

# Re: The "u" and "v" in older written English is confvsing

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  - *Date:* Sun, 25 May 2008 12:04:48 GMT
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"Richard Wordingham" <[jrw0602@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:jrw0602@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote...

"John Atkinson" <[johnacko@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:johnacko@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote...

[V"]? Is that how you/they pronounce the SUN vowel? 'V" ' is, IIRC, Kirshenbaum for backwards epsilon, so that its long version [V":] is the vowel in nurse and girl, which, for me (and also in typical RP, AIUI) is quite a long way from SUN, and close to [@:].

Quite a lot of people probably think the IPA does not understand IPA vowel symbols.

Arguably, I'm one of them.

[...]

(If the symbols don't render [...])

They did. Thanks.

Now, the RP vowel of SUN is or was [P] (What's the Kirshenbaum symbol for this?)

There's none, apparently.

Kishenbaum defines [V"] as {lmd, cnt, unr, vwl} and [V] as {lmd, bck, unr, vwl}. He says [V"] = reversed epsilon, but doesn't give the IPA equivalent of [V]. Turned V (or is it capital lambda) is the same level as reversed epsilon but bck, so that must be it.

[P] is halfway between lmd and low on the 1993 IPA chart.

IPA has 7 levels (close, close-mid, open-mid, open, plus the three halfway points between these).

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Kirshenbaum has 6 levels (hgh, smh, umd, mid, lmd, low) — nothing between lmd and low.

Besides omitting [P], K pushes [æ] (IPA [ae]) down from halfway between open–mid and open down to low, where IPA [a] is, and then pushes his [a] back to centre (below IPA [P], where IPA has nothing).

, though educated Yorkshire is reportedly (J.D. O'Connor) actually [Y] (K. [æ]). I therefore think that Kirshenbaum [V"] is a reasonable approximation to both my pronunciation and to the RP pronunciation.

My SUN is central and quite as low as PALM (differing from it only in length). So Kirshenbaum [a, a:] are perfect for these two for me, and with IPA all I can do is say it's halfway between their [a] and [A].

I agree with you that [V"] is a good average for most of us from what you say. [V] is too back for most accents. But I'm happy with using /V/ for the corresponding phoneme, as appears to be pretty standard among Brit phoneticists.

Conversely, the RP pronunciation of <nurse> etc., though traditionally written using the IPA symbols [ɹ], should be written in IPA as [Xɹ] (Kirshenbaum [æ<umd>:]), though J.D. O'Connor depicts it as [Yɹ] (K. [æ:]).

The latter, viz /æ:/, is what I once used here for the corresponding phoneme, and got shouted down for it.

and reports the former as Cockney.

Anyway, to the point. Do these folk have [A.] for \_all\_ SUN words spelled with <o> (done, come, love, mother, stomach, monk, tongue, onion, money, front)? What about words spelled <ou> (touch, enough, young, double, southern, country) and <oo> (blood, flood)?

I've not noticed [A.] in any of these. I was thinking of words in <con-> and <com->, several of which show fluctuation between [A.] and [V"].

Or is it restricted to words starting with /w/. If so, does it occur in <worry> and <wonder> too, or just <won> and <one>?

Variation occurs in all these words, but I've only heard [wA.mb&t] for <wombat>.

<Wombat> has /A./ for everyone. No one anywhere ever pronounced it with the SUN vowel, which is why I didn't include it above. It's from Dharug /wambad/ IIRC. Like most Australian languages, Dharug has only three vowels, so the realisation of /a/ varied quite a lot depending on adjacent consonants, and no doubt approached /O/ or /o/ after /w/. This is the case with other languages hereabouts anyway — Dharug hasn't

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been used for a century or more so no one knows for sure whether it was true there as well.

Spelling in English of borrowings which had /wa/ in local languages can be either <wa> or <wo> but is usually realised as /wA./ . For example:

Wagga Wagga, Wadeye, Wallaga, Warrumbungle, wallaby  
Wollondilly, Wollemai, Wollangambe, Wolli, wombat, wonga

From the same local word, there's <Wollomombi> /wA.l@xxxxx:/ (a waterfall) and <Wallamumbi> /wA.l@mVmbi:/ (a grazing property nearby),

Wangaratta in Queensland has /w&/, though it occurs to me it's maybe not a local word — probably named after the NZ town of Whangarata, Maori whanga rata = quiet inlet

Wollongong is /wUl@xxxxx/. It's from Dharawal, but I don't know whether the Dharawal word had /wa/ or /wu/.

Wombarra is /wA.mba:r@/. It's from Dharawal /wumbara/, black duck (/wu/ not /wa/)

I was listening out for pronunciations of these words, and I found on Disney channel that /wA.n/ was much commoner than /wV"n/ for 'one'. As for 'won', listen to the chant of 'We won the cup' at <http://www.fanchants.com/football-songs/liverpool-chants/we-won-the-cup/> . What I hear is /wi: wA.n D@ kV"p/.

Possibility (1): it occurs in all these <o> words and is either [Speculation (a)] a comparatively recent spelling pronunciation by people who previously had [U]; or [Speculation (b)] a retention from the time before the rest of us southerners changed from [A.] to [V] in these words — i.e., around or a bit after the time the standard spelling was established several centuries ago.

We didn't change [A.] to [V" ]. The change shows every sign of being [U] > [V] > [V" ].

So. Then why the spelling with <o> for this group of words, instead of <u> like all the rest (which clearly do have [U] > [V" ])?

OK, I see come, love, monk, wonder, tongue, southern, and flood all had <u> in OE; mother, done, young, enough, and blood had <o> in OE; while worry had <y>. The other seven all come from OFr and had <o>, a few with <u> as alternative spelling. What a mess.

So, trying to establish that they underwent a different sound change from the words with modern <u> on the basis of the spelling is probably pretty hopeless — or at any rate would involve a more detailed investigation than I'm about to give it.

Possibility (2): It occurs just in <wo>=RP/wV/ words (all four of them), and [Speculation (c)] is an extension of the change /w&/ > /wA./ (what, was,

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Wally, ...) in the standard language to /wV/ > /wA./ as well, which, for non-obvious reasons, never happened with the rest of us.

Or a parallel development? Did we have /w&r/ > /wA:/ > /wO:/ or /w&r/ > /wA.r/ > /wA./? The pronunciation of <qualm> as /kwA:m/ suggests the latter, but there's also a pronunciation /kwO:m/, and <water> is /wO:t@/. Of course, we could just be dealing with spelling pronunciations in the case of <qualm>.

While /wV"/ > /wA./ seems plausible, I note that words like <worth> are \*not\* pronounced \*/wO:T/.

No, only <war-> > /wO:/. Maybe the /r/ at the end of <water > influenced it to join the other <war-> words?

John.

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