Generative phonology distinguishes three levels of adequacy of phonological analysis.

1. **OBSERVATIONALLY ADEQUATE ANALYSIS**: Accurately accounts for the data.

   e.g., If a description of English phonology states that there are words such as *play and clay but no word *nlay exists.

   Observationally adequate: correctly states that certain forms exist while others don’t.

2. **DESCRIPTIVELY ADEQUATE ANALYSIS**: There is a correspondence between the analysis and the linguistic intuition of the native speaker.

   e.g., *nlay not only is not observed, but it could not be a possible word in English; the native speaker intuitively knows that it is not possible to have a *nl-cluster at the beginning of the word in English.

   Descriptively adequate: refers to the knowledge of the native speaker.

3. **EXPLANATORY ADEQUACY**:
   - A higher level of adequacy that considers a set of universal conditions which all grammars of possible human languages must obey;
   - It motivates the choice of the best grammar from all the descriptively adequate grammars;

   Chomsky assumes that the child possesses an innate mechanism for deducing the full structure of the language he/she has to learn from the data presented to him/her. IT IS ASSUMED THAT LINGUISTIC ANALYSES ARE TRUE TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY APPROXIMATE THIS MECHANISM.

**CLASSICAL PHONEMICS**: Observationally adequate analysis

**GENERATIVE PHONOLOGIES**: Aim to provide analyses of descriptive and explanatory adequacy.