English B2

(IM 259, *Lingua Inglese Pari a Livello B2*)

Lesson 2

Part I

1. More about VOWELS

- Summary from last lesson:

> Italian vocalic system has (roughly) 5 sounds
> English vocalic system has (roughly) 10 sounds
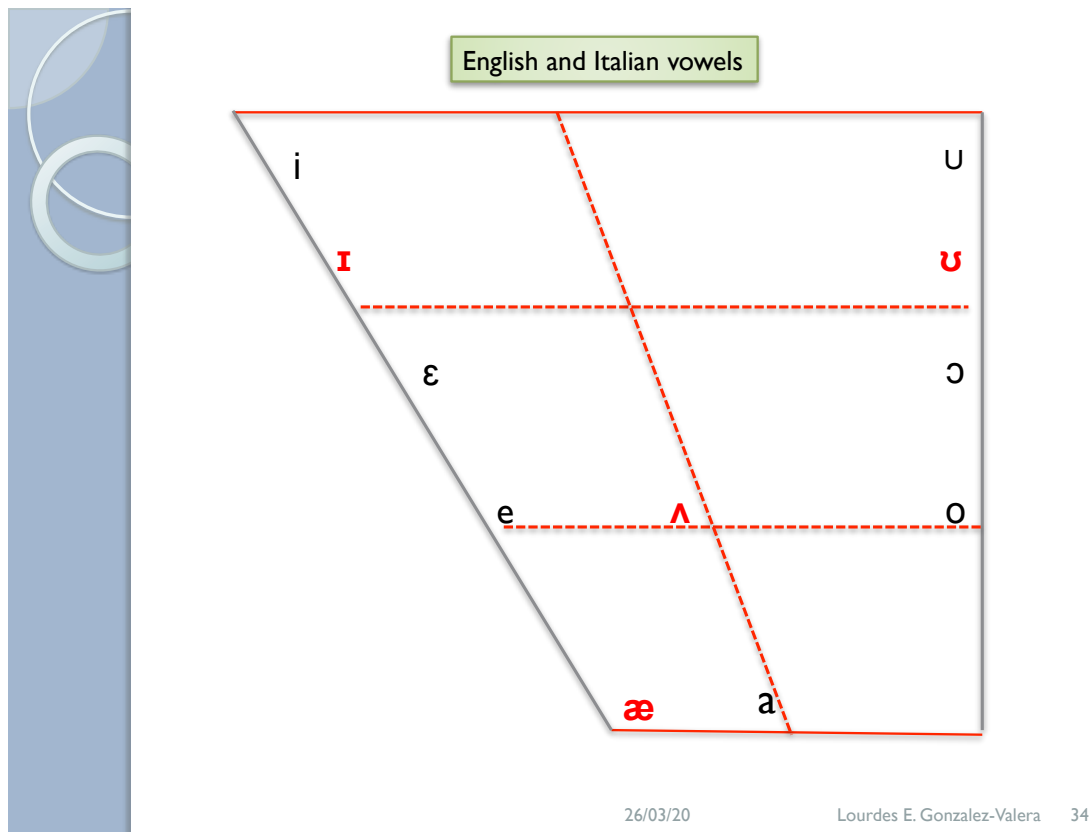
- Main difficulty for Italian speakers:

> Their ear is not trained to perceive some English vowels
> Their vocal tract and tongue are not trained to articulate some English vowels

- Result:

> The Italian Speaker/Hearer ends up saying or understanding the wrong word(s) causing interference in the communication with native speakers.

Activity:

Let's revisit the representation of the English and Italian vocalic system. Again: the vowels in **black** are the vowels both languages have in commom. The ones in **red** are the English vowels inexistent in the Italian vocalic system. I'm ignoring the English vowel **[ə]** for the time being. We'll talk about it later.

English and Italian vowels

i

ɪ

ε

e

æ   a

ʊ

ʊ

ɔ

o

2. **Limitations of the writing systems:**

As it happens in many languages, we have a limited set of letters. And we have to use this limited set to represent, in the writing system, the sounds we use when we speak.

Consequence: We have more sounds than letters!!!

- For example, we have a single letter "a" that represents at least two different sounds:
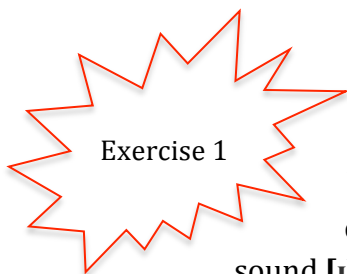
Same letter "a"	Different pronunciation: æ, ei
b**at**	b **æ** t
b**ate**	b **ei** t

- We can say the same of the letter "i":

Same letter "i"	Different pronunciation: ɪ , ai
b<u>i</u>t	b **ɪ** t
b<u>i</u>te	b **ai** t

- or the letter "u"

Same letter "u"	Different pronunciation: ʌ , yu
p**u**t	p **ʌ** t
p**u**ck	p **yu** k

The only way to master these differences is 1) practice; 2) practice; 3) practice!

Exercise 1

Remember: In Lesson 1 we exercised the differences between the sound **[i]** (sometimes represented by the letter combinations '**ee**' as in "reef", '**ea**' , as in "eat", and the sound **[ɪ],** represented by the letter 'i' in words such as "bit" or "kit".

Now, we'll learn the difference between the vowel sound **[ʊ]** and **[u]**

- Watch the following video and perform the proposed exercises until you are satisfied with your results.
- Write down the list of words that differentiate their meaning by using the sounds **[ʊ]** and **[u]**.

Video explaining the **[ʊ]** sound (as in the word "full"):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moLTR-dLQQY

Video explaining the **[u]** sound like in the word *fool***:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkM6CKBM2ns

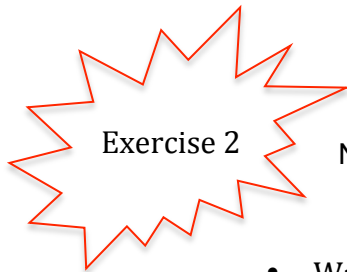Learning the correct pronunciation of these two sounds is important in order to express what you mean: It's not the same to say:

<p style="text-align:center">I'm full (Sono pieno),</p>

than to say:

<p style="text-align:center">I'm fool (Sono stupido).</p>

Exercise 2

Now, we'll learn the difference between the vowel sound **[æ]** and **[ɛ]**

- Watch the following video and do the proposed exercises until you are satisfied with your result.
- Write down the list of words that differentiate their meaning using the sounds analyzed.

[æ] like in bad, and **[ɛ]** like in bed

Video explaining the sounds **[æ]** and**[ɛ]:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNL5BmWQGiI

Learning the correct pronunciation of these two sounds is important in order to express what you mean: It's not the same to say:

<p style="text-align:center">I need a pat (Ho bisogno di una pacca),</p>

than to say:

<p style="text-align:center">I need a pet (Ho bisogno di un animale domestico);</p>

or:

That's a huge bat   (*Quello è un pipistrello gigante*),

and

That's a huge bet   (*Quella è una scomessa gigante*).

Exercise 3   Activate your virtual assistant (SIRI, for example) and ask for help using the following sentences. Write down the results obtained. Repeat the excersise until you get the assistant to understand the sentence you are dictating.

1. I need to buy a new flash

2. I'm looking for a store to buy bed sheets

3. How thin is a sheet of paper?

4. How expensive is a gram of pepper?

5. Do you think Mary is a tramp?

6. Where does Mr. Trump lives?

7. Who was Luke Skywalker?

8. I would like to look into that

9. Who are Bert and Ernie?

10. What's the weather like today?

SEE YOU NEXT WEDNESDAY!