



# Unit 5a

## Vowels (2)

### The system of English vowels and diphthongs

Print version of the  
*Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)*  
presentation given on  
23 May 2023

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5a.1

/ˈɪŋ glɪf fə ˈnet ɪks ˈjuːn ɪt ˈfaɪv ˈeɪ/ (phonemic) <English Phonetics: Unit 5a:> (orthographic) [ˈɪŋ.gɫɪf  
fə.ˈnɛt.ɪks ˈjuː.n.ɪt ˈfaɪv\_ˈeɪ] (narrow phonetic: RP)

/ˈvaʊəlz ˈtuː/ /ˈvaʊ əlz ˈtuː/ (phonemic) <Vowels (2)> (orthographic) [ˈvəʊəlz ˈtʰuː] [ˈvəʊ.əlz ˈtʰuː]  
(narrow phonetic: RP)

/ðə ˈsɪs təm əv ˈɪŋ glɪf ˈvaʊ əlz ən ˈdɪf θɒŋz/ (phonemic) <The system of English vowels and  
diphthongs> (orthographic) [ðə ˈsɪs.təm\_əv\_ˈɪŋ.gɫɪf ˈvəʊ.əlz\_ən ˈdɪf.θɒŋz] (narrow phonetic: RP)

Ist dieses System der diakritischen Zeichen überhaupt wohltemperiert? Will heißen: Ist *Dis* identisch mit  
*Es*? Ist [ɛ] identisch mit [ɛ̃]?

i.e. is this rocket science, or not??

5a.2

## 1 Goals

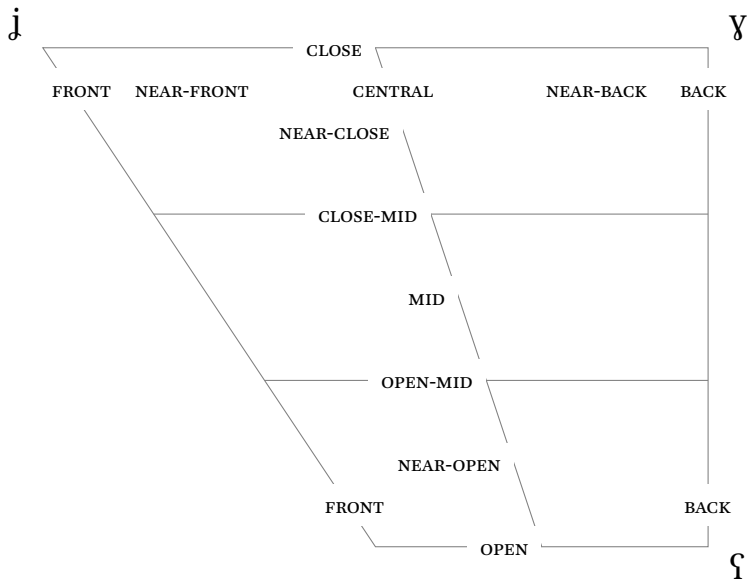
The goals of today's session are:

1. To give an overview of the system of vowel and diphthong phonemes in English
2. To examine the typical phonetic realizations (phones, allophones) of the vowel and diphthong phonemes of English in the Received Pronunciation of British English
3. To begin practising some of the English vowels and diphthongs that can be problematic to speakers of various other languages, especially German
4. To prepare the ground for a systematic comparison (next week) of the vowels and diphthongs of German, the Received Pronunciation of British English, General American English, and Australian English.

5a.3

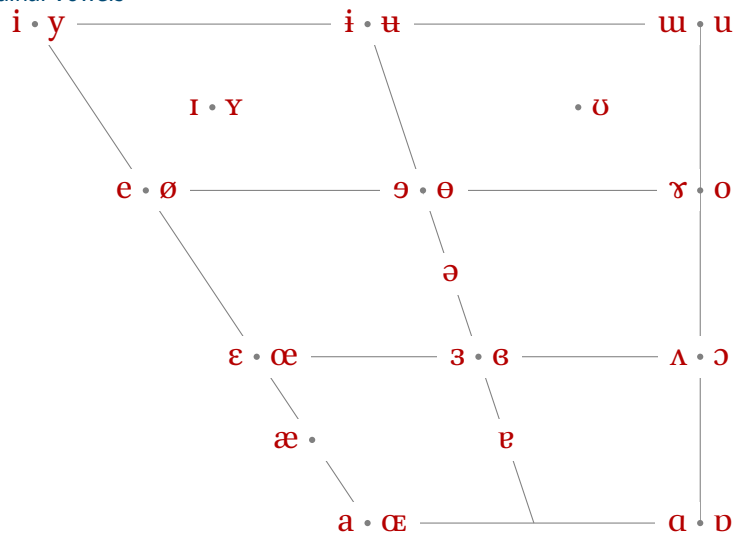
## 2 Experiment

Vowel Quadrilateral



5a.4

Cardinal Vowels



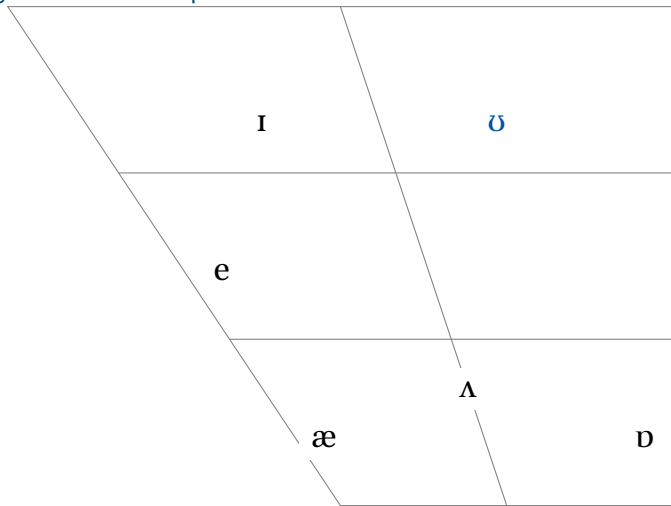
5a.5

English short vowels: lexical sets



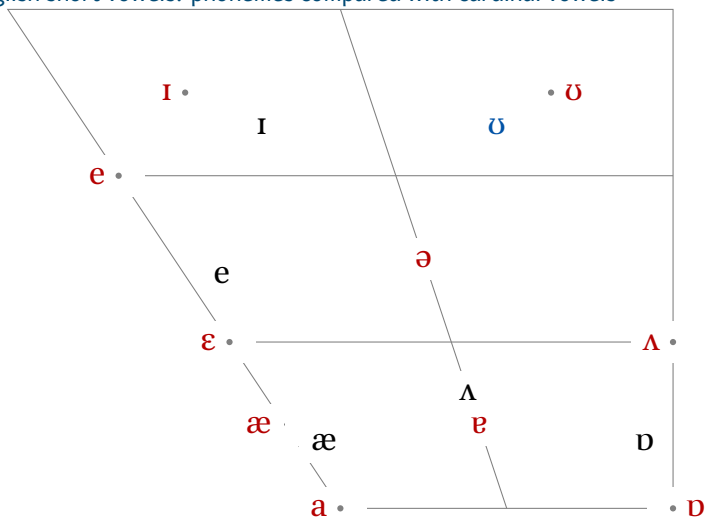
5a.6

English short vowels: phonemes



5a.7

English short vowels: phonemes compared with cardinal vowels



5a.8

English short vowels: examples

pit	pet	pat	pot	putt	put		
/pɪt/	/pet/	/pæt/	/pɒt/	/pʌt/	/pʊt/		
[pʰɪt]	[pʰɛt]	[pʰæt]	[pʰɒt]	[pʰɛt]	[pʰʊt]		
bit	bid	wick	wig	nip	nib	hiss	his
[bɪt]	[brɪd]	[wɪk]	[wɪg]	[nɪp]	[nɪb]	[hɪs]	[hɪz]
set	said	debt	dead	etch	edge	cess	says
[sɛt]	[sɛɪd]	[dɛt]	[dɛɪd]	[ɛtʃ]	[ɛɪdʒ]	[sɛs]	[sɛɪz]
fat	fad	back	bag	batch	badge	slap	slab
[fæt]	[fæɪd]	[bæk]	[bæɡ]	[bætʃ]	[bæɪdʒ]	[slæp]	[slæb]
cop	cob	knot	nod	lock	log	hops	Hobbes
[kʰɒp]	[kʰɒb]	[nɒt]	[nɒd]	[lɒk]	[lɒɡ]	[hɒps]	[hɒbz]
cup	cub	duck	dug	fuss	fuzz	once	ones
[kʰɛp]	[kʰɛb]	[dɛk]	[dɛɡ]	[fɛs]	[fɛz]	[wɒns]	[wɒnz]
put	bush	soot	foot	wool	stood	hood	good
[pʰʊt]	[bʊʃ]	[sɒt]	[fʊt]	[wʊl]	[stʊd]	[hʊd]	[ɡʊd]

5a.9

English short vowels: more examples

kit	dress	strap	lot	strut	foot
/kɪt/	/dres/	/stræp/	/lɒt/	/strʌt/	/fɒt/
[k <sup>h</sup> ɪt]	[dɹ̩ɛs]	[str̩æp]	[lɒt]	[str̩ʌt]	[fɒt]

it fits him | big business stinks | Tim hit his shins | /ɪt fɪts hɪm/ /bɪg 'bɪznɪs stɪŋks/ /\*tɪm hɪt hɪz ʃɪnz/

let's get set | lead's heavy | chem sex isn't the same as cam sex | /lets get set/ /ledz 'hevi/ /kem seks ɪz.nt ðə sem əz kəm seks/

the black cat tried to catch a rat | the back hatstand is for caps | /ðə blæk kæt traɪd tu kæʃ ə ræt/ /ðə bæ k 'hætstænd ɪz fə kæps/

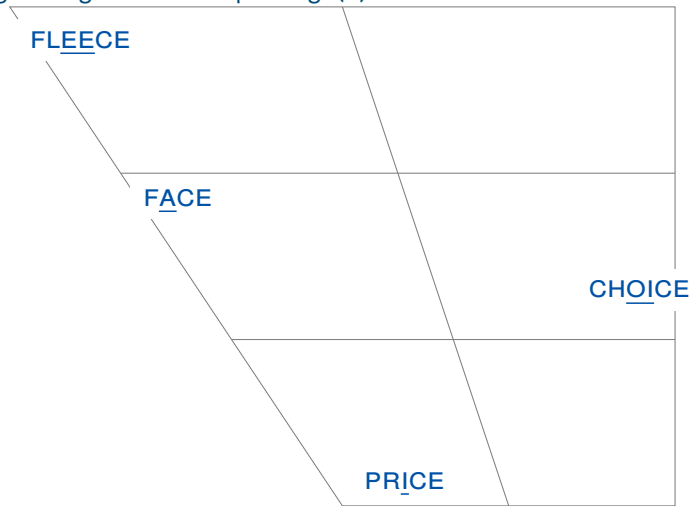
I want to wander in the tropics | Don Johnson is on top | /aɪ wɒnt tu 'wɒndəɪ m ðə 'trɒpɪks/ /\*dɒn \*dʒɒnsən ɪz ɒn tɒp/

cut up the tough stuff | it's lovely honey and butter | /kʌt ʌp ðə tʌf stʌf/ /ɪts 'lʌvli 'hʌni ən 'bʌtə/

look, full of books | Cook took a look | Cook took Brook's rook | /lʊk | fʊl əv bʊks/ /\*kʊk tʊk ə lʊk/ /\*kʊk tʊk \*brʊks rʊk/

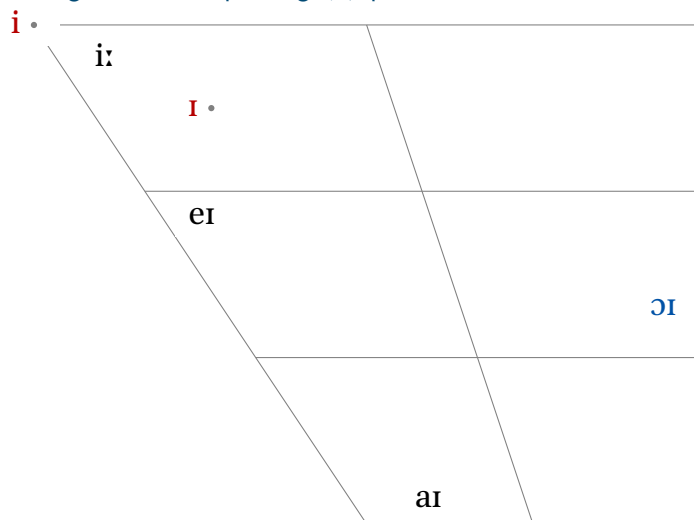
5a.10

English long vowels and diphthongs (1): lexical sets



5a.11

English long vowels and diphthongs (1): phonemes



5a.12

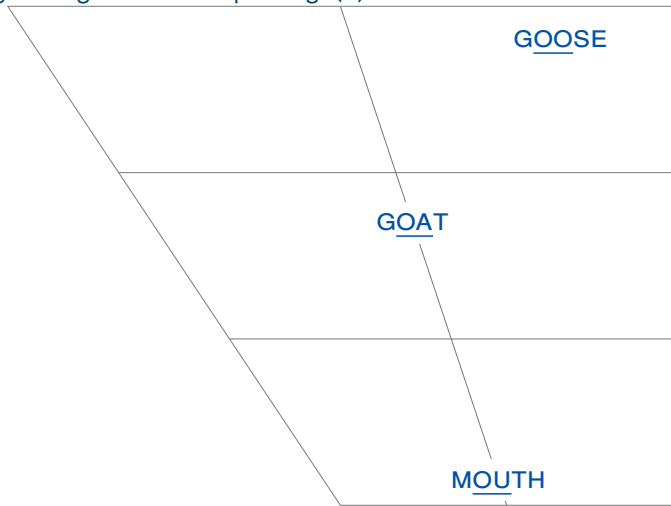
English long vowels and diphthongs (1): examples

fleece	face	price	choice				
/fli:s/	/feɪs/	/praɪs/	/tʃɔɪs/				
[fl̩iːs]	[f̩eɪs]	[p̩aɪs]	[tʃ̩ɔɪs]				
fleece	fleas	heat	heed	belief	believe	cease	seize
[fli:s]	[fli:z]	[hi:t]	[hi:d]	[bi.'li:f]	[bi.'li:v]	[si:s]	[si:z]
face	phase	pace	pay	wait	wade	fate	fade
[feɪs]	[feɪz]	[pʰeɪs]	[pʰeɪ]	[weɪt]	[weɪd]	[feɪt]	[feɪd]
price	prize	ice	eyes	wright	ride	dice	die
[p̩aɪs]	[p̩aɪz]	[aɪs]	[aɪz]	[ɹˈwaɪt]	[ɹˈwaɪd]	[daɪs]	[daɪ]
choice	Choy's	Joyce	joys	quoit	coy	Boyce	boys
[tʃ̩ɔɪs]	[tʃ̩ɔɪz]	[dʒɔɪs]	[dʒɔɪz]	[kɔɪt]	[kɔɪ]	[bɔɪs]	[bɔɪz]

It's the bee's knees! Peachy keen! Squeaky clean! Lean and mean!  
 The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain. (K)no(w) pain, (k)no(w) gain.  
 Try it – you'll like it! "I like Ike!" ("I like Pike!") Mike's on Skype.  
 Noisy toys point to boys. (This one's been reported to the gender police.)

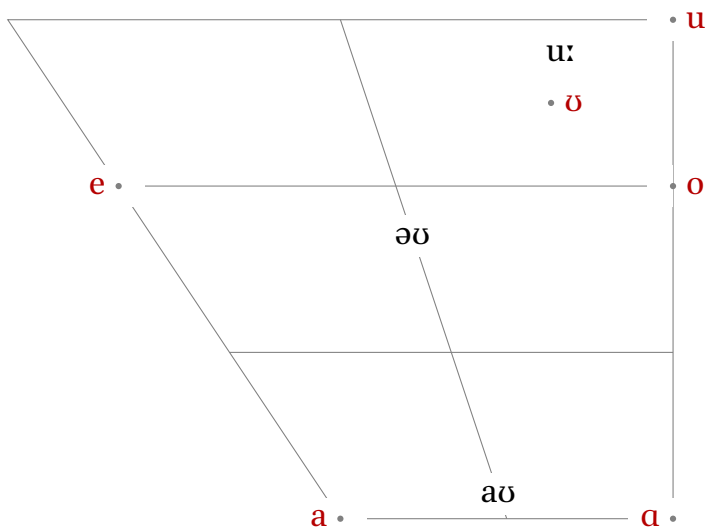
5a.13

English long vowels and diphthongs (2): lexical sets



5a.14

English long vowels and diphthongs (2): phonemes



5a.15

English long vowels and diphthongs (2): examples

goose	goat	mouth		
/gu:z/	/gəʊt/	/maʊθ/		
[gʊːs]	[gəʊt]	[maʊθ]	[mɛʊθ]	[mΛʊθ]

moot	mood	use (n.)	use (v.)	proof	prove
[mʊːt]	[mʊːd]	[jʊːs]	[jʊːz]	[pɹʊːf]	[pɹʊːv]

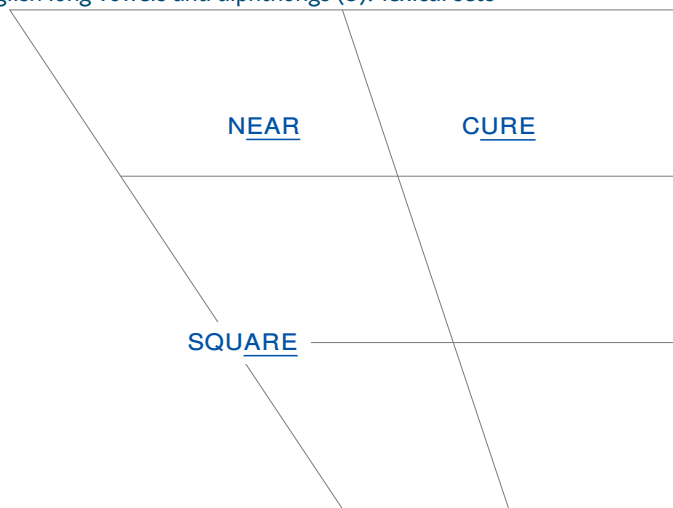
goat	goad	dose	doze	close (n.)	close (v.)
[gəʊt]	[gəːd]	[dəʊs]	[dəːz]	[kləʊs]	[kləːz]

mouth (n.)	mouth (v.)	house (n.)	house (v.)	bout	bough
[maʊθ]	[maːθ]	[haʊs]	[haːz]	[baʊt]	[baːʊ]

Whose shoe's loose? Sue knew. Hugh's tune is due in June.  
 I suppose so. It's Flo's go. Oh no, don't go home alone.  
 How now, brown cow? Out out, town mouse! Clouds and showers.

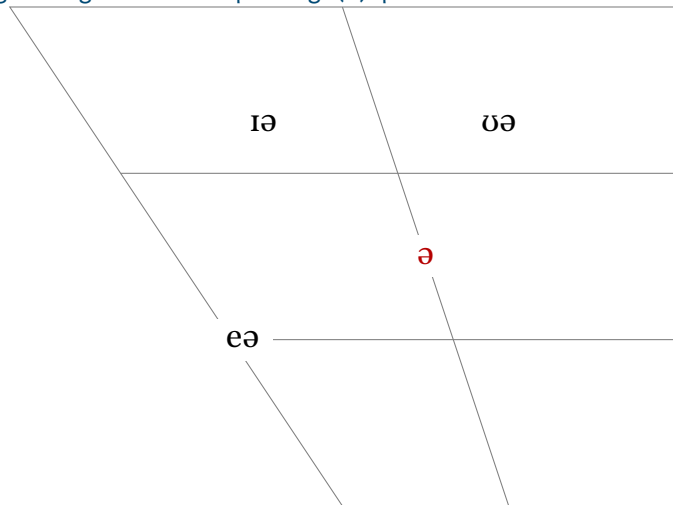
5a.16

English long vowels and diphthongs (3): lexical sets



5a.17

English long vowels and diphthongs (3): phonemes



5a.18

English long vowels and diphthongs (3): examples

near	square	cure			
/nɪə/	/skweə/	/kjʊə/			
[nr̩ə]	[skwɛ̃ə]	[kjʊ̃ə]	[kjɔ:]		

pierce	peers	fierce	fear	weird	beard
[pɪ̃əs]	[pɪ̃r̩z]	[fɪəs]	[fɪə]	[wɪ̃əd]	[br̩əd]

scarce	scares	there	their	they're	mayor	prayer
[skɛ̃əs]	[skɛ̃əz]	[ðɛ̃ə]	[ðɛ̃ə]	[ðɛ̃ə]	[mɛ̃ə]	[pɪ̃ɛ̃ə]

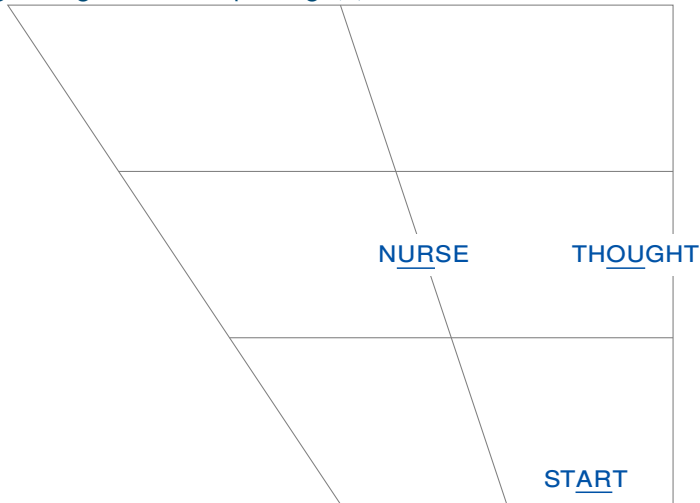
  

your	you're	sure	pure	poor	Europe
[jʊ̃ə]	[jʊ̃ə]	[ʃʊ̃ə]	[pjʊ̃ə]	[pɪ̃hʊ̃ə]	[ˈjʊ̃ɹ̩.əp]

Here and there, we're aware of Peter Pears paring a pair of pears.  
 Here they're all ours; there they're all theirs.  
 This is your big "But you're Jean Ure, aren't you?" moment!  
 Are you sure (/ʃʊ:/ <Shaw>)? No, I'm Shakespeare!

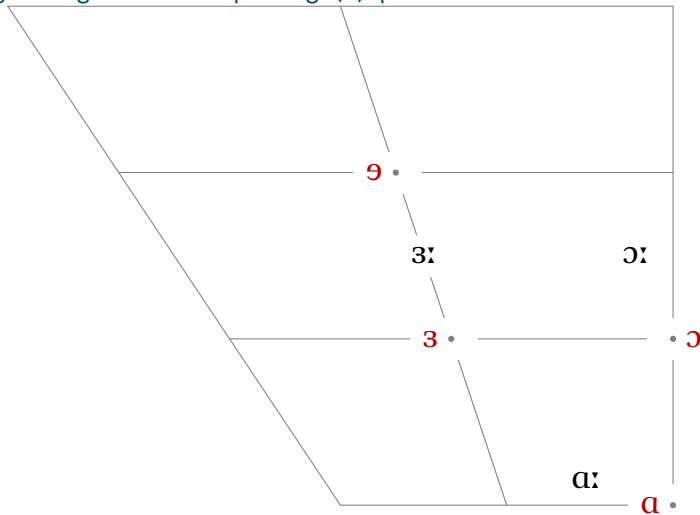
5a.19

English long vowels and diphthongs (4): lexical sets



5a.20

English long vowels and diphthongs (4): phonemes



5a.21

English long vowels and diphthongs (4): examples

start nurse thought  
 /stɑ:t/ /nɜ:s/ /θɔ:t/  
 [stɑ̃ːt] [nɜ̃ːa] [θɔ̃ːt]

part staff starve cars bar bra  
 [pʰɑːt] [stɑːf] [stɑːv] [kɑːz] [bɑː] [br̩ɑː]

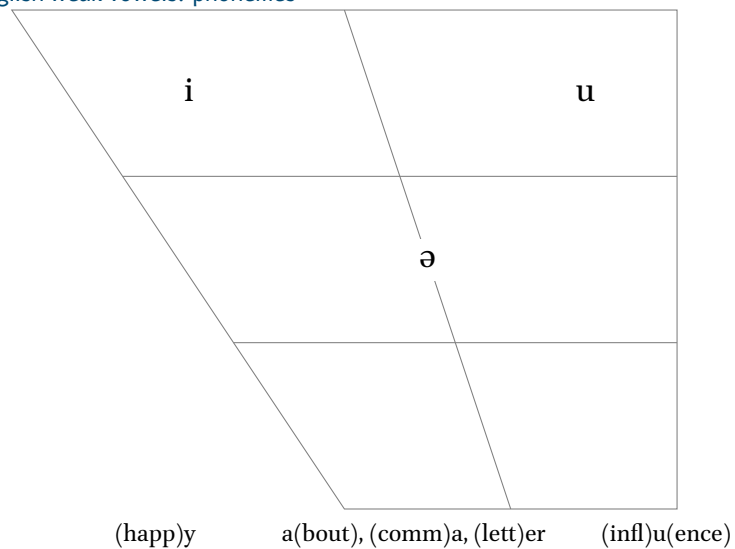
search surge merch merge fir prefer fur  
 [sɜːtʃ] [sɜːdʒ] [mɜːtʃ] [mɜːdʒ] [fɜː] [pɪˌiːˈfɜː] [fɜː]

law war court cord course cores sauce saws  
 [lɔː] [wɔː] [kɔːt] [kɔːd] [kɔːs] [kɔːz] [sɔːs] [sɔːz]

Ma parks Pa's car | last dance, last chance | a large farmyard  
 Percy turned, when he heard the girl's words | birds searched the earth for worms  
 you're four boards short | Lord Gordon caught naught | coarse gorse tore your horse

5a.22

English weak vowels: phonemes



5a.23