BBN–ANG–141 Foundations of phonology
5. Vowels and R

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outline

recap: vowel categories

presence and absence of R
- rhotic and nonrhotic accents

vowels before R
- historical short vowels before R
- diphthongs before R

breaking and smoothing
- breaking and smoothing without R

hiatus

mergers

sample exam questions

recap: vowel categories

checked vowels: only before consonant

i	e	a	ə	o	u
KIT	DRESS	TRAP	STRUT	LOT	FOOT

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R vowels: also word finally

iː	eː	aː	əː	oː	uː
NEAR	SQUARE	START	NURSE	FORCE	CURE

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R vowels: also word finally

iː	eː	aː	əː	oː	uː
NEAR	SQUARE	START	NURSE	FORCE	CURE

free vowels: even before vowel

ij	ej	aj	aw	əw	oj	uw
FLEECE	FACE	PRICE	MOUTH	GOAT	CHOICE	GOOSE

rhotic and nonrhotic accents

	GA	CUBE
rush	rəʃ	rəʃ
brush	brəʃ	brəʃ
burrow	bərow	bərəw
burp	bərp	bəːp
blur	blər	bləː
blurred	blərd	bləːd
blurring	blərɪŋ	bləːriŋ
blur out	blər awt	bləːr awt

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rhotic accents

in General American (GA) all Rs of the spelling are pronounced
(R = spelled R, /r/ = pronounced /r/)

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rhotic and nonrhotic accents

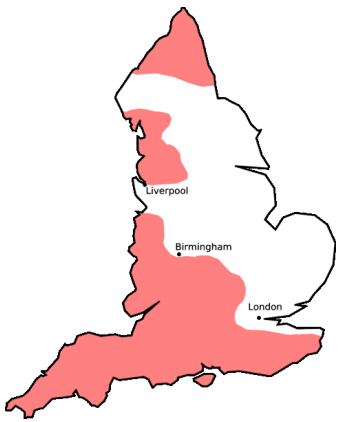
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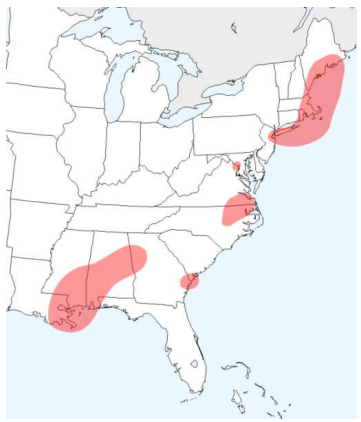
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rural rhotic accents in England in the 1950s (Orton & al. 1962–1971)

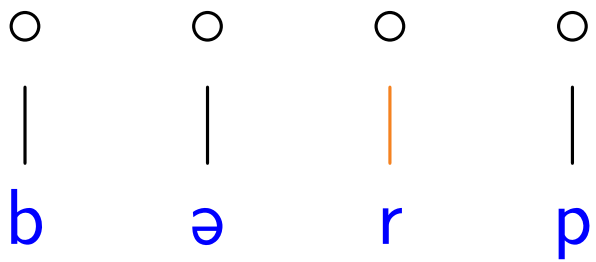


rhotic dialects in England in the late 20th c. (Trudgill 2000)



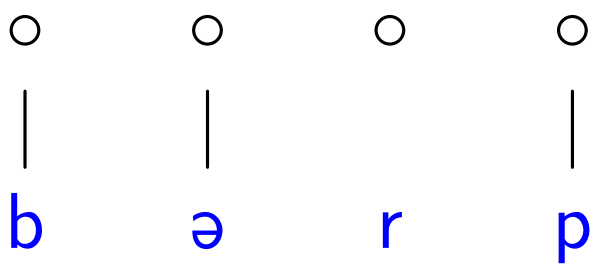
nonrhotic pronunciations among whites in the USA (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006)

compensatory lengthening (CL)



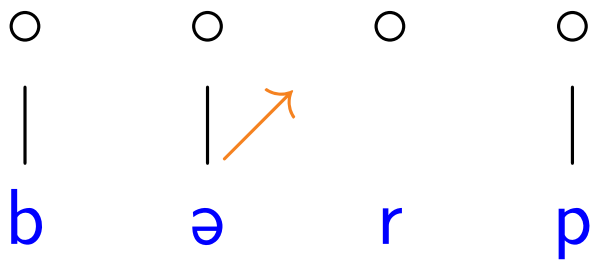
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compensatory lengthening (CL)



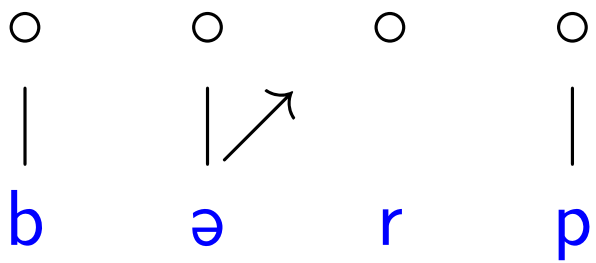
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2. in nonrhotic English
   a. [r] not followed by vowel delinks

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compensatory lengthening (CL)



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   a. [r] not followed by vowel delinks
   b. preceding vowel takes its place

the loss of [r] is compensated for by the lengthening of the preceding vowel

other short vowels before R

__R#	__RC	__RV	
car k**aː**	*card* k**aː**d	*carrot* k**a**rət	vanilla CL
or **oː**	*lord* l**oː**d	*lorry* l**o**rij	vanilla CL
blur blə**ː**	*Kurd* kə**ː**d	*hurry* h**ə**rij	NURSE-merger + CL
her hə**ː**	*herd* hə**ː**d	*herring* h**e**riŋ	NURSE-merger + CL
stir stə**ː**	*skirt* skə**ː**t	*spirit* sp**i**rit	NURSE-merger + CL

- vowel quality changes in the last two cases (unless R is followed by V)

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  - formerly different vowels (ə e i) merge in əː

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  - NURSE is the name of əː
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- (in fact, there is some quality change in the first two cases too: see next slide)

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  - NURSE is the name of ɜː
  - formerly different vowels (ə e i) merge in ɜː
- (in fact, there is some quality change in the first two cases too: see next slide)
- words with a short V + r + V (last column) are CARROT words

comparing accents (narrow transcription)

control		SSE	GA	BE		SSE	GA	BE
cat kat	*car*	kar	kɑ˞	kɑː	*card*	kard	kɑ˞d	kɑːd
lot lɔt	*or*	ɔr	ɔ˞	oː	*lord*	lɔrd	lɔ˞d	loːd
bluff bləf	*blur*	blər	blə˞	ləː	*Kurd*	kərd	kə˞d	kəːd
hen hɛn	*her*	hɛr	hə˞	həː	*herd*	hɛrd	hə˞d	həːd
still stɪl	*stir*	stɪr	stə˞	stəː	*skirt*	skɪrt	skə˞t	skəːt

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still stɪl	*stir*	stɪr	stə˞	stəː	*skirt*	skɪrt	skə˞t	skəːt

- the [r] withers gradually: it is “strong” in SSE, “weak” in GA, absent in BE

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- the preceding vowel is unaffected in SSE, in most cases altered in GA and BE

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bluff bləf	*blur*	blər	blə˞	bləː	*Kurd*	kərd	kə˞d	kəːd
hen hɛn	*her*	hɛr	hə˞	həː	*herd*	hɛrd	hə˞d	həːd
still stɪl	*stir*	stɪr	stə˞	stəː	*skirt*	skɪrt	skə˞t	skəːt

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- wrt R, SSE is most conservative, GA is intermediate, BE is most advanced

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- the [r] withers gradually: it is "strong" in SSE, "weak" in GA, absent in BE
- the preceding vowel is unaffected in SSE, in most cases altered in GA and BE
- wrt R, SSE is most conservative, GA is intermediate, BE is most advanced
- the quality change of the short V before R is called broadening; ɑː, əː, and oː are broad vowels

diphthongs before R

control	__R]	__RC	__RV
weed wijd	*queer* kwiː	*weird* wiːd	*weary* wiːrij
lute luwt	*lure* luː	*Lourdes* luːd	*lurid* luːrid
cake kejk	*care* keː	*scarce* skeːs	*vary* veːrij
vote vəwt	*fore* foː	*force* foːs	*forum* foːrəm
spine spajn	*spire* spajə	*spires* spajəz	*spiral* spajrəl
house haws	*hour* awə	*hours* awəz	*dowry* dawrij
coin kojn	*coir* kojə	—	*Moira* mojrə

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- non-wide diphthongs never occur before R (pronounced or not), but are replaced by an R vowel

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- non-wide diphthongs never occur before R (pronounced or not), but are replaced by an R vowel
- only wide diphthongs occur before R and only before RV (cf. CARROT)
- in other environments wide diphthongs are followed by /ə/ (but see next slide)

development: breaking and smoothing

	diphth.+R >	breaking >	R-loss >	glide loss >	coalescence
queer	ijr	ijər	ijə	iə	iː
lure	uwr	uwər	uwə	uə	uː
care	ejr	ejər	ejə	eə	eː
fore	owr	owər	owə	oə	oː
spire	ajr	ajər	ajə	aə	aː
hour	awr	awər	awə	aə	aː

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- breaking: insert ə between glide and r

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- breaking: insert ə between glide and r
- smoothing: delete glide between vowel and ə (ijə > iə, etc.) and fuse them into a long vowel (iə > iː, etc.)

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- breaking: insert ə between glide and r
- smoothing: delete glide between vowel and ə (ijə > iə, etc.) and fuse them into a long vowel (iə > iː, etc.)
- most British dictionaries indicate different stages of this development
  queer kwɪə, *lure* ljʊə, *care* keə, *fore* fɔː, *spire* spaɪə, *hour* aʊə

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- most British dictionaries indicate different stages of this development *queer* kwɪə, *lure* ljʊə, *care* keə, *fore* fɔː, *spire* spaɪə, *hour* aʊə
- Oxford/Wiktionary is a bit more up-to-date: *care* kɛː

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- breaking: insert ə between glide and r
- smoothing: delete glide between vowel and ə (ijə > iə, etc.) and fuse them into a long vowel (iə > iː, etc.)
- most British dictionaries indicate different stages of this development *queer* kwɪə, *lure* ljʊə, *care* keə, *fore* fɔː, *spire* spaɪə, *hour* aʊə
- Oxford/Wiktionary is a bit more up-to-date: *care* kɛː
- CUBE/this course is even more up-to-date

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all word-final Rs are lost

the r in these words is not the historical/etymological R of *blur* or *guitar*, it is epenthetic (= inserted from "outside"), to repair hiatus

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hiatus: vowel + vowel

recall, only diphthongs occur before another vowel

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- diphthongs occur word finally, but that's okay, since they may occur before a vowel

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old-school grammarians distinguish between

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- "linking" R: occurs in rhotic accents too and in spelling

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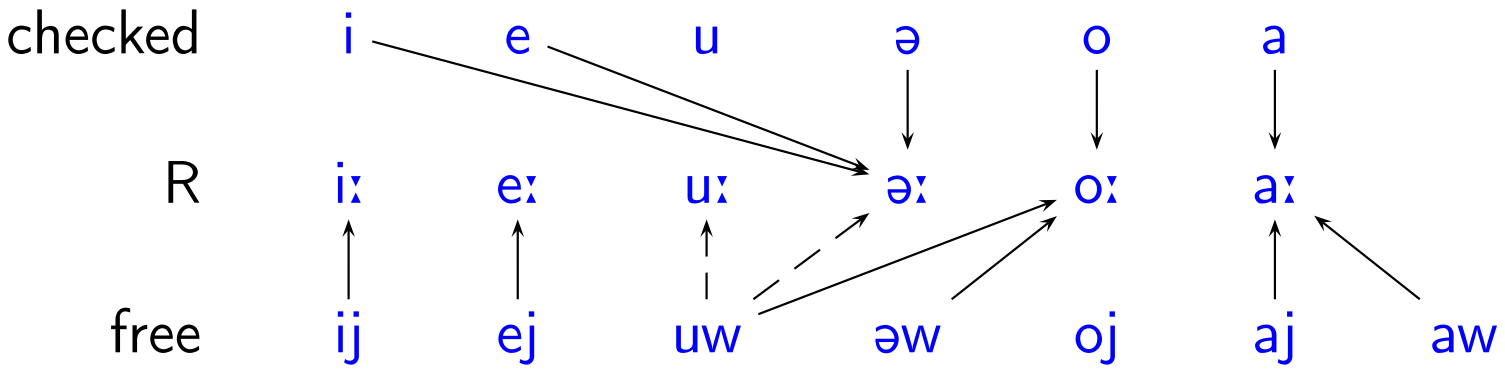
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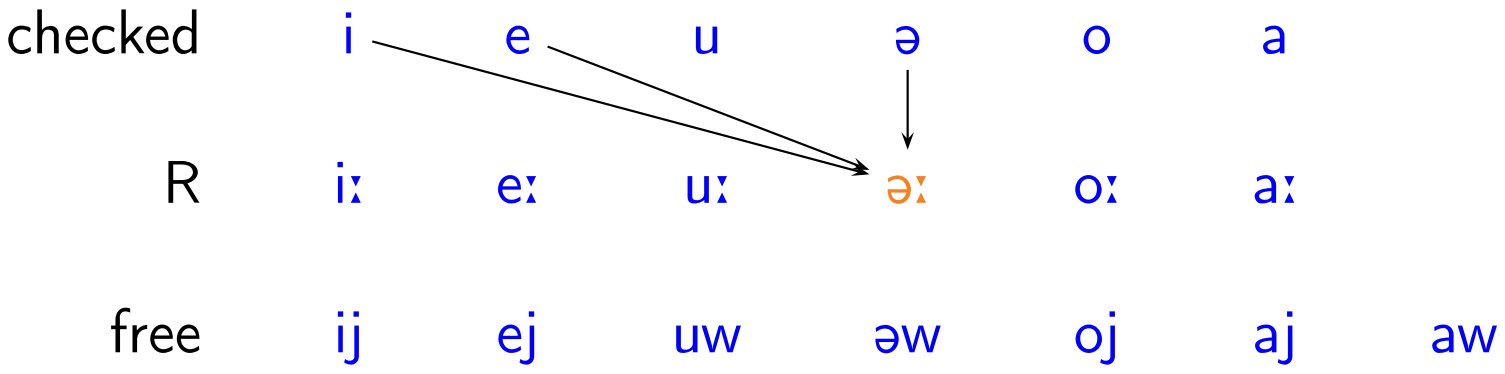
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however, this distinction is linguistically meaningless,
so we will just talk about hiatus-filling or epenthetic r

overview of pre-R mergers

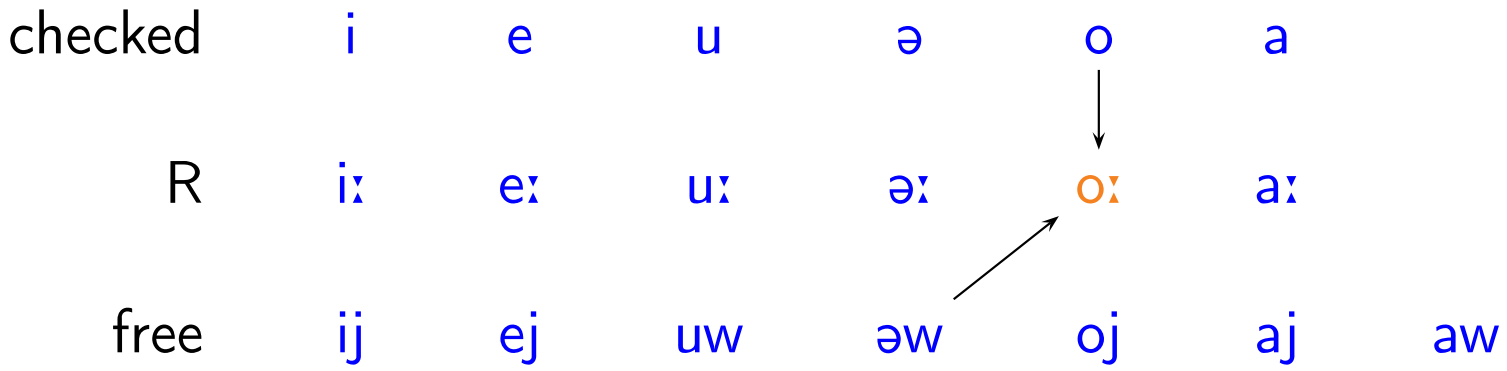


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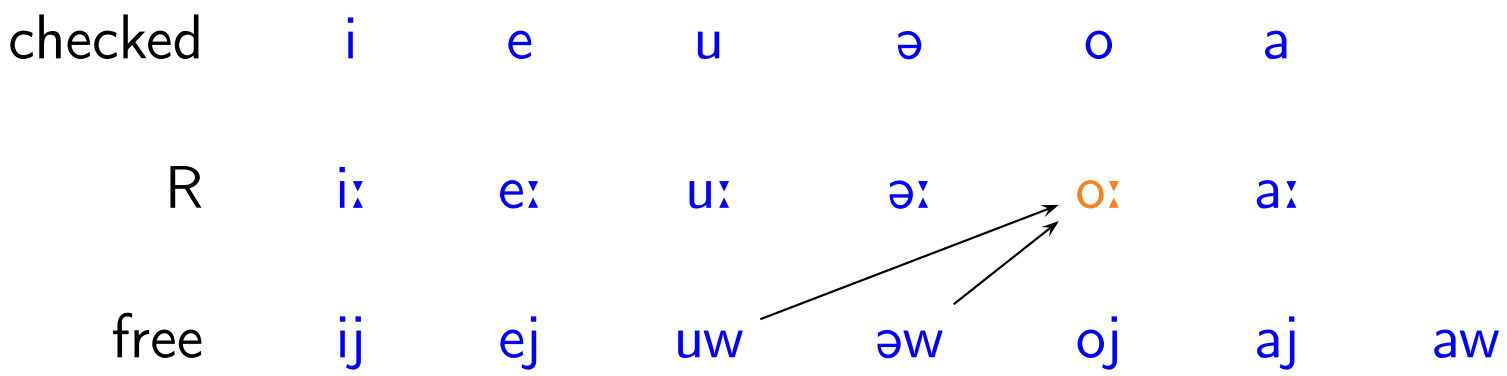
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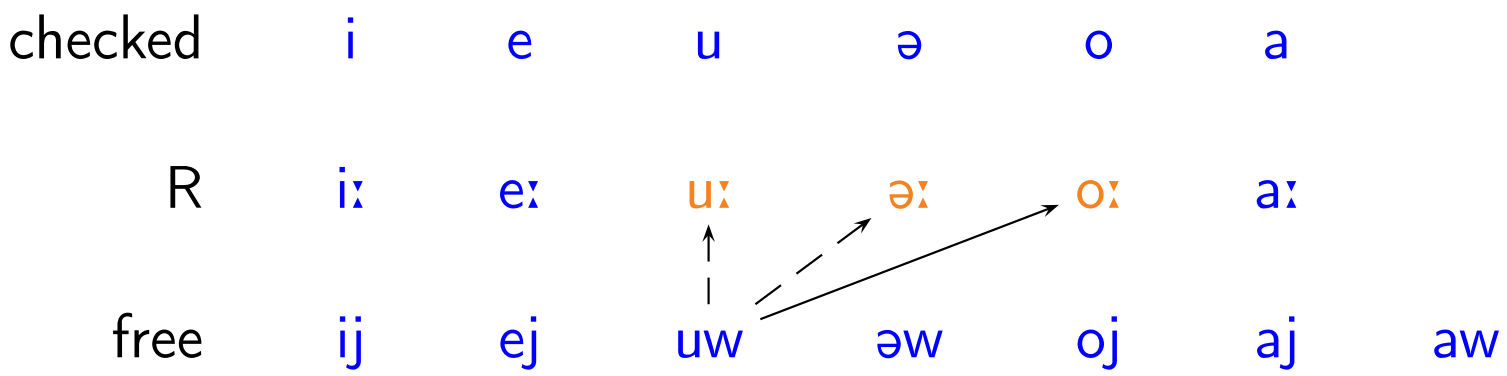
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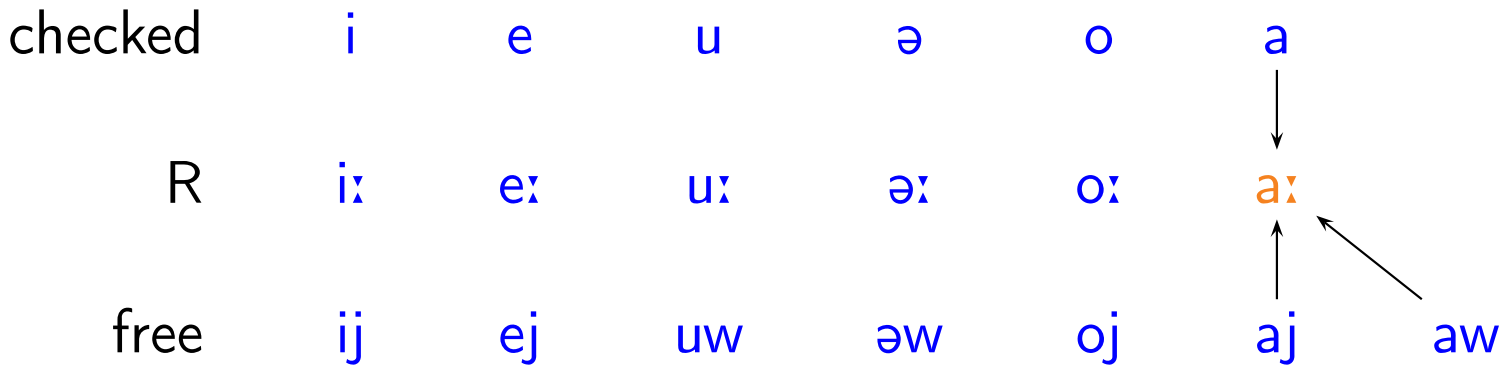
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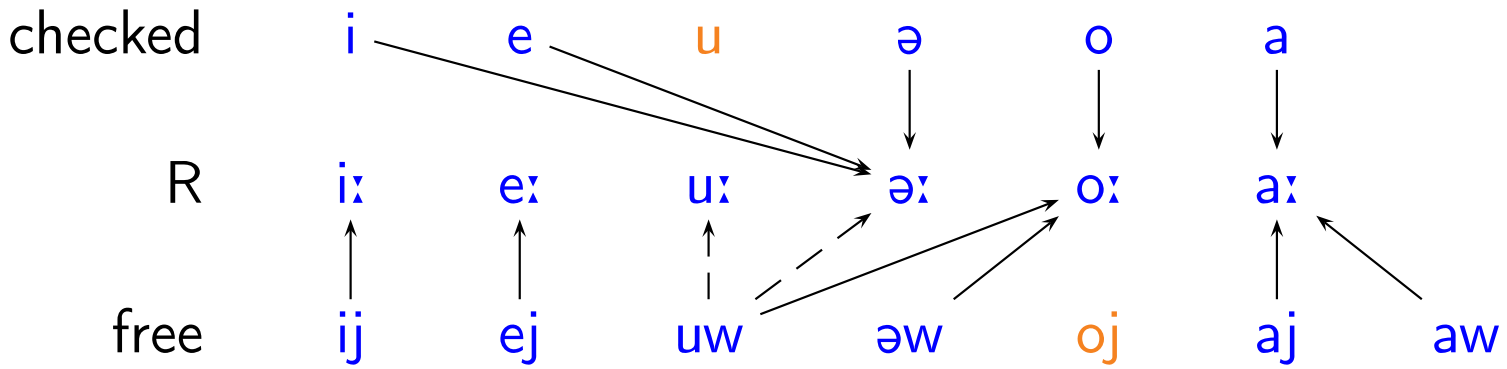
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- checked u and the diphthong oj have no R vowel counterpart

sample exam question

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1. breaking
2. smoothing
3. the NURSE merger
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2. because there are fewer long than short vowels
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