

## Comparison of English, German and Uzbek Vowel Sounds

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**Abstract:** This research work shows the differences and similarities of vowel sound system in three languages: English, German and Uzbek. There are vowels sounds in any language, but their number is not equal. According to the family of the languages there are some similarities, such as English and German belong to Indo-European languages and their phonetic system has the same structures. However, Uzbek is from Turkic languages and it totally differs from English and German.

**Key words:** vowels, pronunciation, articulation, monophthongs, diphthongs, lacuna vowels, long vowels, short vowels.

**Introduction.** Vowel sounds are much more difficult to describe than consonants because they are not produced with stoppage or friction and are consequently difficult to “feel.” In addition, vowels are not discrete sounds but points in a continuum.

You can try this yourself by pronouncing the vowel sound in Eng. beat or Germ, biet(e). Notice that your lips are spread and your tongue is about as high and forward as it can go without causing friction in the air stream. Now, keeping your tongue forward, slowly open your mouth as wide as it will go. You will hear a unbroken continuum of sound from the vowel of Eng. beat to bat. Now return to your starting point and pull your tongue back without opening your mouth. Your lips will automatically round and you will produce a vowel like Eng. do or Germ. du. Keeping your tongue back, you can once again

open your mouth as wide as it will go, producing a spectrum of vowels between the starting point and the vowel of Eng. father or Germ. Vater.

Given the up ~ down, front ~ back mobility of the tongue, vowels can be placed at any point on the two dimensional surface bounded by the four corner points we have experimentally determined. This is the basis of the Cardinal Vowel system devised by Daniel Jones at the beginning of the last century. Since the distance between the corner vowels is rather large, Jones added four arbitrary mid-points front and back to make a set of eight “cardinal vowels.” These vowels act as universal points of orientation to facilitate the description of the real vowels of any given language.

Vowels are normally made with the air stream that meets no obstruction in the mouth, pharyngeal and nasal cavities. On the articulatory level in English the description of vowels notes changes:

1. in the stability of articulation
2. in the tongue position
3. in the lip position

4. in their length

In Uzbek they are described:

1. according to the lips position
2. according to the vertical movement of the tongue
3. according to the horizontal movement of the tongue

English has

1.) 10 monophthongs: /i/, /e/, /æ/, /u/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /ɑ:/, /o/, /o:/, /ɜ:/.

2.) 8 diphthongs: glides to [i] -/ei/, /oi/, /ai/; glides to [u] -/au/, /əu/, /uə/; glides to [ə] - /iə/, /eə/

3.) 2 diphthongoids /i:/, /u:/

Thus, the phonemic inventory of English vowels

includes 20 phonemes and 6 vowel letters a, i, e, u, o, y, Uzbek has 6 vowel phonemes [ɨ], [ə], [a], [y], [ɟ], [o] and letters i, e, a, u, o', o.

According to the tongue position vowels divided into forward, mid, backward, up, down in all compared languages.

According to the tongue position English vowels divided into 5 types but in Uzbek and German languages they are in 3 types:

	front vowel	front-retracted vowel	central vowels	back vowels	back-advanced vowel
English	[i: e æ]	[ɨ]	[ʌ ə: ə]	[ɑ: o o: u:]	[u]
German					
Uzbek	[i], [e]	-	[o']	[a], [o], [u]	-

Moving up and down in the mouth the tongue may be raised to different height towards the roof of the mouth.

Some languages also have vowels with reverse lip rounding – front rounded, or back unrounded vowels. Jones provided a set of “secondary” cardinal vowels for this eventuality. For German, we only need the four front rounded vowels [y, Y, ø, œ]. These are like the “normal” vowels of the same height, but are pronounced with rounded lips.

The German vowels

The following table gives the vowel sounds of standard German with keywords:

Vowel Example Spelling Gloss

i bitən bieten offer

I bItən bitten ask

y bysən büßen atone for

Y bYfəl Büffel buffalo

e bet Beet flower bed

E bEt Bett bed

Ø bǒzə böse evil

œ gœt^ Götter gods

u busə Buße atonement

U bUs Bus bus

o boshaft boshaft evil

o botIC Bottich barrel

A bazə Base basis

a bas Bass bass

Ə bEstə Beste best

Ă bEsĂ besser better

ai baisən beißen bite

au bau Bau building

OY boYtə Beute prey

The vowels occur in tense/lax pairs, as in bieten

~ bitten, Beet ~ Bett, etc. In addition the front

vowels occur in rounded/unrounded pairs as in bieten ~ büßen, Besen ~ Bösen, etc.

In the chart above, vowel length has not been indicated. The reason for this is that the tense vowels are always long when accented and all other vowels are short. There is, however, one fly in the ointment. In south German a distinction is made between the vowel of nähmen and nehmen. The former has a long lax vowel /Eù/. This is probably a spelling pronunciation – in any case, a feature that disturbs the otherwise perfect symmetry of the modern German vowel system. Note that German indicates a short vowel by writing a long (double) consonant as in bitte and a long vowel with a single consonant as in Bote ‘messenger’.

Speakers of English have to learn to pronounce the front rounded vowels and the pure long tense vowels. Speakers of Romance and Slavic languages must, in addition, learn to distinguish between tense and lax vowels, which is a considerable challenge.

1. When the front or the back of the tongue is raised high towards the palate the vowel is called close in English and German languages. They are – [i: I u u:].
2. When the front or the back of the tongue is as low as possible in the mouth open vowels are pronounced in English and German languages. They are – [æ a: o o:].
3. When the highest part of the tongue occupies the position intermediate between the close and the open one mid vowels are pronounced only in English. They are – [e Λ ə: ə].

When the lips are neutral or spread the vowels are called unrounded. They are – [i:], [i], [e], [æ], [a:], [Λ], [ə:], [ə]in English. In Uzbek they are –[ɪ], [ə], [a].

When the lips are drawn together so that the opening between them is more or less round the vowel is called rounded.

They are – [o o: u u:].In Uzbek[y], [ÿ], [o].

According to the length, English vowels are classified into short and long:

Long vowels are – [i: a: o: u: ə:]

Short vowels are – [i, e, o, u, Λ, ə].

But in comparison with English, there is no such division of vowels in Uzbek and German . But in German vowels are divided into stressed and unstressed vowels. Prof. U.K. Yusupov describes some Uzbek geminis vowels], which are alien to English. He classifies lacuna vowels in the compared languages as follows: English lacuna vowels for Uzbek: [æ], [u:], [ə:], [a:], [ou], [oi], [ə:], [au], [iə], [uə], [εə], [ai].

There is only one Uzbek lacuna vowel for English. It is [ÿ]. The phonemic status of English diphthongs is still a question of discussion. Diphthongs are complex units of the two elements which are closely blended together. They are syllabically indivisible, the length of diphthongs is the same as that of English long vowels. In Uzbek and Russian, there are no diphthongs, only combinations of sounds where both elements are equally energetic and distinct. English diphthongs consist of two elements, the first of which is a nucleus, strong and distinct; the second is a glide, which is very weak and indistinct.

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