



MANDARIN PHONEMIC INVENTORY¹

Please remember that dialectal differences exist for each language and should be considered when using the phonemic charts.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Alveopalatal	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	p p ^h			t t ^h					k k ^h		
Nasal	m			n					ŋ		
Trill											
Tap or Flap											
Fricative		f		s	ʃ		ʂ		x		
Affricate				ts ts ^h	tʃ tʃ ^h		tʂ tʂ ^h				
Glides (Approximant)							ɹ				
Liquid (Lateral Approximant)				l							

¹ Chart based on information gathered from the following:

Cheng, L. (1991). *Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students* (2nd ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.

Fang, X., & Ping-an, H.. (1992). Articulation disorders among speakers of Mandarin Chinese. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 1(4), 15–16.

Facts on Mandarin Phonology

- Mandarin is a tonal language. Each syllable has a tone and each tone changes the semantics of a word. The tones are as follows:¹
 - high level,
 - rising,
 - falling–rising,
 - falling, and
 - neutral.
- There are no consonant clusters.²
- Words are monosyllabic.³
- The sounds /n/ and /ŋ/ are the only consonants that can occur in word-final position.⁴
- Phonemes in English that are not found in Mandarin include the following:
 - /v/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /θ/, /ð/
- In addition to final consonant deletion, common substitution errors for Mandarin speakers learning English include the following:⁵
 - /s/ for /θ/ in initial, medial, or final position;
 - /f/ for /θ/ in final position;
 - /d/ for /ð/ in initial or medial position;
 - /z/ for /ð/ in initial or medial position;
 - /f/ for /v/ in initial or medial position; and
 - /w/ for /v/ in initial or medial position.

¹ Cheng, L. (1991). Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students (2nd ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.

² Slobin, D. I. (1992). *The crosslinguistic study of language acquisition* (Vol. 3). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

³ Cheng, L. (1991). Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students (2nd ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.

⁴ Fang, X., & Ping-an, H. (1992). Articulation disorders among speakers of Mandarin Chinese. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 1(4), 15–16.

⁵ Cheng, L. (1991). Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students (2nd ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.