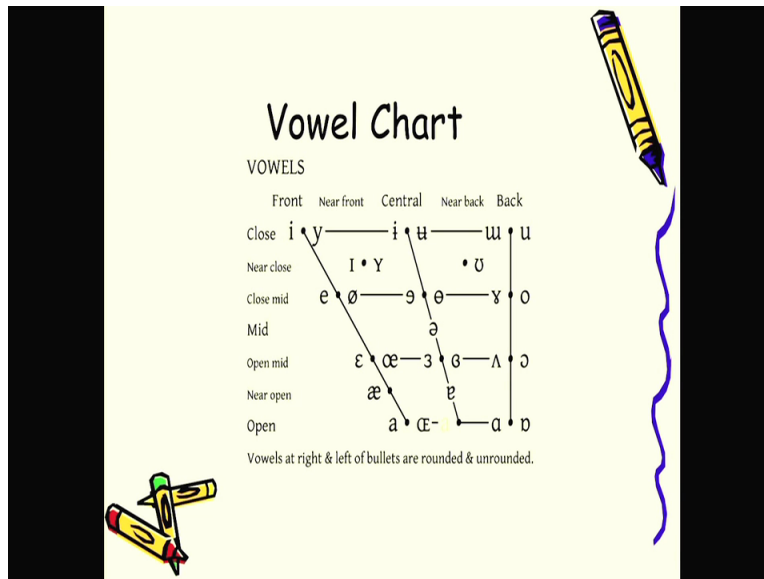


Speaking Effectively
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Lecture 13
Sound of English: Vowels

Welcome to the third module again. In this unit of module 3 on phonetics, we will look into the sounds of English. In the last module I introduced you to the vowels, diphthongs and consonants of RP. In this unit, I will guide you to the vowels and diphthongs of British English comparing it to the sounds of Indian English to show you how the sounds of Indian English are slightly different from those of RP. that is the reason why we sound different from native speakers of English.

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Let me introduce you to the vowel chart first. How do we distinguish between vowels and consonants in spoken English. I supposed to written English, I said we can divide phonemes of English into vowels and consonants. But in addition to vowels and consonants we also have diphthongs. How do we separate the vowels and diphthongs from the consonants? That has to do with the degree of the obstruction of air when a sound is produced.

When sound is produced and when there is no obstruction of the passage of air, as the air passes from lungs to the upwards to the vocal chords and escapes either through the nasal or the oral cavity. If there is no (obstruc) obstruction to the passage of air then that sound is a vowel sound or a diphthong sound. However when there is an obstruction to the passage of air from the lungs to the as it escapes through the oral or nasal cavity, those sounds are consonants sounds. This is how we separate the vowels from consonants.

Let me first introduce you to the vowel sounds of English and then consonant sounds in addition in would also look at the diphthong sounds. But before that let us try to understand how do we produce sounds? How do we produce sounds? When we talk about the production of sounds we need to talk about articulators. Can you guess and tell me how is sound produced? What are the articulators that we use when we produce sounds?

It is very important to have a knowledge of the articulators that we use in producing sounds, because every language has a different way of using those articulators or uses different articulators to produce the same sound. And you would find as I give you examples, when you use the (diff) different articulator to produce a sound which seems identical to the sound of another language, the sound quality changes. So let us look at the articulators we used to produce sounds. So, first of all the air escapes from the lungs.

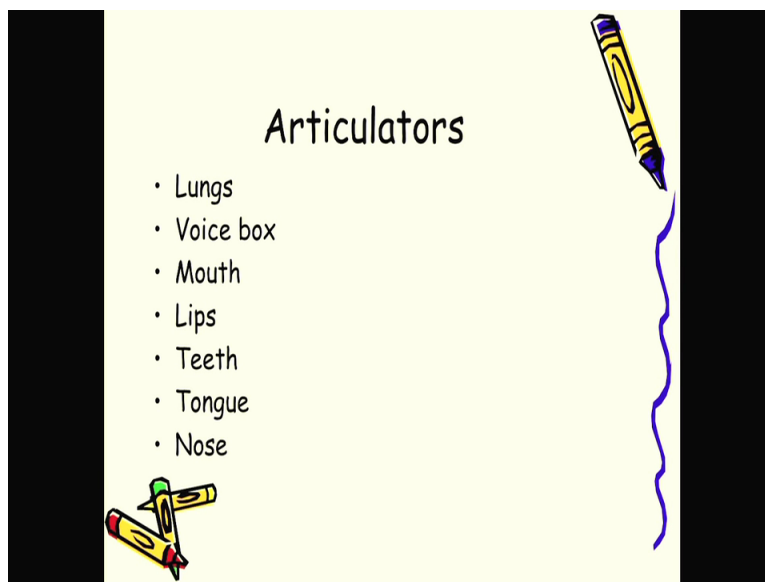
The lungs are one important articulators and that is why breathing is so important and those of us who have problem with our lungs, we have asthma or we have breathing problems, you will find that we have a breathy voice because there air is not able to escape easily. From the lungs, (ai) the next important articulators the voice box were the most important part of the production of voice and (ha) you must have heard people say that I have a very good voice box.

Those who have good voices, those who have very clear voices, are boast of having a good voice box, which resonates. And from the voice box we go to the mouth. As I speak to you would find that you can see my lips moving because the mouth is very important in the production of sound, it is a very important articulator. By mouth we do not mean lips however lips are different from the mouth. We use all parts of the different parts of the mouth when we are producing sound and lips are outside. So lips are yet another articulator in the production of sounds.

Teeth. Did you ever think that the teeth could (pre) (pa) (pe) play a role in producing sounds? Have you ever tried to guess that people who lose their teeth, like elderly people, you'll find that there is a difference in the speech of an elderly person who has lost teeth or who an elderly person who wears a denture. You would find that (th) there is distinctive difference in the voice quality. Why? Because even though we do not realize it, our teeth also plays an important role in producing sounds. They are very important in articulation of sounds.

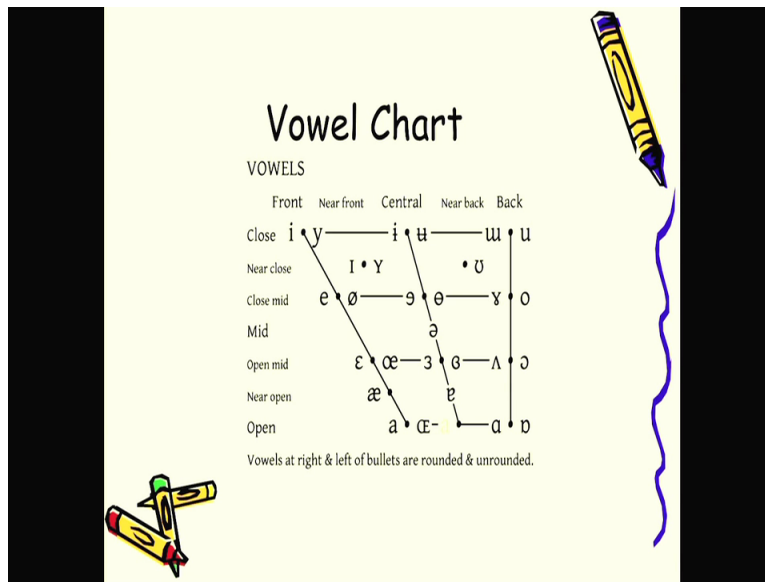
Along with the teeth we have the tongue. So the other word for languages is tongue. Why do we use the word 'tongue', Zubaan, tongue for talking about languages? Because the tongue is the most important articulator. You say that he was tongue tied or people who have a problem with their tongue, a disability, they are not able to speak clearly.

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And finally the nose. Not only in nasality but also when we normally speak even when we do not speak in a nasal tone, the nose has an important part in producing sounds.

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Now let me go back to the vowel sounds. What are the vowel sounds of English, of standard British English or RP? And how is it different from the sounds of Indian English? Before I show you the difference I will first list the sounds of RP and I will show you the difference between the different kinds of vowels. How do vowels differ from one another? So we make a distinction between different vowels on the basis of whether we use the front of the (mou) tongue or the back of the tongue to produce that vowel sound.

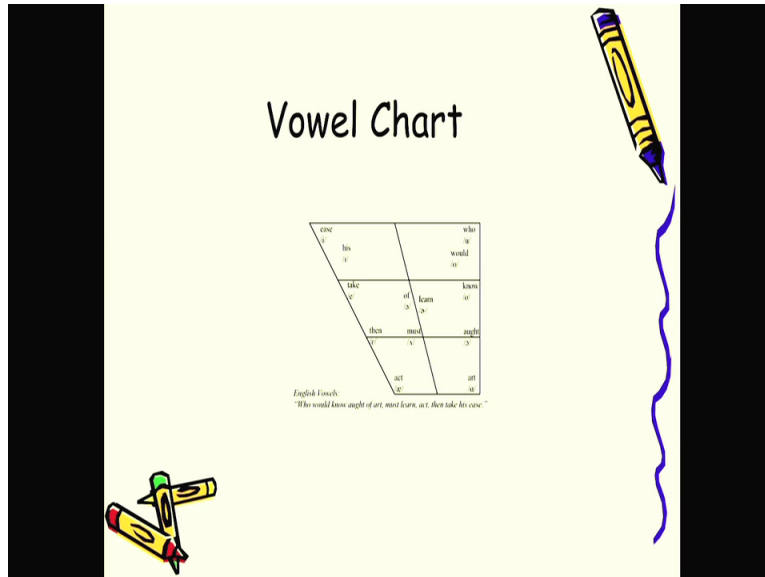
The vowels which are produced through using the front of the tongue are called front vowels. And those in which we use the back of the tongue are called back vowels. So, front vowels and back vowels, that is one way of distinguishing between vowels. Then the second way of differentiating vowels sounds is to look at closed vowels and open vowels sounds. What are closed vowel sounds? When the distance between the roof of the mouth and between the tongue and the roof of the mouth is minimal, those vowels are called closed vowels.

Where the tongue almost touches the roof of the mouth and vowels sounds where the distance between the roof of the mouth and tongue is maximum, those a called open vowels. In between closed and (op) open vowels we also have categories of half closed and half open.

So those where the mouth is not fully open or where the mouth is not fully closed, where the distance is halfway between the distance used to produce closed vowels or to produce front

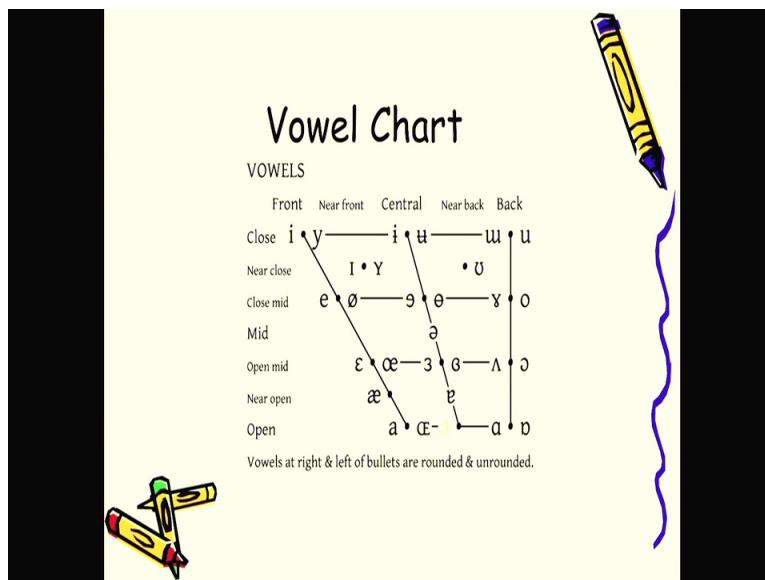
vowels, those are called closed vowels, half closed and we can have no ranges near close, closed mid, mid, open mid, near open and fully open. These are the two ways of distinguishing between vowels.

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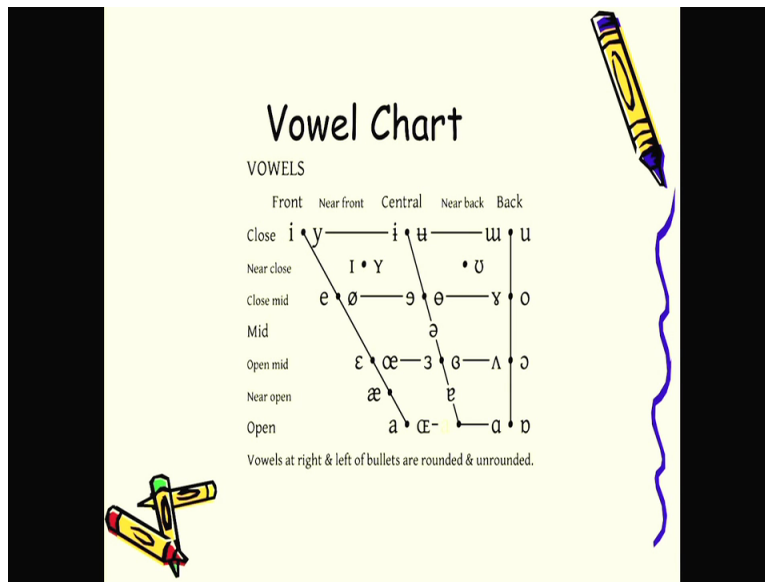


Another way of distinguishing between vowels is about the position of the lips.

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In the back vowels we will begin with the sound ‘au’, which is an open vowel. ‘Au’ as in caught, ‘auu’ as in cot. The second sound, the second back vowels is ‘auu’ as in cot, ‘auu’ as in cot. Mind you, watch me. The first one is ‘au’ as in caught. The second one is ‘auu’ as in cot. Now, what is the difference between two? One is a short sound and the other is a longer sound. So the first ‘au’ is ‘au’. The second ‘auu’ is ‘auu’. It is a longer sound. And what is the other difference? Lips are more rounded in the second ‘auu’. So the first one is ‘au’ as in caught. The second one is ‘auu’ as in cot.

So you need to round your lips more. let us have some fun with my name. My name is Anjali, as I said at the very beginning. My name is Anjali and I am from the north of India and my name is pronounced in the (nor) north as Anjali. Now I have been living in East India where the local language is Bengali and nobody calls me by my name, as I am called in the north. Everyone calls me Aunjali. Why? Because ‘a’ becomes ‘au’. It becomes rounded and that is why the name itself changes.

So you can choose to say the same name of a person in Hindi with the position of lips in a neutral position or if you say the same name in Bengali, you need to round the lips. So instead of saying Anjali, you would say ‘Aunjali’ and then it becomes a Bengali sound because your lips are rounded. Similarly in this case if you do not round your lips adequately for the second ‘au’, then what happens is the ‘au; and the ‘oo’ sound alike.

For instance when I go into the example of Indian English and how it differs from RP, I will show you how Indian speakers make these two sounds alike. They do not differentiate between the short 'au' and the long 'au'. Because they do not round their lips sufficiently.

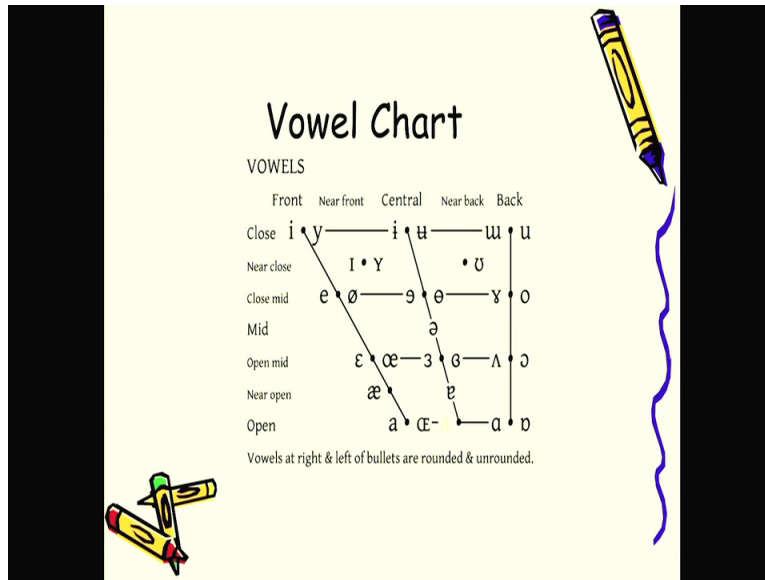
From 'au', which is an open mid sound, we move to a close mid sound, which is 'oo'. 'Oo' as in pool, 'oo' as in pool. And sorry this is a near close sound, not close mid sound, it is a near close (mi) mid sound which is 'oo' as in pool. And the final vowel is a close vowel which is 'ou' as in pull, 'ou' as in pull. So, how many have we completed? Five front vowels and now we had four back vowels. when I was taught phonetics, I was not taught this fifth fifth back vowel. But I see in this chart, there is a fifth back vowel which is 'au' as in, a close mid sound, 'au' as in cot, 'au' as in cot.

So there is a (thi) fifth back vowel here. From the back vowels, let us move on to the central vowels of (ind) English. And what are central vowels? Central vowels are the sounds which are produced through the center of the tongue. And what are these vowels? There are 3 central vowels. The first central vowel is 'a' as in bud, 'a' as in bud.

The second central vowel is 'a' as in bud, 'a' as in bud. So the same sound 'a' as in bud, you have to make it longer and make it like, 'a' as in bud. And then we have the final central vowel which is 'a'. Now this is the only vowels which has a name. This vowel is called 'Schwa'. And this vowel 'schwa' is used either at the beginning or words or at the end of words. Say in a word like, about, among, along, aside, awake. So instead of saying, awake, along, about, aside, you need to shorten the sound and use the vowel 'schwa' which is 'a', the short 'a' sound.

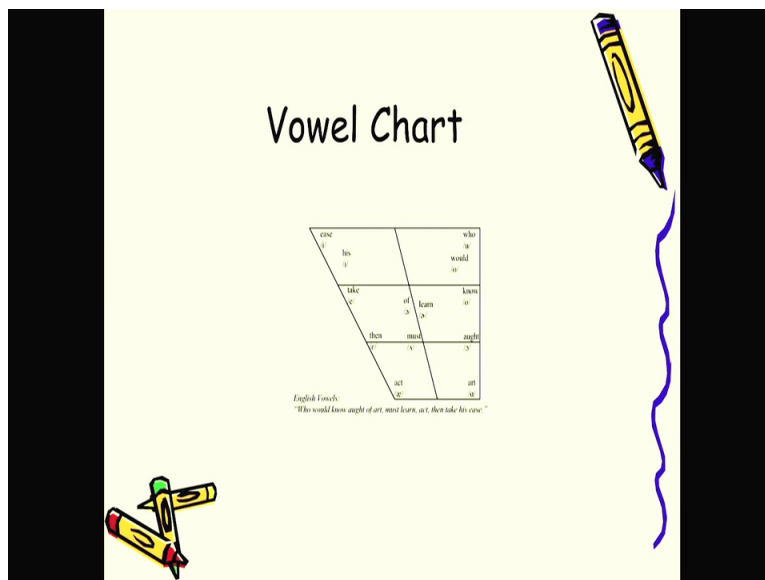
At the end of words we use it in words like sugar, bitter, better. So we do not say better, we do not say bitter, we do not say sugar, we say bitter, better, sugar. This is how we use the vowel 'schwa' in word final positions.

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Now, as you saw here, (vo) vowels on right and left of bullets are rounded and unrounded. Which vowels are rounded and which vowels are not rounded. The (le), right of bullets are rounded whereas left of bullets are unrounded. The lips are in a neutral position. Let me show you the same with the example of words.

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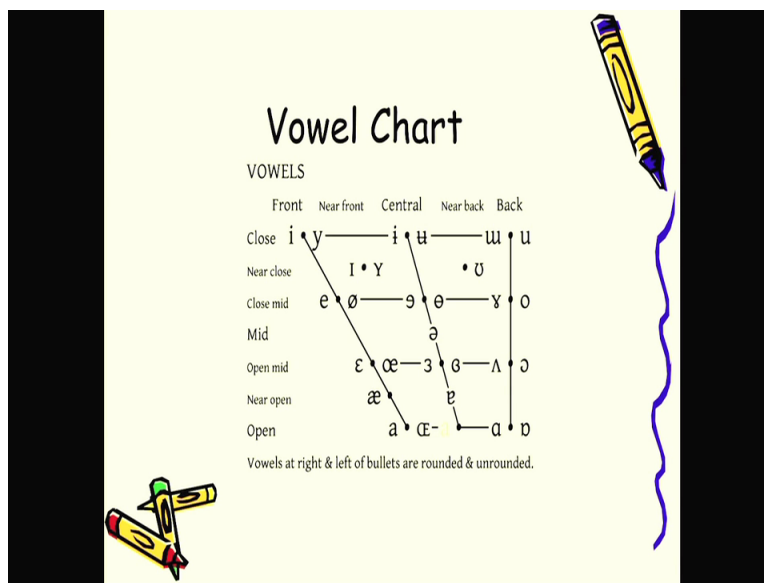


So, let us do a recapitulation of vowel sounds through use of words. I also used words but here we have list of different words to see. Ease, 'ee' as in ease, 'e' as in his, 'ee' as in ease, 'e' as in

his, 'ai' as in take, 'ai' as in then, 'ai' as in then, 'aai' as in act, 'aai' as in act, 'aaa' as in art. So let us begin from the beginning. 'e' as in his, 'ee' as in ease, 'e' as in his, 'ai' as in take, 'ai' as in then, 'aai' as in act, 'aai' as in act and 'aaa' as in art.

Now let us come to back vowels and do the same. 'ou' as in ough, 'ou' as in ough, 'ouu' as in no, 'o' as in would and 'ouu' as in who. Central vowels, 'a' as in must, 'aa' as in learn and 'ua' as in uff. Okay. So here we have the 12 vowel sounds of British English or RP. And let us see how these 12 vowel sounds are different from the sounds of Indian English. What is the difference?

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In the first sound 'e', which I began with. Say in the word pit, pit. What is the difference between the RP sound and the Indian English sound? There is a very slight difference and that slight difference can tell whether a person is a speaker of RP or whether a person is an Indian speaker of English. Why and how? Because as Indians we tend to close the gap between the mouth (an) and the tongue when we produce the sound.

So we would say 'it', we close the mouth. Pit, pit, pit. And what happens when we close the mouth and make the sound? The distance between the roof of the mouth and the tongue closes completely. And we use the exact tip of the tongue to make the sound. So we say pit, bit, hit, rit, sit, okay. That is an Indian English sound. Now let us go to the RP sound. In RP you would find the mouth opens a little more and the position of the sound is little lower on the tip of the tongue.

So you would hear something like, pit, pit, sit, hit, rit, wit, see the difference? Pit, pit, sit, rit, hit. And (en) RP, sit, bit, hit, rit, wit. The mouth is open, slightly open and therefore the distance between the roof of mouth and the tongue increases and the position of the sound is little lower on the tip of the tongue than it is on Indian English. This is the perfect example of how even slightest difference in the place of articulation changes the sound. 'e' as in sheet or pit. We do not have any problem making this sound unlike 'e' which we tend to make less full than the RP sound.

But many of us particularly in East India have notice that people are not able to differentiate between the short 'e' and the long 'e'. So people tend to use the long 'e' when they need to (sho) use the short 'e' and they tend to use the short 'e' when they need to use the long 'e'. So I have come across, I am not talked to them, I have heard people say or somebody who is very articulate and people who prides (sp) themselves speaking English well, they would be caught saying making simple mistakes of their sky.

I have sin this in New York, I have sin this in New York. Sin, my god, you have sin this in New York, what do you mean? I have seen this in New York instead of I have seen this in New York, I have heard somebody say, 'I have sin this in New York'. Whereas, 'Have I committed a sin by coming late?' 'How many keeds do you have madam?' 'How many kids do I have?' 'Do you want to know how many kids do I have?' No, 'how many keeds do you have?' So people tend to lengthen the short 'e' and shorten the long 'e' and this is very rampant in East India.

Now let us come to (ne) next sound 'a' and how it differs from RP when we use the sound in Indian English. The sound 'a'. The sound 'a' which is a close mid sound that is the roof of the mouth and the tongue, the gap is somewhere, it is not in the middle, it is somewhere between half close. It is between close and mid close. That is the distance between the roof of the mouth and the tongue when we are making this sound. Now what happens when Indians make this sound 'a'? Again, they tend to close the distance. Make it completely close vowel.

So, you would hear people saying, 'give me a pen'. Close the mouth fully and say, 'give me a pen', 'my shirt is red', 'I have a red shirt'. So what happens is, the sound is different when you say pen, red, head. Why you shouting at me? My head is hurting. So, head, bread, shed, wed, pen. These sounds are said with almost the mouth closed. Whereas in Brits English, it is said

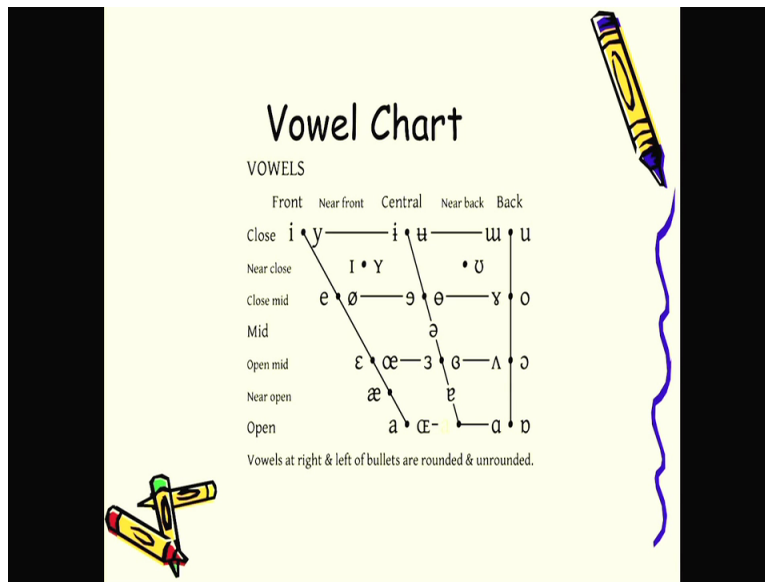
with a fuller sound. So it is between it is not mid close, it is between close and mid close, not fully close, it is mid close.

And you would hear people saying, head, wed, red, shed, sad. So what is the difference? It is little more open than the Indian English sound. And in Indian English, it is not that everyone speaks in the same way across the country. What would people say in the north of India, particularly in Punjab, people would say, had, wed, bed. So, you would hear people saying, I have a double bed which looks very nice. So double bed. So 'ay' becomes 'ayy'. And east of India or in the west of India, usually this sound is mispronounced as 'a'.

So people will say , I had an egg form breakfast. Or , I went to see London to see the big ben. The 'ay' becomes 'ayy' in west India. In particularly speakers of Gujrati, no offence intended again because I am making fun of all communities, one and all and also just doing in the humorous manner to illustrate some differences and illustrate some pronunciations differences. Please do not get offended if you are a speaker of that language. Mind you, I am also the speaker of one of the languages I am making fun of.

So, it is neither 'had' nor 'had' but, I have heard my colleague saying, 'the head has not come to the office as yet', 'this needs the head's signature'. So, it is not head or it is not head, but it is head, head, head, wed, sad, read, okay.

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From 'ay' we go to 'ayy', pat, 'ayy' as in pat. And from pat we go to, 'aa' as in part. Now what is the difference between the British sound and the Indian English sound, the difference is that, we do not open our mouth. And that has to say with the educate of our languages. In our languages, we are taught particularly Hindi which I speak or Urdu which I hear and speak. People are taught from their childhood so that when you speak, you should not open your mouth very wide. It looks (unpo) impolite to open your mouth with your speaking because it does not look good.

So most of us speak with our mouth closed. Whereas in English, westerners, in European languages you open your mouth particularly in English. So when we say the sound 'aa', we do not open our mouth fully. We say part, father, paa, but a native speaker of English would say, father, rather, car, part. So you need to open your mouth more.

Next we come to the back vowels and the two back vowels with which most Indian speakers have a problem. The sounds 'au' as in caught and the sound 'auu' as in caught. Now, what happens with most of us, we say the two sounds alike. So you would say 'caught and 'caught'. There is no difference between the ways you say the two sounds. You would say, 'caught', 'cot'. You say, 'I caught asleep thief sleeping on my cot'. Instead of that you would hear people say, 'I saw a thief sleeping on my cot'. 'I caught a thief sleeping on my cot'. There is no difference.

But there should be. The second 'auu' is longer and it is also more rounded. So, you say 'cot', not 'caught'. Do not make it 'caught', 'cot', 'cot'. And as it is shown in this chart, we have another sound which is similar but different. 'Coat'. So, 'caught', 'cot' and 'coat'. Like the supreme 'coat'. That is different. Because that is a close mid sound. Then we come to 'oo' and 'ou' as in pool and pull. Again in east India, people tend to make the short sound long and the long sound short. So you would say, 'why are you pulling my leg?', 'I am going to fall in the swimming pool.' So, why are you pulling my leg becomes, why are you pooling my leg.

I am going to fall in the swimming pool becomes, I am going to fall in the swimming pull. So, again like in the short 'e' sound, when we make the short 'oo' sound, we close our mouth fully. Indian speakers, we say, pull, pool. Instead of pull you need to say pull, pull. Open your mouth and say it, pull. And if you say like that, your sound will be closer to the, it will not be completely, but bit closer to the native RP sound.

Now let us come to the central vowels and we have the same problem, 'a' as in bud. Either we make it very long. Some parts of India, we make it very long. We say 'bud'. I have a rose bud. So the bud becomes so long. In east India people would say 'bud', make it very full. In the north India, as I said people swallow vowels, so they say, close the mouth and say, 'bud'. The rose bud looks very nice. Or in east India they would say, 'Rose bud is very nice'. None of them is accurate because it is in between the two bud. Bud, bud, open your mouth and say bud.

Do not make it bud. Bud, bud, bud. Do not say bud, do not say bud. Bud, bud. See sounds are very tricky. There is a range of sounds. So if you vary those range even slightly, the sound changes. So (wi) the difference is almost inaudible. But people can tell the difference, those who know. 'A' as in bud. Again some people make the sound very long. They say, baad. So bud becomes the bud of (en) even. Instead of saying bud, you say baad. Curd you say card. 'Can I have some card rice?' No, 'can I have some curd rice?' 'Did you bring me a greeting card?' So that is card.

You do not say, 'greeting curd'. You say, 'greeting card'. But when you want to eat curd rice, you say 'I want some curd rice.' Not some 'card rice'. And finally the sound 'a', which Indian speakers do not tend to use because they use the fuller sound. With this we conclude our session

on unit on the sounds of English part 1, I which I introduced you to the vowels of English. The 12 vowels of RP and how the 12 vowels of RP differ from the vowels of Indian English.

In the next unit, I will introduce you to the diphthongs and consonants of RP and show you how diphthongs and vowels of RP differ from those of Indian English. Thank you.