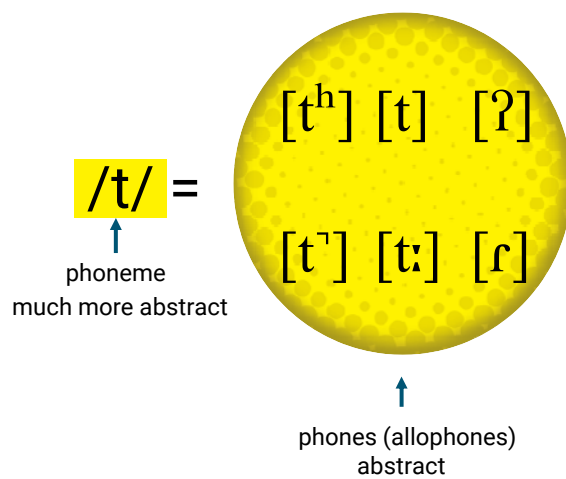


# Phones, Phonemes, and Allophones

## The Phoneme /t/



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## Some Definitions

### Phone

A speech sound.

### Phoneme

A set of related speech sounds.

### Allophone

A member of a set of related speech sounds (i.e. an allophone is a member of a phoneme).

## Phones

### Phone

- A speech sound
- A **noise** systematically exploited by communities of language users to construct **signifiers**
- A **concrete** thing, not an abstract thing
- **Language independent**
- Watch for the **brackets**



Table: wenchiaawang/iStock/Thinkstock

## Phonemes and Minimal Pairs

### Phoneme

- A set of related speech sounds
- A **mental entity**, not an acoustic entity
- An **abstract notion**, not a concrete notion
- **Language dependent**
- Watch for the **slashes**
- **Represented** by one of the allophones (the least predictable, most basic one), but **not pronounceable**
- A critical diagnostic: **the minimal pair**

### Minimal Pairs:

pill	hill
till	chill
kill	Jill
bill	will
dill	mill
gill	rill
fill	Lil
sill	nil
shill	

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## Allophones and Complementary Distribution

### Allophone

- A member of a set of related speech sounds (i.e. an allophone is a member of a phoneme)
- Does not make sense except terms of some specific phoneme
- There is no such thing as “an allophone”, only “an allophone of a phoneme”
- [tʰ] is not “an allophone”, it is “an allophone of /t/ in English”
- A critical diagnostic: **complementary distribution**

e.g. k<sup>h</sup>ill    lit<sup>ʰ</sup> ← this will never happen at the start of a word    [p<sup>h</sup>il] [spil] [lip<sup>ʰ</sup>]

this will never happen at the end of a word → not phonetically similar enough    complementary distribution phonetically similar

- Phonetic similarity + mutually exclusive neighborhoods

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## Distribution Rules

Predictable {  $[p^{h}il] \rightarrow [p^h] = / \# \underline{\quad}$   
 $[lip^{\text{ː}}] \rightarrow [p^{\text{ː}}] = / \underline{\quad} \#$

"Elsewhere"  
 "Basic"  
 /p/  
 "Least  
 Predictable" {  $[spill] \rightarrow [p] = / C \underline{\quad}$   
 hippo  $\rightarrow / V \underline{\quad}$   
 hippo  $\rightarrow / \underline{\quad} V$

Environmental Slash

# Word Boundary  
 — Location of Phone  
 C Consonant  
 V Vowel

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