

Some diachronic stages of English

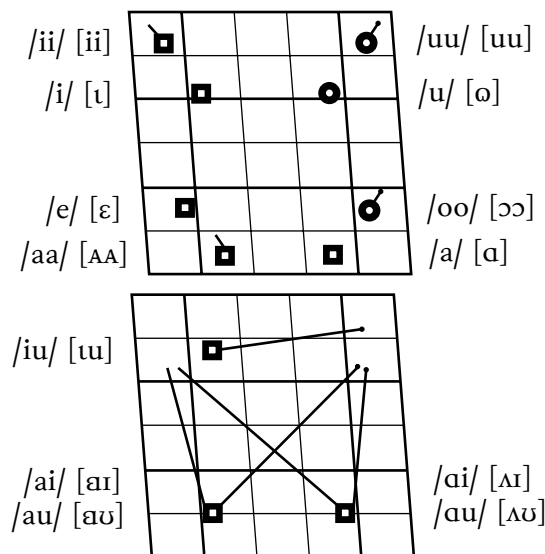
Including Early Modern English

Luciano Canepari – © 2016

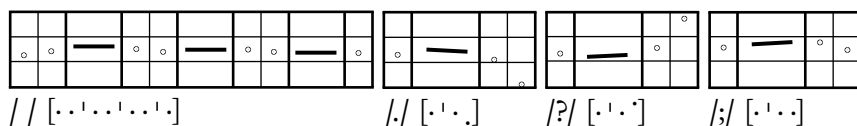
68.1. To complete our description of the possible variation in the sound systems of English, in addition to geographical and social aspects, we thought it might be interesting to also offer some concise diachronic views of older phases in the development of the English language.

In addition to the reconstruction of their vowels and consonants, we decided to include their possible and valid intonation patterns... until proved otherwise, of course.

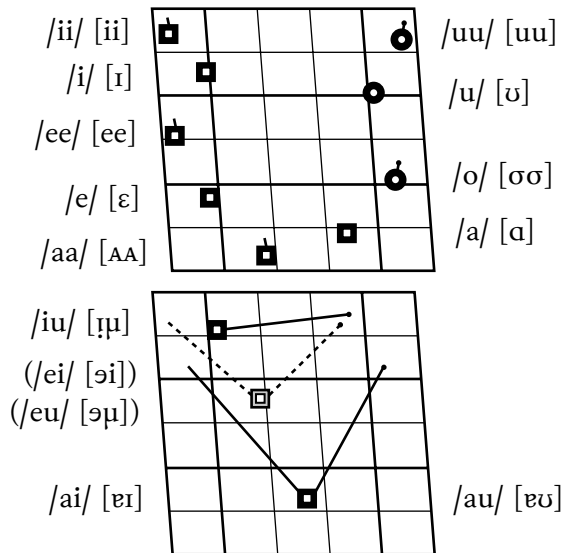
68.2. *Proto-Germanic* (IE) had four short vowels and five long ones (ie monosyllabic diphthongs), with different articulations, and the five diphthongs given,



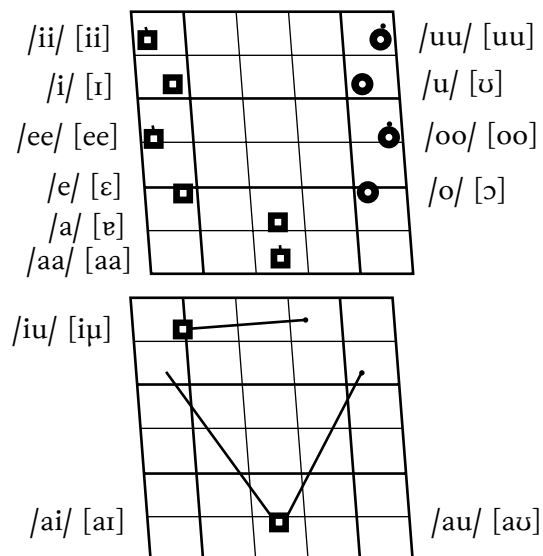
m		n		
p b	t d		k g	
φ [β]	θ[s [ð]]z		x [χ]	
		j	w	[h]
	r-l			



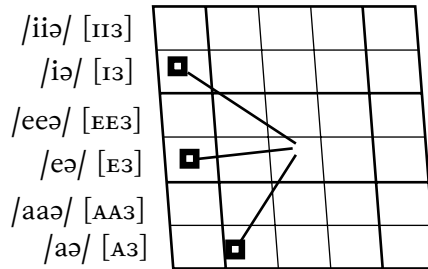
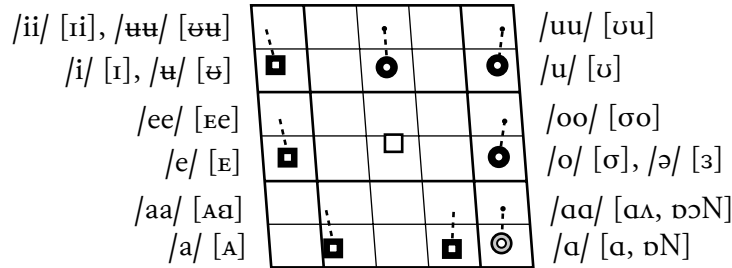
two of which on the way to die out ($/ei, eu/ \rightarrow [ii, iu]$). In the *old* phase, it only had four vowels (both short and long) and the diphthongs shown; whereas in the *late* phase, it presented five vowels (both short and long) but only three diphthongs. As for its *consonants*, it should be highlighted that $/f, \theta, x/$, $[\phi, \theta, x]$, had the word-internal taxophones $[\beta, \delta, \gamma]$, but $/x/$ $[x, \#h]$; notice also $[n \equiv C]$.



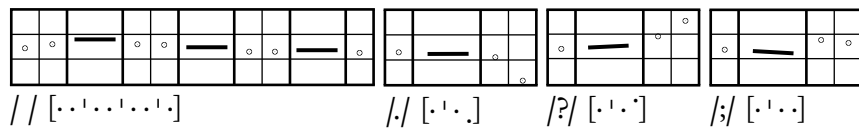
Late stage



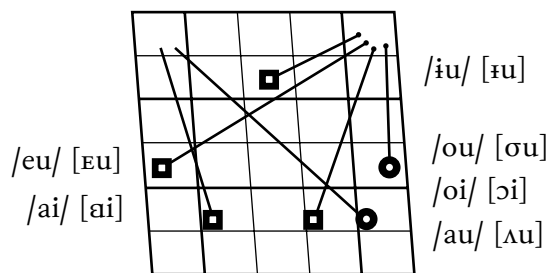
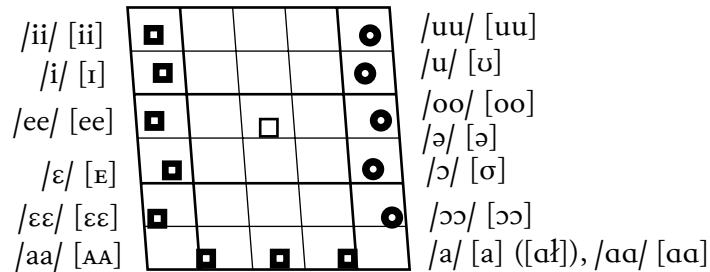
68.3. *Old English, Anglosaxon* (Germ., IE), had eight short and seven long vowels (the latter being narrow diphthongs), and three sequences or centring diphthongs /iə, iə; eə, eeə; aə, aaə/ both short and long, as well; before nasals, /ɑ, ɑɑ/ had the taxophones [v, vɔ]. As for its *consonants*, the obstruents, in a voiced environment, had the voiced taxophones given; either front or back vowels affected /k, g, h/, giving [k, c; g, ɣ, ʝ, ʒ; h, ɦ, ɣ]. There was a tardy phoneme, /ʒ/. Further, sequences of /h/ + /n, w, l, r/ gave [h, hv, hl, r]; /r/ [rV, zC, z#]; /l/ [lV, łC, ł#]. There was opposition between C ≠ CC, and [n≡C].



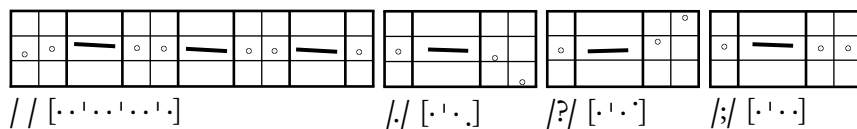
m	n						
p b	f d	[c ʝ]	k g				
		ʧ ʤ					
f [v]	θ [s]	ð [z]	ʃ (ʒ)	[j]	[ɣ]		
		[z]	[ɦ]	j	[h]	w	h
	r-l	[ł]					



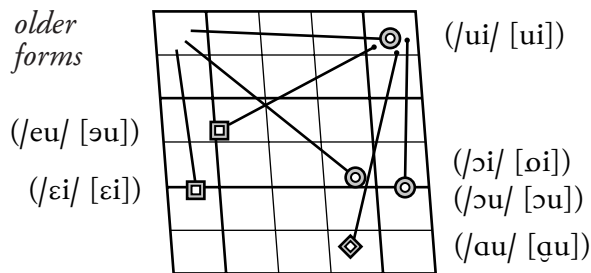
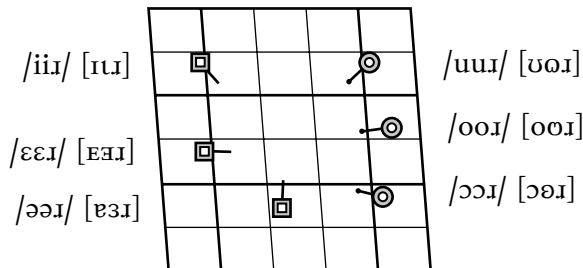
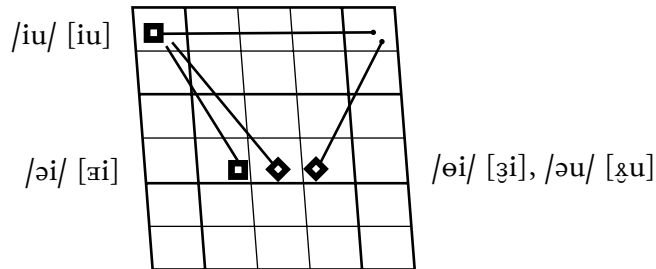
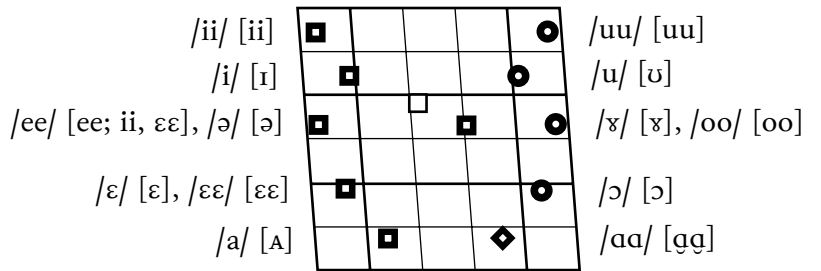
68.4. *Middle English* (Germ., IE) had six short vowels (including /ə/ [ə]) and eight long vowels, with different timbres (and a retracted taxophone for /a/ [ɑ̠C, ɑ̠ʰ]), as well as the six diphthongs given. As for its *consonants*, it had /r/ (or rather /z/) [zV, zC, zʰ], /wɾ/ (or /wz/) [ʒ̥]; /l/ [lV, lC, lʰ]; /h/ [#h, ʋ̥h, ʋ̥h], /hw/ [hw], and [n≡C].



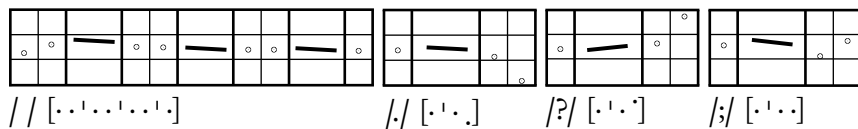
m		n							
p b		f d		tʃ dʒ		k g			
	f v	θ s ð z		ʃ					
		z				[h] j	[h]	[h̥] w	h
		l	[ɫ]						



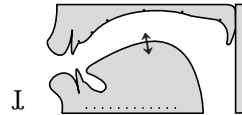
68.5. *Early Modern English* (Germ., 1E) had seven short vowels (including /ə/ [ɚ]) and six long vowels (some of which had quite different timbres from those of the corresponding short ones), as well as the seven diphthongs given. As for its *consonants*, it had /hw/ [hʷ]; /ɹ/ [ɹV, ɹC, ɹ[#]] (with [ɹC, ɹ[#]] in milder accents); /l/ [lV, lC, l[#]]; /tj, sj/ [tʃ, sʃ] (not yet [tʃ, ʃ], which derived from later [tʃj, ʃj]). Probably, also for the stage, /ɹ/ was [r]; and -y /i/, might produce a certain rhyming effect if pronounced as [ɹi], with a postpalatal semi-approximant (see orogram), as if it were [ɹi].



m		n		ŋ
p b		t d		k g
			tʃ dʒ	
f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	
		[r] l [ɹ]	j [ɹ] ɹ [ɹ]	[hʷ] w h



Postpalatal semi-approximant.



68.6. Here is the transcription of Hamlet's monologue (given in § 52.6), using a reconstructed pronunciation of Shakespeare's time.

(David Crystal's suggestion is too simple, incomplete and scarcely reliable; it seems rather a sort of journalistic scoop, with all its limitations. Ben Crystal's performance sounds too inconsistent, and with too many oscillations between American-like, North-British-like, and personal realizations.)

[fʰə'bi:·|| ə'noʊ· fə'bi:·||| ðə'f ɪzðə'kʰwɛstʃən·|||
 ɹ'hɛð-ə· ɹ'ɪz'nooblə· ɪnðə'maɪndʒ·|| fʰə'sɪf-ə·
 ðə'slɪŋz·|| and'fai-ooz· ɹəvʒu'fɪɛɔzəs 'fɔə'ɪun·||
 ɹə'fə'fʰɛɛk 'gɔɪmz·| (ə'gɛnst ə'si əv'fʰɪɪb-ətz·)|||
 əmbəiə'pʰooziŋ·|| ʌ'ɛndðəm·||| fʰə'dəi·|| fʰə'sliip·||
 noo'mɔə·||| (ə ~ ʌəmbəiə'sliip· fə'sɛɛ· wɪ'ɛnd)
 ðə'hɔɪ'fɛɛk·|| əndə'θʒuzŋ· 'nə'fjəɹət· 'ʃɔks·|
 (ə ðə'fɪɛ· ɪz'ɛɪɪtu·)||| fʰɪzə'kɔnsə'mɛɛsʒən·
 də'vʒu'fɪi·| fəbi'wɪ'fɪ·||| (ə fʰə'dəi·|| fʰə'sliip·)||
 ʌ'fʰə'sliip·|| (ə 'pʰɛɹ'vʰɪɪns· ʌ'fə'dɪim·)||| (ə 'ɛi·| ðɛɪɪz ðə'ɪɪb·)||
 (ə fɔə'ɪnðə'fʰə'sliip· əv'dɛθ·| 'hɔʊ' dɪimz·| mɛɛ'kʰɪɪm·||
 ɪ'hɛŋ wɪəv'ʃɪf-ətɔ· 'dɔf·| ðɪs'mɔə'fət· 'kʰɪɪət·||
 (ə ʌ'mɪs 'gɪv-əs· ʌ'pʰɔɔz·)||| (ə ðɛɪɪz ðə'ɪɪspɛkt·
 ðə'p'mɛɛks kə'lə'm-ə'fɪ·| əv'soo'ɔŋ· 'ɪɪf·)||
 (ə ~ ɹfə'ɪhu· ɹwəb'ɛɪɪ· ɹðə'hɪps· ɹən'skɔəɪnz· ɹəv'fʰɛɪm·)||
 ɹðə'pʰɪɪs-əɪz· 'ɔŋ·|| ɹðə'pʰɪɪsɪb 'mənʒ· ɹkʰən'fʰɪumɪli·||
 ɹðə'pʰɪɪz· əv'də'spɛɪzɔ 'ɪɪv·|| ɹðə'ɔɔz· də'ɪɪɛ·||
 ɹðɪ'ɪnsələns· əv'dɔfɪs·| ɹəndə'spɛɪzɪnz·|
 ɹðə'pʰɛɛsʒəmp· 'mɛɪ-ɪf·| ɹəv'dɪɪm'wɛɪɔdi· 'fʰɛɛks·||
 ɹ'hɛn 'hi· ɹɹɪm'sɛɪf·|| ʌ'mɛɪ'fʰɪz kʰ(w)ɪi'ɪfəs· ʌ'mɛɛk·
 ʌwɪðə'ɛɪɪ· (ə ʌ'ɔɔ'ɔkɪn·)||| (ə ɹ'hu· ɹwə'd'fɔɔɔ'ɔɔz· ɹ'ɛɪɪ·|
 ɹfʰə'gɪɪf· ən'swɛɪf·| ɹndə'ɪɪwɪ-i 'ɪɪf·)||
 bɪ'fðə'ðə'dɪɪf· əv'sɪmθɪŋ·|| 'ə'fɪɪ 'dɛθ·|||
 ɹðɪɪndɪ'skɪv-əɪd 'kʰɪɪfɪ·| fɪəm'huuz 'boɔɪn·||
 'noo 'vʰɪɪv-əlɪɪ ɪə'fʰɛɪzɪnz·|| ʌ'pʰɪɪz-ətz ðə'wɪt·|||
 ʌ'm'mɛɛksəs· ʌ'ɪɔð-əɪ· ʌ'ɛɪɪ·| ðoozɪtɪz· wɪ'həɪv·||
 ɹðə'fɪɪ· ɹɹə'ɪɪð-əɪz·| ðə'wɪ'noo· 'noʊ 'dɔv·|||
 'ðɪs·|| 'kʰɔnsʒəns·| 'dɪz· 'mɛɛk 'kʰɪɪɪɪz·| əv'ss'ɔɔt·||
 əndɪs· ðə'nɛɪɪv 'hi· əv'ɪɪzə'ɪɪsʒən·|
 ɪz'ɪkɪd 'ooɪ·| wɪððə'pʰɛɪɪt 'kʰɪɪf· əv'θɔɔf·||
 ənd'ɪɪɪɪɪɪz·| əv'gɪɪp· 'pʰɪɪf·| əm'mooɪɪf·|
 ɪwɪð'ðɪɪɪɪɪɪz·|| ðɛɪɪ'kʰɪɪzɪɪntɪs·| 'fʰɪɪzɪn· ə'ɪɪɪ·|||
 ən'ɪɪuz·| ðə'nɛɪm·|| əv'ɪɪk-sʒən·|||].