**Nasals: Nasalization, Dentalization, and -ng pronunciation**

Refer to the sounds produced with the air escaping through the nose. In their articulation the soft palate moves down so that the air can be released through the nose and not the mouth. Nasals in English include bilabial: /m/, alveolar: /n/, and velar: /ŋ/.

For more clarity, consider the following figures.

---

**Nasalization:**

It refers to the effect nasals have on the sounds adjacent to them, in this case vowels. Thus, vowels are said to be nasalized when they co-occur with nasals. For instance in the word “man” the short vowel ‘a’ is nasalized hence it occurs next to nasals. The reason behind this is that the soft palate normally moves up in the articulation of the vowel ‘a’ (see fig.1). However, due to the occurrence of nasals next to the vowel, the soft palate cannot be raised very quickly, so the vowel is likely to be pronounced with the soft palate still lowered (see fig.2), giving a nasalized quality to the vowel.

The diacritic symbol for nasalization is [ʷ]. So, “man” would be transcribed in narrow transcription as [mən]. Note that the short vowel “a” is nasalized.

**Dentalization:**

Similar to nasalization, Dentalization is also about sounds influencing each other. Thus, it refers to dental sounds, namely /θ/, /ð/, influencing the alveolar sounds including /t d s z n l/ these alveolar sounds are said to be dentalized when they co-occur with /θ/, /ð/. More particularly, if /t d s z n l/ are word finals and the next word start with /θ/, /ð/, they are dentalized. To make the image clear, consider the following example: “that thing”. In this phrase “that thing”, the /t/ sound is final in the first word (that) and the next word (thing) starts with a dental sound, namely /θ/.

So, the /t/ sound, in this example (that), is dentalized.

The diacritic symbol for Dentalization is [ɹ]. In narrow transcription the sound /t/ in “that thing” would be transcribed as /dæt ðɛn/.

---

[Image: Figure.1](image1)
[Image: Figure.2](image2)
**-ng pronunciation /ŋ/ or /ŋg/:**

Unlike the other nasals /m n/, the velar nasal /ŋ/ raise considerable problems in pronunciation as when to pronounce /ŋ/ without the plosive /g/ and when to pronounce it with /g/, which is transcribed as /ŋg/. To make it clear, consider the following examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'finger'</td>
<td>ˈfɪŋə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'anger'</td>
<td>ˈæŋə</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspite of that all the words, in the above example, are written with ‘ng’, there is a difference in their pronunciation. Thus, in the word “finger” ‘ng’ is pronounced as /ŋg/, whereas in singer the /g/ disappears to be pronounced only with /ŋ/. The reason behind this is that the word “finger” cannot be divided into smaller parts (known as morphemes). However, the word “singer” can be divided into smaller parts. That is, the word consists of “sing”+ suffix “er”. In this case the “ng” is pronounced /ŋ/. The same thing can be said to the word "hanger", which is "hang"+ suffix "er".

So to make it simple, “ng” is pronounced /ŋ/ if it occurs at the end of the word (or morpheme). However, if it occurs in the middle of one-morpheme words (i.e. Words that cannot be divided into small parts) it is pronounced /ŋg/ as in “anger”.

Exception to this rule is the comparative and superlative suffixes “-er” and “-est”. For instance,

long longer longest. /lɒŋ, lɒŋə, lɒŋgest/  
Strong, stronger, strongest. /strɒŋ, strɒŋə, strɒŋest/

Following the above rule “longer” is to be pronounced as /lɒŋə/, which is incorrect.

Knowing that, comparative and superlative forms must be treated as one-morpheme words so that “ng” is pronounced as /ŋg/.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that only short vowels /æ ə ʌ əʊ əʊ/ can occur before the velar nasal /ŋ/. For instance: fang, song, hung, sing, etc.