

Lesson 5

Vowels and consonants:

The difference between vowels and consonants is a difference in the way that they are produced. Vowels are sounds in which there is no **obstruction** to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips. A doctor who wants to look at the back of a patient's mouth often asks them to say "ah". Making this vowel sound is the best way of presenting an unobstructed view.

Another important difference between vowels and consonants is **their different distributions** (the different contexts and positions in which particular sounds can occur). It is important to remember that the distribution of vowels and consonants is different for each language.

The vowels of English:

Vowels differ from each other in:

A- the **shape and position** of the tongue (the vertical distance between the upper surface of the tongue and the palate or the roof of the mouth and, secondly, the part of the tongue, between front and back, which is raised highest.)

B- Lip-position.

1- Rounded, where the corners of the lips are brought towards each other and the lips pushed forwards.

2- Spread, with the corners of the lips moved away from each other, as for a smile.

3- Neutral, where the lips are not noticeably rounded or spread. The noise most English people make when they are hesitating (written 'er') has neutral lip position.

English short vowels

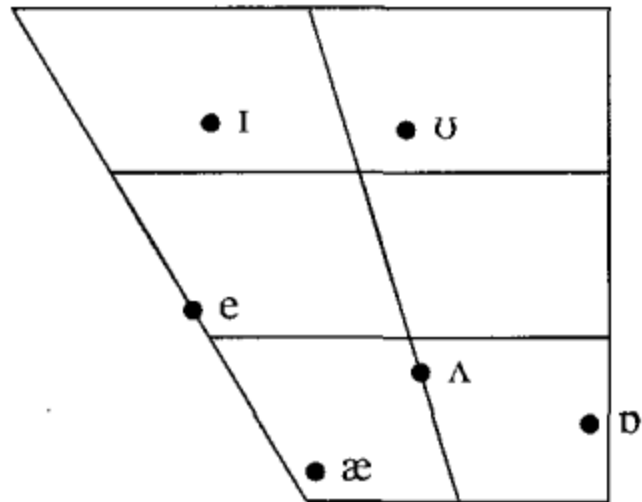


Fig. 5 English short vowels

Lesson 6

English long vowels

The symbols consist of one vowel symbol plus a length mark made of two dots.

The five long vowels are different from the seven short vowels not only in length but also in quality ((resulting from differences in tongue shape and position, and lip position).

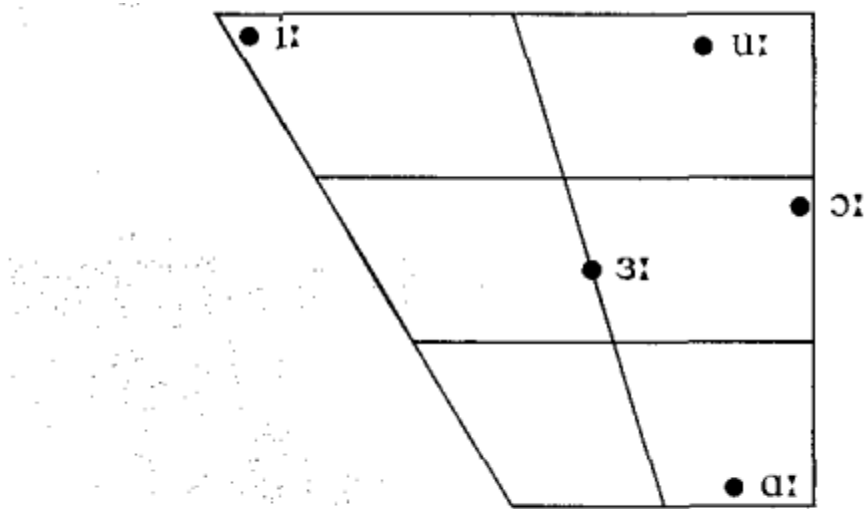


Fig. 6 English long vowels