

Phonetics

Definition:

Phonetics is the scientific study of speech sounds and how they are produced.

Vowel and consonant sounds

- **Vowels** are sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips. E.g. /u:/ ; /i/

Types of vowels

1- *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:

- ɪ (example word): *fish*
- e (example word): *yes*
- æ (example word): *man*
- ʌ (example word): *but*
- ɒ (example word): *gone*
- ʊ (example word): *push*

2- *Long vowels*

There are five long vowels; these are the vowels which tend to be longer than the short vowels in similar context.

- i: (example words): *mean, peace*
- ɜ: (example words): *bird, purse*
- ɑ: (example words): *card, pass*
- ɔ: (example words): *board, horse*
- u: (example words): *loose, soon*

3- *diphthongs*

Diphthongs sounds consist of a movement or glide from one vowel to another. The total number of diphthongs is eight. The easiest way to remember them is in terms of three groups divided as in this diagram.

diphthong	
Centring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ending in ə : ɪə (fierce), eə (scarce), ʊə (tour)
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ending in ɪ: eɪ (face), aɪ (nice), ɔɪ (voice) ending in ʊ : əʊ (home), aʊ (house)

4- Triphthongs

The most complex English sounds of the vowel type are the triphthongs. A triphthong is a glide from one vowel to another and then to a third, all produced rapidly and without interruption.

The triphthongs can be looked on as being composed of the five closing diphthongs , with ə added at the end. Thus we get:

- eɪ + ə = eɪə (player)
- aɪ + ə = aɪə (fire)
- ɔɪ + ə = ɔɪə (loyal)
- aʊ + ə = aʊə (hour)
- əʊ + ə = əʊə (lower)

Consonant sounds are speech sounds produced by partly or totally blocking the path of the air through the mouth. E.g. /m/ ; /f/

The End