4.7: Phonological Derivations

Using the notation of feature matrices, we can create “formulas” that represent the relationship between the phonemic and phonetic levels of representation in our mental grammar. These formulas are known as phonological derivations or phonological rules, and they are meant to represent the unconscious knowledge that every fluent speaker has about the predictable environments where allophonic variation occurs in their language.

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Check Yourself

1. Which phonological rule accurately represents the process, “vowels become nasalized before a nasal consonant”? 
2. Which sentence accurately describes the process depicted in this phonological rule?

- Voiceless fricatives become voiced between voiced sonorants.
- Voiceless stop consonants become voiced before or after a voiced sonorant.

3. Which sentence accurately describes the process depicted in this phonological rule?

- The segment [ə] is deleted in the environment of a strident consonant.
- The segment [ə] is epenthesized following a strident consonant.

Answers