

# EL2211 Historical Variation in English (Sem 2, 2008/09) Tutorial No. 2

**1. Consonants.** Put in, between the oblique strokes, the first segments of the following words.

coo / /	cent / /	chill / /
chic / /	chemical / /	quill / /
shunt / /	gents / /	gamble / /
phrase / /	psst / /	psych / /
thwack / /	those / /	tsunami / /
yeti / /	jest / /	xylem / /

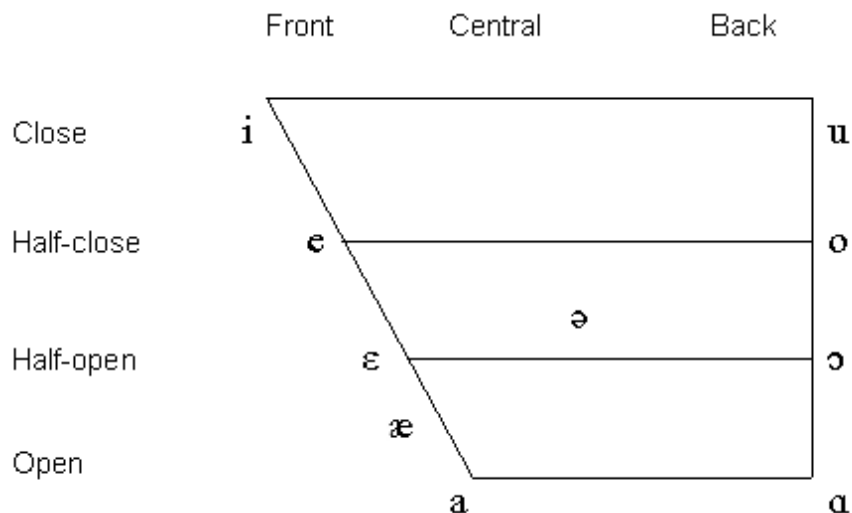
Now put in, between the oblique strokes, the last segments of the following words.

sin / /	sing / /	garage / /
climb / /	fax / /	of / /

**2. Vowels (long, diphthongs).** Examine the vowel diagram on page 2.

Decide which symbol represents the vowel sound in the words below (in your pronunciation) – if you think the vowel sound you make is not represented in the IPA symbols introduced to you, leave the space blank. If you are aware of different vowel sounds employed by speakers with other accents, you may include that at the side as well.

bar / /	boat / /	boot / /
bead / /	bay / /	board / /
bide / /	bout / /	



### 3. The Great Vowel Shift (GVS).

(a) If you bear in mind that English spelling was 'fixed' before the GVS, try to have a guess about the vowel sounds for these words in Middle English: *find*, *we*, *speak*, *lady* [first syllable], *oak*, *goose*, *house*, and try to indicate the positions in the vowel chart on p. 1.

(b) Now consider their present-day pronunciations, and indicate with arrows the shifts that the vowel sounds have undergone.



(c) Aitchison (1991) likens the GVS to the Mad Hatter's tea-party. Why? If you're not familiar with *Alice in Wonderland*, here is the appropriate quotation from it:

'I want a clean cup,'  
interrupted the Hatter: 'Let's  
all move one place on.'  
He moved on as he  
spoke, and the Dormouse  
followed him; the March Hare

moved into the Dormouse's place, and Alice rather unwillingly took the place of the March Hare. The Hatter was the only one who got any advantage from the change: and Alice was a good deal worse off, as the March Hare had just upset the milk-jug into his plate.

**4. Rhoticity.** The post-vocalic /r/ (or the non-prevocalic /r/) seems to have wreaked havoc on the vowel sound preceding it, before this /r/ was lost in many accents.

(a) Give some examples of one-syllable words with <-ar-> (but not <-are->). What vowel sounds are used today?

(b) Give some examples of one-syllable words with <-ir->, <-ur-> and <-er-> (but not <-ire>, <-ure> or <-ere>). What vowel sounds are used today?

(c) Give some examples of one-syllable words with <-eer-> and <-ere->. What vowel sounds are used today?

(d) Give some examples of one-syllable words with <-are>. What vowel sounds are used today?

(e) Give some examples of one-syllable words with <-ire>. What vowel sounds are used today?

(f) Give some examples of one-syllable words with <-ure>. What vowel sounds are used today?

(g) Think about the likely ME pronunciations of these words, remembering that today's spelling often reflects the ME pronunciations. Are there some patterns of change? Organise the examples according to the patterns of change. (Don't get too worried if there seem to be some exceptions or if not everything fits into the pattern.)

**NOTE:** Questions 1 and 2 should be finished very quickly. Question 3 might take more time and Question 4 will probably take the longest time. (Some selection might be necessary.)