REVIEW - ANAMARIA FĂLĂUȘ, ENGLISH PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY. THEORY AND PRACTICE. LAMBERT ACADEMIC PUBLISHING, 2023

Ioan-Beniamin Pop

Lecturer, PhD, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, North University Centre of Baia Mare

Abstract: This paper reviews Anamaria Fălăuș's English Phonetics and Phonology. Theory and Practice, a book that revisits the field of English phonetics and phonology with the purpose of breaking down complex theories into reader accessible explanations and applications. The theoretical construct introduces the main areas of phonetics and phonology, while exploring the rules and patterns governing speech sounds. The practical part provides a solid foundation for the illustration of the diverse applications of phonetic principles.

Keywords: phonetics, phonology, English, theory, practice

Published in 2023 by Lambert Academic Publishing, *English Phonetics and Phonology. Theory and Practice* by Anamaria Fălăuș proposes a comprehensive and engaging analysis of the intricate realms of English phonetics and phonology. The book presents itself as a commendable endeavour that reflects the author's interest in the subject matter, evident in the thoughtful and meticulous research of the phonetic structure of the English language.

As revealed in the title, the book is designed on a twofold structure: a theoretical exploration of the main areas of phonetics and phonology that aims to provide a well-rounded and accessible overview of the fundamental principles governing the sounds of the English language, as well as a practical part meant to engage the target audience in a guided, progressive learning that combines theoretical and practical tasks. The book serves as an invaluable resource for both students and professionals in linguistics, being structured in a way that caters to both beginners and those with a foundational understanding of linguistics. What the author attempts to prove is the fact that the study of phonetics and phonology is essential from both a theoretical and a practical point of view, a complete understanding and description of a language being impossible without a description of its sound structure and system.

In what concerns the theoretical approach, the organization of the content is commendable, with a logical progression from basic concepts to more advanced topics. The book begins by introducing the main branches of phonetics: articulatory phonetics (which studies the way speech sounds are produced, articulated, and uttered), acoustic phonetics (focusing on the physical properties of speech and their acoustic classification), and auditory phonetics (underlining the perception and interpretation of sounds by the receptor of the oral message). In order to set the scene for further developments, the book provides a brief history of the English language with an emphasis on its obvious lack of consistent relationship between sounds and letters, i.e. between pronunciation and spelling. It then seamlessly advances to the realm of phonology exploring the rules and patterns governing the functionality of the English speech sounds in the language. Special attention is given to the variations of one and the same sound due to its distribution in different phonetic contexts (positional variants), the speaker's geographic or social background (regional variants) or the speaker's personal peculiarities (individual variants). A succinct presentation of the distinctive features that characterize the

English inventory of speech sounds leads to a detailed analysis of the English vowel and consonant phonemes. A distinction is also made between sounds in isolation and sounds in connected speech, with an emphasis on the major suprasegmental phenomena by which neighbouring speech sounds affect one another's quality, namely assimilation, elision, juncture. The following chapters engage into an analysis of the syllable structure and prosodic phonological features that characterize suprasegmental phonology: accent, rhythm and intonation.

One of the strengths of *English Phonetics and Phonology. Theory and Practice* is its emphasis on practical applications. Mrs. Fălăuș skilfully connects theoretical concepts to a vast range of exercises and real-world examples, illustrating how phonetics and phonology play a crucial role in language acquisition, speech pathology, and linguistic analysis. This approach not only enriches the reader's understanding but also highlights the relevance of these concepts in various linguistic disciplines. The practical part follows the contents of various publications in the field (the study benefiting from a current and diversified bibliographic apparatus) being intended and designed as an auxiliary material meant to help students improve their knowledge and pronunciation abilities. The first set of questions takes into discussion some theoretical issues proposing a series of multiple-choice exercises, true/false sentences, and a number of open questions that require the students' need to revise the theoretical material introduced at the beginning of the book. The second part combines theory with practice in order to consolidate the information accumulated up to that moment. The third chapter (the largest one), however, mostly focuses on some practical exercises meant to assist students in improving their pronunciation. The series of exercises alternate with theoretical parts that facilitate a better understanding of the topics analysed. There are also exercises that require the students' knowledge of phonemic symbols. Being able to understand phonemic symbols is a useful skill to have in order to make use of the complete information provided by dictionaries that represent pronunciation using the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), or a similar system. There are also exercises that attempt to emphasize the specific difficulties that Romanian learners encounter when learning English. Such exercises have a double purpose, on the one hand identifying and illustrating those difficulties, on the other, finding ways to eliminate them by making use of the appropriate practical techniques of acquiring the right pronunciation. From this perspective, what the book attempts to do is raise awareness of the fact that the teacher and the learner of a foreign language should be able to recognize and produce the sounds of the studied language just like a native speaker.

By providing a comprehensive theoretical background that covers the fundamental concepts of phonetics and phonology with clarity and accuracy, followed by practical applications that investigate the nature and use of speech sounds, Mrs. Fălăuș's book advocates an approach that successfully bridges the gap between theory and application, catering to the interests of both instructors attempting to offer their students the best possible foundation in the science of speech sounds and students aiming to apply the acquired knowledge of phonetics and phonology in practical contexts.

One of the standout features of this book is its clarity in presenting complex concepts. The author employs a writing style that strikes a balance between academic rigor and reader-friendly accessibility. The use of clear examples and real-world applications, as well as the incorporation of visual aids, such as charts and diagrams, enhance the reader's comprehension of intricate phonetic and phonological phenomena and reinforce key concepts in this field of research. The book becomes an ideal choice for professionals and learners interested in deciphering the ways in which speech sounds are produced, transmitted and received, the ways in which they function in a language, the range of phenomena included in the sound structure of languages, the rules governing the combination of speech sounds into syllables and larger phonological constructions, and the relationship between the spoken and written language.

The book might seem a bit too detailed for the readers that are just getting acquainted with the complexities of this branch of linguistics. Nevertheless, this can also be viewed as a positive aspect for those seeking an in-depth exploration of the subject matter. In conclusion, Mrs. Fălăuș's book *English Phonetics and Phonology. Theory and Practice* is a commendable addition to the literature on phonetics and phonology. It offers a well-balanced blend of theoretical insights and practical applications that addresses a complex and varied readership, from the student embarking on a linguistic journey to a professional looking for a new perspective. The book thus becomes a valuable tool that initiates the readers into the intricate world of sounds and symbols in human language.