

English Phonetics-II

6. Diphthongs and Triphthongs

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LECTURE OUTLINE

- English diphthongs: definition and formal characteristics.
- English vs. Spanish diphthongs. Main differences.
- Diphthongs and vowel sequences. The case of [ui]-[ju].
 - Centring diphthongs
 - Falling diphthongs
- The status of 'triphthongs' in RP

1. WHAT ARE DIPHTHONGS?

"a sequence of two vowel qualities within a single syllable" Wells, LPD, 209.

"a glide with no peak valley" (Jones, Outline, 156).

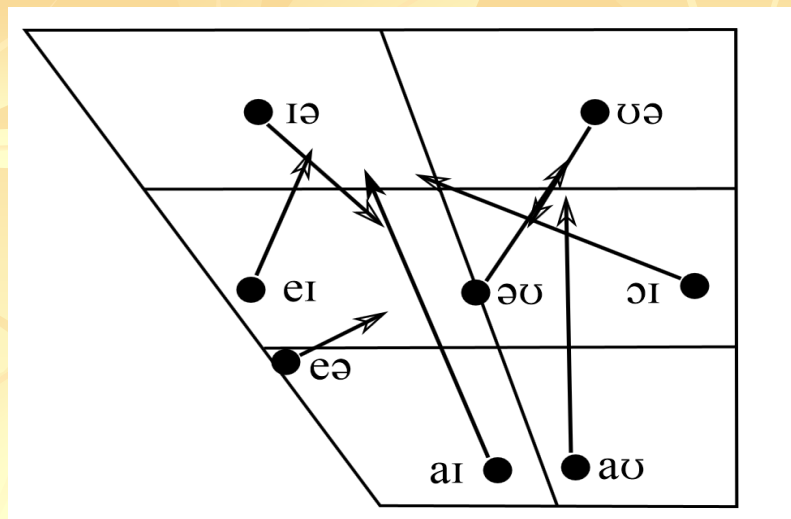
IN SPANISH: (i/u)+Nuclear V+(i/u)



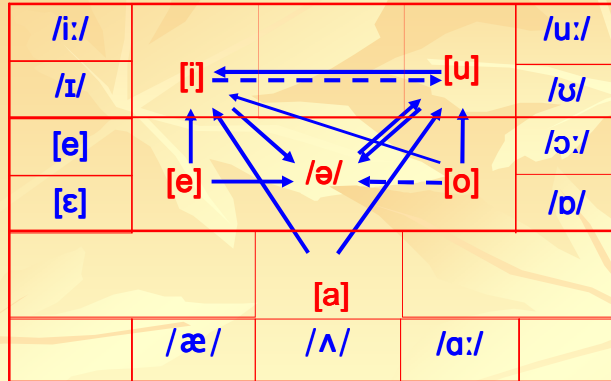
VOWEL RESTRICTIONS:

- Identical geminated short vowels: *buryit, dais*
- Identical geminated long vowels: *beeeater*
- Long+ short high vowels: *skiing*
- [i] +[u] and [u]+[i]: *curious, quick.*
- Restrictions with mid and low short vowels: *superiority.*

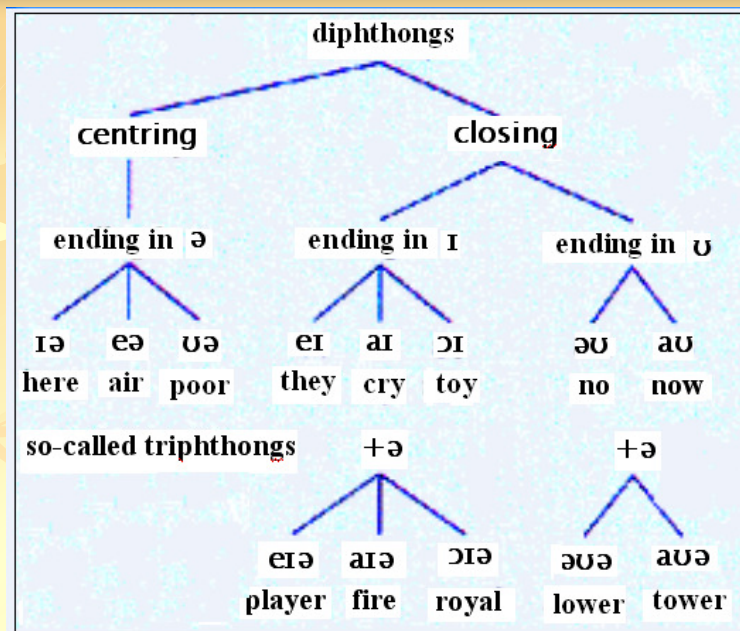
1.1 ENGLISH DIPHTHONGS



1.2 ENGLISH DIPHTHONGS



Monroy, 2012



1.3 NON-DIPHTHONGAL SEQUENCES IN ENGLISH

NON-DIPHTHONGAL SEQUENCES

i'eɪ	i'æ	i'ɒ
ABBREVIATION AFFILIATION APPRECIATION AVIATION CONCILIATION DIFFERENCIATION ENUNCIATION HIATUS INITIATION MEDIATION MEATUS PROCREATION	ASIATIC CHRISTIANITY DIAMETER ENTHUSIASTIC DIANA GENEALOGIST JOVIALITY PECULIARITY PIANIST POTENTIALITY REACTION TRIANGULAR	AUDIOMETRY BIOLOGIST INFERIORITY BIOGRAPHER NEOLOGISM PATRIOTIC PHYSIOLOGIST SOCIOLOGY SUPERIORITY CARDIOLOGIST HAGIOLATRY BIOLOGY
i'e	i'ɑ:	i'ɔ:
ORIENTAL SERVIETTE SIESTA ACQUIESCE COMEDIENNE R.A.F	LIANA PIAZZA TIARA REARMAMENT SHAKESPEARIANA ESCORIAL	MEDIOCRE MYOPIA RE-OPEN SCOLIOSIS SIMBIOSIS MYOSIS
i'i:	i'ɪə	i'i
NAÏVE PAYEE	DIARESIS PIERIAN	ATHEISTIC REITERATIVE

2. DIFFER. BT SPANISH AND ENGLISH DIPHTHONGS

ENGLISH

- +Vowel restrictions
- +Central set
- -j/w word initial
- +long 1st element
- +weak second element
- + short range
- "Distinction bt diph/monoph not always clear" (Wells,LPD).
- In terms of duration "is like that of long Vs" (Wells, LPD)

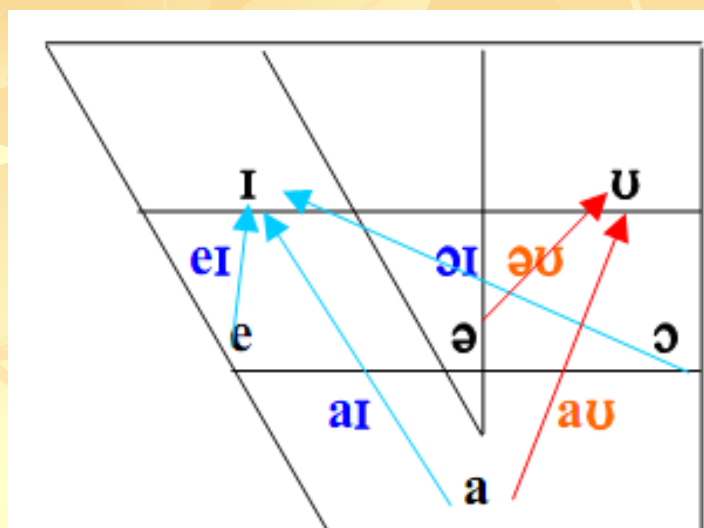
SPANISH

- -vowel restrictions
- -central
- + j/w initial
- -long 1st element
- - weak 2nd element
- -short range
- +clear-cut

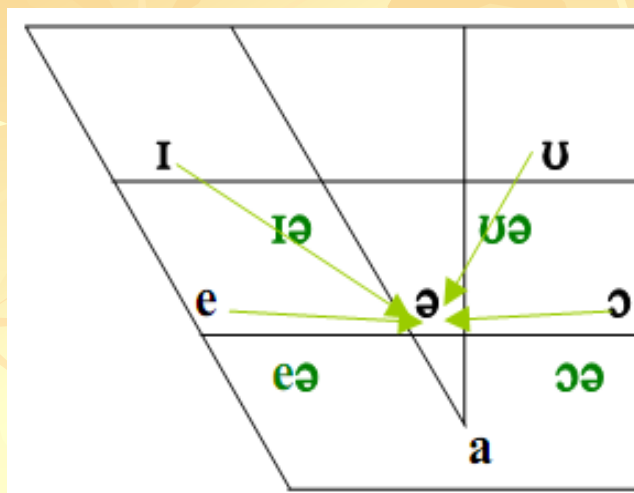
3. RP DIPHTHONGS. GENERAL REMARKS

- Based on the **direction** of the moving tongue, RP diphthongs are classified as *centring*, *closing* or *level*. Closing diphthongs are further divided into *fronting* and *backing*
- **Centring diphthongs** (tongue location glides towards a 'central' position –the diphthong started being either front or back). Conventionally, there are 3 in RP
 - /ɪə/ as in *here, near, beer*
 - /eə/ as in *bear, there, air*
 - /ʊə/ as in *poor, sure, cure* (also with /ɜ:/)

3.1 ENGLISH (RP) RISING DIPHTHONGS



3.2 ENGLISH (RP) CENTRING DIPHTHONGS



3.3 DIPHTHONGAL STATUS OF [ʊɪ]-[ɪʊ]

LEVEL DIPHTHONGS?

[ʊɪ]: *ruin, fluid, quick, suicidal, ruination...* "extremely rare occurrence in one syllable" G-Crut, 93). "Low distinctive weight, so disyllabic better" (*ibid*). But Jones (*Outline, 125*) states that "a rising diphthong [ui] is not uncommon". It is always unstressed; and always replaceable by the disyllabic sequence **u-i** hence it "may be ignored by the foreign learner" (*ibid*).

- Nuclear: **ruin /rʊɪn..** (the same *fluid, suicidal...*)

[u'ɪ]: *Luisa.*

- Non-nuclear: **[wɪ]:** *cuisine, suite,*
[ʊɪ]: *jesuit,* (Wells: [uɪ])

[jʊ]: *value, rescue, beauty, curious* (Heffner= diphthong).

[ɪʊ]=/ju/-/ʊ/ Nuclear: **[jʊ],** *infusion, utility,..*

[jʊə]: *urine,*

Non-nuclear: **[jʊ],** *value, usurp*

3.3.1 [ʊɪ]-[ɪʊ] (CONT'D)

Criterion: disregard [j] and [w] as diphthongal elements.

Reasons for their rejection as diphthongs:

- ❑ "they would add enormously" to the vowel inventory (Gimson-Crut.)
- ❑ Although purely vocalic, they function as consonants (marginal position in a syllable).
- ❑ After voiceless Cs they tend to be voiceless or to have friction –a phonetic characteristic of a consonant.

4. CENTRING DIPHTHONGS

- /ɪə/{
 - **+stressed:** *ideal* (falling); *here, year* (rising)=length
 - **-stressed:** *serious, inferiority...*=no length
 - **+stressed:** *dual* (falling); *fewer, ...if* **R=[jɔ:]** *tour, poor. alluring ?*
- /ʊə/{
 - **-stressed:** *influence, contour...*=no length
 - **+stressed:** *scares* vs. *scarce*; =length
- /eə/{
 - **-stressed:** *various,* =no length

4.1 DIPHTHONG /ɪə/

- **[+ stress]:**
 - Optional lengthening of first element: *idea, Ian...*(but notice *here* and *year* [jɜː]) . Also ['reɪlɪ] (Queen). No lengthening if /r/: *adhere, cashier, criterion...*
- **[- stress]:**
 - No length: *furious, inferior, serious...* (Wells: ['sɪəri-əs])

NOTICE: Only optional alternation with [j] if unstressed: 'eɪljən, but **never** if

- **initial syll + stressed one:** *realistic, reassure...*
- **initial syll:** *theological...*
- **Not after /r/:** *material, criterion, period....* (but Wells gives: *familiar* = [-ljə] as a second option.

4.2 DIPHTHONG /eə/

- Words like *square* traditionally –a tradition that goes back to the beginning of the XXc.– had a centring diphthong, with a half-open starting point i.e. [eə]. For phonological reasons, Gimson began transcribing it as /eə/.
- Today a long mid-open front monophthong ([ɛː]) is increasingly heard and some recent works use /ɛː/ instead of /eə/ (e.g. Upton et al. in the OPD. Also Collins & Mees, 2008). Under this view, RP has now an additional monophthong and a diphthong less).

NOTICE the alternation between **eə-e(ə)** in words like *pear, swear, wear....* (/ɛː/ in Upton et al.).

4.2.1 RP /eə/ (CONT'D)

	Phonological transcription	Phonetic transcription
square	/skweə/ ¹	[skweə]
	/skwe:/ ²	[skwe:]

1. Traditional transcription in books

2. Transcription found at present in the Oxford dictionaries and books like Collins & Mees's *Practical Phonetics and Phonology*

4.3 RP /ʊə/

- [ʊə], traditionally found in *sure, poor, tour*, etc. in the first part of the 20th c., started to sound identical to *shore, pour, tore* (i.e. with /ɔ:/) by the mid 20th c.
- The decline/disappearance of /ʊə/ is increasing, particularly in **common, monosyllabic** words (e.g. *your, poor, sure*). More resistance to change is found in other words (e.g. *jury* or *rural*) typically with [ʊə] or even [ʊ], which can be interpreted as a variant of /u/.
- This levelling towards /ɔ:/ does not occur when suffix **-er** follows: *truer, evildoer, fewer...*
- **NOTICE: ʊə/wə: "i/u if compressed →üə →wə, admittedly it may be difficult to hear the difference bt. them" (Wells, LPD 175).**

4.3.1. RP /ʊə/

	Most common pron. today (recommended)	Other pronunciations
<i>your</i>	jɔ:	juə
<i>sure</i>	ʃɔ:	ʃuə
<i>poor</i>	pɔ:	puə
<i>tour</i>	tɔ:	tuə
<i>jury</i>	dʒuə	dʒɔ:ri dʒu(:)ri dʒɜ:ri
<i>cure</i>	kjuə	kjɔ: kju(:) kjɜ:
<i>rural</i>	'rʊəl	'rɔ:rl 'rɜ(:)rl
<i>Europe</i>	'juərəp	'jɔ:rəp 'ju(:)rəp

5. RP CLOSING DIPHTHONGS

❑ **Closing diphthongs** (tongue height glides towards a half-close position). There are 5 in RP

■ **Closing fronting:** the tongue moves towards a half-close *front* position

- /aɪ/ as in *sky, height, mine*
- /ɔɪ/ as in *boy, noise*
- /eɪ/ as in *day, rein, late*

■ **Closing backing:** the tongue moves towards a half-close *back* position

- /əʊ/ as in *no, know, oak*
- /aʊ/ as in *how, house*

5.1 DIPHTHONGS /eɪ/-/ɔɪ/

/eɪ/

[**+stressed**]: long/short (*raid-rate, plays-place...*)

[**-stressed**]:

FREE VARIATION: [eɪ ~ɪ]: *weekdays, holidays, yesterday...*

ALTERNATION: [eɪ -æ]: *Spain-Spanish, nation-national...*

if Verbs, /eɪ/ (e.g. *separate, elaborate...*), but [ɪ/ə] if Adj. (a *separate room...*)

NOTE: French **-ade** → /eɪ/ (*decade, crusade...*) or /ɑ:/ *façade, charade...*
Also, French **-et** = /eɪ/ : *ballet, beret, buffet, bouquet (83% --'--)*.etc.

/ɔɪ/

[**+stressed**]: long/short : *boy-voice..*

VARIANTS: -[ɔ:ə] + /ɪ/: *royal, foil, turmoil...*

-<oi>: [ɔɪ]: *turquoise*

[ə]: *turtoise*

[wɑ:] **chamois** but *chamois* ([ɪ])

Note; *choir* and *buoy=boy*; **In the case of <ei>:** *heifer (vaquilla), Reynolds = [e]*

5.2 DIPHTHONGS /aɪ/-/aʊ/

/aɪ/

[**+stressed**]: long/short (*fly-flight, eyes-ice...*)

[**-stressed**]:

✓ <-INE> :[ɪn] if Vs (*determine, imagine...*), Ns (*discipline, engine...*).
[aɪn] if Adjs (Exc.: *masculine, feminine and genuine* -the three [ɪn]).

✓ <-ITIS>:[aɪ]: *bronchitis, laryngitis...* In USA= [i:]

✓ [ɑ:ə]/[a ə]+/ɪ/: *I'll, pile...* ([ɑ:] in Refined RP).

/aʊ/

+stressed: long/short (*mouth-to mouth, allows- a louse...*)

VARIANTS:

[aʊ]: *house, sound, fountain...* [æʊ] in Estuary E.

[ɑö]: *how, now,*

[ɑ:]: (Advanced RP): *town, foul,* ([u:] in Scottish)

[ɒ]: *sausage*

5.3 DIPHTHONG /əʊ/

A key feature to know where a person is from

+stressed: great variation (also differences in length: *robe-ropé*)

✓ **[əʊ]** Popular Southern (*go, home, shoulder...*). Also in RP in unstressed position where other accents reduce to schwa.

✓ **[æʊ]** Popular London and Estuary

✓ **[eʊ]** The Queen. **[oʊ]** London (older speakers)

✓ **[ɜ:]** The Church (particularly before /l/: *girl*)

✓ **[ɒʊ]** In words where <o+l> (a Cockney feature, also "typical of London Regional RP" (G+Crut, 136).

✓ Prefix <pro>=**[əʊ]** generally (*process, progress*, but note *project, produce* with no diphtong).

--stressed

✓ **[ə(ʊ)]** *phonetics, potato, fellow*, ..but full if a C follows.

/əʊ/

5.3.1 /əʊ/ (cont'd)

VARIATION: [əʊ]-[ɒ]: *holy-holiday, host-hostel, provoke-provocative...*

SPELLING-SOUND:

[ju:]: *feudal, few, ...*

<EU> **[u:]**: *rheumatism, crew...*

[oi] (German-derived words: *Freud*.)

[ɜ:] (French-derived words: *masseur*)

+r = [jʊə-jʊ]: *Europe, euro...*

NOTE THE ENORMOUS VARIATION OF <OU>:
courage, journey, thought, courier, through;
bough, though, tourist, thorough, etc.

6. TRIPHTHONGS ?

- **Definition:** "a glide from one V to another and to a third" (Roach, 23).
- **Problems:** 'triphthong' (Roach,), 'diphthongs+ə' (G-Crut., Wells). "Controversial status" (R.Odgen, 2009): hire vs. higher.

Why not 'triphthongs'?

- Not a single nucleus: *lower, player, greyer*.
- Weak central vowel –may disappear. (Cf. Sp. j/w+**á/é**+i: *estudiéis*).
- Smoothing (see next transp.)
- But if not, what about *society, lion, hierarchy... ?*

6.1 TRIPHTHONGS? (cont'd)

■ Wells' view:

- "My view about [aɪə]...is that all such sequences are potentially (and arguably underlyingly) disyllabic, but that they can all potentially be 'compressed' into monosyllabicity. In RP and many other varieties can be smoothed (=lose the [ɪ] element). There are therefore four logical possibilities:
- Unsmoothed, uncompressed:[aɪ.ə]
- Smoothed, uncompressed:[a.ə]
- Smoothed, compressed: [aə] /[a]
- Unsmoothed, compressed: [aɪə], I would judge this to be rare or non-existent" (Wells reply to *Phonet*, 11/12/01)

6.2 TRIPHTHONGS. THEIR TYPOLOGY AND SMOOTHING

■ Typology:

— /aɪə/ (*fire, tyre*)

— /eɪə/ (*player*)

— /ɔɪə/ (*lawyer, royal*)

— /əʊə/ (*lower, mower*)

— /aʊə/ (*power, Howard*)

<i>fire</i>	/ˈfaɪə/	smoothed to	[faə]
<i>science</i>	/ˈsaɪəns/	smoothed to	[saəns]
<i>power</i>	/paʊə/	smoothed to	[paə]
<i>Howard</i>	/ˈhaʊəd/	smoothed to	[haəd]
<i>throwing</i>	/ˈθrəʊɪŋ/	smoothed to	[θrɜɪŋ]

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