



The Phonetics-Phonology Interface and Overlap: A Brief Article Review

Asst. Lect. Ina'am Abdul-Jabbar Abdul-Kadhim

Ministry of Education- Thi-Qar Education Directorate
inaam.a@utq.edu.iq

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Abstract— The word "phonetics" is notoriously difficult to pin down since, right from the start, this subfield of linguistics has dealt with two distinct but related concepts: phonemes and speech sounds. To put it simply, phonology is the scientific study of phonemes. There are three points of contact between phonology and phonetics. To begin, phonetics is a tool for characterizing unique traits. Additionally, numerous phonological patterns can be explained by phonetics. Some have referred to these two interfaces as phonology's "substantive grounding." Lastly, phonological representation is put into practice by phonetics. This interface suggests some areas that should be investigated in both disciplines: In the overlap theory, no one's identity is lost; just as land and water are distinct, so too are phonetics and phonology. A cognitive representation of language-specific information is the "output" of the phonological module, which is the specification that interfaces with phonetics. In contrast, the exemplar theory posits that when we compare new information with instances we already know, we tend to group things into preexisting categories.



Keywords— Phonetics, phonology, interface, overlap.

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous ideas about the interface within the broad churches of phonetics and phonology since they can and have been defined in a wide variety of ways. It is preferable to attempt to determine some of the more general underlying principles that trigger specific models rather than cataloguing and contrasting these in any detail, and then sketch some broad families of interface types.

While language is the distinctive feature of human beings, phonetics comes to be the 'systematic study' of the speech sounds of this language, where sounds could be described as "mechanical pressure waves" of word pronunciation. It is "physical and directly observable" (Ogden, 2009, p.1). One of phonetics' basic paradoxes is that observing individuals to learn something about the behaviour of groups of people. This is beneficial for both our immediate surroundings and ourselves as examples of various groupings. The linguistic and phonetic study of a language, the relationship of phonetics with other disciplines of linguistics, involves determining how the sounds of

language (the phonetic part) are used to convey meaning (this is what distinguishes it from a study of the sounds human bodies can make), including how words are formed, it could be referred as the relationship between phonetics and semantics. How words are put together, how similar (but different) strings of sounds can be distinguished (such as "I scream" and "ice cream") - indicating the relationship between phonetics and phonology. How specific shades of meaning are conveyed, this is where phonetics meets pragmatics, and how the specifics of speech relate systematically to its inherently social nature (phonetics and sociolinguistics). Moreover, Phonetics is one of the basic branches of linguistics, naturally it is closely connected with the other linguistic disciplines. The connection of phonetics with grammar, lexicology and stylistics is exercised first of all via **orthography**, which in its turn, is closely connected to phonetics. Through the system of rules of reading, phonetics is connected with **grammar** and helps to pronounce correctly singular and plural forms of nouns, the past tense forms and past participles of English regular verbs.

Additionally, phonetics is closely linked to stylistics through intonation and its components: speech melody, utterance stress, rhythm, pausing, and voice tone, which serve to convey emotions and differentiate attitudes of the author and speaker. Often, the writer helps the reader interpret ideas using specific words and remarks such as: a pause, a short pause, angrily, hopefully, gently, incredulously. Phonetics also relates to stylistics through the repetition of words, phrases, and sounds; this repetition forms the basis of rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration. Special attention should be given to the relationship between phonetics and the social sciences. The functioning of phonetic units in society is examined by sociophonetics, which analyzes how pronunciation interacts with social factors. In other words, it studies how phonetic structures change in response to different social functions. Phonetics is also closely linked to several non-linguistic disciplines that explore various aspects of speech production and perception, such as physiology, anatomy, and physics (acoustics). In phonetic research, they use tools like mathematics, statistics, and computer science. There is another area closely connected with phonetics: the study of non-verbal means of communication.

Phonology, on the other hand, “examines language sounds as mental units, encapsulated symbolically... and focuses on how these units function in grammars”. From the phonological perspective, sounds are particular units that integrate with other specialized equipment and simulate sound waves. The behaviour of these sounds within a system is what phonology examines (Odden, 2013, pp. 4-11). However, there is no clear-cut separation between phonetics and phonology, just as it is, in some ways, difficult to make a principled separation between physics and chemistry, or sociology and anthropology. Although they both deal with language sound, phonetics and phonology focus on various facets of sound. Phonetics, which focuses on acoustic waveforms, formant values, and measurements of duration measured in milliseconds, of amplitude, and of frequency, deals with “actual” physical sounds as they appear in human speech. Phonetics also examines the physiological underpinnings of sound generation, such as the resonances of the vocal tract and the muscles and other articulatory structures that produce those resonances. On the other side, phonology is an *abstract cognitive system* that deals with rules in a mental grammar: ideas from unconscious “thought” that are connected to language sounds.

The lines separating the fields of phonetics and phonology, however, are not fully distinct until going deeper still into the fundamental issues of phonology. Taking these areas in advance, it has become clear that taking phonetics into account is necessary for a better understanding of many

phonological concerns, just as a phonological analysis is necessary for the phonetic study of language.

The Domain of Phonetics and Phonology

The study of sound units and how they are arranged inside morphemes, words, and expressions in languages is known as **phonology**. These units are *abstract* because phonological units might belong to the same category despite having a wide variety of phonetic details. The phonetic realization of these units is symbolic in that it is a *concrete* illustration of these more ethereal concepts. Moreover, the study of how languages differ is a central issue in phonology, as one language varies from another in their particular inventory of these categories, as well as from the certain restrictions they set on their arrangement, such as language restrictions different types of consonants in different words. The phonological unit of analysis is called **phoneme**, among other units of analysis, it is notable, abstract and observable. Phonetics, on the other hand, centralizes on the “analysis of physical and physiological dimensions of human speech” (Kennedy, 2022, p.683).

As an aspect of interface, both phonetics and phonology address the function of articulation and acoustics in language. The phonology of acoustic and articulatory patterns is still treated as a system of categories rather than a formalization of phonetic effects. Studies on typology and acquisition provide additional support for the hypothesis that phonetic influences on phonological systems exist. For instance, some phonemes are present in many languages, if not almost all of them, while others are found in considerably fewer languages, a phenomenon that is probably related to their distinctiveness and learnability. The phonetic characteristics of abstract phonemes are connected to the phonological characteristics of visible manifestations. The use of articulatory (Chomsky & Halle, 1968) and subsequently acoustic (Jakobson et al., 1952; Fant, 1960) phonetic descriptors to define and categorize phonemes is of special relevance in this context. In these concepts, [+nasal] units are subject to place assimilation, much like in Malay. Phonology was able to grow as a science independently of experimental or measurement-based phonetics thanks to the emphasis on phonemic inventory and distribution during the early stages of feature-driven inquiry.

A significant observation concerning the contrast of analysis in both domains is that the “tools of phonemic analysis and representational modelling in phonology are distinct from the instrumentation and measurement used in phonetics” (Kennedy, 2022, p.688). Phonetics, as it has been mentioned before, deals with the physical aspects of speech, while the abstracted component of symbols in phonology is

frequently conceivable as the imposition of categories on continuous phonetic dimensions, according to the analysis of boundaries in phonetic dimensions (689).

Phonetics/ phonology Interface and Overlap

In linguistics, the idea of an interface suggests a relationship between two independent theoretical fields, each of which is focused on a particular subset of linguistic events. If the domains are different, the purpose of interference is to state the necessary connections between them; otherwise, if these domains share a great deal in common, the purpose of interface is to provide theoretical competition between the two to support specific theories of modular demarcation (Scobbie, 2005, p.1).

The phonetics/phonology interface is argumentative, where the question lies in explaining the prior spectacle in the sound system from either phonetic or phonological perspective. To put this in question: what is the nature of the Phonological data? What gets into surface structure in the first place? Different theories of constraints and constraint interaction will be needed depending on the forms of allophonic variation present in the surface structure. The main revitalization of interest in the theoretical importance of the interface to phonology has come from the relatively small number of researchers who are interested in understanding quantitative data, even though phonological theory is completely dependent on the inclusion or exclusion of specific phenomena from the set of relevant data. However, if the surface representation that phonological theory seeks to produce is random and faultless, then the implications for phonology go well beyond the purely technical question of whether or not a low-level phenomenon is given an analysis. The crucial point here is how many phonetics\ phonology interfaces are there? - According to Kingston (2007, p.401):

Phonetics interfaces with phonology in three ways. First, phonetics defines distinctive features. Second, phonetics explains many phonological patterns. These two interfaces constitute what has come to be called the 'substantive grounding' of phonology ...Finally, phonetics implements phonological representations.

The interface within definitions, "Phonetics aims to study patterns and systems in a normalized physiological/ mental setting, using evidence drawn from specific examples of learning in childhood, application in production and perception, and storage in the brain". The phonetic data is of physical aspect of real space and time. While phonology goes beyond phonetics towards abstract relations between contrastive units (Scobbie, 2005, p.5).Traditionally, distinctive features could be defined phonetically with a particular value of the phonological representation of an

utterance. Distinctive feature values are differently realized within different languages, contexts, speaking styles, and even speakers.

Explanation is the second dimension of the interface. The Phonetic explanations of phonological patterns are built from physical, physiological, and/or psychological properties of speaking and listening. For example, /g/ is missing in Dutch and Thai but not /b/ or /d/ because it is much harder to keep air flowing up through the glottis when the stop closure is velar rather than bilabial or alveolar. This dimension of interface demands a phonetic explanation of the inventory content each language has, for example, explaining vowel inventories in each language and then classifying them into patterns to be discussed.

The third dimension of interface is implementation. Phonetics implies phonological representations in two ways: when phonetics is placed with markedness. For example, when a coronal stop sound is followed by non-coronal stop sounds (t,k, d,g), the coronal articulation becomes briefer and reduced. The second one is categories and gradients. Phonology is commonly thought to deal in categories, while phonetics deals instead with gradients (Kingston, 2007, 412-433).

So, it could be suggested that almost all phonetic processes to be phonologized or grammaticized since they have a cognitive representation under an explicit control of the speaker and then turned to be the physical representation which is speech (Zsiga, 2020, p.18-19).

Assuming that both "phonology and phonetics are learnt, language-specific and cognitively represented, then the dividing line is not between linguistics and non-linguistics, but between different parts of linguistics," it is easier to understand the interface argument. It is possible to think of phonology and phonetics as distinct language modules, each equally important but addressing distinct phenomena with distinct basic ideas and procedures. The modules of linguistic theories were connected through a derivation: the phonology's output was the phonetics' input, and the syntax's output was the phonology's input. By the end of the twentieth century, this was very much the general consensus. "Where is the dividing line?" is the fundamental definitional question in a modular approach to phonetics and phonology. What distinguishes the phonetic module from the phonological module? According to Scobbie (2007), this line can be thought of as a fence or a boundary, and each fact about sound patterns must be positioned on either side based on how well its features align with the fundamental attributes of that module. Important research problems include defining the definitional aspects of phonetics and phonology and identifying the precise features of specific alternations or rules.

In summary, there is a significant interface difference between phonology and phonetics: Linguistics includes both phonetics and phonology. Phonology is qualitative and conceptual, focusing on the correspondence between sound and meaning. Phonological laws can be understood by introspection and are formal, syntactic, and algebraic. On the other hand, phonetics deals with quantifiable, physical data that cannot be accessed through introspection and is described by physics and continuous mathematics.

Approaches to the Interface

Saussure's distinction

The concept of a division of labor between two distinct fields in the study of speech sounds—disciplines that more or less resemble what is taught in university courses on phonetics and phonology at the start of the twenty-first century became ingrained in linguistic theory at the start of the twentieth century, with scholars like Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) in Switzerland and Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (born in France) and others. Saussure's distinction in the speech circuit of speech sounds stages: five stages: "two psychological, two physiological, and one physical". He insists on two distinct approaches to analyzing speech sounds: one is "linguistics proper" and focuses on how "sound image" relates to meaning; the other is completely unrelated and does not focus on how sound pictures are physically implemented in the body. Claiming that it would be "fanciful" to view language and speaking from the same perspective (Zsiga, 2020, pp. 7-9).

Saussure defends Baudouin's concepts about phonetics, which were called "anthropo-phonetics" and became known as simply "phonetics", and what he called "psycho-phonetics" became "phonology". Like Saussure, Baudouin de Courtenay wanted to shift the focus of linguistics from historical reconstruction to "pure linguistics, whose subject is language itself". He also insisted on the separation of the physical and the psychological in the study of speech sounds, which he described in terms very similar to Saussure's (though without the clever diagrams). He wrote, "two elements are inseparably linked in language: a physical and a psychological a natural science . . . anthropo-phonetics, closely related to mechanics (dynamics, kinematics) and physics (acoustics, optics), and psycho-phonetics, which is a 'humanistic' science closely related to psychology and sociology". To anthropo-phonetics he assigned the study of articulatory, auditory, and "cerebral" structures and functions, noting that these were not "truly psychological or linguistic" (Stankiewicz 1972b: 278, Cited in Zsiga, 2020, p.9). To psycho-phonetics, he assigned the study of all psychological aspects of language, including abstraction, generalization, and particularly of the phoneme (a term which he was the first to use in its modern sense),

which he defined as "the psychological equivalent of physical 'sound,' the actual and reproducible unit of linguistic thought".

Phonological Structures VS. Phonetic Substance

1- Trubetzkoy Distinction

Different scholars distinguish the concrete and specific "speech event" from the abstract and general "system of language", inseparably linked and should be considered two aspects of the same phenomenon, language. But they are different and need to be studied differently. For phonology, they use the term (abstract) while (concrete) referring to phonetics. A phonological analysis will begin with a phonetic transcription as data, and with consideration of phonetic factors as a starting point, linguists must realize that "higher levels of the phonological description, that is, the systemic study and the study of combinations, are quite independent of phonetics".

2- Spair's distinction

Linguists are increasingly familiar with the idea of the "phoneme," which is a functionally significant unit in the rigidly defined pattern or configuration of sounds unique to a language, as opposed to the "sound" or "phonetic element," which is an objectively defined entity in the articulate and perceived totality of speech. As it becomes increasingly clear that no entity in human experience can be sufficiently described as the mechanical sum or product of its physical properties, the difficulties that may still seem to exist in differentiating between the two must finally vanish. (Zsiga, 2020, pp. 12-13).

A general model of the generative interface

This broad model states that phonology and phonetics differ in two ways, which are frequently combined in any particular model. The cognitive (or social) and physicalistic instantiation of sound systems is one dimension that clearly illustrates the a priori motivation for the modularisation of phonology and phonetics. Since phonology and phonetics must describe abstract relationships (usually thought of as cognitive systems of mental representation) while the former must deal with events in the physical world, they are represented as labels for two distinct and non-overlapping domains. Discrete transduction (T) and relative concreteness (C) are two examples of this kind of interface (Scobbie, 2005, p.7). Because phonological symbols must somehow be translated into physical actions and back again, the interface can be thought of as a transducer or translator. Studying the interface entails studying how this is accomplished.

The interface from a modular perspective

There is an organization based on a limited number of categorically distinct modules within a domain-and-interface model of grammar. This architecture does not appear to be unmanageable if the number of modules is kept to a minimum. However, given the number of sub-modular (i.e., comparatively independent) theories that are specific to stress, intonation, feature theory, constraint interaction, perception, production, sociophonetics, and phonemics, the number of modules may be very large. There will be more interactions if phonology has sub-modules, and there will also be more "border disputes" with phonetics. Explaining phonologization as the distinct transfer of phonetic phenomena over the interface into phonology is the aim of modularity.

Kennedy's (2022) Characterization of Phonetics/Phonology Interface The following is a concise account of Kennedy's characterization of the phonetics-phonology interface:

- 1- Experimental Phonology: Phonetic Evidence for Phonological Constructs. Instead of relying solely on perceptually distinct allophones and proof-elicited data, the search for phonetic evidence for phonological constructs focuses on finer instrumental measurements designed to find perceptually subtle phonetic correlates of phonological differentiation. Recent laboratory-derived phonological research, organized by types of phonological phenomena to which phonetic research bears relevance:

A- Vowels

The phonology of vowels is notable for its reliance on placing abstract Categories of height, backness, rounding and length over gradient phonetic dimensions.

B- Consonants

Consonant phonology also contains several phonological dimensions in which abstract categories such as place, manner, sonority and voicing are imposed over continuous phonetic correlates. Moreover, as with vowels, consonant phonology may invoke scenarios where a segment shares some feature with an adjacent unit, or where a structure-changing process seems attributable to phonetic pressures. Each of these can be investigated with laboratory methods.

C- Laryngeal Features

The role of voicing and other laryngeal behaviours arises in many other patterns where the phonetics of phonation interacts with phonological dimensions. The process of voicing assimilation is a prime example of how phonetic data informs phonological research.

D- Syllable Structure

Beyond segmental analysis, other phonological research explores how segments are organized into the abstract grouping of syllables and metrical structure, as well as how morphological structure interacts with the realization of phonemes. Hence, it is an empirical question whether the same phonological category may present differently in different syllabic or morphological contexts.

For example, Davidson and Roon (2008) compare the durations of adjacent consonants with and without intervening morphological boundaries in Russian. Since segment duration is affected in slight ways by morphological context, we can infer that their phonetic form reflects a more abstract level of morphophonological representation. Sugahara and Turk (2009) employ a similar methodology for English. Phonetic support for phonological claims about prominence and syllable position is also widespread.

1- Tone & Prosody

The phonology of tone and intonation is another area in which to explore the interplay between abstract categories and phonetic dimensions. As a physical dimension, tone and pitch are a function of f_0 , corresponding to the rate of cyclical vibration of the vocal folds. Fundamental frequency is employed contrastively in tone languages, where the relative pitch that accompanies segmental strings serves as a phonological contrast. Despite the inherently gradient nature of f_0 within and across speakers, tone languages impose categories across the pitch spectrum, and these categories are determined relative to a speaker's baseline register and to position within a phrase or utterance.

2- Linguistic Phonetics

Somewhat distinct from phonetically based phonological theories stands another thread of research that, for lack of a better term, we can call linguistic phonetics, in opposition to experimental phonology. In the place of attributing phonological processes to formal principles that encode phonetic pressures, these approaches subsume the explanatory work of traditional phonological analysis with enriched conceptualizations of phonetic knowledge. Through this lens, the distribution of sounds within and across languages is a function just of phonetic principles, without any additional abstract phonological processes invoking or imposing categories over phonetic dimensions.

3- Best Practice for Teaching and Learning in Linguistics Pedagogy

There is a range of contexts in which the phonetics/phonology interface arises as a topic in university coursework. It is a rich enough field that it could fill a

curriculum for a graduate or advanced undergraduate research seminar. Indeed, even a single area of experimental phonology (e.g. segmental assimilation or tonal phonology) is sufficiently rich to provide a basis for coursework while providing models for advanced students to pursue similar questions. The best pedagogical practices in such a scenario include an emphasis on sound phonetic methodology combined with steps to ensure that experimentally derived phonetic effects are attributable to the phonological conditions that they are intended to test. Even in such an empirically oriented instructional context, and despite the breadth of research that so closely intertwines phonetic and phonological analysis, my own pedagogical intuition here is to remind students recurrently of the distinct purviews and goals that separate phonetics and phonology as fields of inquiry.

4- Future Directions

We have seen that, as fields of linguistics, phonology and phonetics both have long philosophical and methodological traditions and have progressed in parallel over time, with increasing attention to the mutual influence that phonological and phonetic patterns have on each other. The range of theoretical orientations for exploring their interface is itself quite wide, but regardless of where one draws the line between phonetics and phonology, any such exploration must wrestle with linking the continuous physical dimensions of phonetic science with the abstract cognitive categories and rules of inventory, combination and sequencing that typify phonological models.

The potential for expanding the scope of research that investigates the phonetics/phonology interface is certainly very broad. **First**, more data will add to our understanding of the interface itself, **and** so the myriad of questions about relationships between phonological constructs and their phonetic counterparts can continue to be extended to a wider range of examples and languages.

The overlap Hypothesis

In the transition area between phonetics and phonology, the interface blends elements of discrete modularity with non-modularity. According to overlap hypothesis, this realm encompasses both land and sea, as well as the physical and cognitive spheres. The land and the sea, as well as phonetics and phonology, are not the same; therefore, overlap in this sense does not "imply loss of identity." Significant progress has been made in both theoretical and experimental methods as a result of important works in the phonetics-phonology interface that have attempted to accomplish the goal of bridging the gap between the two disciplines. All works on the phonetics-phonology interface have relied rather heavily on theoretical assumptions provided by phonological models that have

been tested using fairly basic experimental designs and data analysis tools, even though one of the main goals of research in this area is to provide novel experimental data that can test widely held assumptions about phonological structure in languages (Romero & Riera (eds., 2015, p.xv-xviii). (Romero. & Riera (eds., 2015, p.xv-xviii).

An example to propose the nature of the interface is the idea that Language has a specific phonology, while phonetics is universal:

The "output" of the phonological module, i.e. the specification which interfaces with phonetics, is a cognitive representation of language-specific information. Once universal phonetic detail is added, the transduction interface can be the same in every language. This proposal expands phonology downwards a bit: the formal phonological mechanism necessary for contrast would be used to express all language-specific sound system generalisations from the most phonetic-like to the most morphophonemic (Scobbie, 2005, p.15).

It is simple to compare language-specific phonetic and (morpho) phonological events within the grammar when it is assumed that all language-specifics fall under the category of "phonology."

The Interface as an Object of Inquiry

The phonetics/phonology interface has hence emerged as a robust and coherent subfield of phonological inquiry. This type of interface appears to be a subject of research in both fields. Some of these recent research areas are the following (Kennedy, 2022, pp. 690-700):

- 1- Themes of design: comparisons of the phonetic properties of instances of the same abstract category under different phonological conditions in a given language, and comparisons of phonetic properties of ostensibly equivalent structures across languages. Either angle seeks concrete measurement as evidence of the configuration of abstract units, and for such questions, the full range of phonetic methodology is available to seek phonetic support for phonological claims. For example, finding an instrumental measurement intended to detect subtle phonetic correlates of phonological differentiation drawn from data.
- 2- Expanding the Scope of research

More data will add to the understanding of the interface itself, and so the myriad of questions about relationships between phonological constructs and their phonetic

counterparts can continue to be extended to a wider range of Examples and languages. A wider knowledge base is becoming more and more achievable as computer technology, data storage, and phonetic instrumentation advance in capabilities, performance, and cost. Particularly, the increasing viability of MRI and ultrasound imaging leads to the expansion of articulatory research paradigms. Similar to how Praat (Boersma, 2001) is now widely available, and thanks to the expansion of an academic community honing its use with appropriately designed analytical scripts, acoustic analysis is now a very approachable byproduct of descriptive linguistics and phonetics research.

3- . Language documentation

As a field within linguistics, language documentation is developing swiftly and as it has grown, phonetic and phonological protocols have been more heavily incorporated. Thus, phonological analysis should both drive and be directed by rigorous phonetic data collection. Additionally, language documentation practices have changed to include more speakers and community members as cooperative researchers, academicians, and authorities on their own languages. The investigation of issues surrounding the phonetics/phonology interface may be best left in the hands of community members who have been recruited and trained as scholars and have an intellectual stake in the documentation and care of the languages of their communities, because modern documentary practices involve a wider range of discourse styles and levels of linguistic analysis.

CONCLUSION

The true intricacy of the meaning of the term "phonetics" stems from the fact that, since its inception as a discipline of linguistics, it has been concerned with two different entities: phonemes and speech sounds. These two entities are related to each other in the same way as content and form are related to each other. Phonology is the branch of science that is responsible for the study of phonemes. There are three different ways in which phonetics interacts with phonology. To begin, the field of linguistics known as phonetics is concerned with the identification of distinguishing characteristics. Secondly, phonetics explains a large number of phonological patterns. Phonology is said to be "substantively grounded" by these two interfaces, as it has come to be known. Last but not least, phonetics brings phonological representation to life in the form of sound. Certain elements to be investigated in both domains are suggested by this user interface: Overlap theory, in which there is no loss of identity, states that the

land and the sea are not the same, nor are phonetics and phonology.

The output of the phonological module, that is, the specification that interfaces with phonetics, is a cognitive representation of information that is peculiar to a particular language. In contrast, the theory of exemplars argues that humans classify items by comparing new information to instances that they have previously memorized

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