PHONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS CHECKLIST

This article lists some of the problems that students of English have with the pronunciation of English sounds and prosody.

CONTENTS

Chinese
Arabic
Korean
French

CHINESE

Vowels

-confusion over /i:/ and /ɪ/

-/æ/ as /ɑː/, /ʌ/ or /e/

-/ɒ/ as /ɔː/, /əʊ/ or /ʊ/ (or a front vowel)

/ʌ/ as /æ/

Consonants

-unvoiced stops - /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/ (should be voiced)

-unvoiced /b/, /d/ and /g/ (should be voiced)

-/v/ as /w/ or /f/

-/n/ as /l/

-/θ/ as /tʃ/, /f/ or /s/

-/ð/ as /dʒ/ or /z/

-heavy /h/

-/z/ as /s/

-heavily coloured

-/dʒ/, /tʃ/ and /ʃ/

-extra vowel sound at end of words or dropping of consonant at end of word
-/l/ in final position as /r/ followed by /ə/ or dropped

Consonant clusters
- stress on too many syllables and weak ones are too full (rather than reduced pron.)
- omission on weak syllables esp. between adjacent pairs (e.g. ‘n’)

Intonation
- Separation of words (rather than a smooth stream of speech)
- Confusion over short vowel sounds
- Overemphasis of consonants
- Avoidance of elisions and short forms
- Overly-energetic articulation
- Too many stressed syllables and not enough clearly articulated vowels (jabber effect speech)
- Glottal stops before initial vowels breakup natural catenations
- Added consonants/tendency for pron. Same as written form. Esp. at ending e.g. silent ‘ed’ is pronounced.
- Confusion over some vowels e.g. /ɪ/ and /e/, /o/ and /oː/, /ei/ and /æo/
- Tendency to use either /g/ or /dʒ/ in all positions (don’t distinguish between the 2 distinct ‘g’ forms)
- Harsh /h/
- Use /p/ and /b/ randomly
- /v/ as /f/
- /ð/ as /t/ and /ð/ as /d/
- /ŋ/ as /n/, /ng/ or /nk/
- Insertion of short vowel between consonant clusters e.g. pr/ gd
- Rhythm and stress – Prob. with individual word stress and too much rising tone in questions, suggestions, recommendations etc. / tend to avoid using markers
- Intonation - avoidance of conjuncture/linking between final consonant and initial vowel and often produce extra vowel sound between consonants.
**Vowels**
- Confusion over minimal pairs e.g.
  - /ɔː/ and /æʊ/, /æ/ and /n/, /ɑː/ and /ɜː/
  - /a/ as /ɑː/
- Difficulty with diphthongs ending in /a/ e.g. change to /ɑːː/
  - /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ under-pronounced
  - /ʊː/ unrounded

**Consonants**
- Difficulty with /l/, /r/, /t/, /d/, /s/ and /z/
  - /h/ as /f/ and vice versa
  - /θ/ as /s/ and /ð/ as /z/
  - /v/ as /b/
- Disappearing /n/ after vowels or pronounced as /m/ or /ŋ/
- Difficulty with /t/ and /d/ before /ʊ/ and /ʊː/:
- Word linking – round off vowels in consonant clusters esp. when final consonant is /n/ or there’s a linking /r/
Vowels
- Confusion over /iː/ and /ɪ/
- /ɑ/ as /ɔː/
- /ɑ/ and /ɑː/ pronounced the same
- /o/ not rounded
- confusion over /ɔː/ and /ɔː/ and /æ/ as /e/

Consonants
- Difficulty with
  - /θ/, /ð/ and /ʃ/
  - unvoiced /h/
  - dark /l/ (as in will)
  - short vowel sounds make it difficult to differentiate between voiced/unvoiced consonants e.g. in /at/ and /ad/ in /ick/ and /ig/ combinations.

Consonant clusters
- /l/ (as in incredible) as /ɔl/ or /al/
  - omission of /s/ when pronounced as /z/ after a consonant

Stress -Difficulty using to mark contrast

Intonation – Difficulty gliding/ tend to step

Spelling/ pron.
  - overpron. of /r/ at end of syllable.
  - non-pron. of plural /s/
  - unvoiced final /id/ or /ed/ becomes voiced
  - L1 interference – false friends
  - ‘ou’ (as in pronounced) as /ɔː/ and ‘au’ (as in automatic) as /ɔ/