

University of Colombo

Faculty of Arts

Second Year Examination in Arts – Semester 2 – 2017/2018

Studies in English as a Second Language (ESL)

ESL 2217 - The Sound Patterns of the English Language

2 hours

Answer Any 05 Questions.

1. *Sounds can be analyzed as clusters of features.*

- a. Briefly comment on the validity of the above statement with examples.
(3 marks)
- b. What are nondistinctive features in phonology? Briefly explain with examples.
(3 marks)
- c. Analyze the following two groups of sounds using two feature matrices.
(4 marks)
 - i. m, n, l, r
 - ii. æ, ɒ, ʊ, ə

2. *Minimal pairs illustrate that some speech sounds in a language are contrastive and can be used to make different words.*

- a. In light of the above statement, explain how the minimal pair test can be used to separate phonemes from allophones with examples. (3 marks)
- b. Why is *phonetic similarity* considered an essential determinant in deciding two phones as allophones of a particular phoneme? Explain briefly with examples.
(3 marks)
- c. Using the data set given below comment on the distribution of [n] and [ŋ] and the phonetic environments in which they occur. (4 marks)

billionth /bɪljənθ/

clandestine /klændestɪn/

ninth /naɪnθ/

ostensible /ɒstensəbl/

tenth /tenθ/

ignoble /ɪgnəʊbl/

manner /mænə/

3. *The relationship between the phonemic representation of a word and its phonetic representation is rule-governed.*

- a. Briefly comment on the validity of the above statement with examples. (4 marks)
- b. What is meant by the term, epenthesis? Explain briefly with examples. (3 marks)
- c. Given below are a few words with their phonemic and phonetic representations. Indicate the type of phonological rules that can account for the changes in the phonetic representations when compared to their respective phonemic representations. (3 marks)

	Word	Phonemic representation	Phonetic representation	The type of phonological rule at play
Ex	bomb	/bɒm/	[bɔ̃m]	<i>assimilation</i>
(i)	cats	/kæt + pl/	[kæts]	
(ii)	raided	/reɪd + pst/	[reɪdəd]	
(iii)	kill	/kɪl/	[kʰɪl]	
(iv)	houses	/haʊs + pl/	[haʊsəz]	
(v)	gnostic	/gnɒstɪk/	[nɒstɪk]	
(vi)	fifth	/fɪfθ/	[fɪft]	

4. *All languages have constraints on the permitted sequences of phonemes, although different languages have different constraints.*

- a. In light of the above statement, provide a brief account of phonotactic constraints of English comparing them with the phonotactic constraints of another language familiar to you. (4 marks)
- b. What is the relationship between the two phenomena, phonological rules and phonotactic constraints? (4 marks).
- c. Provide illustrative examples from English for the following syllable structures. (2 marks)

	Syllable	Example
Ex	v	eye /ai/
(i)	cv	
(ii)	vc	
(iii)	cvc	
(iv)	ccvc	

5. *In English, intonation may reflect syntactic or semantic differences.*

- a. Briefly comment on the validity of the above statement with examples. (2 marks)
- b. What are *lexical gaps* in phonology? Explain briefly with examples. (2 marks)
- c. Rewrite the following phonological rules using the shorthand notation. (6 marks)
 - i. Voiceless stops /p, t, k/ are aspirated when they are syllable initial and followed by a stressed vowel.
 - ii. Voiceless stops /p, t, k/ are unaspirated if immediately preceded by an /s/.
 - iii. Stops are unexploded when they occur before another stop in words such as apt.

6. *According to Optimality Theory, some aspects of language generation are easier to understand as a system of interacting constraints than as a system of ordered rules.*

- a. In light of the above statement, explain briefly the nature of the optimality theoretic constraints and the way in which a language resolves contradictions generated by the competing constraints. (3 marks)
- b. How does the central thesis of Optimality Theory differ from the generative approach to phonology? Briefly explain. (3 marks)
- c. Using tableaux, analyze the differences between English and German with respect to syllable-final voicing. (4 marks)

i. English

1. bed /bed/
2. dog /dɒg/

ii. German

1. bett /bet/
2. Hund /hʊnt/