**Assistant Instructor**

**Huda Ameen Ahmed**

**Phonetics & Phonology**

**Ch.3**

**Long vowels, Diphthongs, Triphthongs**

**-English long vowels**

**- Diphthongs**

**- Triphthongs**

**English long vowels**

They are the vowels which tend to be longer than the short vowels in similar contexts. It is necessary to say "in similar contexts" because, the length of all English vowel sounds varies very much according to their context **(such as the type of sound that follows them) and the presence or absence of stress**. To remind you that these vowels tend to be long, the symbols consist of one vowel symbol plus a length mark made of two dots; **/i:/, /a:/.**

The five long vowels are different from the six short vowels not only in length but also in **quality**. If we compare some similar pairs of long and short vowels, for example **/i:/** with **/i/,** or **/u/** with **/u:/,** we can see distinct differences in quality (**resulting from differences in tongue shape and position, and lip position**) as well as in length. For this reason, **all the long vowels have symbols which are different from those of short vowels; you can see that the long and short vowel symbols would still all be different from each other even if we omitted the length mark, so it is important to remember that the length mark is used not because it is essential but because it helps learners to remember the length difference.**

**-Describing Long Vowels**

**/i:/** (example words: 'beat', 'mean', 'peace') This vowel is closer and more front than is the short vowel of 'bid', 'pin', 'fish', the lips are only slightly spread and this results in a rather different vowel quality.

**/3:/** (example words: 'bird', 'fern', 'purse') This vowel is used in most English accents as a hesitation sound (written 'er'). The lip position is neutral.

**/α:/** (example words: 'card', 'half, 'pass'),the lip position is neutral.

**/Ɔ:/** (example words: 'board', 'torn', 'horse').This vowel is almost fully back and has quite strong lip-rounding and the tongue height.

**/u:/** (example words: 'food', 'soon', 'loose' ) The lips are only moderately rounded.

**Diphthongs**

BBC pronunciation has a large number of diphthongs. They are sounds which consist of a movement or glide from one vowel to another. A vowel which remains constant and does not glide is called a **pure vowel.**

In terms of length, diphthongs are similar to the long vowels described. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about all the diphthongs is that the first part is much longer and stronger than the second part; for example, most of the diphthong /aI/ (as in the words 'eye') consists of the a vowel, and only in about the last quarter of the diphthong does the glide to I become noticeable.

**The total number of diphthongs is eight. They divided into three groups:**



**Centering diphthongs**: It is a vowel sound that starts with a regular vowel and glides toward the central vowel /ə/ (the schwa) in the same syllable.

**Diphthongs ending in /ə/**

(ɪə) as in here, , weird, fear, near

(ʊə) as in poor, sure, cure, lure

(eə) as in hair, scarce, bear, square

**Closing Diphthongs:** It is a vowel sound that starts with a more open vowel and glides toward a higher (closer) vowel, like /i/ or /u/, within the same syllable.

1. **Diphthongs ending in /ɪ/**

(eɪ) as in day, paid, pain, face

(aɪ) as in why, tide, time, nice

(**Ɔ**ɪ) as in toy ,void, noise, voice

1. **Diphthongs ending in /ʊ/**

(aʊ) as in now, house, loud, out

(əʊ) as in load, home, most, boat

**Note:** The diphthongs /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/ are very difficult to pronounce as they are not frequently realized in everyday language native speakers use nowadays. Native speakers often pronounce the word (here) as /hi:/ not /hɪə/, and (poor) as /po:/ instead of /pʊə/.

**Triphthongs**

is the glide of three vowels within the same syllable. It starts with one vowel sound, moves to another, and then glides to a third, often ending with a schwa **/ǝ/**sound.

1. /aɪə/ as in fire, tire

2. /ɔɪə/ as in royal, employer

3. /eɪə/ as in layer, player

4. /əʊə/ as in lower, mower,

5. /aʊə/ as in power, hour