

Q: write a note on the distinction between phonetics and phonemics.

For quite a long time, the two words phonetics and phonemics existed side by side, meaning more or less the same thing. Phonetics and phonemics are the two separate ways of studying speech sounds. While phonetics deals with the study and analysis of the sounds of languages in respect of their articulation, transmission and perception, phonemics is concerned with the study and analysis of the exploitation of different ranges of speech sounds by languages and the systems of contrasting sound features found in them. In fact, the main difference between phonetics and phonemics is that of generality and particularity. John Lyons presents his view about these two ways of study in a very simple words. He says, "Phonetics differs from phonemic/phonology... in that it considers speech sounds independently of their predignations in particular language." The following points bring out the major differences between phonetics and phonemics.

### Phonetics

1) The scientific study of speech sounds is known as phonetics.

2) It studies the medium of spoken language.

### Phonemics

Phonemics is the study of vocal sounds and sound changes, phonemes and their variants.

Phonemics studies how and where the medium of spoken language is produced from. How is it received by the ears? How and why is one sound different from the other?

## Phonetics

3) Phonetics studies the production, transmission and reception of speech sounds. In this way, phonetics has a vast subject matter.

4) Phonetics studies speech sounds from three points of view i.e.;

- acoustic phonetics
- > - auditory "
- articulatory "

5) Phonetics is concerned with all languages.

6) Phonetics is general, descriptive and classificatory.

## Phonemics

The subject matter of phonemics is limited in comparison to that of phonetics. Every language makes its own selection of sounds and organizes them into characteristic patterns. This selection of sounds and their arrangement into patterns constitute the phonemics of the language.

Phonemics has no sub-branches.

Phonemics deals with one language at one time.

Phonemics is particular and functional.

<sup>thus we see that though they are different yet they are not ~~completely~~ distinctly distinguishable. There is only slight difference.</sup>  
The above mentioned points show that there is not any major difference between phonetics and phonemics. These two are related to each other in many ways. R.H. Robins says that, "phonetics and phonemics are both concerned with the same subject-matter or aspect of language, but they are concerned with them from different points of view." Actually phonemics has been called functional phonetics.