AAE103

L5 : Letter-to-Sound Rules Vowels

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outline

- origins of problems
- spelling reform?
- principles for transcription

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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/ → /aɪ/   *mite*
- /eː/ → /iː/   *meet*
- /ɛː/ → /iː/   *meat*
- /aː/ → /eɪ/   *mate*

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

GVS explains 'a'

- *mat* : /mæt/
- *mate* : /meɪt/

- *vane* : /veɪn/
- *vanity* : /vænɪti/

GVS also explains 'i'

- *bit* : /bɪt/
- *bite* : /baɪt/

- *divine* : /dɪˈvaɪn/
- *divinity* : /dɪˈvɪnɪti/

- *live* : /lɪv/, /laɪv/
  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 : /eɪ/ ~ /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. /e/ ~ /æ/ : /æ/ only occurs with 'a'
2. /ɔː/ ~ /ɒ/ : /ɔː/ with 'or', /ɒ/ with 'o'
3. /ɑː/ ~ /ʌ/ : /ɑː/ only occurs with 'a'
4. /uː/ ~ /ʊ/ : /ʊ/ never occurs after /j/

Principle 1 : /e/ ~ /æ/

/æ/ 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/ ~ /ʊ/

/uː/ occurs after /j/, /ʊ/ occurs before /k/

prototype : *youth* /juːθ/, *book* /bʊk/

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

Reading

- for pronunciation of vowels: SoE 68 – 72.