

Concepts in English Linguistics

Session 2: Phonetics and Phonology

Acoustic phonetics The study of the production of speech

Affricate A plosive followed by a fricative when they form a single phoneme: /tʃ/, /dʒ/

Allophone One possible realization of a phoneme: [ɹ], [tʰ], [iː], [i:]

Alveolar A speech sound produced with the front of the tongue pressed against the alveolar ridge: /t/,
/s/

Approximant A speech sound consisting in near-contact between two speech organs without notable
friction: /r, w, l, j/

Articulatory phonetics The study of the production of speech

Auditory phonetics The study of the aural reception of speech

Bilabial A speech sound produced with both lips pressed against each other: /b/, /p/, /m/

Coda Any consonants following a syllable nucleus (i.e. following the vowel); an optional syllable constituent

Consonant Phonetically, a sound produced with a marked constriction of the airflow in the speech tract; phonologically, a sound that normally occurs in the syllable boundary, rarely in its nucleus

Continuant (sonorant) A consonant without perceptible friction: /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/, /r/

Digraph A combination of two letters representing a single sound: <ea>, <oo>

Diphthong A gliding vowel, i.e. an unobstructed sound that changes its place of articulation in the course of its production: /aʊ/, /ɔɪ/

Egressive pulmonic airstream An outflow of breath from the lungs

Fricative A speech sound consisting in a considerable oral constriction of the airstream: /s/, /ʃ/, /ð/

Glottal Produced with modulation (esp. closure) of the glottis other than voicing

Grapheme The smallest meaning-distinguishing unit in ordinary writing; a letter

Labiodental A speech sound produced with the (upper) teeth pressed against the (lower) lip: /f/, /v/

Lateral A speech sound that allows the airflow to escape along the sides of the tongue: /l/

Ligature Two graphemes (i.e. letters) joined together into one: <æ>, <œ>

Liquid Groups together /l, r/ for their shared phonological characteristics

Minimal pair A set of two words of the same language, differing in one sound only and thereby proving the status of the two differing sounds as phonemes of the language in question: *bit* : *bid*

Monophthong A static vowel, i.e. an unobstructed sound with a single place of articulation: /æ/, /u:/

Nasal A continuant produced with persistent blockage of the oral cavity: /m/, /n/, /ŋ/

Nucleus The sole mandatory element of a syllable, consisting of a vowel or syllabic consonant

Onset Any consonants preceding a syllable nucleus (i.e. preceding the vowel); an optional syllable constituent

Palatal A speech sound produced with the front of the tongue pressed against (or approaching) the

hard palate: [c], /j/

Phone Any speech sound, regardless of its status within a language's phonological system

Phoneme The smallest meaning-distinguishing unit of language

Plosive (or stop) A speech sound consisting in an oral blockage and release of the airstream: /p/, /d/, /g/

Rhyme The sequence of a syllable's nucleus and coda

Semivowel A speech sound that serves as a consonant phonologically but that has phonetic qualities like those of a vowel: /j/, /w/

Sonority The required energy for, and corresponding inherent loudness of, a speech sound relative to others in the system

Syllable Smallest rhythmical unit of speech, usually clustered around a vowel: pal·mis·try (phonological division), palm·ist·ry (morphological division)

Syllable stress Relative prominence in the production of a syllable; in English, expressed through volume, pitch, and length

Velar A speech sound produced with the back of the tongue pressed against the soft palate: /g/, /k/

Vocal tract The channel of organs involved in the production and modulation of speech

Voicing Vibration of the vocal cords in the production of a sound

Vowel Phonetically, a speech sound produced without a marked constriction of the speech tract; phonologically, a speech sound found only as the nucleus of a syllable