

Some useful minimal pairs

The following does not include non-troublesome pairings such as *catch* and *match*, *say* and *play* etc. because learners are very unlikely to have difficulty distinguishing between /k/ and /m/ or /s/ and /p/. It focuses on sound pairs which do cause difficulty for some learners.

Consonants			
/m/ vs. /n/	/s/ vs. /θ/	/tʃ/ vs. /t/	/g/ vs. /dʒ/
beam bean beam been came cane comb cone dim din game gain grim grin same sane seem seen spam span team teen term turn	force fourth mass math mouse mouth miss myth pass path saw thaw sank thank sick thick sigh thigh sink think sing thing sum thumb	chair tear chalk talk chap tap chart tart cheese Ts chest test chew two chick tick chin tin chip dip chop top chum tum	gale jail gear jeer get jet ghee G gig jig gone John goose juice gorge George got jot guest jest gunk junk gust just
/r/ vs. /l/	/p/ vs. /b/	/θ/ vs. /s/	/v/ vs. /w/
arrive alive cloud crowd collect correct grow glow light right ramp lamp rock lock root loot royal loyal	cup cub pack back park bark path bath pay bay peach beach pig big pin bin tap tab	thank sank thaw saw thick sick thigh sigh think sink thong song thought sought thorn sawn thumb sum	veil whale vein wane verse worse vest west vet wet vie why vine wine vow wow Vs wheeze
/f/ vs. /v/	/t/ vs. /d/	/b/ vs. /v/	/t/ vs. /ð/
fairy vary fan van fast vast fender vendor foul vowel save safe vine fine	tart dart ten den tie die tin din tip dip tore door town down	vale bale van ban vat bat vest best vet bet vile bile vole bowl	tear their tease these ten then toe though
/d/ vs. /θ/	/d/ vs. /ð/	/dʒ/ vs. /d/	/f/ vs. /v/
dank thank dick thick dirty thirty door thaw dread thread	dare their day they den then dough though doze those	jam dam jaw door jive dive jug dug just dust	fail veil fan van fear veer file vial fine vine

/k/ vs. /g/	/k/ vs. /ŋ/	/tʃ/ vs. /ʃ/	/θ/ vs. /s/
cap gap card guard coal goal cold gold curl girl lack lag sack sag	back bang kick king luck lung ruck rung stick sting tuck tongue wick wing	chair share cheap sheep chew shoe chip ship choose shoes chop shop chose shows	thank sank thick sick thigh sigh think sink thong song thorn sawn thumb sum
/k/ vs. /tʃ/	/s/ vs. /ʃ/	/n/ vs. /ŋ/	/g/ vs. /ŋ/
cane chain cap chap care chair cat chat come chum coo chew keep cheap keys cheese kick chick kill chill kin chin	cell shell sack shack save shave saw shore seat sheet sell shell sew show sign shine sip ship sock shock suit shoot	ban bang fan fang gone gong run rung thin thing ton tongue win wing	bag bang big bing lug lung rig ring rug rung tug tongue wig wing
		/t/ vs. /θ/	/θ/ vs. /f/
		tank thank tick thick tong thong	thaw four thin fin three free
Vowels			
/i:/ vs. /ɪ/	/ɜ:/ vs. /ɑ:/	/ɜ:/ vs. /ɔ:/	/ʌ/ vs. /e/
beach bitch green grin peel pill reach rich seater sitter	curt cart hurt heart lurk lark murk mark shirk shark	bird bored burn born fur four curd cord were war	buck beck bunch bench butt bet just jest jut jet
/ʌ/ vs. /u:/	/æ/ vs. /ʌ/	/u:/ vs. /ʊ/	/əʊ/ vs. /ɔ:/
hut hoot nun noon rough roof shut shoot	back buck cap cup hat hut lack luck	food foot fool full look Luke pool pull	bone born coat court dose doors moan mourn
/æ/ vs. /e/	/e/ vs. /ɪ/	/aɪ/ vs. /eɪ/	/eɪ/ vs. /e/
bag beg bat bet man men sand send	hell hill letter litter set sit west whist	bite bait file fail height hate tile tail	bait bet based best hail hell shale shell
/ɒ/ vs. /æ/	/ɪə/ vs. /ɔ:/	/əʊ/ vs. /aʊ/	/ɔɪ/ vs. /aʊ/
cot cat hot hat pot pat top tap	beer bore cheer chore fear four mere more	boat bout dote doubt float flout tote tout	boy bough coy cow hoy how soy sow