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Allophones of the phoneme r

IPA chart showing the distribution of the rhotic consonant

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This article is about the quality of realization of English phoneme /r/ among dialects. For the distribution of the historical rhotic consonant after vowels in varieties of English, see Rhoticity in English. This article needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unourced material may be challenged and removed.Find sources: "Pronunciation of English /r/" – news · newspapers · books · scholar · JSTOR (November 2018) (Learn how and when to remove this template message)
History and glottalization
English pronunciation Historical stages Old EnglishMiddle English General development OverviewOld EnglishIn Scots Development of vowels OverviewGreat Vowel ShiftClose frontAOpen backClose backDiphthongsPre-LPre-R Development of consonants Single consonantsClusters Variable features RhoticityFlappingL-vocalizationT-glottalizationCot–caught mergerH-droppingDrawTHRWH Related topics History of EnglishSpelling vte This article contains phonetic transcriptions in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). For an introductory guide on IPA symbols, see Help:IPA. For the distinction between [] , / and ⟨ ⟩, see IPA § Brackets and transcription delimiters.
Pronunciation of the phoneme /r/ in the English language has many variations in different dialects. Variations Depending on dialect, /r/ has at least the following allophones in varieties of English around the world:[1] "Standard" R, postalveolar approximant [ɹ] (listen) (a common realization of the /r/ phoneme worldwide, Received Pronunciation and General American included) "Bunched" or "Molar" R: "bunched-tongue" alveolar approximant [ɹ̠] (occurs in Southern American English and some Midwestern and Western American English most strongly); in fact, there is often a continuum of possible realizations for the postalveolar approximant within any single dialect from a more apical articulation [ɹ] to this more bunched articulation "Velar" R: velarized alveolar approximant [ɹ̠] (occurs in conservative [ish English][2] "Retroflex" R: retroflex approximant [ɻ] (listen) (occurs in West Counry English, some American and most Canadian English and Irish English, including Northern Irish English "Flapped" or "Tapped" R: alveolar flap [ɾ] (listen) (occurs in Scouse, most Scottish English, some South African, Welsh, Indian,[3] conservative Irish and Northern English English, and early twentieth-century Received Pronunciation; not to be confused with flapping of /l/ and /d/) "Trilled" or "Rolled" R: alveolar trill [r] (listen) (occurs in Afrikaans English, some Welsh English [4] some very conservative Scottish English, Indian English[3] and Jersey English "Uvular" R or "Northumbrian burr": voiced uvular fricative [ʁ] (listen) (occurs in very conservative varieties of Geordie and Northumbrian English, though largely now disappeared, as well as possibly some conservative South-West and East Irish English and some Aberdeen English) "Labial" or "Rounded" R: labiodental approximant [ʁ] (listen) (occurs in some South-East England and London English as a presumed idiosyncrasy, though this is disputed, as is its overlap with rhotacism; see § R-labialization below) In most dialects /r/ is labialized [ɹʷ] in many positions, as in reed [ɹʷiːd] and tree [ɹʷiː]; in the latter case, the /r/ may be slightly labialized as well.[5] In General American, it is labialized at the beginning of a word but not at the end.[citation needed] In many dialects, /r/ in the cluster /dr/, as in dream, is realized as a postalveolar fricative [ɹ̠], or less commonly alveolar [ɹ]. In /tr/, as in tree, it is a voiceless postalveolar fricative [ɹ̠] or less commonly alveolar [ɹ]. In fact, there is a voiceless postalveolar fricative [ɹ̠] or less commonly alveolar [ɹ].[6] In England, while the approximant has become the most common realization, /r/ may still be pronounced as a voiceless tap [ɹ̠] after /θ/ (as in thread).[7] Tap realization of /r/ after /θ/ is also reported in some parts of the United States, particularly Utah.[8] There are two primary articulations of the approximant /r/: apical (with the tip of the tongue approaching the alveolar ridge or even curled back slightly) and domal (with a centralized bunching of the tongue known as molar r or sometimes bunched r or braced r). Peter Ladefoged wrote: "Many BBC English speakers have the tip of the tongue raised towards the roof of the mouth in the general location of the alveolar ridge, but many American English speakers simply bunch the body of the tongue up so that it is hard to say where the articulation is".[9] The extension to the IPA recommends the use of the IPA diacritics for "apical" and "centralized", as in (ɹ̠, ɹ̠̠), to distinguish apical and domal articulations in transcription. However, this distinction has little or no perceptual consequence, and may vary idiosyncratically between individuals.[10] Rhoticity and non-rhoticity Main article: Rhoticity in English All English accents around the world are frequently characterized as either rhotic or non-rhotic. Most accents in England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa speak non-rhotic accents, and in those English dialects, the historical English phoneme /r/ is not pronounced except before a vowel. On the other hand, the historical /r/ is pronounced in all contexts in rhotic accents, which are spoken across the majority in Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Canada, and also in some English accents (like in the West Country and some parts of Lancashire and the far north). Thus, a rhotic accent pronounces marker as [ˈmɑːrkər], and a non-rhotic accent pronounces the same word as [ˈmɑːkə]. In rhotic accents, when /r/ is not followed by a vowel phoneme, it generally surfaces as r-coloring of the preceding vowel or its coda: nurse [nɜːs], butter [ˈbʌtər]. R-labialization R-labialization, which should not be confused with the rounding of initial /r/ described above, is a process occurring in certain dialects of English, particularly some varieties of Cockney, in which the /r/ phoneme is realized as a labiodental approximant [ʁ], in contrast to an alveolar approximant [ɹ]. The use of labiodental /r/ is commonly stigmatized by prescriptivists. However, it is used in many other languages, and its use is growing in many accents of British English.[11] Most speakers who do so are from the South-East of England, particularly London. That has also been reported to be an extremely-rare realization of /r/ in New Zealand English.[12] The /r/ realization may not always be labiodental since bilabial and velarized labiodental realizations have been reported. R-labialization leads to pronunciations such as these: red – [ʁeɪd] ring – [ʁɪŋ] rabbit – [ˈʁæbɪt] Merry Christmas – [ˈmɛɹi ˈkɹɪsməs] However, the replacement of /r/ by some kind of labial approximant may also occur caused by a type of speech impediment called rhotacism or demortacization. See also English-language vowel changes before historic /r/ Rhoticity in English References ^ Wells, John C. (1982). Accents of English. Volume 1: An Introduction, Volume 2: The British Isles, Volume 3: Beyond the British Isles. Cambridge University Press. ^ Hickey, Raymond (2007). 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Athens, Georgia: The Linguistics Society at the University of Georgia. pp. 49–63. hdl:10724/38831. ^ Ladefoged, Peter (2001). A Course in Phonetics. Harcourt College Publishers. p. 55. ^ Laver, John (1994). Principles of Phonetics. Cambridge. p. 300. ^ Foulkes, Paul, and Gerard J. Docherty. (eds.) (1999). Urban Voices. Arnold ^ Bauer, Laurie; Warren, Paul; Bardsley, Dianne; Kennedy, Marianna; Major, George (2007). "New Zealand English". Journal of the International Phonetic Association. 37 (1): 100. doi:10.1017/S0025100306002830 Retrieved from " Hello there, Is there any Chinese dialect/language that actually has [l] and some kind of r (e.g. [r], [l̪], [l̪]) as allophones of the same phoneme, either in complementary distribution or as free variation? Or is the confusion of English /r/ and /l/ merely because one of the two is lacking in (some?) Chinese dialects/languages? I saw Mandarin has /l/ as well as /r/, which corresponds to the pronunciation of English /l/ and /r/. Does this mean that speakers of Mandarin do not conform to the stereotype of mixing up English /l/ and /r/? Thanks very much! I'm not aware of any confusion between [l] and [r] in Chinese, although I wouldn't completely rule out the possibility of its existence in some dialects. However, in Japanese [l] and [r] can be considered one and the same. So the stereotype does not apply to Chinese at all (or maybe only in some dialects), but only to Japanese?! Do you know if both [l] and [r] (so an alveolar trill, or would it rather be [l̪] or [l̪]) like the English r?) actually occur as allophones in Japanese, and if they are in free variation or in complementary distribution? Although this seems more of a question for the Japanese forum... It's seems that 上海話 and 閩南話 don't have /r/ contrast. Mandarin r is [l̪] or [ʁ]. [ʁ] is also acceptable. English r is [ɹw], which is a round consonant. To Chinese ear, [r] is more like [l] or [l̪]. Although this seems more of a question for the Japanese forum... The /r/ in Japanese is a "flap" (probably represented by the phonetic symbol [ɺ]). It's just one sound, so one can't properly speak of "complementary" or "free" distribution. The confusion only occurs when Japanese people try to speak a foreign language such as English, where there are 2 sounds (L & R) which are relatively similar to the flap in Japanese. This necessitates Japanese speakers to learn the two new sounds and associate them with the single Japanese [ɺ]. The confusion comes from the distribution of [l̪] and [l] in Mandarin: the former can only be a coda consonant", while the latter can only be an onset. In other words, they are in complementary distribution, so one could propose that they are allophones of a single phoneme. One piece of evidence for this comes from transliterations: e.g. Rome is luómǎ and Russia is éluósī, while Bill is bǐěr and Nepal is nǐbōěr. This so-called evidence, if not pointed out, would mislead one into thinking that Chinese has indeed got this kind of complementary distribution. Chinese people transcribed foreign words in the ways shown in the examples because they perceive them as pronounced like these by foreigners. This is completely a different issue as to how r and l are distributed in the Chinese language itself. So what is the distribution of R and L in Mandarin, in your opinion? R and L in Mandarin are two independent sounds, and just like any other two independent sounds in the language, the behaviour of one is not related to the other. Hello there, Is there any Chinese dialect/language that actually has [l] and some kind of r (e.g. [r], [l̪], [l̪]) as allophones of the same phoneme, either in complementary distribution or as free variation? Or is the confusion of English /r/ and /l/ merely because one of the two is lacking in (some?) Chinese dialects/languages? I saw Mandarin has /l/ as well as /r/, which corresponds to the pronunciation of English /l/ and /r/. Does this mean that speakers of Mandarin do not conform to the stereotype of mixing up English /l/ and /r/? Thanks very much! 1. 太专业，没太搞明白你具体问什么。中国部分方言里和不分(我热死了/我乐死了是个有点普遍的笑话); 2. 普通话里没有told中的发音，这是中国人说英语一个发音难点，ie中的不是问题。r不是问题。 So what is the distribution of R and L in Mandarin, in your opinion? R and L in Mandarin are two independent sounds, and just like any other two independent sounds in the language, the behaviour of one is not related to the other. Let me ask it a different way: What is the distribution of R in Mandarin, and how does it differ from the distribution of L in English, and how does it differ from the distribution of L in Mandarin speakers? For an educated Mandarin speaker, he/she would have no difficulty with /r/ in "rice or peter" and /l/ in "lie". In Mandarin, we don't have the same /l/ in "told" and that's one of the pronouncing problems for most Chinese. Let me ask it a different way: What is the distribution of R in Mandarin, and how does it differ from the distribution of R in English, and could this affect the pronunciation of English /r/ by Mandarin speakers? What is the distribution of L in Mandarin, and how does it differ from the distribution of L in English, and could this affect the pronunciation of English /l/ by Mandarin speakers? It's seems that 上海話 and 閩南話 don't have /r/ contrast. Mandarin r is [l̪] or [ʁ]. [ʁ] is also acceptable. English r is [ɹw], which is a round consonant. To Chinese ear, [r] is more like [l] or [l̪]. 1. Chinese r is never flapped, which is very different from the "r" in other languages. 2. Both Chinese /r/ and English /r/, the tongue position is a little backer than /l/. 3. GA and RP r is [ɹw], which is "ru" to Chinese ear. 4. To Chinese ear, [r] and [r̠] is a sound between [l] and [d]. 5. Chinese er is not /r/, but a rhoticized /ə/ just like English "er". 6. tr and dr, in some speaker's accent, is [ʁlænd [dʁ]. For people speak Mandarin, they are them as "ch" and "zh". 7. English have a dark l [ɫ], which is velarized(just like /u/), Chinese general pronounce "o" instead. I recently was listening to a Chinese opera competition where most of the pieces were in Italian. There were singers that pronounced the Italian alveolar flap and trill very well (although one singer pronounce it not quite, but a little bit alike to the French "r" à la Piaf), but sometimes they confused them - "r" instead of "r" and "r" instead of "r" was actually the most common pronunciation mistake. Once I even hear "asphetti" instead of "aspetti" - quite funny, because that's how this letter is pronounced in Neapolitan. For an educated Mandarin speaker, he/she would have no difficulty with /r/ in "rice or peter" and /l/ in "lie". In Mandarin, we don't have the same /l/ in "told" and that's one of the pronouncing problems for most Chinese. A related issue to what you say above about the pronunciation of "told": my Putonghua teacher had huge problems pronouncing "work", which she always ended up saying as if it were "walk". It depends on 1), where in China she came from. Basically Chinese from Changjiang Triangle Region (Shanghai/Jiangsu/Zhejiang) have the best English pronunciation due to a). early western culture influence. b). advanced English language training in public schools. c). Pronunciation of local dialects is relatively similar to English. 2), whether she had her basic English training in rural or urban areas. English training in Chinese rural areas is much worse than it is in the urban areas. Your post is very interesting, can I ask you what exactly you mean when you say that "pronunciation of local dialects is relatively similar to English" ? It might interest you to know that the best English I have ever heard spoken by a non-native speaker was by a friend and colleague from Jiangsu. His grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation were basically at native speaker level, but when I met him first, he had never ever been outside China or met a foreigner (he came from a very small village near Xuzhou), and had learnt English at school with a lot of self study....Incredible. Your post is very interesting, can I ask you what exactly you mean when you say that "pronunciation of local dialects is relatively similar to English" ? As you probably know, it's rather difficult for a Chinese to pronounce and perceive the voiced stops (b, d, g), since voicedness is not a contrastive feature in most Chinese dialects. However, many of the Wu 吴 and Xiang 湘 dialects do have voiced stops, which may give the speakers of these languages a certain advantage when learning to speak a foreign language. 1. That's what my experience tells me. People from these areas have some advantages for their dialects. 2. To DernierVirage. I guess your friend from Xuzhou was most probably born after 1980. They could reach more original English materials than those born between 1960-1979. When I was in school/college, it's quiet hard for me to find any English magazines like Times/Newsweek etc.... Thanks to Ghabi and bighead+ for your above replies. Just to follow up on what you both say: - very interesting, the comments about the pronunciation in the Wu and Xiang dialects. Just for interest, does this apply also to the region of Jiangsu where I used to go for many years ? The nearest main city was 徐州 and the area in question is just to the east of 邳州市 (whose previous name was 邳县), the actual village is 港上镇 - the young man with the amazing English was born in around 1975, so he must indeed have done his studies in a more open environment. Last edited: Apr 10, 2010 As you probably know, it's rather difficult for a Chinese to pronounce and perceive the voiced stops (b, d, g), since voicedness is not a contrastive feature in most Chinese dialects. However, many of the Wu 吴 and Xiang 湘 dialects do have voiced stops, which may give the speakers of these languages a certain advantage when learning to speak a foreign language. Well, English also doesn't distinguish voicing in stops except intervocally. Instead, we distinguish aspiration initially and vowel length before stops in the coda position (which are never released, and thus carry no information regarding voicing). Interesting discussion, although way too technical for me. I remember seeing this stereotype depicted on TV years back (come to think of it, it must have been the Wonder Years, with the endearing Kevin). Anyway, Kevin and his family went to this Chinese restaurant for Christmas dinner, and the waiters brought out a goose (maybe?) in lieu of turkey, and then started singing a Christmas carol for the family. However, instead of singing falalalala, they sang farararara. It was a very funny scene, but at the time I thought it quite unbelievable. I mean, I can see some Chinese people pronouncing the English r as an l, as the r is a more difficult sound in my opinion, but never the other way around... but then again, most waiters working in a Chinese restaurant during the Wonder Years would have been immigrants from the Hong Kong & Guangdong areas, so perhaps such confusion is possible for people who speak the 粤 dialect as their mother tongue? ... I remember seeing this stereotype depicted on TV years back (come to think of it, it must have been the Wonder Years, with the endearing Kevin). Anyway, Kevin and his family went to this Chinese restaurant for Christmas dinner, and the waiters brought out a goose (maybe?) in lieu of turkey, and then started singing a Christmas carol for the family. However, instead of singing falalalala, they sang farararara. ... That was the movie A Christmas Story. And then there is that scene in Lethal Weapon where Mel Gibson is making fun of Uncle Benny by asking him for some "fled lice" to which Uncle Benny responds "It's fried rice, you pick!" This is a very common stereotype (in America, anyway) that all Asian people (Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, etc.) confuse the R and L sounds. As this thread points out, there is some truth to that as there are obvious differences between the phonology of English and many Asian languages, but like all stereotypes it has been generalized so much to be more false than true. Last edited by a moderator: Jun 8, 2011 Hello there, Is there any Chinese dialect/language that actually has [l] and some kind of r (e.g. [r], [l̪], [l̪]) as allophones of the same phoneme, either in complementary distribution or as free variation? Not that I know of, but not the more standard ones at least. Or is the confusion of English /r/ and /l/ merely because one of the two is lacking in (some?) Chinese dialects/languages? Cantonese doesn't have a distinction between /l/ and /l̪/, having only /l/, and hence the stereotype in Spanish-speaking countries that Chinese speakers use [l] for Spanish /l/ /r/ /l̪/. This applies to many other dialects too. I saw Mandarin has /l/ as well as /r/, which corresponds to the pronunciation of English /l/ and /r/. Does this mean that speakers of Mandarin do not conform to the stereotype of mixing up English /l/ and /r/? Correct. The idea that "English" is something that Chinese people do is incorrect, that applies to speakers of Japanese and Korean. Mainstream North American culture has applied that to Chinese speakers mistakenly. At the most it would be a stereotype of pronouncing English /l/ and /l̪/ as [l], as in Spanish-speaking countries, considering the large numbers of speakers of Cantonese over there. But nope, nobody said mainstream culture is savvy. Hello there, Is there any Chinese dialect/language that actually has [l] and some kind of r (e.g. [r], [l̪], [l̪]) as allophones of the same phoneme, either in complementary distribution or as free variation? Or is the confusion of English /r/ and /l/ merely because one of the two is lacking in (some?) Chinese dialects/languages? I saw Mandarin has /l/ as well as /r/, which corresponds to the pronunciation of English /l/ and /r/. Does this mean that speakers of Mandarin do not conform to the stereotype of mixing up English /l/ and /r/? Thanks very much! I used to stay in Wuhan, Capital of Hubei Province. There are some dialects that might have [l] and some kind of [r] variation as allophones. I also suspected they put some variation of nasal/l/ with /l/ or /r/ as well. A friends of mine has problem distinguishing Liu4 六, Niu2 牛, Rou4 肉, when he says 溜牛肉Liu1Niu2Rou4, everybody laughs. LOL He is from 沙市 Sha1Shi4, Hubei. hope this helps. You must log in or register to reply here.

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