If **two sounds CONTRAST** in a particular language (e.g. [t] and [d] in English)…

(a) The sounds are **separate phonemes** in that language.
   
   **Example:** /t/ and /d/ are separate phonemes of English.

(b) Speakers of that language **pay attention** to the difference between the sounds, and have an easy time perceiving the contrast between them.

(c) The sounds are in **contrastive** (or **overlapping**) distribution, meaning there are at least some contexts where either sound is possible.
   
   **Example:** In English, either [t] and [d] can fill in the blank in [ ___æjn ].

(d) There are **minimal pairs** distinguishing the two sounds.
   
   **Example:** In English, we have have a minimal pair [tæjn] vs. [dæjn] (train vs. drain).

(e) It's **unpredictable** which of the sounds you get in at least some contexts.
   
   **Example:** Given the context [ ___æjn ], there is no way of predicting which of the two sounds will be used.

If **two sounds DO NOT CONTRAST** in a particular language (e.g. light [l] and dark [ɫ] in English)…

(a) The sounds are **allophones of a single phoneme** in that language.
   
   **Example:** [l] and [ɫ] are allophones of the English phoneme /L/.

(b) Speakers of that language **ignore** the difference between the sounds, and often have a hard time perceiving the contrast, even when it's brought to their attention.

(c) The sounds are in **complementary** (or **non-overlapping**) distribution, meaning the places one shows up, the other never shows up.
   
   **Example:** In English, [l] only shows up before vowels, and [ɫ] never shows up before vowels.

(d) There are **no minimal pairs** distinguishing the two sounds.
   
   **Example:** In English it would be impossible to have two words [læmp] and [ɫæmp] that mean different things. Similarly, pronouncing *hill* [hɪɫ] with a light L like [hɪl] sounds funny but can't change the meaning of the word.

(e) It's **predictable** which of the sounds will be used in a given context.
   
   **Example:** Given the context [ ___æmp ], we know that if the phoneme /L/ is used, the pronunciation will be [læmp], and not [ɫæmp]. Similarly, in the context [ hɪ__ ], it's predictable that the allophone [ɫ] will be used rather than [l].