Unit 01
Defining goals
what you want to achieve, and how this course can help you.

Print version of the
Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)
presentation given on
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Tuesday 08 April 2025

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1   Dedication

Dedication

Ruqaiya Hasan
(رقیہ حسن)
3.7.1931–24.6.2015

M.A.K. Halliday
(韩礼德 Hán Lǐdé)
13.4.1925–15.4.2018

2 Definitions

Two important definitions

<div align="center">

Language:

the noises we make with our faces in order to live.

(J.R. Firth)

Phonetics:

</div>

3 Agenda

The agenda for today's session:

1. To get to know the **course participants** and to begin defining the **goals** the participants hope to achieve in this course.
2. To gain a general **overview of the course**: to explore its overall structure and to discuss how the weekly classes and the oral exams will work.
3. To list some **guiding principles** for the study of phonetics.
4. To review some useful **resources** for the study of phonetics.

4 Participants and goals

Course participants and learning goals

- If you have not filled in the survey form yet, please do so a.s.a.p.
- Maybe you have already thought about what you want to achieve in this course, or maybe you are still deciding.
- Please make sure to send me a recording of yourself reading aloud the *Dialectal differences* text, so that I can assess your pronunciation. I would like to give everyone feedback at the second session.
- Course participants can now introduce themselves to the group (I will also ask questions about you).
- Don't let me forget to introduce myself to you (!), and please feel free to ask any questions, at any time – about me, about the course, or whatever.

5 Course overview

5.1 Two words of warning

Before we begin our overview of how the course will work, it is worth drawing attention to two of the many important general principles upon which this course is based—principles which may not otherwise be immediately self-evident.

1. An *inter*-organism perspective
2. A stratificational perspective

An *inter*-organism perspective (1): Saussure
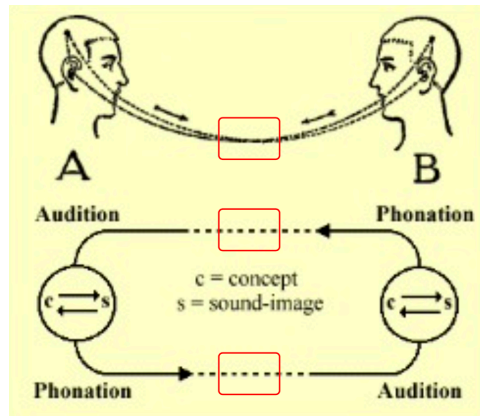
Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916). éd. Bally / Sechehaye. Payot, 1971. pp 27-28

LARGER VERSION: click **here**.

In this course, we will not be concerned with what is happening inside people's brains, but only with what is happening when a speaker produces a sound wave that travels through air.

An *inter*-organism perspective (2): Halliday
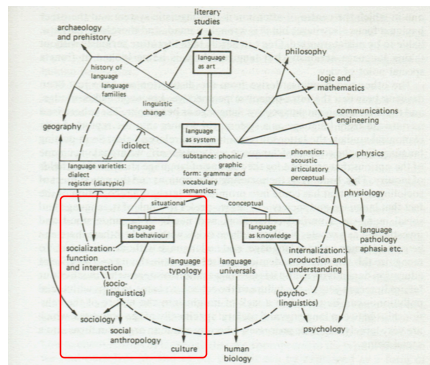
A diagrammatic representation of the nature of linguistic studies and their relation to other fields of scholarship. from: Halliday, M A K 'Language and social man (Part 1)'. in: Halliday, M A K *Language as social semiotic. The social interpretation of language and meaning.* Arnold, 1978. p 11.

LARGER VERSION: click **here**.

In this course, when we talk about the 'meaning' of utterances, we will be concentrating on the area outlined in red. This contrasts with the perspective adopted in most of your classes on linguistics.

A stratificational perspective

- · Imagine you are looking through a microscope at a prepared slide. The slide contains a slice of tissue.
- · You need to adjust the depth of focus:
  - – If you focus on a point which is too **high**, you will not see clearly what you are supposed to be seeing; things will seem blurred.
  - – The same applies if you focus on a point which is too **low**.
- · If you adjust the focus properly, you will see the cells you are meant to see, in sharp contrast against everything else.
- · The same applies to the study of sound in language:
  - – We can focus on the **higher, more abstract patterns** in which the sounds of a language [dt. *Sprachlaute*] are involved: **(phonology)**
  - – We can focus on the **result of 'projecting'** the more abstract sound patterns onto the more concrete physical reality to produce what we actually 'perceive' as sounds [dt. *Sprechlaute*] when we are speaking: **(phonetics)**.
  - – We can focus on the **lower, more concrete physical reality** of sound waves **(acoustics)**.
- · We call these different depths of focus LEVELS or, following an analogy from geology, STRATA.

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Phonology (phonemics), phonetics, physics

There are different LEVELS a.k.a. STRATA in language, as well as different MANIFESTATIONS (e.g. written and spoken). It often helps to analogize between the spoken and the written:

TIN STEP LETDOWN		lexicogrammar
⟨t⟩	/ t /	{graph | phon}emics
ꞇ ∅ ᵵ	[tʰ] [t] [t̚]	{graph | phon}etics
photons	sound waves	physical reality

Note the conventions: ⟨t⟩   / t /   [t]
see Eckert & Barry, p. 289.

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A phonological rank scale for English
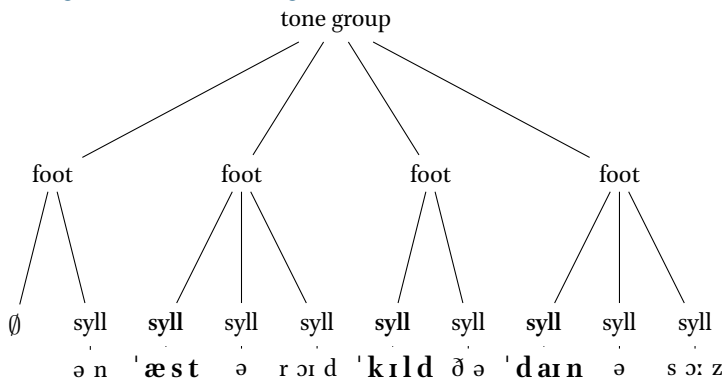
(Context: 'What happened 65 million years ago?')

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tone group $\longrightarrow$ foot $\longrightarrow$ syllable $\longrightarrow$ phoneme

This is the most minimalistic description of English phonological units that actually works.

5.2 Website

Where to find information about the course:
- The course website: http://spence.saar.de/phonetics
- ... this is a shortcut that takes you to: http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/phoneticswithlistening which includes:
    – the slides as presented each week, plus:
    – a printable version of the slides, plus:
    – links to the videos for the listening exercises, plus:
    – exercise sheets for the listening exercises, plus:
    – various other materials.
- One part of the course website is password-protected:
    – http://spence.saar.de/arcanum/phonetics
    – You have received your password by email.

5.3 Timetable

Timetable

Date	Unit	Description
Tu 08.iv	01	Defining goals
Tu 15.iv	02	Refining goals
Tu 22.iv	03	The syllable and its environments
Tu 29.iv	04	The syllable margins in the material world
Tu 06.v	05	The syllable nucleus in the material world
Tu 13.v	06	The contrastive phonology of the syllable nucleus
Tu 20.v	07	The contrastive phonology of the syllable margins
Tu 27.v	08	More practice in the phonetics of the syllable nucleus
Tu 03.vi	09	More practice in the phonetics of the syllable margins
Tu 10.vi	10	Syllable margins in contact
Tu 17.vi	11	Syllables and salience in the service of the word
Tu 24.vi	12	Salience in the service of interpersonal and textual grammar
Tu 01.vii	13	Tonality and tonicity in the service of textual meaning
Tu 08.vii	14	Primary tone in the service of grammar
Tu 15.vii	15	Secondary tone, and « envoi »
We 16.vii $\longrightarrow$		Online Oral Exams (any day, any time, till Sa 26.vii)

In week 1, students have a choice between SYNCHRONOUS REMOTE (MS Teams) mode and ASYNCHRONOUS REMOTE mode. After that, the choice is between FACE-TO-FACE and SYNCHRONOUS REMOTE (MS Teams), i.e. HYBRID. Exams will mostly be held via MS Teams.

5.4 Procedure: sessions

How each week will work
1. There will be a short homework task every week.
2. The session will begin with
    (a) a warm-up exercise and/or
    (b) a pop quiz and/or
    (c) a discussion of the homework task
3. The rest of the session will be divided into two or three parts; each will be filled with a task such as:
    (a) discussing the main points listed on the slides
    (b) doing pronunciation exercises
    (c) doing, or discusssing the results of, listening exercises
    (d) dealing with any other issues raised by the participants

5.5   Procedure: exams (1)

How the final oral exams will work (1)

1. Exams will be held online (MS Teams) between Wednesday 16 July and Saturday 26 July. Later dates (August and September) are possible, but would delay your results.
2. I will send you a list of possible times and you can choose a time that suits you.
3. I will send you confirmation of the time via MS Teams.
4. You need to fill in and send me these two forms before the exam:
   (a) the Cover Sheet (*Deckblatt*)
   https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/fakultaet-p/studienkoordination/Formulare_
   Anträge_Leitfäden_Broschüren/Deckblatt_aktl_070125.pdf
   (b) the Consent Form (*Einverständniserklärung*)
   https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/dezernat/ls/LS-MuendlichePLdigital-Einverstaendnis.
   pdf
5. It would be possible to do some of the exams in person, in room 1.22, if you prefer. In that case, you would not need to fill in the Consent Form, only the Cover Sheet.

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How the final oral exams will work (2)

The exam will consist of:

1. providing identification:
   (a) official ID (ID card (*Personalausweis*) or passport (*Reisepass*)) plus
   (b) student ID card (*Studierendenausweis*)
2. reading the consent form aloud
3. deciphering IPA transcriptions that I will present on-screen
4. reading aloud the text *Dialectal differences*
5. free conversation on any topic of your choice
6. feedback on the course plus suggestions about how to improve it next semester.
   Note:
   I will let you know what your grade will be approximately (and record this in the official record) before I ask you for feedback – so please criticise mercilessly!

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6   Principles

Some general principles to remember when studying the phonetics and phonology of English

1. Imagine you are training to be a spy, and are going to be working in England. A German accent would give you away!
2. Start with the entire body in its biological and social environment. Sleep in an English-style bed, eat an English-style breakfast, surround yourself with everything English; stand the way English people do, walk the way they do, hold your mouth the way they do. Then the sounds will come naturally.
3. Free up your sound-making. Stop being an adult with desires and purposes and intentions. Just be a child and play. Do not let your phonetics be constrained by anything related to language (such as German sound patterns, or German sentence patterns, or German ways of organizing ideas, or ...)
4. Find someone to imitate. It should be someone quintessentially English. Abandon your own desires and purposes and intentions and just imitate the other person.

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7   Resources

Some useful resources for the study of phonetics

In the following, we look at some useful resources for the study of phonetics.
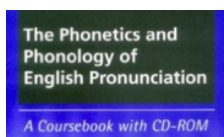
1. Books

2. Internet sources
3. Fonts
4. Character pickers
5. Keyboard layouts
6. Apps

7.1   Books

Books (1)

You might find some of these useful (active links):
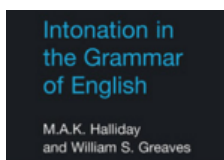
Eckert and Barry: The Phonetics and Phonology of English Pronunciation. Trier: WVT, 2005

Arnold und Hansen: Englische Phonetik. Langenscheidt, 1998

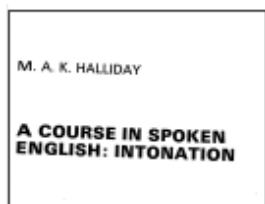Halliday and Greaves: Intonation in the Grammar of English. London: Equinox, 2008

Books (2)

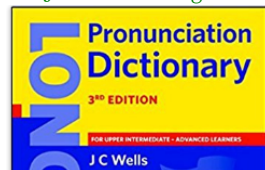These are the books I'll be using most often in this course:

Sauer: A Drillbook of English Phonetics. Heidelberg: Winter, 2013[4]

Halliday: A Course in Spoken English: Intonation. Oxford: OUP, 1970

J.C. Wells: Longman Pronunciation Dictionary. Harlow: Pearson, 2008[3]

1. If you are using an Oxford dictionary to check the pronunciation of an English word, make sure it is an Oxford **learner's** dictionary – not the "Concise Oxford Dictionary"!
2. BAD: Concise Oxford Dictionary: `http://www.oxforddictionaries.com`
3. **GOOD: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary:** `http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com` (don't forget the "ꜱ"!)
4. On a Mac, the Concise Oxford Dictionary is integrated with the operating system. DO NOT TRUST IT!!
5. Beware these...!

WRONG!	(words like:)	RIGHT!
ɛ	BET	e
a	BAT	æ
əː	NURSE	ɜː
ɛː	SQUARE	eə
ʌɪ	PRICE	aɪ

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7.2   Internet sources

Internet sources

- Wikipedia: `http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationales_Phonetisches_Alphabet` or: `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet`
- IPA website: `http://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/`
- An easy place to start: `http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPA_chart_for_English`
- "I want to hear the sounds!": `http://www.lfsag.unito.it/ipa/index.html`

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7.3   Fonts

Fonts

Make sure you have a Unicode font installed! ... e.g. ...Lucida Grande or Arial Unicode MS or Charis SIL, or Gentium, or STIXGeneral, or the Brill, or ... Check your computer's character palette to see which of the fonts on your system actually contain the phonetic symbols. The following fonts are free, and are worth having:

- Charis SIL: `http://software.sil.org/charis/`
- Gentium: `http://software.sil.org/gentium/`
- STIX: `http://www.stixfonts.org/` download here: `https://github.com/stipub/stixfonts/`
- the Brill: `https://brill.com/page/BrillFont/brill-typeface`

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7.4   Copy-and-paste

Copy-and-paste

- `http://www.ipa.webstuff.org/` click on: Vowels | Consonants | ... then "COPY & PASTE VERSION" also has links to fonts, keyboards, ... (at top)
- the character picker at: `https://r12a.github.io/pickers/ipa/` (but beware the old-fashioned naming conventions used there: "high" vowel → close vowel; "low" vowel → open vowel)
- another character picker (better terminology, but may need frequent refreshing in browser window): `http://westonruter.github.io/ipa-chart/keyboard/`
- A copy-and-paste solution will save you having to type the symbols using your own keyboard; but you will still need at least one font on your system that has all the phonetic symbols.

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7.5   Keyboard layouts

- Enter phonetic symbols via your keyboard: `https://keyman.com/keyboards/sil_ipa`

- for iPhones: `http://tinyurl.com/i-want-ipa`

- for Androids look here: `https://tinyurl.com/i-want-ipa-for-android`

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7.6   Phonetics programmes

- PRAAT: `http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/`
- This one is for geeks *g*
- Once you have PRAAT installed on your computer, you have your very own phonetics lab to play with.
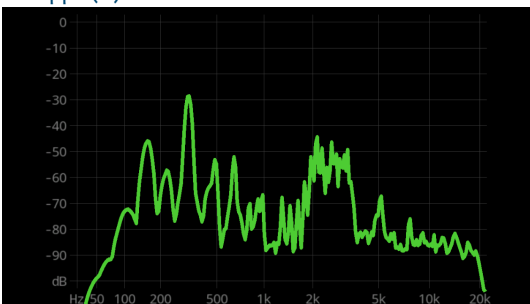

- Audacity `https://www.audacityteam.org/`
- You probably already have this.
- Audacity can do most of the things you need to know something about for an introductory course on phonetics.

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7.7   Mobile apps

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- FrequenSee – Spectrum Analyzer (free) `https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.DanielBach.FrequenSee&hl=de`
- analyzes frequency of sound in real time
- allows you to see differences [s] / [f], [i] / [a] / [u], etc.
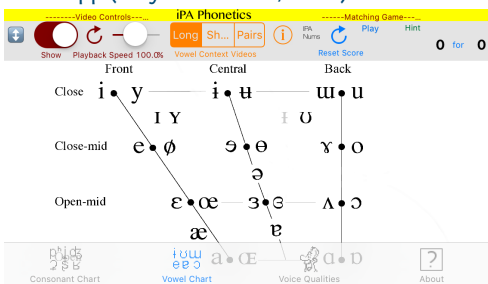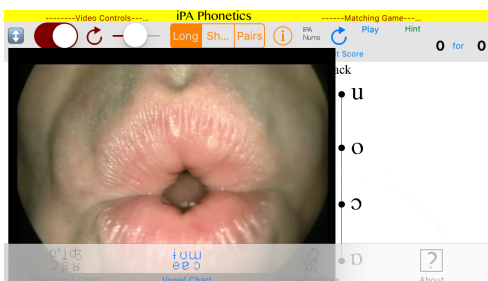- also available for iPhone (see AppStore)

Mobile apps (2)

- live BPM – Beat Detector (relatively inexpensive) `https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.DanielBach.liveBPM`
- detects rhythmic "beat" of drumming (or speaking)
- might be useful towards end of course
- also available for iPhone (see AppStore).

The killer app (only for iPhone / iPad)

- Click on the IPA symbol, hear the sound: `http://www.uvic.ca/humanities/linguistics/resources/software/ipaphonetics/index.php`

8 Homework

Homework

- If you haven't already done so, please send me your recording of yourself reading aloud the text *Dialectal differences*.
- Feel free to explore the website, including the password-protected part, and to use anything you find useful.