

Second Lecture:

2. Phonology

Phonology is a branch of linguistics, which deals with the ways in which speech sounds form systems, and patterns of languages. Phonology is concerned with the growth, the analysis and description of the phonemes of a language. It studies the speech sounds of one particular language with respect to their production, transmission and reception. Balasubramanian states, "The selection and organization of speech sounds in a particular language constitute the phonology of that language". It is the study of the organization of the speech sounds units into syllables and other larger units. It is used in two ways: as the mental representation of linguistic knowledge, and as the description of this knowledge. So it refers either to the representation of the sounds and patterns of sound in a speaker's mental grammar, or to the study of the sound patterns in a language or in human language generally. Phonological knowledge supports a speaker to articulate sounds which form meaningful utterances, to identify a foreign accent to build up words, to add the suitable phonetic segments to form plurals and past tenses, to produce aspirated and unaspirated voiceless stops in the suitable context, to know what is or what is not a sound in one's language, and to know that different phonetic strings may represent the same morpheme. Its aim is to explain the patterns of distinctive sound found in a language, and to make as general statements as possible about the nature of sound systems in the languages of the world. It studies the range and function of sounds in specific languages as well as the rules that can be written to show the kinds of phonetic relationships which relate and contrast words and other linguistic units. Crystal confirms that phonology, in linguistic theories is understood in two ways (a) as a level of linguistic organization, contrasted with the levels of phonetics, (b) as a component of a generative grammar (the phonological component), contrasted with different other components such as syntactic or semantic in early generative grammar. This second lecture shows that phonology seems to be more abstract. It does not deal with the physical nature of speech sounds directly (although that is completely relevant). It deals with rules of the unconscious to a large extent for sound patterning which are found in the mind/brain of a person who speaks a particular

language. It can be argued that a phonologist is a kind of grammarian, and the area of grammar that it is concerned with is the sound pattern of a language. The rules studied by phonologists come in various kinds. First, phonetic study reviews that sounds oftentimes vary with their context in complex ways; and phonologists hypothesize rules to characterize this variation. Second, the sequencing and distribution of speech sounds follows patterns also describable with rules. That means it is not arbitrary. Third, phonology is interacted with other components of the grammar, particularly morphology and syntax, and there are rules that characterize the way in which sound patterning reflects information that arises within these components. The phonologies of many languages always present a level of complexity that makes them an important intellectual challenge for the phonologist who attempts to understand them. It can take many years of careful research to explain the sound pattern of a language completely. The wonderful thing is that the same pattern is learned quite quickly by humans when they are exposed to it in childhood; at the intuitive level. There are two branches of phonology: *segmental* phonology that analyses speech into separate segments such as consonants and vowels. *Suprasegmental* phonology which analyses features that extends over more than one segment such as stress and intonation. There is another distinction made between *diachronic* phonology that studies patterns of sound change in the history of language and *synchronic* phonology which studies sound patterns regardless of the process of historical change. *Experimental* phonology purpose is to merge research in experimental phonetics, experimental psychology and phonological theory to provide a hypothesis- based investigation of phonological phenomena. The history of phonology has adopted the development of ideas that are related to the phoneme, as originally raised in Prague school and Bloomfieldian phonological theory, and the alternative views suggested later, especially in *generative* phonology and *prosodic* phonology. Both of them reject the concept of the phoneme. *Prosodic* phonology suggests the notions of phonemic unit and prosody. Various levels of representation are recognized and an independent phonemic level has been rejected in early *generative* phonology.