



# **DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS**

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# **PHONOLOGY:**

## **The Sound Patterns of Language**

Phonology is the study of the sound system and the processes we use to discover the unconscious system underlying our speech.

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# Concepts:

1. Phonology is the study of the sound system and the processes
2. Linguistic sounds are not generally used in isolation
3. Rules also govern pieces bigger than single sound
4. Pitch and loudness can affect meaning in systematic ways.



# PHONEMES and ALLOPHONES

# PHONEMES

the smallest unit of speech that  
can be used to make one word  
different from another word

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

# Allophones

one of two or more variants of  
the same phoneme

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

❖ Each language has its own set of phonemes

❖ Phonemes are the “psychology real” sounds of a language, and allophones are the actual sounds.





# ASSIMILATION RULES

# Assimilation

- the process of making one sound more like a neighboring one with respect to some feature.

## **A. VOWEL NASALIZATION**

**A nasal vowel** is a vowel that is produced with a lowering of the velum so that air escapes both through nose as well as the mouth

Ex. 'pan' /pæn/ as [pæn]

## B. ALVEOLAR NASAL ASSIMILATION

- It assimilate the place of articulation of the nasal to the labial consonant
- The alveolar nasal /n/ assimilates to the bilabial /w/ by changing the alveolar to a bilabial /m/.

Ex. sandwich /sænwɪč/ → /sænwɪč/

# **C. ALVEOLAR STOP**

## **ASSIMILATION**

A word can assimilate to the place of articulation of some consonant (casual speech)

Ex.

I can be ready in five minutes. can be /kæn bi/ → /kæm bi/

I can go with you. can go /kæn go/ → /kæŋ go/

I can see the palace from here. can see /kæn si/ → /kæn si/



# PALATALIZATION

a common process that results from an interaction between either front vowels or a /y/ glide and a neighboring alveolar consonant

Alveolar stop + high front vowel or  
glide → palatalized fricative or  
affricate

Ex. t + yu → ě     mature, nature  
/metyur/ → /mečur/



# VOICING ASSIMILATION


The vibration of the vocal cords is not something that can be switched on and off very swiftly, as a result groups of consonants tend to be either all voiced or all voiceless.

[http://davidbrett.uniss.it/phonology/notes%20and%20exercises/assimilation/assimilation\\_of\\_voicing.htm](http://davidbrett.uniss.it/phonology/notes%20and%20exercises/assimilation/assimilation_of_voicing.htm)



# DISSIMILATION RULES

- cause two neighboring sounds to become less alike with respect to some feature.

- 
- Rules involving dissimilation cause two neighboring sounds to become *less alike with respect to some feature*.
  - Dissimilation rules are less common than assimilation rules, at least in English.

- It took place when the suffix *-al* attached to some Latin nouns to make adjectives.
- The regular suffixation process gives us pairs like the following: *orbit/orbital*, *person/personal*, *culture/cultural*, *electric/electrical*.

# DISSIMILATION OF FRICATIVE SOUNDS

This rule applies to sequences /fθ/ and /sθ/,  
changing them to [ft] and [st].

For example: Fifth—pronounce as “fift”

Sixth —pronounce as ”sikst”



# INSERTION RULES

also called epenthesis cause a segment not present at the phonemic level to be added to the phonemic form of a word.

# INSERTION OF VOWELS

From Old English(OE) to Middle English (ME), vowels were inserted between consonant.

In Present-Day English, many variations across dialects involve insertion of vowels

A vowel is inserted between the consonant of a consonant cluster.

OE

ME

PDE

þurh



thorow

‘thorough’

setl



setel

‘seat’

æfre



ever

‘dream’



# INSERTION OF CONSONANTS

The alveolar stop with the same place of articulation as the nasal /n/ (alveolar) was inserted in Old English

Old English þunor →

Present-Day English thunder  
(compare German Donner ‘thunder’)

# **INSERTION OF VOICELESS STOP**

A common insertion takes place between a nasal and a voiceless fricative when a voiceless stop with the same place of articulation as the nasal is inserted.

Hamster /hæmstr/ → /hæmpstr/

something /səmθɪŋ/ or /səmθɪn/ →  
səmpθɪŋ/ or /səmpθɪn/

strength /strɛŋθ/ → /strɛŋkθ/

# INSERTION OF /Y/

- A /y/ is inserted after initial alveolar consonants and preceding high vowel vowel (some dialects of English used)
- This insertion is better described as deletion

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Ex.

News, Tuesday, and duke are pronounced /nyuz/, /tyuzde/, and /dyuk/



# PROSODIES

: the rhythm and pattern of  
sounds of poetry and  
language

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

# PITCH

1. the difference in the relative vibration frequency of the human voice that contributes to the total meaning of speech
2. a definite relative pitch that is a significant phenomenon in speech

Merriam-Webster Dictionary



# TONE

- the quality of a person's voice
- : the quality of a sound produced by a musical instrument or singing voice
- : a quality, feeling, or attitude expressed by the words that someone uses in speaking or writing

Merriam-Webster

# INTONATION

- ❖ The combination of musical tones on which we pronounce the syllables that make up our speech.
- ❖ The tune of what we say
- ❖ The rise and fall in the pitch of the voice when speaking

# STRESS

- the relative emphasis that may be given to certain syllables in a word, or to certain words in a phrase or sentence
- Ex. dóllar, pássage, admìre

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# PHONOLOGY

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary

- the science of speech sounds including especially the history and theory of sound changes in a language or in two or more related languages

- the study of how sounds are organized and used in natural languages.

<http://www-01.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerms/WhatIsPhonology.htm>



# PHONETICS

and

# PHONEMES

# *PHONETICS*

the science devoted to the physical analysis of the sounds of human speech, including their production, transmission, and perception

# PHONEMICS

- ❖ the study and establishment of the phonemes of a language
- ❖ the study of phonemes and phonemic systems

**PHONEMES**

and

**ALLOPHONES**



# ***PHONEMES***

- the smallest unit of speech that can be used to make one word different from another word

# *ALLOPHONES*

- one of two or more variants of the same phoneme

# PHONEMES and ALLOPHONES

A *phoneme* is a family of similar sounds which a language treats as being "the same". Members of the family are called its *allophones*.

# NONE CONTRACTIVENESS OF ALLOPHONES

When a specific allophone (from a set of allophones that correspond to a phoneme) *must* be selected in a given context (i.e., using a different allophone for a phoneme will cause confusion or make the speaker sound non-native), the allophones are said to be **complementary** (i.e., the allophones complement each other, and one is not used in a situation where the usage of another is standard).

# TRANSCRIPTIONS

**transcribing:** the act or process of transcribing something

**transcript:** something that has been transcribed

**phonetic representation:** a  
phonetic representation of speech  
using special symbols

Ex. bat [bæt], home [hom]