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Connecting Phonology with Semantics: A Case Study of Polyphones and Homographs in the Written Essays of Some Obafemi Awolowo University English Students

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ABSTRACT
The study considers the relationship between semantics and phonology. Hence, the need for the identification and categorization of samples of homographs (in semantics) and polyphones (in phonology), respectively. Data for the research are gathered from the written essays (academic writing) of some English students of Obafemi Awolowo University; Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The students' essays are subject to purposive sampling in order to bring out representative samples of homographs and polyphones. Driven by insight from related research on homography and polyphony as well as Halliday's Systemic Functional Theory, findings reaffirm that both semantics and phonology are interrelated because the written discourse of the English language is systemic and, thus, thrives on meaning-related approaches. Findings further reveal that there is indeed a discrepancy between homography and polyphony. The discrepancy, as discovered from the gathered samples, appears rather cumbersome and challenging, especially for learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). The study concludes by recommending that in the teaching of homography and polyphony, students as well as learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) must be painstakingly put through the similarities, differences and distinct samples of homographs and polyphones. This, in linguistic inquiry, is needful for meaningful interpretation of homography and polyphony, respectively.
Keywords*: polyphony, homography, English lexicon, written discourse, contextual word usage*

INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on linguistics and its related branches. The branches are necessary for discussion since they are cardinal to the study's different concepts. Hence, what is linguistics? Linguistics is concerned with studying language-related disciplines like grammar, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, and semiotics, among others. Linguistics, therefore, deals with spoken language. The foci of this study are phonology and semantics, considered the domains of spoken language in linguistics. Hence, there is a need to define the linguistic concepts of phonology and semantics. This becomes necessary in order to draw the distinction and/or similarities between phonology and semantics. First, what is phonology? Phonology deals with sound patterns. The study of speech sounds (phonemes) and the rules dictate the formation of the sequence in forming syllables and words (Hedge, 2021). In other words, phonology has to do with the pronunciation of words. Phonology also studies the sounds of a language and helps speakers understand and produce words. Noticeably, it is impossible to pronounce a word with no adequate knowledge of the correct articulation of such a word.

The phonology of English, therefore, has to do with the description of the sounds of English and their relationships and contrasts with each other (Pennington, 1997). It should be noted that the speech sounds employed in word pronunciation are called phonemes. According to Craiker (2022), a phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a language. Also, Atoye (et al. 2018) state that a phoneme is a bundle of abstract distinctive features or oppositions between sounds. Following the discussions on phonemes, it can be remarked that they are language-specific. Take for instance, the English language. It is noticed that the phonemes of the English language have a unique appearance and, hence, a peculiar sound pattern. In the English language, there is usually a maximum of three consonantal sounds before a vowel and a maximum of four consonantal sounds after the vowel. Consider the following word samples:

(1)Splash-/splæʃ/. The sound pattern is such that *splash* has three consonantal sounds /s/, /p/, and /l/ before the vowel /æ/.

(2) Texts-/teksts/. The sound pattern is such that *texts* has four consonantal sounds /k/, /s/, /t/ and /s/ after the vowel /e/.

In samples (1) and (2), it is evident that the teaching of phonology is incomplete without an aspect of phonetics. This is because both phonetics and phonology are concerned with the study of sounds in human language. The two also aim to understand how speech sounds are produced, perceived and represented in human language. However, phonetics is concerned with studying sounds made in human language production (Finegan, 2008). In other words, phonetics concerns the physical aspects of speech sounds. The same involves the production and articulation of speech sounds and how the human ear perceives them.

While phonetics focuses on the physical properties of speech sounds, which are their production, articulation, and acoustic characteristics, phonology, on the flip side, is concerned with the underlying structures and rules that shape the sounds of language. In other words, phonology focuses the abstract and mental representations of sounds in language (*Learn English Phonetics and Phonology*). What, then, is the relevance of phonetics and phonology to the present study? It should be noted that phonetics is useful in the fields of speech therapy, language teaching, and forensic linguistics, while phonology is useful in the fields of language acquisition, language documentation, and computational linguistics. With their concerns in different linguistic fields, phonetics is primarily concerned with the concrete physical properties of language sounds, while phonology investigates how sound and meaning are connected (O'Grady et al., 2011).

The contrast, no doubt, unveils the importance of the meaning of speech sounds in language production. This is the overlap of semantics with phonology. Second, what is semantics? Semantics deals with meanings construed from sound patterns of words or sentences. This means that words and sentences communicate with the aid of sounds or sound patterns. When this happens, different words and their corresponding sound patterns,

mean different things to different people. The instance of the pair of words, *read/read* below, can mean different things to different people depending on usage as explicated below:

(3) I am going to 'read' /ri:d at the library. (The task of going through pages of books)

(4) He has 'read' /red/ a lot of books. (A completion of task of going through pages of books)

In samples (3) and (4), there are different uses of the word *read.* Interestingly, the different sound patterns of *read* is understood by language users. Another example is the use of the pair of words, *bow/bow:*

(5) Please take a 'bow' /baʊ/ because the king is approaching the palace. (a gesture of respect by lowering the head)

(6) You need a 'bow' /bəʊ/ and an arrow to hunt these days. (an instrument for hunting)

In samples (5) and (6), the pair of /baʊ/ and /bəʊ/ of the word '*bow',* though with same spelling but different sound patterns, has been used differently. Hence, the two sentences illustrate instances of homographs. It should be noted that homographs share meaning boundary with polyphones. This is because both homographs and polyphones belong to the fields of semantics and phonology respectively. In addition, both homographs and polyphones aim to seek meanings to words, sentences and their respective sound patterns. The concepts of homography and polyphony are thus features of semantic realisation and of variation of words, sentences and phrases as well as their phonological patterns.

With phonology and semantics considered two distinct branches of linguistics, the study is interested in supra-segmental phonology, where rhythm and stress are involved, and lexical semantics, where word meanings and word relations are involved. In other words, both phonology and semantics consider word forms and their respective sound patterns important for effective meaning. Noticeably, word forms are used in sentence construction. This prompts the question, what is the place of grammar in academic writing where polyphones and homographs are involved? The connection between phonology and semantics in the context of polyphones and homographs is based on the premise that

phonology, a branch of linguistics concerned with sounds, has as one of its sound system components, polyphones; while semantics, also a branch of linguistics, has as one of its meaning system components, homographs; all existing within the purview and scope of the grammar of the human language.

This is the idea of cognitive grammar. Hence, grammar, just like phonology and semantics, is also one of the branches of linguistics. Grammar is a system of rules and principles for speaking and writing a language. The same has sub-divisions: syntax and morphology. Syntax studies the use of words, while morphology studies the internal structure of words. The way words are used in the construction of sentences and clauses is provided by the syntax of a language. This is where grammar comes in, that is, in sentence construction. A sentence construction, no doubt, is a language that includes the language's phonemes, its stress, its accent, and its intonation (its entire sound effects). In sentence construction therefore, words are employed and the same are made to comply to the rules of the grammar of a language in order to construe meaning. The present study thus sees the written essays of some English students of Obafemi Awolowo University as the grammar of the English language wherein homographs and polyphones are tested. Although polyphones are peculiar to the spoken discourse, the written essays of some English students of Obafemi Awolowo University are examined to test students' knowledge of the differences and similarities between polyphones and homographs, more so in academic writing.

Defining Polyphony and Homography for Learners of English as a Second Language (ESL)

It has been noted that phonology plays a role in word class categorization (Hellmuth & Cushing, 2020). By word class categorization, different words in English language for instance, are assigned, to different parts of speech or word order. These parts of speech or syntactic categories makes it possible to articulate or pronounce any English word appropriately and devoid of misinterpretation. For instance, the word pair, bow/bow in samples (5) and (6). The English word ‘bow,’ with the phonemic patterns/baʊ/ and /bəʊ/,

has been assigned two syntactic categories or word classes. The first 'bow' /baʊ/ is a verb while the second 'bow'/bəʊ/ is a noun. The use and occurrence of 'bow' in sentence construction makes grammar overlap with phonology to construe meaning. The present study thus sees grammar as the foundation upon which phonology (the domain of word sound patterns) are built for meaningful interpretation. Grammar therefore cannot be separated from the study of phonology and semantics where polyphones and homographs are involved respectively.

Interestingly, the English language is said to be polyphonic and this has been one of the cogs in the wheel of learners of the language. Polyphony means the use of a letter for different sounds. That is, the representation of different sounds by the same letter in a writing system. Soneye (2007) describes polyphony as the use of a single grapheme (letter) to stand for more than a phoneme (sound). But what is a grapheme? A grapheme is a written or group of letters representing the sound. In English language, the maximum number of graphemes for a phoneme is four (Atoye, 2018).

Understanding how graphemes map to phonemes in a language is of great importance for learning to read or decode words in such a language. For instance, letters 'e' and 'i' have different phonetic realisations in '*recite'* and '*recitation'* respectively. While letter 'e' is pronounced as /i/ in *'recite'* but /e/ in '*recitation',* letter 'i' is realised as a diphthong (/ai/) in *recite* but a monophthong (/i/) in *recitation.* Also, the characters 'in' as featured in *wind* can be realised as /aɪ/ in /waɪnd/ or /ɪ/ in /wɪnd/. Similarly, the characters 'ow' in *bow* can be realised as /ɑʊ/ in /ƀɑʊ/ or /əʊ/ in /ƀəʊ/.

Represented below are sentence samples that further explicate the identified characters:

(7) You will 'r**e**c**i**te' /rɪ's**a**ɪt/ your poem when it is time for 'recitation' /r**e**sɪ'teɪʃən/.

(8) She needs to '*bow*' /baʊ/ to pick the *bow* /bəʊ / and arrow.

(9) You can't '*wind' /waɪnd/* down the glass because of the '*wind*' /wɪnd/.

For the purpose of this study, different realizations of four graphemes (*u, c, a,* and i) and three digraphs (*ch, ea*, and *ow*) will be examined:

(i) <u> can be realised as: /ʊ/ put /pʊt/, bull /bʊl/
/u:/ gruel /'gru:el/, drupe /dru:p/
/f/ lieutenant /lef'tenænt/
/ʌ/ bud /bʌd/, pulse /pʌls/
/ə/ buffon /bə'fu:n/, guffaw /gə'fɔ/
/e/ bury /'berɪ/,

Letter 'u' is silent (or not realised) in 'building' /'bɪldɪŋ/, 'guess' /ges/

(ii) <c> /ʧ/ cello /'ʧələʊ/, cellini /ʧel'ɪnɪ/
/s/ **c**itric /**s**ɪtrɪk/ chau**c**er /ʧɔ:**s**ə^{r}/
/k/ **c**urry /kʌrɪ/, criti**c** /krɪtɪk/

(iii) <a> /ə/ **a**ffray /**ə**'freɪ/ palaver /p**ə**'la:və^{r}/
/œ/ **a**ffricate /'œfrikət/, cam /kœm/, mallon /'mœlən/
/eɪ/ came /keɪm/, lathom /leɪθəm/
/a:/ lather /la:ðə^{r}/, class /kla:s/
/ɔ:/ ball /bɔ:l/, mall /mɔ:l

(iv) <i> /i/ bit /bɪt/, live (verb)/liv/
/ai/ bite /bait/, live (adjective) /laiv/
/i:/ pique /piːk/, visa /vi:zə/

(v) <ch> /ʃ/ chante /ʃæntɪ/, chanel /ʃæ'nəl/
/ʧ/ channel //ʧ/, chanter /ʧɑntə^{r}/
/k/ chalde /kældɪ/, chiasmus /kɑɪ'œzməs/
/h/ chanukah /hʌnukə/

The 'ch' is silent in 'yacht' /yɒt/

(vi) <ea> /e/ cleanse /klenz/, lead (metal) /led/
/eɪ/ great /greɪt/, break /breɪk/
/i:/ clean /kli:n/, creature /'kri:ʧə/

(vii) <ow> /aʊ/ row /raʊ/, growl /graʊl/
/əʊ/ bowl /bəʊl/, snow /snəʊ/

A look at the above graphemes shows that polyphony in phonology is a relationship of words that consists of many sounds. Homography, on the flip side, is a relationship of words with the same spelling or same written forms (orthographical forms) but different meanings and pronunciations. Word samples of homographs purposively selected from the written essays of some English students of Obafemi Awolowo University include thus:

(10) *Bass: 'bass'* /bæs/ of a fish (noun) is pronounced differently from '*bass' /beɪs/* of a musical key/note (noun)

(11) *Lead: 'lead' /led/* of a metal (noun) is pronounced differently from *lead* of to preside over a group of people (verb)

(12) *Minute: 'minute' /mɪnɪt/* of a summary of a meeting proceeding (noun) is pronounced differently from '*minute' /maɪju'nju:t/)* of something small or insignificant (noun)

(13) *Desert: 'desert' /'dezət/)* of dry and arid region (noun) is pronounced differently from '*desert' /d*ɪ'zɜ:t/ of to leave or abandon (verb)

(14) *Live: 'live' /laɪv/* of a staged performance (adjective) is pronounced differently from '*live' /l*ɪv/ of live a life (verb)

(15) *Refuse: 'refuse'* /'refju:s/ of garbage (noun) is pronounced differently from '*refuse' /r*ɪ'fju:z/of to decline an offer (verb)

(16) *Object: 'object' /'ɒbʤɪkt/* of entity (noun) is pronounced differently from '*object'* /əb'ʤɪkt/ to strongly oppose (verb)

The Meaning Boundary shared by Polyphones and Homographs

Although the word pairs exemplified above are representative samples of homographs as purposively selected from the students' essays, there are diverse challenges faced by English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. One is identifying samples of homographs and polyphones in sentence construction. The sentence, *Is it fair to attend the fair?* Is from the literature. Undoubtedly, the word pair, *fair/fair,* shares the same graphemes. The same word pair is considered a sample of homonyms. Homonyms refer(s) to word pairs sharing the same word spelling but not necessarily different pronunciations. In other words, homonyms

may share the same word spelling and pronunciation but different meanings. For instance, the pair of homonyms, *kind/kind* (generous/type). While this may be problematic for ESL learners to master, it is equally challenging in the academic discourse since tutors need to be careful about certain word pairs of homonyms, which can overlap with homographs and polyphones as a result of different pronunciations/variations but similar word spellings. Instances include *fair/fair* and *tear/tear* in the literature. Following the illustrated samples, the study re-affirms that both polyphones and homographs display multiple word pronunciations. Hence, while all homographs can be polyphones, not all polyphones can be homographs (Rafique & Liaqat, 2024).

Although the present study aligns with previous works on homographs and polyphones, the study however comes up with the following assumptions that further clarify the basic differences between homographs and polyphones:

(i) **Homographs are words of same spellings but different pronunciations and different meanings**. The instance of *lead (to guide)* and *lead (a metal).*

(ii) **Polyphones are basically words of different pronunciations and different meanings but not necessarily the same spelling**. The instance of *cell* and *car* where the character or letter 'c' is realized as /s/ in cell and /k/ in the *car*.

Hence, a polyphone can be identified through the inconsistency of graphemes and pronunciation while a homograph can be identified through consistency of word spellings but multiple pronunciations. It should be noted that the assumptions given above do not rule out the fact that homographs are not polyphones. Rather, it indicates that for every pair of homographs, certain characters or letters of similar word spelling, changes in pronunciation. The instance of *lead* and lead is a word pair that matches the assumptive definition of homographs. Interestingly, the same word pair, *lead* and *lead,* as samples of homographs, overlaps with polyphones due to change in pronunciation of characters or letters 'ea' in '*lead'* /lɪd/ *(v. to guide)* and '*lead'/led/ (n. a metal)* respectively. On the contrary, the same characters or letters 'ea' in words like *sea (*of an ocean) and *lead* (of a metal) will not pass as homographs (simply because the pair differs in word spelling) but are

polyphones due to different realizations of the letters, 'ea', in different linguistic environments. The study implies that in both cases of polyphones and homographs, what is important is context, without which it will be problematic to decipher meanings of similar word spellings, especially in the written discourse.

Consider the sentence sample: *She has read /red/ what the teacher asked her to read /ri:d/.*

The sentence sample shows the same word pair, *read/read,* articulated or pronounced differently in varying linguistic environments to convey meaning. Hence, similar word pairs with different pronunciations and different variations. This illustrates the meaning of boundary shared by polyphones and homographs.

Review of Related Literature and Statement of Research Problem

Different scholars have researched polyphony and homography. Different research studies focus on the connection or differences between polyphony and homography for effective word pronunciation in different learning areas. Hence, the following:

Bar-On, A., Oron, T. & Peleg, O. (2021) distinguish between semantic and syntactic constraints in analyzing heterophonic-homographic words in Hebrew. The result shows that in the reading practices of sentences from respondents, syntax but not semantics plays a role in the reading accuracy of text. Karsten, A. (2023) discovers that style and tone are vital in determining individual's speech production. Hence, the internalized voice becomes externalized for speech production. Sarjoughian, A., von Zinnenburg, K.C. & Kennedy, S.(2024) examine polyphony from the perspective of historical art or art history by considering diverse voices, intricate interactions and archival practices. The result shows that polyphony is relevant in the academic world for knowledge creation. Rafique,F. & Liaqat, M.(2024) unveil the similarities and differences between homographs and polyphones. The result shows that all homographs are polyphones. Hellmuth S. & Cushing I. (2020) draw the distinction between grammar and phonology, whereby phonology is seen as a discipline in linguistics that plays a significant role in word class categorization.

Given the previous research works carried out by notable scholars, therefore, the present study similarly considers representative samples of homographs and/or polyphones purposively selected from the grammar (written essays) of some Obafemi Awolowo University English students. The different word samples of homographs and/or polyphones found in the essays were further subject to the process of identification and categorization. The process of identification and categorization becomes necessary in order to unravel and resolve the discrepancies between homographs and polyphones. This is the gap the present study intends to fill.

RESEARCH METHODS

Theoretical Framework and Method of Data Collection

This study employs the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics as propounded by M. A. K. Halliday. The theoretical framework of Halliday is considered valuable for the study because Halliday's theory of language sees language as a tool needed to create meaning. As a result, whether we speak or write, we tend to use linguistic frameworks specific or peculiar to the learning area. It should be noted that Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics focuses on two aspects: the systemic approach and the functional approach. Halliday's systemic approach of the theory considers crucial issues that are related to second language learning and acquisition (Amusan, 2023).

In other words, the systemic approach of the theory views how language works. Halliday's functional approach of the theory considers the functional use of language since language is described according to the function it performs. Hence, Systemic Functional Theory explores how people use language in different contexts and how language is structured as a semiotic system, bearing in mind the three metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The Systemic Functional Theory, therefore, provides the tools to analyze written and spoken texts with particular attention to the context in which

they are produced. This makes the theory similarly described as a functional-semantic approach to language (Eggins, 2004).

As already noted, the written essays of some English students of Obafemi Awolowo University are considered for discussions of homographs and polyphones. The question asked by the tutor is this: What are the different samples of homographs and polyphones in the English language, and how can they be differentiated? The table below provides answers to the question by showcasing representative samples of homographs and polyphones from the selected students' essays:

Table I: Analysis of the Distinction and Similarities between Homographs and Polyphones

Samples of homographs and Polyphones	**Differences/Similarities**	**Sentence Samples**
1. Homographs: Minute/Minute **Polyphones:***/maɪjuˈnjuːt/*and */mɪnɪt/*	They have same spellings but different word pronunciations.	A 'minute' */maɪjuˈnjuːt/* portion of the 'minute' */mɪnɪt/* was shown to us.
2. Homographs: Lead/lead **Polyphones:** /led/ and /lɪd/	They share same graphemes but different phonemes.	Hold the 'lead' /led/ of the pencil as you lead /lɪd/ her to the temple.
3. Homographs: Live/live **Polyphones:** /lɪv/ and */laɪv/*	They share same graphemes but different phonemes.	Nobody is allowed to 'live' /lɪv/ closer to a 'live' */laɪv/* wire (an electric pole).
4. Homographs: Bass/bass **Polyphones:** */beɪs/* and /baes/	They share same graphemes but different phonemes.	Tolu will play the 'bass' /beɪs/ guitar at the 'base' /beɪs/ of the Cathedral as we plan to eat 'bass' */baes/* for dinner.
5. Homographs: Refuse/refuse **Polyphones:** */rɪˈfjuːs/* and */ˈrefjuːz/*	The same graphemes but different phonemes.	Do not 'refuse' */rɪˈfjuːs/* to drop your 'refuse' */ˈrefjuːz/)* in the waste paper basket.
6. **Homographs:** Bow/bow **Polyphones:** */bau/* and */bəʊ/*	They share different word pronunciations and phonemes.	David needs to 'bow' (/bau/) before the king as he took with him, a 'bow' /bəʊ/) and an arrow for war.

7. Homographs: Wind/wind **Polyphones:**/wa*ɪnd*/and */wɪnd/*	The same graphemes but different phonemes.	Just 'wind' /wa*ɪnd/* up the glass; it will prevent the heavy 'wind' */wɪnd/)*.
8. Homographs: Rebel/rebel **Polyphones:** */'rebl/*and */rɪ'bel/*	The same graphemes but different phonemes.	It is only a 'rebel' /'rebl/ that will 'rebel' /rɪ*'bel/)*.
9. Homographs: Resume/resume **Polyphones:***/'rezjʊmeɪ/*and */ri'zju:m/*	The same graphemes but different phonemes.	I shall bring the 'resume' /'rezjʊmeɪ/ of last session to you when we 'resume' */ri'zju:m/* on Monday.
10. Homographs: Polish/polish **Polyphones:** */pɒlɪʃ/*and */pəʊlɪʃ/*	The same graphemes but different phonemes.	You will need 'Polish' (/pɒlɪ*ʃ/)* language to 'polish' /pəʊlɪ*ʃ/* your work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I presents representative samples of homographs and/or polyphones purposively selected from some English students' written essays. From the table, both homographs and polyphones overlap. This point re-affirms previous studies on homographs and polyphones. However, the study uncovers the most commonly employed samples of homographs and polyphones which are invariably documented in some students' essays:

Table I. Sample 2. *Lead/lead--Hold the 'lead' /led/ of the pencil as you 'lead' /lɪd/ her to the temple.*

Table I. Sample 6. *Bow/bow--David needs to 'bow' /bau/ before the king as he took with him, a 'bow' /bəʊ/ and an arrow for war.*

Table I. Sample 7. *Wind/wind--Just wind /waɪnd/ up the glass; it will prevent the heavy wind /wɪnd/.*

In addition, the study discovers a grammatical dimension to the use of similar word pairs. The following sample from the table further explicates:

Table I. Sample 8. *Rebel/rebel--It is only a 'rebel' /'rebl/ that will 'rebel' /rɪ'bel/.*

Thus, Table I. Sample 8, represents the spoken expression (the domain of phonology).

(8*) *It is only a rebel (noun) that will rebel (verb).*

Sample (8*), represents the written expression (the domain of grammar).

It should be noted that in Table I. Sample 8, the pair of words, *rebel/rebel*, has been used differently. Both *rebel/rebel* have been phonetically transcribed for easy pronunciation. Interestingly, sample (8*) is another dimension to Table I. Sample 8. Sample (8*) is the written counterpart of Table I. Sample 8. Hence, in written grammar, the pair of words, *rebel/rebel,* as used in sample (8*), has made it possible to categorise each word pair, *rebel/rebel,* into its respective word class.

Thus, in both cases of Table I. Sample 8, and sample (8*), similar word pairs are either phonetically articulated or categorized into their appropriate word class in order to construe the meaning of any sentence construction. In other words, be it spoken or written expression of the English language, pair of words like *rebel/rebel,* makes meaning to its users. Hence, Table I. Sample 8, does not only pass as the documented spoken expression of the English language, but also passes as a written grammar (8*).

The difference between Table I. Sample 8 and sample (8*) clearly shows the type of language decision to assign to similar word pairs: the instance of the sample (8*) where the language decision of similar word pairs is assigning each word pair into its respective syntactic category or parts of speech. The assigned word class is enclosed in the bracket; an instance of the sample (8*). The figures below further explain the identification and realization of words with similar spelling:

Figure 1: Realisation of ‘rebel’ (noun) /'rebl/

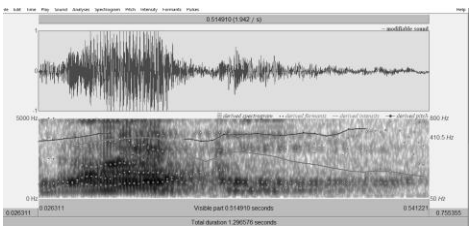
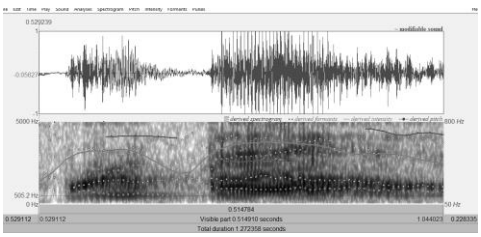


Figure 2: Realisation of ‘rebel’ (verb) /rɪ'bel/



The different realisations from Jones (2018), were subjected to Praat for their acoustic analysis. Figure 1 above is the phonemic realization of /’ rebel/, while Figure 2 shows the phonemic realization of /rɪ'bel/, the verb form of the word ‘rebel.’ The meaning implication

of sample (8*) is that the first occurring word pair, 'rebel,' is a noun (with its unique pronunciation) while the second occurring word pair, 'rebel,' is a verb (with its unique pronunciation as well). As a result, the two similar words, rebel/rebel, differ in both word class categorization and pronunciation which can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 (above). This means that when English sentences become written expressions like sample (8*) above, grammar finds a way to connect itself with phonology.

This is through the parts of speech or word order attached not only to word samples of homographs and polyphones, but covertly/overtly, every English word. By so doing, the phonetic difference of the different words that constitute a sentence becomes clearer to its users since words in the English language assume different articulation or pronunciation in different linguistic environments.

Table I and its sentence samples, therefore, provide a grammatical dimension to similar word pairs in different sentence constructions, which, in a way, better explicate the similarities and differences between homographs and polyphones. Thus, Table I provides a succinct connection that grammar, phonology, and semantics share with linguistics. Noticeably, the goal of phonetics is to provide a comprehensive description of all the sounds employed in human languages; the goal of phonology is to identify and describe the distinctive features of sounds; and the goal of grammar is to help learners understand the order of speaking and writing based on its descriptive rules (*The linguistic analysis of word and sentence structures).* Albeit there are different phonemes across different languages, both phonetics and phonology ensure the meaningfulness of all word phonemes in different human languages.

Hence, the study recognizes the role played by grammar in ensuring that polyphones and homographs are appropriately documented (written) and articulated (spoken) for effective meaning. In addition, Halliday's theory serves as the basis for discussing the meaning of linguistic forms by considering representative samples of homographs and polyphones from the grammar/ written essays of some English students of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The samples are representative because they share

similarities with samples from the literature and presumably, expected in the student's writing. It should be noted that to avoid misconstrue the simultaneous occurrences of certain graphemes for homographs, learners of English as a Second Language (ESL), must exercise caution. This is because certain semantic or linguistic concepts look alike in terms of word samples.

The instance of homonyms, homophones, homographs, and polyphones and their respective word samples (Parent, 2012). Albeit, the four can overlap at different linguistic levels; polyphones can be homonyms; polyphones can be homonyms and homographs; and homophones can be homographs (Rafique,F. & Liaqat, M.,2024), yet, there are some basic differences needful for clarification: Homonyms share similar word spelling and pronunciation but different meanings *(kind(generous)/kind(type))*; Homophones share similar pronunciation but different word spellings and meanings *(see(of sight)/sea(of ocean));* Homographs share similar word spelling but different pronunciations and meanings*(bass(of fish)/bass(of voice)*. According to the study, language and sounds are inseparable. The inseparability led to the relationship shared by language and sounds in phonology, and sounds and meaning in semantics, which, in a way, shows the connection between polyphones (in phonology) and homographs (in semantics).

The point made above thus re-affirms the fact that homography can lead to polyphony (Rafique & Liaqat, 2024). It should be noted that certain graphemes in/of similar word forms, can be pronounced in more than one way. When this happens, homography and polyphony do overlap. The instance of *lead (to guide)* and *lead (a metal)* shows the overlap. However, not all polyphones are homographs. The difference between homography and polyphony lies in the fact that the same graphemes "ea" displayed in *lead* can be realised in words like *cleanse* and *lead* with no history of homography. In other words, *cl<u>ea</u>nse* and *l<u>ea</u>d* are not homographs but polyphones despite sharing the same underlined graphemes, "ea".

The bottom line is that while a speech sound can realise different phonetic interpretations in different words though not necessarily the same word spelling (polyphones), the same speech sound can be differently pronounced using strictly the same

word spelling in another linguistic environment (homographs). Hence, different pronunciations and different variations of similar letters or graphemes. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the study of polyphones and homographs is not limited to the language of classroom instruction. The study of homography and polyphony as remarked in the literature, can also be useful in music and computing. This perhaps is possible due to the occurrence or presence of texts or characters. It should be noted that texts or characters in computing or music are also forms of language.

The only difference is that they are ''coded'' forms of language understandable by its users. Moreover, there is an interplay between phonology and semantics, which brings up diverse meaning possibilities to either similar word sounds, homonyms, and/or similar word spellings and homographs (Parent, 2012). As a result, the study avers that **polyphones** focus basically on different sound system of **similar meaningful graphemes/letters/characters** though **not necessarily the exact spelling** (*cell and car*). In contrast, **homographs** focus basically on **different sounds and meaning systems** with **necessarily the exact spelling** (*minute (of time) and minute (very small)*). This is the idea of the interconnectivity and differences shared by polyphones and homographs in phonology and semantics, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper concludes by recommending that all speakers or learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) be aware of the fact that the spellings of many English words do not always comply with their sounds. When this happens, therefore, the onus is on the language users (native and non-native speakers and learners of the English language) to not assume or generalize the pronunciations of a particular grapheme or graphemes of the same sequence. Rather, learners should strive to be conversant with their different realizations in different linguistic environments. This is where context comes in; the idea of situating the exact English word spelling in different linguistic environments. Context, therefore, informs

the language decision of similar word pairs, be it in the spoken or written discourse. The study of homographs and polyphones can also be useful in the filmmaking industry, where voice modulations and their meanings are paramount to decoding messages.

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