

## ENGLISH PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY (PETER ROACH)

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This is a course book designed to be used by university students of English either in the final semesters of undergraduate study or during a graduate program. It is just what the title says--a practical course book in basic English phonetics and phonology aimed at training the student or (future) teacher to detect his/her own pronunciation errors or those of (future) students, and to recognize the

causes and remedies of these errors.

One of the strong points of the book is its readability --explanations are clear and concise, without an overload of unnecessary technical detail. Previous knowledge of phonetics or phonology is not necessary, as all essential concepts and vocabulary are explained when needed to understand articulatory processes. Where other writers

disagree on theoretical issues (e.g. whether or not English has stress-timed rhythm) or terminology (e.g. voiced/voiceless versus fortis/lenis), Roach has found it important to familiarize the reader with both theories or both terms, and to give practical reasons for his choice of one or the other.

More detailed explanations, discussion of issues, further references for each chapter, and a comprehensive bibliography are reserved for the tutor's book, making it useful for the advanced student working independently. The tutor's book also includes a discussion of the various pedagogical applications of applied phonetics, detailed notes for the teaching of each chapter, and a most interesting section giving suggestions for the teacher who wants to produce his own supplementary material.

The student's book is organized into twenty chapters providing relevant phonological and phonetic information, followed by nineteen corresponding tape units, giving practice in pronunciation, discrimination and description. All exercises are recorded on two accompanying cassette tapes. Using British RP (Received Pro

nunciation) as the model, the course begins with a discussion of individual segments, then moves into syllable structure, word stress, weak forms of grammatical or function words, aspect of connected speech such as assimilation, elision and linking, and finally intonation.

In his discussion of vowels, Roach adopts the usual British distinction between short vowels, long vowels, diphthongs and triphthongs (including in the two latter those represented graphically by post-vocalic r). In the sections on consonants, he opts for the fortis/lenis distinction as opposed to voiced/voiceless; he adopts the term approximants for the segments /j/, /w/ and /r/; and he makes a clear distinction between syllabic consonants and those preceded by /ə/.

For word stress Roach adopts a rather eclectic approach, extracting what he feels to be the most useful generalizations for simple words from Chomsky and Halle's (The Sound Pattern of English) generative stress rules. However, included in these "useful" generalizations are several that I feel are more likely to confuse students, because of

underlying representations not identifiable from the spelling. For example, the rule which stresses the antepenultimate syllable of nouns ending in two syllables with short vowels and single or no consonants includes many words such as cinema, custody, and venison, where the middle vowel could easily be interpreted as the long vowel /i:/ and the diphthongs /aʊ/ and /aɪ/ respectively. I might add that native speakers have been shown to give these alternative interpretations for nonsense words following the same graphic patterns (Baptista, 1984).

For complex words Roach lists the most productive suffixes, grouping together those that have a similar effect on stress placement. Although I feel this approach is useful to the student, I think it could be improved upon by taking advantage of Guierre's graphic/phonological groupings to include a greater number of suffixes. For example, the suffixes -ial, -ion, -ious, included by Roach, constitute part of Guierre's (1970) group -iV(C), along with -iant, -ience, and innumerable others which Roach does not mention.

For compound words

Roach has included a totally misleading rule giving primary stress to the second element of compounds whose first element is adjectival. This is unfortunate, as Kingdon's detailed survey (1958) has shown this to be true only in the specific categories of past participle + noun (e.g. split peas), adjective + adjective (e.g. red hot), adjective + past participle (e.g. bad-tempered) and adjective + adverb (e.g. nearby). It is not true for the very large class of adjective + noun (e.g. gentleman), adjective + nomen agentis (e.g. newcomer), and ing-form + noun (e.g. steering-wheel).

Roach's five-chapter treatment of intonation is, in my opinion, the strongest part of the book. Drawing on various British analyses, especially that of Crystal, he progresses without hurry from the simple to the complex, adding one aspect at a time, always after sufficient practice has been given on the previous one. His description of intonation in chapters 15, 16 and 17 begins with pitch (using the word in its broad sense to cover both auditory sensation and actual fundamental frequency)-- high and low; then moves on to tone--

fall , rise, fall-rise, rise-fall and level; precedes to describe the tone unit with its head, pre-head, tonic syllable, and tail; and concludes by giving the various pitch and tone possibilities within the tonic unit. In Roach's examples and exercises, the progression is also gradual, from one syllable tone-units to small-phrase tone units to larger-phrase tone units.

Chapters 18 and 19 discuss the various functions of intonation--attitudinal, accentual, grammatical and discourse, again drawing from various British scholars on the subject. Although Roach claims that through this course book foreign learners will learn only to "recognise and copy English intonation" ( p. 114), needing actual conversation with native speakers to use it appropriately; my students, after working hard on the very challenging tape-units, felt much more confident in their own use of intonation.

In conclusion, in spite of my criticisms of sections on word stress, and my slight disappointment at finding almost no references to differences in American pronunciation; I believe the book

is very successful in reaching its main objectives of (1) presenting in simplified form both phonetic and phonological descriptions of those aspects of the English sound system which are most important for accurate pronunciation , and (2) giving the foreign learner/teacher appropriate training in discrimination and production of these aspects, for the purpose of improving his/her pronunciation, and that of his/her students. Both my students and I found working with the book extremely profitable.

#### REFERENCES

- Baptista, B.O. 1984. " Stress Rules and Native Speakers," Language and Speech,
- Guierre, L. 1970. Drills in English Stress Patterns. London: Longman.
- Kingdon, R. 1958. The Groundwork of English Stress. London : Longman.