HANDOUT 4: THE CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH VOWELS.

Vowels.
1. The classification of English vowels.

- The qualities of vowels depend upon the positions of the tongue and lips.

- It is important to classify them according to the position of the main part of the tongue.

- Vowels may be conveniently arranged according to the position of the highest point of the tongue.

- Vertical axis: front, central and back vowels.

- Horizontal axis: close and open vowels.

- Quantity axis: short and long vowels.
3. Front vowels

- The front of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate: /i:/ as in /’si:/.
3. Back vowels

- The back of the tongue is raised in the direction of the soft palate: /a:/ as in '/ka:/; /u:/ as in '/fuːd/
3. Central vowels

- They are intermediate between front and back vowels: /3:/ as in /ˈb3:d/.
4. Essential elements in the classification of vowel sounds.

- The part of the tongue that is raised: *front*, *back* and *central* vowels.
- The height to which it is raised: *close* and *open* vowels.
- The position of the lips: *rounded* and *unrounded* vowels.
  - Spread vowels.
  - Close lip-rounding and open lip-rounding.