Title: [Review of the book *An introduction to English language: Word, sound and sentence* (2nd ed.), by K. Kuiper & W. S. Allan]

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In this review I have concentrated on the phonetic details that the authors describe, rather than on phonological theory or the specific apparatus that they propose. This is in part because the authors make no bold claims about new flavors of Optimality Theory, or for rule ordering (they actually have old-fashioned rule notation to account for certain kinds of alternations). In fact, although they discuss constraints extensively, and present detailed charts of constraint ranking, both for Berber and Moroccan Arabic, they present no tableaux or detailed derivations. Rather they are interested in presenting a great deal of detailed information about specific aspects of the syllable structure of a language that is at one end of the continuum of which Hawai’ian represents the opposite extreme.

The other reason this book will be interesting to readers of this journal is that the language data beg for fine-grained phonetic analysis (in fact, the authors say exactly this, p. 333). For example, the sentence /dl-n≡t ntl-n/ ‘they covered him and hid themselves’ must be pronounced ‘with a single uninterrupted closure in the midsagittal region’ (p. 141). Similarly, there are long stretches of speech with no vocal cord vibration at all, as illustrated by a sentence on the first page of text: /kks=t t-ˇsˇs-t=t/ ‘remove it and eat it’, pronounced [k:st:s:t:h] (and, for those interested in the phonological questions, syllabified thus: [.k .kst .t .s :t .h ]).

Reference


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This is the second edition of a fairly traditional introduction to the linguistics of English, concentrating on the more formal aspects of language study such as grammar and phonetics with less attention paid to areas such as language acquisition, language variation or language change. It is divided into three sections, the first on morphology and word classes, the second on phonetics and phonology, and the third on sentence structure. There are not too many changes in this second edition of the book, though the section on words has been moved to the front, before that on sounds, and there are some valuable extra exercises to extend the understanding of students.

The coverage of the material is rather traditional in a number of ways, so for example there is little mention of modern theories of syntax, such as those of Chomsky, and thus the structure of noun phrases is discussed with no mention of the possibility of a DP analysis (Radford 1997: 152, Ouhalla 1999: 203). With respect to phonology, the analysis depends on two basic models, that of the phoneme, including substantial coverage of allophonic variation originating from complementary distribution, and an introduction to distinctive feature analysis, including simple rules for such processes as assimilation, deletion and insertion based on binary features. While this rather conservative coverage fails to consider more modern approaches, such as autosegmental phonology, feature geometry, or optimality theory, it does present basic phonological concepts in a very accessible manner, and the
extensive, well-constructed, carefully presented exercises, many of them interspersed into the main text, will enable introductory students to gain a solid understanding of the key issues in the grammar and phonology of English.

Even though most of the coverage is traditional, in a few places the analysis is perhaps a little surprising. For example, the concept of an allophone depends entirely on the occurrence of complementary distribution (p. 151), so the definition of allophones is that they ‘appear in mutually exclusive positions’ (p. 142). This seems to overlook the possibility of free variation as one source of allophonic variation (Cruttenden 2001: 45), and it would seem better to define an allophone as any variant that does not result in a change in meaning (Crystal 2003: 19). The concept of free variation is introduced briefly, to deal with the occurrence of /i:/ or /a/ at the start of either and /e/ or /i:/ at the start of economics (p. 147), but although such alternations affecting individual words may indeed be regarded as instances of free variation, it is usual to include within the scope of the concept the small variations in the realisation of a phoneme that occur on different occasions (Laver 1994: 69) and between different speakers, variations which are likely to extend throughout the lexicon and not be limited to isolated words.

In one further issue concerned with allophones, section 5.4, which is headed ‘Allophonic processes’, includes subsections on elision and insertion. While there is no explicit suggestion that Ø can be treated as an allophone of /d/ and /t/ on the basis of the pronunciation of handsome and mostly (p. 164), the fact that elision and insertion appear to be included within the scope of allophonic processes is likely to result in some confusion among students.

One attractive aspect of this book is its regular use of literary texts, especially the work of such well-known poets as Gerard Manley Hopkins and W. H. Auden, to illustrate a number of phonological issues such as syllable structure (p. 193), rhyming schemes (p. 196), intonation (p. 204), and rhythm and meter (p. 209), and this certainly enlivens and enriches the text. But maybe as a result of this frequent reference to poetry when analysing the phonology of English, there is more belief in the isochrony of stress-timing in English than is generally assumed nowadays, and we might ask if there is really any empirical evidence for the approximately equal duration of the feet in an utterance such as:

| What’s the | difference between a | free and a | bound | morph? (p. 207)

However, in an introductory textbook, it perhaps does no harm to simplify things a little, even if a deeper understanding of phonetics would allow students to appreciate that such fixed patterns of isochrony are not quite so straightforward in the real world (Lehiste 1977, Couper-Kuhlen 1993).

Of course, more ambitious students might find it valuable to be told where things are not so simple, and pointers to further material on a topic such as rhythm would prove useful for such students. Unfortunately the guidance in this respect is rather limited. Although at the end of each section there is a very brief list of books for suggested further reading, there are no references within the text itself, so for example we are told that ‘some phonologists have considered’ the phoneme to be the underlying phonological entity while ‘other phonologists’ have instead proposed distinctive features to be the fundamental unit (pp. 168f.) without being informed who these phonologists are. Though it does seem to be common for many introductory books to avoid references within the text in this way, and this certainly ensures the text remains clear, direct, and uncluttered by what many might regard as extraneous material, it might be helpful if dedicated readers were offered a bit more substantial guidance on how to follow up some of the issues. Furthermore, one wonders whether the absence of references within the text is providing a good model for students who are in the process of learning how to write academic presentations.

In one further instance where the coverage simplifies matters to the extent that it is not quite watertight, the tonic syllable is defined as ‘the only syllable in the tone group where the pitch changes during its production’ (p. 201). However, this definition is at odds with some of the examples on the same page, where for instance the only syllable with pitch movement in the first tone group of ‘It was only yesterday | that I decided not to go’ is the final syllable...
of *yesterday*, which exhibits a small but distinct rise in pitch. Surely the final syllable of *yesterday* cannot be the tonic syllable here? But perhaps a comprehensive definition of the tonic syllable would need to consider its role as the anchor point for the tune of the whole tone group (O’Connor & Arnold 1973: 14) and also maybe to analyse how the inventory of nuclear pitch patterns differs from those that occur on non-nuclear accented syllables (Nolan 1984: 7–10), and it must be admitted that this is rather more abstract than stating that the tonic syllable is the only syllable which exhibits pitch movement. Perhaps it is appropriate that an introductory textbook should keep things simple in this way, even if it results in some rather obvious flaws.

The book basically adopts a British model of pronunciation, though the symbols used are not quite the standard ones, with /ei, ai, ɔi, au/ used instead of /eI, aI, ɔI, au/, and /ou/ instead of /û/. While it may be possible to justify the use of these symbols, it seems a pity not to adopt the standard set found in the two pronouncing dictionaries (Wells 2000, Jones et al. 2003), as this is likely to result in unnecessary confusion among students. One other issue with symbols involves the adoption of [.] to indicate half-long vowels, so for example *beat* gets transcribed phonetically as [bi.t] as a result of vowel shortening because of the final voiceless consonant (p. 167), and it is not clear why the standard IPA symbol [œ] (IPA 1999: 203) is not adopted for a half-long vowel, especially when this standard symbol is subsequently listed as the correct one for this purpose (p. 189). Furthermore, when syllables come to be considered, syllable boundaries are also shown (correctly) with [, so we have the same symbol sometimes indicating length as in [bi.t] and sometimes showing a syllable boundary as in /fæ.ne.tIk/ (p. 190).

With regard to symbols, it is also rather unfortunate that there are quite a few errors, some of them introduced in the typesetting of this second edition, such as the regular appearance of [œ] instead of [ø] (pp. 141, 155, 174, 208), the suggestion that /ŋ/ gets pronounced as [n] in *congress* (p. 162), and the claim that the past tense /d/ morpheme is pronounced as [æd] after [--cont –ant +cor] sounds (p. 182) instead of [--cont +ant +cor] sounds (as it was correctly shown in the first edition). In addition, it is a pity that some of the errors from the first edition have not been fixed, so /d/ rather than /z/ is given as the assimilated consonant in the pronunciation of /ju:zdæ/ as [ju:stæ] (p. 162), and the omission of the first /t/ in *postmaster* is still used to illustrate the elision of consonants in unstressed syllables (p. 207) even though this /t/ actually occurs in a stressed syllable. Finally, some of the additional exercises in this second edition have errors, such as the representation of *bathe* as /be:θ/ (p. 185), which means the answer provided for the lengthening of Scottish vowels occurring before /vðzHe/ or a morpheme boundary (p. 326) no longer works, and the transcription of *beautiful* as [bju:tɪfəl] for Dialect D (p. 187) even though the answer key claims that this dialect (presumably Norfolk English) has deleted /j/ in all positions (p. 327).

It is hoped that these (and many more) irritating errors can be fixed soon, so that this book can take its well-deserved place as one of the foremost introductory textbooks on the structure of English for those who prefer a solid, traditional approach that focuses in a highly approachable manner on the core areas of grammar and phonetics. Even if some of the definitions are not completely watertight, and even though the analysis of a few things such as rhythm does not quite comply with recent acoustic research, perhaps it is picky to dwell on minor shortcomings when so much of the material is presented so well and in such an attractive fashion. Many students will appreciate the detailed but clear discussion of this introductory material on the structure of English and will also find the extensive, carefully graded exercises exceptionally helpful, and this certainly makes it an excellent introductory text.

References

This volume (henceforth *ODP*) is certainly a weighty contribution to English pronunciation lexicography. It immediately invites comparison with the only two previous works of closely similar aims and dimensions, viz. the *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (LPD)* and the Cambridge University Press *English Pronouncing Dictionary (EPD)*. *LPD* has 869 pages in two columns and *EPD* has 606 pages in three columns. *ODP* has 1208 pages of text in four columns per page. In hardback, *ODP* has the same footprint and weight as *LPD* but it is 1.5 cm thicker and consequently a little less convenient to handle, but it scores heavily over the other two in offering rather more self-explanatory and certainly less condensed transcriptions.

Its preliminary matter begins with a single page (p. vi) headed ‘Dictionary team’, which lists five additional editorial staff and eighteen ‘Foreign language consultants’. These last cover Afrikaans, Brazilian Portuguese, Lusitanian Portuguese, Czech, Danish, Dutch-and-Flemish, French, German, Hungarian, Irish Gaelic, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Welsh.

The single-page, rather effusively expressed ‘Preface’ (p. vii) proclaims that the authors offer ‘models . . . in what we believe to be a new manner for the new millennium’ having ‘developed’ them ‘not as incremental improvements upon some prior practice but as the product of our long research experience as students of language variation’. They see themselves as having been ‘called upon to decide what pronunciations are held in common as national habits or norms by British and American speakers’. They refer to their belief that their ‘wide experience with variation’ gives them ‘standing to create pronunciation models which avoid slavish imitation of the dictates of self-appointed arbiters of taste or style in language in favour of patterns which reflect the actual speech of real people’. Some lines later they talk of having ‘ascertained particular models’.