

topics to suffer from insufficient presentation. Despite the promising title, not much about patterns, processes, and path of acquisition is provided in any systematic way. The conclusion to be drawn is perhaps that an informed decision about the explanatory powers of linguistic theories can only be made on the basis of much more in-depth knowledge than what any one- or two-term module can provide.

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Reviewed by **Joanna Przedlacka**
Speech, Hearing and Phonetic Sciences,
University College London
j.przedlacka@ucl.ac.uk

Intended for a reader unfamiliar with the subject, Richard Ogden's textbook covers topics which traditionally form the core curriculum of introductory university courses in phonetics. The material is presented in two stages: the first four chapters set the basic framework by giving an overview of speech production mechanism, place and manner of articulation, and types and levels of transcription. Further chapters present the classification of sound types (vowels, approximants, plosives, fricatives, nasals) and airstream mechanisms. Each chapter is followed by a summary, a set of exercises with answers and discussion and suggestions for further reading. The material is illustrated with spectrograms, waveforms, diagrams and – somewhat unusually – natural conversational data alongside more formal utterances, all of which serve to exemplify the phenomena under discussion. A fresh approach is to leave non-pulmonic airstream mechanisms till the end and then demonstrate that clicks and ejectives, which a beginner might view as somewhat exotic, are in fact abundant in English speech where they have a conversational function.

Like many other textbooks, Ogden's volume may serve simply as a compendium of basic knowledge. However, the provision of a descriptive framework is not an end in itself, but serves as a tool which enables readers to explore phonetics independently, reflect on their own speech and describe that of others. This works at two levels: by allowing the mastery of key concepts as well as training of skills indispensable to a phonetician's trade such as transcription and interpretation of spectrographic data. Ogden's hands-on approach engages

readers from the beginning. Peppered with observations on everyday speech (such as first person pronoun reduction), it also encourages the reader to listen for more. Previous work is referred to in chunks manageable for a beginner, and at the same time there are hints about what discoveries are yet to be made.

More importantly, the volume emphasizes links between phonetics and other disciplines so that the reader can see phonetics not merely as an aim in itself, but as a tool for the collection of linguistic data. Rather than being supplied with a tidy description of English speech, the reader is alerted to the complexity of speech in general and in a sense thrown in at the deep end. Of course such an approach may have its drawbacks.

Though a staple of phonetics courses, acoustics is often tackled in a separate chapter in introductory textbooks (but see Ashby & Maidment 2005 for an exception). A positive aspect of Ogden's book is the early link between articulatory aspects of sound types and their acoustic representations. By showing that the two go hand in hand, the author shifts the focus from the segmental to the continuous nature of speech. This approach is evident throughout the book. To give a few examples, English rhotics are discussed in connection with secondary articulations (p. 91), elsewhere (p. 75) attention is drawn to how the timing of rounding and voicing contribute to the difference between pairs such as *sport* and *support*, and in Chapter 7 the co-occurrence of either aspiration or pre-aspiration with voiceless plosives highlights that those events could be mirror images. Through such presentation a reader new to the subject can indeed form an opinion that 'phonetics involves something like unpicking the sounds of speech and working out how all the components work together' (p. 7). For an advanced reader, viewing the familiar material in new light may stimulate a new understanding.

In contrast to many traditional textbooks, Ogden does not insist on a reference accent. Present-day RP (including the weak vowel of *happy*, but somewhat inconsistently not the one of *thank you*) is among the varieties presented, but it is not given prominence, and examples are drawn from a number of other varieties of English. I consider Ogden's treatment of vowels to be a less successful aspect of the book. Five systems (RP, General American, Australian, New Zealand English and Tyneside English) are presented using Wells' (1982) keywords for standard lexical sets. The typical vowel and diphthong qualities of the first three varieties are plotted in the cardinal vowel space. These illustrations are followed by brief descriptions of vowel transcription problems and a discussion of origins and qualities of the vowels of TRAP, STRUT, FACE and GOOSE. This presentation is not unlike that of Gimson's in Cruttenden (2008), albeit less detailed. With such a choice of reference accent varieties, native speakers can make sense of the issue of interest by relating the data from an accent to the closest of the five reference accents. But for non-native English speakers and beginner students of linguistics, the chapter might turn out to be confusing because of a wealth of realisation detail, transcription choices and a sketchy historical explanation squeezed into a relatively short space. It also begs the question why only four vowels had been selected for further discussion. On the positive side, cardinal vowels (a notoriously difficult topic) are introduced through a practical experiment, echoing Catford's (2002) approach. Thus, rather than merely presenting a widely used reference system, the book alerts readers to the possibilities of the human vocal tract.

Overall, the textbook feels like a chat with your tutor. While the basics of the subjects are discussed, their treatment is far from simplistic. Its originality lies in the way links are made between topics and this requires the reader to come prepared when tackling successive chapters. It is full of snippets of information that one could spend a long time trying to locate in other written sources, such as common transcription mistakes, or another – that not everything that shows on a spectrogram represents speech, thus an unidentified transient may simply appear due to bubbles of saliva bursting in the mouth as we start speaking.

Ogden's book is a clear introduction for anyone interested in learning the basics of phonetics, though it does not style itself as a definitive guide to the subject, stressing that even the commonly used terms are subject to different interpretations. Therefore, those looking for

instant answers might be disappointed. While at a level suitable for a beginner, Ogden's book assumes a mature interest in phonetics.

References

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