

## Comparing the Sounds of English with Hmong and other languages

Notes on the structure of English words

V(C)	(C)V
CV(C)	(C)VC
CCV(C)	(C)VCC
CCCV(C)	(C)VCCC

Ø-	A	A	-Ø
s-	say	stayed	-d
st-	stay	bark	-rk
str-	stray	barked	-rkt

### Hmong

The Hmong consonant sounds below are divided into those occurring before vowels and those occurring after.

**Consonants:**

**Initial consonant sounds:**

p <sup>h</sup> -	t <sup>h</sup> -	c <sup>h</sup> -	k <sup>h</sup> -
p-	t-	c-	k-
[b-]	[d-]	[j-]	[g-]
m-	n-		ng-
f-	[th-]	s-	sh-
v-	[dh-]	[z-]	[zh-]
w-	[r-]	y-	w-
	l-		

**Initial clusters:** pl-, p<sup>h</sup>l-, py-, p<sup>h</sup>y- (only)

**Final consonant sounds:** (only two)

-n

-ng

[Thus, of course, all English final consonant clusters are missing.]

**Vowels:**

[-iy]

[-uw]

-i

-u

-ey

-ər

-ow

-ε

[-ə]

[-ae]

-ɔ

-ɔy

-a

-ay

-aw

As the chart above shows, Hmong lacks the /-iy/ of *beat*, the /-uw/ of *boot*, the /-ae/ of *bat*, and /-ə/ of *but* and *butt*. This means that, in addition to these sounds themselves, their rather similar shorter counterparts will also be problems; that is, Hmong speakers often have trouble distinguishing the /-i/ of *pit* and the /-iy/ of *Pete* as well as the /-u/ of *put* and the /-uw/ of *boot*. For similar reasons, the /-ε/ of *pet* and the /-ae/ of *pat* are difficult to distinguish.

Note: Symbols in square brackets [...] represent sounds found in English, but either not found at all in Hmong or not found in the same positions in Hmong.