

**University of Sétif-2**  
**Department of English Language**  
**Phonetics Course (1st Year Classes)**  
**Lecturer: Miss. Belhamel**

## **Lecture One**

*“A key to good speaking is good pronunciation”*

(Ellis, 1997)

### **General Introduction**

#### **Introductory facts**

- Part of knowing a language is knowing the sounds of that language.
- Phonetics is the study of speech sounds.
- Everyone who knows a language knows how to segment sentences into words and words into sounds.

#### **The Orthographic Inconsistency**

In English, orthography does not consistently represent the sounds of language. That is there is a big difference between spelling of words and their pronunciation.

1. The same sound may be represented by one letter or letter combinations such as:

He, people, key, believe, seize, Caesar, mission, amoeba

2. The same letter may represent more than one different sound like:

Father, village, badly, made, many

3. A combination of letters may represent a single sound such as:

shoot, character, Thomas, either, physics, rough, coat, deal, recal

4. A single letter may represent a combination of sounds at once as in:

xerx    tax

5. Some letters in may not be pronounced i.e., they represent no sounds at all.

autumn, sword, resign, pterodactyl, lamb, corps, psychology, write, knot

6. There may be no letter to represent a sound that occurs in a word as:

cute use

## **The IPA and the Phonemic Symbols of Speech Sounds (Phonetic Alphabet)**

The symbols for the English phonemic chart have been compiled from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) devised by International Phonetic Association (also abbreviated IPA). The association was established in 1886, and since then, it has been functioning as the major as well as the oldest representative organization for world phoneticians. The association's mission is to promote the scientific study of phonetics by providing phoneticians worldwide with a notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages, i.e. the **IPA**. That is the **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)** is an active and evolving standard originally developed by the International Phonetic Association in 1888 with the goal of transcribing the sounds of all human languages. The IPA is based on **the Roman alphabet**, which has the advantage of being widely familiar, but also includes letters and additional symbols from a variety of **other sources**. The IPA is invented in order to have a system in which there was a **one to-one correspondence** between **each sound** in language and **each phonetic symbol**.

## **Accent and Dialect**

Though these terms are often confused with each other, the word **dialect**, on one hand, is used to refer to a variety of a language which is different from others not just in **pronunciation** but also in some matters like **vocabulary**, **grammar** and **word order**. Differences of **accent**, on the other hand, are those of **pronunciation only**. So, accent is the way in which a language is pronounced in a specific geographical area.

The accent that is concentrated on, here, is the one that is most often recommended for foreign learners studying British English as being an indicator of formal speech and widely used as a reference/model for comparison with other varieties i.e., **Received Pronunciation (RP)**. Various labels are given to this pronunciation that has connotations of prestige and authority including Oxford English, **BBC English**, the Queen's English, Public School Accent. Moreover, phonemic transcriptions in dictionaries are based on this particular accent which is non-rhotic. The British and Americans are divided by a common language two standards of pronunciation (compare the BBC i.e., Received Pronunciation-RP- and CNN News i.e., General American -GA-).