

English Phonetics and Phonology

Chapter One & Two

Introduction

Definitions

- **Phonemes** refer to abstract set of units that represent the basis of our speech.
- **Transcription** refers to the use of special symbols to represent speech sounds.
- **Accent** is a speech variety differing in its pronunciation from other varieties. The variation may be due to regional factors, (a London, Geordie, Somerset, etc. accent) or social factors (an RP accent).
- **Dialect:** A form of a language differentiated from the standard language by particular features of grammar, vocabulary and accent and associated with a particular region, for instance Norfolk dialect, or social background, for instance English RP.

Chapter two

The production of speech sounds

- **Vowel and consonant**
- **Vowels** are sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips.
- **Consonants** are sounds in which there is an obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips. However, some consonants are produced without obstruction to the air flow such as /h/, /j/ and /w/.
- **Distribution** is the study of the different contexts and positions in which particular sounds can occur.

Vowel

- Vowels can be described in terms of close/open and front/back.
- Close and open refers to the tongue height (the distance between the tongue and the roof of the mouth). For example i: is close while ae is open.
- Front and back refers to which part of the tongue is the highest. For example, i: is front vowel because the front part of the tongue is raised. While u is back because the back part of the tongue is raised.

	Front	Back
Close	i:	u:
Open	æ	ɑ:

The cardinal vowels

- **cardinal vowels** are a standard reference system of vowels. It is a very accurate way of classifying vowels, and have developed a set of vowels which are arranged in a close-open, front-back diagram similar to the one above but which are not the vowels of any particular language.
- **Primary cardinal vowels**; these are the vowels that are most familiar to the speakers of most European languages.

Primary cardinal vowels

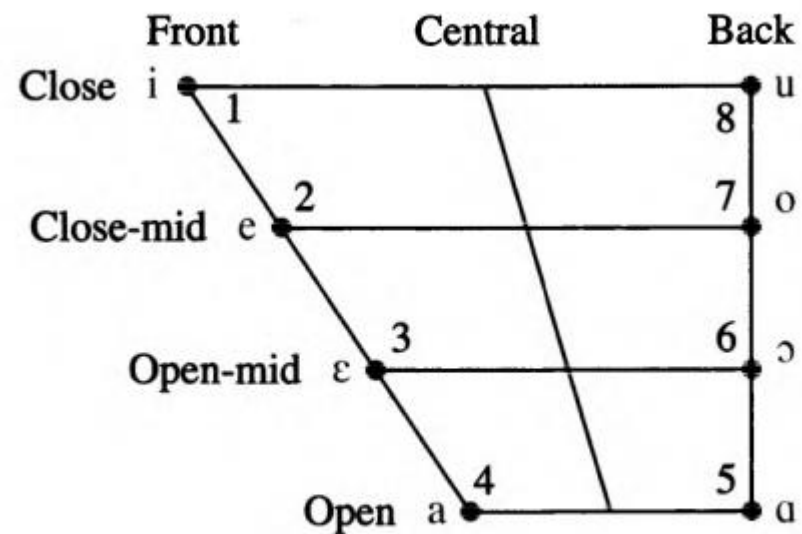


Fig. 4 Primary cardinal vowels

- Although the lips can have many different shapes and positions, we will at this stage consider only three possibilities. These are:
 - i) **Rounded**, where the corners of the lips are brought towards each other and the lips pushed forwards. This is most clearly seen in cardinal vowel no. 8 [u].
 - ii) **Spread**, with the corners of the lips moved away from each other, as for a smile. This is most clearly seen in cardinal vowel no. 1 [i].
 - iii) **Neutral**, where the lips are not noticeably rounded or spread. The noise most English people make when they are hesitating (written er5) has neutral lip position.

English short vowels

- English has a large number of vowel sounds; the first ones to be examined are short vowels. The symbols for these short vowels are: i, e, æ, ʌ, ɒ, u. Short vowels are only relatively short; as we shall see later, vowels can have quite different lengths in different contexts.

i, e, ae, Λ, o, u

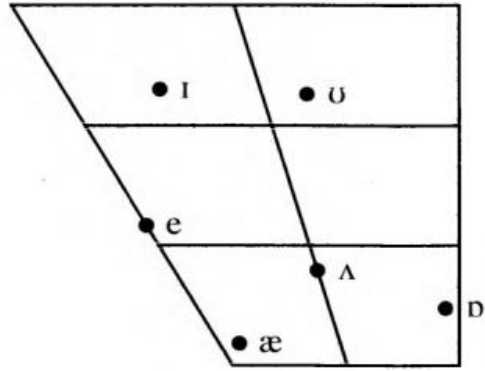


Fig. 5 English short vowels

- i (example words: 'bit', 'pin', 'fish') The diagram shows that, though this vowel is in the close front area, compared with cardinal vowel no. 1 [i] it is more open, and nearer in to the centre. The lips are slightly spread.
- e (example words: 'bet', 'men', 'yes') This is a front vowel between cardinal vowel no. 2 [e] and no. 3 [ɛ]. The lips are slightly spread.
- æ (example words: 'bat', 'man', 'gas') This vowel is front, but not quite as open as cardinal vowel no. 4 [a]. The lips are slightly spread.
- ʌ (example words: 'cut', 'come', 'rush') This is a central vowel, and the diagram shows that it is more open than the open-mid tongue height. The lip position is neutral.
- ɒ (example words: 'pot', 'gone', 'cross') This vowel is not quite fully back, and between open-mid and open in tongue height. The lips are slightly rounded.
- ʊ (example words: 'put', 'pull', 'push') The nearest cardinal vowel is no. 8 [u], but it

Examples

- Boys 11
- i\ fit, hit,
- e\ then, sent
- ae\ 0
- ʌ\ cut, love
- ɒ\ object, spot, god
- u\full,

- Girls 12
- i\ lift
- e\ left, send, pen
- ae\ hat, sad, that
- ʌ\ shut, bus
- ɒ\ loss, Tom, wash
- u\

Examples

- i\ bit, pin, fish\ fit, ...
- e\ bet, men, yes\ pet, pen
- ae\ bat, man, gas\ cat, fat
- ʌ\ cut, come, rush\ up, hug
- ɒ\ pot, gone, cross\ want
- u\ put, pull, push\ book, would