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Book Review

Teaching and Researching English Accents in Native and Non-native Speakers, by Ewa Waniek-Klimczak and Linda Shockey (Eds.), Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, Springer, 2013, 244 pp., 140,39 €, ISBN 978-3-642-24018-8

According to Lippi-Green (1997), an accent can be influenced by the place in which its speakers reside; social class; socio-economic status; or a first language (L1). Intelligibility research examines the features of an accent that affect intelligibility in a given setting. Because of the differences among the phonological features of L1, a second language (L2), or even a third language (L3), it is reasonable to hypothesise that these differences may influence intelligibility and accentedness of learners' L2 or L3. Understanding the relationship of accented speech and intelligibility is essential for both theoretical inquiries into the nature of speech perception and evaluation of successful communication in the context of daily life. The findings of this research assist in prioritising the pronunciations that must be articulated as correctly as possible to avoid communication breakdown.

Teaching and Researching English Accents in Native and Non-native Speakers is an edited volume that attempts to look into L1, L2, and L3 from phonological, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and pedagogical perspectives. It moves beyond a simple discipline to incorporate different concepts, methodologies, qualitative and quantitative data, and viewpoints from multiple disciplines to advance fundamental issues or solve disputes in the real world. There is a delicate balance between research and teaching in this volume. The research findings can also inform teaching practices and enhance teaching quality.

The volume is organized into four sections: Part I: 'Pronunciation: Production and perception'; Part II: 'Pedagogy'; Part III: 'Phonology'; and Part IV: 'Sociolinguistics'. Part I, from chapters 1-6, centers on the production and perception of nonnative speakers' segmental and suprasegmental features of English, and how their speech influences native speakers' perceptions of intelligibility and accentedness. For example, Wrembel investigates the influence of learners' L1 (Polish) and L2 (English) on the acquisition of the L3 (French). The results show that both participants' L1 and their L2 phonologies noticeably affect their L3 performance. Rojczyk tests Polish learners of English for their perceptions of lexical stress by manipulating fundamental frequency (F0), vowel duration, and vowel quality. The results show that learners use vowel duration as an indicator for assigning lexical stress, but they identify lexical stress not involving the F0 cue used in their L1 phonetic system.

Part II, from chapters 7-10, highlights a number of empirical studies exploring the teaching techniques that can help learners improve their pronunciation. Pawlak compares the effectiveness of explicit and implicit corrective feedback on advanced Polish learners' English pronunciation. Szymanska-Czaplak and Wujec-Kaczmarek evaluate the teaching materials of English pronunciation used for Polish secondary school students. Henderson surveys how English pronunciation is taught in ten European countries.

Part III, from chapters 11-13, discusses several interesting but unsettled issues in phonetics and phonology. For example, Shockey looks into vowel duration and vowel quality of English long and short vowels from both native and non-native speakers' production and perception data. This paper contributes a solid and valuable overview of English long and short vowels from historical, phonetic, phonological, and pedagogical points of view. Ciszewski examines English vowels acoustically in different prosodic environments. The results find significant correlations between acoustic correlates of stress and the durations of stressed and pre-stressed vowels.

Part IV, from chapters 14-18, introduces some sociolinguistic approaches to exploring L2 pronunciation changes and growth. For example, Malarski investigates the dialects of English and explores the reasons that the Birmingham accent is perceived as less attractive and intelligent than other accents. The findings suggest that undesirable perceptions may be primarily related to the distinctive intonation patterns in Brummie. Zajac discusses how Polish learners colouring the Received Pronunciation accent accommodate their pronunciation when speaking with a Canadian English speaker, who uses two phonological features, tapping and rhoticity, commonly found in Canadian speech.

This volume includes a broad range of fascinating collections on English accents presented in an interdisciplinary manner. I believe it may be suitable not only for European readers, but also for Asian researchers, educators, teachers, and learners interested in broadening their views of different English accents around the world. It provides research on critical issues that may not have been systematically considered or investigated before. It also benefits educators or teachers by stimulating them to revisit the ways in which they can raise students' awareness of issues surrounding accents. Educators will also be motivated to develop and implement appropriate teaching strategies or materials for English learners in Asian contexts.

References

- Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. New York: Routledge.

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