CHAPTER THREE

THE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will be providing a phonological analysis of prepositional phrases headed by TO, OF and FOR. I have chosen to look at phrases headed by these three items for a number of reasons:

(i) there are many tokens in a small corpus.

(ii) although certain aspects of the phonological analysis will be idiosyncratic to each item, there are many patterns in their behaviour which are common to all three.

(iii) together with a two other prepositions (FROM and AT), TO, OF and FOR form a class with respect to their restricted syntactic distribution: they do not function as adverbial particles in phrasal verb structures\(^9\). This restricted syntactic distribution seems to be reflected in traditional phonological descriptions where it is only these five preposi-

tions which have weak forms\textsuperscript{40}.

3.2 Data and prior categorisation

The data under analysis consist of 126 tokens. I will be presenting the impressionistic records of around half of these tokens in this chapter.

Were I to be explicit about every step on the way to the phonological statement, I would begin by providing a list of impressionistic records, perhaps ordered chronologically, of all the tokens of the prepositional phrases in question. I would then show every step in the sorting process. However, I have decided not to commit a lot of this groundwork to paper, and will be presenting the impressionistic records and the description of the patterns I have observed in these records with a considerable amount of prior categorisation in terms of syntactic and rhythmic structure. This prior categorisation is, in part at least, relevant to accounting for the similarities and differences observable in the different tokens of the same item.

The syntactic categorisation of the data will be in terms of the following structures:

\textsuperscript{40}See e.g. Gimson (1980, 262-263).
The second categorisation is made in rhythmic terms. To represent and talk about rhythmic structure I am following Abercrombie (1965b), i.e. I am using the ab-

\[\text{X/NP} \]
\[\text{PP[to]/NP}^{41}\]
\[\text{Pl[to]/NP}\]
\[\text{P[to] NP/NP}\]

\[\text{to} \quad \text{e}\]

^{41}My corpus contained only four examples of gapped prepositional phrases and these are all headed by TO.
tion of the foot, a unit which begins with a stressed syllable and includes all subsequent syllables up to, but not including, the next stressed syllable. The first syllable of the foot is at ictus, the remaining syllables (if any) are in the remiss. I am not claiming that this variety of English is necessarily foot-timed, although for much of the informant's utterance this seems to be the case.

3.3 Observations in the impressionistic records

(22) Grammatical structure

```
   PP
    /\ 
   P1 /
   P   NP
```

Rhythmic structure

$$S / S^{42}$$

FOR

a. unusual for Bert

```
\text{\textsuperscript{\textordmasculine}} \text{\textsuperscript{n}} \text{i} \text{\textsuperscript{\textordmasculine}} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textsuperscript{\textordmasculine}} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textsuperscript{\textordmasculine}} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textsuperscript{\textordmasculine}} \text{\textordfeminine}
```

b. seen a lot for fifteen

```
\text{\textordmasculine} \text{i} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{i} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordmasculine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine}
```

c. play for ages

```
\text{\textsuperscript{\textordmasculine}} \text{\textordmasculine} \text{\textsuperscript{\textordmasculine}} \text{\textordmasculine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine}
```

d. cooking for (0.8) extra

```
k' \text{\textordmasculine} k' \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordmasculine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} (0.8) \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine}
```

OF

e. bit of cauliflower

```
\text{\textordmasculine} \text{\textordmasculine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine} \text{\textordfeminine}
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\textsuperscript{42}Slash marks foot boundary, $S =$ syllable.
f. box of stickle (bricks)  b v ' f k ' k ' s ' t t f k ' k ' y

g. cup of tea  k' ' a' p' t's e i'

h. this time of year  d' i' s' t' a' i' m' i' j' e'

i. change of heart  t' f' e' i' n' d' z' h' a: ?

j. a lot of small ones  e l' l' o' b' o' s' m' o' w' a' n' t'

k. load of vegetables  l' a' w' d' a' v' e' d' z' t i' b' v' z'

l. (0.4) couple of hours  (0.4) k' a' p' l' ü' v' a' e'

m. in case of accidents  i' n' k' e' i' s' a' v' a' e' k' s' a' d' e' n' t' s'

n. a lot of uneven  i l' o' ? a' v' a' n' i: v' a' n'?

o. three coats of (0.6) Sadolin  b j' i' k' e' y' t' s' a' (0.6) s' a': d'

p. go to work  g e' u' ? e' w' 3: f k'

q. go to bed  g e' u' ? i' b' e' d'

r. saying to Ivan  s e' y' ? e' d' a' v' a'

s. been to work  b f' n' ? e' w' 3: f k'

t. onto something else  ü k' n' ? e' s' a' n' e' v' a'

u. two to ten  t' o' w' ? i' t' 3: n'

v. different to any  d i' f' i' e' n' ? t's e' j' e' n' i'

w. back to Debenhams  b' 3: f k' t's i' d' e' b' a'
x. build up to Christmas

y. nine to ten

z. go back to (1.0) Linda's

In all these examples the prepositions are syntactically adjacent to a lexical item, and in every case the first syllable of the lexical item is at ictus, and the preposition is the final syllable in the remiss of the previous foot. In (22d, o & z) the speaker has produced a pause following the preposition.

When FOR, OF, and TO are at these places in the rhythmic and syntactic structure the following recurrent features are observed:

(i) the vocalic portion, when it is present, has lip and tongue configurations approximating those of the following syllable.

(ii) when the syllable at ictus has vocalic onset, voiced post alveolar open approximation in the case of FOR and TO, and voiced labiodental approximation in OF is present at the juncture of the two syllables.

(iii) where the syllable at ictus has voiceless or whispered onset, FOR, OF and TO can be unvoiced (lack of vocal cord vibration). This absence of voice takes two different forms:

(a) in (22b, f, w & y) the glottis is open from
the onset of the prepositional syllable and is maintained through to the onset of the syllable at ictus. The syllabic diacritic in (22b), under the first symbol for voiceless labiodental friction is used to represent the auditory impression that the speaker was making two lip-teeth gestures, which would not have been adequately symbolised had I used [f:].

(b) (22e & g) represent cases where the offset of the syllable preceding the preposition is done with closed glottis, which is then maintained through to the onset of the syllable at ictus.

(iv) when FOR, OF and TO are prepausal, as in (22d, o & z), the vocalic portion is always accompanied by voice and the tongue height is half-open and front of central, and any approximation of the tongue height observed across the pauses, as in (22d) is seen to stand in a different relationship to that observed when no pause is present.

(23) Grammatical structure

```
PP
 |\P1
 |\NP
  |\P
  |\Det N1
  |\S
  |\S / S
```

Rhythmic structure

FOR

a. (1.4) for this furniture

```
• Ø i s f r i n i t f a s
```
b. (1.4) for the end

\[ \ddot{\text{i}} \dot{\text{d}} \dot{\text{i}} \text{j} \dot{\text{e}} \dot{\text{n}} \dot{\text{d}} \]

c. maximum for the minimum

\[ \text{m} \text{a}: \text{k}' \dot{\text{i}} \ddot{\text{s}} \ddot{\text{g}} \text{m} \text{a} \text{m} \ddot{\text{i}} \ddot{\text{d}} \dot{\text{i}} \text{m} \text{n} \text{i} \text{m} \text{e} \text{n} \]

d. just for a piece

\[ \ddot{\text{d}} \ddot{\text{i}} \text{e} \text{s} \text{i} \text{p} \text{j} \text{i} \text{p}' \text{s} \text{i} \text{s} \]

OF

e. out of the state

\[ \text{e} \text{a} \text{?} \ddot{\text{i}} \ddot{\text{d}} \text{i} \text{s} \text{t} \text{e} \text{i} \text{?} \]

f. out of the ground

\[ \text{e} \text{a} \text{?} \text{e} \text{d} \text{a} \text{g} \text{j} \text{e} \text{u} \text{w} \text{a} \text{?} \text{e} \text{n} \]

g. more of an issue

\[ \text{m} \text{c} \text{j} \text{a} \text{v} \text{n} \text{i} \text{f} \text{e} \text{w} \text{u} \]

h. bit of a shock

\[ \text{b} \text{i} \text{?} \ddot{\text{v}} \ddot{\text{d}} \text{j} \text{p} \text{?} \text{k}' \]

TO

i. apertaining to the same

\[ \text{?} \text{e} \text{a} \text{?} \text{p}' \text{?} \text{e} \text{t} \text{e} \text{i} \text{n} \text{n} \text{?} \ddot{\text{i}} \ddot{\text{d}} \text{s} \text{e} \text{i} \text{m} \]

j. went to the curtains

\[ \text{w} \text{e} \text{n} \text{?} \text{t} \ddot{\text{i}} \ddot{\text{d}} \text{e} \text{k}' \text{z} \text{e} \text{?} \text{n} \text{z} \]

k. up to a pint

\[ \text{l} \text{p}' \text{t} \text{e} \text{w} \text{a} \text{p}' \text{a} \text{i} \text{n} \text{?} \]

l. pieces to a dealer

\[ \text{p}' \text{e} \text{i} \text{s} \text{e} \text{z} \text{t} \text{e} \text{w} \text{a} \text{d} \text{e} \text{i} \text{e} \text{l} \text{?} \text{a} \]

m. (1.0) to a dealer

\[ \text{t} \text{e} \text{j} \text{a} \text{d} \text{i} \text{l} \text{e} \]

Here the preposition is followed by other grammatical items (determiners) which are also contained within the same foot. The following features are observed:

(i) when the preposition precedes 'the', the vocalic portion, when present, has lip and tongue configurations approximating those of the vocalic portion of
the'.

(ii) the prepositions FOR and OF preceding the indefinite determiner have the voiced post alveolar open approximation and voiced labiodental approximation observed with lexical items having vocalic onset.

(iii) when TO is followed by 'a' the situation is different. The TO syllable can be rounded throughout, with the back of the tongue raised towards the soft palate in a stricture of open approximation during the vocalic portion. Lip rounding is maximal at the juncture of the two syllables. This applies to examples (23k & l). In (23m) no rounding is observed and the tongue height approximates that of the following syllable. At the juncture of the two syllables there is voiced post alveolar open approximation.

(24) Grammatical structure

```
PP
  /\ P1
 / \ P NP
   / Pronoun
```

(A) Rhythmic structure

$ /$ FOR

a. much for him
   \m\d\t\j\f\i\h\i\m

b. ideal for her
   \a\i\d\i\r\f\j\z\n
(c. enough there for us
   \i\n\d\i\f\\o\\v\j\j\j\j\s

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d. logical for them

OF

e. think of me

to

f. give it to me

g. said to me

h. said to you

i. come to yours

j. said to him

k. said to her

Grammatical structure

(B) Rhythmic structure

FOR

l. sorry for him

m. got room for them

of

n. out of it

o. issue of it

p. most of them

---

43Dotted line represents an undefined number of syllables ≥ 0.
TO

q. say to him  

r. said to her  

s. talking to her  

t. gave it to her  

u. slab up to it  

In the examples given in (24), the prepositional phrase is contained within two different rhythmic structures. In (24A) the pronoun is the syllable at ictus and the preposition is the last syllable in the remiss of the previous foot. The following features are observed:

(i) the vocalic portion of the pronoun, when present, has lip and tongue configurations approximating those of the syllable at ictus.

(ii) when the syllable at ictus has vocalic onset, as in (24b & c) the preposition has no vocalic portion, and voiced post alveolar approximation is present.

(iii) the onset of certain pronouns at ictus have structures of close approximation, as in (24a, d, j & k).

In (24B) the whole of the prepositional phrase is contained within the remiss of the foot. Pronominal prepositional phrases seem to be unique with regard to their placement within the rhythmic structure, in that
they are the only prepositional phrases which I have that can be contained completely within the remiss. Here the following features are observed:

(i) the FOR syllable has rounding throughout. The tongue configuration for the vocalic portion is back and mid. TO has rounding throughout, being maximal at the juncture of the two syllables, with the tongue raised in a stricture of open approximation with the soft palate. OF has rounding throughout, with an open and back tongue configuration.

(ii) the strictures of close approximation observed at the onset of the pronouns at ictus are absent (cf. (iii) above).

(25) Grammatical structure

```
X/NP
   PP[to]/NP
     PI[to]/NP
         P[to] NP/NP
            to
```

Rhythmic structure / $\dot{\ldots} \ldots \dot{\ldots} /$

a. (I don't know what he would be) entitled to

b. (but what it) boiled down to

c. (central thingummy for them all) to go to

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In these examples TO is syntactically final. The TO syllable is rounded throughout, being maximal towards the end. The vocalic portions are relatively long. The back of the tongue is in a stricture of open approximation between the soft palate and hard palate.

3.4 Phonology

3.4.1 Introduction

In this section I intend to write a phonological statement comprising a phonological formula for each of the prepositions together with a set of instructions which allow the formulae to be interpreted. That such a phonological statement will need to attain a considerable degree of abstraction can be shown if one considers for a moment just some of the different phonetics which correlate with any one of the prepositions. I will take two tokens of TO repeated here for convenience:

(22q) go to bed
\[ q \varepsilon u \mid ? \bar{i} \mid b \varepsilon d' \]

(24k) said to her
\[ s \varepsilon d' \mid t^{-}\bar{a} \mid h \varepsilon \]

In both these examples I have delimited, using dotted lines, two portions which contain a good deal of
the phonetics which I would want to attribute to TO\textsuperscript{44}. It is striking how different the delimited portions are. They have in common that they both contain vocalic portions preceded by a period of occlusion somewhere in the vocal tract. Here, however, is where the similarities end. The occlusion in (22q) is at the glottis, and in (24k) there are co-temporal velic and alveolar strictures of complete closure. At no point during these portions is the state of the glottis the same. In (22q) it is closed and then vibrating, and in (24k) it is open throughout. The vocalic portions in these two examples share an 'area' which is front of central and closer than mid, both have spread lips and are both relatively short.

I hope to have shown with this brief description of the similarities and differences one can observe in just two tokens of one preposition the complex and abstract nature of the task at hand.

3.4.2 Constructing the statement

In 3.3 I categorised the data in syntactic and rhythmic terms. This allowed me to make observations on material which had already been organised into manageable chunks. I would now like to summarise the phonetic

\textsuperscript{44}I am not claiming that the delimited portions constitute all of the relevant phonetics. I would argue that the phonetics sliced out in this manner are both more and less of the phonetics which correlate with TO.
observations as a basis for the phonological statement:

(i) when the preposition is the last item in the remiss of the foot, the vocalic portion, when present, has lip and tongue configurations approximating those of the vocalic portion of the syllable at ictus.

(ii) the phonatory quality of the prepositional syllable, when it is final in the foot, is dependent upon one or more of the following factors:
(a) the offset of the previous syllable.
(b) the onset of the prepositional syllable.
(c) the onset of the syllable at ictus.

(iii) three types of juncture are observed where the following syllable has vocalic onset:
(a) FOR always has voiced post alveolar open approximation.
(b) OF has voiced labiodental close or open approximation.
(c) TO has either voiced post alveolar open approximation or voiced labial velar open approximation.

(iv) prepositions of pronominal prepositional phrases in the remiss all have lip rounding and tongue heights which do not approximate those of the following syllable. The pronouns lack the strictures of close approximation which are present when these pronouns are at ictus.

(v) prepositions which occur prepausally, but which are syntactically bound to the noun phrase following the
pause, have vocalic portions which have half-open, central tongue configurations, not approximating those of the syllable following the pause.

I argue that the features observed at the phonetic level serve to bind together the preposition and the noun phrase into a piece. This is done in different ways depending on the position of the prepositional phrase within the rhythmic structure of the utterance. These observations must be stated at the phonological level. To illustrate this I use examples of pronominal prepositional phrases in different rhythmic structures:

(26) a. P Pronoun $ / \quad $ b. P Pronoun $ \quad $...

\text{FOR} \quad 'much for him' \quad 'sorry for him'

\text{OF} \quad 'think of me' \quad 'most of them'

\text{TO} \quad 'said to her' \quad 'said to her'

In the examples in (26a), the prepositional phrase is bound together by the harmony of the vocalic portion of the prepositional syllable with that of the syllable at actus. In (26b), the binding is done by the presence of
lip-rounding throughout the prepositional syllable, the presence of certain junctural features at the syllable boundaries, and the absence of the strictures of close approximation at the syllable onset of the pronouns, observed when they are at ictus. These relationships are stated at the phonological level in (27):

(27)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. P Pronoun} & \quad \text{b. P Pronoun} \\
& \quad \text{FOR} \\
\text{\$ / \$} & \quad \text{\$ \$ \ldots / \$} \\
\text{kfe FVC} & \quad \text{kfer FVC} \\
\text{m \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}}} & \quad \text{\$ \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}}} \\
& \quad \text{'much for him'} \\
\text{OF} & \quad \text{OF} \\
\text{k\textregistered FVC} & \quad \text{k\textregistered FVC} \\
& \quad \text{(predicted)} \\
\text{m \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}}} & \quad \text{\textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}}} \\
& \quad \text{'of them'} \\
\text{TO} & \quad \text{TO} \\
\text{kta FV} & \quad \text{kta FV} \\
\text{\$ \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}}} & \quad \text{\textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}} \textsuperscript{\text{\textregistered}}} \\
& \quad \text{'said to her'} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The units set up at the phonological level represent the following abstractions made from the phonetic observations:

\[
\text{f} - \text{voiceless labiodental friction at syllable onset.}
\]
t - stoppedness in the vocal tract at the onset of T0. The place and nature of this stoppedness will be considered later.

\( \Theta \) - syllabicity.

k/k - presence/absence of rounding and backness throughout the syllable.

w - voiced labial velar open approximation.

r - tongue tip in a stricture of open approximation at the post alveolar place, together with voice.

v - voiced labiodental approximation.

F/F - presence/absence of stricture of close approximation at the teeth or glottis at syllable onset.

V, C - informal categories, not further specified beyond vowel and consonant.

Making abstractions in this way allows me to show clearly the ways in which pronominal prepositional phrases are held together at the phonological level. The relationship in (27a) is stated as k/F, and in (27b) as k/F. That this is a genuine syntagmatic relationship is validated by the absence of k/F or k/F. I have no examples of syllabic rounding of a preposition, followed by friction at the onset of a pronoun.

When the preposition occurs in other grammatical structures, similar statements can be made. When the prepositional syllable is final in the remiss and precedes nouns with consonantal or vocalic onset, the relevant
phonetic patterns can be expressed at the phonological level as follows:

(28)

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
  \text{FOR} & \text{CVC} \\
  \text{e.g.} & \text{'for Bert'} \\
  & \text{VC} \\
  \text{e.g.} & \text{'play for ages'} \\
  \text{OF} & \text{FVC} \\
  \text{e.g.} & \text{'change of heart'} \\
  \text{TO} & \text{CVC} \\
  \text{e.g.} & \text{'go to bed'} \\
  & \text{VC} \\
  \text{e.g.} & \text{'saying to Ivan'}
\end{array}
\]
When the preposition is placed before the indefinite article, 'a', the behaviour of the prepositional syllables is half way between that observed before pronouns in the remiss, and nouns at ictus with vocalic onset. So FOR and OF behave phonologically as they do before syllables at ictus with vocalic onset:

\[(29)\]

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{P} & \text{Det} & \text{N} \\
\$ & $ & / $ \\
\end{array}
\]

FOR \quad k\text{for} \, \text{a}

e.g. \quad  \text{f e j i p' e i s} \quad \text{for a piece}

OF \quad k\text{av} \, \text{a}

e.g. \quad  \text{b i j y e j i n t k} \quad \text{bit of a shock}

TO can also behave in this way:

TO \quad k\text{ter} \, \text{a}

e.g. \quad  \text{t e j e d i j e}\quad \text{to a dealer}

But more frequently TO behaves in the same way as it did before pronouns in the remiss:

k\text{tew} \, \text{a}

e.g. \quad  \text{t e w e d e i l l a} \quad \text{to a dealer}
For the cases given in (22d, o & z, p. 96) where the prepositions are prepausal, the half-open central vowel qualities are phonetic exponents of the preposition's place in the interactional structure of utterance, that is, these particular qualities show syntactic non-completion, and at the same time project a pause. In the examples in (25) TO occurs at a place of syntactic completion, and k is the phonological exponent of this completion. From this I would predict that FOR and OF would be kər and kəv at this place in the syntactic structure.

3.4.3 Syllable onset of TO

The syllable onset of TO poses problems for statement. It is observed that at the onset of TO, there is always stoppedness. This stoppedness can occur at the alveolar place or at the glottis. Initially we can set up a two term system of syllable offset for the preceding syllable, S and G, where S is mnemonic for sonorance, and has as its exponents vibrating glottis and open approximation, either in the oral or nasal cavity; S abstracts over the absence of these features. This two term system accounts for the majority of the data, e.g.
'saying to Ivan' 'gave it to her'

'been to work' 'said to him'

'go to Debenhams' 'back to'

However, this analysis does not account for all the data. There are a few cases where 5 would predict a glottal stop, but where we find an open glottis and plosion at the alveolar place, viz.:

(22y) nine to ten

(24s) talking to her

(25b) down to

(25c) to go to

The alveolar plosion in (25b & c) is treated as part of the exponent of TO at this place in the syntactic structure. (22y) and (24s) pose more of a problem, and I present two tentative solutions here:

(a) frequency of occurrence may have an effect, i.e. those cases where glottal closure is present may be
used with greater frequency. Another number expression given is 'two to ten' (22u, p. 97). Here glottal closure is present, and 'two to ten' is an expression commonly used by the speaker because it describes a particular shift worked by her father, and 'nine to ten' does not have this same status in her usage. The same frequency difference might apply to 'talking to' as opposed to other expressions like 'saying to'.

(b) a type of consonant harmony might be present: (22y) has a number of articulations executed at the alveolar place, and this may override the glottal closure predicted by the offset of the syllable preceding TO.

3.5 Firthian prosodic aspects of the statement

There are many aspects of this statement which I consider to be Firthian prosodic, aspects which set the type of analysis I am proposing here apart from the types of analyses of non-citation form utterance which I presented in Chapter One.

First, what I have proposed in the previous section is a statement comprising formulae containing a number of symbols together with a description of the abstractions from the phonetic material which these symbols represent. What I have not done is to begin with a phonetic represen-
tation of each preposition and propose a set of processes which would change this string in various ways in the appropriate environments. I have not taken the phonetics of any one of the tokens to be prime, instead I have abstracted those features which I observed to be common to a number of different tokens.

Another feature of this statement which it shares with Firthian prosodic analysis is that it is polysystemic. Each syllable comprises a number of places at which operate a system consisting of a number of terms. Furthermore the systems operating in items which are at a particular place in the syntactic structure (in this case prepositions) will at the outset be assumed to be different from those operating in items at other places in the syntactic structure. If it turns out that the patterns being observed at one place are the same as those being observed elsewhere then the systems can be conflated. One of the interesting consequences of polysystemicity is that two sets of similar phonetics may well be accounted for by completely different bits of the phonology. So although the phonetics of TO and FOR might, on occasion, turn out to be very similar to those of the numerals TWO and FOUR, the phonology of these items would always remain different. There are two main reasons for this.

First, the phonological statement I have proposed attempts to generalise over a whole range of the different possibilities of doing a particular item. Although the phonetics of, say, TWO and FOUR might turn out to be
strikingly similar to those of TO and FOR at a particular point in utterance, this is not deemed to be of paramount importance as it would be, indeed have to be, in, for instance, a phonemic phonology, since the overall range of possibilities for doing TWO and FOUR would be considerably different from those that I have observed for TO and FOR.

Second, the phonological statement generalises over the set of alternations which can turn up at a particular place in structure, in this case the syntactic structure. One of the important things about OF in this respect is that it is different from all the other items which can alternate with it at that place, i.e. be the head of a prepositional phrase. The numerals TWO and FOUR alternate with, among other things, all other numerals.

Another example of phonetic similarity and phonological difference is the unit which I have proposed to account for voiced labiodental approximation: v. In my data I have many examples of voiced labiodental approximation between two vocalic portions. One portion of utterance containing two instances of labiodental approximation, (22n), is repeated here for convenience:

(22n) a lot of uneven

The two instances of labiodental approximation here are very similar. In both cases there is a stricture of close approximation together with a central/back of central secondary cavity resonance. However, as similar as these
two articulatory complexes maybe there seems to be no good reason for relating them in the phonology. The first instance has a different function from the second. It serves to link OF with a following vowel-initial syllable. This labiodental approximation 'comes and goes' as is required. The second instance is always there.

A third Firthian prosodic aspect of my statement is that it is non-segmental. The only segments present in this statement are the symbols in the statement itself. However, it should be clear from the exponency statements that the abstractions from the phonetic material which they represent are not phonetic 'packets' which can be lined up behind one another in time. Each unit represents abstractions of various combinations of articulatory and phonatory activity which have implications over different temporal domains. For instance, the unit k is placed first on the page, but it has implications for tongue and lip configurations throughout the production of the syllable. Likewise, the tongue and lip configurations together with the various phonation types observed in prepositions adjacent to the syllable at ictus are attributed to features of the preceding and following syllables. When a preposition is adjacent to the syllable at ictus all one needs is a unit which abstracts out syllabicity: θ. It is important to remember that this θ is not [θ], nor is it /θ/, indeed it need not be anything which is vocalic at all. The unit θ is not specified for a state of the glottis or any tongue or lip configurations.
3.6 Discussion

In the first of the empirical chapters of this study I have shown that it is possible to make phonological statements about a language from a corpus of naturally occurring talk, without using a prior analysis of data gathered from word lists or read texts as a starting point. Instead of having a fixed phonetic form as the 'invariant, stable background' (Lass 1984,295), using rules to derive each token separately, invariance is created at the phonological level via a set of subjective abstractions made by the analyst on the basis of recurrent patterns observed at the phonetic level. It is deemed necessary to make and interlink abstractions at a number of linguistic and non-linguistic (syntactic, rhythmic and interactional) levels, in order to give a complete description of the phonetic observations made.

Because the approach taken here chooses to analyse a particular syntactic structure, the phonological statements of the syllabic structures of the prepositions may, or may not, be applicable to other syllables in other syntactic structures, such as the infinitival TO particle. At a later stage it would be necessary to bring such observations together in the phonology, but it is considered more fruitful to keep them apart initially, at the risk of making undergeneralisations, rather than trying to
hold everything together at the outset, and having to tease them apart later.