



THE MOST COMMON PHONOLOGICAL RULES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This present study sheds light on the most common phonological rules with examples of languages. This paper also explains the significance of phonological rules in language learning and teaching. This paper provides information to researchers, scholars, teachers, and students who are closely connected to the field of language studies.

Keywords: English language, examples, phonological rules, significance.

Introduction

Language is one of the precious gifts we use for communication among human beings. There are nearly more than 6000 languages in the world used by different types of society in different countries. Thus, speaking is the primary element of the language which means the first preference of communication by using the language is speaking. Therefore, phonology is the branch of linguistics that concerns the systematic patterns of speech sounds within a language or between different languages.

The study of phonology is very important to get a clear understanding of the language which functions with its rules and structures in a specific manner. In that respect phonology has some rules; they are assimilation, dissimilation, deletion, and insertion. Also, the phonological rules concern the function of the phonemes in the word according to the particular environment. That means the phonological rules mostly refer to the neighboring sounds due to the easiness of articulation. Furthermore, the phonological rules show the differences between the phonemic forms of words and their phonetic forms in a language or languages.

1. Assimilation

Assimilation means the pronunciation of a sound is influenced by its neighboring sounds which may be the following sound or preceding sound of the particular word. Assimilation rules are mostly occurred due to the easiness of articulation. Thus, the assimilation rules can be divided into two parts; they are regressive and progressive.

- I. Regressive -: The pronunciation of a sound may occur as similar to its following sound or it is changed by the following sound. It is known as right-to-left or anticipatory assimilation.

Eg -: gunpoint - /gʌmpɔɪnt/ /n/ → /m/

(The sound /n/ is changed by the following bilabial stop /p/ sound. It is pronounced as nasal /m/)

can be - /kæm bi:/ /n/ → /m/

pan cake - /pæŋkeɪk/ /n/ → /ŋ/

- II. Progressive -: The pronunciation of a sound in a particular word which is changed by the preceding sound. It is known as left-to-right or perseveratory assimilation.

Eg-: washed /wɒʃt/ /d/ → /t/

dogs /dɒgz/ /s/ → /z/ /g/

books /bʊks/ /s/ → /z/ /k/

plays /pleɪz/ /s/ → /z/

(That means, if the final segment of a particular word is voiced then we can get the voiced sound while adding suffix. If the final segment of the base word is voiceless then, we will get the voiceless sound while adding a suffix.)

2. Dissimilation

Dissimilation means two close sounds are made as different sounds.

For example, the Latin word arbor (tree) became arbol in Spanish which means the segment /r/ is dissimilated to the sound /l/. Also, the word from Latin – alis is formed as aris, in this situation the sound /l/ is dissimilated as /r/. As well, as the word /eptal/ → /efta/ seven (from Greek).

Usually in English, the suffix - **al** forms a noun into an adjective however if the noun ends in /l/ we cannot add the suffix – **al**. This situation shows the dissimilation clearly.

Eg:-	Noun	→	Adjective	
	music		-musical	} usual formation
	globe	-	global	
	circle	-	circular	} dissimilation occurs
	single	-	singular	

3. Insertion

We have another rule in the phonological process which is “Insertion”. Insertion means the sound is inserted into a word and it is known as epenthesis.

Eg:- /film/ → /fɪləm/

In English, the short vowel /ɪ/ is inserted when we pronounce the past tense by adding the suffix – ed.

Eg: - wanted - /wɒntd/ → /wɒntɪd/

needed - /nɪd/ → /nɪdɪd/

Similarly, we can observe the rule of insertion when the word is formed as singular in English.

Eg:- matches /mætʃɪz/

judges /dʒʌdʒɪz/

4. Deletion (Elision)

Contrastively, the phonological rule of “Deletion (Elision)” says that if the speech sound is deleted from a word called deletion. That means the segments vanish while pronouncing the word and it occurs due to the manner of fast pronunciation. Most of the native speakers of the English language remove the /t/ sound which comes as the final segment in the word, for example: - *car*, *similar*, *bear*.

Comparably, we can get the manner of deletion when we link the words in an utterance.

Eg :- must be - /mʌst bi/ → /mʌsbi/
can't be - /kɑ:nt bi/ → /kɑ:nbi/
kept going → /kepgoing/
grandpa → /grænpɑ:/
handsome → /hænsəm/

In the above examples, the sound /t/ is dropped. This means the alveolar consonants /t/ and /d/ are omitted when they are in between two consonants.

As well as another rule of deletion occurs with the liquid sounds /l/ and /r/, particularly before the liquids.

Eg:- camera → /kæm(ə)rə/
chocolate → /tʃɒk(ə)lət/
memory → /mem(ə)ri/
telephone → /tel(ə)fəʊn/

We can observe the rule of elision in the spoken utterances of native speakers, especially in English. The use of elision would make the word more comfortable and easier to pronounce the words and native speakers of English would like to minimize the duration of the time while speaking.

5. Metathesis

Metathesis means the rearranging or reordering of the sounds in a syllable of a word in a particular context. It may be occurred due to the slip of the tongue while speaking quickly. It is mostly rearranging through the consonant cluster or the transposition of vowels.

The consonant cluster is mainly occurred at the end of the words and it cannot be in the initial position of the words.

Eg:- c₁, c₂ - c₂, c₁
mask - /mʌsk/ → /mʌks/
best - /best/ → /bets/

The consonant cluster in the above examples occurs in CC sequences thus, the final part of the words or the two consonant segments is reversed from one context to another. Also, it can occur in the sequences of CVC. That means the first and last consonants are reordered as $C_1VC_2 - C_2VC_1$

Eg:- cup - /kʌp/ → /pʌk/
pack - /pæk/ → /kæp/
comfortable - /kʌmfətəbəl/ → /kʌmtəfəbəl/

Similarly, we can identify the rule of metathesis by occurring the transposition as $C_1C_2V \rightarrow C_1VC_2$. That means the consonant cluster in one situation of a word is replaced on either side of a vowel.

Eg:- blue - /blu/ → /bul/
plot - /plɒt/ → /pɒlt/

Furthermore, we have some words in English which have been changed, from old English to modern English, due to the rule of metathesis.

Eg :- *old* → *modern*
brid → bird
frist → first
thrid → third

In the above words, it occurred with the consonant /r/ due to the phonetic change by replacing two sounds in a word.

Additionally, in the Latin language – the word ‘folium’ (leaf) had been changed to ‘foillage’ then it became ‘foliage’.

The words in Spanish :- “croqueta” from “cocreta”
“dentifrice” from “dentrifico”
“criba” from “brica”

The words from French :- “arabe” from “rebeucite”
“cite” from “teci”
“français” from “cefran”

The words in Finnish :- “valhe” from “vale”
“orhi” from “ori”
“venhe” from “vene”

6. Strengthening (Fortition)

The rule of strengthening indicates that the sounds are made stronger. We can observe the aspiration rule in English as strengthening. The sounds are pronounced stronger hence, it is known as fortition.

Eg:- *from Latin to Italian*

aqua /akwa/ → acqua /akkwa/ (water)

sapiat → sappia (He knows)

maiu → Maggio (May)

7. Weakening (Lenition)

The last rule of phonology in my study is weakening (lenition) and it is also known as softening. Therefore, lenition means the speech sounds become softer and it can occur synchronically and diachronically. The rule of lenition mostly deals with the consonants. Also, it may occur due to the nature of the language or dialect.

Eg :- *Latin to Spanish*

cuppa (cup) → copa (wine glass)

gutta (drop) → gota

siccu (dry) → seco

From Latin to Italian

habebat → aveva (He had)

faba → fava (bean)

The Significance of Phonological Rules

The phonological rules, which are mentioned above, are very important in learning a language to get a clear understanding of the structure and the pattern of any language particularly in the sound system. That is we can simply identify the sound patterns of a language; also the phonological rules reveal the system of different sounds and similar sounds within a language or between the languages. At the same time, it is easy to know how the sounds go together in a word or phrase and why some sounds do not go together.

The phonological rules explain the phonetic information about the languages thus, we can be deeply concerned about the internal structure of the languages. Also, we can easily handle a language when we speak that particular language with others.

The pronunciations or utterances are the major parts of speaking a language because speaking is the prominent feature of a language when we use it. Therefore if we study the phonological rules we can get to know the tone, pitch, stress, and so on. So, we may speak like a native speaker of a particular language. Similarly, it is very easy to sing songs and recite poems when we know the rules of phonology. Also, we can identify the effects of pronunciation from one language to another.

Also, the phonological rules always help criminal investigators in Forensic linguistics which, is one of the broad areas in Linguistics, used to find out the criminals and their information especially where the

criminal is from. That means it assists in getting the details about the criminal through his/her spoken language particularly the way and the pronunciation of his/her utterances. Thus, it is useful to get to know the place (a city within a country or other country) tradition, culture, and the education level of a criminal.

On the other hand, the rules of phonology are a wonderful tool to analyze the sound variation of language or languages, especially for researchers who do language-related research. The phonological rules illustrate the variations of phonemes and allophones in the languages in different contexts according to their usage.

At the same time, we can understand the development of a language or languages from time to time. That means the language has been changed over a long term in history and the evolution of language is revealed through the phonological rules.

Moreover, the rules of phonology assist the teachers of any language to teach the language properly with its nuances which is essential to have a better idea about the language particularly. Also, it is very useful for teaching speaking a language or languages, especially pronunciation.

Additionally, the knowledge of phonological rules plays a prime role in translation studies. That means it is a part of the translation while translating or interpreting literal text, poems, or songs of old languages. Because there are differences between old and new lexical in a language thus, the translator should be aware while interpreting sometime from one context to another.

All in all, better communication needs a better knowledge of the phonological rules which help to maintain good relationships with different people from different areas or countries. It is almost helpful to mingle with the people who live in a different region.

Therefore, the phonological rules describe how the language is constructed, how it functions, and how it has been changed. That is why, they are used in several fields to make the work or process easy.

Conclusion

In summary, phonological rules are essential in language learning and teaching as they play a crucial role in the development of a learner's phonological awareness, pronunciation, and overall linguistics competence. On the other hand, the phonological rules provide a clear framework for understanding the sound structure of language, facilitating pronunciation, language acquisition, and linguistic diversity appreciation. Hence, they help a lot while teaching and learning the languages.

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