

# Danish Pronunciation

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17.36.1. Neutral Danish (Germ., IE) has changed considerably with respect to the traditional pronunciation of three or four decades ago, both phonetically and phonemically (even though grammars and textbooks usually still present traditional pronunciation).

In fact, we now even find an opposition between /æ/ ≠ /a/, as in *kan* /'khæ/ [kha] (pres. tense) 'can' vs *kar* /'kha/ [kha] 'container', *Anners* /'ænɫs/ [ʔænɫs] (genitive pl. form of) 'Anna' vs *Anders* /'anɫs/ [ʔanɫs] (surname).

In words of foreign origin ending in -a#, we have /æ#/ [A], but /a#/ [a] for -ra: *villa* /'vilæ/ [vɪlA], *Noah* /'nʊʊæ/ [nʊʊA], *zebra* [ʂɪpɾɛA], *Nora* ['nʊʊɾɛA, 'nʊʊA].

Moreover, we now have: *lad* /'læð/ [læɔ] (before coronal C) vs *lab*, *laf*, *lak* /'lap, 'laf, 'lak/ [lap, 'laf, 'lak], which once had the same phoneme (/CaC/), even though phonetic differences similar to those of today were to be found (ie: [læɔ], [lap, 'laf, 'lak]), while there were no minimal pairs, since *kar* was still /'khar/ [khaɾ, 'khaʂ, 'khaʒ] (the last symbol is completely voiceless), and *kan* /'kha(nʔ)/ [kha(ŋ)].

Besides, it is better to posit the phonemes /ɔ(ɔ)/, even if they are only found in contact with /r/. In fact, particularly out of sociolinguistic reasons, we cannot let /rɔ(ɔ)/ [rɔ(ɔ)] coincide with the diaphonemic sequences /rø(ø)/ [rø(ø)], which are possible in the same words, but with connotations referring to traditional pronunciation (which is shown by the taxophones given in the second vocogram), with a closing and fronting narrow diphthong; the same happens for the indicated taxophone of /re(e)/ [re(e)].

17.36.2. Let us also notice /eɛ, øɔ/, which occur in contact with /r, ʀ/: they are *diaphonemes*, being possibly realized as [ee, æ; øø, øɔ] alongside with [eɛ, øɔ]: *lære* /'lɛɛr/ [lɛɛɫ, 'lɛɛɫ, 'læɛɫ], *smøre* /'smøɔr/ [ʂmøɔɫ, 'smøøɫ, 'smøɔɫ], *rærene* /'rɛɛʔrɛnə/ [ʂɛɛʔɾnə, 'ɾɛɛʔnə, 'ɾæɛʔnə, -ɾnə], *røre* /'røɔr/ [ʂøɔɫ, 'røøɫ, 'røɔɫ].

Again in the second vocogram, we also find the peculiar realizations of /re, rɔ/ [rɛ, rɔ], with an inserted approximant, as in: *række* /'rɛkə/ [ʂɛkə], *dromme* /'trømtə/ [ʂrøɔmtə, -ɔmtə].

Even other taxophones appear, under the influence of /r/ and of /ʀ/ [ʌ, ɫ#], as well, but we focus especially on /aar, ɔɔr/ ('/aaa, ɔɔr') [aʀ, ɔʀ], as in *vare* /'vaar/ [vaʀ, 'vaɫ], *pore* /'phɔɔr/ [phɔʀ, 'phɔɫ]; the second taxophones are increasingly less frequent (and belong more to traditional pronunciation).

The series is completed by /ir, ir, ɛr; yr, yr, ɔr; ur, ur/ [i-, i-, e-; y-, y-, ɔ-; u-, u-], which maintain the second element unassimilated, ie /r/ [ʌ] and [ɫ#], if final and prepausal. Sequences of /VV/ + /r/ are also possible: *ord* /'ʊʊʀ/. Stressed initial V are often preceded by [ʔ].

/i(i)/ [i(i)], /y(y)/ [y(y)]		/u(u)/ [μ(μ)]
/I(I)/ [I(I)], /Y(Y)/ [Y(Y)]		/U(U)/ [U(U)]
/e(e)/ [e(e)], /ø(ø)/ [ø(ø)]		/ə/ [ə]
/εε/ [EE], /ø(ø)/ [ø(ø)]		/o(o)/ [o(o)]
/æ/ [ε, ↓ε]		/ɔ(ɔ)/ [σ(σ)], /C <sub>R</sub> / [C <sub>Λ</sub> , C <sub>Λ</sub> <sup>#</sup> ]
/a/ [a] ([↓A] + lab. & apic. C)		/ə/ [ə, Δ, Λ]
		/aa/ [aa]

/i, I/+/ð/ [i, I]+[ɹ]		/R(u)u/ [ʁ(u)u]
/y, Y/+/ð/ [y, Y]+[ɹ]		/Rø(ø)/ [ʁø(ø)]
/re(e)/ [ʁe(e)]		/øø/+/R/ [øø]
/εε/+/R/ [εε]		/Rø/ [ʁωø]
/RE/ [ʁε]		/ə/ [ɤ, ɔ, ɔ]
/εε/+/R/ [εε], /ε(ε)RV/ [ε(ε)ʁV]		
/æ#/ [A], /øR#/ [(ʁ)a]		

/ii/ [ii]		/uy(ə)/ [μy(ə)]
/ei/ [ei]		/yY/ [yY]
/εi/ [εi]		/Δy(ə)/ [Δy(ə)]
/ai(ə)/ [Ae(ə), ↓aə(ə), ↓↓aə(ə)]		

/iu/ [iμ]		/yu/ [yμ]
/Iu/ [Iμ]		/YU/ [Yμ]
/eu/ [eμ]		/øu/ [øμ]
/εu/ [εμ]		/ou/ [oμ]
/au/ [aμ]		/ɔu/ [ɔμ]
		/Δu/ [Δμ]

/i <sub>R</sub> / [i <sub>ʁ</sub> ], /y <sub>R</sub> / [y <sub>ʁ</sub> ]		/u <sub>R</sub> / [μ <sub>ʁ</sub> ]
/I <sub>R</sub> / [I <sub>ʁ</sub> ], /Y <sub>R</sub> / [Y <sub>ʁ</sub> ]		/U <sub>R</sub> / [U <sub>ʁ</sub> ]
/ε <sub>R</sub> / [ε <sub>ʁ</sub> ], /ø <sub>R</sub> / [ø <sub>ʁ</sub> ]		/ɔɔ/+/R/ = 'ɔɔɔ' [ɔɔ]
/aa/+/R/ = 'aaa' [a <sub>ʁ</sub> a]		

m	n	[ɲ]	ŋ
p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	[t <sup>h</sup> ]	k <sup>h</sup>
f v	ʃ	ʒ [ʒ]	j
ø	[ɹ]		[ɥ] [ɷ]
	l	[l]	ʁ h [ɦ]

// [· · · · · · · ·]	./ [· · · · ·]	?/ [· · · · ·]	;/ [· · · · ·]

17.36.3. /i, ɪ, y, ʏ/ + /ð/ have retracted taxophones [i̠, ɪ̠, y̠, ʏ̠], which are indicated: *stød* /'stɔ̠ð/ [ʃt̠ø̠]. Danish shows various sequences of vowel phonemes (either short or long, [V, VV]), phonetically real closing diphthongs, with /i/ [i], or especially /u/ [u], as a second element (deriving from previous /ɣ, v/, to which they are still synchronically linked). Notice, however, that /ai/ is mostly [Ae, ↓aə, ↓↓aə].

There are even some real triphthongs, which are generally hardly ever realistically indicated with 'VjV, VwV', which would lead one to think there are two syllables 'V#jV, V#wV'. The third to fifth vocograms show all these.

Sequences of /VV/ + /i, u/ are also possible: *eg*, *åg* /'ɪi²i, 'oo²u/, but they are often shortened to /V/ + /i, u/, especially in widely used words: /'ɪi², 'ou²/.

The abstract (tautosyllabic) sequences //ən, əl, əR// undergo assimilation, which is already included in our phonemic transcriptions /ŋ, ɭ, ʀ/ (the latter, [Λ, ɰ]#, from previous traditional [ʀ]): *halen* /'hɛɛɫŋ/, *gammel* /'kaməɫ/ [ʰkamɫ], *haler* /'hɛɛɫʀ/.

This assimilation can further extend to other voiced phonemes: *tiet* /'thiiəð/ [ʰhii̠ð], *hyldet* /'hɫəð/ [ʰhɫ̠ð]. Let us notice that currently (as already emerged from some examples given above) /ə#/ even assimilates to a preceding voiced phone, giving: *hale* /'hɛɛɫ/, *måne* /'moonə/ [ʰmoo̠n], *uge* /'uuə/ [ʰʀmu̠], *pige* /'phiiə/ [ʰhii, 'phi̠i], *pine* /'phiinə/ [ʰphi̠n], *gade* /'kɛɛðə/ [ʰkɛɛð̠], which are possibly further reduced in case of complete assimilation.

Let us also notice: *uforståelige* /ufɾ'stoo²əliə/ [uɸΛʃt̠oo̠lii].

17.36.4. As for *consonants*, we recall that /C<sup>h</sup>/ indicates /Ch, C/, which oppose word-initially; in the extant cases (even in /sC/) they occur without 'aspiration', and –between V– they are voiceless lenis, [p̠, t̠, k̠] (in careful pronunciation, but [b̠, d̠, ɡ̠] in connected speech).

Besides, we notice that in the capital and its outskirts, /th/ is often realized as [t̠h]: *ten* /'thii²n/ [ʰhii̠n; ʰt̠h-]; on the other hand, especially between V, /t/ is frequently realized as [ɿ] ('dasked *d*'): *otte* /'ootə/ [ʰt̠oo̠t̠ə, -d̠ə, -ɿə].

Besides, /n, t<sup>h</sup>, s, l/ + /j/ → [ɲj, t̠(h)j, s̠(j), ɭj], but usually //sj// → /ʃ/ [ʃ]. In addition, in quick speech /h/ can become [ɦ] between V.

17.36.5. As already seen, Danish has a typical consonantal sound: /ð/ [ɹ], 'blødt *d*' /'plyt 'tii²/ [ʰplyt̠ ʰtii̠], a voiced lateralized dental approximant (which foreigners often mistake for /l/).

*Stød* is a typically Danish phenomenon by which stressed (or half-stressed) V either short (followed by voiced C) or long can present distinctively the creaky phonation type (in place of ancient tones): *hun* /'hun/ [ʰɦun] 'she', *hund* /'hun²/ [ʰɦun̠] 'dog'; also, *mor* /'mooʀ/ [ʰmoo̠ʀ] 'mother', *mord* /'mooʀ²ʀ/ [ʰmoo̠ʀ̠] 'murder'; *tænder* /'thenʀ/ [ʰʰen̠] 'lighter', *tænder* /'then²ʀ/ [ʰʰen̠ʀ̠] 'teeth'.

Some speakers pronounce /V², C²/ as sequences of [Vʀ, Cʀ]. However, nowadays, this pronunciation is not considered to be neutral any longer, except when speaking slowly or emphatically; otherwise, it is regional.

Let us finish with some interesting transcriptions: *København* /khyɾŋ'haʊ²n/ [khyɾŋm̠'haʊ̠n], *Kierkegaard* /'khiɾkəkəʊ²/ [ʰkhi̠k̠ə̠k̠ə̠, -k̠ə̠k̠-, -k̠k̠-], *Lars von Trier* /'laas fən'thrii²ʀ/ [ʰlaas̠ fən'thri̠i̠ʀ̠].

17.36.6. *Spelling*. Vowels: *a* /εε, æ, a/ (but only /a, aa/ before or after *r*), *e* /ɪɪ, e; ɪ/ (after *r*, normally /ε, ee, ei/; before *r* /ε, ɪɪ/), *eg#|ej* /aɪ/, *er(#)* /ɛr/, *i* /ii, i, ɪ/, *o* /ʊʊ, ɒ, o; ʊ/ (before *g*, *v* even /oo/), *or* /ɔɔ, ɔ/, *u* /uu, u, o; ʊ/, *y* /yy, y, ʏ/, *æ* /e, ee/ (before *r* /εε, ε/, after *r* /ee, ε/), *ø* /ʏʏ, ʏ, ø, øø/ (before *r* /ʏʏ, øø, ø/, after *r* /ø, øø, ø/; /ø, øø/ only, but not necessarily, before *m*, *n*, *v*, or after *r*), *ør* /ʏʏr, ør/, *øj* /ɔʏ/, *å* /oo, ɒ, o/, *år* /ɔɔ, ɔ/, *Vv(l/n)#* /Vu(l/n)/.

Consonants: *b* /p/ (finally, even /v#, u#/), *c* /sʏ, k/, *ch* /ʃ/, *d* /#t, ð#, ðə, ði/ (silent in *ld*, *nd*, *rd#*, *ds*, *dt*), *-dd-* /ð/, *g* /#k, ʏθ, ʏi#, ʏu#/, *lg* /lj/, *rg* /ru/, *-gg-* /k/, *h* /h/, *#hj* /j/, *#hv* /v/, *jV* /j/, *k* /#kh, k/, *ng* /ŋ/, *p* /#ph, p/, *r* /r, r#/ (*Vre(r)#* /V(V)r/, *Vrre(r)#* /V(r)rr/, *Cre#* /Crr/, *ere#* /rr/), *s* /s/, *t* /#th, t/, *z* /s/.

17.36.7. The fundamental *intonation* patterns are shown in the tonogram at the end of the figure.