

Diphthongs are compounded of short vowels, not of long ones : long vowels will not coalesce, but continue to be separately heard, producing such sounds as the *ai* and *ê* (*é* + *e*) in the French words *naïf* and *même*, and the *au* in the Italian *bauc*. The Italians make it a principle to sound every written vowel ; hence they would have no diphthongs, but that they have failed to observe that subtle *r*, when brought in after *e*, will always change it into a diphthong.

W and *y* do not make true diphthongs or triphthongs with the sounds that follow them. In true diphthongs and triphthongs each vowel is sounded to the same degree, and hence the blending is complete ; whereas when *w* or *y* precedes a vowel or cluster of vowels, the *w* or *y* is heard much more faintly than the other part of the combination. *W* and *y* may be compared to grace notes in music ; whereas diphthongs are like chords. *W* and *y* are formed by bringing the lips and tongue into the same position as for sounds 1 and 8 ; but they are not uttered until the instant that the vowel or diphthong following is ready for utterance, when the breath is jerked from them on to it, all the pause and stress being thrown upon it, none upon *w* or *y*.

We find *w* in English attached to sixteen different sounds, which in the order of our list are shown as follows :—

<i>woo,</i>	<i>woke,</i>	<i>warn,</i>	<i>waft,</i>	<i>world,</i>	<i>wane,</i>	——	<i>ween ;</i>
<i>wool,</i>	——	<i>wan,</i>	——	<i>won,</i>	<i>went,</i>	——	<i>win ;</i>
<i>wound</i> (past tense),	——	<i>ware,</i>	<i>wise,</i>				
			<i>wax.</i>				

Y, again, combines with eleven sounds, as heard in

<i>youth,</i>	<i>yoke,</i>	<i>yawn,</i>	<i>yarn,</i>	<i>yearn,</i>	<i>yea,</i>	——	<i>yield,</i>
<i>occupied</i> (=okyüped),	<i>yon,</i>	——	<i>young,</i>	<i>yes ;</i>	——	——	

besides *youp* (vulgar), and *yare* (obsolete).

The French sound of *ou*, equivalent to our *w*, and of *u* and *gn*, equivalents to our *y* and *ny*, are probably heard before an equally large proportion of vowels and diphthongs ; though *ou* is not heard before its own true vowel sound whether long or short, as *w* is in the English combinations *woo* and *wool*, while *u* and *gn*, of course, do not occur nearly so often as the consonantal *y*. The Germans have no equivalent of *w* ; but their *j*, which has the same effect in introducing a syllable as our *y*, is probably heard before as many of their vowels and diphthongs. The French also form a kind of *w* from sound 7 in such words as *huit* and *huile*.

If we now count up the sounds arranged in each double column of the table, we shall find that Italian possesses twelve simple vowels and one diphthong ; French, fifteen simple vowels and three diphthongs ; English, thirteen and five respectively, and German, the full sixteen and five (besides one triphthong).