

ANSWERS AND METHOD OF GRADING

Answer all questions in Parts 1, 2 and 3. You have a choice of topics in questions 4 and 11.

Part 1. Classification of English vowels

1 The following are descriptions of RP vowels. Give the symbol for each vowel **and a word containing that vowel (not the keyword!)**. (5%)

- æ a open (=low) front lax
ɔː b half-open (=fairly low) back tense
ɪ c close (=high) front lax
eɪ d diphthong rising from mid front to close front
aʊ e diphthong rising from open back to close back

1 point for each answer; half for the symbol, half for the word. NB several people forgot to give words, or simply gave the keywords from page 1.

2

a Explain what we mean by the Vowel Chart. Why are vowels classed as high (or close) and low (or open), and what do we mean by front and back? How are these features shown on the chart? (5%)

5 points for full answer

b Draw the vowel chart and show the positions of the English tense vowels and diphthongs (not the lax vowels). Give their symbols. (5%)

5 points for full answer. NB several people forgot the diphthongs.

3

a Explain **vowel length** in English, making sure you describe the difference between **lax** and **tense** vowels. (6%)

For 6 points you needed to mention:

- The vowels of English all have different lengths.
- The shorter ones are called lax vowels, and the longer tense.
- Tense vowels include the diphthongs.

- All vowels become shorter when followed by a fortis consonant in the same syllable, but the difference is hardly audible in the lax vowels, which are already short.
- When stressed, lax vowels are always checked, which means that they cannot occur alone at the end of a word. Unstressed KIT and FOOT may be unchecked, but when this happens they may also be tensed to (short) i and u. Schwa can occur word-finally, since it is always unstressed.

b In the following list, **UNDERLINE** the words which are affected by fortis clipping (do not underline words with lax vowels): (4%)

fight wait groan fit shake book news loose reach which coach stage

12 items correct gave 4 points, 11 gave 3,5, 10 gave 3, etc.

4 Answer EITHER (a) or (b) (5%)

a What are the main differences between RP and General American vowels?

For full marks, you had to mention these points:

- Length is not distinctive in American English. Both lax and tense vowels can have varying lengths according to emphasis. For this reason, we often omit the length mark (:) after American tense vowels.
- The British LOT vowel is missing in American English– LOT words have either the PALM vowel or the THOUGHT vowel. (Extra point: in some American accents the THOUGHT vowel is also missing, going over to PALM.)
- BATH words have $\alpha:$ in British English but æ in American English. In other words in American English they have the same vowel as the PALM words, but in British English they have the same vowel as the TRAP words. (NB several people seemed to think that $\alpha:$ did not exist in American English – but it exists in PALM words! Also that all TRAP words had $\alpha:$ in British English!)
- Since General American is rhotic, there are no centring diphthongs – instead of SQUARE, NEAR and CURE, GA has DRESS, KIT and FOOT followed by r.

b Describe and explain vowel-length in Icelandic and show how it differs from English vowel length which you described in question 3. How do these differences affect the Icelandic pronunciation of English?

These were the important points:

- The Icelandic length rule is that all vowels are short when they are followed by 2 or more consonants in the same syllable, otherwise they are long. (There are some exceptions to this rule, but we did

not mention them in class – words like *vökvi*, *Esja*, *sitja* have long vowels.)

- This means that Icelanders pronounce English lax vowels long when only one consonant follows them, and may not clip tense vowels.
- Examples: seven, foot, price.

Part 2. Classification of English Consonants

- 5 Describe the **initial** consonants of the following words, giving the PLACE and MANNER of articulation. (5%)

Examples: **false** - labiodental fricative. **day** - alveolar plosive.
Note that you are not asked to mention fortis or lenis

- | | |
|----------|------------------------|
| 1 fish | labiodental fricative |
| 2 quite | velar plosive |
| 3 cheese | postalveolar affricate |
| 4 walk | bilabial approximant |
| 5 shine | postalveolar fricative |
| 6 think | dental fricative |
| 7 union | palatal approximant |
| 8 nose | alveolar nasal |
| 9 down | alveolar plosive |
| 10 great | velar plosive |

Each answer had 2 terms. I subtracted one-quarter for each wrong term.

- 6 a Eight pairs of English consonants show the fortis/lenis distinction. What are the eight fortis/lenis pairs? (2%)
0,75 for each correct pair = 2 points
- b Give examples of words with these consonants (16 words). (2%)
1/8 for each correct word = 2 points
- c This distinction is not simply one of voicing or non-voicing - can you mention other features? (6%)
For full marks, you need to name the 4 extra features and explain them, saying in which cases they apply. The features are:
- Voicing (already mentioned in the question). Most important for fricatives and affricates, since lenis plosives can also be more or less unvoiced.
 - Aspiration - fortis plosives and affricates are (post)aspirated, especially at the beginning of stressed syllables.

- Glottalization: fortis plosives can be glottalized in certain final positions and when they occur with other consonants medially or finally.
- Length: fortis consonants are generally longer than lenis.
- Strength: fortis consonants are generally stronger (pronounced with more force) than lenis.

7 Mark unvoiced r and l in the following words by writing $\overset{\circ}{r}$ below them ($\underset{\circ}{r}$ $\underset{\circ}{l}$) (5%)

truck clock grunt plus strong pry spring glory blue apply

Ten items worth 0,5 each = 5

8 Mark dark l in the following by crossing the l (ł) (5%)
lazy girls lie all night long on piled-up milk-white pillows

leɪzi gɜ:łz laɪ ɔ:ł naɪt lɒŋ

ɒn paɪłd ʌp miłk waɪt pɪləʊz

8 items; minus 1 point for each mistake

9 Add the s-ending (-s, -z or -IZ) to the following noun and verbs:

spice IZ mix IZ fly Z tear Z plumber Z

flap S deck S frame Z hour Z touch IZ (5%)

Ten items worth 0,5 each = 5

10 Add the past tense ending (-t, -d or -ID) to the following verbs: (5%)

raid ID rake T deny D state ID flip T

roar D open D browse D grill D reach T

Ten items worth 0,5 each = 5

11 Describe the difference between EITHER nasals OR sibilants in Icelandic and English. What problems do they present to Icelandic speakers of English? You should mention differences in both voicing and place (= *position of articulation*), and give examples of words where problems will occur for Icelanders - give at least 2 examples for each problem you discuss. (5%)

- For sibilant you had to mention the fact that Icelandic has only one, which is alveolar and unvoiced, but English has 4, voiced and unvoiced alveolar and post-alveolar. Icelanders tend to use their unvoiced alveolar for all of these, or add j to the post-alveolar

ones, saying sj for ʃ and ʒ. English also has 2 affricates, tʃ and dʒ, which Icelanders tend to pronounce as ts, tsj, dj etc.

- Fort nasals: English has 3 nasals, bilabial, alveolar and velar, all voiced and short, while Icelandic has a range of 10, adding unvoiced and lengthened nasals and another position, palatal. Icelanders speaking English must be careful not to devoice their nasals.
- Several people forgot to give examples.

12 Describe **Linking R** and **Intrusive R**. Explain exactly the context in which they occur, and in what way they are different from each other. Explain why they are a feature of some dialects, but not others. Give full examples. (5%)

For full marks, you needed to say:

- Both linking and intrusive r occur when non-high vowels (ɑ:, ɜ:, ɔ:, ə, and the centring diphthongs) come at the end of a word or a syllable and the next word or syllable begins with any other vowel.
- The difference between linking and intrusive r is that linking r is shown in the spelling (the r is historical) while intrusive r is not shown in the spelling. There is no other difference.
- You lost marks if you did not mention the non-high vowels and also if you said the non-high vowels were responsible for intrusive r only.
- Linking and intrusive r only occur in non-rhotic accents since in rhotic accents all historical r's (those in spelling) are pronounced. In non-rhotic accents only occurs in the pronunciation if it is followed by a vowel.
- So of course you lost marks if you said that r's are not pronounced in non-rhotic accents!
- And many people forgot to give examples.

Part 3. Sentence stress and weak forms

13

a Explain **isochronic stress**. (2,5%)

2,5 marks for saying that *isochronic* means "equal time", and that in English the stressed syllables appear to occur at fairly regular intervals, no matter how many unstressed syllables there are between them. Of course, this is only a tendency.

b Underline the words in the following sentence which *may* lose their initial *h* in R.P.: (2,5%)

When did her husband decide he had better hire himself a horse?

H occurs 7 times: minus 0,5 for each mistake.

14

- a Transcribe the following passage. (10%)
 b Show all sentence stresses (' before stressed syllables). (5%)
 c Make sure you are using weak forms wherever applicable. (5%)

When the first tug of the rope came, she was caught off-balance and fell headlong into the mire. Cold muddy water soaked her to the skin. She had lost her grip on the rope. Immediately, she thought: “Perhaps I can pretend I was attacked.”

RP and GA transcriptions are given below. I was not very strict about the difference between RP and GA, and I allowed some mixtures, but not in the case of r – if you had r in *first* you also needed it in *mire, water, her* and *perhaps*.

Under your transcriptions I give three marks:

- “tr” = number of mistakes in transcription. No mistakes gave 10 points, 30 mistakes gave 0 points.
- “str” means number of wrong stresses. Minus half for each mistake (5 points).
- “w” means number of wrong weak forms. Minus half for each mistake (5 points).

RP:

(¹)wen ðə 'fɜːst 'tʌg əv ðə 'rəʊp 'keɪm
 ʃi wəz 'kɔːt 'ɒf 'bæləns ən 'fel 'hedlɒŋ 'ɪntə ðə 'maɪə |
 'kəʊld 'mʌdi 'wɔːtə 'səʊkt ə tə ðə 'skɪn | ʃi əd 'lɒst ə
 'grɪp ɒn ðə 'rəʊp | ɪ'mɪdɪətli (ɪ'mɪdʒətli) ʃi 'θɔːt |
 pə'hæps aɪ kən prɪ'tend aɪ wəz ə'tækt

GA:

(¹)wen ðə 'fɜːrst 'tʌg əv ðə 'rəʊp (rəʊp) 'keɪm
 ʃi wəz 'kɔt ('kɑt) 'ɒf 'bæləns ən 'fel 'hedlən ('hedlɒŋ) 'ɪntə
 ðə 'maɪr | 'kəʊld ('kɔʊld) 'mʌdi 'wɔtər ('wɑtər) 'səʊkt
 ('sɔʊkt) ər tə ðə 'skɪn | ʃi əd lɒst (lɑst) ər 'grɪp ən ðə
 rəʊp | ɪ'mɪdɪətli (ɪ'mɪdʒətli) ʃi 'θɔt ('θɑt) | pər'hæps aɪ
 kən prɪ'tend (prə'tend) aɪ wəz ə'tækt