CHAPTER-03

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PHONOLOGY *languages*

1. What is Phonology?

Like Phonetics, Phonology is also an area of study in Linguistics. Phonetics and Phonology are closely related. Phonetics is the study of human speech sounds while Phonology is the study of how sounds are organized and used in a language or languages. According to David Crystal,

" *Phonology is a branch of Linguistics which studies the sound systems of languages.*"

In other words, phonetics is surrounded by phonology which is the application of phonetics to a particular language or languages.

Phonology is language specific; it studies the speech sound of a given language and their function within the sound system of that language. As a matter of fact, human speech is something which is extremely, delicately patterned. It is not just a jumble of sounds but a highly organized system of structure and it is in this structure that the phonologist is interested. The phonoligist analyses speech as an orderly sequence of specific sounds and sequences of sound. The speech is orderly in terms of very complex set of patterns which repeatedly occur and which are at least partially predictable. These patterns in phonological analysis form the structure of human speech.

Phonemes: The most basic elements in the sound system of a language are called phonemes. Phonemes are the minimal (smallest) meaningful elements in the sound system of language. For example /p/ , /b/ , /t/ , /@/ are called phonemes In any language, there is a definite number of phonemes. In English, for example, there are 44 phonemes grouped into 20

vowels and 24 consonants. If there is a minor change in the sound of a phoneme, the sound is called allophone. For Example,

/t/ is a phoneme; /t^h/ is its allophone.

Syllables: Phonemes are organized into syllables in a quite definite and systematic way. Each syllable must have one or more consonants before the vowel. For example, there are three syllables in the word *'unkindness'* : un-kind-ness. In each, there is a vowel sound. The maximum number of consonants which can appear before a vowel in a syllable in English language is three, while the maximum number of consonants that appear after the vowel is four. The diagram below shows the possible structures of a syllable:

C = consonant; V = vowel

$$C_{0-3} \quad V \quad C_{0-4}$$

There are quite intricate restrictions on the combination of vowels and consonants that each language permits. Of all the possible combinations of English sounds, only a small proportion are admitted as complying with the patterns of English speech structure.

Discourse: Next to syllable in the phonological structure of any language is foot, and feet combine to make tone units in a discourse. Discourse means larger meaningful units such as sentences, paragraphs.

Thus a phonologist is concerned with drawing up a comprehensive phoneme inventory of a language, its classification into vowels, consonants, diphthongs, triphthongs and allophones.

Two Branches of Phonology

Within phonology two branches of study are usually recognized, segmental and supra-segmental. The minimum unit in segmental phonology is phoneme, whereas the minimum unit in supra-segmental phonology is syllable. Segmental phonology analyses speech into discrete segments such as phonemes, while supra-segmental phonology analyses those features which extend over more than one segment such as

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stress, rhythm and intonation. When words are used in connected speech, certain changes take place in their sounds such as assimilation (one sound mixes with the other), elision (leaving out a sound), neutralization (weakening of sounds), liaison (linking of sounds) and juncture (boundary between two sounds)P. They are studied in supra-segmental phonology.

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2. Difference between Phonetics and Phonology

Phonetics and Phonology are two fields within Linguistics which is the scientific study of various aspects of Language. The two fields focus on the same phenomenon and complement each other in the comprehensive investigation of the speech sounds of any language. Phonology is just one of the several aspects of language. It is related to other aspects such as phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Given below is an illustration that shows the place of phonology in an interacting hierarchy of (lower to higher) levels in linguistics:

Pragmatics (language in communication)

Semantics (study of meaning)

Syntax (study of sentence structures)

Morphology (study of word structure)

Phonology (study of arrangements of sounds)

Phonetics (study of production of sounds)

Both Phonetics and Phonology deals with the sounds of language. But there are certain differences in their range and process. The following comparative table is helpful to understand this difference: ● mor pheme :- the smal

Phonology	Phonetics
1. It operates at the level of sound systems and linguistic units called 'phonemes', and arranges sounds into meaningful utterances	1. It is concerned with the study of how human speech sounds are produced.
2. It has two branches: Segmental, Supra-segmental.	2. It has three branches: Articulatory, Acoustic, Auditory.
3. It is the basis for further work in morphology, syntax, discourse.	3. It is the basis of phonological analysis.
4. It analyzes the sound patterns of a particular language by pointing out which phonetic sounds are significants and how these sounds are interpreted.	4. It analyzes the production of all human speech sounds, regardless of language.