

YA GOVERNMENT DEGREE COLLEGE (W), CHIRALA

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

STUDENT STUDY PROJECT (2016-17)

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Topic: Minimal Pairs

Objectives: 1. To identify minimal pairs in English
2. To make a list of often confused minimal pairs
3. To get equipped with minimum pronunciation skills

Methodology: This study is aimed to learn about the minimal pairs in English with reference to pronunciation. Effective pronunciation results from a proper identification of sounds in English phonology and making a good practice. Hence this study at first identifies some useful minimal pairs and makes us be aware of how to pronounce the sounds in words. Under the supervision of our class teacher we are making this study using the internet basically.

Definition: *A minimal pair is a pair of words that vary by only a single sound, usually meaning sounds that may confuse English learners, like the /f/ and /v/ in fan and van, or the /e/ and /I/ in desk and disk.*

Synopsis: As indicated by the /:/ part of its symbol, /i:/ is a longer sound than /I/ and pronouncing it this way can help distinguish between the two in the pairs of words below. You will also notice, however, that /I/ does not have a dot over it, making it a different mouth position from /i:/. The sound /i:/ is said with the mouth much more spread, something like a broad smile. This is why we say "cheese" rather than "chiz" (or "whizz") when we take photos.

1. “/I/ and /i:/” :: Examples:

bin	bean	did	deed	itch	each
chip	cheap	fill	feel	ill	eel
it	eat	grin	green	lick	leak
sit	seat	is	ease	mill	meal
bin	been	slip	sleep	pitch	peach
bit	beat	still	steal	hid	heed

2. “/e/ and /I/” :: Examples:

Both sounds are short, with /I/ being pronounced with a wider mouth, almost in a kind of smile. This makes it much closer to the long sound /i:/ than it is to the short sound /e/.

dead did	bed bid	Bless bliss
desk disk	bell bit	Clench clinch
belt built	beg big	Fleck flick
fell fill	check chick	Quell quill
head hid	gem gym	Dead did
mess miss	let lit	Den din

3. “/e/ and /ei/” :: examples:

/e/ is a short single sound that is pronounced without our mouth moving, whereas /ei/ is a diphthong (a merging of two sounds) and our mouth gets smaller as we are making the sound.

Wet wait	Debt date	Hell hail
Fell fail	Pent paint	Sent saint
Let late	Tell tale	Tread trade
Sell sale	When wane	Pest paste
Test taste	Bell bail	Shed shade

4. “/ɒ/ and /əʊ/” :: examples:

/ɒ/ is a short single sound made without the mouth moving. /əʊ/ is a diphthong -- a longer sound made of two sounds -- meaning that the mouth moves during production of the sound.

Not note	Clock cloak	Slop slope
Want won't	Cock coke	Dot dote
Got goat	God goad	Cocks coax
Cost coast	Rob robe	Bond boned
Non known	Sock soak	Stock stoke
Rod road	Odd ode	Pop pope

5. “/əʊ/ and /ɔ:/” :: examples:

The sound of /əʊ/ is a diphthong, meaning two vowel sounds blended into one. We should be able to feel the mouth moving from one position to the other while making the sound, with the mouth becoming smaller and rounder. We can emphasize and control this by holding our hand in front of our mouth and bringing the fingers in towards each other as we move from the first part of the sound to the last part.

The sound of /ɔ:/ is a single long sound. The mouth doesn't move while making this sound, and we can pronounce it as long as we have breath.

Bowl	ball	Moan	mourn	Note	naught
So	saw	Oat	ought	Know	no
Boat	bought	Goal	gall	Foam	form

6. **“/ɑ:/ and /ɜ:/” :: examples:**

Both sounds are long single sounds but the mouth position is different, with /ɑ:/ having a much wider open mouth position. This is why our doctor asks us to say this sound to show him or her inside our mouth. /ɜ:/ is much more like the sound people make when they are disgusted.

Fast	first	Farm	firm	Shark	shirk
Hard	heard	Guard	gird	Parch	perch
Heart	hurt	Card	curd	Dart	dirt
Pass	purse	Park	perk	Carve	curve
Bard	bird	Star	stir	Barn	burn

7. **“/n/ and /ŋ/” :: examples:**

Both /n/ and /ŋ/ are pronounced with air coming through our nose, with our blocking the air in the mouth with the front of our tongue for /n/ and the back of our tongue for /ŋ/.

Thin	thing	Ton	tongue	Gone	gong
Sin	sing	Ran	rang	Kin	king
Win	wing	Ban	bang	Pan	pang
Wind	winged	Don	dong	Clan	clang
Ban	bang	Banned	banged	Done	dung

8. **“/dʒ/ and /z/” :: examples:**

/dʒ/ is an explosive sound that is like a voiced version of /tʃ/ and therefore almost like a sneeze and so it is impossible to extend the sound for very long. /z/ is a smooth sound that is a voiced version of /s/ and so can be extended as long as we like.

Stage	stays	Rage	raise	Jew	zoo
Wage	ways	Budge	buzz	Siege	seize
Forge	fours	Singe	sins	Rage	rays

9. **“/b/ and /p/” :: examples:**

The main difference between /b/ and /p/ is that /b/ is a voiced sound, whereas /p/ is just produced by the puff of air. /b/ is pronounced with less air released than /p/, and this can sometimes be a more useful distinction as it is difficult to feel the vocal cords vibrating when making the /b/ sound.

Big pig	Bear pear	Beak peak
Buy pie	Banned planned	Bleed plead
Bay pay	Blank plank	Bitch pitch
Bin pin	Bull pull	Blot plot
Cub cup	Tab tap	Beak peak

10. “/f/ and /v/” :: examples”

/f/ and /v/ are pronounced with the same mouth position of the top teeth biting the bottom lip, but with /f/ pronounced with more air and no use of the voicebox.

Fan van	Safe save	Feign vain
Leaf leave	Belief believe	Fault vault
Ferry very	Fail veil	Fender vender
Fast vast	Grief grieve	Half halve
Fine vine	Surf serve	Reef reeve

Findings:

By minimal pairs we can get to clarity of speech in pronunciation. The practice of it is more useful when we are introduced to phonetics. Unfortunately we neglect this. We utter words in English by taking undue liberty and proceed. If we can practice sets of words as shown above we can correct ourselves to a great extent.

Bibliography:

1. Internet sources
2. Dept. of English, YA Govt. Degree College (W), Chirala

Signature of students

Signature of supervising teacher

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