


Phonology

Phonology is the branch of linguistics which studies the **principles** which govern the way speech sounds are **organized** to form a **system** in a language and languages in general.

Principle of contrast


Consider the following:

- | | | | | | |
|----|-------|-------|----|---------------------|-------|
| a. | [pat] | ‘pat’ | b. | [p ^h at] | ‘pat’ |
| | [bat] | ‘bat’ | | [pat] | ‘pat’ |


 What do you observe?

In the two sets of words you will see the following:

- a. the sounds/phones after the initial sounds in the two sets of words are exactly the same/identical
- b. the initial sounds are different phonetically
 - i. in (a) [p] is a voiceless bilabial plosive [b] is a voiced bilabial plosive
 - ii. in (b) [p^h] is a voiceless aspirated bilabial plosive, [p] is voiceless bilabial plosive
- c. the two words are different in meaning in (a), but not in (b)

 Could you suggest a reason why there is a meaning difference in (a) and not in (b) in the two words?

1. The phonetic difference in (a) is signaled by the **state of the glottis** only:
 - a. [p] is voiceless and
 - b. [b] is voiced
2. The phonetic difference in (b) is signaled by a **secondary articulation** only:
 - a. [p] in the first word is aspirated
 - b. [p] in the second word is not aspirated
 - c. otherwise they are both voiceless

 The phonetic difference in set (a) correlates with meaning difference, while that in set (b) does not.

Given the meaning difference in set (a) and lack of meaning difference in set (b) we will say that:

- a. [p] and [b] are significant sounds, because they can give rise to meaning difference when they occur in a pair of words in Jamaican English
 - b. although [p^h] and [p] are different they do not give rise to meaning difference when they occur in a pair of words in Jamaican English, therefore they are not significant sounds
3. Two significant sounds in a language:
- a. are **contrastive** sounds
 - b. are **phonemes** because of (a)

☞ the pair of words in which phonemes occur is called a **minimal pair**

☞ the words in set (a) constitute a minimal pair, while those in set (b) do not

Phonemic/Phonetic Transcription

We have discovered that [p] and [b] are phonemes in Jamaican English. Sounds which are phonemes are placed within two slashes. For example:

/p/ & /b/

The set (a) words in which they appear will be rewritten as follows:

/pat/ 'pat'

/bat/ 'bat'

☞ the transcription above represents phonemic or broad transcription

☞ the principle which governs the identification of significant sounds in a language is called **CONTRAST**

☞ Provide minimal pairs for the following sounds in Jamaican English:

i. [f] & [v] iv. [k] & [g]

ii. [s] & [ʃ] v. [m] & [n]

iii. [t] & [d] vi. [w] & [r]

☞ With these examples attempt a definition of the **principle of contrast**

BRAVO!!!