

Allophone

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Altres idiomes: [Alófono](#)

[Al·lòfon](#)

Allophones are the different realizations of a [phoneme](#) depending on the [phonetic environment](#) the phoneme occurs in. The production of any of the contextual variants of a phoneme does not convey differences in meaning, thus, they are non-contrastive. The term comes from Greek *allos* 'other' and *phōnē* 'sound, articulated sound'.

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Explanation

Phonemes have different articulated representations known as allophones. They are predictable phonetic variants that depend on the phonetic context in which the sound is inserted. For example, the phoneme /d/, in the word 'dado' *dice* is realized in two different allophones: the first one [d] is plosive and it is produced after a pause or a nasal; the second one [ʔ] is fricative and occurs in the rest of the contexts. In any case, the realization of the phoneme /d/ as plosive or fricative does not imply a difference in meaning, since allophones are nondistinctive variants of a phoneme.

Allophones are classified into two groups, complementary and free-variant allophones, on the basis of whether they appear in [complementary distribution](#) or the

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speakers have freedom to choose the allophone that they will use. Allophones are in complementary distribution when they occur in mutually exclusive environments and are distinguished by one articulatory feature only, that is the case of [d] and [ʔ] in 'dado'. Free-variant allophones, however, can replace one another, that is, they can occur in the same position, and their use depends on personal habit or preference, for this reason their number is unlimited and they are not usually taken into account for descriptive purposes.

Related concepts

[Phoneme](#)

[Sound](#)

[Combinatory variant](#)

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