

## *Today's topics:*

- Course overview
- What is phonology?

# 0. Today's objectives

After today's class, you should be able to:

- Describe the goals, structure, and requirements of this course
  - And know where to go to find the details
- Explain the main **difference** between phonetics and phonology
- Provide evidence that there is a **mental grammar** of speech sounds

# 1. Course information (part I)

This is **LING 200, Phonology**

**Welcome!**

- I am **Jen Smith** [[my web site](#)]
  - You may call me Jen or use a title, as you prefer
  - If you use a title: please use Dr. Smith or Prof. Smith

## 2. What is phonology?

### Group discussion

- Introduce yourselves in your group!
- Try to reach a group consensus on these questions:
  - What is **phonology**?
  - How is it different from **phonetics**?

## 2. What is phonology?

### Phonetics vs. phonology

- **Phonetics** is about the **physical** aspect of speech sounds (universally, or in one particular language)

Phonetics is concerned with questions such as:

- How are speech sounds **articulated**?
- What are the **acoustic** effects?

## 2. What is phonology?

### Phonetics vs. phonology

- **Phonology** is about the **mental** or **cognitive** aspect of speech sounds — **mental grammar!**

Phonology is concerned with questions such as:

- How are speech sounds mentally **represented**?
- What mental **principles** or **patterns** govern the ways sounds are combined into larger units?

(In current research, the phonetics/phonology distinction is not absolute)

### 3. Activity: Tongue twisters

#### **Group activity**

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  - Can you find one that is hard to say even slowly?

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### 3. Activity: Tongue twisters

#### Group activity

- Think of a few tongue twisters (in any language)
  - Can you find one that is hard to say even slowly?
  - What happens if you try to say a hard one in your head, **without moving** any articulators?
    - It's still hard!
- Evidence for a **mental** aspect to language sounds
- We will return to our tongue twisters next time

## 4. A mental grammar for speech sounds

- Other evidence for the role of mental grammar in sound patterns:
  - **Foreign accents**
    - What kinds of phenomena make up a “foreign accent”? Where do they come from?

## 4. A mental grammar for speech sounds

- Other evidence for the role of mental grammar in sound patterns:
  - **Child language acquisition**
    - Do children ever **systematically replace** one sound category with another?
    - Is this something they have directly acquired from the language in their **environment**?

## 4. A mental grammar for speech sounds

- Other evidence for the role of mental grammar in sound patterns:
  - **Language disorders**
    - What components of the **linguistic system** can be affected when someone has a speech disorder?  
(Is it all about moving the **articulators**?)

## 4. A mental grammar for speech sounds

- All these different phenomena show us that:
  - Humans have a **mental grammar** which includes a **phonological component**
- Your **phonological grammar** affects how you...
  - acquire your native language
  - make speech errors
  - develop a speech disorder
  - label sounds as “similar” or “different”
  - learn to read and write
  - learn a foreign language (foreign accent!)

## 4. A mental grammar for speech sounds

- Now, consider **language typology**
  - Languages are very **diverse** in many ways
  - But, they have **core similarities** too — such as:
    - All languages distinguish vowels vs. consonants
    - All languages prefer certain syllable types
    - Some types of phonological patterns recur in language after language

## 4. A mental grammar for speech sounds

- The phonologist's ultimate goal: To develop a **model** of the mental grammar that allows us to
  - **describe**
  - **predict**
  - **explain**

these various patterns and facts

## 5. Preview of the course

- LING 101 phonology was focused on:

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- LING 101 phonology was focused on:
  - Determining allophones for phonemes
  - Writing basic phonological rules
  - (- Syllable structure, in some sections?)
- This course will examine human-language phonology in more depth

## 5. Preview of the course

- **Four research questions** that organize this course:
  - 1 How are **segments** mentally **represented**?
  - 2 How are **morpheme** sound shapes mentally **represented**?
  - 3 Is there evidence that speech sounds are mentally organized into **syllables**?
  - 4 How does the mental **grammar enforce patterns and changes** in speech sound structure?

## 5. Preview of the course

- An overarching question for research in phonology:
  - How can we build a **model** of the phonological grammar that is both **general** and **restrictive**?
    - *model*: (we will look at this next time)
    - *general*: is able to account for the range of phenomena seen across languages
    - *restrictive*: avoids predicting phenomena that are unattested in any human language

## 5. Preview of the course

- *Our first research question:*  
How are **segments** (single speech sounds; consonants and vowels) **represented** in the mental grammar?
  - Can our proposed representation make the right **predictions** about how sounds behave in the world's languages?
- To get started, we need to know what the **phonetic** (physical) characteristics of segments are
  - **Phonetics review** in the next two classes

## 6. Course information (part II)

- **Course web site:**  
<https://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/ling200.html>
  - Linked from Canvas home page
- Check the “Daily syllabus” page after every class to find out about new readings and assignments
  - Today’s entry has the “Course info and policies” handout — ***download and keep in a safe place***

*Remember to REFRESH your web browser  
to get the latest version of a web page*

## 6. Course information (part II)

### Some key course policies

- See the “Course info and policies” handout
  - Grading information
  - How to prepare for class
  - What to expect for assignments and exams

...and more