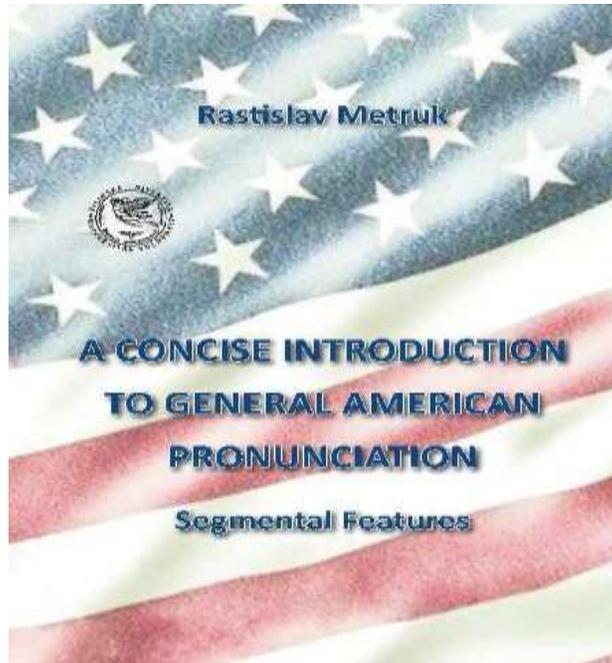


Book Review



A Concise Introduction to General American Pronunciation. Segmented Features

Author: Rastislav Metruk

Book: A Concise Introduction to General American Pronunciation. Segmented Features.

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Reviewer: Yevgeniya Karpenko

Significance and Vitality of Phonetics in Spoken Language: Mastering American Pronunciation

There are many books on the pronunciation of English and on the phonetics and phonology of English. As an English language teacher, I would often choose some chapters from books such as Mojsin L. K. (2016) “Mastering the American Accent”, Kreidler C. W. (2004) “The Pronunciation of English: A Course Book” as both are intended for teachers and prospective teachers of English who require a full understanding of a sound system of English and for students

of linguistics, who know English but need to acquire an understanding of phonology. The books deal mainly with American English and give a good picture of American sounding rhythm and American intonation. But these books about teaching pronunciation have been written with an audience of mainly native speakers of English in mind and don't touch on many issues that students who have learned English as a second language want and need to know about - questions and problems that may not occur to native-speaker teachers and students.

The book by Metruk R. "A Concise Introduction to General American Pronunciation. Segmented Features." has been written with special consideration of the needs and interests of Slovak speakers of English. The approach of this book is a little different to previous similarly practical books on pronunciation for teachers in that the underlying theory and activities suit Slovak students, and it does make the whole topic very accessible for both Slovak teachers and students. Designed for Slovak students working alone as well as for classroom use it provides intensive practice in stress and intonation of particular sound contrasts. In this pronunciation course for intermediate Slovak students of English, each unit provides intensive practice in key intonation patterns of English, and shows how English sound contrasts are difficult for speakers of Slovak. This book is for teachers who are looking for ways to incorporate some theoretical issues of phonetics, and pronunciation into their classes and those who want to learn more about phonology and would make a great source book about pronunciation work for teaching training purposes.

The preface with notes facing the theory explains how the book is organized. All 7 units can be used independently of each other. The examples and tasks in each unit lead students from theory to practice in sounds, stress and intonation in relation to connected material found in real life. The first part in the book offers the reader with some general questions or statements to consider and reflect upon how and what sounds humans produce in language. This area develops the reader's understanding in relation to phonetics and phonology, English accents along with some aspects of teaching pronunciation. This includes pronunciation models learners should aim to achieve, and why teachers should focus on pronunciation during lessons.

Unit 2 is dedicated to detailed explanation of the movement and sound produced in the mouth. The author also provides a detailed description of the parts of the articulatory system - the tongue, teeth, and lips etc. along with visual images of the position of the articulators during speech.

Units 3, 4 focus on the properties of segments i.e., vowels, consonants and diphthongs with the corresponding spelling in English. These units are extensive and students, should they be able to dedicate the time to reading this area, will develop their awareness of pronunciation, such as explanations of fricatives, plosives, etc, as well as further information on more learner related issues, consonant clusters, word stress or connective speech.

Unit 5 is devoted to teaching pronunciation, which "is undoubtedly a matter of considerable importance" (Metruk R. "A Concise Introduction to General American Pronunciation. Segmented Features." P.51). As the book is aimed mainly at prospective English language teachers, this is one of the important issues to be discussed.

There are many things that prospective English language teachers need to know how to fit into their limited class time in future – grammar, vocabulary, reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Students often think it isn't that important, or there will be not enough time to teach pronunciation so it often gets pushed to the bottom of the list. But if we want our students to be prepared to teach pupils to speak English understandably, pronunciation is important. The days when learners only needed writing and reading skills in English are past. The learners will need to speak and understand English in real life to communicate with both native speakers of English and speakers of other languages. Even if their vocabulary and grammar are strong, if their pronunciation isn't easy to understand, their communication will fail. We owe it to our students, as prospective English language teachers, to give them the tools they'll need to be able to teach their pupils to communicate successfully in English.

Under conditions of successful language learning three main requirements are mentioned: **motivation**, **exposure** and **output**. Learners make more progress if they want to learn. No teacher can force learners to learn if they're not motivated. This also can be applied to teaching pronunciation. Teachers can provide information and many chances to practice, but they don't have the power to change the learners' pronunciation for them. They have to want to work at it themselves. However, it is stated in the book, that "when EFL learners enjoy success, and when they feel satisfaction with what they have accomplished, there is every likelihood that they will become motivated." (Metruk R. "A Concise Introduction to General American Pronunciation. Segmented Features." P.51). So, teachers can help motivate the learners by showing them how improving their pronunciation will help them reach their goals.

Exposure refers to the contact that the learner has with the language that they are learning, either generally or with specific language points. Referring to the language in general and pronunciation in particular, it often refers to contacts outside the classroom. One of the most important tasks of the teacher is to give learners enough exposure to examples of pronunciation from different speakers. The teachers can also use natural input from CDs, television, video, web sites, magazines, and books.

Dr R. Metruk also presents some practical considerations and recommendations for the output phase in teaching speaking and pronunciation, when students are encouraged to use what has been presented as input and to expand their spoken repertoire. In his opinion, communication-based activities which guide students from input to output offer them the opportunity to foster accurate pronunciation skills in the target language. The final two units – "Errors in the English pronunciation by Slovak EFL learners", "English-Slovak dictionary of phonetic terms" – are obviously self-explanatory and focus on these areas of pronunciation.

This book is an excellent introduction to, or review of, the basics of phonology together with some useful activities to use with students for in-service training sessions. The book contains wealth of ideas and the terminology related to the area of phonology and phonetics, as well about learner-related issues regarding pronunciation and the practical aspects of teaching pronunciation in the classroom.

Reviewer: Yevgeniya Karpenko, PhD, senior lecturer, Zhytomyr state Ivan Franko university, Ukraine

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