

# THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE ENGLISH SPEECH SOUNDS

## 1/ Introduction:

**Speech sounds** are divided into **vowels** and **consonants**.

**Vowels** can be divided into **pure vowels (monophthongs)** and **diphthongs** and possibly *triphthongs*.

Vowels and consonants differ in distribution and production.

+ In distribution: vowels => centers of syllables

consonants => either precede or follow vowels.

+ In production:

<b>Vowels</b>	<b>Consonants</b>
are produced with relatively little obstruction in the vocal tract.	are produced with a narrow or complete closure in the vocal tract.
are more sonorous.	are less sonorous.
are voiced.	are either voiced or voiceless.
are syllabic.	are generally not syllabic.

# PURE VOWELS (MONOPHTHONGS)

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## **1/ *What is a vowel?***

A vowel is a sound in the production of which the air passage through the mouth is free.

## **2/ *What is a pure vowel?***

A pure vowel (monophthong) is an unchanging sound in the pronunciation of which the organs of speech do not perceptibly change the position throughout the duration of the vowel in a syllable.

## **3/ *Classification of vowels: 4 principles***

### **+ According to the part of the tongue raised:**

- Front vowels: /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/
- Central/ mid vowels: /ɜ:/, /ə/, /ʌ/
- Back vowels: / u:/, /ʊ/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ/, /ɑ:/

**+ According to the height of the tongue:**

- Close/High vowels: /i:/, /ɪ/, /u:/, /ʊ/
- Mid-open/Mid-close vowels: /e/, /ə/, /ɜ:/, /ɔ:/
- Open/Low vowels: /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɑ:/, /ɒ/

**+ According to the lip shapes:**

- Rounded vowels: /u:/, /ʊ/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ/, /ɑ:/
- Neutral vowels: /ɜ:/, /ə/, /ʌ/
- Unrounded vowels (spread vowels) : /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/

**+ According to the length**

- Long vowels: /i:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/, /ɔ:/, /ɑ:/
- Short vowels: /ɪ/, /ʊ/, /e/, /æ/, /ɒ/, /ʌ/, /ə/

***For more details and descriptions, follow the link***

***<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYkITlqfZ6c>***

***or see Table III.3 and Figure III.2, Page 25***

***see also Illustration Files attached***

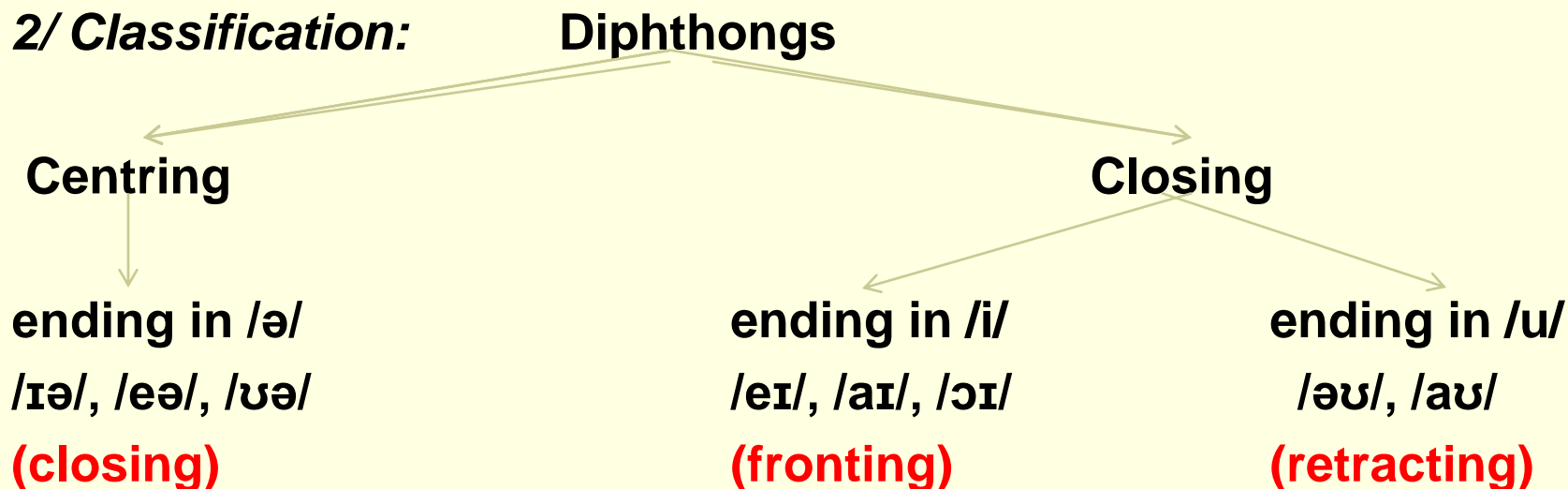
# DIPHTHONGS

## 1/ What is a diphthong?

A diphthong is a combination of two vowels pronounced within one syllable.

- The first element of a diphthong is called the **nucleus**. It is strong, clear, distinct and stressed.
- The second element is called the **glide**. It is weak.

## 2/ Classification:



*(For more details, see Figure III.3, Table III.4, Page 26)*

**see also Illustration Files attached**

# CONSONANTS

## **1/ What is a consonant?**

A consonant is a sound in the production of which an obstruction is formed in the mouth by the active organs of speech.

## **2/ Classification:** 3 main principles

### **+ According to the positions/places of articulation:**

=> Labial: Bilabial /p/, /b/, /m/, /w/

Labio-dental /f/, /v/

=> Dental /θ/, /ð/

=> Alveolar /t/, /d/, /n/, /l/, /s/, /z/

=> Palato-alveolar /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /r/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/

=> Palatal /j/

=> Velar /k/, /g/, /ŋ/

=> Glottal /h/

**+ According to the manners of articulation**

=> Plosive/stop /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/

=> Fricative /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/

=> Affricative /tʃ/, /dʒ/

=> Nasal /m/, /n/, /ŋ/

=> Lateral /l/

=> Rolled /r/

=> Semi-vowel /w/, /j/

**+ According to the vibration of the vocal cords**

=> voiceless/unvoiced: /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/

=> voiced: /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/,  
/w/, /j/, /h/

*( For detailed descriptions, read pages 27, 28, 29, 30 and see Table III.5, Page 30)*

***see also Illustration Files attached***