

Introduction to Linguistics Phonetics and Phonology

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Linguistics

- the scientific study of language; i.e. it studies language from the point of view of its structure and function.
- People have always expressed enormous interest in language, but when did the *science* begin?
 - 19th century: comparative philology?
 - 20th century: Baudouin de Courtenay and de Saussure plus subsequent structuralist schools (Prague, Copenhagen)?
- 3 major characteristics of scientificness in language studies (according to Crystal 1990):
 - **explicitness, systematicity, objectivity.**

Explicitness

- clarity of assumptions
- thorough description of intermediate stages of an argument
- clear and consistent use of terminology (terms should not appear out of the blue)
 - of paramount importance in linguistics as linguists describe and analyse language using language=> metalanguage

Systematicity

To be avoided:

- haphazard study of an issue
- partial coverage of an issue
- impressionistic commentary
- failure to take into account previous research

To be followed:

- standard and methodical procedures
- consistent descriptive framework

Objectivity

- no bias (influence) from the researcher
 - enough data
 - representative selection of informants
 - verifiable results
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- Chomsky and the generative theory: linguistics as a mentalistic discipline, intuitions about one's language, layperson and linguist often one person-how can all this be **objective**?

Primary aim of linguistics

- Construction of theories (not data collection about the facts of the world or its improvement)
- A theory is an **explanation** of phenomena (data/reality), not a summary of the data; i.e. it not only explains the data already collected but also data that may be collected in the same frame of reference in the future.
- In other words, theories transcend data and their validity is measured by the extent to which they explain future data as well.

Linguistics- disciplines

- **Core disciplines:** phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, stylistics, pragmatics, lexicography, historical linguistics, philosophy of language;
- **Applied linguistics:** language pedagogy, second language acquisition, forensic linguistics, discourse analysis;
- **Inter-disciplinary disciplines:** sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and others.

Phonetics

- the science of human speech sounds with no specific reference to their function in a given sound-system
- highly autonomous within linguistics (true science: instruments, computers, scaled measurements, etc.)
- It studies 'the defining characteristics of *all* human vocal noise' (Crystal 1990: 167); => phonetic symbols (IPA, see below).
- three interdependent viewpoints:
 - ❖ articulatory (speech production)
 - ❖ acoustic (transmission of sound)
 - ❖ auditory (perception of sound)

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

- Alphabetic system of phonetic notation devised by the International Phonetic Association (in use since 1888)
- It includes **consonants** (both pulmonic and non-pulmonic), **vowels**, **suprasegmentals** (see below) and **diacritics** (additional symbols to specify the exact articulatory position or signal secondary articulation).
- See the latest alphabet (revised to 2020) here:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8f/IPA_chart_2020.svg

Phonology

- Studies 'sounds and their contrasts within a specific sound-system' (Crystal 1990: 172).
- functional aspect of sounds
- PHONETIC STATEMENT: /b/ is a voiced bilabial plosive.
- PHONOLOGICAL STATEMENT: there are 6 short vowels in English.
- phonemics: 1/ synonym of phonology (sound-system of one language)
2/ theoretical study of **phonemes**

Phonetics & Phonology

- The crucial difference between the two lies in the difference between the **sound** and the **phoneme**.
- Both phonetics and phonology can be divided into two main categories:
 - **segmental** (segment=phone; the smallest perceptible sound)
 - typically vowels and consonants
 - **suprasegmental** (also called prosody; concerned with characteristics stretching over more than one segment)
 - typically syllables, sentences, clauses, utterances
 - suprasegmentals include e.g. stress (a combination of loudness, pitch, and length), rhythm, intonation, tempo.

Vowels v. consonants

- **Vowels:** sounds defined by the position of the tongue, most easily described in terms of auditory relationships; they are typically voiced with no noise component.
 - Monophthongs (long and short), diphthongs, triphthongs.
- **Consonants:** sounds defined by the contacts and movements of the various articulatory means (e.g. teeth, lips, palate, etc.); they may be voiced or voiceless and there is typically a noise component involved.
 - place and manner of articulation (e.g. a bilabial plosive)

Phoneme & Allophone

- **Phonemes** are contrastive units of sound which can be used to change meaning (Collins & Mees 2003: 11).
- Phoneme is an abstract entity shared by a native community.
- **Allophones** are actual sounds uttered by speakers and interpreted as one phoneme despite possible phonetic differences.

Phoneme & Allophone

- One cannot pronounce a phoneme, only an allophone; hence phoneme, being a feature of language structure, cannot be defined acoustically. In Saussurean terms, it is part of **langue**, not **parole**.
- **phonemic** /ki:p/ v. **phonetic** [k₊^hi:p] **transcription**

Czech phonologists

- **Vilém Mathesius** (1882-1945): founder of the Prague Linguistic Circle, centre v. periphery; elastic stability of a language system.
- **Bohumil Trnka** (1895-1984): historical phonologist, functional load of phonemes, description of the phonological system of Modern English and thoroughly described the Great Vowel Shift.
- **Josef Vachek** (1909-1996): historical phonologist, language in a perpetual state of imperfect balance=>constant change due to the tension between peripheral and central elements.
- **Ludmila Urbanová** (1944): phonetician and phonologist, later turned her attention to stylistics and pragmatics

English phoneticians and phonologists

- **Henry Sweet** (1845-1912): description of the standard pronunciation, his own phonetic script.
- **Leonard Bloomfield** (1887-1949): American linguist, interest in other languages than English.
- **Daniel Jones** (1881-1967): description of Received Pronunciation, *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (vowel diagram)
- **John Rupert Firth** (1890-1960): main interest in prosody.
- **Alfred C. Gimson** (1917-1985): Jones's student and follower, *Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*, editor of the *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (after Jones).
- **J C Wells** (1939): *Accents of English* (1982), lexical sets, *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*.
- **Clive Upton** (1946): dialectologist, *Oxford Dictionary of Pronunciation for Current English*, updated the model of RP

Other phoneticians and phonologists

- **Nikolai Sergejevich Trubetzkoy** (1890-1938): co-founder of the PLC, *Grundzuge der Phonologie* (1939), definition and theoretical description of the notion of phoneme, binary oppositions.
- **Roman Jakobson** (1896-1982): co-founder of the PLC, linguistic markedness, dynamism of language system, therapeutic function of language change

Markedness in linguistics

- Originally, the concept comes from the Prague Linguistic Circle (Roman Jakobson, Nikolay Sergejevitch Trubetzkoy; pre-WWII era) and characterises binary oppositions (i.e. the contrast between two members of a pair).
- It refers to the presence/absence of a particular feature: e.g. nasality is dealt with in such terms and the presence of it is **marked** while the absence thereof is **unmarked**.
- Today, the meaning is broader and it refers to the usual (i.e. unmarked) v. unusual (i.e. marked) state of things:
 - E.g. *lion* is unmarked in terms of gender while *lioness* is marked;
 - *How **old** are you* is unmarked while *how **young** are you* is marked;
 - rhoticity in RP is marked while the lack thereof is unmarked, in GenAm it is the other way round, etc.

References

- Collins, Beverley and Inger Mees. 2003. *Practical Phonetics and Phonology*. London: Routledge.
- Crystal, David. 1990. *Linguistics*. London: Penguin Books.