

## DEFINING THE PHONEME: PHENOMENOLOGICAL ASPECTS

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The concept of the phoneme as used by the Prague School and later structuralists does have a post-Chomskyan future, provided that it is made explicit in phenomenological terms. Phenomenological definitions of the phoneme center on its 'manner of existence'. These definitions form an implicative sequence, in that the *n*th implies the *n* - 1st. Some of the more basic ones are suggested herein.

(1) Phonemes are existent in the sense of being given and being independent of any given individual's recognition of their existence.

(2) The prime attribute of the phoneme is the constancy of its identity at all given points in a communicative event.

(3) Phonemes exist in language as abstracta while allophones represent a subordinate class of their concrete realizations.

(4) Phonemes are to be considered abstract elements because they account for concrete events.

(5) The 'manner of existence' of phonemes is to be found in their linguistic relevance based on both the constancy of their identity and their relevant functioning.

(6) Since phonemes form a linkage to biological events, they are of a symbolic nature.

(7) Phonemes are existent in individual units in the communicative event, which is to say that the existence-relation of the phonemes and the corresponding speech sounds is one of mutual dependence.