

Rogerson-Revell, P. (2011). *English phonology and pronunciation teaching*. London: Continuum. ISBN: 978-0-8264-2403-7. £19.99. 352 pp.

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The stated aim of this book is to provide “an accessible introduction to the phonology of English and its practical application to pronunciation teaching” (p. xi). It is designed to be used either as a course book or resource book by new and experienced English language teachers as well as applied linguistics students. It claims to provide teachers with guidance on what to teach and how to teach it based on a discussion of current issues and relevant research. The issues discussed all revolve around English as an International Language (EIL) or as a lingua-franca (ELF), which limits the scope of the discussion somewhat.

There are 15 chapters, with the first two providing the philosophical basis for the rest of the book. Chapters 3 to 12 cover phonetics and phonology while the remaining three chapters focus on pronunciation teaching. The first chapter sets the target context as EIL, and lays out the philosophy upon which the book is based. This chapter relies excessively on the work of Jenkins (2000) and her proposed lingua franca core (LFC), which Rogerson-Revell has clearly fully embraced. Little more than lip service is paid to other perspectives. While I have no difficulty with EIL from a political or philosophical perspective, there are a number of major problems from the perspective of phonological theory and practical classroom teaching. The LFC core proposes learners need to master a number of phoneme level features and tonic syllables, but does not present us with a theory of phonology or learning and teaching. This fact is made painfully obvious as one reads through the book. The effect of this approach is to remove the social and cultural contexts from communication, and to view the surface features of pronunciation as discrete sounds divorced from meaning, which in turn promulgates the misconception that pronunciation is essentially the mechanical production of sounds rather than primarily a cognitive skill. This is made clear in the Chapter 2 when we are told it is a given that “motor skills and automaticity are key to learning sounds” (p. 23).

The second chapter on research and L2 phonological acquisition continues to develop the case for EIL at the expense of a balanced literature review. Overall, the references are dated and the review limited to the point of being misleading. There is no mention of any theory which would shed light on what the learner has to actually do to learn pronunciation. It is unfortunate that the book seems to take on Jenkins’ pessimism that it is “so ingrained as to be unteachable” (p. 22). Indeed, the supposed level of difficulty seems to be just as important as the LFC in selecting what to teach. This is hardly a very positive note on which to start a book which one might hope would encourage pronunciation teaching.

Once the book moves onto the straightforward descriptions of aspects of phonology it becomes much clearer, and a number of useful exercises are

provided. The physical descriptions provided in Chapter 3 are clearly presented, along with very good activities to help students understand. The teaching implications are also clear. Chapter 4 focuses on consonants, and its content is clearly described. Chapter 5 examines the vowels of BBC English. The main teaching focus is on which vowels are most important according to the LFC. There are few ideas as to how they could be taught, but it is suggested that listening would be most appropriate.

Finally, in Chapter 6, there is some welcome clarification as to what a phoneme actually is. There is a good discussion and exemplification of how phonemes change in context followed by discussion of which models teachers might use, but the book gives little indication as to how they might be taught. Chapter 7 considers the syllable. Again the focus is on the LFC, which leads to a number of unsubstantiated assertions. Chapter 8 provides the reader with a review. Chapter 9 deals with word stress, where the unsupported assertion is made that pitch is the most important factor. Here, Rogerson-Revell struggles with Jenkins' rejection of word stress and the overwhelming evidence that it is important for intelligibility. Chapters 10 and 11 cover features of connected speech and intonation, followed by a review in Chapter 12.

The remaining three chapters of the book focus on teaching pronunciation. Chapter 13 is on pronunciation in the classroom, and provides an outline of the sub-skills that learners need to develop: noticing, discriminating, imitating, reproducing, contextualising, generating, and correcting. While I agree with this, I can't see how it fits in with the philosophical basis of the book. Up until now, there has been little acknowledgement of the cognitive and social aspect of pronunciation. The second half of the chapter provides a comprehensive review of activity types and techniques, and refers the reader to a number of useful books for practice exercises. All aspects of pronunciation are covered, regardless of their relevance to ELF. It is suggested that students be introduced to all suprasegmental aspects early on, which seems to conflict with the claims for the LFC.

After a cursory and rather unbalanced historical overview, Chapter 14 poses and answers a number of questions related to pronunciation teaching. There are a number of useful suggestions for integrating pronunciation into specific language learning areas and guidance on diagnosing learners' difficulties. Finally, in Chapter 15 pronunciation problem areas are discussed, firstly in terms of the features of English which may cause difficulties, followed by a summary of typical difficulties likely to be caused by a number of languages.

Overall, leaving the first two chapters aside, there are a number of useful explanations and exercises which one could dip into as a reference book. Unfortunately there are also a number of unsupported assertions. The book demonstrates that EIL is a philosophy, and not a coherent theory of pronunciation learning and teaching. As I am based in New Zealand, most of my students are not in an EIL situation, so I would not recommend the book. Even in a different

context I would not choose this as a course book because students would find it confusing. Its blind adherence to Jenkins' view of EIL and her LFC render a version of pronunciation and phonology which does not provide a coherent or consistent set of guidelines for the teacher.

Reference

Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.