PHONETIC ILLUSION: notes

Two types of illusion:

1. **Sounds are objectively the same, but they are perceived as different.**

   Example 1
   Linguistically naive speakers of Polish believe that the words *smog* ‘smog’ and *smok* ‘dragon’ are pronounced differently. They think that they pronounce [g] in *smog* ‘smog’, even though, spelling pronunciation aside, they actually pronounce [k] (due to Final Devoicing). In the same vein, they believe that words such as *kot* ‘cat’ and *kod* ‘code’ are pronounced differently, even though they are pronounced the same: [kɔt].

   Example 2
   Linguistically naive speakers of American English believe that the words *betting* and *bedding* are pronounced differently, though they are pronounced the same: [bɛɾɪŋ] (due to the rule called Flapping)

2. **Sounds are objectively different, but they are perceived as the same.**

   Speakers of Polish believe they pronounce the same [t] in the following words: *tama* ‘dam’, *trawa* ‘grass’ and *trzy* ‘three’. In actuality the t’s are different:

   - tama – dental [t̪]
   - trawa – alveolar [t̪] because [r] is alveolar
   - trzy – postalveolar [t͇] because [š] is postalveolar

   Similarly, speakers of English are convinced that they pronounce the same [t] in eight, eight roses, eight churches. In actuality the t’s are different:

   - eight – dental [t̪]
   - eight roses – postalveolar [t̪] because [r] is postalveolar
   - eight churches – palatoalveolar [t̪] because [ʃ] is palatoalveolar

CONCLUSION: the existence of phonetic illusion argues for the fact that the actual physical representation of sounds and the mental representation (representation in the mind = what speakers believe to be correct) are different objects. Phonetics studies physical representations while phonology investigates mental representations.

Mental representations of morphemes are called *underlying representations*. 