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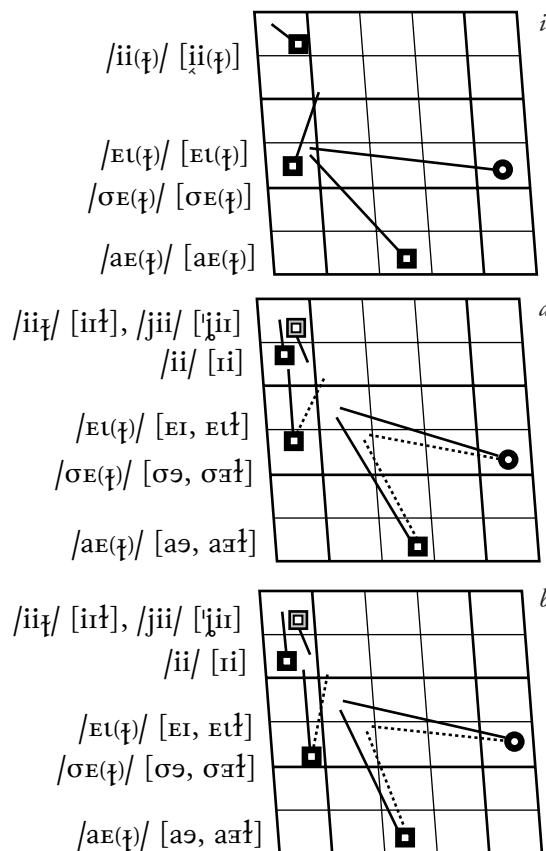
The diphthongs of the three neutral accents

10.1. Let us now consider the seven phonemic diphthongs of our three neutral accents. Of course, in plain International English, we have one realization for each of the seven diphthongs. Let us notice, once again, that they are *seven*, not just *five*, as even most native-speaker phoneticians still seem to believe, in spite of clear and obvious evidence of the fact that /ii, uu/ are diphthongs, too.

This can be done even acoustically, for those who are not able to hear the sounds, or who rely too heavily on documented ‘scientific’ results, as if the results of a trained ear would just be a case of unexpected chance (something like ‘what a lucky fluke!’).

10.2. fig 10.1 shows the four fronting diphthongs, for the three accents. In place of the four expected realizations of plain International English, the American and

fig 10.1. Fronting diphthongs (cf fig 25 and fig 25.2, as well).



British neutral accents (as well as the native-like International accent, cf fig 5) have eight, more or less different, realizations, because we cannot absolutely ignore the taxophones before /ɪ/.

This might let one think that –after all– the type of (plain) International pronunciation is not a ‘natural’ one. But we have to state, once again, that it is far more natural than what most books on the phonetics of English still present.

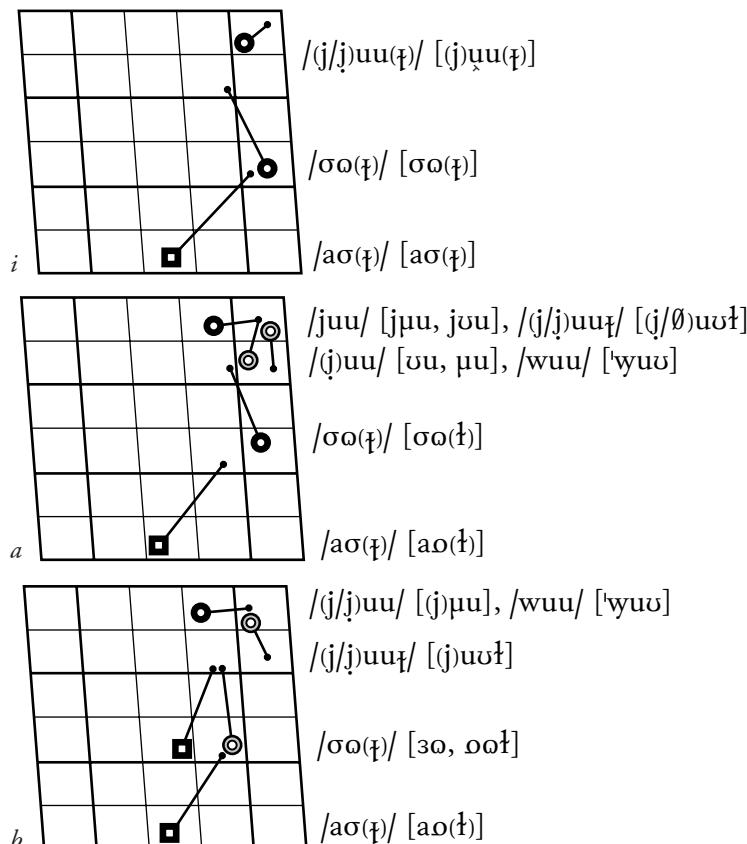
10.3. The *black markers and lines* stand for the four phonemes, while the *grey markers and broken lines* show the additional taxophones, or contextual variants – /iɪ(ʃ)/ *i*[iɪ(ʃ)] *a/b*[iɪ, iɪʃ], /eɪ(ʃ)/ *i*[eɪ(ʃ)] *a/b*[eɪ, eɪʃ], /aɛ(ʃ)/ *i*[aɛ(ʃ)] *a/b*[aɛ, aɛʃ], /oʊ(ʃ)/ *i*[oʊ(ʃ)] *a/b*[oʊ, oʊʃ]:

tea, feel /tʃiɪ, tʃiɪʃ/ *i*[tʃiɪ, tʃiɪʃ] *a/b*[tʃri, tʃiɪʃ, tʃiɪʃ]
day, sail /dʒeɪ, 'seɪʃ/ *i*[dʒeɪ, 'seɪʃ] *a/b*[dʒeɪ, 'seɪʃ, 'seɪʃ]
high, file /haɪ, fæɪʃ/ *i*[haɪ, fæɪʃ] *a/b*[haɪ, fæɪʃ, fæɪʃ]
boy, boil /bɔɪ, bɔɪʃ/ *i*[bɔɪ, bɔɪʃ] *a/b*[bɔɪ, bɔɪʃ, bɔɪʃ].

10.4. fig 10.2 shows the three backing diphthongs, with /aʊ(ʃ)/ *i*[aʊ(ʃ)] *a/b*[aʊ(ʃ)], /oʊ(ʃ)/ *i*[oʊ(ʃ)] *a*[oʊ(ʃ)] *b*[zə, əʊʃ], /uʊ(ʃ)/ *i*[uʊ(ʃ)] *a*[ʊʊ, ʊʊʃ] *b*[μʊ, ʊʊʃ].

For the American accent, we must show also the variant with exchanged possible realizations, since they vary quite freely, although it is better to use [μʊ] when preceded by /j/, and [ʊʊ] in the other cases, including /juu/, which, in neutral American English, stands for plain /uu/; thus, we have /juu/ *i*[juu] *a*[ʊʊ] *b*[jμʊ], and /juu/ *i*[juu] *a*[jμʊ] *b*[jμʊ] as in:

fig 10.2. Backing diphthongs (cf fig 25, as well).



new /'njuu/ *i* ['njuu] *a* ['nuvu] *b* ['njuvu]
you /'juu/ *i* ['juu] *a* ['juvu] *b* [juvu].

10.5. In addition, for neutral British English, besides the expected /uu(ɹ)/ [μu, uəɹ] realizations, there is an important taxophone of /σω(ɹ)/, [zə, əəɹ], ie with a back-central round first element occurring before [ɹ] (which, as far as we know, no one else had clearly shown before, except for mediatic British /σωɹ/ [ɛvɹ], given as 'ɛvʊ'). In fact, in British English, *go* begins as *girl*, rather than as *goal* /'gσω, 'gɛ:rl, 'gσωɹ/ *b* ['gɜ:ɹ, 'gɜ:ɹ, 'gɔ:ɹ, 'gɔ:ɹɹ].

10.6. Thus, we have:

now, fowl /'naɔ, 'faɔɹ/ *i* ['na:ɔ; fɑ:ɔɹ, 'faɔɹ] *a/b* ['na:ɔ; 'fa:ɔɹ, 'faɔɹ]
go, goal /'gσω, 'gσωɹ/ *i* ['gσ:ω; 'gσ:ωɹ, 'gσωɹ] *a* ['gσ:ω, 'gσ:ωɹ, 'gσωɹ] *b* ['gɜ:ɹ, 'gɔ:ɹ, 'gɔ:ɹɹ,
'gəoɹ]
who, cool /'huu, 'kuuɹ/ *i* ['hu:u; 'khuruɹ, 'khuuɹ] *a* ['hu:u; 'khuruɹ, 'khuuɹ] *b* ['huru, 'khuruɹ, 'khuuɹ], and:
cue, yule /'khjuu, 'juuɹ/ *i* ['khjuru; 'juuɹ, 'juuɹ] *a/b* ['khjuru, 'khjuru; 'juuɹ, 'juuɹ].

10.7. As we have already seen, the other diphthongs, even if followed by /ɹ/, do not change much their components, apart from those with front second elements; besides (except for /σω/, which has only /ɹ/, in neutral pronunciation), they freely fluctuate between /ɹ/ and /ɿ/ (with a rarer realization of /ɿ/ as 'əɿ' [wɹ]):

feel /'fiɿɹ/ *i* ['fi:ɿɹ, 'fiɿɹ] *a/b* ['fi:ɿɹ, 'fiɿɹ]
file /'faeɹ/ *i* ['fa:ɹ, 'faeɹ] *a/b* ['fa:ɹ, 'faeɹ]
sail /'seɪɹ/ *i* ['seɪɹ, 'seɪɹ] *a/b* ['seɪɹ, 'seɪɹ]
boil /'bσeɹ/ *i* ['bσeɹ, 'bσeɹ] *a/b* ['bσeɹ, 'bσeɹ]
soul /'sσωɹ/ *i* ['sσ:ωɹ, 'sσωɹ] *a* ['sσ:ωɹ, 'sσωɹ] *b* ['sσ:ωɹ, 'sσωɹ]
owl /'aσɹ/ *i* ['a:σɹ, 'aσɹ] *a/b* ['a:σɹ, 'aσɹ]
yule /'juuɹ/ *i* ['juuɹ, 'juuɹ] *a/b* ['juuɹ, 'juuɹ]
cool /'kuuɹ/ *i* ['kuuɹ, 'khuuɹ] *a/b* ['kuuɹ, 'khuuɹ].

10.8. Let us notice that the modern neutral British pronunciation differs only slightly from the more traditional one (and so there is little difference from the American one) for /ii, eɪ, aɛ, σe, aσ/ and even for /iɿɹ/, as can be seen better through a careful comparison between the British and the American vocograms.

Indeed, we have:

tea /'tii/ *i* ['t̪hi:i] *a/b* ['t̪hri:]
day /d̪eɪ/ *i* ['d̪eɪ] *a/b* ['d̪eɪ]
high /haɪ/ *i* ['haɪ] *a/b* ['haɪ]
boy /bσe/ *i* ['bσe] *a/b* ['bσe]
now /'naɔ/ *i* ['na:ɔ] *a/b* ['na:ɔ]
so /'sσω/ *i/a* ['sσ:ω] *b* ['sɜ:ω]
youth /'juuθ/ *i* ['juuθ] *a/b* ['juuθ]
new /'njuu/ *i* ['njuu] *a* ['nuvu] *b* ['njuvu]
who /'huu/ *i* ['huu] *a* ['hu:u] *b* ['huru].

10.9. In slower speech, /VV_t/ –in a tune– can be realized as /VVə_t/ ⁱ[VVə_t]
_{a/b}[VVu_t]. While, in normal speech, /VV_t/ –in a *protune*– generally changes into
 /VV_t/ ⁱ[VV_t] _{a/b}[VV_t]. Of course, this holds even more for those /VV_t/ that currently
 become [VV_t]:

trial /'trɪərɪəl/ *a trial period* /'trɪərɪəl'fərɪəfɪərɪəl/ *feel* /fiːl/ *I feel good* /aɪ'fɪl'gʊd/.

10.10. Of course, the most peculiar diphthong in the British accent is /ʊə/ [ʊə], whose first element is central and unrounded (if not followed by [ɫ], where we find [ooɫ]); while in American pronunciation (and International, as well) it is back and rounded, [ʊə]:

No, Joe won't go /'nσω. 'fʒσω, 'wσωη 'gσω. / i/a['nσ·ω. 'fʒσ·ω. 'wσωη 'gσ·ω.] b['nʒ·ω.. 'fʒʒ·ω. 'wʒωη 'gʒ·ω..].

10.11. In the British accent, at the beginning of the twentieth century, [oʊ] was widespread; until the fifties it was [ɔʊ], always with lip rounding, while [əʊ, ɔʊ], at that time, sounded rather affected. In mediatic British pronunciation, we have /ʊə(t̪)/ [xʊ, ɔʊ(t̪)] (cf fig 56.2) – generally [ɔʊʃv̪] also for /ɒʃv̪/.

10.12. Let us add that, mainly in quicker (British and American) speech, unstressed *-owing*, *-ower*, /ʊəʊɪŋ/, /ʊəʊər/ become ^b[-əʊɪŋ; -əʊər] [æ-əʊɪŋ; -əʊər], as in *following* and *follower*: [fɒl-əʊɪŋ, fɒl-əʊər] [æf-əʊɪŋ, (ə)f-əʊər].

Also /æə/ [ɛə], as in *missile* ^b [ˈmɪsɪl̩] /mɪsɪl̩/. Even /ʊə/ [œə] may become [əʊə] (mainly in a protune and losing [:] *tur[.]moil*), as in *turmoils of emotions* ^b [t̪ʊh̩-mɔɪ̩z̩ əv̩ əm̩ɔɪ̩z̩]. We may even find /əʊə/ [əʊə] ^b [əʊ̩ə] (again in a protune and losing [:] *Schopen[.]hauer*), as in *as Schopenhauer wrote* ^b [əz̩-əʊ̩ə, rɪvəh̩məʊ̩z̩ əz̩-əp̩ə, vəh̩məz̩].

fig 10.3. Reduced forms of shortened unstressed triphthongs, in quicker speech (see § 30).

