

# Università di Cagliari



**Corso di Laurea in**  
**Economia e Gestione Aziendale**  
Economia e Gestione dei Servizi Turistici  
Economia e Finanza  
**Lingua Inglese**

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# THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH



# The Sounds of English

## PHONETICS

The study of speech sounds and their production.

Articulatory phonetics studies the way vocal organs are used to produce speech sounds

## PHONOLOGY

The study of the sound system of a particular language and the general properties displayed by such a system.

In contrast with phonetics, phonology only studies those contrasts in sound (the phonemes) producing different meanings within languages

WORDS CAN BE BROKEN DOWN (DIVIDED)  
INTO **MORPHEMES** - THEIR STRUCTURAL  
(morphological) CONSTITUENTS

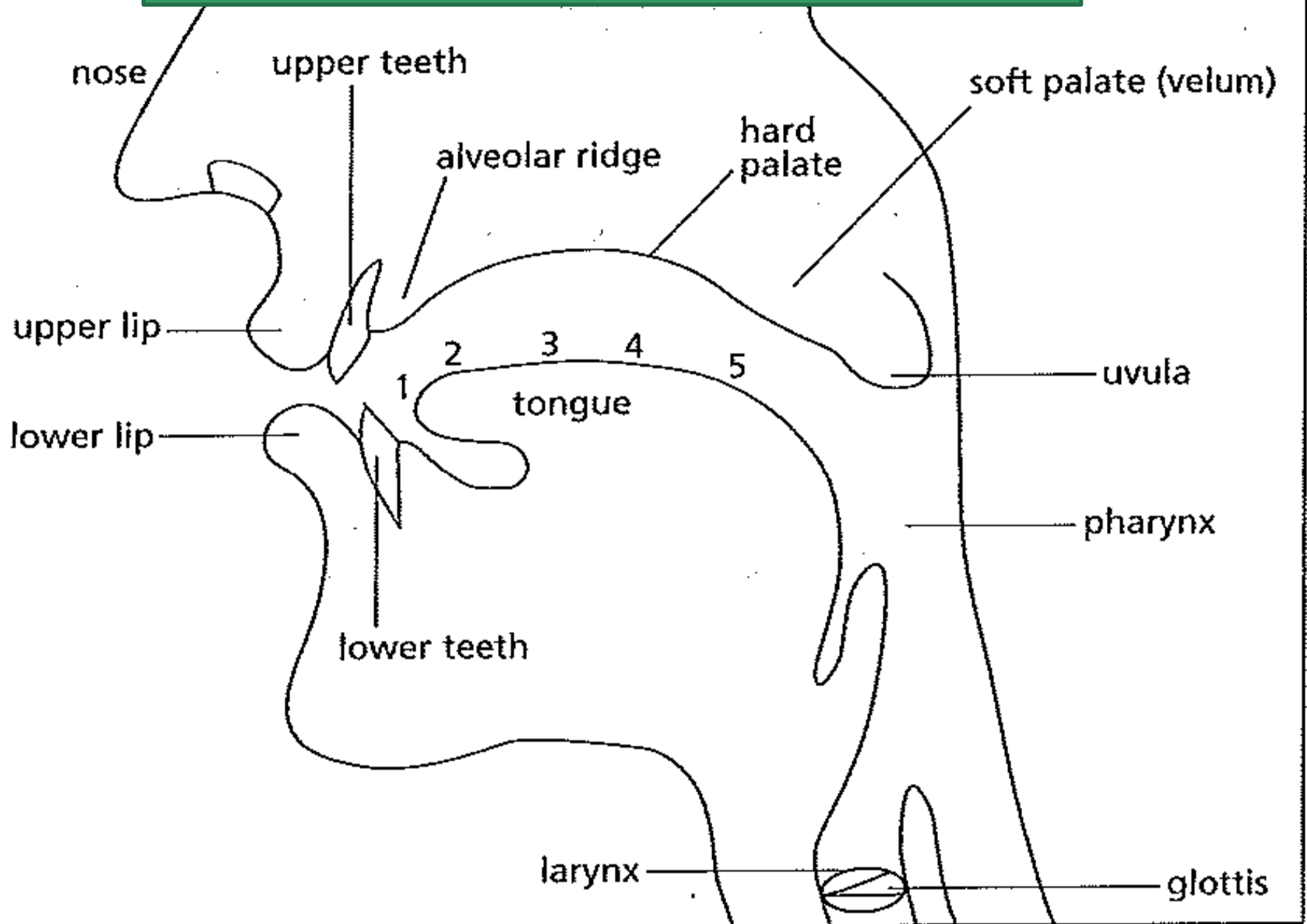
*un-employ-ment*

THEY CAN ALSO BE BROKEN DOWN INTO  
THEIR CONSTITUENT SOUNDS,  
**PHONEMES**

A PHONEME is the smallest unit of sounds  
contributing to change of meaning.

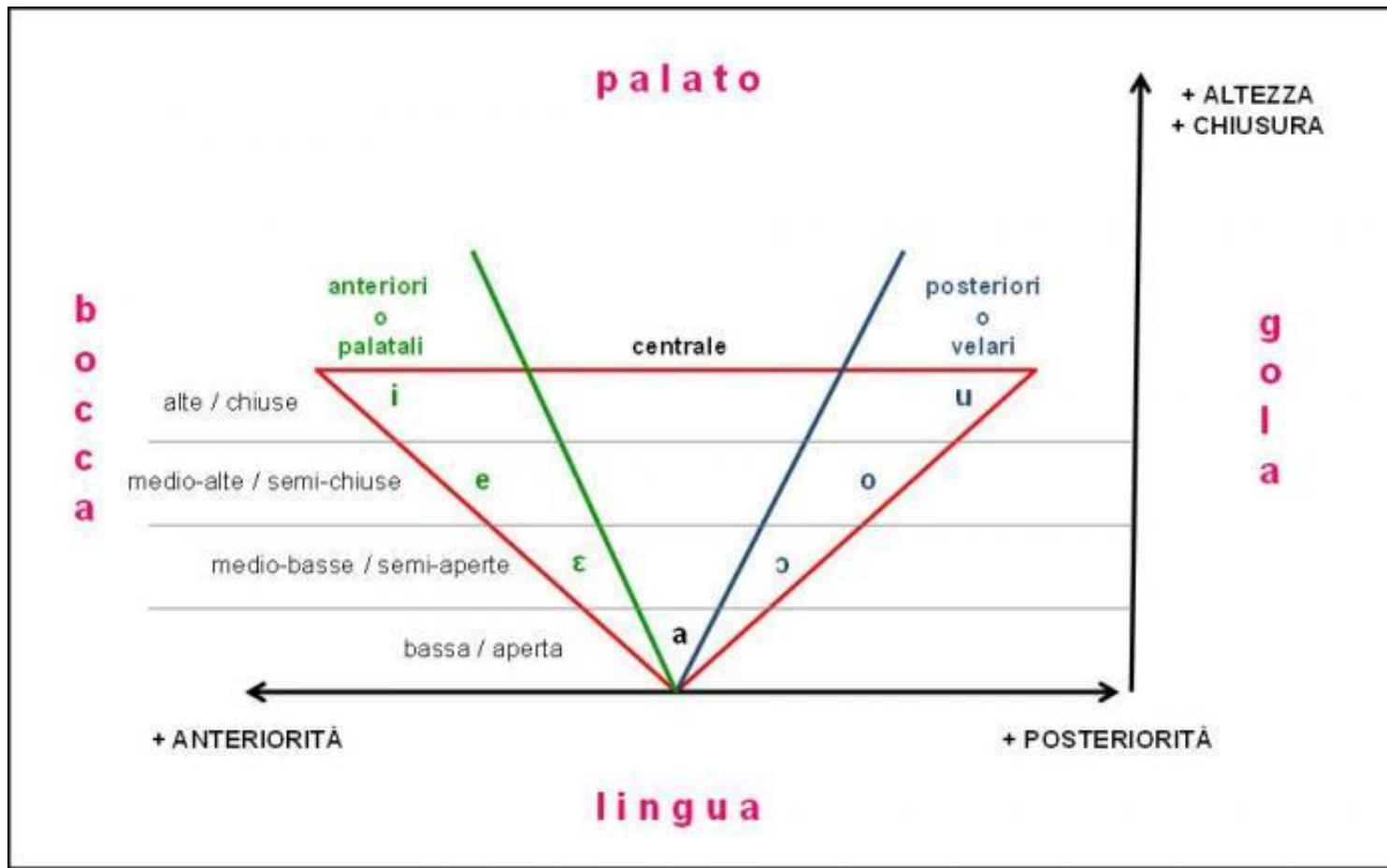
*Seat / beat / meat /*

# The organs of articulation



# Phonemes of the Italian language

30 phonemes (7 vowels + 2 semi-consonants + 21 consonants)



# The sounds of English

- ◆ English has 44 phonemes, 24 consonants and 20 vowel sounds
- ◆ Dramatic difference between the written alphabet and most English accents
- ◆ Contrary to Italian, in English the sounds and their graphic representations do not correspond

# Consonants (1)

- They are sounds made with a certain amount of temporary block of the airflow through the mouth.
- They are articulated in two ways: partial or total blockage of one of the vocal organs, the closing movement may involve the lips, the tongue, or the throat.

# Consonants (2)

- Phonologically, **consonants** occupy the edges or margins of a syllable. They may also appear in clusters or sequences:

play [pleɪ]; jump [dʒʌmp]; twelfth [twelfθ].

- Some consonants involve the vibration of the vocal cords: they are **voiced** consonants. Other consonants have no vocal cord vibration: they are called **voiceless**.

PLACE OF ARTICULATION OF ENGLISH VOWELS

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2015)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

© 2015 IPA

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ	n			ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill	ʙ		r						ʀ		
Tap or Flap		ⱱ	ɾ			ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative			ɬ ɮ								
Approximant		ʋ	ɹ			ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant			l			ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Symbols to the right in a cell are voiced, to the left are voiceless. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

# Consonants (3)

Some sounds may be confused with vowel sounds, as they are articulated in the same way as vowels, but function in the language as consonants:

/j/ in YES and /w/ in WE.

These two consonants are sometimes described as semi-vowels

# The sounds of English

## ◆ VOWEL

A sound made without any restrictions in the airflow.

The 20 vowel sounds may be divided into 12 'pure' vowel sounds or monothongs, and 8 diphthongs.

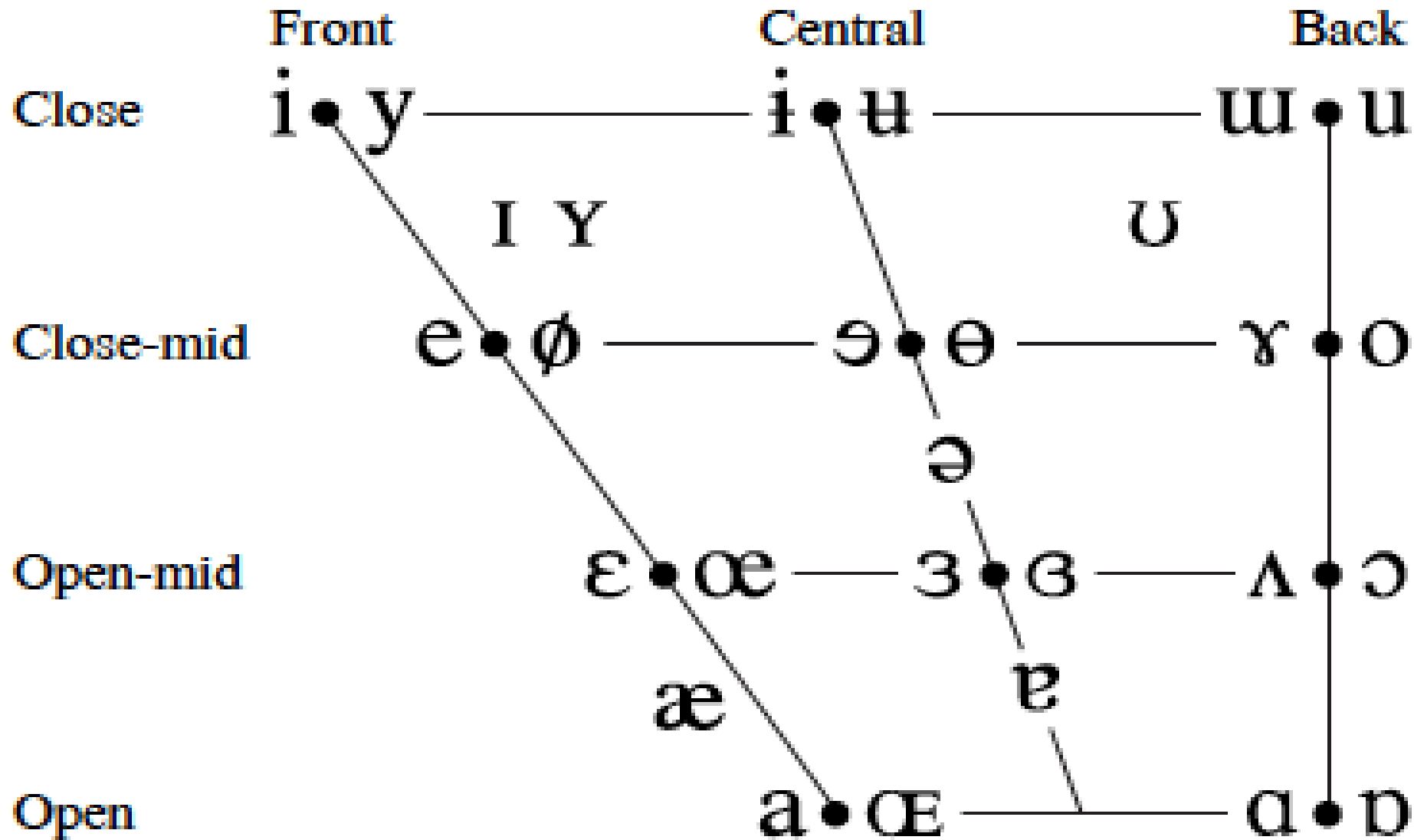
# Describing vowels (1)

- From a phonetic point of view, vowels are articulated with a relatively open configuration of the vocal tract: no part of the mouth is closed and no audible friction is made.
- From a phonological point of view, vowels occupy the middle of the syllable. Consonants, by contrast, are found at the edges or margins of syllables:  
BIG [bɪg]; CAP [kæp].

# Describing vowels (2)

- The letter **Y** can be described as either a consonant when it occupies the edges (YET), and as a vowel when it acts as a vowel (MY).
- **Vowels** involve the vibration of the vocal cords (voicing), and their distinctive resonances are made by varying the shape of the mouth.

# VOWELS



Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

# Describing vowels (39)

Length is a very important factor,  
symbolized by /: /

SIT [sit]

SEAT [si:t]

From the point of view of length,  
diphthongs are like long vowels, but the  
first part of a diphthong in English is  
much longer and louder than the second.

# The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

**THE PHONETIC ALPHABET  
DISTINGUISHES ALL PHONEMES IN  
WRITING.**

**The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) provides a writing symbol for any linguistic sound of any world language.**

# The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

Enables students and linguists to learn and record the pronunciation of languages accurately, thereby avoiding the confusion of inconsistent, conventional spellings.

One aim of the IPA was to provide a unique symbol for each distinctive sound in a language--that is, every sound, or phoneme, that serves to distinguish one word from another.

## PROSODY

THE STUDY OF THE PATTERNS OF SOUNDS AND RHYTHMS IN POETRY AND SPEECH

## STRESS (ACCENT)

AN EXTRA FORCE USED WHEN PRONOUNCING A PARTICULAR WORD OR SYLLABLE:

In 'stratègic' the stress is/falls on the second syllable

# ACCENT

A NATIONAL, LOCAL, INDIVIDUAL  
WAY OF PRONOUNCING WORDS.

A Southern accent, East-Coast accent  
a Northern accent, West-Coast accent  
a Scottish accent, an Irish accent

*"To speak with an accent"*

# The Sounds of English

In English, stressed syllables occur generally at regular intervals.

The stress pattern can sometimes indicate a word's class (noun, verb, adjective, adverb), for example 'conduct' can be pronounced:

/' /, a **noun**, or / ' /, a **verb**.

*Co'nduct (n.)      To condu'ct (v.)*

Also 'contest', 'contact', ecc.

*Co'ntest (n.)      To conte'st (v.)*

*Co'ntact              To conta'ct (v.)*

- ◆ A STRESSED SYLLABLE IS MARKED BY PLACING A HIGH VERTICAL MARK /' / BEFORE IT. A stressed syllable is relatively loud, long in duration, said clearly and distinctly.
- ◆ LONGER WORDS may have one or more secondary stresses coming before the main stress. These are marked with /, /

/La'borato,ry/, /ce'remo,ny/, /mo'naste,ry/

# The Sounds of English

INTONATION MAY BE RISING OR FALLING

In English declarative sentences - statements - are spoken with **FALLING intonation**.

Interrogative sentences - questions - have **RISING intonation**.

# The Sounds of English

THE FIRST PRONUNCIATION GIVEN IN  
A DICTIONARY IS THAT OF GENERAL  
BRITISH - British English

Received Pronunciation - RP - plus similar  
accents not strongly regional

# The Sounds of English

**OFTEN THE SAME PHONETIC REPRESENTATION OF A WORD IS ALSO APPROPRIATE FOR AMERICAN SPEECH , WITH SIMPLE AUTOMATIC CHANGES ( F.E. TO INSERT /r/ IN SUCH WORDS AS FARM).**

**If the word is pronounced differently in the US, the dictionary will give its pronunciation separately with the **label US:****

**HOT, BUTTER, BETTER, FAST, PAST, PASS, CEMETERY, MONASTERY, MONETARY.**

# Oxford Advanced Dictionary

Hot: \_\_\_\_\_

Butter: \_\_\_\_\_

Better Past: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Monastery: \_\_\_\_\_

Monetary: \_\_\_\_\_

Pass: \_\_\_\_\_

Fast: \_\_\_\_\_

Past: \_\_\_\_\_

# Oxford Advanced Dictionary

Hot: /hɒt/

Butter: /'bʌtə(r)/

Better Past: /'betə(r)/

Cemetery: /'sɛmɪtri/

Monastery: /'mɒnəst(ə)ri/

Monetary: /'mʌnɪt(ə)ri/

Pass: /pɑ:s/

Fast: /fast/

Past: /pɑ:st/