Transcribing British English vowels

Péter Szigetvári

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the Jones/Gimson/Wells tradition

ɪ	KIT	iː	FLEECE			ɪə	NEAR
e	DRESS	ɜː	NURSE	eɪ	FACE	eə	SQUARE
æ	TRAP	ɑː	START	aɪ	PRICE		
ʌ	STRUT			aʊ	MOUTH		
ɒ	LOT	ɔː	FORCE	ɔɪ	CHOICE		
ʊ	FOOT	uː	GOOSE	əʊ	GOAT	ʊə	CURE
ə	commA	(i)	happY				

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criticism

- phonetic imprecision

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- many “funny” symbols

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criticism

- phonetic imprecision
- many "funny" symbols
- little symmetry (no true short–long pairs)

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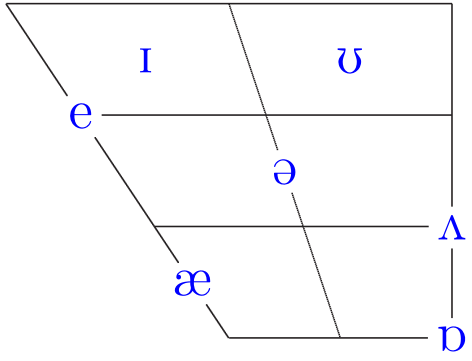

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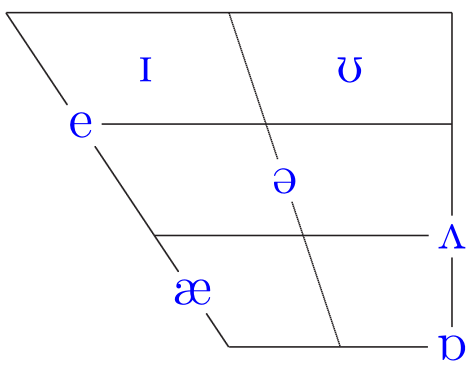

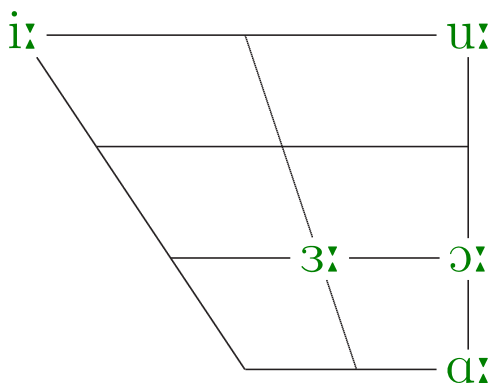

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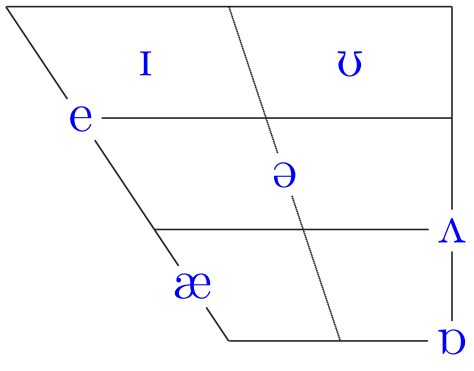

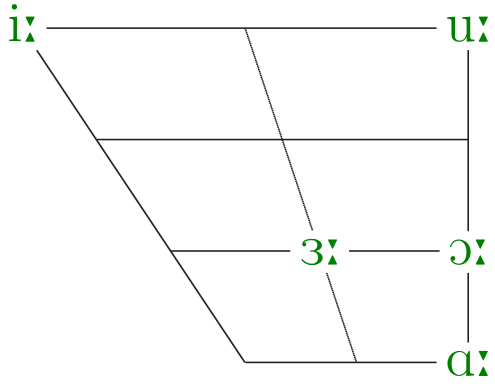

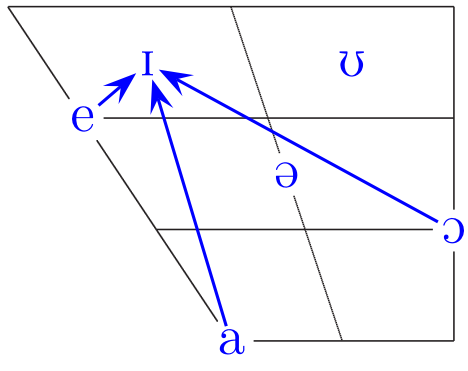

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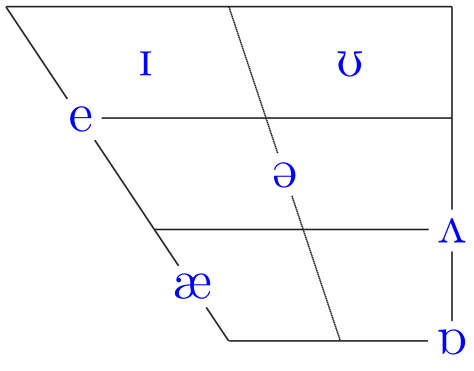

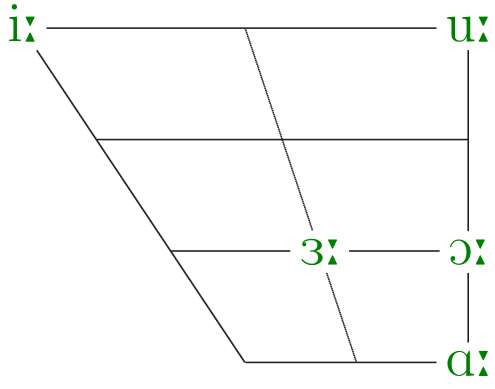

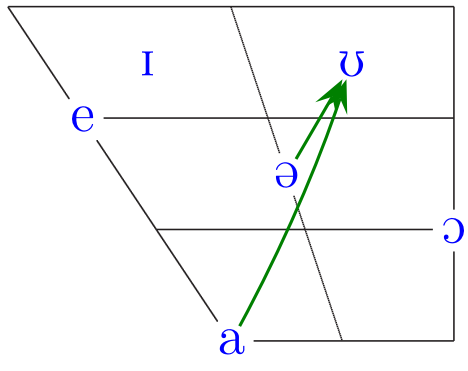

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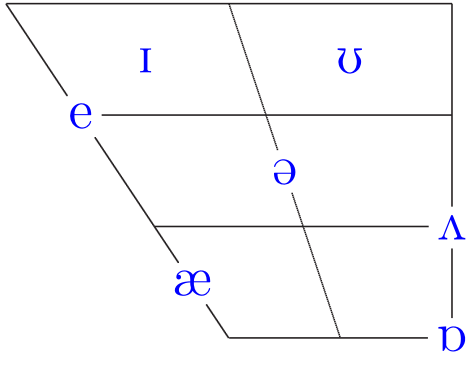
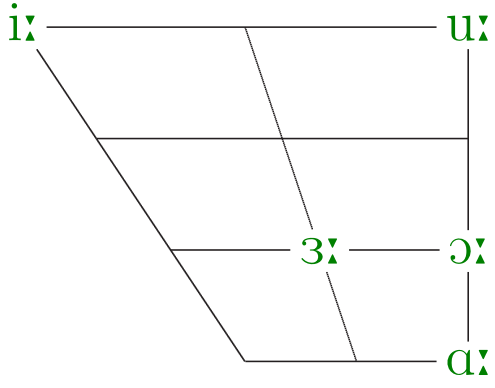
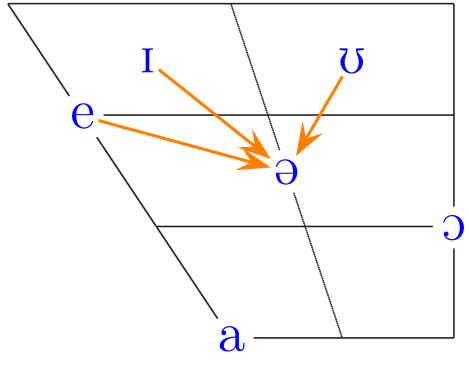
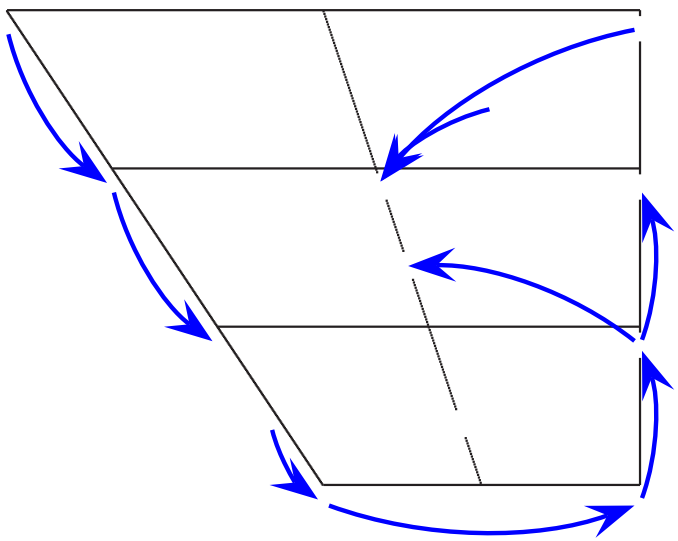






the anticlockwise vowel shift



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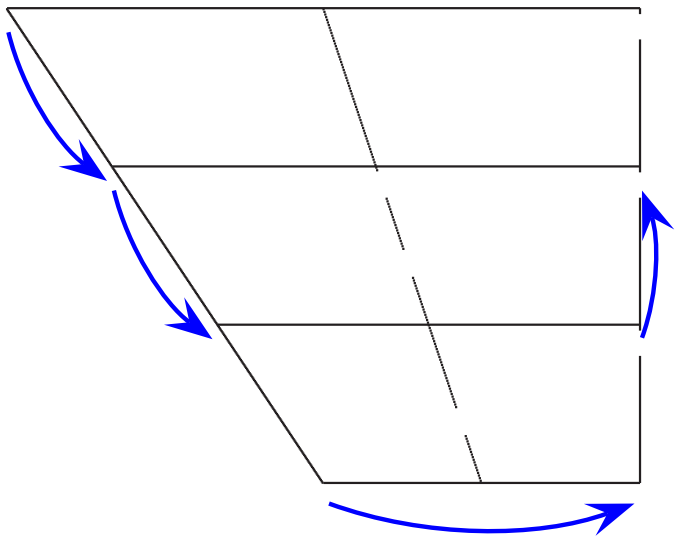

iː → ɪi, eɪ → ɛi,

aɪ → ɑi, ɔɪ → oi

e → ɛ, æ → a, ɒ → ɔ

ʊ → ɵ, ʌ → ə

ɔː → oː, uː → ɵu

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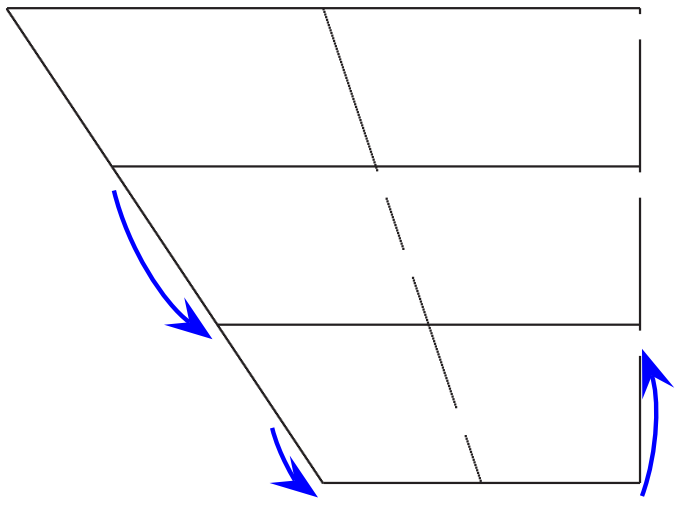

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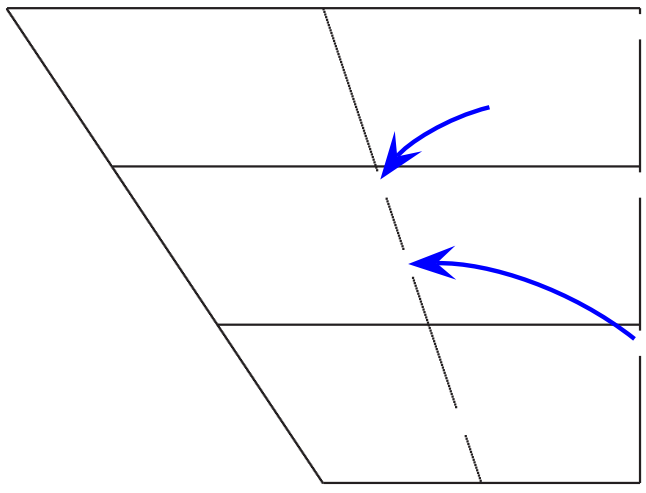

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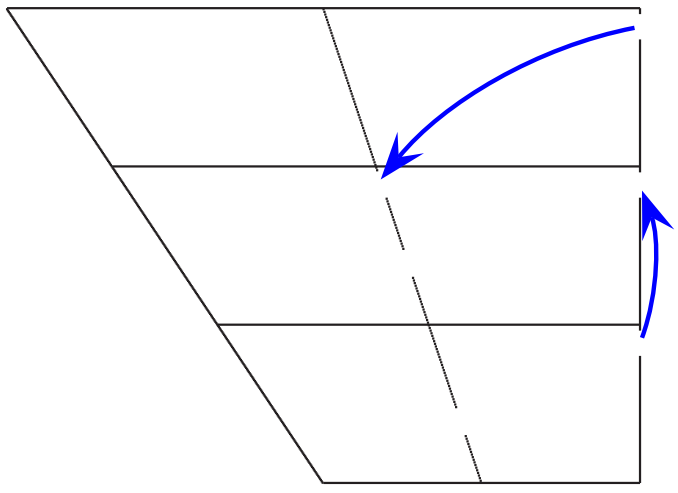

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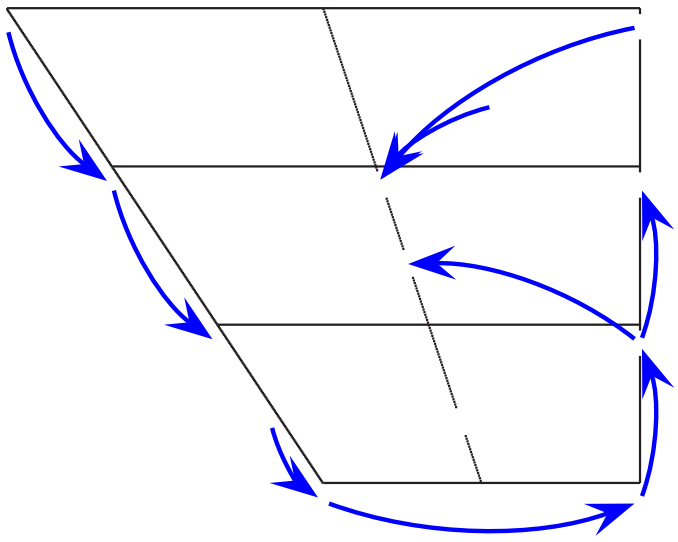

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monophthongization and syllable split

eə $\rightarrow$ ɛː (SQUARE)

monophthongization and syllable split

eə → ɛː (SQUARE)

ɪə → "ɪɪ" / __ C (*hero, beard*)

→ "ɪjə" / __ # (NEAR)

monophthongization and syllable split

eə → ɛː (SQUARE)

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→ "ɪjə" / __ # (NEAR)

ʊə → "ʊː" / j __ (*curious*)
→ oː (*poor*)
→ "uː" (*tourist*)
→ "ʊwə" / __ (CURE)

superseding the Gimsonian tradition

ɪ → e	KIT	iː → ej	FLEECE			ɪə → eː	*hero*
e → ɛ	DRESS	ɜː → əː	NURSE	eɪ → ɛj	FACE	eə → ɛː	SQUARE
æ → a	TRAP	ɑː	START	aɪ → ɑj	PRICE		
ʌ → ə	STRUT			aw	MOUTH		
ɒ → ɔ	LOT	ɔː → oː	FORCE	ɔɪ → oj	CHOICE		
ʊ → ɵ	FOOT	uː → ɵw	GOOSE	əw	GOAT	ʊə → ɵː	*curious*
ə	commA	i(ː) → ej	happY				

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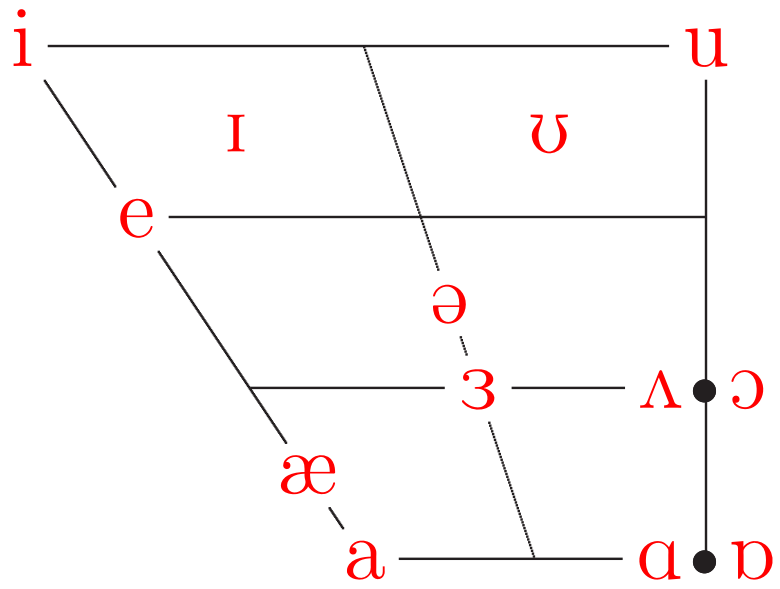

superseding the Gimsonian tradition

ɪ → e	KIT	iː → ej	FLEECE			ɪə → eː	*hero*
e → ɛ	DRESS	ɜː → əː	NURSE	eɪ → ɛj	FACE	eə → ɛː	SQUARE
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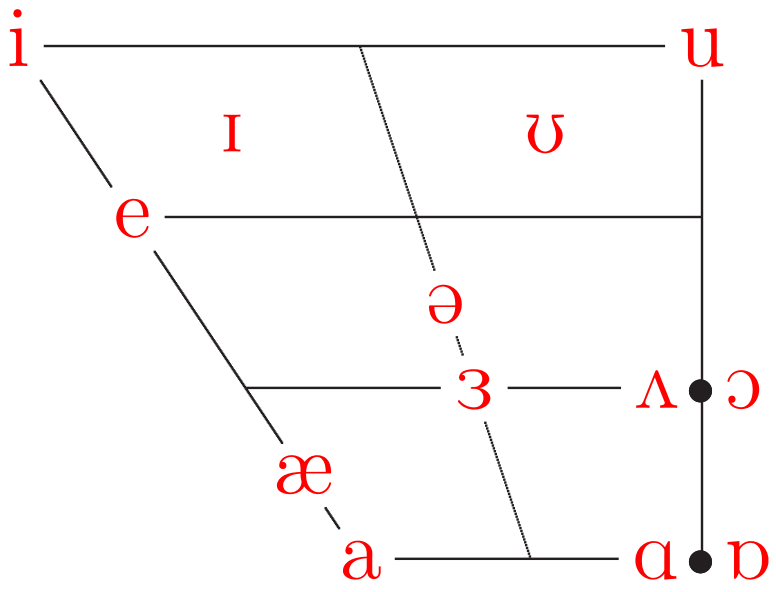

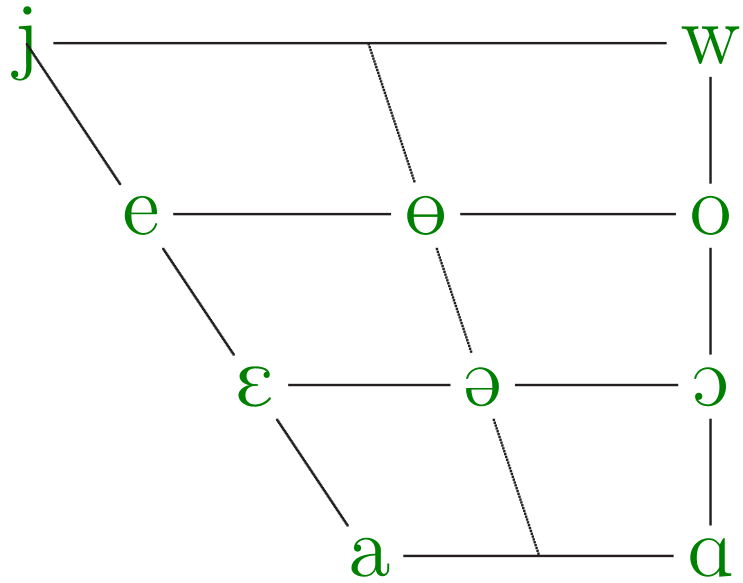

an emerging system

e	KIT		(eː)	*hero*		ej	FLEECE, happY
ɛ	DRESS		ɛː	SQUARE		ɛj	FACE
a	TRAP	⇔	ɑː	START		ɑj	PRICE + aw MOUTH
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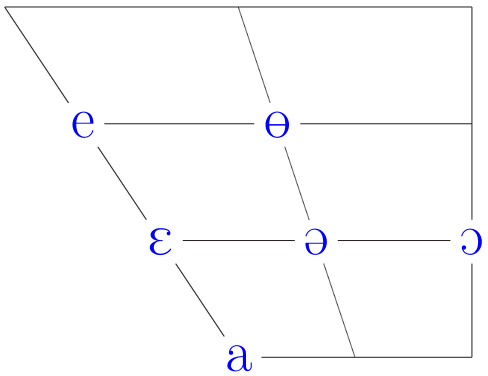

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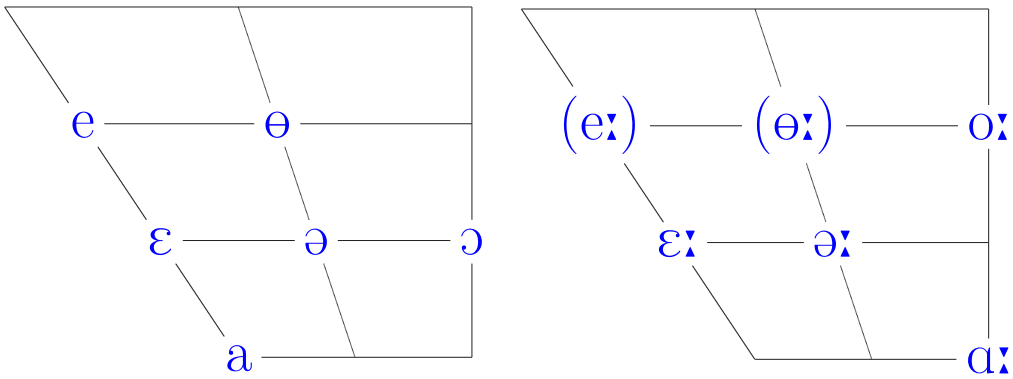

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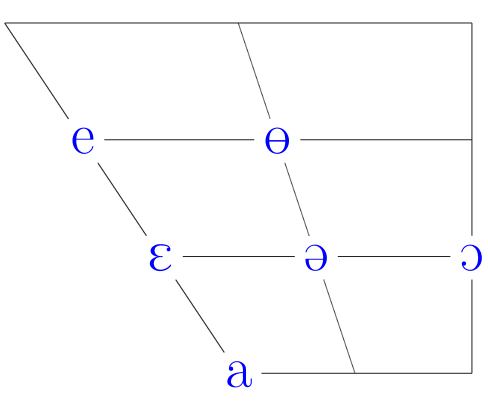

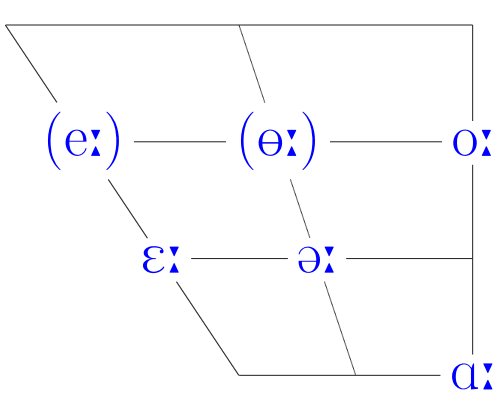

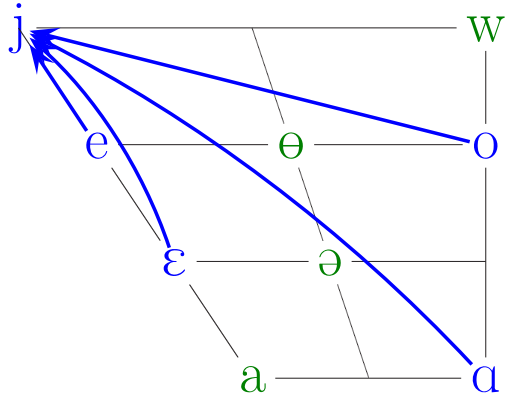

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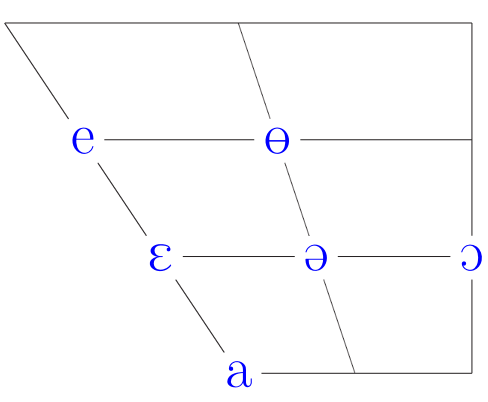

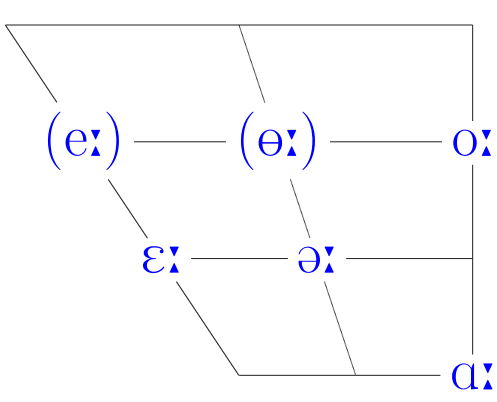

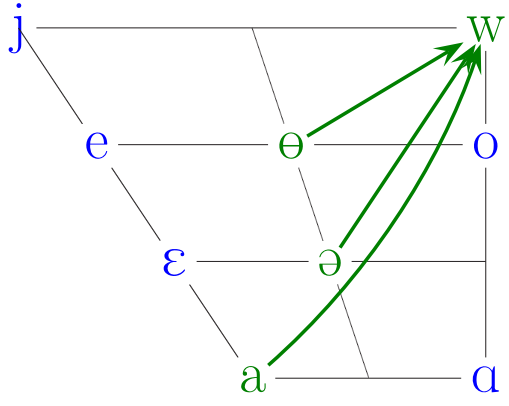

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- the vowel inventrory of unstressed syllables is a proper subset of that of stressed syllables
- current British English has a basic short–long (not lax–tense) contrast in its vowel inventory

“triphthongs” and smoothing

BISYLLABIC		DROP GLIDE	SMOOTH	
ejə	NEAR	eə (=G ɪə)	eː	*beard*
ɛjə	*layer*	ɛə (=G eə)	ɛː	*layered=laird*
ɑjə	*fire*	ɑə	ɑː	*dialect*
awə	*sour*	aə	aː	*ours*
əwə	*lower*	“əə”	əː	*blowers=blurs*
ɵwə	CURE	ɵə (≈G ʊə)	ɵː	*curious*
ojə	*lawyer*	oə	oː	*royal≈crawl*

emerging alternations

- *shear* ʃejə ∼ *sheared* ʃeːd

emerging alternations

- *shear* ʃejə ∼ *sheared* ʃeːd
- *cure* kjʊwə ∼ *curing* kjʊːreŋ

sample

hjəw pət mɑj bək ɔn ðə tɛjbəl ənd sɛz
fər ə heːrəw kəreʤ ez nɔt ðej absəns əv fejə
bət rɑːðə ðə ʤəʤmənt ðət səmθeŋ ɛls
ez moːr empoːtənt ðən fejə

sample

hjəw pət mɑj bək ɔn ðə tɛjbəl ənd sɛz
fər ə heːrəw kəreʤ ez nɔt ðej absəns əv fejə
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ez moːr empoːtənt ðən fejə

hjuː pʊt maɪ bʊk ɒn ðə teɪbəl ənd sez
fər ə hɪərəʊ kʌrɪʤ ɪz nɒt ðiː æbsəns əv fɪə
bət rɑːðə ðə ʤʌʤmənt ðət sʌmθɪŋ els
ɪz mɔːr ɪmpɔːtənt ðən fɪə

sample

hjəw pət mɑj bək ɔn ðə tɛjbəl ənd sɛz
fər ə heːrəw kəredʒ ez nɔt ðej absəns əv fejə
bət rɑːðə ðə dʒədʒmənt ðət səmθeŋ ɛls
ez moːr empoːtənt ðən fejə

hjuː pʊt maɪ bʊk ɒn ðə teɪbəl ənd sez
fər ə hɪərəʊ kʌrɪdʒ ɪz nɒt ðiː æbsəns əv fɪə
bət rɑːðə ðə dʒʌdʒmənt ðət sʌmθɪŋ els
ɪz mɔːr ɪmpɔːtənt ðən fɪə

Hugh put my book on the table and says
“for a hero courage is not the absence of fear
but rather the judgement that something else
is more important than fear.”

convergence

- FOOT fʊt **vs** STRUT strʌt

convergence

- FOOT fʊt **vs** STRUT strʌt
- *London look* lʌndən lʊk

convergence

- FOOT fɵt **vs** STRUT strɵt
- *London look* lɵndɵn lɵk
- GOOSE gɵws **vs** GOAT gɵwt

convergence

- FOOT fʊt **vs** STRUT strət
- *London look* ləndən lʊk
- GOOSE gʊws **vs** GOAT gʊwt
- CURE kjʊː **vs** NURSE nəːs

convergence

- FOOT fɵt **vs** STRUT strət
- *London look* ləndən lɵk
- GOOSE gɵws **vs** GOAT gəwt
- CURE kjɵː **vs** NURSE nəːs
- *tire* tɑjə **vs** *tower* tawə

convergence

- FOOT fʊt **vs** STRUT strət
- *London look* ləndən lʊk
- GOOSE gʊws **vs** GOAT gʊwt
- CURE kjʊː **vs** NURSE nəːs
- *tire* tɑjə **vs** *tower* tawə
- *tire* tɑə/tɑː ≈ *tower* taə/taː

further issues

- tradition

further issues

tradition

- KIT ket, FLEECE flejs, *hero* heːrəw

further issues

tradition

- KIT ket, FLEECE flejs, *hero* he:rəw
- STRUT=commA?

further issues

tradition

- KIT ket, FLEECE flejs, *hero* heːrəw
- STRUT=commA?

symmetry

further issues

tradition

- KIT ket, FLEECE flejs, *hero* heːrəw
- STRUT=commA?

symmetry

- LOT lɔt→lot **vs** THOUGHT θoːt

further issues

tradition

- KIT ket, FLEECE flejs, *hero* heːrəw
- STRUT=commA?

symmetry

- LOT lɔt→lot **vs** THOUGHT θoːt
- TRAP trap **vs** START staːt → trap/trɑp, staːt/staːt

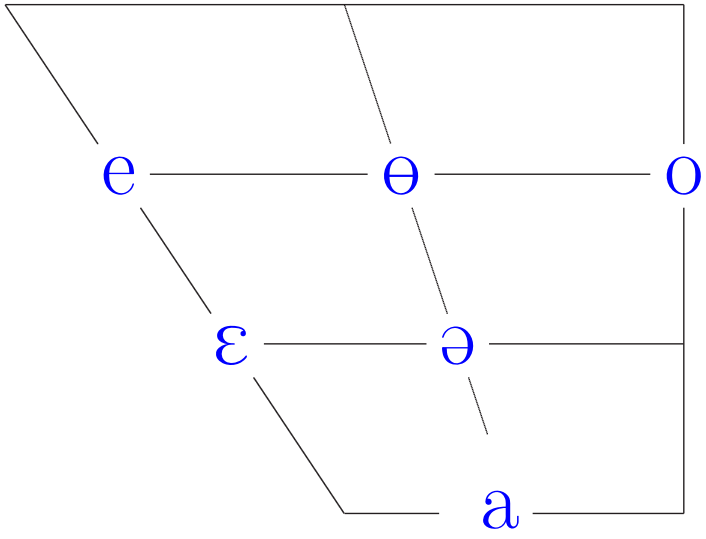
variants

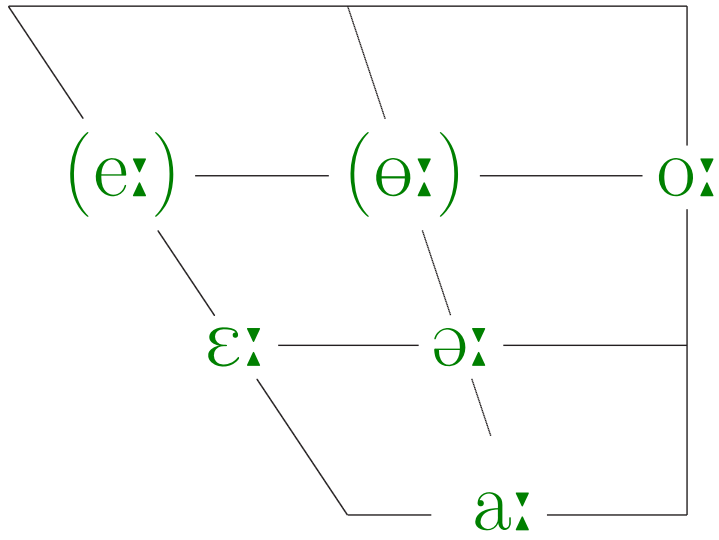
hjəw pət mɑj bək ɔn ðə tɛjbəl ənd sɛz
fər ə heːrəw kəreɟ ez nɔt ðej absəns əv fejə
bət rɑːðə ðə ɟəɟmənt ðət səmθeŋ ɛls
ez moːr empoːtənt ðən fejə

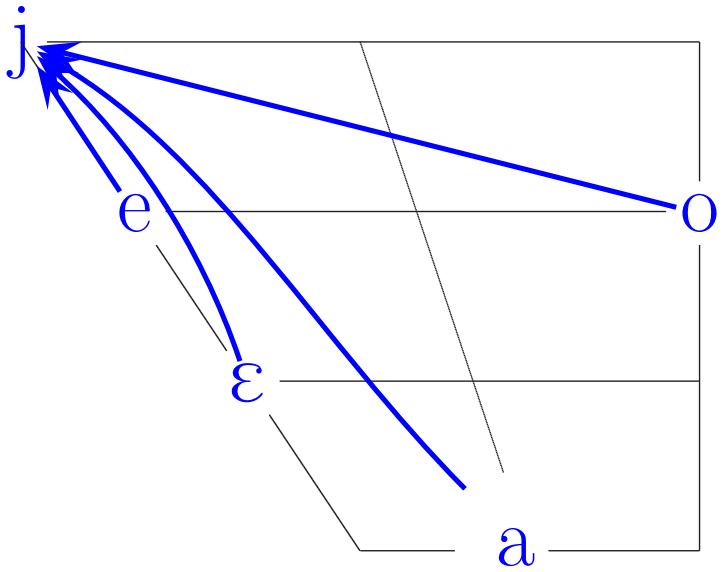
hjʊw pʊt mɑj bʊk ɔn ðə tɛjbəl ənd sɛz
fər ə hɪːrəw kərɪɟ ɪz nɔt ðɪj absəns əv fɪjə
bət rɑːðə ðə ɟəɟmənt ðət səmθɪŋ ɛls
ɪz moːr ɪmpoːtənt ðən fɪjə

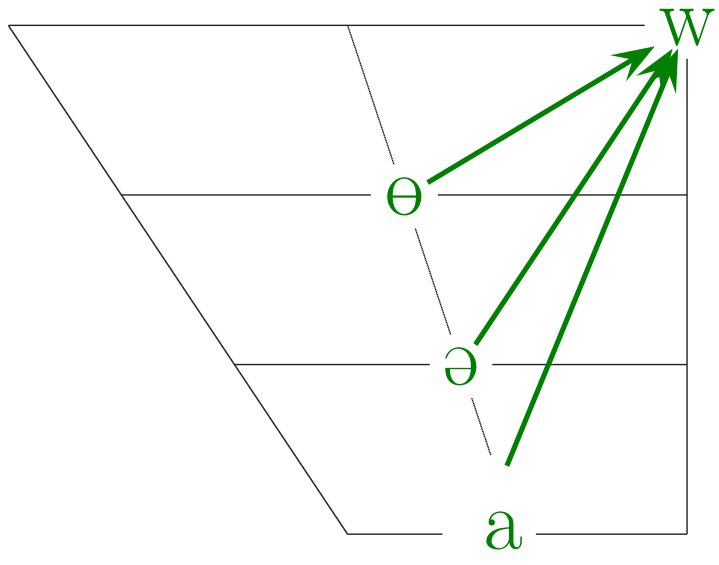
hjəw pət maj bək on ðə tɛjbəl ənd sɛz
fər ə heːrəw kəreɟ ez not ðej absəns əv fejə
bət raːðə ðə ɟəɟmənt ðət səmθeŋ ɛls
ez moːr empoːtənt ðən fejə

vowel charts again









sites to check

- englishspeechservices.com/blog
  (Geoff Lindsey's blog)
- dialectblog.com
- seas3.elte.hu/epd/epd2.pl
  (pronunciation dictionary giving the new transcriptions too—contains bugs)