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Teaching Phonetics in English Language: The Speech System

Natka Jankova Alagjozovska, PhD

Faculty of Philology, Goce Delcev University, N.Macedonia

Introduction: Sounds in Language

- Initial role in the speech process
- Differ and cannot be repeated

Sometimes the speakers differ in repeating the same sounds because of many factors:

- The silence/noise in the room
- Whether the speaker is tired
- Whether the speaker is distracted
- Whether the speaker is not willing to repeat
- According to his/her background

Systems of language

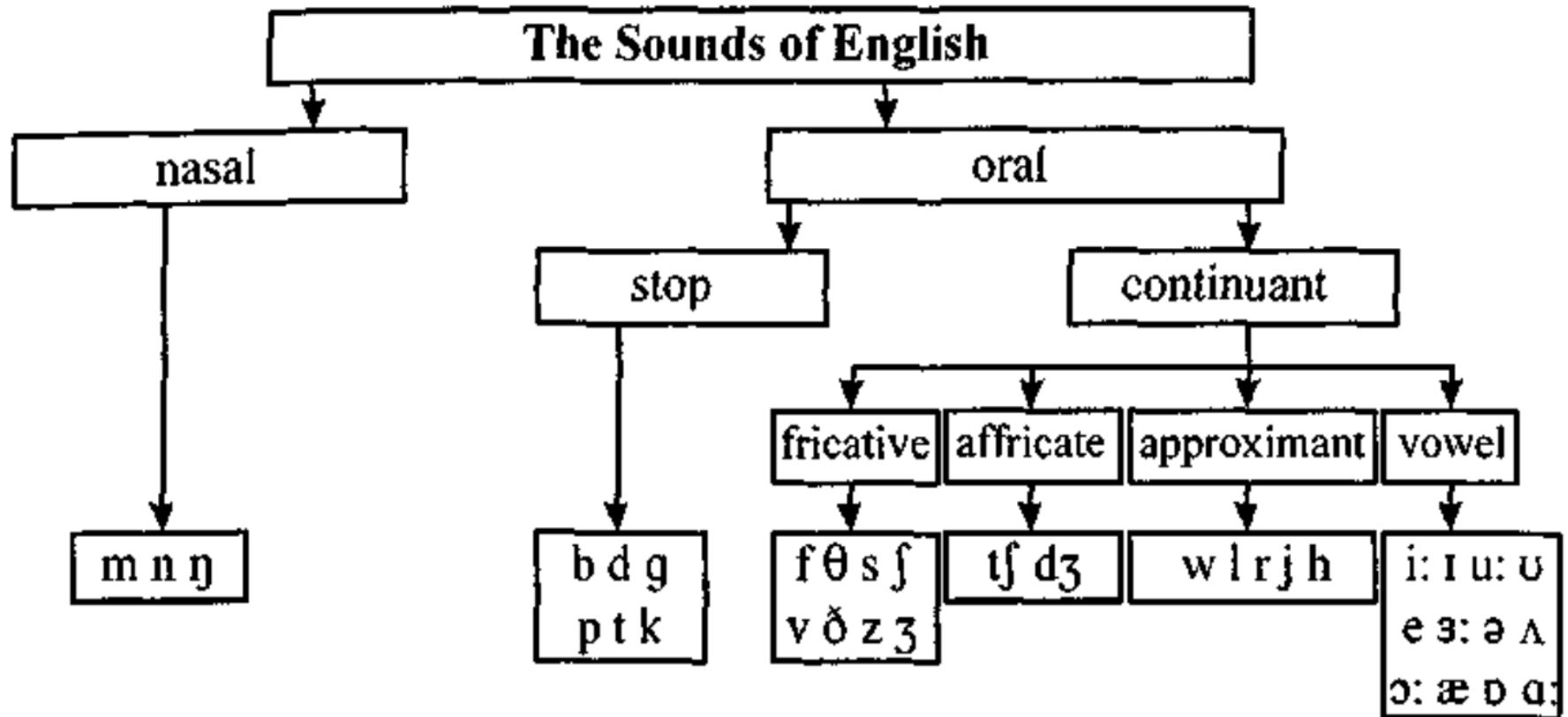
- Language consists of 3 interlocking systems
 - The system of sounds
 - The system of words
 - The system of grammar
- These systems form the resources for creating meaning
- Each system is language specific
- English vs. any language?

Characteristics of the speech system

FL speakers find themselves in a chaos of sounds because of the nature of the “problem” i.e. the speaking or learning a foreign language. This chaos is supposed to be fixed by following a certain rule/rules or codes. Thus, each system (the speech system) has two main characteristics:

- It contains a limited number of sound units
- It contains certain rules to combine those units

The sounds of English



The sound system

The speech sub-system of the verbal code has 2 types of units:

1. Distinctive features (sound properties)
2. Speech sound types (phonemes)

The sound system of any language can be studied from two points of view:

- ▣ how individual sounds in the language are made (phonetics)
- ▣ The relationship between sounds and meaning (phonology)

The number of phonemes

- The minimum number of phonemes is different across languages (never exceeding 50)
- 13 for natives of Hawaii
- 32-59 phonemes in Danish and Lithuanian

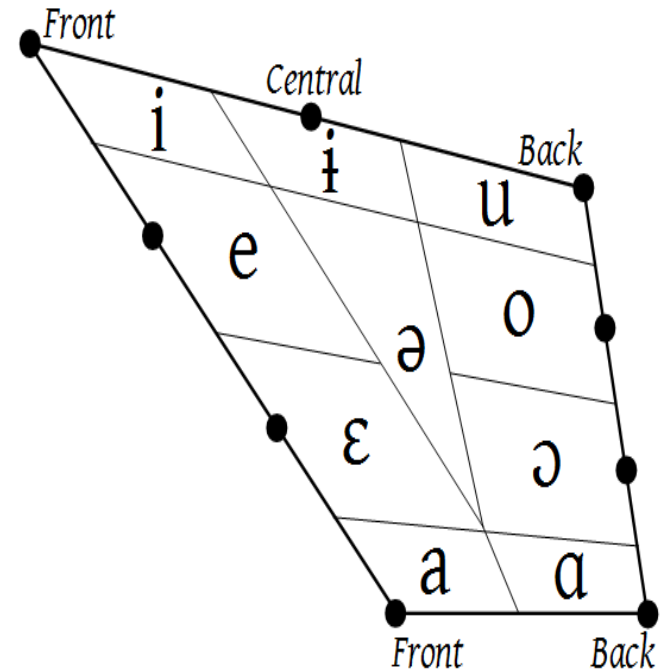
A phoneme is the smallest unit of a sound which can be meaningful/meaningless and by combination of phonemes we get morphemes. Whereas, a morpheme is the smallest linguistic unit with a semantic meaning.

The 44 phonemes

/b/	/d/	/f/	/g/	/h/	/j/	/k/	/l/	/m/	/n/	/ŋg/
big rubber	dog add filled	fish phone	go egg	hot	jet cage barge judge	kitten cat duck school occur cheque antique	leg bell	mad hammer lamb	no dinner knee gnome	sing monkey sink
/p/	/r/	/s/	/t/	/v/	/w/	/y/	/z/	/θ/	/ð/	/tʃ/
pie apple	run marry write	sun ice mouse dress science city	top letter stopped	vet give	wet	yes onion	zip fizz sneeze laser is was please xylophone	thumb thin thing	this feather then	chip match
/ʃ/	/ʒ/	/ɑ/	/e/	/i/	/o/	/u/	/ā/	/ē/	/ī/	/ō/
ship mission chef motion special	garage measure division	hat laugh	bed bread	if	hot want haul draw bought	up ton	bacon late day train they eight vein	me these beat feet key chief baby	find ride light fly pie	no note boat soul row
/ū/	/oo/	/ōō/	/ow/	/oy/	/a(r)/	/ā(r)/	/o(r)/	/air/	/i(r)/	/u(r)/
human use few chew	book put could	moon truth broom	cow out mouse	coin toy	car	air fair bear care	for core door	air hair bear care	hear cheer mirror	burn first fern work heard

Other interesting features of sounds

- One of the properties of the speech phonological subsystem is a tendency towards symmetry.



Redundancy



The possibility to predict the presence of a linguistic unit merely on the basis of the presence of another unit with which is always coupled. Redundancy is a means in each language that fights disturbance in communication.

Clements (2005: 50) "languages tend to organize their sound systems by maximizing the use of a small number of highly valued features" Again, redundancy is minimized to achieve representational simplicity.

How do we make speech sounds?

- Use air from our lungs as well as the organs of speech, i.e. lips, tongue, teeth , vocal cords to create different sounds
- By manipulating the sounds in different ways, we make different sounds
 - Phonemes are different sounds that indicate a different meaning, e.g. pill/bill, till/dill, mill/nil
 - Allophones are variations in pronunciation of individual sounds that do not signal difference in meaning, e.g. the difference in the way the /l/ is pronounced according to the sounds that surround it, as in “plane and pail”

Representing spoken language

12

- More sounds in English than letters
 - e.g. 12 vowel sounds, only 6 vowel letters
- To represent pronunciation the International Phonetic Alphabet has been created
 - Allows representation of how words are pronounced

coot *noun* /ku:t/

- Allows UK/US variations to be noted

YouTube *noun*

UK /'ju:.tʃu:b/ **US** /'ju:.tu:b/

Conclusion

Word:	British	American
<i>hair</i> y	/ heəri /	/ heri /
<i>near</i>	/ niə(r) /	/ nir /
<i>ask</i>	/ ɑ:sk /	/ æsk /
<i>answer</i>	/ ɑ:nsə(r) /	/ ænsər /
<i>grass</i>	/ grɑ:s /	/ græs /
<i>dance</i>	/ dɑ:ns /	/ dəns /
<i>process</i>	/ prəuses /	/ prɑ:səs /
<i>fear</i>	/ fiə /	/ fir /
<i>sheer</i>	/ ʃiə /	/ ʃir /
<i>buy</i>	/ bai /	/ bai /
<i>fate</i>	/ feɪt /	/ feɪt /
<i>tour</i>	/ tuə(r) /	/ tur /
<i>later</i>	/ leɪtə(r) /	/ leɪdər /