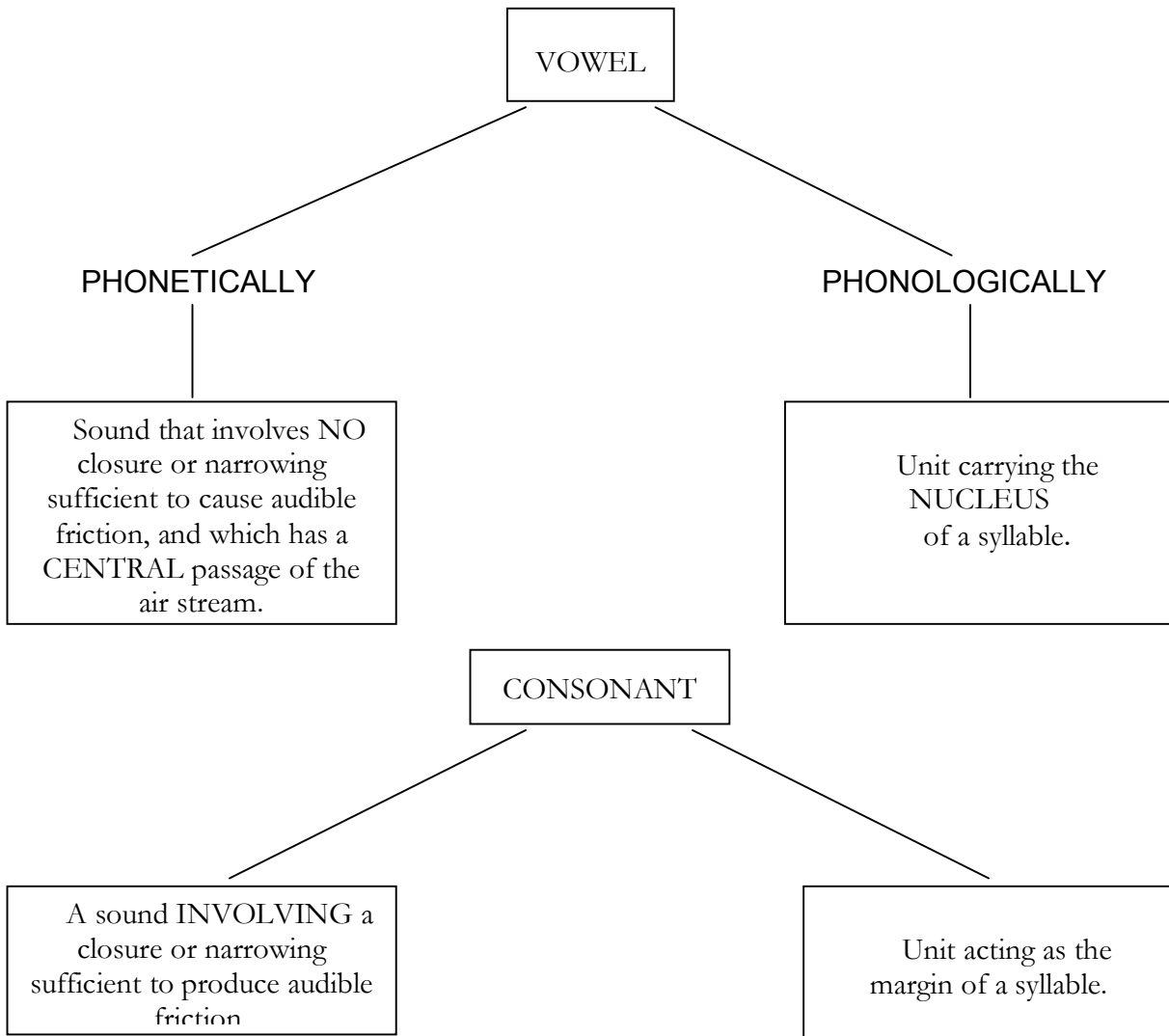


Semivowels – Glides – Approximants

Let's start by reviewing our concepts of VOWEL and CONSONANT, shall we?



'Semi-vowels', 'glides', or 'approximants' are sounds that, phonetically, have a vowel-like articulation, but, phonologically, have a consonant role in the syllable structure.

They are rapid independent vocalic glides, where the speech organs produce a weakly articulated close vowel and move immediately to another sound of equal or greater prominence.

SEMI-VOWELS

In English there are two semi-vowels [j] and [w] and although they are vocalic phonetically, they have traditionally been grouped with consonants because of the following reasons:

a. **Phonetic reasons:**

1. They are shorter than vowels.
2. They are devoiced when they occur after a [-voiced] C*
3. There is a certain degree of friction when they occur after a [-voiced] C*
4. Their lack of stress compared to the following vowel.

*Cue [ˈkjʊ:]

*Quick [kwɪk]

b. **Phonological reasons:**

1. The articles 'the' and 'a' take their pre-consonantal form in front of semivowels, as in the following examples:

a car [əˈkɑ:]	an orange [ənˈɒrɪndʒ]
the car [ðəˈkɑ:]	the orange [ðɪˈɒrɪndʒ]
a door [əˈdɔ:]	an apple [ənˈæpl̩]
the door [ðəˈdɔ:]	the apple [ðɪˈæpl̩]
a window [əˈwɪndəʊ]	
the window [ðəˈwɪndəʊ]	
a youth [əˈju:θ]	
the youth [ðəˈju:θ]	

2. The preposition 'to' takes its preconsonantal form in front of semivowels, as in the following examples:

to see [təˈsi:]	to Eric [tʊ ^w erɪk]
to Peter [təˈpi:tə]	to Alice [tʊ ^w ælis]
	to earn [tʊ ^w ɜ:n]
to win [tə wɪn]	
to yawn [tə jɔ:n]	
give it to William	

3. As is the case of the other consonants, in British English dialect, we do not use a "linking r" in front of semivowels e.g.

letter C [ˈletəˈsi:]	letter A [ˈletə ^r eɪ]
letter P [ˈletəˈpi:]	letter I [ˈletə ^r aɪ]
letter Y [ˈletəˈwaɪ]	letter O [ˈletə ^r əʊ]

Phonotactics:

Both of them occur in the same kind of environment:

- a. Syllable initial as in: yes, win, away.
- b. As the second member of a syllable – initial cluster as in: pew, tune, queen, mule, dune, Gwen, beauty, nude, etc.
- c. As the third member of a syllable – initial cluster [s]+[stop]+ [l, r, j, w] (approximant) as in: stew, spurious, askew, square, squash, squirrel.