

ENGLISH PHONEMES AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

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Abstracts: This article provides a comprehensive theoretical analysis of phonemes in English and their classification. The role of the concept of phoneme in linguistics, one of its main features - the meaning-differentiating property, and its function in pronunciation are explained in detail. Vowel and consonant phonemes in English are divided into classes according to articulatory and acoustic criteria. The article analyzes the realization of phonemes in pronunciation, their segmental and suprasegmental properties (stress, intonation, rhythm), and their role in the speech process. Some comparative aspects of English phonemics with other languages, in particular, the Uzbek language, are also considered. The results of the study serve not only to deepen theoretical knowledge in the field of phonetics and phonology, but also to develop phonetic competence in the process of teaching and learning English.

Keywords: phoneme, phonetics, phonology, English, vowels, consonants, articulation, segmental units, suprasegmental features, stress, intonation, phonetic classification, speech sounds, pronunciation.

Аннотация: В статье дается комплексный теоретический анализ фонем английского языка и их классификация. Подробно раскрывается роль понятия фонемы в лингвистике, один из ее основных признаков – смысловоразличительное свойство, и его функция в произношении. Гласные и согласные фонемы английского

языка делятся на классы по артикуляционным и акустическим критериям. В статье анализируется реализация фонем в произношении, их сегментные и супraseгментные свойства (ударение, интонация, ритм), а также их роль в речевом процессе. Также рассматриваются некоторые сопоставительные аспекты фонетики английского языка с другими языками, в частности, с узбекским языком. Результаты исследования служат не только углублению теоретических знаний в области фонетики и фонологии, но и развитию фонетической компетенции в процессе преподавания и изучения английского языка.

Ключевые слова: фонема, фонетика, фонология, английский язык, гласные, согласные, артикуляция, сегментные единицы, супraseгментные признаки, ударение, интонация, фонетическая классификация, звуки речи, произношение.

Phoneme is an important concept in linguistics, defined as the smallest unit of sound that distinguishes meaning. Each language has its own phonetic and phonological system, through which the main communicative functions of the language are carried out. English is also considered one of the languages with a complex phonemic system. In it, speech sounds not only determine pronunciation, but also directly affect the meaning, stress and tone of the sentence. Therefore, the study of phonemes is of great importance in understanding not only theoretical, but also practical aspects of the English language.

This article analyzes the phonemes in the English language and their classification on a theoretical basis. First of all, the concept of a phoneme, its emergence and the approaches developed in linguistics are considered. Then, the sounds in the English language are classified as vowel and consonant phonemes, and their articulatory (in the process of pronunciation) and acoustic (in hearing) characteristics are studied in depth. The segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental (stress, intonation, rhythm) aspects of phonemes are also considered as important objects of analysis in the article. The sound system of English is also compared in some respects with other languages, in particular Uzbek. This allows Uzbek speakers to identify and find solutions to phonetic obstacles encountered in the process of learning English.

The phoneme system is one of the main factors in understanding the grammatical and lexical aspects of the English language. Its in-depth study serves to scientifically understand the phonetics and phonology of the English language, as well as to form phonetic competence in teaching a foreign language. With this goal in mind, the article aims to systematically illuminate the theoretical foundations of English phonemes, classify them based on various signs, and determine their significance in speech.

1. The concept of phoneme and its place in the phonological system

A phoneme is one of the important elements of the language system, and in linguistics it is considered the smallest sound unit that distinguishes meaning. It is a generalized, abstract model of specific speech sounds, and at the same time forms the internal structure and grammatical mechanisms of the language. The most important function of a phoneme is to distinguish words from each other. The words pat and bat are distinguished using the phonemes /p/ and /b/ in English, which indicates the semantic load of the phoneme.

A phoneme can be observed in real speech in various variants - in the form of allophones. For example, the phoneme /t/ occurs in different articulations in words such as top, butter, stop, but it still remains as the phoneme /t/. These differences are noticeable phonetically, but the meaning does not change. The science of phonology studies the system of these phonemes, their relationship, location, and how they work in context. English phonology has a rich system in this regard, and the positional variants of phonemes, their stress-related changes, and their effects on neighboring sounds (assimilation, elision, linking) have been widely studied.

2. General classification of phonemes in English

In English, 44 basic phonemes are usually distinguished, which are divided into 20 vowels and 24 consonants. Each phoneme is classified based on articulatory criteria.

2.1. Vowel phonemes

Vowel sounds are pronounced when the air flow passes through the oral cavity without any obstacles. They are determined by the position of the tongue during articulation, the degree of mouth opening, and its elongation.

By language position:

Front vowels: /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/

Back vowels: /u:/, /ʊ/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ/

Central vowels: /ə/, /ʌ/

By duration of elongation:

Short vowels: /ɪ/, /ʊ/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ə/

Long vowels: /i:/, /u:/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/

Diphthongs (combinations of two vowels): /eɪ/ (say), /aɪ/ (my), /ɔɪ/ (boy), /əʊ/ (go), /aʊ/ (now), etc. These sounds pass through two articulatory positions in one syllable.

Triphthongs are combinations of three sound elements: fire – /faɪə/, player – /pleɪə/.

2.2. Consonant Phonemes

Consonant sounds are produced by an obstruction to the airflow in the oral cavity. They are classified according to three main criteria:

1. By place of articulation:

Bilabial: /p/, /b/, /m/

Labiodental: /f/, /v/

Dental: /θ/, /ð/

Alveolar: /t/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /n/, /l/

Post-alveolar: /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /r/

Velar: /k/, /g/, /ŋ/

Glottal: /h/

2. By method of articulation:

Plosive: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/

Fricative: /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/

Nasal sounds: /m/, /n/, /ŋ/

Alveolar sounds: /l/

Approximate: /w/, /j/, /r/

3. By voiced/silent:

Voiced: /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /z/, /ʒ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/, /r/, /j/, /w/

Silent: /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /h/

3. Suprasegmental elements: stress, intonation, rhythm

Suprasegmental features greatly affect the pronunciation and meaning of phonemes. English is a stressed language, and the importance of speech sounds depends not only on articulatory but also on prosodic (stress, tone) elements.

Stress - Stress is the pronunciation of a particular syllable or word in a word or sentence that is stronger, clearer, or louder than others. In English, stress plays an important role in determining pronunciation and meaning. Stress plays an important role in the accuracy of pronunciation, the meaning of a sentence, and the rhythm of speech. Speaking with the right stress makes pronunciation smoother and easier to understand.

Word stress: One syllable in a word is pronounced more strongly than the others. Example: Table, aBOut, reCORD (noun) vs reCORD (verb), import (noun) vs import (verb)

Speech stress: The main informational words in a sentence are pronounced with strong stress (usually verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs), while less important words (articles,

auxiliary verbs, conjunctions) are short or swallowed. Example: I DID see him (the stress is on the "did", which negates the negative).

Intonation is the rise and fall of the pitch of a sentence, which plays an important role in determining the emotional tone of speech, the purpose of communication, and the meaning. In English, intonation serves to express the type of sentence (for example, a question, an affirmation, a command), as well as the mood of the speaker (surprise, doubt, joy).

1. Rising intonation: The tone of the sentence rises at the end. It is more often used in "yes/no" questions.

Example: Are you ready?

2. Falling intonation: The tone of the sentence falls at the end. It is usually used in commands, affirmations, and specific information.

Example: She is a teacher. (simple fact)

3. Fall-rise intonation:

The tone falls and then rises. Often indicates doubt, insistence, or continuation.

Example: Well, I'm not sure...

4. Rise-fall intonation:

Used in short, emotional words. Expresses surprise or strong emotion.

Example: Really?!

Rhythm: English is a stress-timed language, meaning that the time between stressed syllables is equal, and unstressed syllables are shortened. This differs from the syllable-timed system typical of Uzbek.

The phonemic system of the English language is one of the most important and complex areas of linguistics, which determines the structure and pronunciation of speech through the smallest units of meaning in the language - phonemes. This article provides an

in-depth theoretical analysis of phonemes in the English language, highlighting their classification, articulatory properties and functional role. Various features of vowel and consonant phonemes - for example, pronunciation method, voiced / voiceless, place of articulation - are important in their correct study and differentiation. In addition, suprasegmental units such as stress and intonation also play an important role in speech expression and communication. A comparative analysis of the Uzbek and English phonemic systems is useful in preventing phonetic interference and is of practical importance for those learning the English language.

In conclusion, a thorough study of phonemes not only enriches phonetic knowledge, but is also one of the main factors in the formation of correct pronunciation, clear communication and speech culture. Therefore, learning English phonemes and their classification is an important step in language learning.

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