

PSEUDO-UNITS IN PHONETICS

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O. Descriptions of spoken languages have mostly been based on materials which a linguist, knowing the language, has established by "rapid" listening "directly" to speakers or "indirectly" to recordings of speakers. Details that had not been actually heard were added by the linguist. Often the linguist could use his own knowledge of a language without even listening to any speaker at all. This technique seems to be practical and allows for establishing the units usually (and rightly) considered to be basic (" α -units" such as phonemes, morphemes etc).

Details belonging to what I have called the β -level, expressing how an utterance is said, and the γ -level, characterising the speaker, (cf. my *Linguistische Einheiten*..., Berlin—Heidelberg—New York 1966, p. 8—13) generally require painstaking "indirect" listening to tape recordings where many repetitions are often necessary to establish each detail, i.e. "rapid" listening is not sufficient in this case. In addition, the listening tests that would be required for many problems have not yet been undertaken. Consequently our knowledge of these levels is in some respects incomplete.

1.0. Little interest has been given to what I would like to call pseudo-units. Sometimes parts of the "spoken chain" (the expression) are such that they seem to be "realisations" of well known α -units such as phonemes, syllables or prosodemes but in the usual description they cannot be related to any such units. The explanation of this fact is that the "rapid" listening of the normal linguist is directed exclusively towards clear, rather slow and unemotional pronunciation. This procedure provides an acceptable starting point but is not the basis for the most complete possible description.

I would now like to consider a number of pseudo-units.

1.1. *Pseudo-phones*. The segments of the spoken chain are not always in one-to-one relation to phonemes. The Portuguese word *geral* is sometimes, under emphasis, pronounced in a way that could be written *gerali*, i.e. at the end of the word there appears an "extra" segment of the type that from the viewpoint of the sound can usually be attributed to a phoneme although in the word mentioned this does not seem meaningful. When the word written *geral* is described, it is said to end in an $[l]$. We suggest that a segment such as the final $[i]$ of "gerali" be called a pseudo-phone.

Even if a segment such as the one just mentioned is not what it might superficially seem to be, i.e. a segment belonging to a phoneme, it has a function on the α -level being part of a possible realisation of a "longer" unit than a phoneme, namely a lexeme. Thus it can be treated less on the phonological than on the morphological level. At the same time it is certainly part of a β -unit. (In the example given the β -value is emphasis.) The Swedish so called supradentals, such as [s] in *mors* (mother's) are from an auditory, acoustic and articulatory standpoint comparable to phones. In the phonemic description that I prefer, however, each supradental does not correspond to a phoneme and one might be tempted to call them pseudo-phones. As, on the other hand, each supradental corresponds to *two* consecutive phonemes ([mo:s] = = /mo:rs/), it is preferable not to do so. A similar, but not altogether equal, case is constituted by a segment that occasionally (and not normally like a Swedish supradental) realises two phonemes. "In rapid 'uncareful' speech, for example, an English vowel with a following [n] may occasionally fuse to a single-segment portmanteau nasalized vowel [...]" (Pike, K. L., *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behavior*, II, 1955, p. 16). This type of segment, too, would not be considered as a pseudo-phone (but as an "unclear segment", see below, paragraph 4).

1.2. *Pseudo-syllabs and pseudo-syllab prosodes*. The Portuguese word *geral* is generally considered to possess two "syllables" (syllabemes) but in the emphatic pronunciation just mentioned it has three "syllables": *ge-ra-li*. Of these three "syllables" the first is clearly a syllab (because it can be attributed to a syllabeme). The third is clearly a pseudo-syllab not being attributable to a syllabeme. The second, too, must be considered as a pseudo-syllab being pronounced in a way that corresponds to the letters *ra* whereas the syllab corresponds to *ral*.

Pseudo-syllabs can be described in the part of the description dedicated to syllabemes and syllabs but they are above all relevant on the α -level as parts of lexes. They are at the same time parts of β -units (expressing e.g. emphasis).

Syllabs are characterised, i.e., by syllab prosodes which are attributable to syllabeme prosodemes. Pseudo-syllabs are characterised by pseudo-syllab prosodes that cannot be attributed to syllabeme prosodemes. (Cf. *Linguistische Einheiten...*, p. 37—40.)

1.3. *Pseudo-syntagms and pseudo-syntagm prosodes*. The usual syntactic analysis is based on clear, unemotional speech (which is one of the range of possibilities of the β -level). The resulting syntagms are pronounced and heard as groups of lexes. Under determined β -conditions the lexes are grouped in a way that does not correspond with the usual syntagms of the sentence. These groups of lexes can be called pseudo-syntagms. Unlike syntagms they cannot be attributed to syntagmemes (cf. *Linguistische Einheiten...*, p. 46).

Pseudo-syntagms can split up the syntagms pronounced and heard in most cases or they can join together lexes usually belonging to separate syntagms, i.e. determined syntactic means, that usually group together the lexes of a determined syntagm,

are used by the speaker to group this syntagm and one or more adjacent syntagms into a "long" pseudo-syntagm. An example of the second possibility is offered by a recording that a French speaker made for me some years ago. The three consecutive sentences *Il est trop petit. Ce n'est pas pour lui. C'est pour les grandes personnes* are usually pronounced so that the end of each sentence is clearly indicated (i.e. through falling pitch) but by the speaker mentioned the three sentences were grouped into one pseudo-sentence. This was indicated i.e. by rising pitch at the end of the first two sentences. The result is a stylistic (β -) effect: The three sentences become closely tied together. The first two sentences enumerate two closely related facts and the third closely related fact of the third sentence is added in a particularly conclusive way.

Syntagms are characterised by syntagm prosodes belonging to syntagmeme prosodemes but the pseudo-prosodes of pseudo-syntagms do not correspond to such prosodemes.

It should be noted that, although syntactic analysis does not usually concern stretches longer than a sentence, in the French example just mentioned three sentences can be said to form one pseudo-sentence.

2. It seems doubtful to what degree the notions of pseudo-lex and pseudo-lex prosode would be interesting and useful.

3. Common to the stretches of sound corresponding to the pseudo-units we have been concerned with is:

a) They are segments of speech which usual linguistic description, being based on clear, "neutral" speech (or on the thoughts the linguist has about such speech), does not take into account. In a description, where the facultative variants of α -units are included, they will, however, necessarily be considered.

b) They have different β -functions, being the expression of β -units or parts of the expression of such units. (β -units can usually be described as facultative variants within α -units.)

4. It should be added that in a complete description of speech, account must be taken not only of such segments as mentioned above, but also of segments that can be attributed neither to "traditional" units nor to pseudo-units. Examples of such "unclear segments" are, e.g., vocal murmurs of the sort that cannot be attributed to a phoneme. The lex [naəs] as a possible pronunciation for the Swedish lexeme *naturligtvis* would contain at least one such unclear segment, i.e. [ə] (cf. *Linguistische Einheiten...*, p. 44). Thus the description of the segments of a lex must take into account, among other things, (a) phones, (b) pseudo-phones and (c) nuclear segments.