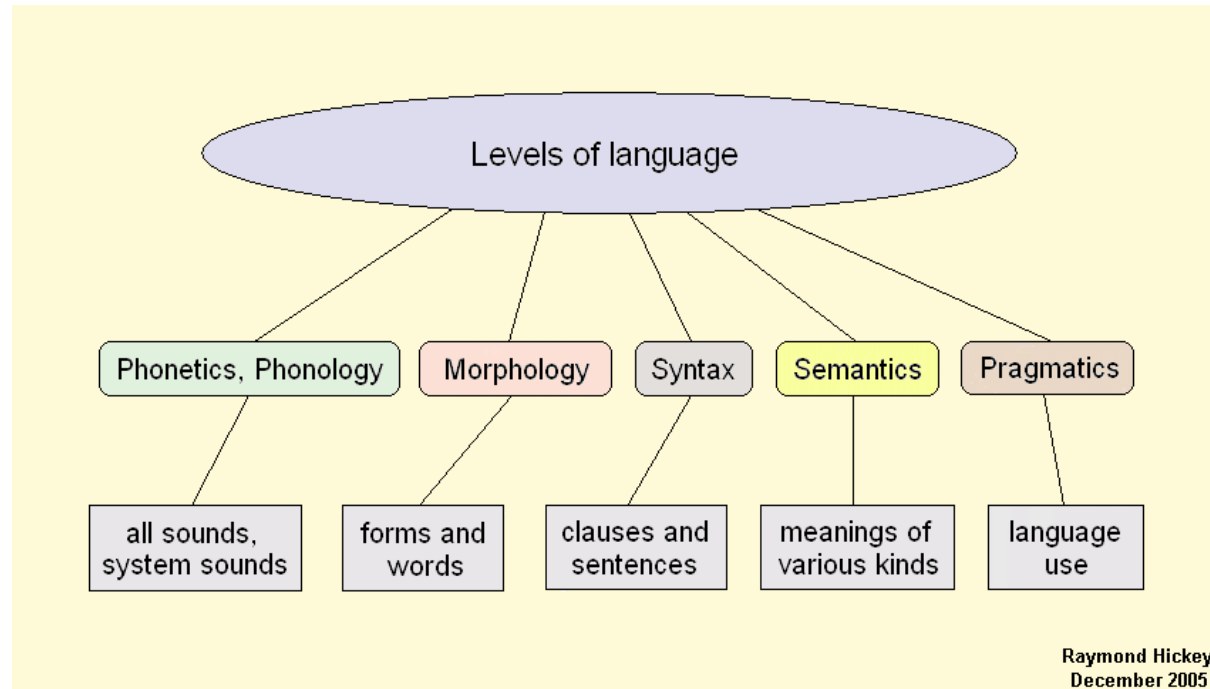
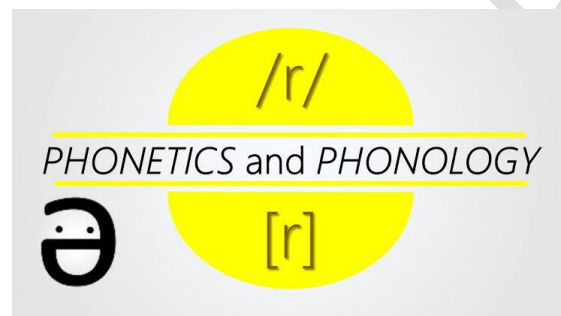


LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Levels of language refer to the way language itself is organised and hence analysed by linguists.



Lecture on Phonetics and Phonology



Introduction

Communication is the foundation of our social lives, allowing us to understand each other (Rowe & Levine, 2016). Studying how communication operates, particularly the rules of spoken languages, is key to comprehending the world around us.

Spoken languages are analysed at six levels:

phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. For EFL students, understanding the linguistic system of the target language, starting from sounds in speech to meaning construction, is highly recommended.

Phonetics: The Study of Speech Sounds

Phonetics is the scientific study of speech sounds, focusing on their production, perception, and acoustic properties (Rowe & Levine, 2016). It has three main fields:

1. **Articulatory phonetics:** Examines the physiological mechanisms of speech production in the vocal tract. For example, in producing the consonant /p/, the lips are closed and the tongue is retracted, while for /t/ the tongue tip touches the alveolar ridge behind the teeth.
2. **Acoustic phonetics:** Measures and analyses the physical properties of speech sound waves. For instance, a spectrogram shows the vowel /i/ has a high frequency first formant, whereas /a/ has a lower first formant.
3. **Auditory phonetics:** Studies how speech sounds are perceived by the listener.

Phonology: The Study of Sound Patterns

Phonology is the subfield of linguistics that investigates the sound patterns of language, focusing on the system and functions of speech sounds (Rowe & Levine, 2016). It examines how sounds are organized in the mind and used to convey meaning, as well as the phonological processes that occur when sounds combine.

Phonology is divided into two areas:

1. **Segmental phonology:** This branch focuses on the individual sounds themselves, analyzing their distinctive features. These features include place and manner of articulation (where and how the sound is produced), voicing (whether the vocal cords vibrate), and tongue height.
2. **Suprasegmental phonology:** This area examines how sounds are grouped and modified beyond individual segments. It focuses on features like pitch (the highness or lowness of your voice), stress (emphasis on certain syllables), and intonation (the overall rise and fall of pitch in a sentence).

Key Concepts in Phonetics and Phonology

- **Segment:** The smallest perceived unit of speech sound, like /p/, /a/, or /t/.
- **Phoneme:** The minimal unit of sound in a language that can differentiate meaning when substituted. For example, the difference between the phonemes /p/ and /b/ in "pin" and "bin" changes the word entirely.
- **Allophone:** Different pronunciations of the same phoneme that do not change the meaning. For instance, the /p/ sound in "pin" and "spin" are allophones of the phoneme /p/.
- **Minimal pairs:** Words that differ in only one sound, demonstrating how sounds can change meaning. Examples include "ship" and "sip," "right" and "light."

Phonological processes:

These are the ways sounds interact and influence each other in speech:

- **Assimilation:** Sounds become more similar to each other for easier pronunciation.

Example: "Handbag" becomes "hændbæg" due to the /n/ influencing the /d/ to become more nasal.

- **Elision:** Certain sounds are omitted in casual speech.

Example: "Gimme" instead of "Give me," "camera" pronounced as "cam'ra."

- **Cluster reduction:** Groups of consonants are partially or fully omitted.

Example: "Friend" becomes "fren," "stop" becomes "top."

Difference between Phonetics and Phonology

Phonetics is like the science lab, analysing the physical properties of individual sounds. It gives importance to the structure and rules of sounds, trying to explain how the abstract sets of sounds convey meaning through the physical sounds produced and heard. On the other hand, phonology is the organizer, focusing on the abstract system of sounds, their functions, and the rules that govern how they combine to create meaning in a language.

Practice Exercises:

1. Transcribe the following words phonetically: think, house, water, please, strong.
2. Find minimal pairs for the following words: wait, way, hear, hair, right.
3. Provide examples of assimilation and elision from Arabic.

References:

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