

# LECTURE 2

Topic: Segmental  
Phonemes

# The Plan:

- Main Trends in Phoneme Theory
- Methods of Phonological Analysis
- English Consonant Phonemes
- English Vowel Phonemes

## I. Main Trends in Phoneme Theory

*I.A. Baudouin–de–Courtenay*

the “*mentalist*” view of the phoneme

The phoneme is a psychological image of a sound; it is a complex perception of the articulatory movements connected with the resulting acoustic impressions all of which react on the mind simultaneously.

*Ferdinand de Saussure,*

*L. Hjelmslev*

(the Copenhagen Linguistic Circle)

the “*abstract*” view of the phoneme

The phoneme is independent of the phonetic properties, i.e. acoustic and psychological.

*N.S. Trubetskoj, L. Bloomfield,  
R. Jakobson*  
the “*functional*” approach

The phoneme is the minimal sound unit by which meanings of morphemes and words may be differentiated.

*Daniel Jones*  
*the physical view*

The phoneme is a “family” of sounds;  
the members of the family can occur  
in the same phonetic context as any  
other member.

**L.V. Shcherba and V.A. Vassilyev**  
***the materialistic view***

**The phoneme** is regarded as a dialectical unity of three aspects:

- 1) material, real and objective;
- 2) abstractional and generalized;
- 3) functional.

## II. Methods of Phonological Analysis

Each language has its own system of phonemes: in one language community two physically different units are regarded as the same; but in another they are referred to as different because they perform different linguistic functions.



The English [l] - [ɫ]  
(clear and dark) –  
one phoneme: the  
articulatory  
difference doesn't  
affect the meaning  
and the  
communication  
process.

In Russian the  
articulatory  
difference  
between [л] - [л']  
affects the  
meaning: “лук” –  
“люк” => two  
different  
phonemes.

The aim of phonological analysis is

- to determine which differences of sounds are phonemic, i.e. sense-distinctive, and which are non-phonemic;
- to find the inventory of the phonemes of a language;
- to systematize the sounds of a language or to group them into functionally similar classes.

The procedure of defining the phonemes:  
1) to single out the minimal segments of speech, i.e. the speech sounds, and to record them graphically – to transcribe allophonically - the comparison of [stɪk] and [stæk] > [ɪ], [æ]; of [stɪk] and [spɪk] > [st], [sp]; the comparison of them with [tɪk], [tæk,] [sɪk], [sæk] > [s], [t], [p].

BUT: further comparison followed by division is impossible => we have minimal, further indivisible units – phonemes;

2) to distribute the sounds into functionally similar groups with the help of two methods: *distributional and semantic*.

***Distribution*** - a unity of sound environment, consisting of homogeneous elements within which a given element can occur in speech, i.e. preceding and following phonemes.

## 3 types of distributional correlations:

- E.g.: even if we fully palatalize [l] in the word “let” it will be still “let” but not “pet” or “bet”;

[t] in “tone” and [t] in “stone” =>

If more or less similar sounds occur in different positions and never occur in the same phonetic context they are allophones of one and the same phoneme – ***the complementary distribution***

- E.g., initial consonants in words: “pin”, “bin”, “tin”, “kin”, “chin”, “gin”, “fin” and so on =>

If more or less different sounds occur in the same phonetic context they are allophones of different phonemes => their distribution is **contrastive**.

- E.g., in Russian plosive [ɾ] and fricative [ɣ] or “шкаф” and “шкап”, “калоши” and “галoши”.

If the sounds occur in the same phonetic contexts and don't perform the distinctive function they are considered to be **free variants** of one and the same phoneme.

***The semantic method*** is based on the fact that phonemes can perform the significative function, i.e. distinguish words and morphemes when opposed to one another.

The principle of minimal pairs – we substitute one sound for another to find out in what cases the phonetic context being unchanged, this substitution leads to the change of meaning – **the commutation test.**

# *“Triangular tables for the phonemes of English”*

by A.S.C. Ross and J. Josephs:

	<b>[i:]</b> (seen)	<b>[e]</b> (bet)	<b>[ei]</b> (day)	<b>[æ]</b> (cat)	<b>[ɛə]</b> (there)	<b>[a:]</b> (cart)
<b>[i]</b> (pit)	peat pit	pet pit	pate pit	pat pit	cared pit	cart pit
	<b>[i:]</b> (seen)	pet peat	pate peat	pat peat	pears peas	car key
		<b>[e]</b> (bet)	pate pet	pat pet	fared fed	hard head
			<b>[ei]</b> (day)	pat pate	fared fade	marred made
				<b>[æ]</b> (cat)	fared fad	marred mad