

**ENGLISH PHONETICS
AND PHONOLOGY:
A PRACTICAL COURSE**

**Peter Roach,
Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Student's book, Tutor's book
and 2 cassette tapes.**

For many years now, the standard texts for the teaching of RP English pronunciation have been Gimson (1980) and Jones (1960), and this situation is unlikely to change in the near future. The thoroughness and meticulous scholarship evident in both of them, while adding to their unquestionable academic value, has unfortunately also meant that their practical use for teaching purposes is limited to the most advanced groups of students of English, when a firmly-based working knowledge of English phonetics is a no less necessary requirement for students at a much earlier stage. The need for practical material has in part been satisfied by Byrne and Walsh (1977), Gimson (1975) and several others, as well as Monroy Casas (1979) and Finch and Ortiz Lira (1982) in the specific case of Spanish-speaking students.

Roach's course, however, is a welcome addition to the material at the disposal of both teacher and student: while having the advantage of covering all aspects of pronunciation (not only segmental phonemes but also word-stress, characteristics of connected speech such as rhythm, assimilation, etc., weak forms, and a

large section dedicated to intonation), it is still sufficiently clear and uncluttered to be useful to a student with only a basic command of the theoretical aspects of linguistic analysis or of the terminology used in phonetics. Complexity in the explanations is kept to a minimum, though it is evident that there is a progression in this sense from beginning to end, as the student becomes more familiar with concepts introduced in the earlier parts of the course (though Roach is careful to repeat and emphasise particularly those terms which tend to lead to confusion on the student's part; for example, the constant reminder of the association of «fortis» and «lenis» with «voiceless» and «voiced» respectively, as on page 106 *).

This laudable attempt to make phonetic descriptions clearly comprehensible does lead in one or two cases to unfortunate results: I find the explanation of the affricates on pages 37-38 somewhat infelicitous in its discussion of why one sound is represented by two symbols, though this is given more depth in a later chapter (pages 94-97).

The distribution of the material may be considered questionable in some cases — the separation of linking 'r' from the other manifestations of /r/, and that of schwa from the description of all other vowels (justified by Roach on page 21 of the Tutor's book), but

* All page references are to the Student's book unless otherwise indicated.

this does not detract from the overall attractiveness of the book.

For students who will go on to study English pronunciation in greater depth, this course offers the considerable advantage of using transcription symbols which are largely the same as those of Gimson and Jones, with a few exceptions, the most notable of which (the use of weak vowels {i} and {u} as well as the traditional «long» and «short» varieties) is discussed by Roach on pages 34-35 of the Tutor's book.

The text has clearly been very carefully produced, with remarkably few printing errors for a book of this kind: on page 42 {c} is printed with two slightly different characters; page 173 has / æŋhl / for / æŋgl / and page 183 / də kundt / for / ðə kudnt /. On page 8 of the tutor's book, a line of print is apparently missing between lines 22 and 23 — a minor number of errors for a publication with a heavy density of phonetic symbols included in the text.

All in all, Roach has designed a course of eminently practical use, accessible to a large number of students of English at many levels, and one which can be unreservedly recommended.

REFERENCES

- BYRNE, D., and WALSH, G., 1977: *Pronunciation Practice* (2nd ed.), London, Longman.
- FINCH, D., and ORTIZ LIRA, H., 1982: *A Course in English Phonetics for Spanish Speakers*, London, Heineemann.
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- GIMSON, A. C., 1980: *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English* (3rd ed.), London, E. Arnold.
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- MONROY CASAS, R., 1979: *La pronunciación del inglés RP para hablantes de español*, Madrid, Paraninfo.

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