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yer (*n.*) In the PHONOLOGY of Slavic languages (e.g. Polish), a term used to describe a type of very short high VOWEL which appears only in certain contexts; also spelled **jer**. It has been seen as an illustration of a GHOST SEGMENT, and the question of its REPRESENTATION has attracted particular attention in NON-LINEAR PHONOLOGY. See also HARD CONSONANT, SOFT CONSONANT.

yes–no question (*y/n*) A term used in the GRAMMATICAL subclassification of types of QUESTION to refer to a question form where a grammatical reply would have to be of the type *yes* or *no*. It is formally marked by INVERTED SUBJECT–VERB order, e.g. *is she going?* These ‘general’ or ‘inverted order’ questions are contrasted with *WH*-questions.

yo-ho-ho theory In HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS, the name of one of the speculative theories about the origins of LANGUAGE: it argues that SPEECH arose because, as people worked together, their physical efforts produced communal, rhythmical grunts, which in due course developed into chants, and thus language. The main evidence is the use of universal PROSODIC features (but these provide only a small part of language structure).