

PHONOLOGY

Phonology (Greek phone = voice/sound and logos = word/speech), is a subfield of linguistics closely associated with phonetics.

Whereas phonetics is about the physical production and perception of sounds of speech, phonology describes the way sounds function - within a given language or across languages.

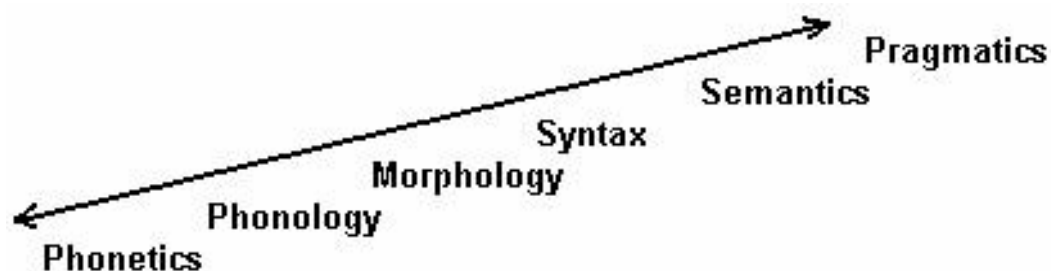
Phonology is the study of how sounds are organized and used in natural languages.

The phonological system of a language includes

- an inventory of sounds and their features, and
- rules which specify how sounds interact with each other.

Phonology is just one of several aspects of language. It is related to other aspects such as phonetics, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics.

Here is an illustration that shows the place of phonology in an interacting hierarchy of levels in linguistics:



Comparison: Phonology and phonetics

Phonetics ...	Phonology ...
Is the basis for phonological analysis	Is the basis for further work in morphology, syntax, discourse, and orthography design
Analyzes the production of all human speech sounds, regardless of language	Analyzes the sound patterns of a particular language by determining which phonetic sounds are significant, and explaining how these sounds are interpreted by the native speaker.

Phone: A phone is an unanalyzed sound of a language. It is the smallest identifiable unit found in a stream of speech that is able to be transcribed with an IPA symbol.

Phonemes: A phoneme is the smallest contrastive unit in the sound system of a language.

Allophones: An allophone is a phonetic variant of a phoneme in a particular language.

Minimal pairs: Minimal pairs are pairs of words in a particular language which differ in only one phoneme and have a distinct meaning.

Comparison: Phone and phoneme

A phone is ...	A phoneme is ...
One of many possible sounds in the languages of the world.	A contrastive unit in the sound system of a particular language.
The smallest identifiable unit found in a stream of speech.	A minimal unit that serves to distinguish between meanings of words.
Pronounced in a defined way.	Pronounced in one or more ways, depending on the number of allophones.
Represented between brackets by convention. Example: [b], [j], [o]	Represented between slashes by convention. Example: /b/, /j/, /o/

In English, [p] and [p^h] are allophones of the /p/ phoneme.

e.g. [p^hɪt]

[spɪt]

Switching allophones of the same phoneme **won't change** the **meaning** of the word: [sp^hɪt] still means 'spit'.

Switching allophones of different phonemes will **change** the **meaning** of the word or result in a nonsense word: [skɪt] and [stɪt] do not mean 'spit'.

Different languages can have different groupings for their phonemes.

e.g.

[p] and [p^h] belong to the same phoneme in English, but to different phonemes in Chinese.

In Chinese, switching [p] and [p^h] does change the meaning of the word.

A **broad transcription** uses only **one symbol for all allophones** of the same phoneme.

This is enough information to distinguish a word from other words of the language.

What details you have to include in a broad transcription will depend on what language or dialect you are transcribing

We have already looked at the distinct phonemes in English: