

Difficult English Sounds for Speakers of Other Languages

If your home language is . . . **You will most likely find the following sounds in English challenging . . .¹**

Spanish b d dg h j m n ng r sh t th v w y z
s-clusters end clusters

Vietnamese a e k l ng p r sh s y l-clusters r-clusters

Chinese b ch d dg f g j l m n ng o sh s th v
z l-cluster r clusters

Korean b l o ow p r sh t th l-clusters r clusters

Urdu a d e f n ng s sh t th

Japanese dg f h i l th oo r sh s v w shwa
l-clusters r clusters

Phonology

Young English learners have particular needs with regard to learning sounds in the English language (phonology):

- **Sounds of the letters:** they have difficulty hearing/distinguishing because the sounds (phonemes) may not exist in their language
- **Pronunciation:** Difficulty shaping their mouths and tongues to produce unfamiliar sounds

Don't Forget: Semantics, Morphology, Syntax

Teachers must also address the following when working with young English learners:

- Basic and academic vocabulary
- How and when to use verb tenses, adjectives and pronouns
- Syntax or language structure (in English word order is important)

Additional Reading

- Cappellini, M. (2005). *Balancing reading and language learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. <http://www.stenhouse.com/shop/pc/viewPrd.asp?idcategory=0&idproduct=8948>
- Ted Power English Language Learning and Teaching: <http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/phono.html>

¹ Adapted by WestEd with permission from: Cappellini, M. (2005). *Balancing reading and language learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, (p. 68).