

International Phonetic Alphabet School

DAY 4: EAR TRAINING
SATURDAY 12TH OF JANUARY
with Zoénie Liwen Deng

The IPA in a dictionary shows you how something should be pronounced by a national or academic standard. It is a **phonemic transcription of a word**.

An IPA notation of detailed, individualised features of one person's speech is called a phonetic transcription. It describes what is there, it doesn't prescribe what should be there, resulting in something as subjective and personal as a drawing.

There is no such thing as neutral hearing. Our own language background has as much influence on our hearing as on our speaking. **Our hearing has an 'accent'.** My phonemic transcription of your speech can tell not only how you have said something to me, but also how I have heard you. Phoneticians have to take so-called ear training as part of their education. An interesting way to do your own ear training, is by concentrating on people's names.

In a situation like the events today, very complex ideas are conveyed in vehicular languages. The words that usually remain untranslated, are names. Yet **personal names are words that exist in particular languages. Your name is language.**

When somebody calls your name, you probably respond not to its meaning, but to its sound. Speaking a name from an orthographic transcription in, say, the Roman alphabet, is notoriously problematic. But even when you say your own name out loud as part of an introduction, people may not be able to repeat it, because they are unable to reproduce your sounds, or even to capture them with their ears.

So today, **when somebody tells you their name, take a moment to write it down as you hear it from their mouth.** If you are already familiar with IPA, make a phonetic transcription. If you aren't, write it in any other way that helps you to remember the sounds. **You may discover sounds that you are not able to hear.**

To test your ears right away, let me introduce myself to you. My name is Zoénie Liwen Deng. Zoénie Liwen Deng.
