

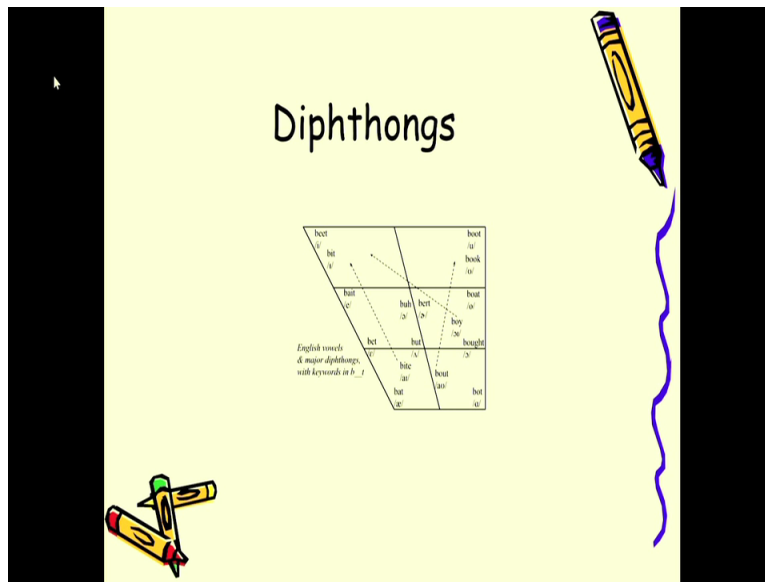
Speaking Effectively
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Lecture 14
Sounds of English: Diphthongs and Consonants

Hello and welcome to module 3 unit 4 on phonetics and in this unit we talking about diphthongs. In the last module I introduced you to the sounds of English and vowel sounds of RP. In this unit I will move on to diphthongs and consonants. What are diphthongs? Diphthongs is a glide from a vowel sound to another vowel sound. Smooth glide from one vowel sound to another vowel sound is defined as a ‘diphthong’. What is a glide? Glide is a smooth movement. When you move from one vowel sound to another in a very smooth fashion then that is how you produce a diphthong.

In addition to 12 vowel sounds we have 8 diphthongs in RP. What are these 8 diphthongs? And how do we produce diphthongs? One needs to (fa) follow only one rule when one is producing diphthongs. One that the movement from one vowel sound to the other vowel sound should be smooth. It should be a glide. It should not be a gallop or a jump. It should be a very smooth glide. The second rule is that, the first vowel sound in a diphthong is more prominent than the second vowel sound.

Let us look at the (sa) diphthongs of RP and see how these diphthongs are pronounced differently by Indian speakers of English and why they sound different.

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Let us come to diphthongs. The first set of diphthongs are diphthongs which are based on which end with the vowel 'a', with the vowel 'schwa'. The diphthongs 'ea' as in beer, the diphthong 'ooa' as in the sound poor and the diphthong 'aea' as in the diphthong , 'aea'. So, ear, hear, sear, ear. The second diphthong is 'ooa' as in poor, tour and so on. And the third sound which ends with the vowel 'schwa' is 'aea' as in pear, sear, care. That is the vowel. three diphthongs ending with the vowel 'schwa'.

Next we move to the diphthongs which end with the vowel 'o'. Say the diphthong 'aow' as in how, now. The diphthong is a combination of 'aa' and 'o', 'aa' and 'o', now, how, wow. That is a diphthong 'aow'. Another diphthong ends with the vowel 'o' and this is the diphthong that we are most guilty of mispronouncing in India. The reason is that the sound which is really a diphthong in RP is pronounced as a vowel sound in Indian English. The diphthong is 'ow', 'ow' as in go, as in home.

Do you ever use this sound in Indian English? No, no. Why? Because Indian users of English make this diphthong sound which is a combination of vowels 'a' and 'o', 'ow' into 'oo'. So we tend to say, go, home. It is not go, its go. It is not no, it is no. It is not home, it is home, 'ow'. So the diphthong is turned into a vowel sound by Indian learners of English. (Na) Now we move on to diphthongs which end with the vowel 'e'. And we have 3 diphthongs which end with the

vowel 'e'. 'ae' as in fly, 'ae' as in fly, 'oe' as in boy, 'oe' as in boy and 'ae' as in gate, 'ae' as in gate.

So what is the problem with the sound again? As Indian users we tend to make this sound which is a diphthong in English, 'ae', we turn it into a vowel sound and we say, 'ay'. We change it to 'ay'. Do you remember there being a sound 'ae' among the 12 vowels that we spoke about? No. There was no 'ae' sound. There was either 'ay' or 'ayy'. There was no 'ae' sound. But Indian speakers tend to make this sound which is a diphthong 'ae', 'a' and 'e' into, 'ay'. So we say, gate. Have you taken the gate exam? The gate of your house is wide open. So it is not gate, its gate, gate, late, hate, state and so on.

So let us revise the eight diphthong sounds of RP. The 3 diphthong sounds which end in the vowel 'schwa', 'ea' as in beer, 'ooa' as in poor, 'aea' as in 'aea'. The 3 diphthong sounds which end in the vowel 'e', 'ae' as in fly, 'oe' as in boy and 'ou' sorry 'ae' as in gate. Finally the (tho) (diph) two diphthongs which end in the vowel 'o', 'aow' as in how and 'ow' as in go. What is the problem with Indian learners of English? The problem is that we forget the rule that in a diphthong one must not stress each of the sound equally.

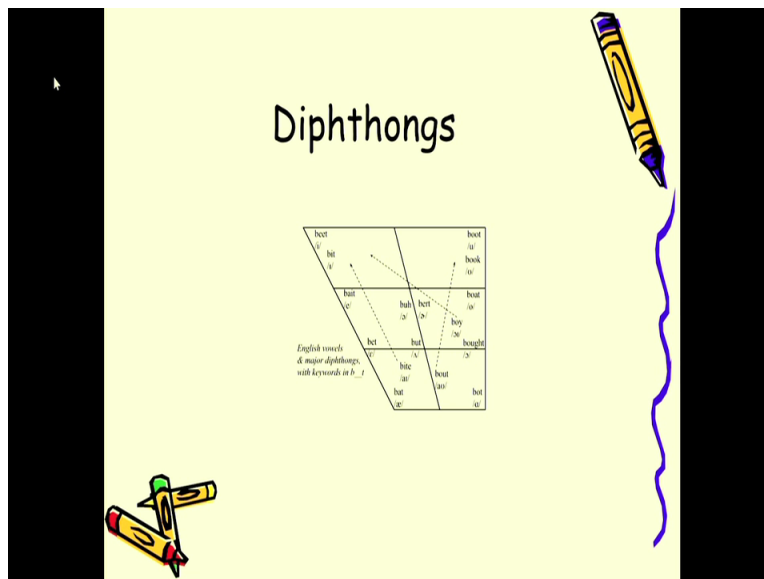
One must not distribute the stress between each of the vowel sounds equally. As I said, the first vowel sound should be more prominent. And in order to make the first vowel sound we must stress it more than the second vowel sound. So that the second vowel sound is very fat. So instead of saying I, say I. Indian speakers say I, fly cry. It should be, fly, I, high, cry. They say, why are you crying? I want to tell you this, I want to go flying, go fly a kite. Instead of that, go fly a kite, this is very high, I want to tell you this.

So I high, why, try should be 'I' should be more prominent than 'e'. Similarly with how. Indian speaker say, how did you do this? How did you do this? How could you do this to me? You are putting equal lances on the first vowel and the second vowel. It should not be equal. The first vowel sound should be more prominent that the second vowel sound. So it would sound like, how, now. Not how. Not now. How, now. So I, how. This is how you must put equal weight, not put equal weight on both the sounds but make the first sound more prominent than the second sound.

In fact what happens to us is that when we speaking fast, in connected speech, the second (vo) vowel sound almost disappears. So, if I say, 'I am so happy today'. What happened to the 'I'? I dint say, 'I am so happy today'. I said, 'I am so happy today'. The I became 'a'. 'Am' become 'um', 'aum'. I am so happy today. I dint say, 'I am so happy today'. I said 'I am so happy today'. So, the (vo) second vowel sound almost disappears. Now with that, that brings us to 'triphthongs'. What are triphthongs? Triphthongs are a combination of 3 vowel sounds.

Like dipthongs are a combination of 2 vowel sounds, triphthongs are a combination of 3 vowel sounds. The rule is the same. The first vowel sound should be prominent, the second should not be prominent. And because of this the second sound in a triphthong is almost inaudible. Let us take some examples. So let us take the same examples which we took for the dipthongs and turn them into triphthongs. So let us take the triphthong 'a', 'aya'.

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'Ay' as in play and if we say, 'player', it becomes a triphthong. So 'ay' and 'a', 'aya', player. 'Oy' and 'a', employer. Employ, employer. 'Aoa', that is the most commonly mispronounced triphthong. So we say, in the first 'a' let us meet. What do we do with the 'o'? We swallow the 'o' because the 'o' supposed to be said very fast and when you say it very fast, some people tend to make it disappear altogether. You say, 'I am gonna meet you in the first hour', 'let us meet in the tower', 'let us have a have you had a shower?'

So, it is not shower, it is not tower, it is not shower, it is not tower, it is not hour, its hour, tower, shower. Remember that they are triphthongs but in the (tip) triphthongs we use the same rule that the second (ta) sound is not as prominent as the first sound.

From diphthongs we come to consonants and in consonants what do I need to tell you? I need to tell you that in consonants Indian learners of English do not have that many problems as compared to say, Chinese letters of English. (Woul) As because in Chinese language there no separate phonemes for 'la' and 'ra' and because of that Chinese tend to confuse learn 'la' and 'ra' which might be (12:00) Chinese languages to confuse to make these sounds to use these sounds interchangeably.

In India we do not do this, Indian speakers do not do this. What are the problems with consonant sounds when it comes to Indian speakers? The problems with consonant sounds when it comes to Indian speakers is, mother tongue interference, not in terms of the sounds of Indian English or sounds of Indian languages being similar but not identical to those of the sounds of RP or British English. How is that so? And how do these (chang) sounds change? (Ther) Because there is a very imperceptible difference between the two sounds.

It is very easy to confuse one sound with the other and make a fool of oneself. So, we have a sound in English, remember in the very first lecture I said if we do not have a sound in our language we are unable to produce that sound. So, say the vowel sound, 'ayy' as in German like the sound in the German spelling or German pronunciation of city of Cologne, you say 'Cologne', 'Cologne'. That sounds 'ayy', 'Cologne'.

It is not there in Indian languages so when Indian speakers (pe) pronounce that sound, it is difficult for them to pronounce that sound just as it is difficult for North Indian speakers to use the sound 'ra' as in, in the Bavarian languages. So one of the sounds in English which is (impossib) difficult for Indians speakers to pronounce is the sound 'scha', 'scha'. The 'scha' sound as in the word pleasure, leisure, pressure. So what do Indian speakers tend to do? They tend to (pro) pronounce the 'scha' sound as either as 'sha' or as 'za' but never as 'scha'.

So they would say it is my pleasure to meet you, it is my pleasure to meet you. They would not say, it is my pleasure to meet you, pleasure, 'scha', 'scha'. Come in your leisure time. They would say, leisure time, (leisu) leisure time or leisure time. And there is one variation which I

find in the north of India particularly in (pa) North among the certain generation of people who are in their mid-70s to 80s. They for some enforceable (())(14:33) little reason that I am not aware of. This generation of speakers in Punjab always tends to pronounce the word pleasure as player. Pleasure as player.

So I would hear elders in of that Generation say, 'it is my pleasure to introduce so and so'. And it is very embarrassing when you are in the head of an institution and you are introducing a very renowned speaker. You are standing before the crowd of 500 people and you say, 'it is my pleasure to introduce so and so'. Oh! Do not worry do not worry do it at your layer, there is no hurry'. So I do not know how they got to pronounce this sound 'scha' as 'ayy', but they do it. They still continue to do it.

But in the majority of other consonant sounds in English, we find that the sounds are not completely (di) impossible to produce. They are not completely not there in Indian languages. But they are said differently and they are said differently because the place of articulation in the Indian languages is different from the place of articulation in British English. And as a result, when new learners of English, new speakers of English who come from Indian languages of Indian languages speakers, when they learn English for the first time.

They carry over the articulators and the speech habits of their mother tongue into English language but sounds very amusing to people who are fluent in English. So let me give you a very common sound which is mispronounced. Which sounds very amusing to people fluent in English but new learners often make this mistake and very confused when they find that they are not able to, people are laughing at them. What are these sounds? The sound 'pha'. 'Pha' and the sound 'fa'. The sound 'pha' and the sound 'fa'. 'Pha', 'fa'.

What is the difference? What is the English sound and what is the Indian sound, Indian language sound? In Indian languages, particularly in Hindi. Let me take the example of Hindi, not all, because all languages are different and I might be making too wide generalizations if I claim to speak for all languages. Forget all Indian languages, even (ph) all north Indian languages if I make this generalizations. So, the sound 'pha' in Hindi, is the sound 'pha'. Please watch my lips, the sound is 'pha' as in the word 'phool'.

The term in Hindi for the word flower is 'phool', 'phool', 'phool'. Watch it, it is a bilabial sound that is we use both the lips to produce the sound 'pha', 'pha', 'pha', 'phool'. Now, when we make the sound in English, it is not bilabial sound. We do not use both the lips. We do not say, 'pha'. it is an alveolar sound. What does that mean? That the upper teeth touch the lower lips. So you say 'fa', 'fa', 'fa', 'fa'. You do not say, 'pha', 'pha'. You say, 'fa', 'fa'.

So suppose you are saying the same word in English the word which is 'FOOL' which is very different from Hindi word 'phool' which means flower. The English word 'FOOL' which means someone who is stupid. If you say it with the Hindi articulation place. If you say it like a new learner of English who is the Hindi speaker says it. It will sound like 'phool'. Why? Because you are using the articulators of Hindi 'pha' to say the sound 'fa'. So you would say, you are a 'phool', my 'phather' told me, it is not funny at all.

Because this learner is applying the rules of, all the familiar articulators of Hindi to produce a sound which is in English sound. So you would say instead of saying, 'my father told me', you say, 'my phather told me'. Why? You are making a genuine mistake because you are carrying over the articulation habits or the articulators of Hindi into the articulation of English sounds and they sound ridiculous. They sound very amusing to native speakers of English. But for most of you who do not make this mistake, I am sure you do not say 'pha' instead of 'fa'.

You say 'fool' and you say 'father'. You do not say 'phool' or 'phather'. But do you realize that most of the mistakes Indian users make are of this category. That we use the article letters of Indian languages (tos) to produce the sounds of English and they sound different when we speak English. let us take some other sounds which are not so familiar to, which you do not realize. What are these sounds? Like the 'va', 'va'. Now in English, there are two sounds. There is a sound 'va' and there is a sound 'wa'. 'Va' and the other is 'wa'.

And they are two different sounds. 'Va', 'wa'. One as in, 'very', the sound as in 'va', 'very'. And other is the sound 'wa' as in 'well'. So you say, 'very well'. But in Hindi we do not have two sounds for 'wa'. We have only one sound which is closer to the second sound of English as in 'well'. It is 'va'. We say, Vinod, Vishal. Which is like the sound in 'well'. It is not the sound in 'very'. So when we are speaking English Indian users are speaking English we say, 'very well', 'very well' 'very well'. We say it identically.

Whereas the sound is 'very well', 'very well', 'very well', 'very well'. We say 'very well'. Similarly when we say the sounds 'tha', 'tha' and 'dha'. Take the sounds 'tha' and the sounds 'dha'. Indian users of English say them as 'tha', 'tha', 'tha', 'tha'. Because the Hindi sound is 'tha', with your mouth closed 'tha'. With both your teeth you say, 'tha', 'thakaan' 'fatigue', 'thakaan'. In English you do not say, 'tha', you say 'dha'. It is an alveolar sound when your upper teeth touch your lower lip, 'dha', 'dha'.

So Indian users would say the English sound as they say the Hindi sound 'tha'. And they would say 'tha' as in 'think'. I think, I think. Whereas the British sound is 'dha', 'dha' and that sounds like 'think', 'think'. So Indian users would make it like the Hindi sound 'think', 'think'. Similarly, 'think', 'think', 'think'. In English it is an alveolar sound where the upper teeth touch the lower lip, 'think', 'think', 'think'. But Indian users would say, 'think', 'think', 'think'. They would not say 'think'. They wouldn't say 'something'. They'd say, 'something', 'anything', 'anything'.

So these are the slight differences. When we use the consonant sounds, we are able to produce this sounds but we are not able to produce them exactly because we use the familiar articulators of our Indian languages. The sounds we produce are very different from the sounds produced by the native British speakers of English. Let us move onto consonant clusters. That is another area which is the problem for Indian speakers. When we have a combination of two consonants together, how are they said?

Indian speakers tend to make these, when they are using the consonant (cl) clusters they tend to pronounce each and every sound. And they sound different from native speakers. Say the two sounds 'ingh'. One is the sound 'ingh' as in 'sing' and there is another sound which is 'na' and 'ga'. Combination of sounds 'na' and 'ga'. The cluster where you do not have a vowel between 'na' and 'ga', the two sounds 'na' and 'ga' in a consonant cluster (don) and that is very different from the sound 'ingh'. So sing, hang and finger, finger.

So you say sing, hang, finger. In finger it is not 'fing' the sound 'ingh'. It is a combination of two vowel sounds 'na' and 'ga'. Indian speakers tend to confuse (se) the two and they will say give me a hanger. They do not say hanger. My finger is hurt. I need a hanger. But that two are different. One is a consonant cluster, which is finger, 'inger' and the other is 'ingh' which is

hanger, hanger. So we must watch out for these that we must realize that is one is finger 'ingh', the sound 'ingh' and the other is a constant cluster 'na' and 'ga'.

They are similar consonant clusters where we make these mistakes. Finally we have a problem with sounds which we call semi vowels. At the end of words like hidden, little, kitten, the sound 'na' and 'la', which are actually consonants turn into vowels. They turn into vowels. So, you say, kitten, little, hidden. This here 'na' and 'la' themselves work as vowels. So you do not have to add a vowel between this. Indian speakers say, kitten, hidden, little. They add a vowel between 'ta' and 'la'.

You must understand that 'la' itself is a vowel. it is a semi vowel so you do not need to add the 'e' or 'a' sound between 'da' and 'na' and 'ta' and 'la'. So you say, kitten. You have to say it very fast, kitten, hidden, little, written. So these are semi vowels. Other than this Indian speakers of English do not seem to have major problems with consonants except that the slight variation in the place of articulation or the (u) use of a difference set of articulators.

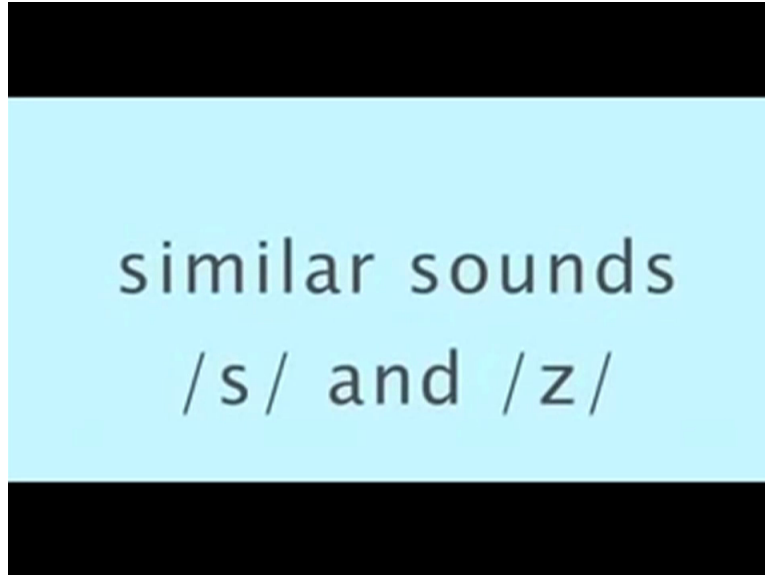
As I said in 'pha' if (bi) you make it bilabial sound instead of a alveolar sound, the sound will change and you will say 'phool' instead of 'fool'. You will say, 'pho', 'phool' instead of 'fool' when you are pronouncing that word. Other than that we do not seem to have too many problems pronouncing the consonant sounds of (En) English language. another thing that occurred to me is vowels, consonants, diphthongs, triphthongs. These are the four sounds of English that we practice and understood.

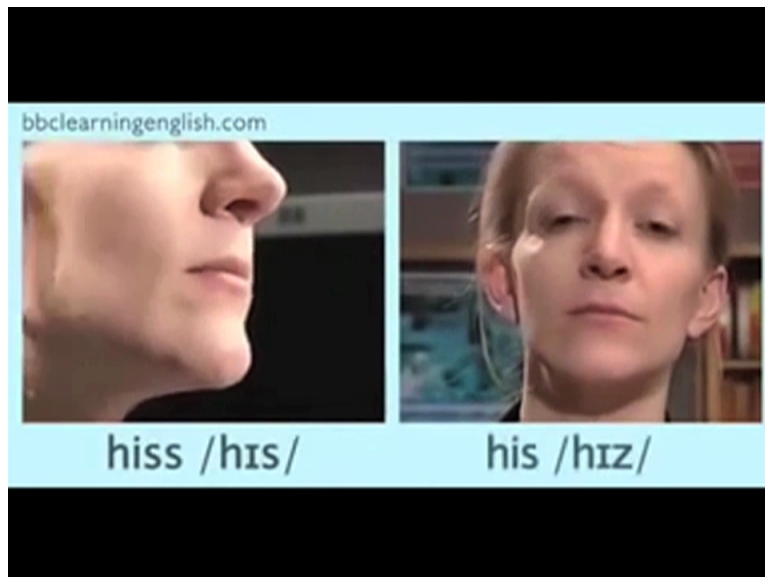
Now most of the problems of Indian speakers, one of the problems I would say, which native speakers have identified is, they say, that the sounds you make are not sounds of English at all. They are not British sounds at all, they are different. So the first area that you must try to work on if you are trying to improve your pronunciation of English is to learn first of all what are the sounds of English and try to imitate the sounds of English either by the practicing these sounds in a drill form which I'd be happy to share with you if you would like.

Or better way is to listen to native speakers of English or to professionals who have mastered the art of speaking English even though they were not the native speakers. The best way for you to improve your pronunciation of the sounds of English is the first stage is to know how the Indians English sounds are different from those of British English. And the next stage is to try to unlearn

the way you use these sounds and to speak them to enunciate them as a native speaker would do.
Thank you.

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So, speakers of some languages, it may be difficult to tell difference between the voiceless sound, 's' and its voiced partner 'z'. Listen carefully to hear the difference. For each example I will say the word with the voiceless sound 's' first. 'Hiss', 'his', 'course', 'cause'.