

The Study of Language – Chapter 4:

The Sound Patterns of Language

- Course: Introduction to Linguistics
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Introduction to Phonology

- Phonology: Study of sound systems and patterns in language
- Focuses on abstract, cognitive aspects of sounds
- Contrasts with phonetics (physical properties)

Phonemes

- Phoneme: Smallest unit of sound that can distinguish meaning
- Example: /p/ vs. /b/ in 'pat' vs. 'bat'
- Phonemes are language-specific

Minimal Pairs

- Two words differing by only one sound in the same position
- Examples: 'fan' vs. 'van', 'tip' vs. 'dip'
- Used to identify phonemes in a language

Phones and Allophones

- Phone: Actual sound produced
- Allophones: Variants of a phoneme that do not change meaning
- Example: [t] in 'top' vs. [ʔ] in 'button'

Complementary Distribution

- Allophones appear in specific, non-overlapping environments
- Example: [p^h] in 'pin' (aspirated), [p] in 'spin' (unaspirated)
- Do not contrast meanings

Free Variation

- Allophones that can occur in the same environment
- Example: [t] and [ʔ] in 'bottle'
- Choice does not affect meaning

Phonotactics

- Rules about permissible sound sequences in a language
- Example: 'ng' never starts a word in English
- Languages vary in their phonotactic constraints

Syllables and Structure

- Basic unit of speech sound organization
- Syllable parts:
 - -Onset: beginning consonant(s)
 - -Nucleus: vowel (required)
 - -Coda: final consonant(s)
- Syllable = Onset + Rhyme (Nucleus + Coda)

Summary and Practice

- Chapter 4 explores phonemes, allophones, and phonological rules
- Key concepts: minimal pairs, phonotactics, syllables
- Practice identifying phonemes and analyzing sound patterns