

Today's objectives:

- **Course overview**
- **What is phonology?**

0. Today's plan

- Course information
- Introduction to phonology
 - Phonology vs. phonetics
 - A mental grammar of speech sounds
 - Some goals of this course

1. Course information

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

1. Course information

- **Course web site:**

<https://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/ling200.html>

- Linked from Canvas “Pages”
- 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*

1. Course information

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

1. Course information

- Introductions
 - What name would you like us to call you?
 - Tell us something about you (hobby, background, language interests, ...)

2. What is phonology?

Group discussion

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

2. What is phonology?

Debriefing: Phonetics vs. phonology

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

Phonetics is concerned with questions like:

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

2. What is phonology?

Debriefing: Phonetics vs. phonology

- **Phonetics** is about the **physical** aspect of speech sounds (universally, or in one particular language)
- **Phonology** is about the **mental** or **cognitive** aspect of speech sounds — **mental grammar!**

Phonology is concerned with questions like:

- What speech-sound **categories** are relevant?
- How do the individual speech sounds behave when **combined?**

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

3. Activity: Tongue twisters

Group activity

- Think of a few tongue twisters (in any language)
 - Are some of them hard to say even slowly?
 - What happens if you try to say a hard one in your head, **without moving** any articulators?

3. Activity: Tongue twisters

Group activity

- Think of a few tongue twisters (in any language)
 - Are some of them 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

3. Activity: Tongue twisters

Group activity

- Each group:
 - Write down a different “hard” tongue twister on a piece of paper
 - Work together to transcribe it in IPA
 - If you aren’t sure of the right IPA symbols, use a “?” or make a guess

3. Activity: Tongue twisters

Group activity

- Each group:
 - Which parts of your tongue twister (sounds or sound combinations) make it so hard to say?

3. Activity: Tongue twisters

Group activity

- Each group:
 - Which parts of your tongue twister (sounds or sound combinations) make it so hard to say?
 - Use your knowledge of sounds and sound properties to **state a hypothesis** about what factor(s) make a tongue twister hard

3. Activity: Tongue twisters

Group activity

- Each group:
 - Use your knowledge of sounds and sound properties to **state a hypothesis** about what factor(s) make a tongue twister hard
- Class discussion:
 - How well do the different hypotheses do at accounting for each group's tongue twister?
 - Can we combine or refine hypotheses?

3. Activity: Tongue twisters

Debriefing

- What makes tongue twisters hard?

One key factor:

- **Similar sounds** (near each other, or in an alternating or quasi-alternating pattern)
→ But what makes two speech sounds “similar”?

4. A mental grammar for speech sounds

- The tongue-twister activity shows us that:
 - There is a mental aspect to speech sound patterns (tongue twisters can be “brain twisters”)
→ A role for **mental grammar**
 - We need to look at the properties of individual speech sounds to understand their patterns
→ The mental grammar is **sensitive** to not just speech sounds, but their **properties**

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 lgs distinguish vowels vs. consonants
 - All lgs 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 build a **model of the mental grammar** that allows us to understand these various patterns and facts

5. Preview of this course

- LING 101 phonology was focused on:

5. Preview of this course

- 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 this course

- This course will consider questions like:
 - How are speech sounds mentally **represented**?
 - What kinds of phonological **processes** are there?
 - What **relationships** can we identify between a phonological process and its environment?
 - If some phonological processes are **phonetically plausible**, why aren't they always mandatory?
 - How do different processes **interact**?
 - Are **rules** even the **right way** to think about phonological processes?

5. Preview of this course

- This course will consider questions like:
 - How can we build a **model** of the phonological grammar that is both **general** and **restrictive**?
 - *model*: (we will look at this next week)
 - *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 this course

- Our first goal will be to understand:
 - How are **segments** (single speech sounds; consonants and vowels) **represented** in the mental grammar?
 - Can our proposed representation help us understand how sounds **behave** in the phonologies of the world's languages?
- To start talking about this, we need to know what the phonetic (physical) characteristics of segments are, so we can work from there
 - **Phonetics review** next class