

EL2111 Historical Variation in English

(Sem 2, 2020/21)

Tutorial No. 2

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

cart / /	cell / /	cello / /
chef / /	cholera / /	quaint / /
shunt / /	gel / /	gill / /
phlegm / /	psst / /	psych / /
thistle / /	thither / /	tsetse / /
yeti / /	jest / /	xanthium / /

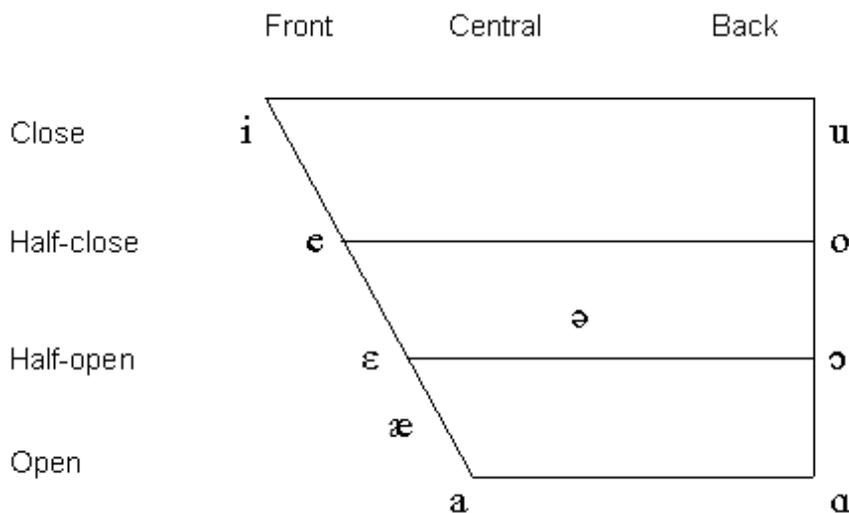
Now put in, between the oblique strokes, the **last** segments of the following words.

sin / /	sing / /	garage / /
climb / /	fax / /	of / /
with / /	worth / /	

2. Vowels (long, diphthongs). Examine the vowel diagram below.

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. Compare the pronunciations and spellings of

these groups of words. If we assume that spelling is conservative and in fact reflects the pronunciation of words around 1400, what kinds of pronunciation changes would you say have occurred? (Warning: (e) is particularly tricky.)

- (a) cat, mat, cart
- (b) fist, first, fir
- (c) fend, fern
- (d) fun, fur, hurt
- (e) steak, bean, hear, wear
- (f) sake, mate, lame, bare, care
- (g) white, bile, side, wire, hire
- (h) cute, tune, cube, lure, pure

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.)

John Wells's key words for vowels. You might want to put in symbols for **your own** pronunciation!

Keyword RP	Example words
KIT I	ship, rip, dim, spirit
DRESS e	step, ebb, hem, terror
TRAP æ or a	bad, cab, ham, arrow
LOT ɒ	stop, rob, swan
STRUT ʌ	cub, rub, hum
FOOT ʊ	full, look, could
BATH ɑ:	staff, clasp, dance
CLOTH ɒ	cough, long, laurel, origin
NURSE ɜ:	hurt, term, work
FLEECE i:	seed, key, seize
FACE eɪ	weight, rein, steak
PALM ɑ:	calm, bra, father
THOUGHT ɔ:	taut, hawk, broad
GOAT əʊ or ou	soap, soul, home
GOOSE u:	who, group, few
PRICE aɪ or ʌɪ	ripe, tribe, aisle, choir
CHOICE ɔɪ	boy, void, coin
MOUTH aʊ	pouch, noun, crowd, flower
NEAR ɪə	beer, pier, fierce, serious
SQUARE εə or eə or ε:	care, air, wear, Mary
START ɑ:	far, sharp, farm, safari
NORTH ɔ:	war, storm, for, aural
FORCE ɔ:	floor, coarse, ore, oral
CURE ʊə	poor, tour, fury