

# The allophones

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A phoneme is an abstract linguistic unit  
which is realized in speech in the  
material form is called allophone

allophone

Allophones of a certain phoneme are speech sounds which are realizations of one and the same phoneme and which, therefore, cannot distinguish words. Their articulatory and acoustic distinctions are conditioned by their position and their phonetic environment.

Every language has a limited number of phonemes. All the actual speech sounds are allophones.

Allophones are phonetically similar sounds that don't contrast with each other.

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Allophones of a certain phoneme have articulatory and acoustic distinctions.

Allophones of a phoneme which never occur in identical positions are said to be in complementary distribution. For example, an RP speaker pronounces a «dark» allophone of /ɪ/ before consonants in final position, whereas he usually pronounced a «clear» allophone of /ɪ/ only before vowels and /j/.

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Every allophone displays a great range of variations in connected speech. The variations are classified as  
**IDIOLECTAL**



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They embrace the individual peculiarities of articulating sounds caused by the shape of the speaker's speech and organs and by his articulatory habits.

Diaphonic: They are caused by historical tendencies in certain localities

Allophonic: They are caused by the phonetic position and phonetic environment. The number of allophones is no less than the number of phonetic positions and environment in which the phoneme occurs.

Allophones of a phoneme, which do occur in the same phonetic position, but can never distinguish words, are said to be in free variation. For example, /t/ in «Good night» may be either a plosive or a non-plosive sound. Though these sounds differ acoustically, they do not distinguish words in English. Therefore, they are allophones of the same phoneme and are in free variation.



Different allophones of the phoneme /t/

\* in TEA: plosive, aspirated, alveolar;

\* in LITTLE: laterally, exploded, alveolar;

\* in KITTEN: nasally, exploded, alveolar;

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\* in OUTCOME: unexploded, alveolar ( glottal stop);

\* in EIGHTH: unexploded, dental;

# Questions

- 1) What is an allophone?
- 2) What are idiolectal variations?
- 3) What are diaphonic and allophonic variations?