

# Phonemes and symbols

Ch 5

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# What do we mean when we use the word “sound”?

1. When we speak, we produce a continuous stream of sounds.
2. Speech sounds can be divided into smaller pieces. These are called **segments** (the smallest speech sound that a word can be divided into).
3. The word ‘man’ is pronounced with a first segment m, a second segment ae and a third segment n.

# Sounds (forty-four)

1. Ch 2 and 3 introduced the set of vowels found in English. Each of these can be pronounced in many slightly different ways, so that the total range of sounds actually produced by speakers is practically infinite.
2. Speech sounds can be pronounced differently.
3. Why English has no more than twenty vowels?
4. This is because changing one vowel with another results in different meaning.

# Letters (twenty six)

1. In the alphabet we have five letters that are called vowels: a, u, o, e, i.
2. we get the five words spelt 'pat', 'pet', 'pit', 'pot', 'put', each of which has a different meaning.
3. We can do the same with *sounds*. The vowels i, e, ae, **ɪ**, **ʊ**, for example, we can see how substituting one for another in between the plosives p and t gives us six different words as follows:

'pit' pɪt

'pet' pet

'pat' pæt

'putt' pʊt

'pot' pɒt

'put' pʊt

# Phonemes

1. **Phonemes** refer to abstract set of units that represent the basis of our speech.
2. **Phonemic system** is the complete set of abstract units (phonemes) of the language.
3. **Realisations (allophones)** refer to the substitution of one sound with another without changing the meaning.
4. For example, t in the word 'tea' is aspirated while in 'eat', the realisation of t is unaspirated.
5. **Complementary distribution** refers to the strict separation of places where particular realisation can occur.

# Sounds vs letters

Sound	Letter
Can be divided into smaller pieces (segment)	Cannot be divided into smaller pieces
Unlimited	limited
variable	One letter may have two sounds

# Sounds vs phonemes

Sound	Phoneme
Concrete	Abstract
Unlimited	limited
Can be divided into smaller pieces	Cannot be divided into smaller pieces
Changing one sound with another does not necessarily change the meaning	Changing one phoneme with another changes the meaning

# Symbols

1. There are two types of **symbols**:
  1. **Phonemic symbols** (symbols representing abstract units)
  2. **Phonetic symbols** (symbols representing concrete units)
2. The phonemic system described here for the BBC accent contains forty-four phonemes.
3. We can display the complete set of these phonemes by vowel quadrilateral - as was done in Chapters 2 and 3 - and the consonants can be placed in a chart or table according to place of articulation, manner of articulation and voicing.

# Phonetic transcription

1. There are three types of phonetic transcription:
  1. **Narrow:** a phonetic transcription containing a lot of information about the exact quality of the sounds
  2. **Broad:** one which only included a little more information than a phonemic transcription
  3. **Allophonic** transcription is basically phonemic, but contains additional symbolic information about allophones of particular symbols.

# Phonetics and phonology

1. Phonetics is the study of human speech sounds. It is concerned with the psychological side of sounds.
2. Phonology is the study of sound pattern in language. It is concerned with abstract side of sounds.
3. Phonology includes:
  1. Phonemic system
  2. Phoneme sequence and syllable structure
  3. Suprasegmental features