

Ружица Ивановић
Филолошки факултет
Универзитет у Београду

Наслеђе 27 • 2014 • 225-228

FOCUS ON FOCUS ON ENGLISH PHONETICS
Čubrović Biljana & Tatjana Paunović (editors), *Focus*
on *English Phonetics*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars
Publishing, 2013, 295

Following in the footsteps of the previous editions – *Ta(l)king English Phonetics Across Frontiers* (2009, CSP), and *Exploring English Phonetics* (2012, CSP) – *Focus on English Phonetics* (2013, CSP) is a balanced collection of papers presented at the *Third Belgrade International Meeting of English Phoneticians*, a conference organized by Professor Biljana Čubrović and held at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, in March 2012. This comprehensive volume combines a variety of research papers on theoretical, experimental and applied phonetics and phonology, thus making a significant contribution to further research in these fields.

The editors of this publication, Professor Čubrović of the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, and Professor Tatjana Paunović of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, have selected 18 papers written by researchers from nine different countries, and classified them into four sections according to the level of analysis and subject-matter.

Part One – Phoneme and Beyond focuses on the segmental properties of English speech sounds, with three papers that approach the topic from different angles. The section opens with Professor Alan Cruttenden's state-of-the-art report on the application of dynamic Magnetic Resonance Imaging (dynamic MRI) in articulatory phonetics. The author describes the tongue position during the articulation of five English phrases recorded by MRI, with special reference to coarticulation features and variant realisations of /r/. Furthermore, Cruttenden makes an interesting observation that the dynamic MRI scans reveal that English velar plosives are articulated farther forward than it is usually considered. Undoubtedly, the procedure discussed in this paper opens a new door for future articulatory research.

By contrast, Andrej Bjelaković's paper takes us back to the 17th century and Early Modern English by providing an insight into the accent of Shakespeare's London. In order to illustrate the differences in pronunciation between Early Modern and present-day English, the author provides a detailed description of vowels, supported by the examples of phonemically transcribed Shakespeare's verses. The research findings confirm the general observation that the main differences between contemporary and Early Modern English

lie in their phonetic realization, while the two phonological systems prove to be remarkably similar. Moreover, many rural accents of Great Britain and Ireland still reflect certain pronunciation features of the reconstructed accent of the past.

Professor Chernogorova's paper on the production of English vowels /i:, ɪ, u:, ʊ/ by Bulgarian speakers makes a fine transition from Cruttenden's synchronic standpoint to Bjelaković's diachronic analysis. Following the results of a spectral analysis of articulated vowels, the author examines the degree of L1 transfer, which could be of special interest to teachers of English and language researches whose native tongue belongs to the South Slavic group of languages.

Part Two – Suprasegmentals and Beyond discusses suprasegmental features – intonation in particular, with four out of seven papers reporting their findings obtained using the PRAAT acoustic analysis software. The section opens with Stefano Quaino's acoustic analysis of the use of rising tones in Welsh English of the Gwynedd area, conducted with the aim to determine their distinguishing features. Likewise, Ken Ichi Kadooka applies the same method to examine the punch-line paratone in English jokes. In his comparative research paper, Professor Brian Mott analyzes the differences in the position of the nuclear tone in English vs. Serbian in a number of recorded utterances classified into different sentence types. The author concludes that the nuclear stress placement in English is affected by its more fixed syntax, as opposed to Serbian. In another comparative study of prosodic features in English and Serbian, Aleksandar Pejčić addresses methodological issues in the acoustic analysis of spontaneous speech, which became apparent during his research into the prosodic correlates of persuasive speech in Serbian and British political discourse. The paper provides useful information on how to prepare spontaneous speech material for software analysis, how to select suitable speech tokens, and how to handle disfluency issues and other errors made by the speakers. Moreover, Pejčić considers possible pedagogical implications of spontaneous speech analysis, which are relevant for language teachers.

The next two papers are concerned with theoretical issues in intonational research. Professor Vladimir Phillipov is interested in the status of intonation in the level approach to language structure, i.e. the hierarchical organization of language. After an outline of the theoretical framework, the author examines the behaviour of phonologically motivated emphatic structures in English, Bulgarian and Russian. In order to support his thesis that intonation can be viewed as a marked exponent of the grammatical category of case, Phillipov analyzes a number of examples in German and Russian. Professor Yulia Nenashva discusses different approaches to prosodic research and examines the realization of phonetic stereotypes in intonational patterns. The author provides an overview of definitions of linguistic stereotypes, and the results of a research study conducted at the Oxford University Phonetics laboratory, which show that intonational patterns are not mere sums of separate prosodic

elements, but rather complex structures of interrelated units, where the order in which these elements occur and interact is the most important.

Part Two ends with Professor Oksana Pervezentseva's paper on the impact of prosodic interference on communication between native and non-native speakers in situations of artificial bilingualism. The author focuses on the communicative-pragmatic types of utterances that are most likely to cause misunderstanding or communication breakdown. According to her findings, native speakers are most likely to perceive L2 learners' incorrect use of intonational patterns which express the emotional-modal aspect. In her conclusion, the author offers a strategy for teaching English intonation to L2 students. The applied approach presented in this paper serves well as an introduction to the next section of the book.

Part Three – Applied Phonetics and Beyond brings together papers on English phonetics, phonology, and pronunciation teaching. The section opens with Dr Patricia Ashby's experiences with the 'flipped classroom' method in her teaching practice. The term refers to the reversal of traditional teaching practice, whereby students watch online lectures at home and arrive in class already prepared for the topic to be discussed. In order to test the effectiveness of this method, the author compares the achievement of two groups of students, the 'traditional cohort' and the 'flipped cohort', and investigates their attitudes towards the new technique. Since the 'flipped cohort' students proved to be more successful in the final examination, and owing to the fact that all students were enthusiastic about the new method, the author concludes that the 'flipped classroom' has its place in university education.

Professor Rastislav Šuštarčić highlights the relevance of minimal pairs for pronunciation teaching and English-Slovene contrastive analysis. After a description of the main differences in speech sounds of the two languages, the author outlines the contrasts which Slovene students find particularly problematic. Lastly, the paper offers pedagogical approaches and activities related to the use of minimal pairs in pronunciation training.

Professor Tatjana Paunović investigates the use of prosodic cues to signal discourse topic structure (topic beginning, continuation, and ending) in the context of EFL learning. The author reports the results of a research study in which she compared the performance of L1 English and L1 Serbian speakers (who are also relatively proficient EFL students) in a reading task. Given that L1 Serbian speakers had problems using prosodic cues while reading texts in English, even when those cues were similar to the ones in their native tongue, the author concludes that these result from L1 prosodic transfer, and therefore need specific instruction and practice.

Professor Snezhina Dimitrova presents results of a survey into Bulgarian students' pronunciation preferences in relation to their spoken performance when imitating the model accents – British Received Pronunciation or General American. According to her findings, Bulgarian students were more consistent in imitating the RP accent (apart from the occasional failure to avoid rhoticity), while the biggest challenge for those who had chosen GA was to be

consistent in producing the vowel qualities in words of the LOT and BATH lexical sets.

The next two papers address other aspects of applied phonetics that are not directly related to teaching. Professor Biljana Čubrović explores whether the Serbian accent used in the film industry to mirror a strong Russian accent in English is credible from the phonetic point of view. The author provides an acoustic and auditory analysis of Rade Šerbedžija's accent, as recorded in his four films, with the aim of determining which phonetic features of the Russian EFL accent are present in it. According to her results, some of the most striking features of Russian English, such as palatalization, are not reflected in the actor's speech, and therefore he does not seem to be convincing enough from a linguistic standpoint. However, this discrepancy is disregarded by the international audiences, who still recognize his accent as Russian. The section ends with Isao Ueda investigating the phonetic similarity of English trademarks transliterated into Japanese, together with the problems the applicants for foreign trademarks face in the legal procedure. Namely, owing to the differences in the two phonological systems, Japanese examiners reject the trademarks that they consider phonetically similar and thus confusable, while the native speakers of English perceive them as being different. The author explains that the impression of similarity shared by the Japanese is caused by segmental, prosodic, and functional factors, which he illustrates with examples.

Part Four – Phonology and Beyond is devoted to phonological topics, with two papers discussing the relationship between phonology and morphology on the one hand, and phonology and orthography on the other. Professor Jelena Vujić examines the impact of phonology on the process of affixation, with a special focus on level ordering of affixes and restrictions in their combinations. The author refers to different theoretical approaches to English word-formation, from the transformational-generative point of view to the recent Optimality theory, all of which acknowledge the interdependency between phonology and word-formation. In conclusion, she discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each model. Professor Csaba Csides's paper ends the volume by showing that the distinction between tense and lax vowels in English is based on phonological evidence and orthographic justification. The author argues that phonological processes such as the Vowel Shift, Trisyllabic Laxness, Laxing by ending, etc., support the thesis that the categories of tense vs. lax are phonological rather than phonetic in nature. In the second part of his paper, the author turns to orthography by examining the sound values of English letters, and discussing the differences between the free and covered graphic positions.

Focus on English Phonetics presents a rich blend of empirical research and theoretical reflections that will be valuable not only for phoneticians and phonologists, but also for other linguistic researchers, graduate and postgraduate students, and EFL teachers. Finally, due to its international character and the contrastive analyses provided, this volume may also be of interest to many researches of languages other than English.