

# HANDOUT 4: THE CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH VOWELS.

Vowels.

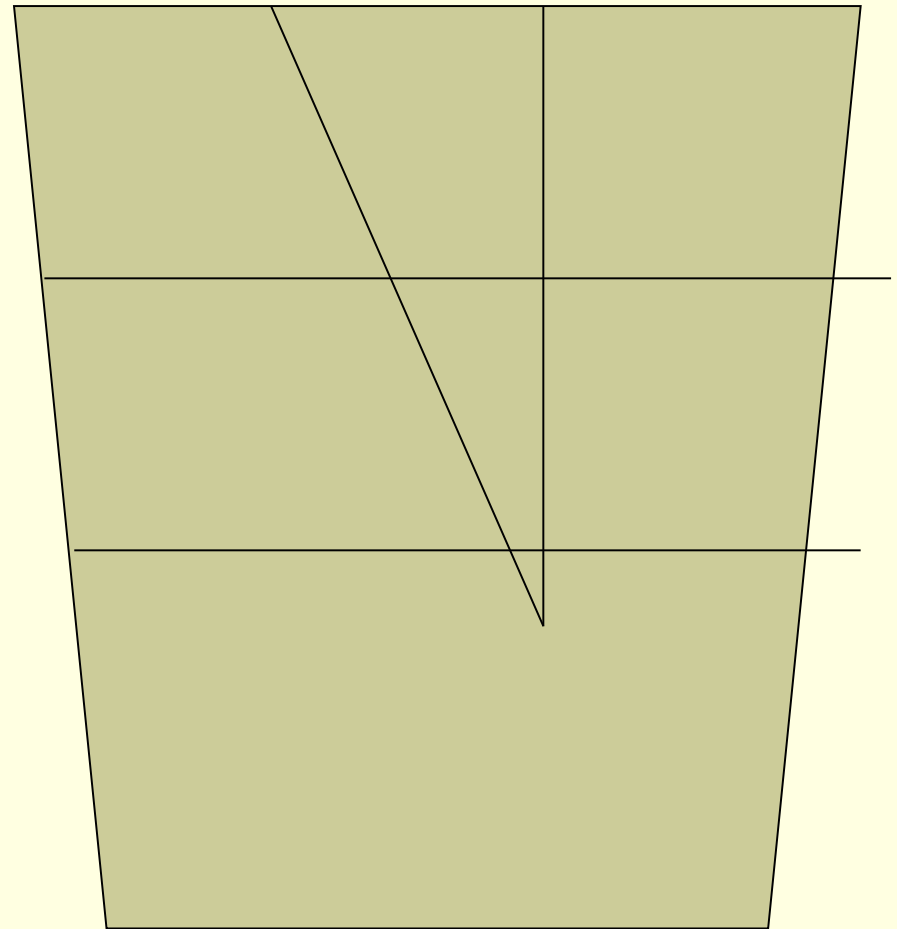
# 1. The classification of English vowels.

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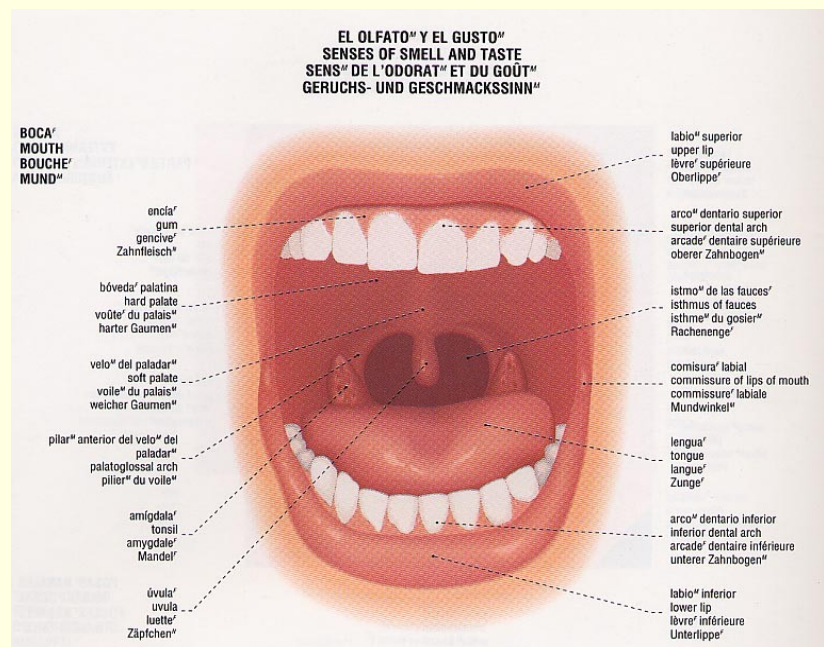
- The qualities of vowels depend upon the positions of the tongue and lips.
- It is important to classify them according to the position of the main part of the tongue.
- Vowels may be conveniently arranged according to the position of the highest point of the tongue.

## 2. Diagram showing the classification of English vowels (D. Jones, 1962).

- Vertical axis: front, central and back vowels.
- Horizontal axis: close and open vowels.
- Quantity axis: short and long vowels.

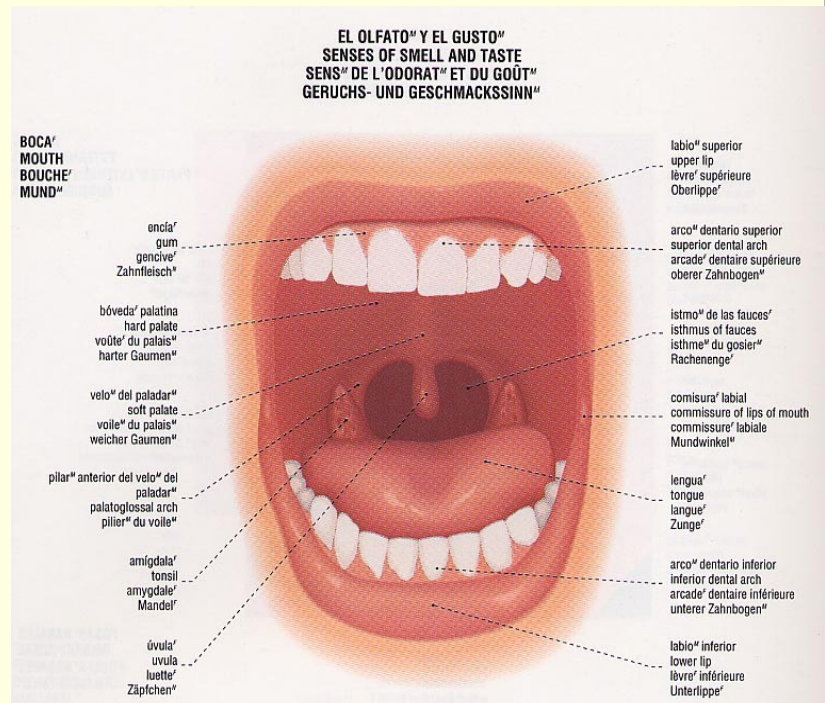


# 3. Front vowels



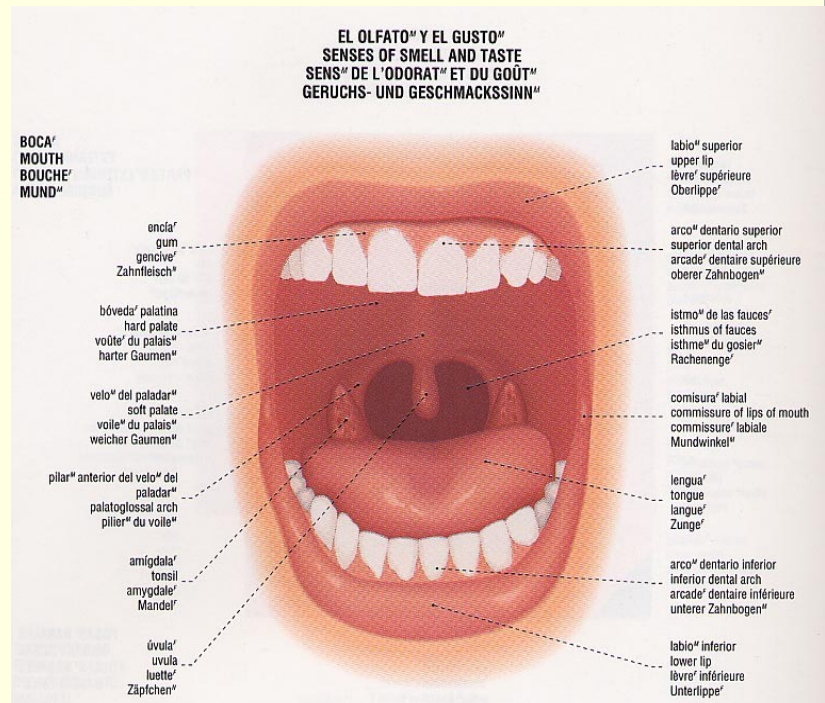
- The front of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate: /i:/ as in /'si:/.

# 3. Back vowels



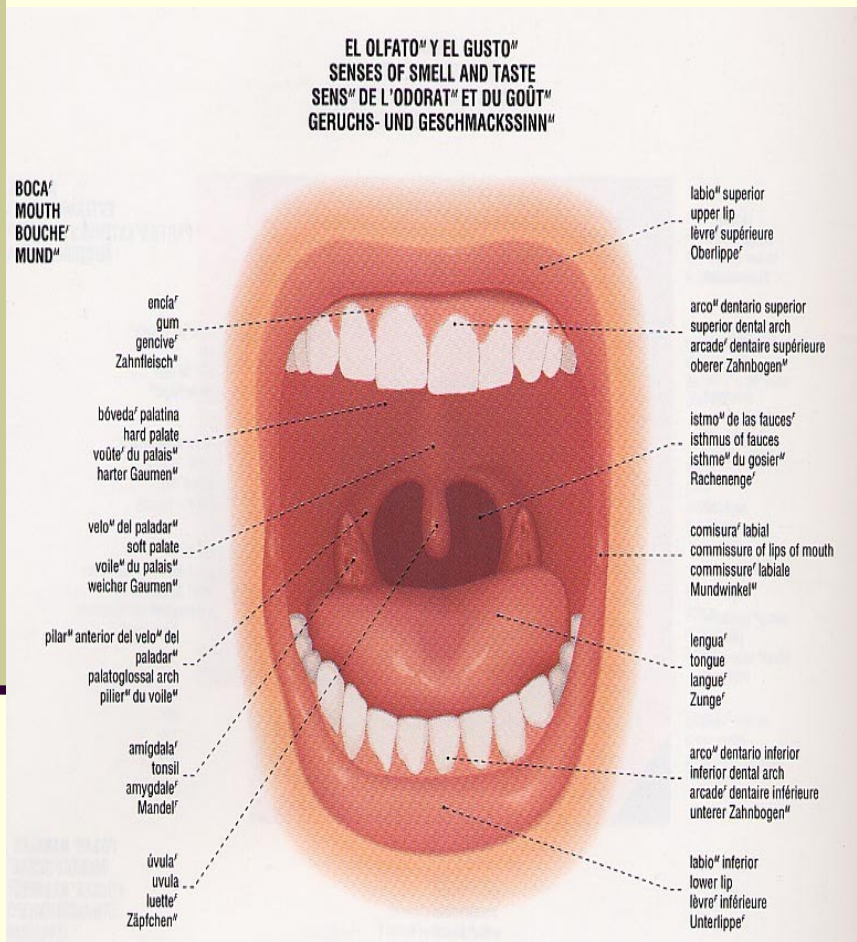
- The back of the tongue is raised in the direction of the soft palate: /a:/ as in /'ka:/; /u:/ as in /'fu:d/

# 3. Central vowels



- They are intermediate between front and back vowels: /ɜ:/ as in /'bɜ:d/.

# 4. Essential elements in the classification of vowel sounds.



- The part of the tongue that is raised: *front*, *back* and *central* vowels.
- The height to which it is raised: *close* and *open* vowels.
- The position of the lips: *rounded* and *unrounded* vowels.
  - Spread vowels.
  - Close lip-rounding and open lip-rounding.