

**219.** A *diphthong* is defined as an independent vowel-glide not containing within itself either a 'peak' or a 'trough' of prominence. By a vowel-glide we mean that the speech-organs start in the position of one vowel and move in the direction of another vowel. By 'independent' we mean that the glide is expressly made, and is not merely an unavoidable concomitant of sounds preceding and following.

**220.** During a diphthong the prominence may fall continuously or it may rise continuously,<sup>10</sup> but by definition it may not contain a fall of prominence followed by a rise nor a rise of prominence followed by a fall.

**221.** A diphthong must necessarily consist of one syllable. In order that a vowel-glide should constitute two syllables, it would be necessary that it should contain a 'trough of prominence,' i.e. a fall of prominence followed by a rise.

**222.** Diphthongs may be long or short, according as the glide is performed slowly or quickly. They may also be 'wide' or 'narrow' according as there is a large or a small movement from the initial position.

**223.** One end of a diphthong is generally more prominent than the other. The greater prominence may be due either to greater inherent sonority (§ 100) or to stronger stress or to a combination of the two. When the beginning of a diphthong is more prominent than the end, the diphthong is said to be *falling*. When the beginning is less prominent than the end, the diphthong is said to be *rising*. Most of the English diphthongs (Chap. XV) are falling diphthongs, but there are two important rising diphthongs, **ɪə** and **ʊə** (§ 378) and four unimportant ones, **ɔi**, **ʊi**, **ɛə** and **ɔə** (§§ 466*v*, 466*x*).

**224.** When a diphthong is 'falling' as the result of a gradual diminution of inherent sonority, the correct effect will generally be given if the speech-organs perform the greater part of the movement towards the second vowel; it is not necessary that the limit of the movement should be actually reached. Thus the English diphthong **ai** is one which begins at **a** and moves in the

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<sup>10</sup> It is also theoretically possible to make diphthongs in which the prominence remains constant.