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The Sound Patterns of Language

Phonetics

It is the description of the systems and patterns of speech sounds in a language. It is concerned with the ways in which speech sounds form systems and patterns in human language. Phonology permits a speaker:

To produce sounds that form meaningful utterances.

To recognize a foreign accent.

To make up new words.

Phonology

Phonology is the sound system of a language. It is functional and analytical.

Phonemes

Phonemes refer to sounds that distinguish the meaning of the words in a language. A phoneme /'fəʊni:m/ is one of the units of sound that distinguish one word from another in a particular language. Example: kill-dill

Each meaning – distinguishing sound in a language is described as a “ phoneme “. It is the single sound type which came to be represented by a single symbol. Slash marks are conventionally used to indicate a phoneme, /t/ .

Phonemes function contrastively. This contrastive property is the basic operational test for determining the phonemes which exist in a language. If we substitute one sound for another in a word and there is a change of meaning, then two sounds represent different phonemes.

Phones and Allophones

They are different versions of a sound type. Phones are represented in square brackets. When we have a set of phones, all of which are versions of one phoneme, we refer to them as the allophone of that phoneme. e.g. Bean, bead.

The basic distinction between phonemes and allophones; substituting one phoneme for another will result in a word with a different meaning, but substituting allophones only result in a different pronunciation of the same word.

Aspiration

When we are producing the same sound in different words, sometimes extra puff of air is produced for the same sound. This feature is just for stops (p, t, k) e.g. pit, kit, sit.

What is the difference between /t^h/ and /t_h? / t_h/ it refers to the phoneme, which is a abstract segment. [t^h] aspiration as pot [t_h] dental as eighth

Minimal Pairs and Sets

When two words such as ‘pat’ and ‘bat’ are identical in form except for a contrast in one phoneme, occurring in the same position, the two words are described as a minimal pair. e.g. Feat, fit, fat, fate.

Phonotactics

There are definite patterns to the types of sound combinations permitted in a language. We can form nonsense words which are permissible forms with no meanings.

They represent identical gaps in the vocabulary of English. E.g. “lig” or “vig” (not English words but possible). But “sing” or “mig” are not obeying same constraints on the sequence. Such constraints are called the Phonotactics of a language.

Syllables and Clusters

A syllable is composed of one or more phonemes and it must contain a vowel sound. Every syllable has a nucleus, usually a vowel-liquid or nasal. The basic elements of the syllable are the onset (one or more consonants) and the rhyme. Plus any following consonants treated as the coda.

The syllables that haven't got a coda are known 'OPEN SYLLABLES' when a coda is present; they are called "CLOSED SYLLABUS".

Cup => closed syllable

No => open syllable

Both onset and coda can consist of more than one consonant known as a CONSONANT CLUSTER. /s/ + (/p/, /t/, /k/) + (/r/, /l/, /w/)

Coarticulation Effects

Our talk is fast and spontaneous and it requires our articulators to move from one sound to the next without stopping. The process of making one sound almost at the same time as the next is called coarticulation. Articulation effects are like " assimilation" and " Elision".

Assimilation

When two phonemes occur in sequence and some aspect of one phoneme is taken or copied by the other the process is known as "assimilation". This process is occasioned by ease of articulation in everyday talk. For example, only vowel becomes nasal whenever it immediately precedes a nasal. E.g. can => I can go.

Elision

Omission of a sound segment which would be present in the deliberate pronunciation of a word in isolation is technically described as "elision" . In consonants clusters, especially in coda position, /t/ is a common casualty in this process, as in the typical pronunciation of the /t/ in "He must be" or in 'Aspects'.