



Editors:  
Miftahul Huda  
Ahmad Ghozi

Proceeding of the 1<sup>st</sup> ELITE Conference  
Vol. I: On Linguistics and Literature

**THE MULTIFACETED DIMENSIONS**  
OF LINGUISTICS, LITERATURE,  
AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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# SOME FEATURES IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC PHONOLOGY

*Dedi Sulaeman*

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati

## **A. Introduction**

Phonology is one of subjects taught in English department. Specifically in English department, the object of the subject is English. Since the English taught as a foreign language, it is interesting to learn and to teach phonology because most students have their own ethnic language as their first language and bahasa Indonesia as their most second language. Besides, learning Arabic for some students in *Taman Pendidikan Al-Quran* (equals to Kindergarten) gives rich materials in discussing phonology in the classroom.

In discussing the human sounds in the classroom, there are at least four sound systems, namely ethnic language, bahasa Indonesia, Arabic and of course English. By exploring those four language, my students and I realize the complexity and the detail of each different sounds used in everyday life. It is very easy to recognize and imitate the sounds but the difficult thing is to theorize the sound and or to analyse the similarities or the differences among them. The following are the explanation of English and Arabic phonemes and its features.

### **1. English Phonemes**

Phoneme, according to Bloomfield (1933) is the smallest distinctive sound. In Arabic linguistic, phoneme called *al-wahdah as-sawtiyyah* (Syahin 1984). If the phonetic is studying about language sound based on its physic aspect only, then the phonemic is studying the language based on its function as a comparative meaning and connected to any language. English has twelve vowels, and twenty four consonants as below:

### **2. English Vowels**

Vowels are speech sound, which are produced by the parts of the tongue (front, central, back, medium and low). The degree of the opening of mouth (close, depending

on the number of the vowels being articulated in-group to form words. They are monophthong, diphthong, and triphthong. There are four principle resonators: (1) the pharyngeal cavity, (2) the oral cavity, (3) the labial cavity, and (4) the nasal cavity. Air flows through these resonators.

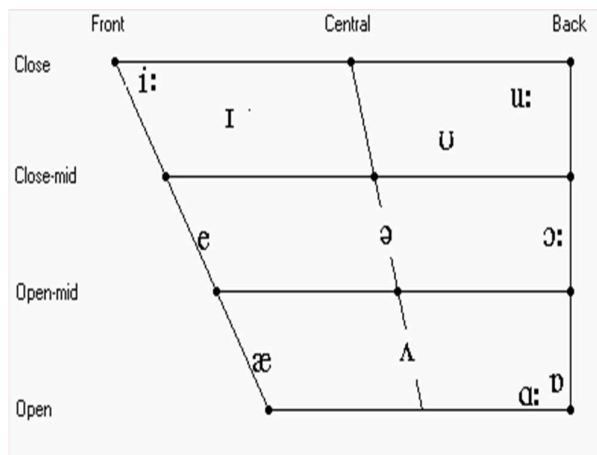
The distinction between consonants and vowels is quite simple. If the air, once out of the glottis, is allowed to pass freely through the oral cavity, the sound is a vowel. If the air, once out of the glottis, is partially or totally obstructed in one or more places in the oral cavity, the sound is a consonant. The shape of the oral cavity is determined by the general position of the tongue in the mouth. This divides the vowels into three great classes: (a) front vowels, (b) back vowels, and (c) central vowels

a) Parts of vowel

a.1. English Monophthongs (Single speech sound)

English monophthong is a single vowel speech sound. There are twelve basic monophthongs in English. Following in the chart of the tongue where twelve basic English monophthongs are produced.

Front, central, and back part of the tongue and high, medium, low parts of the tongue are parts of the tongue where the vowels are produced, while open, half-open, half-close, and close indicate the degree of the opening of mouth. So the production of each English vowel can be explained as follows.



1. /i:/ it produced by the front and high part of the tongue. While the opening of the mouth is close. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a bit longer period. This



- vowel is defined as a front, high, close, long vowel. It takes place at the initial, medial, or final position of English word.
2. /ɪ/: It is produced by the front and high part of the tongue. While the opening mouth is close. The air comes out of the lungs flows in short period. It is defined as a front high, close, short vowel. It takes place at the initial, medial, as well as final position of English words.
  3. /e/: It is produced by the front and medium part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is half-close. The air that comes out of the lungs flows is a short period. It is defined as a front, medium, half-close, short vowel. It takes place at the initial and medial position of English words.
  4. /æ/: It is produced by the front and low part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is half-open. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a short period. It is defined as a front, low, half-open, short vowel. It takes place at the initial and medial position of English words.
  5. /ʌ/: It is produced by the low part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is open. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a short period. It is defined as a low, and open, short vowel. It takes place at the initial and medial position of English words.
  6. /ɑ/: It is produced by the low part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is open. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a bit longer period. It is defined as a long and low vowel. It takes place at the initial, central, and final position of English words.
  7. /ɒ/: It is produced by the back and low part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is half-open. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a short period. It is defined as a back, low, open, short vowel. It takes place at the initial, medial, and final position of English words.
  8. /o/: It is produced by the back and low part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is half-open. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a bit longer period. It is defined as a back, medium, half-open, long vowel. It takes place at the initial, medial, and final position of English words.
  9. /u/: It is produced by the back and high part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is half-close. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a short period. It is

defined as a back, high, half-close, short vowel. It takes place at the medial, and final position of English words.

10. /ʊ/: It is produced by the back and high part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is close. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a bit longer period. It is defined as a back, high, close, long vowel. It takes place at the medial and final position of English words.
11. /ə/: It is produced by the central and medium part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is half-close. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a bit longer period. It is defined as a central, medium, half-close, long vowel. It takes place at the initial, medial, and final position of English words.
12. /ɜ/: It is produced by central and medium part of the tongue. The opening of the mouth is half-open. The air that comes out of the lungs flows in a short period. It is defined as a central, medium, half-open, short vowel. It takes place at the initial, medial, and final position of English words.

### c. English consonants

Although English is written in Latin's spelling, it does not mean that the amount of consonant in English is same as its writing system. English has twenty four consonants as described below:

	Place of articulation							
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar (Post-alveolar)	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
<b>Plosive</b>	p b			t d			k g	
<b>Fricative</b>		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
<b>Affricate</b>					tʃ dʒ			
<b>Nasal</b>	m			n			ŋ	
<b>Lateral</b>				l				
<b>Approximant</b>	w				r	j		

#### 1. Bilabial

Articulations used Upper lip and lower lip

Example:

- /p/ Couple, capable, party, paper
- /b/ Balance, impossible, become

- /m/    Make, mention, mad, mine
- /w/    Aware, widow, away, why

## 2. Labiodentals

Articulations used lower lip and upper teeth

Example:

- /f/    official, force, proof
- /v/    victim, prove, overcome

## 3. Dental

Articulation used almost meeting upper teeth with lower teeth

Example:

- /θ/ think, thin, theme, thesis, thimble
- /ð/ gather, then, themselves, that

## 4. Alveolar

Alveolar sounds are produced by the tip or blade of the tongue moving up towards the alveolar ridge, the bony protrusion you can feel if you curl your tongue back just behind your top front teeth.

Example:

- /t/    tell, time, take, it, polite
- /d/    divide, dark, delicious
- /l/    lately, veil, jealous
- /n/    enrich, nation, event
- /s/    salary, purpose, some
- /z/    realize, cause, reason

## 5. Palato-alveolar

Articulations used tongue front and hard palate

Example:

- /tʃ/    cheap, teach, cheek
- /dʒ/    gender, general
- /ʃ/    shy, show, she
- /ʒ/    garage, vision,

## 6. Velar

Articulations used tongue back with soft palate

Example:

- /k/ secret, accompany, keep,
- /g/ get, gamble, garden, give
- /ŋ/ bring, sing, slink, spring

#### 7. Palatal

Articulations used tongue middle with palate

Kind: /j/

Example:

- /j/ yes, yellow,

#### 8. Glottal

Glottal sounds are those sounds that are made in the larynx through the closure or narrowing of the glottis. It was mentioned earlier that there is an opening between the vocal cords which is called the glottis

Kind: /h/

Example

- /h/ high, hide, happen,

Those are the English phonemes which consist of vowels and consonants. The following is the description of Arabic phonemes which describes the vowels and consonants.

#### **d. Arabic vowels**

Arabic grammarians described vowels as: a) sounds included in consonants and/or b) a facilitator of consonant production, so vowels never occur in isolation, they must be associated to consonantal environment to be produced, this can be explained by the morphological structure of Arabic, (A non-concatenative language with a triconsonantal root, that exhibits direct consonant relation), Some verb categories are marked by a systematic alteration of vowel qualities, without any modification in the consonantal root.

In Arabic vowels are called *حركة* "*harakah*" which means movement. Meanwhile consonant along with its vowel sign called *متحرك* "*mutaharrik*" which meant

moving. If the consonants are without vowels sign, its is called ساكن "sakin" which meant rest. The vowels in Arabic are divided into two, namely:

- Short vowels

Arabic vowels are represented by marks. It has three short vowels, namely:

➤ - /i/

This vowel is called "*kasrah*" in Arabic. When you say this vowel, the position of the tongue is a half-close position.

➤ - /u/

This vowel is called "*ḍammah*", in Arabic. When you say this vowel, the tongue is half-close position also but with around lips.

➤ - /a/

This vowel is called "*fathah*" in Arabic. When you say this vowel, the tongue is half-open position and noutral lips.

- Long vowels

The lips' position when say long vowels sound in Arabic is similar with short vowels sound. But, you have to say this vowel with long duration. Long vowels are:

➤ /i:/

This vowel is formed when we have the prolongation letter (y) ي preceded by the notation "*kasrah*".

➤ /u:/

This long vowel is formed by the prolongati on letter (w) و preceded by the notation dhammah or called "length" in English

➤ /a:/

The third Arabic long vowel is formed by the prolongation letter (a) ا preceded by the notation fathah.

### e. Arabic consonants

As been discussed previously, Arabic consonants are different from English. There are some different sounds as English has. The following is the description of Arabic consonants.

Arabic IPA Chart											
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Stop	b			t t <sup>ʰ</sup> d d <sup>ʰ</sup>				k g q			ʔ
Nasal	m			n							
Tape				r							
Tap or Flap				r <sup>ɾ</sup>							
Fricative		f	θ ð ð <sup>ʰ</sup>	s s <sup>ʰ</sup> z	ʃ		ç	ʒ	ħ	ʕ	h
Lateral fricative							dʒ				
Approximant	w							j			
Lateral approximant				l ɭ							

When symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

Created by John Ohrtby, East West University, johort@ewu.edu

## B. Discussion

### 1. Some Features In English and Arabic

Both English and Arabic have short and long vowels. The following is the description of English and Arabic long vowels.

### 2. English short and long vowels

No.	Long vowels	Phonetic	Long vowels	Phonetic
1	Duck	/dʌk/	Dark	/dɑ:k/
2	Sit	/sɪt/	Seat	/si:t/
3	Foot	/fʊt/	food	/fu:d/

### 3. Arabic short and long vowels

No.	Long vowels	Long vowels
1	Jada	Jaada
2	Judu	Juudu
3	Jida	Jiida

### Double consonants in English and Arabic

Orthographically English has double consonants, but phonetically it is pronounced as a single sound. The following are the example of English single and double consonants and it pronunciation.

No.	Root words	Modification	After	Pronounced
1	Run	-ing	Running	/'rʌn.ɪŋ/
2	Actual	-ly	Actually	/'æk.tʃʊ.ə.li/
3	Happy	(base)	Happy	/'hæp.i /

However, Arabic has double consonants and it can change the meaning. The following table are the example of Arabic single and double consonants.

No.	Single consonant	Meaning	Double consonant	Meaning
1	<i>ila</i>	To	<i>illa</i>	except
2	<b>ana</b>	I	<b>anna</b>	that
3	<b>syam</b>	Sun	<b>asysyam</b>	The sun

### C. Conclusion

Those are some features in English and Arabic phonology. It is just a few things about the similarities and the difference between English and Arabic. Actually, if we go deeper there are so many things and is interesting to discuss about the topic.

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