

HW 7: Sounds

The main goal of this assignment is to give you practice in thinking about the *sounds* (as opposed to the *spelling*) of English - how the sounds are produced, and what they sound like. A couple of the exercises require you to transcribe some sentences using the International Phonetic Association (IPA) symbols. You do not need to memorize the symbols (you'll be able to use a chart during any quizzes and the final - so you will need to understand *how* to use the chart). The goal of this is to give you practice in thinking carefully about the *sounds* of words ... i.e., to think about what children *hear* when they are learning language.

Important: In describing sounds, it is crucially important to describe *sounds*, rather than *letters* that are used to spell a word. These are *very* different concepts.

1. Producing Speech Sounds

For each of the following pairs of speech sounds, use phonetic *features* to describe what the two sounds have in common and what the two sounds do not have in common.

e.g. the pair [t] and [d] are both *stop consonants*, and they both have an *alveolar* place of articulation. The only difference between them is that [t] is *voiceless*, whereas [d] is *voiced*.

In writing your answer, be sure to include all features that are the same or different in the two sounds. As a test of this, imagine that you show your description of the two sounds to a classmate - the description should be clear enough that your classmate could tell you which two sounds you are describing, without being told directly.

- (i) b, g
- (ii) θ, ð
- (iii) i, u
- (iv) s, t
- (v) ñ, ŋ
- (vi) l, z
- (vii) d, k
- (viii) v, h

2. Phonetic Transcription

Transcribe the following sentences from “**The Top 100 Things I'd Do If I Ever Became An Evil Overlord**”, using phonetic (IPA) transcription.

(i) Number Twenty-Four: I will maintain a realistic assessment of my strengths and weaknesses. Even though this takes some of the fun out of the job, at least I will never utter the line "No, this cannot be! I AM INVINCIBLE!!!" (After that, death is usually instantaneous.)

(ii) Number Fifty-Four: I will not strike a bargain with a demonic being and then attempt to double-cross it simply because I feel like being contrary.

(iii) Number Seventy-Two: If all the heroes are standing together around a strange device and begin to taunt me, I will pull out a conventional weapon instead of using my unstoppable superweapon on them.

Remember that when you are transcribing, you are trying to represent the sounds of the words, and you do not care about how the words are spelled in English. English spelling can

sometimes be quite misleading, so you need to watch that you are not misled by English spelling patterns. Once you have transcribed a word, read the transcription back to yourself, to make sure that your transcription corresponds to how you would actually say the word.

Speech sounds articulations and IPA symbols were discussed in class this week. Slides are available in the on-line course notes.

Note: I recommend handwriting your answers to this question unless you can hunt up an appropriate IPA font for your computer.

3. IPA Translation

Translate the following from IPA into standard English spelling, again from “**The Top 100 Things I'd Do If I Ever Became An Evil Overlord**”

aj wɪl nɑt əgriː tuw lət ðə hɪrɔwz gɔw friː ɪf ðej wɪn ə rɪgd kɑntest, ɪjvən ðɔw məj ədvajzəz əfər miː ɪt ɪz ɪmpɑsɪbəl fər ðem tuw wɪn.

ɑj wɪl nɑt flæj ɪntuː ə reɪdʒ ənd kɪl ə məsɛndʒər huw brɪŋz miː bæd nuwz dʒʌst tuw ɪləstreɪt hɑw rɪliː ɪjvəl əj æm. gʊd məsɛndʒəz ɑr hɑrd tuw ɔlm bæj.