

# Phonology: Let's start with allophones

- **Phoneme:** Minimal distinctive unit in the sound system of a language, an abstract category. Distinctive = they allow speakers to distinguish between words (ex. [lʊk vs bʊk]). We use slashes with phonemes //;
- **Phone:** physical realisation of a phoneme. We use square brackets with phones [];
- **Allophone:** a phone which is one of the possible realisations of a phoneme. Phonemes distinguish words, allophones don't. If we replace an allophone with another, we don't change the meaning of a word. So, only two different phonemes can help distinguish a **minimal pair** (words which differ only for one sound, but their meaning changes). If two words are a minimal pair, their distinguishing sound is a phoneme, not an allophone.
- Characteristics of allophones:
  1. In complementary distribution, if they cannot replace one another because of the phonological context – one allophone can occur only when the other cannot: e.g. devoiced [ɹ̥] after voiceless consonants, as in [pɹ̥n] and voiced [ɹ] sound in any other position. They're allophones of the phoneme /ɹ/. Allophones in complementary distribution allow phonetician to predict their distribution, so they are useful for phonological rules;
  2. In free variation, if they can replace one another. E.g. released [p] and unreleased [p̚] can both occur in word-final contexts: it depends on the speaker's choice;
  3. The phonetic context determines which allophone of a phoneme appears in a word. E.g. released [p] can occur in any phonetic context ([pen, ə'pɪə, stɒp]), while unreleased [p̚] can occur only in word-final position [stɒp̚]. Another example is **neutralisation**: a contrast between two phonemes is neutralised. This mainly happens through **final devoicing**: final voiced phonemes become voiceless, so the difference between them and their voiced corresponding phoneme is neutralised. E.g. buck [bʌk] and bug [bʌg], sometimes both pronounced [bʌk].

# Allophones

- Voiceless plosives:

1. Aspirated [p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>] in word-initial position, before stressed vowel sounds: e.g. [p<sup>h</sup>en, t<sup>h</sup>en, k<sup>h</sup>en]
2. Released [p, t, k] between [s] and a vowel or between two vowel sounds: e.g. [skaɪ] or [ɪ'tʰɜ:nə]
3. Any allophone (aspirated, released and unreleased [p<sup>̚</sup>, t<sup>̚</sup>, k<sup>̚</sup>]) in word-final position in free variation: e.g. [that<sup>h</sup>, that, or that<sup>̚</sup>]
4. In American English /t/ and /d/ are realised as voiced alveolar flap [ɾ] (t/d flapping) between two vowels: e.g. [weɪɾə]

- /l/ has 3 allophones:

1. [ɫ] after word-initial voiceless consonants: e.g. [sɫəg]
2. [ɫ] in word-final position: e.g. [bɫ]. Dark 'L', similar to a [ʊ] sound
3. [l] clear 'L' in any other position. Dark and clear 'L' are in complementary distribution.

- /r/ has 2 allophones:

1. devoiced [ɹ] after voiceless consonants, as in [pɹɔn]
2. voiced [r] sound in any other position

NB: In non-rhotic accents, /r/ is sometimes not pronounced (Next slide)

# Rhoticity: rhotic vs. non-rhotic accents

- Distinction coined by Wells;
- Rhotic (r-pronouncing/r-full) accents: /r/ sound is pronounced whenever is ortographically present;
- Non-rhotic (non-r-pronouncing/r-less) accents: /r/ is pronounced only in two positions:

1. Syllable-initial;
2. Intervocally;

Rhotic accents	Non-rhotic accents
CanEng	AfEng
IndEng	AusEng
IrEng	EngEng
South-western EngEng	NZEng
ScotEng	SAfEng
Northern USEng (apart from New England and NYC)	Southern USEng
	WEng
	WInEng in the Caribbean