L5 : Letter-to-Sound Rules
Vowels

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problems with English spelling

- Great Vowel Shift
- multiple origins

Great Vowel Shift

- all the long front vowels shifted
- spelling reflects pre-GVS situation
- English spelling was fixed too early
  - (long back vowels also shifted)

GVS : vowel changes

- /iː/ → /æ/  mite
- /ɛː/ → /iː/  meet
- /æː/ → /æ/  meat
- /æː/ → /æ/  mate

(also back vowels)
- /uː/ → /aʊ/  house
- /ɔː/ → /uː/  boot

GVS explains 'a'

- mat : /mæt/
- mate : /meɪt/
GVS also explains 'i'

- *bit*: /bɪt/
- *bite*: /bɑːt/ 
- *divine*: /dəˈvaɪn/ 
- *divinity*: /dɪˈvɪnɪtɪ/ 
- *live*: /lɪv/, /ˈlæv/ 
  *live* is a homograph but not a homophone. Can you think of other words like this?

spelling reform?

- whose pronunciation should we use? 
- should we distinguish between *poor* and *pour*? 
- idiosyncratic spelling maintains links between words

links between words: /ɛɪ/ ~ /æ/ 

- sane, sanity 
- vane, vanity 
- profane, profanity 
- mendacious, mandacity

links between words: /aɪ/ ~ /ɪ/ 

- sign, signature 
- divine, divinity 
- collide, collision

magic 'e'

- provides links between two pronunciations of a vowel: 
  
  *sane* ~ *sanity*  
  *bite* ~ *bitten*  
  *meter* ~ *metrical* 

multiple origins

- English came from many sources 
- continued borrowings reinforce spelling problems 
  
  *unique*  
  *chic*  
  *antique*
Four Principles

1. /æ/ ~ /æ/: /æ/ only occurs with 'a'
2. /ɑː/ ~ /ɒ/: /ɑː/ with 'or', /ɒ/ with 'o'
3. /æ/ ~ /ʌ/: /æ/ only occurs with 'a'
4. /au/ ~ /ɔː/: /ɔː/ never occurs after /ʃ/ or /θ/

Principle 1: /e/ ~ /æ/

/e/ only occurs with simple 'a'

Prototype: pet /pet/ ~ pat /pæt/

| /e/ | bet, send, net, shed, head, said, shepherd, bed, fed, except |
| /æ/ | bat, sand, rat, bad, sad, hand, happen, captain, panda, attack |

Principle 2: /ɔː/ ~ /ɒ/

/ɔː/ occurs with 'or'; /ɒ/ occurs with simple 'o'

Prototype: port /pɔːt/ ~ pot /pɒt/

| /ɔː/ | port, short, sports, source, important, torture |
| /ɒ/ | pot, shot, spots, cot, dot, dog, log, fog, cotton, exotic, impossible, forgotten |

Principle 3: /ɑː:/ ~ /ʌ:/

/ɑː:/ only occurs with 'a'

Prototype: dark /dɑːk/ ~ duck /dʌk/

| /ɑː:/ | cart, barter, heart, aunt, master, fast, last, regarding |
| /ʌ:/ | cut, butter, hut, nut, mustard, reluctant, shuttle, bustling |

Principle 4: /uː/ ~ /oː/

/uː/ occurs after /ʃ/, /oː/ occurs before /k/

Prototype: youth /juːθ/; book /bʊk/ |

| /uː/ | cute, news, few, rebuke, beautiful, accuse, refute |
| /oː/ | look, shook, took, hook, crook, nook |

Reading

• for pronunciation of vowels: SoE 68 – 72.