

Book Review : English Phonetics and Phonology: A self-contained comprehensive pronunciation course (3rd edition) Authored By - Peter Roach

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Abstract: *The book taken for review is a course book for beginners who are expected either to study in colleges or universities or practicing English language. The chapters are followed by short additional sections as well as notes on problems and further reading. There are brief notes for helping teachers wherever possible and the course also includes recorded material. There are overall twenty chapters and 283 pages. The course includes speech sounds, vowels, consonants, phonemes, syllables, stress, intonation including laboratory phonetics and phonology.*

Key Words: *course book, English language, speech sounds, phonetics, phonology.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Roach (2000) consists of a book with two audio CDs. The book has been published by Cambridge University Press. This is the third edition that is taken into account for review. The previous first and second editions were published in 1983 and 1991 respectively. The book includes 283 pages and twenty relatively short chapters, exercises, recorded exercises, answers to the written exercises, answers to the recorded exercises, recommendation of general reading, bibliography and an index. The stated purpose of the book is to work as a university level course book for teaching the pronunciation of standard British English or “BBC pronunciation” or Received Pronunciation. This book forms a part of a series of academic introductory text to language study. The title of the book clearly indicates that it focuses on the clear and simple presentation of the production and perception of the English phonetics and phonology. Potential readers of this book include language students as well as linguists. This book is also an essential tool for non-native speakers of English. Each chapter contains notes on problems and further reading so that the readers know how they can go further in studying the areas discussed in the chapters. There are also brief and relevant notes for teachers giving suggestions to the one who wants to produce his/her own supplementary material. This is followed by some written exercises to test the understanding of material provided in the chapters. The answers to these written exercises were given at the end of the book (pages 248-59). There are 19 Audio Units (AU) giving practice in pronunciation, discrimination and description. Comprehensive bibliography are reserved for the tutor’s book making it useful for the students.

2. Structure of the book:

When talking about structure, Chapters 1-7 introduce the individual segments, both consonants and vowels, along with the relevant phonetic and phonemic theory. Chapter 2 and 3 deals with vowels and Chapter 4 with some consonants. Roach adopts the usual British distinction between short vowels, long vowels. The voiced/voiceless distinction is also contrasted against the fortis-lenis distinction, in recognition of the fact that many ‘voiced’ consonants exhibit no acoustic voice quality; he adopts the term approximants for the segments /j/, /w/ and /r/. He also makes a clear distinction between syllabic consonants and those preceded by /ə/. The basics of articulation have been dealt with in Chapter 5 ‘The Phoneme’. This chapter is theoretical rather than practical. According to Roach, it is only by studying both the phonetics and phonology of English, it is possible to acquire a full understanding of the use of sounds in English speech. Chapters 6 and 7 presents articulatory phonetics with the fricatives and affricates, and nasals and approximants respectively. Here, he speaks about the problem of Glottalisation which is frequently found in the speech of younger speakers and that formulation of rules stating the contexts is not at all easy. Chapter 8 discusses the larger units of speech that is syllables and the prominence of vowel within it. Such theoretical information is conceived to be “necessary for everyone who needs to understand the principles regulating the use of the sounds of spoken English” (Roach, 2000, p.1). Chapter 9 discusses strong and weak syllables, which often cause problems for many non-native speakers. Roach have lately introduced the ‘Schwa’ vowel here as he wanted to present it in the context of weak syllables in general. Chapter 10 and 11 discusses stress in both simple and complex words, along with inflectional and derivational affixes. The subject of English stress is important because incorrect stress placement can cause intelligibility problems for non-native speakers. Chapter 12 is devoted to a discussion of weak vowel forms, the occurrences of which are contrasted against the occurrence of their strong forms. This is an entirely practical chapter. It serves to link phonetics and phonology to pragmatics and syntax. Chapter 13 draws some of the inherent problems in phonemic analysis. It also

introduces some distinctive features of English phonology. The chapter outlines whether we should identify affricates (/tʃ/ and /dʒ/) as one or two phonemes, how the symbols for diphthongs should be composed (e.g. two vowel symbols /əʊ/ or one vowel symbol plus one consonant symbol /əw/), whether syllabic consonants (e.g. at the end of bottle /batl/) should be listed as separate phonemes, how unaspirated plosives /p t k/ should be transcribed in clusters (e.g. /p/ in the word 'spill') etc. Chapter 14 briefly covers different aspects of connected speech, like, rhythm, assimilation, elision and linking, highlighting that 'there is a great deal of difference between the way words are pronounced in isolation and their pronunciation in the context of connected speech'. Chapter 15-19 discusses various aspects of suprasegmentals, primarily intonation, its forms, functions and some of the problems and controversies which arise when attempting to analyze and/ teach it. A total of five chapters are devoted to this topic demonstrating how difficult and complex the area is. The first section is devoted to some functions of English tones. The second section is devoted to tone-units. The third section highlights the analysis of the most difficult aspect: that of recognizing fall-rise and rise-fall tones when they are extended over a number of syllables. The fourth section is devoted to the attitudinal function, accentual function, grammatical function and discourse function intonation which is also extended to the next fifth section. The chapter's extensive concluding notes mention the fact that perhaps the most controversial question concerning English intonation is what its function is. The final chapter (20) explains laboratory phonetics as well as how accents can differ phonetically or phonologically and contrast BBC English with some other accents of Anglophone countries. Roach looks at the variation influenced by speaker's age, social class, educational background and style. The word 'accent' is often confused with dialect.

3. Merits:

One of the merit of this book is its explanations are clear, effective, very readable and concise. There is no overload of unnecessary teaching detail. Secondly, on the phonetics side, there are some excellent diagrams of the larynx and vocal mechanism. Face diagrams are of nicely used to illustrate the various consonant sounds. Thirdly, the examples are clear and presented in short, focused units. Fourthly, symbols and terminology are introduced progressively, as they are needed, which renders them less daunting to the novice reader and enables her to see beyond them. Fifthly, Roach makes his book easily accessible to the target readership, therefore achieving the objectives stated in the preface. Sixthly, the excerpts selected from the more specialist literature and the questions asked in the Readings section are interesting, relevant and often thought-provoking.

4. Weakness: The weakness of this book is that there is no reference to any historical processes. Moreover, the symbol /ʌ/ is defined as an open mid central vowel while the IPA clearly shows it as an open mid back unrounded vowel.

5. CONCLUSION: Overall, this new 3rd edition has been significantly improved over the previous edition, and provides a concise, teachable course book for teaching English as well as a useful reference for linguistics courses.

REFERENCES:

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