

Your name:

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2016



Problem 1. Alphabet (5 marks)

Our alphabet (often called the ‘Roman’ alphabet) is the grandchild of the Greek alphabet, which was first used 2,800 years ago. The Greeks based their alphabet on that of the Phoenicians, which in turn had grown out of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. The Romans then adapted the Greek alphabet to suit their language, Latin, and we adapted the Romans’ alphabet for our language. As in our alphabet, the letters were always listed in the same fixed order, but surprisingly, the order of letters in our alphabet still follows that of the Greek alphabet.

The table below lists:

- the capital and small shapes of the Greek letters; these double forms are ancient, but it’s only in the last 700 years that we’ve used them for indicating names and sentence boundaries.
- the names of the letters (written, for your convenience, in Roman; ‘ch’ is the continuous ‘k’ sound at the end of *loch*).
- the Roman shape derived from one of the Greek letters.

capital	small	Greek name	Roman capital shape
A	α	alpha	A
B	β	beta	
Γ	γ	gamma	
Δ	δ	delta	
E	ε	epsilon	
Z	ζ	zeta	
H	η	eta	
Θ	θ	theta	
I	ι	iota	
K	κ	kappa	
Λ	λ	lambda	
M	μ	mu	
N	ν	nu	
Ξ	ξ	ksi	
O	ο	omicron	
Π	π	pi	
P	ρ	ro	
Σ	ς	sigma	
T	τ	tau	
Υ	υ	upsilon	
Φ	φ	phi	
X	χ	chi	
Ψ	ψ	psi	
Ω	ω	omega	

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Question 1.1. Complete the column headed 'Roman shapes'. Remember: you're only looking for the shapes of the letters, so you should ignore their values (the sounds they represent). You can use either upper- or lower-case Roman letters. Don't expect to fill every space – some Greek letters didn't give us any letter shapes.

Question 1.2. Most of the Roman letters have the same values as the Greek letters from which they get their shapes; but four have different values. Based on the names of the letters given above, which of the Roman letters have different values from their Greek ancestors?

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Question 1.3. Here are some Greek words written in the Greek alphabet. Write (in the Roman alphabet!) an English word that is derived from each Greek word.

αλφαβητα	
ατομος	
θεωρια	
αρχιτεκτον	

Running speech (10 marks)

The modern International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) dates back to 1888, when the International Phonetic Association created a phonetic alphabet designed so that it would apply in the same way to all languages.

The examples in 1-20 below use the IPA to transcribe short (and rather ordinary) utterances in English as they might sometimes be produced in running speech. In these examples the speaker has a Southern Standard British accent, but the accent itself is not relevant to the task.

1. [hiseggʊdi:vniŋtu:mi]
2. [aɪwʊggəʊ]
3. [aɪwʊdθɪŋksəʊ]
4. [ɪtwəzəgʊbmɔ:nɪŋtəgəʊ]
5. [aɪsɔ:wʌmbaɪk]
6. [aɪwʊdəvθɔ:tsəʊ]
7. [aɪwʊdntel]
8. [aɪlʌvkeɪkəmbɪəd]
9. [aɪkɑ:ŋkgəʊ]
10. [ɔ:lɡʊdθɪŋzkʌmtuənend]
11. [ɪtwʊgkʌmtuənend]
12. [hɪhəd wʌpθɔ:təʊnli]
13. [aɪpʊt̪ðəbɪədɪŋd̪əbɪebbɪn]
14. [hɪsɔ:wʌŋkɑ:ðeə]
15. [aɪkɑ:pθɪŋkwai]
16. [ðəsekəndaɪsɔ:ðəmðeə]
17. [aɪkɑ:mbaɪkeɪkðeə]
18. [aɪlʌvɪŋkkeɪkəndekstɪəstɪŋmɪns]
19. [aɪlʌvbɪədntəʊst]
20. [hɪsɔ:ðəsekəmbaɪk]

You'll notice the following features of these transcriptions:

- The square brackets indicate that the symbols are part of IPA, not ordinary spellings.
- They don't show boundaries between words.
- They show pronunciation, rather than spelling. For example, the [θ] symbol represents the sound at the beginning of the word *thin*, which is written in normal spelling with the letter sequence 'th'.
- IPA symbols may distinguish more sounds than ordinary spelling does. For instance, the three symbols [n] [ŋ] and [ɪŋ] represent three different sounds. The differences may not be very great, however, and you may not be used to thinking of them as different sounds.

Sometimes the way we pronounce words in running (normal) speech is different from the way we produce them on their own. For example, although the word *good* is normally pronounced [gʊd], in utterance 4 it is pronounced [gʊb] and in utterance 10 [gʊd̪]. The changes which may happen are not random, but are determined by the nature of the sound and its context.

Q4.1. Utterances 6 and 8 include the words *would* and *bread* respectively. Give the transcriptions of these two words as they appear in these two utterances.

Q4.2. Find three other examples of *bread* and four other examples of *would*. Give their transcriptions followed by the utterance numbers; for instance, for the word [gʊb] in utterance 4, you would write: [gʊb] (4)

Q4.3. The word *one* is pronounced by this speaker as [wʌn] when said on its own. Find the three examples of this word in the data above and give the transcriptions and utterance numbers as in Q4.2.

Q4.4. The following words appear at least twice in the data above:

- a. second
- b. mint (or mints)
- c. can't
- d. and

Find two instances of each of these words and identify them as in Q4.2.

For each word, also transcribe the word as it would be said by this speaker on its own.

Q4.5. What do you think the following two phrases are? Write them in ordinary spelling.

- a. [bɪɛbmɒtə]
- b. [aɪwʊŋkeə]

YOUR NAME:

REGISTRATION #

(E) Visible Speech (I/I) [10 points]

Alexander Melville Bell (father of Alexander Graham Bell) invented Visible Speech as a more detailed and systematic writing system for English, to help deaf students learn to pronounce spoken language more accurately.

Bell had found that English spelling was not very useful in teaching spoken English to deaf students, since words' spelling and pronunciation often don't correspond. So in order to represent pronunciation for students who had never heard the words in question, he devised an alphabet that tried to directly represent the articulatory gestures -- the mouth shapes and movements -- that speakers use.

E1. The following words in Visible Speech represent *boot*, *cogs*, *peaks*, and *tap*, but not in that order. Which is which?

ᄀᄁᄃᄅ	
ᄃᄅᄇ	
ᄇᄁᄃ	
ᄀᄃᄅᄇ	

E2. What English words are represented by the following?

ᄃᄁᄀ	
ᄀᄃᄅ	
ᄇᄃᄅ	
ᄀᄃᄇ	

E3. Write the following words in Visible Speech.

keep						
tease						
spook						

