

The ingredients of a phonological analysis

1. an underlying representation (UR)
2. a set of phonological rules (possibly null set)
3. an ordering of these rules

Comparing alternative phonological analyses

	Analysis 1	Analysis 2	Analysis 3
UR	/lɔŋ/	/lɔŋg/	/lɔŋg/
1. Alveolar Stop Assimilation	—	—	lɔŋg
2. /g/-deletion	—	lɔŋ	lɔŋ
Surface form	[lɔŋ]	[lɔŋ]	[lɔŋ]

Evaluating alternative analyses

Criterion	Analysis 1	Analysis 2	Analysis 3
1. Descriptive adequacy	✓	✓	✓
2. Internal consistency of analysis/theory	✓	✓	✓
3. Minimal phonemic inventory	÷	÷	+
4. Simplicity: fewer rules and rule applications	+	—	÷
(5. Naturalness of rules)
6. Uniformity of URs	÷	+	+

So which analysis is the right one? It depends ... on

- a) which criteria one values higher and
- b) further evidence

For instance Toni Borowsky¹ has proposed an analysis very similar to our Analysis 3, arguing that /ŋ/ is not a phoneme of English, but that [ŋ] always derives from an underlying nasal-velar stop cluster. Probably she valued criteria 3 and 6 very highly (and higher than 4), and she also presented further evidence for this analysis from various differences between [ŋ] on the one hand and [n] and [m] on the other, indicating that [ŋ] is quite different from [n] and [m], a difference she attributes to /n/ and /m/, but not /ŋ/ being phonemes of English.

¹In her 1986 dissertation *Topics in the Lexical Phonology of English* from UMass, Amherst.

Aside on rule ordering Why is rule ordering important? What would happen if /g/-deletion applied before Alveolar Stop Assimilation?

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1. /g/-deletion			
2. Alveolar Stop Assimilation			
Surface form			

A historical perspective Juliette Blevins and Andrew Garrett² draw attention to the work of the 18th century orthoepist³ James Elphinston. In his 1765 book *Principles of the English Language* Elphinston discusses the pronunciation of nasal-velar stop combinations at the time of writing and notes that all the words and expressions in (1) pronounced with a [g] in the bolded part of the word:

- (1)
- a. angle, angling, anger, angry, finger, hunger, **linger**, longer, younger
 - b. hanger, singer, **singer**, slinger, hanging, singing, prolonging, bringing, belonging, longing, twanging, hanged, longed
 - c. sing aloud, prolong it, strong and mighty, spring eternal, long repose, young Leander

B&G (page 3): In most modern English dialects /g/ is still pronounced in the words in (1a), but not in the words or phrases in (1b) and (1c).

Current variation Some American English speakers (including at least one young male from Virginia) has the following pronunciations:

long [lɔŋ]

longer [lɔŋr]

finger [fɪŋgr]

What is going on in this dialect?

²In a paper called “Analogical morphophonology” to appear in *The nature of the word: Essays in honor of Paul Kiparsky*, edited by Kristin Hanson and Sharon Inkelas and published by MIT Press.

³OED on *orthoepist*: An expert in orthoepy; a person who studies the pronunciation of word. *ortho* from ancient Greek word meaning ‘straight’ and *epos* from Greek word meaning ‘word’ or ‘song’.