



IIT Madras

ONLINE DEGREE

English - 1 (Basic English)
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Lecture - 01
Sounds and Writing Symbols in English

Welcome to this class. We are going to start learning English. We are going to start talking about learning English. In this class, we are going to pay attention to sounds and writing symbols in English. We need to make this distinction very carefully. But let me start with a general introduction on this and a general introduction on learning in particular.

And you will be able to see why these two things are important and relevant for us to pay attention to simultaneously. The main goal in language learning or at least one of the important things that we need to achieve is to build our confidence. That is, when we speak, we speak to others. When we speak, we think. We think about things, and then we communicate with others.

So, when we are speaking with others, we must sound confident with our content. This happens, that is, we sound confident in the language that we have learnt little later when we know nuances of that language. When we know how those nuances help us learn the language. One more time, for us to sound confident knowing the nuances of language is important, and only then we sound confident and impressive.

Knowing the nuances of language, the details of language, the details about the components of language helps us learn the language fast. When we know things well, our learning shows up. And therefore these nuances are important to keep in mind. In this course, I will keep reminding you about the significance of these nuances for the purpose of learning English.

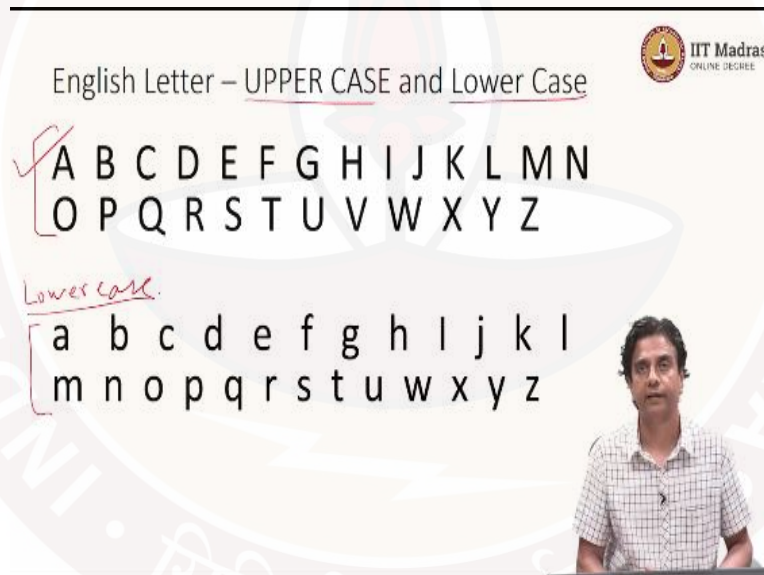
In this particular case, we are going to learn English, and we are going to be talking about the nuances of English as a language. So I will keep reminding you, time to time about this part. And then we need to be patient because these nuances show up

when we speak. Our efforts in paying attention to nuances for the purpose of learning English will show up when you speak when you communicate with others.

Slowly, incrementally and in a steady fashion, you will see the impact of that in your language. So today, we start with the very basic, which we often ignore. I am going to show you that we all know about this, but we do not pay much attention to this part. So what is it that we know and what is it that we need to pay attention. First important part is writing symbols in English.

What we also know as alphabets are different from how they sound. Understand this part, the way we write a word is not the way they sound, or we speak. In other words, that is not the sound when we speak. We will start with simple examples, and then I will try to stress this part, from time to time.

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So first, look at what are the writings. The 26 characters of the English alphabet are A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, and Zee or Z. I wanted to read these letters to you. We know we are starting with this understanding that you know this part. You do not have to learn this afresh. But it is important for us to read, to pay attention to the part, that this is how these letters sound.

This is how we read these letters. These are the letters that we use in writing English, but when we write a word using these letters, in a word, these letters do not sound this way. But at this point, please pay attention to another aspect of that. In English, that is

in the English writing system, these 26 letters are written in two different ways. One is called upper cases that you have just seen.

This part is uppercase, and this part is lowercase. This is uppercase. This is important. And when you read things written in English, we usually see the first word of a sentence is written with uppercase. This is a conventional way of representing, writing in English. And then rest of the things are written using lower cases. Sometimes we write every first letter of every word in uppercase. So these are certain conventions in writing English.

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English Rhyme	
A --	Apple
B --	Ball
C --	Cat
D --	Dog
E --	Elephant
F --	Fan
G --	Girl
H --	House
I --	Ink
J	
K	
L	
M	
N	
O	
P	
Q	
R	
S	
T	
U	
V	
W	
X	
Y	
Z	

26 Letters

When we learn English as a child, or when you watch children learn English, they learn through rhymes. And you must have paid attention to this from kids or elementary classes or a variety of sources. But this is how they are taught. A for apple, B for ball, C for cat, D for dog, E for elephant, F for fan, G for girl, H for house, I for ink or Indian. I do not want to complete the whole rhyme.

Rather, I would let you do the remaining part. So you see, I have talked about A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H and I. Find it out how this rhyme is discussed and talked about when children learn the language, what they say. When they say A for apple, there are certain words for J K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y and Z. Our purpose here is not to memorize this rhyme.

Our purpose here is to pay attention to a very simple fact that when and what this rhyme is doing. This rhyme is not telling us how to say apple. Rather it is telling us how apple is written. That is, it tells us when we write apple, the first letter in apple is a, like the symbol. The first letter in B, the first letter in a word like ball is letter B. The first letter in a word like cat is C. First letter in a word like dog is D.

The first letter in a word like elephant is E. That is what our attention is drawn to. Otherwise, the first sound in the word apple is not A. Think about this, say the word apple and see what the sound comes as. It is not a; it is æ, apple. It becomes clear when we say ball. The first sound in a word like ball is b, not B. And this is where we start.

This is where we want you to pay attention to in this class today. That, when we say a word like a ball, we say the first sound is b, not B. We write with B, but we say b. So, spelling, that is the spelling of a written word is very different from how the sounds in that word are arranged to say that ball. Spelling is Ball. When we say, sounds are /bal/. In a word like cat, spelling is cat. Sounds are /kat/.

We need to pay attention to this part. And then when you go to dog, sounds are /dag/. Spelling is dog. Similarly, in the elephant, the first letter when we write the word is E, not the first sound. The first sound is e. Likewise, you will notice it throughout the English writing system. And this is true for every word in English. So, we write with these symbols, but we say it differently.

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UPPER CASE and Lower Case Letters

TEST IMAGES

UPPERCASE LETTERS											
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I			
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R			
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z				

LOWERCASE LETTERS											
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i			
j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r			
s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z				



We need to keep that in mind. Again, in this chart, you have an English writing system in uppercase and lowercase letters. We are familiar with this. We do not need to worry too much about this part. Nonetheless, our attention to this part is important. This helps us understand the writing system. This helps us read what we write or what is written.

This helps us learn writing, and the distinction between the two helps us remember that we speak differently.

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English Letters


A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h	I i
a	bee	cee	dee	e	ef	gee	(h)aitch	i
[ei]	[bi:]	[si:]	[di:]	[i:]	[ef]	[dʒi:]	[(h)ertʃ]	[ai]
J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p	Q q	R r
jay	kay	el	em	en	o	pee	cue	ar
[dʒei]	[kei]	[el]	[em]	[en]	[ou]	[pi:]	[kju:]	[ɑ:/ɑr]
S s	T t	U u	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z	
ess	tee	u	vee	double-u	ex	wy(e)	zed/zee	
[es]	[ti:]	[ju:]	[vi:]	[ˈdʌbəlju:]	[eks]	[wai]	[zed/zi:]	



So, this is again a different kind of chart where we see A in uppercase and lowercase and this is how it sounds. This letter sounds as this. B as this. C sounds like this. D


sounds like this. E sounds like this. F sounds like this. So these are the sounds involved in these alphabets, not the sounds they represent when we speak.


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Vowels Sounds in English

Vowels			
i	pit	ɔ:	born
e	pet	u:	boon
æ	pæt	aɪ	bite
ɒ	pɒt	eɪ	bait
ʌ	but	ɔɪ	boy
ʊ	book	əʊ	toe
ə	mother	aʊ	house
i:	bean	ʊə	poor
ɜ:	burn	ɪə	ear
ɑ:	barn	eə	air





We will come back to that as well. Then, when we talk about sounds, we will need to pay attention to two types of sounds. One, they are consonants and vowels. Here, very briefly, I would like to tell you what a consonant sound is, and what a vowel sound is and the difference between the two. A consonant sound is okay let us see how these sounds are produced. The exhaling flow of air is responsible for the production of speech sounds. In other words, we speak by modifying exhaling flow of air in our oral cavity at different parts in the oral cavity, and different types of sounds are produced. So when there is very little or no obstruction in the oral cavity for the flow of air, that is the flow of exhaling air, we get vowel sounds.

And when total or different types of obstructions are created, they are called consonants. So with little or no obstruction, we get vowels. With little or more obstruction in the flow of air, we get consonants. I will come back to the description of consonants and vowels for us to know the distinction between the two for the purpose of speaking very shortly.

But at this point I want your attention to a very simple point, like when we talk about vowels in English, in general from the writing system, we see that vowels are a, e, i, o, and u. These are the symbols which represent vowels in the writing system. But the total number of vowels in English is way more than that. And some of these words are

going to show you how these vowels, what those vowels are and how they sound in different words.

So please pay attention to each one of these words. When we read this it is this first word is called pit. The vowel sound here is short i; i pit. Pet. Here each vowel sound is underlined. So, please pay attention to the spelling of these words as well as how they sound. So, this is pet. Pat. So this is how this sounds. Pot, but. So it is written with u.

Book is represented with this. Doubling of o, book, but it is pronounced as short u, book. Mother, bean, burn, barn. So, all these words represent the total number of available consonant sounds in English. You can count them. They are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. There are 20 vowels in English. That is 20 vowel sounds.

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Consonant Sounds in words	
1. /p/-	pit
2. /b/-	bit
3. /t/-	tab
4. /d/-	dab
5. /k/-	cab
6. /g/-	gab
7. /f/-	fan
8. /v/-	van
9. /s/-	sad
10. /z/-	zoo
11. /m/-	man
12. /n/-	not
13. /h/-	hot
14. /l/-	lad
15. /r/-	red
16. /w/-	wed
17. /θ/-	thought
18. /ð/-	them
19. /ʃ/-	shy
20. /ʒ/-	treasure
21. /tʃ/-	chime
22. /dʒ/-	jam
23. /j/-	yum
24. /ŋ/-	sing

Similarly, when you look at consonant sounds in English, you see 24 consonant sounds in English. And this chart shows you how these consonant sounds appear in words like pit, bit, tap, dab, cab, gab, fan, van, sad, zoo, man, not. These words, these sounds are p, b, t, and these are represented in this slant lines /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /m/, and /n/ and likewise.

So please pay attention to each word where these sounds are represented or where we find these sounds. And you will get to see 24 consonant sounds in English and 20 vowel sounds in English.

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Consonant Sounds in English



p	b	t	d	f	v	θ	ð
/pɪn/	/bæd/	/tɪn/	/dɒg/	/faɪv/	/væn/	/θɪn/	/ðæt/
pin	bad	tin	dog	five	van	thin	that
m	n	ŋ	h	ʃ	ʒ	k	g
/mæn/	/nəʊz/	/ŋɪŋ/	/ha:ft/	/tʃə:ʃ/	/ʒæm/	/kaɪnd/	/ɡʌn/
man	nose	thing	half	church	jam	kind	gun
s	z	ʃ	ʒ	l	r	w	j
/seɪ/	/zu:/	/ʃɪp/	/meʒə/	/leg/	/rʌn/	/wɜ:k/	/jes/
say	zoo	ship	measure	leg	run	work	yes



This chart of consonant sounds in English again shows you these consonant sounds in different words with the help of a colour scheme.

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Consonant Sounds



DICTIONARY PHONETIC SYMBOLS			
B) CONSONANT SOUNDS			
/b/	book	/bʊk/	
/d/	day	/deɪ/	
/g/	give	/ɡɪv/	
/v/	vast	/vɑ:st/	
/ð/	this	/ðɪz/	
/z/	zoo	/zu:/	
/ʒ/	vision	/vɪʒən/	
/dʒ/	jump	/dʒʌmp/	
/l/	look	/lʊk/	
/r/	run	/rʌn/	
/j/	yard	/jɑ:d/	
/w/	we	/wi:/	
/m/	moon	/mu:n/	
/n/	name	/neɪm/	
/ŋ/	sing	/sɪŋ/	
/p/	path	/pɑ:θ/	
/t/	town	/taʊn/	
/k/	cat	/kæt/	
/f/	fish	/fɪʃ/	
/θ/	think	/θɪŋk/	
/s/	say	/seɪ/	
/ʃ/	she	/ʃi:/	
/tʃ/	cheese	/tʃi:z/	



With this, I want to draw your attention to yet another part as exercise as a test for you.

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Words with vowels

aa —
i —
ii —
u —
uu —

o
au

24 28



I am writing just 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 vowels here for you. That is aa, i, ii, u, uu, o, and au. I want you to write four words, each with these consonant sounds for you to do the practice. Just pay attention to the words that you know and see where these vowel sounds come in those words. They may come at the beginning of a word; they may come in the middle of a word; they may come at the end of the word.

All you need to do is to find four words, where each one of these vowel sounds is there. That is, you need to have a total number of 24 words with these 6 vowels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. 7 vowel sounds, 7 vowel sounds, 4 words each, you need to have 28 words for this. Do this exercise. You will get to see the distinction between consonant and vowel sounds.

And today, we want to close this class with the point that what we have tried to cover is just two points. There are two types of sounds. One is consonant; one is vowel sound. They are written differently in English. They are spoken differently. There are 26 characters that we use to write English system in uppercase, with uppercase and lowercase. But when we speak, there are 44 sounds; 20 vowel sounds and 24 consonant sounds. Thank you so much.