

Day Twelve: Phonology

Phonology: the study of the sound system of a language, how the particular sounds contrast in each language to form an integrated system for encoding information, and how such systems differ from one language to another.

- I. Questions
 - a. Are voiceless palatal stops allophones of voiceless velar stops in all languages?
 - b. How can we tell whether this process is tied to human physiology (and therefore universal) or whether this reflects a rule of English mental grammar?
- II. Minimal pairs/sets in other languages
 - a. Hungarian
 - i. [kuka] dustbin
 - ii. [kuca] dog
 - b. Minimal pairs are the ultimate overlapping distribution
 - c. They overlap in where they can occur; they contribute to contrastive meaning.
- III. Steps for solving phonology problems
 - a. Your attention will be directed to specific sounds
 - i. Look for minimal pairs
 - ii. If you do not find minimal pairs, list the surrounding environments for each
 1. If no minimal pairs, look for a pattern (distribution of the two sounds)
 - a. What environments does sound X occur in?
 - b. What environments does sound Y occur in?
 - iii. Determine which sound only occurs in a particular environment (identified by a natural class).
 1. You should be able to find a natural class of sounds that conditions the pronunciation of one of the phones
 2. You should be able to design a complementary distribution statement
 - iv. Frame a complementary distribution statement
 1. What is a phonological rule?
 - a. The description of a relationship between a phoneme and its allophones and the conditioning environment in which the allophones appear.
 2. Rules describe the systematic change in the pronunciation of segments.
 - v. Design a rule
 1. The sound that changes from its phonemic representation
 - a. What sound changes? How?
 2. Its conditioning environment

a. What makes it change?

IV. Rule Format

- a. (the underlying phoneme) becomes (the exceptionally pronounced phone) (in a restrictive environment)
 - i. ex. "voiceless velar stops become palatal before front vowels"
 - 1. Voiceless velar stop → palatal / __ front vowels
 - 2. (otherwise, a mentally represented voiceless velar stop is pronounced as a voiceless velar stop)