

SHANGHAI CONSONANTS

	Denti-		Retro-	Alveo-	Palatal	Post-		
	Labial	labial	Dental	flex	lar	Velar	velar	Glottal
Voiceless stop		p		t			k	
Aspirated stop		p'		t'			k'	
Voiced stop		b		d			g	
Voiceless affricate				ts		chy		
Aspirated affricate				ts'		ch'y		
Voiced affricate						iy		
Voiceless fricative		f		s		sy		h
Voiced fricative		v		z		zy		fi
Nasal		m		n			ng	
Voiceless nasal								
Lateral				l				
Voiceless lateral								
Flap or trill								
Voiceless flap								
Semivowels		w				y		

There are an especially large number of vowels in Shanghainese: *i*, *e*, *ɛ*, *a*, *z*, *ə*, *ǎ*, *ɔ*, *u*, *o*, *ü*, *ö*, *er*. The vowel that is written here as *z* is pronounced with the blade of the tongue so close to the alveolar ridge it has a fricative quality. It is similar to the vowel of Mandarin *sì* 'four,' and it only occurs after the consonants *ts-*, *ts'-*, *s-*, and *z-*. The central vowel *ǎ* is very unusual; it is pronounced with the tongue bunched up in the center of the mouth, but how the articulation differs from that of schwa (*ə*) is uncertain. The acoustic impression is that it has rounding of some kind. The retroflex vowel *er*, which is pronounced like its Mandarin equivalent, is heard mostly in learned words; *er*² 'ear,' for example, is the form a Shanghainese doctor uses in the term for the ear-nose-throat department of a clinic. The usual, colloquial word for 'ear' is *ni*² (or *ni²tu*).

This large inventory of vowels is in part the result of historical changes. Many vowels, for example, come from original diphthongs. Others occur in syllables where a final nasal has been lost. In such cases Mandarin has been more conservative. Compare the following words:

	Shanghai	Peking
'come'	le ²	lái
'good'	hɔ ²	hào
'dog'	kǎ ²	gǒu
'plate'	bō ²	pán
'full'	mō ²	mǎn
'rice'	ve ²	fán

A Shanghainese syllable can only end in a vowel, a glottal stop (*q*), or the nasal *-ng*. The final nasal is sometimes heard as a real velar consonant [ŋ], and sometimes just as nasalization on the preceding vowel—the word for 'square,' for

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