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MEHMET YAVAŞ, *Applied English Phonology*. Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. Pp. viii + 245. ISBN-13: 978-1-4051-0872-0. doi:10.1017/S0025100307003179

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Applied English Phonology is a textbook designed for courses on English sound structure for pre- and in-service teachers, primarily of ESOL, and speech language pathologists working with North American English. The book consists of nine chapters. Because my evaluation varies considerably by chapter, I discuss them individually.

Chapter 1, 'Phonetics', presents phonetic transcription and introduces articulatory phonetic concepts. By contrast to the parochial and even idiosyncratic transcription systems found in many texts, Yavaş's use of IPA is to be commended. Other systems make the representation of non-English sounds difficult. At the same time, the availability of free IPA fonts facilitates IPA usage, and use of IPA on sites such as Wikipedia – which students are likely to interact with – is increasing the reach of that world-wide standard. The rest of the chapter, covering consonant features, the vowel chart, syllables, and suprasegmentals, is less successful, however. Since these topics are all dealt with in depth in chapters 3–7, I imagine the purpose here is to provide background for the discussion of phonology in the next chapter. However, the expositions are too brief and unconnected to be useful for that purpose, taking the form of an inventory of concepts.

Chapter 2, 'Phonology', discusses allophonic variation and morphophonemics, and it works well despite the flaws in chapter 1. The emphasis is on diagnosis of phonemic versus allophonic status of sounds in various languages. As appropriate, examples abound of which two sounds are allophones of a single phoneme in one language but allophones of separate phonemes in another. The concept of phoneme can be difficult for students, but the examples, descriptions, and schematics help almost all grasp it. The exercises are also well designed. One quibble involves the Spanish spirantization rule, used in a contrast between the allophones of Spanish /d/ and the English phonemes in *day* and *they*. Yavaş refers to the lenis allophone of the Spanish /d/ as appearing uniquely in intervocalic contexts, whereas later, in chapter 8, it is described more accurately as occurring in other environments too. Furthermore, this allophone is described as a fricative, although according to Hualde (2005) it is better understood as an approximant.

Chapter 3, 'English consonants', provides a detailed rundown of the English consonants grouped by manners of articulation. It was also a success for my students; the exposition is generally quite clear, and the treatment of dialectal variation is unusually helpful and comprehensive. Also to be appreciated is the correction of some common errors. US English lateral onsets are often not clear but velarized, as Yavaş points out. Finally, the exercises are particularly well thought out. My only complaint is that Yavaş departs from his use of IPA

symbols by representing the tap with the Americanist [D]. Not surprisingly, my students were, confused by that usage.

Whereas chapter 3 turned out to be well crafted, chapter 4, 'English vowels' floundered on the shoals of the diabolically complex English vowel system. The chapter begins with a list of 11 of 'what [are] commonly described as monophthongal vowels' (76) and three diphthongs. The vowels are then described in separate subsections by height/backness, tense/laxness, nasality, length, and two pre-liquid contexts. This structure is not optimal because of the heterogeneity of these various dimensions. Whereas, height, backness, and tense/lax provide the defining features of a vowel, [+nasal] is a phonetically conditioned allophonic feature in English. Arguably, vowel length is not a feature at all but responds most significantly to phonetic conditioning and the tense/lax distinction. Pre-liquid contexts are different again, consisting of important phonetic and phonological conditions that can lead to different phonological neutralizations in different dialects. Discussing one after another in the way the chapter does implies to the reader a kind of false equivalence. This organization is part of a general tendency to inventory concepts and facts rather than address first the ways they relate to each other and second the different pedagogical or therapeutic challenges each presents.

The treatment of the tense/lax distinction presents a different and admittedly difficult problem. Whereas almost all authors divide English vowels between those two categories, there is no consensus on the criteria for assignment to each and therefore the distribution between them. This situation presents a challenge to a textbook writer, who needs to provide a discussion that is accessible to students but does not oversimplify the phenomenon. Yavas makes the division on a phonological basis: if a vowel can appear in an open syllable, it is tense; if not, it is lax. This choice is easily justified; viewed phonetically, tenseness and laxness are subtle and controversial, hardly promising fare for an introductory textbook. Nevertheless, much is lost with an exclusively phonological division. The tendency of phonetically tense, or at least peripheral, vowels to become diphthongs and lax ones to remain monophthongal is robust in most varieties of American English, and it was noticed spontaneously by some of my students. Relatedly, any number of dialectal differences can be explained in terms of different lax/tense neutralizations (e.g., the various realizations of *Mary*, *merry*, *marry*, and *Murray* along the East Coast of North America). Finally, leaving the distinction in terms of possible open-syllable position provides little insight into how ESOL students can be helped to acquire difficult contrasts between lax/tense (or peripheral/non-peripheral) pairs.

More generally, dialectal variation is also not successfully dealt with because of the tendency to inventory facts. Variation is handled mainly in four tables plotting a total 29 vowels (including separate entries for pre-liquid vowels) by 13 dialects. The tables present too much information to be memorized or to serve as an illustration but too little to function as a reference resource. Moreover, the list makes little sense dialectologically because the varieties are identified by national status, with North American English consequently limited to two varieties, Canadian and US, whereas some Caribbean islands are presented on their own. As a result, important variants go unmentioned, arguably the most significant being the widespread fronting of historically high back vowels in North America. The chapter closes with a substantial discussion of reduction phenomena, although only from full vowel to schwa; elision is deferred to a later chapter although it is an extension of the same process. Some students picked up on this issue on their own and asked about it in class.

Chapter 5, 'Acoustics of vowels and consonants', is an unusual feature of a book, a discussion of acoustic phonetics, designed as an introduction for (future) practitioners. It includes pictures of spectrograms and discussions of how they reflect articulatory gestures. I was initially excited by this chapter, but in the end found it easier to teach its content by having students plot their own vowels and examine their own stop bursts in class using the material in the book as a reference. Perhaps, it would have been more effective to integrate the content into the respective chapters on consonants and vowels.

Chapter 6, 'Syllables', begins the discussion of suprasegmentals with an excellent account of syllable structure, including tree diagrams and phenomena such as syllable division and

ambisyllabicity. This is a difficult topic, but the students really got it thanks to the clear exposition, and again, the exercises helped.

Chapter 7, ‘Stress and intonation’, combines stress and intonation, with most of the space devoted to the former. I would have preferred a more balanced discussion, perhaps with stress and intonation in chapters of their own.

The book closes with two chapters on educational issues. Chapter 8, ‘Structural factors in L2 phonology’, discusses L2 phonology and, unfortunately, repeats some of the pedagogical miscalculations of chapter 4, particularly substituting inventories of phenomena for a more coherent conceptual treatment. Chapter 9, ‘Spelling and pronunciation’, reviews the relations of phonology to orthography. I did not cover this chapter in my class due to time constraints.

It should be evident that I have mixed feelings about this textbook, but I should say that it is welcome and not only because of the relative dearth of textbooks on English sound structure suitable for present and future educational and clinical practitioners. It could be said that the imbalance between this type of applied book and the numerous texts available focusing on theory reflects the interests of textbook writers rather than the needs of students. Furthermore, it is apparent that Yavaş’s goal was to write a text that balances theory and practice. On the whole, explanations are well written; I had no complaints from students about it being confusing or hard to understand. Compared to two of the prominent potential competitors for course adoption, it is fair to say that Yavaş’s book reduces Kreidler’s (2004) theoretical emphasis, complication, and excessive comprehensiveness while providing an account of the field more rigorous and theoretically informed than that provided by Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (1996). Thus, it is the best book currently available that I am aware of for a course on English sound structure. It will be harder to find one with better explanations, when they are provided.

One of the features that helps includes the numerous and usually well-designed exercises, including a running text for transcription, that accompany each chapter. Moreover, whereas Kreidler provides answers to his exercises in the textbook – a tactic that assumes that students will be motivated and self-directed enough to do them and then check their own learning – Yavaş provides the questions alone. This is a huge advantage because assigning exercises encourages students to actually do the reading, and to include the answers undermines that goal. The lack of answers allowed me to use the exercises in Blackboard, the web-based educational technology system used at my university. I asked students to do some of the exercises online after I posted the potential answers in the system. This allowed students to check their comprehension instantly and provided me with an easy way to assess their understanding without affecting students’ grades. The posting of exercises was not always feasible, but it did seem effective for those questions that could be put in multiple choice or true/false form. Exercises with open-ended answers can be done in class. I was pleased with how much the students learned as we went over those exercises in class and when I checked their results on Blackboard. I was also pleased with their exam results.

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