MAIN TRENDS IN PHONEME THEORY

PHYSICAL VIEW

FUNCTIONAL VIEW

PHYSICAL VIEW ➡ THE MATERIAL ASPECT OF THE PHONEME

A phoneme may be described roughly as a family of sounds consisting of an important sound of the language (generally the most frequently used member of that family) together with other related sounds which 'take its place' in particular sound-sequences or under particular conditions of length or stress or intonation.

– Daniel Jones,

"An Outline of English Phonetics"

PHYSICAL VIEW ➡ THE MATERIAL ASPECT OF THE PHONEME

A phoneme is a class of phonetically similar sounds, contrasting and mutually exclusive with all similar classes in the language.

– B. Bloch and G. Trager

Lena cleans a pool.

[lʲiːnə klʲ̥iːnz ə pʰuːɫ]

lʲ, lʲ̥, ɫ - members of the "family" of the phoneme /l/.

PHONETIC SIMILARITY:	PHONETIC CONTEXT:
ALVEOLAR	LIGHT [l] – BEFORE VOWELS
LATERAL	DARK [ɫ] – BEFORE CONSONANTS
CONSONANT	AND WORD-FINALLY

CRITISIZING

A phoneme is a mechanical sum of its allophones.

This definition is vulgarly materialistic and metaphysical.

The phoneme cannot be defined as the sum total of all its allophones, though it includes all of them.

TO SUM UP

A phoneme is a family of related speech sounds.

Supporters: D. Jones, B. Bloch, G. Trager

Based on the material aspect.

NO REGARD to functional and abstract aspects.

FUNCTIONAL VIEW

A phoneme is the minimal sound unit by which meanings may be differentiated without much regard to actually pronounced sounds. Meaning differentiation is taken to be a defining characteristic of phoneme.

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A phoneme is a bundle of distinctive features.

R. JAKOBSON AND M. HALLE

DISTINCTIVE FEATURE THEORY

❖ All features are privative (i.e. binary).

❖ There is a difference between phonetic and phonological features:

   ❖ distinctive features are phonological.

   ❖ phonetic features are surface realizations of underlying phonological features.

❖ A small set of features is able to differentiate between the phonemes of any single language.

❖ Distinctive features may be defined in terms of articulatory or acoustic features.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

In 1956, Jakobson and Halle devised 12 distinctive features.

E.g., the phoneme /m/ might be represented as a feature matrix

[+ sonorant]
[-continuant]
[+voiced]
[+nasal]
[+labial]

vocalic	non-vocalic
consonantal	non-consonantal
compact	diffuse
tense	lax
voiced	voiceless
nasal	oral
discontinuous	continuant
strident	mellow
checked	unchecked
grave	acute
flat	plain
sharp	plain

TO SUM UP

A phoneme is a bundle of distinctive features.

Supporters: L. Bloomfield, R. Jakobson, M. Halle

Based on the functional aspect.

NO REGARD to material and abstract aspects.