

SCOTTISH DIALECT: VOWELS AND SOUNDS

By
Petrova Kristina
&
Nina Repina
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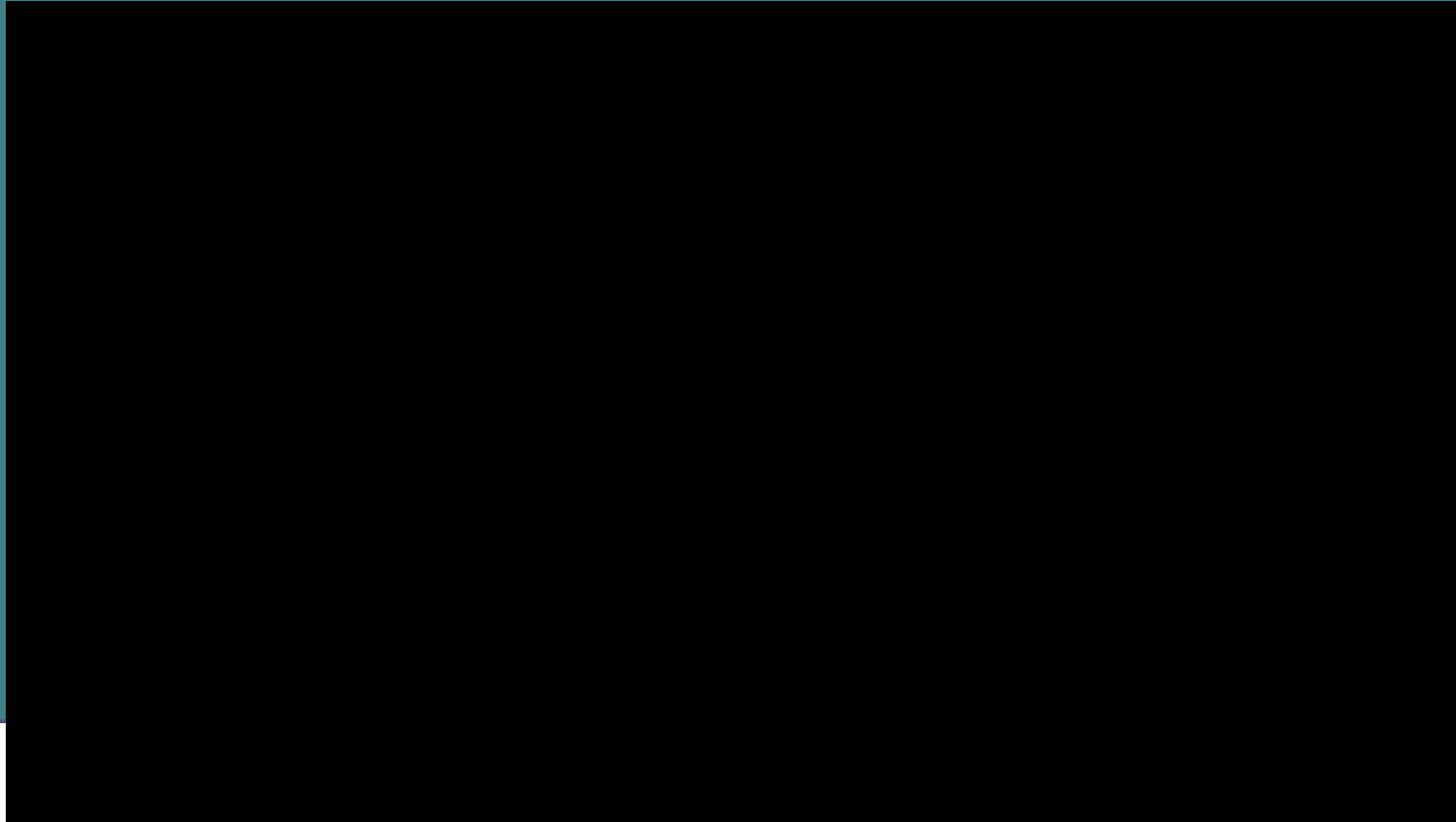
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1. SCOTTISH STANDARD ENGLISH

Scotland is a part of the United Kingdom, but it was an independent state until 1707. The original vernaculars spoken in Scotland were Scottish Gaelic and Scots; the former is a Celtic language, while the latter has developed from the local variant of Middle English. After the loss of statehood, the influence of English has grown: at first it was only used in more formal environments, but by the present day it has become more vernacular.

Scottish Standard English, as it is reflected in its name, is Standard English spoken with a Scottish accent “and retaining a few scotticisms in vocabulary”. Its status in Scotland is considerably more prestigious than that of Welsh English or those of local dialects in England. The phonology of Scottish Standard English reflects its linguistic situation: it is similar, but not identical to Scots regarding its phoneme inventory and phonotactics. Additionally, it retains the Scottish Vowel Length Rule.

GERARD BUTLER



2.1 MONOPHTHONGS

The vowel system of Scottish Standard English typically consists of nine monophthongs in stressed positions. Four of these (/ɪ, ɛ, ʌ, a/) are checked vowels, while the other five (/ɔ, ʊ, i, e, o/) are free. ScStE lacks the Scots vowel phoneme /ø/, which is merged in most dialects with either /e/ or /ɪ/ (Aitken 1984, p. 96).

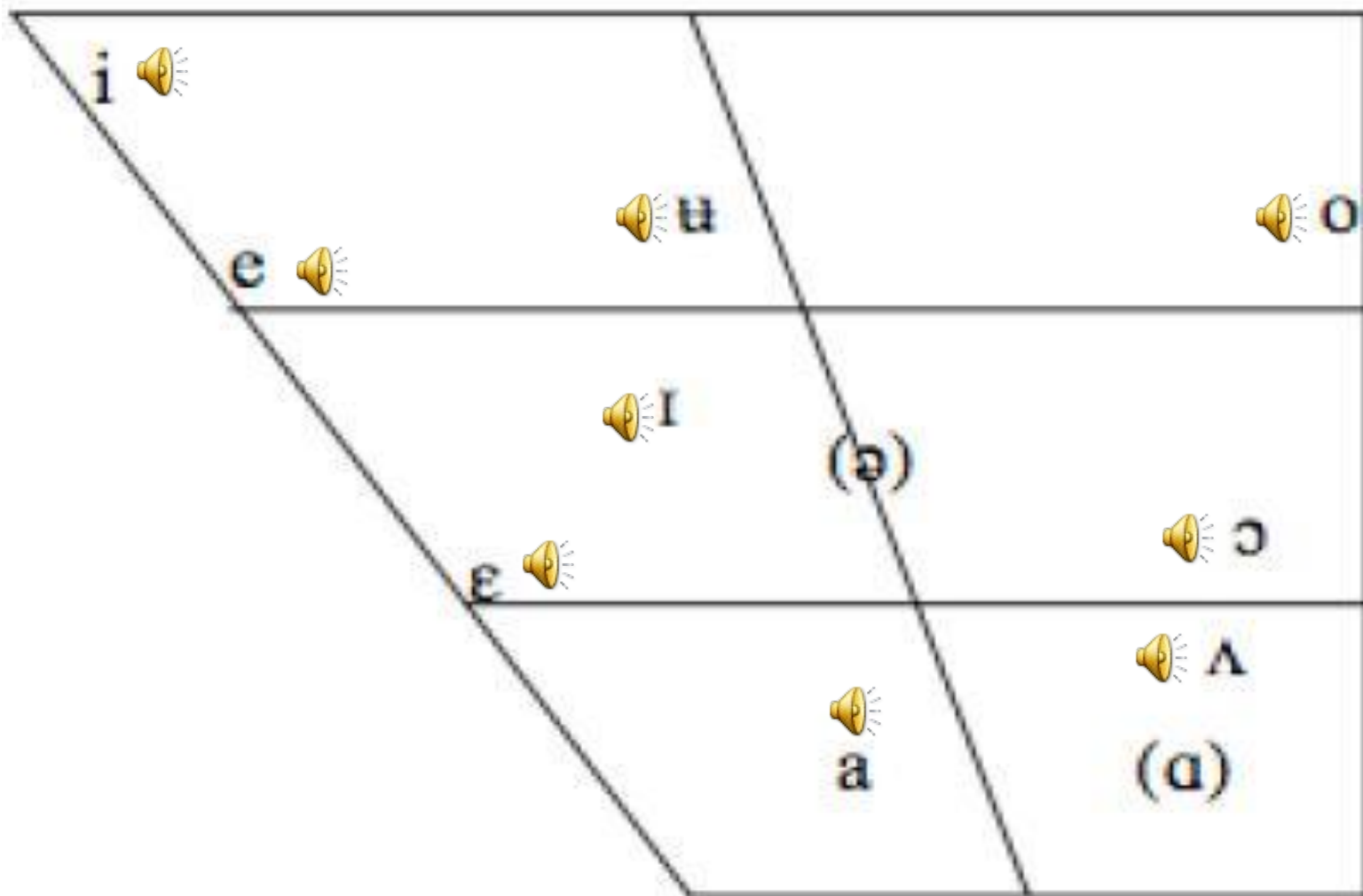


Figure 1: The Scottish Standard English vowel system according to Scobbie et al

KIT /ɪ/

I

According to Stuart-Smith (2008, p. 58), “the usual realization of this vowel in ScStE is [ɪ], though it is often more open [ë]”. Scobbie et al. (2006, p. 6) place /ɪ/ in the almost mid-central location in their vowel chart, though they state that it “may be further lowered and backed or raised and fronted.”

LET'S LISTEN TO THE SOUND.

□ i 

□ Listen to the i sound within a Gaelic word:

□ sin 

□ long ì 

DRESS /ɛ/

E

Both Wells (1982) and Stuart-Smith (2008) describe the ScStE vowel higher than the corresponding RP vowel, which is more similar to cardinal [ɛ].

LET'S LISTEN TO THE SOUND.

□ e 

□ Listen to the e sound within a Gaelic word:

□ dheth 

□ long è 

STRUT /ʌ/

U

The ScStE vowel is somewhat advanced from cardinal [ʌ], as claimed by Wells (1982). It should be noted that while /ʌ/ is present in ScStE, Scots, Southern English dialects and therefore in Received Pronunciation as well, Northern English dialects lack this phoneme, as it has not split from /ʊ/.

LET'S LISTEN TO THE SOUND.

□ u 

□ Listen to the **u** sound within a Gaelic word:

□ guth 

□ long ù 

TRAP/PALM/BATH /A/



Unlike in RP, there is no /a/ phoneme in ScStE; therefore, the TRAP set is merged with the PALM/BATH one. However, according to Stuart-Smith (2008, p. 59), Abercrombie (1979) “observes that «quite a lot of people, particularly in Edinburgh» do have the vowel /a/ with slightly different lexical incidence.” Wells (1982) also claims that the allophone [a] is available for some speakers, but it is claimed to be marginal. The phoneme /a/ is absent from Scots so this occurrence of [a] is probably the result of occasional borrowing from the more prestigious RP vocalism.

LET'S LISTEN TO THE SOUND.

□ a 

□ Listen to the **a** sound within a Gaelic word:

□ bata 

□ long à 

LOT/CLOTH/THOUGHT /ɔ/

0

The vowel /ɒ/, which is present in RP in LOT and CLOTH words, is also missing from ScStE, and these lexical sets are merged with the THOUGHT set. Abercrombie (1979) and Wells (1982) report a distinct [ɒ] quality for many speakers here as well, but this could be again the result of interaction with RP. Macaffé (2004) proposes the same analysis, calling the situation similar to dialect contact, where [ɒ] can spread gradually in lexical items across the dialect border, but the status of this sound is not phonemic yet.

LET'S LISTEN TO THE SOUND.

o 

Listen to the o sound within a Gaelic word:

bog 

long ò 

FOOT/GOOSE /ʊ/

00

“From a diagnostic point of view, the most important characteristic of the Scottish vowel system is its lack [...] of a phoneme /ʊ/” (Wells 1982, p. 40). In Scottish Standard English the FOOT-vowel and the GOOSE-vowel are both realized as [ʊ], “a high, usually rounded, vowel which is central or even front” (Stuart-Smith 2008, p. 60).

FLĒECE /ɪ/

EE

/ɪ/ is the same as in RP, it corresponds to the cardinal vowel [i]. It is not necessarily long, though, unlike in RP, as its length is controlled by the Scottish Vowel Length Rule, which will be discussed below. As opposed to RP, it does not appear in unstressed environments. This will be covered in section 3.3.

FACE /e/

AE

As opposed to RP /eɪ/, Scottish Standard English has a monophthong /e/ in this set. Some Scots dialects distinguish /e/ and /e:/, but this distinction is mostly lost in Scots as well due to the Scottish Vowel Length Rule (Aitken 1984, p. 95).

GOAT /o/

OA

Similarly to the FACE set, Scottish Standard English has a monophthong /o/ in place of the RP /əʊ/. Also similarly, some Scots dialects still distinguish a long version of this sound, but it is merged to the short phoneme in Central and South Scots (Aitken 1984, p. 95).

THE SYSTEM OF MONOPHTHONGS IN SCSTE

	Front	Central	Back
Close	/i/	/ʊ/	
Close-mid	/e/		/o/
Mid		/ɪ/	
Open-mid	/ɛ/		/ʌ/ /ɔ/
Open		/a/	

Figure 2: The system of Scottish vowel phonemes

2.2. DIPHTHONGS

Many RP diphthongs correspond to monophthongs in ScStE. As ScStE is rhotic, RP centring diphthongs are parallel to monophthong + /r/ sequences. Therefore, the inventory of diphthongs in ScStE is much smaller than in RP.

CHOICE /ɔɛ/

OI

The transcription of this diphthong is quite different in the sources. Wells (1982) has /vi/, and notes that there is much variation in the actual surface form. Stuart-Smith (2008) is inconsistent, on p. 55 she transcribes this diphthong with /ɔɛ/, but on p. 56, when approaching ScStE from Scots, with /oe/. Scobbie et al. (2006) have /ɔɛ/ here as well. We can conclude that the exact quality of this diphthong is probably variable in Scottish speech, but /ɔɛ/ seems to be a good compromise between reported surface forms.

MOUTH /ʌʊ/

OU

The diphthong corresponding to RP /aʊ/ has a remarkably different quality in ScStE. The nucleus of the diphthong is centralized according to every descriptive analysis, with a quality usually described with [ʌ]. The offglide is transcribed as a tense [u] by Wells (1982), but Stuart-Smith (2008) and Scobbie et al. (2006) have a centralized [ʊ] here as well. As RP /ʊ/ and /u/ are generally fronted and merged in ScStE /ʊ/ as seen above, and the nature of this diphthong is central, the latter proposal fits much better into the vowel system of Scottish English..

PRIZE/PRICE /æ/ & /ʌɪ/



The lexical set corresponding to RP /aɪ/ is split in ScStE. The environment conditioning the split will be discussed below. The phoneme occurring in PRIZE and – in most cases – word finally is transcribed as /æ/ by Wells (1982) and Stuart-Smith (2008), and as /ɑː/ by Scobbie et al. (2006). Since, as seen above, [ɑ] is marginal in Scottish, I will use the more traditional /æ/ below. The vowel in the PRICE set is transcribed with a centralized nucleus as /ʌɪ/, similarly to the MOUTH set.

2.3. UNSTRESSED VOWELS



commA /ʌ/

According to Wells (1982), not every version of ScStE has [ə]. In place of RP [ə], where it is not present in the inventory, ScStE usually has [ʌ]. In many cases, though, RP [ə] corresponds to [ɪ], e.g. pilot [paelɪt].

2.3. UNSTRESSED VOWELS

ER

lettER /ɪr/ and /ʌr/

As ScStE is a rhotic dialect, the lettER set is different from the commA set. Its vowel can be [ɪ] or [ʌ] according to Wells (1982) and Stuart-Smith (2008). Wells (1982, p. 405) claims that “in Edinburgh speech, however, it seems more realistic to recognize a phoneme /ə/.”

2.3. UNSTRESSED VOWELS

Y

happyY /e/

Scottish Standard English does not exhibit “happy tensing”, which is the process of raising the original word-final [ɪ] vowels to a tense [i] in RP and other major English standards. The counterpart of the word-final RP /i/ is a lower vowel: [e] or [ɪ].

3.4. VOWEL LENGTH

There is no lexical vowel length distinction in ScStE. While pairs of vowels may be categorized based on length or using tense/lax features in RP, ScStE uses the tense/lax features exclusively. However, it should be noted again that while ScStE contains /i/—/ɪ/ as a tense/lax pair, there is no /u/—/ʊ/ pair as it is merged into /ʊ/.

Having said that, vowel length distinction does exist in ScStE, but it is not phonemic.

THE SCOTTISH VOWEL LENGTH RULE

The rule governing the length of a vowel in Scots and in Scottish English is called the Scottish Vowel Length Rule (SVLR), which is attributed to Aitken (1981). The basic rule is that stressed vowels are lengthened before a morpheme boundary, a voiced fricative (/v/, /ð/, /z/ and the marginal phoneme /ʒ/) or a rhotic consonant. This can be summarised in an SPE-style rule as below:

$$V' \rightarrow [+long] / _ \{ \#, [-\text{continuant}, -\text{sonorant}, +\text{voice}], / r / \}$$

3.1. EXAMPLES OF THE SCOTTISH VOWEL LENGTH RULE

bead	[bid]	sleeve	[sli:v]
mood	[mʊd]	smooth	[smʊ:ð]
lace	[les]	maze	[me:z]
tote	[tot]	pour	[po:r]

Table 1: The SVLR: long vowels before voiced fricatives and rhotics

3.1. EXAMPLES OF THE SCOTTISH VOWEL LENGTH RULE

need	[nid]	knee#d	[ni:d]
crude	[krʊd]	crew#ed	[krʊ:d]
staid	[sted]	stay#ed	[ste:d]
toad	[tod]	toe#d/tow#ed	[to:d]
bad	[bad]	baa#ed	[ba:d]
nod	[nod]	gnaw#ed	[no:d]

Table 2: The SVLR: long vowels before strong morpheme boundaries

THE SVLR: THE /**Æ**/~/**ʌ**ɪ/ ALTERNATION



The /æ/~/ʌɪ/ alternation is conditioned by the same environments as the long-short vowel alternation in the above examples:

price [prʌɪs] prize [præz]
side [saɪd] sigh#ed [sæd]

THE /~~AE~~/~/~~AI~~/ ALTERNATION

This alternation in Scots (Aitken 1984) became phonologized as it is apparent from the existence of the following minimal pairs:

ay [~~AI~~] ‘always’ ~ aye [ae] ‘yes’ (Aitken 1984, p. 95)

gey [~~AI~~] ‘very’ ~ guy [gae] ‘guy’ (Scobbie et al. 1999)

To sum up, in the case of the /ae/~/~~AI~~/ alternation, /ae/ behaves as the long variant of /~~AI~~/.

4. CONSONANTS AND COMBINATIONS

There are twelve consonants (ignoring h for the moment) b, c, d, f, g, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, that means theoretically there could be up to 48 different actual sounds

b	c	d	f	g	l
m	n	p	r	s	t

 & <BH>

- ❑ **broad unlenited = unaspirated voiceless bilabial stop /b/**
for example, in Gaelic <bàs>, <obair>, and <pìob> pronounced similarly to the <p>s in English <pope>, only without any puff of air
- ❑ **slender unlenited = unaspirated voiceless bilabial stop /b/**
for example, in Gaelic <beag>, <caibe>, and <glàib> pronounced similarly to the <p>s in English <peep>, only without any puff of air

- ❑ **broad lenited <bh>** = voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ [sometimes broad <bh> in the middle or at the end of a word is silent] pronounced like the <v>s in English <vote> and <move>
- ❑ **slender lenited <bh>** = voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ [sometimes slender <bh> in the middle or at the end of a word is silent] pronounced like the <v>s in English <veer> and <peeve>

<C>&<CH>

- ▣ **broad unlenited <c>** = aspirated voiceless velar stop /k/ pronounced like the <k>s in English <**k**ook> (with a puff of air – though note that in Gaelic the puff of air comes between the vowel and the consonant)
- ▣ **slender unlenited <c>** = aspirated voiceless palatal stop /k'/ pronounced like the <k>s in English <**k**ee**pk**> (with a puff of air – though note that in Gaelic the puff of air comes between the vowel and the consonant)

- ❖ **broad lenited <ch>** = voiceless velar fricative /x/
not commonly found in English, a rasping sound
pronounced like the <ch>s in Scottish <loch>
- ❖ **slender lenited <ch>** = voiceless palatal fricative /ç/
(c with a cedilla) also /k‘/, a rasping sound
pronounced like the <ch>s in Scots <bricht muinlicht
nicht the nicht>

<D>&<DH>

- ▣ **broad unlenited <d>** = unaspirated voiceless dental stop /d/ pronounced similarly to the <t>s in English <tote>, only without any puff of air
- ▣ **slender unlenited <d>** = unaspirated voiceless palatalized dental stop /d'/, the closest English comes is the sound of the <j> and <dg> in English <judge>

- ❖ **broad lenited <dh>** = voiced velar fricative /ɣ/
(lowercase gamma)
[sometimes broad <dh> in the middle or at the end of a word is silent] not normally found in English, except in some dialects as the drawn out sound of the <gh> in <U**gh**!> or <U**ghgh**!>, it is the voiced version of the rasping sound of the <ch>s in Scottish <lo**ch**>
- ❖ **slender lenited <dh>** = voiced palatal fricative /j/
(symbol should really have a curlier tale)
pronounced roughly like the <y> in English <y**es**>

<F>&<FH> 

- ▣ **broad unlenited** <f> = voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/
pronounced like the <f>s in English <food> and <roof>
- ▣ **slender unlenited** <f> = voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/
pronounced like the <f>s in English <fief>

- ▣ **broad lenited <fh>** = (normally silent) / /,
(sometimes) voiceless glottal fricative /h/
normally silent, sometimes pronounced like the <h>
in English <hoop>
- ▣ **slender lenited <fh>** = (normally silent) / /,
(sometimes) voiceless glottal fricative /h/
normally silent, sometimes pronounced like the <h>
in English <heap>

<G>&<GH> 

- ▣ **broad unlenited** <g> = unaspirated voiceless velar stop /g/
pronounced like the <k>s in English <**k**ook>, only without any puff of air
- ▣ **slender unlenited** <g> = unaspirated voiceless palatal stop /g'/
pronounced like the <k>s in English <**k**ee**pk**

- ▣ **broad lenited <gh>** = voiced velar fricative /ɣ/
(lowercase gamma) (sometimes broad <gh> in the middle or at the end of a word is silent)
not normally found in English, except in some dialects as the drawn out sound of the <gh> in <U**gh**!> or <U**ghgh**!>, it is the voiced version of the rasping sound of the <ch>s in Scottish <lo**ch**>
- ▣ **slender lenited <gh>** = voiced palatal fricative /j/
pronounced roughly like the <y> in English <ye**s**>

<M>&<MH>

- ▣ **broad unlenited** <m> = voiced bilabial nasal /m/
pronounced like the <m>s in English <**m**oon> and
<ro**m**>
- ▣ **slender unlenited** <m> = voiced bilabial nasal /m/
pronounced like the <m>s in English <**m**ean> and
<re**m**>

- ❖ **broad lenited <mh>** = voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ (sometimes broad <mh> in the middle or at the end of a word is silent)
pronounced like the <v>s in English <vote> and <move>
- ❖ **slender lenited <mh>** = voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ (sometimes slender <mh> in the middle or at the end of a word is silent)
pronounced like the <v>s in English <veer> and <leave>

<P>&<PH>

- ▣ **broad unlenited <p>** = aspirated voiceless bi-labial stop /p/ pronounced similarly to the <p>s in English <pope> (with a puff of air – though note that in Gaelic the puff of air comes between the vowel and the consonant)
- ▣ **slender unlenited <p>** = aspirated voiceless bi-labial stop /p/ pronounced similarly to the <p>s in English <peep> (with a puff of air – though note that in Gaelic the puff of air comes between the vowel and the consonant)

- ▣ **broad lenited <ph>** = voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ pronounced like the <f>s in English <food> and <roof> (so, pronounced like the <ph> in English <phooey>)
- ▣ **slender lenited <ph>** = voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ pronounced like the <f>s in English <fief> (so, pronounced like the <ph> in English <phoenix>)

<S>&<SH>

- ▣ **broad unlenited** <s> = voiceless alveolar fricative /s/
pronounced like the <s>s in English <soon> and
<noose>
- ▣ **slender unlenited** <s> = voiceless post-alveolar
fricative /ʃ / (integral symbol)
pronounced like the <sh> in English <sheep> and
<leash>

- ▣ **broad lenited <sh>** = voiceless glottal fricative /h/
pronounced like the <h> in English <**h**oop>
- ▣ **slender lenited <sh>** = voiceless glottal fricative /h/
pronounced like the <h> in English <**h**eam>

<T>&<TH>

▣ **broad unlenited** <t> = aspirated voiceless dental stop /t/

pronounced similarly to the <t>s in English <tote> (with a puff of air – though note that in Gaelic the puff of air comes between the vowel and the consonant)

▣ **slender unlenited** <t> = aspirated voiceless palatalized dental stop /t'/

not normally found in English, the closest English comes is the sound of the <ch>s in English <cheep> and <beach>

- ▣ **broad lenited <th>** = voiceless glottal fricative /h/
(sometimes broad <th> is silent)
normally pronounced like the <h> in English
<hoop>, sometimes silent
- ▣ **slender lenited <th>** = voiceless glottal fricative /h/
(sometimes slender <th> is silent)
normally pronounced like the <h> in English <heap>,
sometimes silent

<L>, <N> & <R>

□ <l>, <n>, and <r> are a little different from the other consonants. How they are pronounced depends on being:

a. broad b. slender	a. single (<n>) b. double (<nn>) (in medial or final position)	a. (<n-> at the start of a word) b. (<-n[n]-> in the middle of a word) c. (<-n[n]> at the end of a word)	a. unlenited b. lenited (factor in initial position)
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L

- /l/ voiced alveolar lateral approximate pronounced like to the <l>s in English <low> : <baile>, <mil>
- /l/ voiced velarized dental lateral approximate, it can be described as saying an "l" sound while the tip of the tongue is sticking out and pressed up against the upper front teeth : <làmh>, <balach>, <balla>, <dall>
- /l'/ voiced palatal lateral approximate, it is pronounced like the <ll>s; <lli> in English <million> and the like: <leabhar>, <cailleach>, <till>

N

- /n/ voiced alveolar nasal pronounced like to the <n>s in English <noon>:<mo neart>,<manach>,<ròn>
- /N/ voiced velarized dental nasal, it can be described as saying an "n" sound while the tip of the tongue is sticking out and pressed up against the upper front teeth:<nàbaidh>,<beannachd>,<donn>
- /N'/ voiced palatal nasal, the closest English usually comes is the <ny> in English <canyon>, the <ni> in English <minion>, and the like:<neart><teine><min><bainne><beinn>

THANK FOR ATTENTION.