

# **BETTER ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION**

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**LECTURE NO.5**

**PAGES: 24-28**

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# BETTER ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

## J.D.O. CONNER

### The Consonants of English

Why beginning with consonants rather than vowels?

- ❖ Consonants contribute more to making English understood than vowels do.
- ❖ Consonants are generally made by a definite *interference* of the *vocal organs* with the *air stream*, and so are easier to describe and understand.

Native speakers of English from different parts of the world have different accents, but the differences of accent are mainly the result of differences of the sound of the vowels; the consonants are pronounced in very much the same way wherever English is spoken. So if the vowels you use are imperfect it will not prevent you from being understood, but if the consonants are imperfect there will be a great risk of misunderstanding.

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### The Consonants of English

In learning the consonants, we have to:

1- Distinguish one from the other by learning their *features*

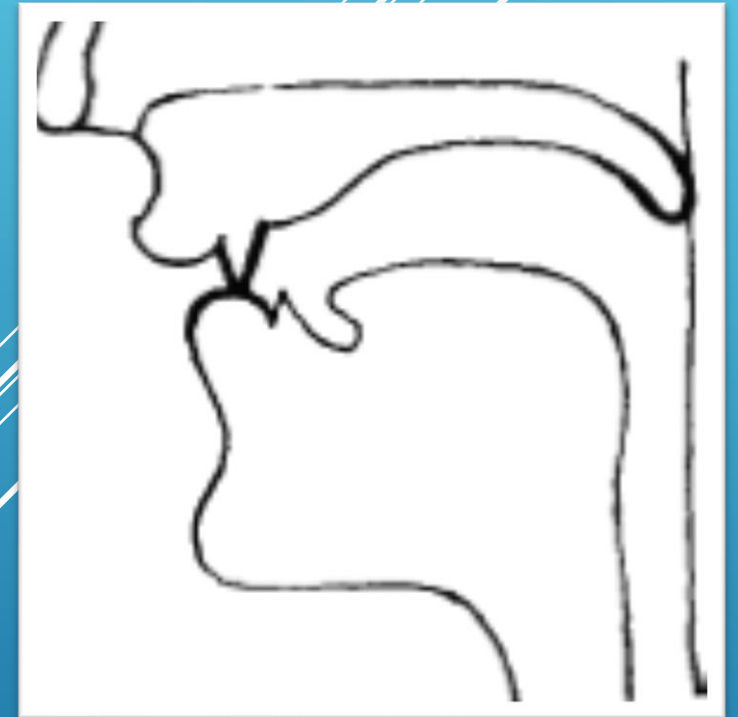
2- Learn any *special sounds* of that same *phoneme* which are made by certain *changes* in their formation

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### Friction Consonants (Fricatives)

- ❖ There are *nine* consonant phonemes whose main sounds all have *friction* as their *most important feature*. They are /f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/.
- ❖ Friction means that the air from the lungs passes through a *narrow opening* where it causes *frictions* of various kinds.



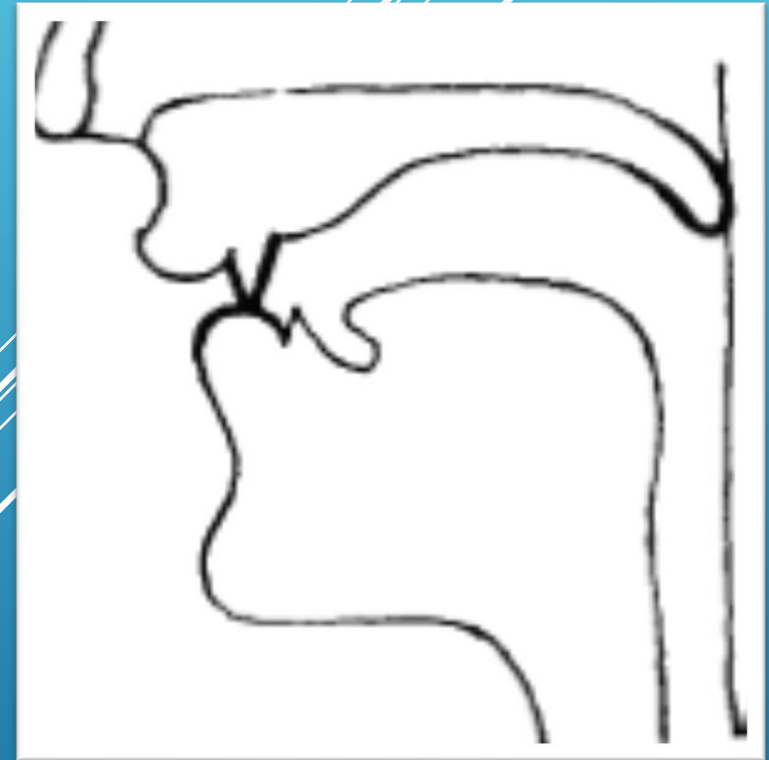
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/f/ and /v/

### How to pronounce them?

- ❖ The soft palate is *raised* so that no air goes through the nose and it is all forced through the mouth.
- ❖ The *bottom lip* is very close to the *upper front teeth*: this forms the *narrowing* and when air is pushed through this narrowing it causes *slight friction*.
- ❖ The tongue is not directly concerned in making these sounds, but it does not lie idle; it takes up the position necessary for the *following sound*, so in *fi:* it will be in the /i:/ position whilst /f/ is being pronounced, and in *fri:* it will be in the /r/ position, and so on.



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### **/f/ and /v/**

#### **The difference between the two sounds**

- ❖ **/f/ is a strong, voiceless, long consonant**
- ❖ **/v/ is a weak, perhaps voiced, short consonant.**

**Put your lower lip and upper teeth close together and blow breath between them quite *strongly*: continue the sound and listen to the friction it is not very noisy but can be heard quite easily. Now blow the breath through very *gently*; the friction is much less and must always be much less for /v / than for /f/.**

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### /f/ and /v/

Practise the following lists of words, with long, strong friction for /f/ and short, weak friction for /v/.

fɑ:st fast

f:ɪ feel

fəʊl foal

ferɪ ferry

fæn fan

vɑ:st vast

vi:l veal

vəʊl vole

verɪ very

væn van

fju: few

frə fear

faɪl file

fæt fat

feɪl fail

vju: view

viə veer

vaɪl vile

væt vat

veil veil

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### /f/ and /v/

Now try these sounds between vowels. In this position the /v/ will be *voiced* in English

sʌfə	suffer	kʌvə	cover
defə	deaf	nevə	never
snɪfɪŋ	sniffing	ɡɪvɪŋ	giving
pruːfɪŋ	proofing	pruːvɪŋ	proving
rʌfə	rougher	lʌvə	lover
səʊfə	sofa	əʊvə	over
seɪfə	safer	seɪvə	savour
ɒfə	offer	hɒvə	hover
dɪfaɪd	defied	dɪvaɪd	divide
rɪfjuːz	refuse	rɪvjuːz	reviews



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### /f/ and /v/

The same applies for phrases:

veri fɑ:st    very fast  
aɪ fi:l faɪn    I feel fine  
faɪn fɜ:z    fine furs  
fɔ: fænz    four fans  
ə gud fju:    a good few

veri vɑ:st    very vast  
aɪ fi:l vaɪl    I feel vile  
faɪn vɜ:s    fine verse  
fɔ: vænz    four vans  
ə gud vju:    a good view

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### /f/ and /v/

When /f/ and /v/ occur at the end of words, after a vowel, they have an effect on the length of the vowel. The strong consonant /f/ makes the vowel shorter, the weak consonant /v/ makes the vowel longer. This is an important general rule which applies to many other pairs of consonants as well: *strong consonants at the end of words shorten the preceding vowel, weak consonants lengthen it.* For example the words safe and save:

li:f	leaf	li:v	leave	laɪf	life	laɪv	live
ha:f	half	ha:v	halve	straɪf	strife	straɪv	strive
kɑ:f	calf	kɑ:v	carve	reɪf	Ralph	reɪv	rave
pru:f	proof	pru:v	prove	weɪf	waif	weɪv	wave
sɜ:f	surf	sɜ:v	serve	seɪf	safe	seɪv	save

These words all contain vowel phonemes which are naturally long, that is to say longer than the vowels /ɪ e æ ʊ ʌ/ in similar positions. The short vowels behave like the long ones when followed by /f/ or /v/, that is, they are shortest when followed by strong /f/ and rather longer when followed by weak /v/

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### /f/ and /v/

Try this with the words below: before /f/ make the vowel quite short, and before /v/ make it a little longer, about as long as the long vowels before /f/. And still make /f/ longer and stronger, and /v/ very short and weak in friction.

stɪf stiff  
klɪf cliff  
snɪf sniff  
gæf gaffe

sɪv sieve  
lɪv live  
gɪv give  
hæv have

ɒf off  
rʌf rough  
blʌf bluff  
flʌf fluff

ɒv of  
dʌv dove  
lʌv love  
glʌv glove

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### /f/ and /v/

Now look at the phrases below, and decide which of the vowels have to be longer and which shorter. Remember that there are *three lengths*:

1. short vowels (/ɪ e æ ʊ ʌ/) before the strong consonant, e.g. stɪf
2. short vowels before the weak consonant, and long vowels before the strong consonant, e.g. glʌv and weɪf
3. long vowels before the weak consonant, e.g. seɪv.

Now say them with good vowel length and good difference between /f/ and /v/.

ə ha:f snɪf	a half sniff	ə breɪv blʌf	a brave bluff
ə stɪf glʌv	a stiff glove	ə laɪv dʌv	a live dove
ə brɪ:f lʌv	a brief love	ə seɪf mu:v	a safe move
ə rʌf greɪv	a rough grave	ə greɪv grɪ:f	a grave grief
ə dwɔ:f stəʊv	a dwarf stove	ə klɪf draɪv	a cliff drive

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### ***/f/ and /v/***

Some of the most common English words which contain */f/* are: *family, far, fat, father, feel, few, fried, first, for, four, five, from, friend, front, before, after, afraid, different, difficult, left, office, perfect, prefer, suffer, awful, often, half, off, knife, life, laugh, self, wife, safe, cough, rough, stiff*

Some of the most common English words which contain */v /* are: *very, valve, visit, voice, value, violent, vast, van, view, ever, never, over, river, seven, several, travel, even, every, heavy, live, of, give, love, move, prove, receive, believe, save, serve, twelve, wave, five, have.*

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**Thank you for your listening!**