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# English Pronunciation for Malaysians

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**A workshop for JBB  
lecturers from IPGKDRI**

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## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Objectives .....	2
Materials.....	2
Timetable .....	2
Procedures .....	3
The English Consonant Phonemes .....	3
For Practice .....	4
Consonants in Bahasa Malaysia .....	5
English Vowels and Diphthongs .....	6
For Practice .....	6
Vowels and Diphthongs in BM .....	7
For Practice .....	7
Transcription Practice.....	8
Reading Phonetic Transcription .....	9
Phonetic Transcription Practice .....	9
Where to Get Help .....	10
Appendix.....	11

# English Pronunciation for Malaysians

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*A workshop for JBB lecturers from IPGKDRI*

## Introduction

This 2-hour workshop session was presented to IPGKDRI lecturers at the JBB retreat held in the Grand Riverview Hotel in Kota Bharu, 4-6 September 2012.

Participants had already attended a session on teaching phonics and increasing students' phonemic awareness. This session was intended to improve lecturers' own phonemic awareness and provide an opportunity to practise transcribing with phonetic script in an engaging way.

This manual is written for both facilitator and participants.

## Objectives

Participants:

- Revise English phonemes, phonemic symbols, and the phonemic chart
- Compare Bahasa Malaysia sounds with English.
- Practise reading words in phonetic script with a game of Bingo.
- Practise writing English phrases in phonetic script with a game of Typhoon.

## Materials

Facilitator needs:

- PowerPoint presentation for revision, and examples for Typhoon game
- Bingo cards, call cards, and Sunflower seeds for markers.
- Whiteboard and markers for writing practice words and for typhoon game.

Participants need:

- Writing materials and paper for writing Typhoon answers.

## Timetable

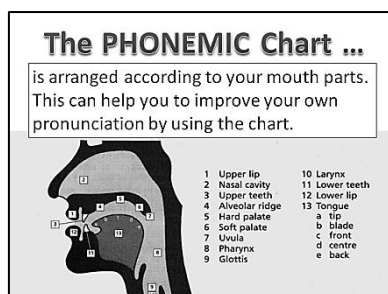
- Revision of chart and sounds, comparison with BM sounds. (45 minutes)
- Bingo game (30 minutes)
- Typhoon game (45 minutes)

## Procedures

Note: Thumbnails of PowerPoint slides are included here.

We have discussed how important it is to teach young learners Phonemic Awareness in order for them to learn Phonics to assist their reading.

The material in this workshop will help to improve our phonemic awareness.



The Phonemic Chart is useful for practising the English phonemes because the chart is designed to mirror the point and manner of articulation for each consonant and vowel.

## The English Consonant Phonemes

English Consonants									
	(unvoiced phonemes)	Place of Articulation							
		Front →							→ Back
Manner of articulation		bilabial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	palato-alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
	plosive	p b			t d			k g	
	affricate					tʃ dʒ			
	fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
	nasal	m			n			ŋ	
	lateral				l				
approximant		(w)				r	j	w	

This variation of the chart shows the English consonant phonemes and their points and manners of articulation.

**1. Plosives** (sometimes called 'stops') – the air flow is stopped completely at the point of articulation, and then released. The consonants marked in purple (/p/, /t/, /k/, /tʃ/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/ and /h/) are unvoiced (or voiceless) – you can check by putting your hand on your larynx (or voice box) and feeling for vibration.

Points of articulation for plosives:

- bilabial (with both lips) - /p/ and /b/,
- with the tongue touching the alveolar ridge (behind the teeth) - /t/ and /d/
- or at the back of the mouth in the 'velar' position - /k/ and /g/.

**2. Affricates** – These are a plosive followed by a fricative – the air is stopped and then allowed to pass slowly with friction through a narrow space. This happens voicelessly and with voice with the tongue touching behind the alveolar ridge (the plosive), and then moving back slightly to allow friction against the palate. The voiceless sound is /tʃ/ (usually written 'ch' or 'tch') and /dʒ/ (usually written 'j' or 'dge').

3. **Fricatives** – These sounds are created by the friction caused when air is forced through a narrow space. There are voiced and voiceless sounds at five points of articulation:

- labio-dental – top teeth and bottom lip /f/ and /v/.
- Dental – tongue-tip sticking out between the teeth - /θ/ and /ð/ (both written as 'th').
- Alveolar – tongue almost touching the ridge just behind the teeth - /s/ and /z/.
- Palato-alveolar – tongue almost touching a little further back just behind the alveolar ridge on the palate - /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ (usually written as 'sh' and '-si' in 'vision' for example).
- Glottal – only voiceless, air passing noisily through the glottis (lower down in your throat) - /h/.

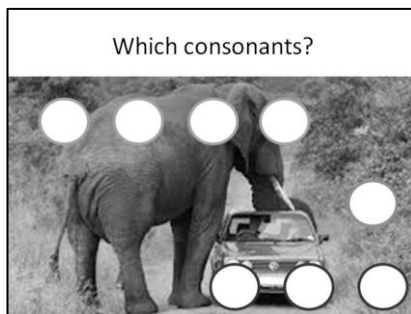
4. **Nasals** – these sounds resonate through the nasal cavity, making the hard to pronounce when we have a cold. They are all voiced, and are articulated:

- bilabial - /m/
- with the tongue against the alveolar ridge - /n/
- in the velar position at the back of the throat - /ŋ/ (usually written as 'ng')

5. **Lateral** – the /l/ sound is voiced, and air is allowed to pass along the sides of the tongue (hence 'lateral') as the tongue-tip touches the alveolar ridge

6. **Approximant** – this group of sounds are all voiced, and include /w/ and /j/ (usually written as 'y') and /r/.

### For Practice



Which consonants?

Considering only the consonants, which consonant phonemes are present in these words?

elephant - /l/, /f/, /n/, /t/

car - /k/ (in American accent, also /r/)

crush - /k/, /r/, /ʃ/.




List all the vocab you can see

List the consonant phonemes

Participants list words associated with the picture, and identify the consonant phonemes.

## Consonants in Bahasa Malaysia

"Bahasa Malaysia is commonly written in a phonetic Latin alphabet..."



Phonetic Alphabet? Does that mean that every sound has a letter...?

It is said that BM is much easier (than English) to learn to read. In fact it is sometimes said that it has a 'phonetic Latin alphabet'.

What does this mean, and is it true?

**[Phonetics] and /Phonemics/**

In BM are there any spoken sounds that are NOT represented by a letter?

[phonetics] is about ALL the sounds we use

/phonemics/ is about the significant sounds

## BM Consonants

		Place of Articulation							
		Front →				→ Back			
		bilabial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	palato-alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
Manner of articulation	plosive	p b			t d			k g	(ʔ)
	affricate					tʃ dʒ			
	fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ		x	h
	nasal	m			n		(ɲ)	ŋ	
	lateral				l				
	approximant	(w)				r	j	w	

How are the BM consonants different from English consonants, and where might a BM learner of English have difficulties?

Some sounds are imported in words from Arabic and English.

These are the differences:

1. BM uses a glottal stop - /ʔ/ between adjacent vowels, and at the end of the word to replace a /k/.
2. /f/ and /v/ only occur in borrowed words.
3. /θ/ and /ð/ only occur in borrowed words.
4. /z/ only occurs in borrowed words.
5. The velar fricative /x/ (written 'kh') does not occur in English.
6. The palatal nasal /ɲ/ (written 'ny') does not occur in English.

## English Vowels and Diphthongs

English Vowels and Diphthongs									
Tongue High → Low ←	Vowels				Diphthongs				
	Front ← → Back				End at front → End at back				
	i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ	oʊ		
	e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	aʊ		
	æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ			
	Lips can be:								
	Spread	Neutral	Rounded		Closing	Centring	Closing		

The English vowels and diphthongs are much more complicated than the BM vowels and diphthongs.

Again, the chart is designed to demonstrate the point of articulation for each vowel according to the position of the tongue, openness of the mouth, and shape of the lips.

Look, for example, at the /ʊ/ and /u:/ - 'short u' and 'long u' sound. Both are often written as 'oo', and it is easy to be confused by the simple 'u' in writing, which generally sounds like /ʌ/ as in 'bus'. The BM /u/ is somewhere between /ʊ/ and /u:/.

The two sounds /i:/ and /ɪ/ have a sound similar to the letter name for 'e'. The BM /i/ is somewhere between the two.

The phoneme /æ/ causes problems for BM speakers of English. In loan words, such as 'apple' this sound is often written as 'e' such as in 'epal', and therefore frequently pronounced as /e/.

The common English schwa /ə/ is a short sound, commonly replacing any other vowel in an unstressed syllable. In BM however, all syllables have some degree syllable stress and the schwa is a longer sound, but not as long as the /ɜ:/ (In some BM words, however, the /ə/ elides and cannot be heard at all - /tren'ganu/ for 'Terengganu' is an example.)


The English 'short o', /ɒ/, often written simply as 'o', is shorter than the BM true /o/. The 'long o', matching the letter name, is in fact a diphthong /oʊ/.

Speakers of BM struggle with the English diphthongs, feeling that they are too long and therefore shortening them sometimes to a simple vowel.


### For Practice

**What are the vowel phonemes?**


transportation




aeroplane



heavy haulage



container ship




locomotive

Consider the vowels and diphthongs just discussed, and list the vowel phonemes in these words.

- transportation: /æ/, /ɔ:/, /eɪ/, /ə/
- aeroplane: /eə/, /ə/, /eɪ/
- heavy haulage: /e/, /i:/, /ɔ:/, /ə/
- locomotive: /oʊ/, /ə/, /ɪ/
- container ship: /ə/, /eɪ/, /ɪ/

Which vowel sounds can we hear in this sentence?



Zaki and Iddy skip down the hill happily.

In our session on phonics, we were discussing this very popular little story about “Iddy the kid”

What vowel sounds are there in the name “Iddy”?

/ɪ/, /i:/

Is this a problem? ...

## Vowels and Diphthongs in BM

BM Vowels and Diphthongs						
Tongue Low ← → High	Vowels			Diphthongs		
	Front ← → Back			End at front → End at back		
	i		u			
	e	ə	o	oi	ai	au
		a				
Lips can be:				Only in open syllables - ?		
	Spread	Neutral	Rounded			

As discussed above, vowels and diphthongs in BM are much simpler than in English.

However, for a learner of BM, the two ‘e’s - /e/ and /ə/ can be very confusing as the same letter is used to spell both.


Scholars disagree about whether BM actually has diphthongs. Some say that they only really occur in ‘open’ syllables (i.e. at the end of a word) such as ‘pulau’ and ‘pantai’.

In other situations where two vowels occur next to each other, an invisible /ʔ/ (unwritten) glottal stop is inserted between the vowels.

### For Practice

How do you say this word (in BM)?

(Try writing it in phonetic script.)




No, we are not looking for the word “Volkswagen”!

The BM word is written ‘kereta’ – but how is it said?

I hear /‘kretə/ or /kə’retə/

How do you say this word (in BM)?



(Try writing it in phonetic script.)

This favourite local food is written “keropok”.

How is it said?

I hear /‘kropoʔ/ or /kə’ropoʔ/



Which vowels are used here (in BM)?



List the vowels used in the BM numbers.

Are they exactly the same as the letters used to spell them?

Which 'e' phoneme is used in each - /e/ or /ə/?

Do any of these words contain diphthongs (in BM)?



Do these BM words contain diphthongs - or not?

- pulau?
- pantai?
- air?
- any others?

## Transcription Practice

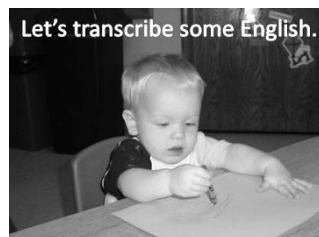
Participants are provided with a hard copy of the phonemic chart, complete with key words.

i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ	/	
sheep	ship	book	shoot	here	wait		
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
left	teacher	her	door	tourist	coin	show	
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
hat	up	far	on	hair	like	mouth	
p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
pea	boat	tree	dog	cheese	joke	coin	go
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
free	video	thing	this	see	zoo	sheep	television
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j
mouse	now	thing	hope	love	run	we	you

NOTE: This chart is from [phonemicchart.com](http://phonemicchart.com).

The version of the chart given to participants uses the /oʊ/ symbol (rather than /əʊ/) for the diphthong as in 'show'.

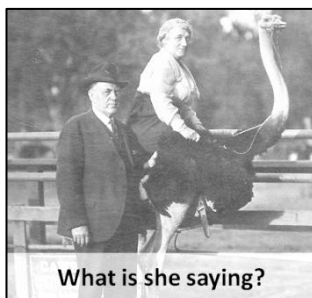
Participants work in pairs and use the chart to write phonetic transcriptions for the following sentences.



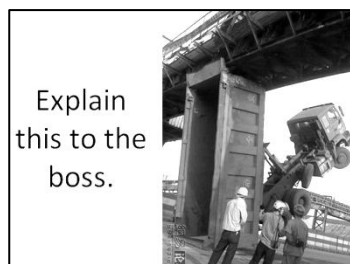
Let's transcribe some English.



What  
is he  
saying?



What is she saying?



Explain  
this to the  
boss.

## Reading Phonetic Transcription

Participants take part in a game of “Bingo!” to practise recognising words written phonetically.



geographical	ide	ly	psychological	acco	ation
personality	operational	magnetise	archeological	certificate	
certif	certify	choi	phy	pr	tric
atrophy	acc	date	immediate	graphy	personally
metabolic	ari	gy	psychology	finally	logically

Each card has 25 words, the first person to hear five-in-a-row calls “Bingo!”.

,æbə'riɒʒəni	beɪð	kætæs'trɒfɪk	'kæzəm	'tʃaɪldhʊd
,kɒmpri'henʃn	kən'fju:ʒn	'kʌzn	'pɔɪnjənt	'puərɪfaɪ
'skeəsli	'fri:kt	'su:ðɪŋ	'slɒðənə	'stri:kt
'θʌrə	θru:'aʊt	'vælju:z	'vaʊəlz	wɔ:m'blɒdəd
'wɔ:təpru:f	'wi:lʃeə	'jɒtsmən	sai'kaɪətrɪst	'kləʊðɪŋ

## Phonetic Transcription Practice

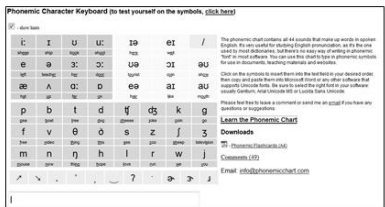


The images and phrases below (in the appendix) were used as stimuli for a game of Typhoon, where each team in turn had to produce a reasonable transcription for a set phrase.

## Where to Get Help

Here are three places on the Internet to get help in this area.

**Where to get help - 1**  
**<http://phonemicchart.com/>**



The screenshot shows the 'Phonemic Character Keyboard' interface. It features a grid of phonemes categorized by place and manner of articulation. The grid includes symbols for various phonemes, and there are instructions on how to use the keyboard to test oneself on the symbols. A search bar and navigation links are also visible.

One of the easiest ways to transcribe phonetic script is to use this chart – simply click on each phoneme and it will appear in the box at the bottom, and then copy and paste into your document.

This site is worth exploring thoroughly as it also has other learning aids – including sounding out phonemes.

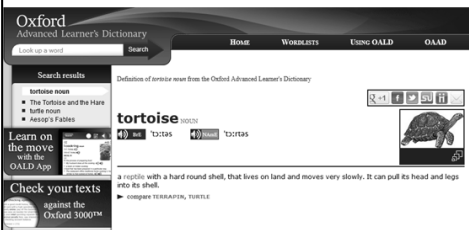
**Where to get help - 2**  
**<http://howjsay.com/>**



The screenshot shows the 'howjsay.com' website, which is described as 'A free online Talking Dictionary of English Pronunciation'. It features a search bar with 'submit' and 'Browse' buttons. Below the search bar, there is a list of words and their corresponding phonetic transcriptions, such as 'submicrometric', 'submicron', 'submicroparticles', etc.

This site has a huge database of words pronounced clearly in a neutral accent.

**Where to get help - 3**  
**[oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/](http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/)**



The screenshot shows the 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary' website. It features a search bar and a list of search results. The entry for 'tortoise' is highlighted, showing its definition, pronunciation, and a picture of a tortoise. The website also includes links to 'Learn on the move with the OALD App' and 'Check your texts against the Oxford 3000™'.

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary is one of many online dictionaries.

This one is particularly useful because it transcribes the British and American versions of each word in phonetic script, and also can say the words aloud.

## Appendix

Examples used for Typhoon game.

<p>Building implosion</p> 	<p>'bɪldɪŋ ɪm'plɒʊzn</p>
<p>Brilliant plumage</p> 	<p>'brɪlɪənt 'plu:mɪdʒ</p>
<p>South African quiver trees</p> 	<p>sauθ 'æfrɪkən 'kwɪvə tri:z</p>
<p>Blossom-laden trees</p> 	<p>'blɒsəm 'leɪdn tri:z</p>
<p>Chatting on a windy beach</p> 	<p>'tʃætɪŋ ɒn ə 'wɪndi: bi:tʃ</p>



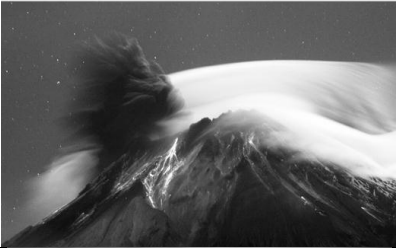

<p>Penguin on the menu</p> 	<p>'pɛŋgwɪn ɒn ðə 'menju:</p>
<p>Windswept plain</p> 	<p>'wɪndswɛpt pleɪn</p>
<p>Nuclear explosion</p> 	<p>'nju:klɪə ɪk'splɒʊzən</p>
<p>Surprised monkeys</p> 	<p>sə'praɪzd 'mʌŋkɪz</p>
<p>Engineering workshop</p> 	<p>ˌɛndʒɪ'niəriŋ 'wɜ:kʃɒp</p>


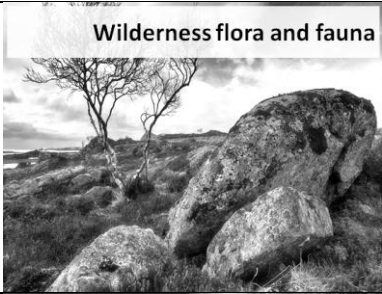



<p>Military wedding</p> 	<p>'mɪlətri: 'wedɪŋ</p>
<p>Underwater anemones</p> 	<p>ˌʌndə'wɔ:tə ə'neməni:z</p>
<p>Buckingham Palace</p> 	<p>ˌbʌkɪŋəm 'pæləs</p>
<p>Giant machine in operation</p> 	<p>'dʒaɪənt mə'ʃi:n ɪn ˌɒpə'reɪʃn</p>
<p>Waterfall anticipation</p> 	<p>'wɔ:təfɔ:l ænˌtɪsɪ'peɪʃn</p>
<p>Amazing antics of acrobatic ant</p> 	<p>ə'meɪzɪŋ 'æntɪks əv ˌækrə'bætɪk ənt</p>

Lightning hitting skyscrapers 		<b>'laɪtnɪŋ 'hɪtɪŋ 'skaɪskreɪpəz</b>
 Flash flood emergency		<b>flæʃ flʌd ɪ'mədʒənsi:</b>
Miraculous recovery 		<b>mɪ'rækjələs rɪ'kʌvəri:</b>
Launching the fishing net 		<b>'lɔ:ntʃɪŋ ðə 'fɪʃɪŋ net</b>
Approaching tornado 		<b>ə'prəʊtʃɪŋ tɔ:'neɪdʊ</b>
Malaysian thunderstorm 		<b>mə'leɪzn 'θʌndəstɔ:m</b>

 <p>Facial expressions</p>	<p>'feɪʃl ɪk'spresnz</p>
 <p>Awkward trolley</p>	<p>'ɔ:kwəd 'trɒli:</p>
<p>Humorous parade</p> 	<p>'hju:mərəs pə'reɪd</p>
<p>Leaning tower tourist site</p> 	<p>'li:nɪŋ 'taʊə 'tʊərɪst saɪt</p>
<p>Dewdrops in spider webs</p> 	<p>'dju:drɒps ɪn 'spaɪdə webz</p>



 <p>Family vehicle</p>	<p>'fæməli: 'vi:əkl</p>
<p>Watery competition</p> 	<p>'wɔ:təri ,kɒmpə'tɪʃn</p>
<p>Rhinoceros in the wild</p> 	<p>'raɪ'nɒsərəs ɪn ðə waɪld</p>
<p>Erupting volcano</p> 	<p>ɪ'rʌptɪŋ vɒl'keɪnʊ</p>
<p>Magical illusion</p> 	<p>'mædʒɪkl ɪ'lu:ʒn</p>

	 <p>Colourful autumn leaves</p>		<p>'kʌləʃl 'ɔ:təm li:vz</p>
	 <p>Wilderness flora and fauna</p>		<p>'wɪldənəs 'flɔ:rə ænd 'fɔ:nə</p>
	 <p>Curling and crashing wave</p>		<p>'kɜ:lɪŋ ænd 'kræʃɪŋ weɪv</p>
	 <p>Freak accident</p>		<p>fri:k 'æksɪdənt</p>
	 <p>Glowing crocodile eyes</p>		<p>'gləʊɪŋ 'krɒkədail aɪz</p>
	 <p>Dewdrops on dandelion seeds</p>		<p>'dju:drɒps ɒn 'dændɪlaɪən si:dz</p>