Lecture 4

Manner and place of articulation

*Obstruents* The high degree of symmetry in the occurrence of the stops and the fricatives is very noticeable. (Note that labio-dental /f/ and /v/ are classified as labial.) There are four pairs of stops and four of fricatives if the affricates /tʃ/ and /d/, which consist of a close connection of a stop and a homorganic fricative (one produced at the same place or organ of speech), are counted with the stops. There has long been discussion about whether /tʃ/ and /d/ are each a single phoneme or a combination of two.

Phonologically, however, the freedom with which both may appear initially (cheese, job), medially (bachelor, major) or finally (rich, ridge) in words is a small indication of their unitary (one phoneme) status. Aside from this point note that there is a lack of balance between the stops and the fricatives, a ‘mismatch’ which is caused by the lack of the palatal fricatives /x/ and /γ/ and the presence of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/. Note that the fricative /x/ (like the ach sound of German) with its allophonic variant [ç] (the ich sound) has, as already mentioned, been retained in the regional Scots dialects, for example in night /neçt/ or loch /lox/. Furthermore, many people use it in the pronunciation of foreign words or names such as Bach or the interjection ugh /x/.

*Nasals* The nasals do not occur in lenis-fortis (voiced-voiceless) pairs, for they are sonorants and therefore are, phonologically speaking, always voiced. There are only three nasals since the post-alveolar // of Spanish (mañana), Italian (senor) or French (compagnon) is not phonemic in English; instead, the analogous sound in English is seen as a sequence of two phonemes /nj/ as in canyon /knjən/. Furthermore, the historically more recent addition to the nasals, the phoneme /ŋ/, is not fully equivalent to /m/ and /n/ since it cannot occur initially in a word, nor does it occur after all the vowels of English (in RP it follows /, , , ɒ/; in GenAm /, , , ɑ, ɔ/, e.g. sing, sang, sung, song, the latter with /ɑ/ or /ɔ/ in GenAm depending on the region).

*The lateral* The lateral /l/ consists of two noticeably different allophones, clear [l] and dark [l], which do not stand in phonemic opposition to each other. Indeed, there are accents such as those of southern Ireland or the southwest of England in which clear [l] appears exclusively, and accents from other areas, such as Scotland and some parts of the United States, in which only dark [l] occurs. RP, as previously mentioned, is characterized by the complementary distribution of the two allophones. This means that in one set of circumstances only the one may occur and in another set of circumstances only the other. Concretely, clear [l] is used before vowels (e.g. look, teller) while dark [l] appears before consonants (e.g. help) or at the end of a word (e.g. goal); this includes syllabic [l] as in bottle).

*The semi-vowels* The semi-vowels are difficult to adapt to the scheme of classification used here because they are, phonetically speaking, not consonants at all, but vowels which occur in the typical position of consonants, peripheral to the syllable (see 4.2). In many classifications /w/ and /hw/ are classified as bilabial. The rounding of the lips which is typical of /w/ and /hw/ is, however, of secondary importance and need not be present. Note that pre-vocalic /r/ is often produced with lip-rounding as well. The criterion which has been used in positioning the semi-vowels in the chart is the position of the tongue: /j/ corresponds to the high front vowel / /, because it has the same sound quality as / /. /j/ differs only inasmuch as it is extremely short (non-syllabic). Like / / it requires a tongue position close to the alveolar ridge; hence it has been classified as alveolar. /r/ corresponds to the central vowel //, which is more or less post-alveolar; and /w/ corresponds to /u/, a high back vowel, which takes a tongue position close to the velum.

*The voiceless vowel* /h/ occurs only before vowels and has a different resonance depending on what vowel follows it, hence the term ‘voiceless vowel’. Preceding /i/, as in heat, /h/ is [i]; preceding //, as in hat, it is [] etc. The small circle (‘under-ring’) indicates devoicing; it is ‘whispered’.

*The glottal stop* [ʔ] does not have the status of a phoneme.