

2.1.3. STABILITY OF THE VOWELS ARTICULATION

According to the stability of articulation and their quality, vowels are divided into monophthongs and diphthongs.

For example:

The English [I], [J], [e], [x], [E:], [q], [V], [H], [A], [L], [P], [R] are monophthongs.

The English [aI], [eI], [OI], [qV], [aV], [Iq], [eq], [Vq] are diphthongs.

There are no diphthongs in the Ukrainian language.

Various systems of vowel classification have been introduced by different phoneticians.

The system of the so-called “cardinal vowels” was introduced by D. Jones.

The aim of the Cardinal Vowel Diagram is to give a common standard of comparison of vowel sounds in all languages.

The system of “cardinal vowels” was very popular as it helped the teacher to explain the articulation of English vowels to students of many nationalities, whose native languages he did not know. Therefore D. Jones considered the system of “cardinal vowels” to be the only way of making the written description of vowels intelligible to a large circle of foreign learners.

According to D. Jones “cardinal vowels” have to be articulated as remote as possible from “neutral” position. He selected 8 such vowels and called them “cardinal”.

Thus, for example, cardinal vowel No. 1 [I] is described by D. Jones as the sound in which the raising of the tongue is as far forward as possible and as high as possible consistently with its being a vowel, the lips being spread.

But still the system of “cardinal vowels” does not form a convenient basis for describing vowels of a foreign language.

Cardinal vowels are artificial vowels which exist neither in English nor in any other language. It is difficult to try to acquire the pronunciation of foreign sounds on the basis of the sounds unknown to the students and therefore when it is possible foreign vowels should be compared to the vowels of the native language of the

learner. Therefore, the way D. Jones proposes to use it is to place on the Diagram both the vowels of the language studied and those of the native language.

Describing English vowels according to the horizontal movement of the tongue and its height, D. Jones compares them with the corresponding cardinal vowels.

Henry Sweet classifies vowels according to the movements of the tongue: the movement of the tongue in the horizontal direction and various degrees of height between the tongue and the palate.

He maps out the mouth schematically into nine squares:

high-back	high-mixed	high-front
mid-back	mid-mixed	mid-front
low-back	low-mixed	low-front

Each of these nine squares may be again subdivided into nine small ones.

The system of vowels by H. Sweet is based on real properties of English sounds and gives minute characteristics of each vowel.

Sweet's classification of vowels is very valuable for scientific comparison of vowels of different languages (Sweet's table of vowels contains 81 divisions).

For practical purposes it is too complicated and overloaded.

A classification of vowels which is most suitable for practical purposes and makes it possible to introduce English vowels on the basis of native vowels is the classification introduced by G.P. Torsuyev in his "English Phonetics" (1950). His classification is based on a phonematic principle and successfully serves the aims of comparative analysis.

G.P. Torsuyev classifies vowels according to the horizontal movements of the tongue into front, front retracted, mixed, back advanced, back and according to the vertical movement of the tongue into high, medium and low vowels. In addition G.P. Torsuyev introduces broad and narrow varieties within each group.

The principles of this classification are applied to the comparative tables of English and Ukrainian vowels, given below.

According to the place occupied by a vowel in a square of the table, one can describe the articulation of a foreign vowel and compare it with the articulation of the corresponding vowel of the native language.

If we take, for example, the English [J] we see that it occupies the extreme high and front position in the table, i.e. it may be described as a narrow variety of a front close vowel. Though the Ukrainian [I] is also a narrow variety of a front close vowel it occupies a slightly lower position, which means that in pronouncing the Ukrainian [I], the tongue is lower and more retracted in comparison with the English [I] (see table 2.1). English vowel phonemes are placed in brackets.

Table 2.1.

English and Ukrainian vowel phonemes

According to the height of the tongue		According to the horizontal position of the tongue				
		Front	Front retracted	Mixed	Back advanced	Back
Close	Narrow variety	[J] I				[H]
	Wide variety		[I] И		y [V]	
Half open	Narrow variety			[E:]		
	Wide variety	[e]	E	[q]	[A]	O
Open	Narrow variety					[L]
	Wide variety	[x]			A	[R] [P]