

# Preface

The pronunciation of English keeps attracting the attention of researchers, teachers and learners alike. Surprisingly perhaps, the somewhat radical proposal that a native-speaker model should be abandoned as the goal for learners of English seems to have provoked more studies of pronunciation learning and teaching than ever before, with the field of applied phonetics expanding and incorporating new approaches and research perspectives. The studies included in this volume bear witness to the growth of the field, reflecting its major dual interest in, on the one hand, researching and, on the other, teaching second and foreign pronunciation. In fact, this division is far from straightforward and neither are the two processes mutually exclusive, as it is much rather a matter of focus than methods or aims of the study that make a particular contribution more research- or teaching-oriented. This combination of theory and practice, with the requirement for a sound scientific background as a prerequisite for practical solutions, follows from the work of Professor Włodzimierz Sobkowiak, whose inspiration for the community of English pronunciation researchers and teachers in Poland and abroad is gratefully acknowledged by the editors and contributors to the volume, many of whom decided to pay tribute to Professor Sobkowiak by continuing (or challenging) his line of research. Although, over the years, Professor Sobkowiak's interests have shifted from general English phonetics to other areas, including phonetics in dictionaries and online communication (see <http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek> for publications and other important facts), the landmark publication *English Phonetics for Poles* (1996) remains one of the most influential texts that he has authored.

It is therefore only fitting that the present volume should be divided into two major parts, namely *Teaching the Pronunciation of English* and *Researching the Pronunciation of English*, which, however, should be seen as complementing and permeating each other. This is because, since most of the contributors are past or present teachers of practical English phonetics, not only the part of the book devoted to pronunciation instruction but also this dealing with researching different aspects of teaching and learning pronunciation contains references to the instructed learning context. As regards the part *Teaching the Pronunciation of English*, it brings together seven papers touching upon various facets of pronunciation

instruction, ranging from learners' beliefs, through factors affecting this process, to different types of educational resources. Setting the scene, the first two papers report the results of questionnaire studies carried out among English majors in Poland, with Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Bielak concentrating on students' beliefs about pronunciation instruction in relation to language attainment, and Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk and Porzuczek focusing on the effect of gender and level of study on the attitude towards pronunciation. The next two papers move closer towards the process of pronunciation teaching itself, describing and researching the results of using new technologies in teaching pronunciation, with Baran-Łuczarska, Czajka and Cardoso examining the effectiveness of and the attitudes towards teaching L2 English phonetics with 'clickers', and Cunningham reporting the process of online pronunciation teaching to teachers. While all of the above contributions concentrate on advanced learners, future or present teachers of English expressing beliefs and working on their own pronunciation, the remaining three papers in this section talk about resources available to learners (Nowacka) and teachers (Tergujeff and Furtak). However, the focus is different. In her account of textbooks, CDs and CD-ROMs, Nowacka overviews materials for learners at different levels of English proficiency and with different needs, whereas Tergujeff looks at the role of textbooks in a specific setting of Finnish lower secondary school. A situation-bound account is also offered by Furtak, who explores the potential use of a modified transcription system for Polish learners.

The second part of the book, *Researching the Pronunciation of English*, brings together contributions discussing different aspects of pronunciation, from priorities in phonetics instruction, through the study of errors, to the suggestions as to the sources of difficulty, and ideas as to the ways of tackling them. As already mentioned, the difference between the papers in this section and the previous one is a matter of focus rather than main interest, with all contributions referring to research with practical implications for pronunciation teaching. The first two papers offer a good example of this type of research, as they take up a crucial theme of the aims for pronunciation teaching, looking for ways to specify priorities for L2 phonetics, with Scheuer concentrating on the criteria of accentedness, intelligibility and teachability, and Zajac exploring frequency. The notion of an error, crucial in the above studies, is further developed by Porzuczek, who looks at local and global errors on the basis of the most-often cited fragment of Sobkowiak's *English Phonetics for Poles*—the list of words commonly mispronounced. It is a sub-section of these words that is further explored by Waniek-Klimczak, who discusses the perception of an error as a possible indicator of advancement. A contrastive approach to vowels, proposed by Schwartz, aims at specifying areas of difficulty for Polish learners; a broader perspective is taken by Shockey, who points to the importance of larynx in the study of a foreign accent. Continuing the topic of a foreign accent, Rojczyk reports the results of an imitation study which shows that a selected feature of L2 can be transferred into accented L1 in advanced learners; and, finally, Dziubalska-Kołaczyk, Balas, Schwartz, Rojczyk and Wrembel argue that pronunciation can be taught more effectively through enhanced suppression of native language processes in imitation. With the final paper aiming to provide a yet

different perspective on successful teaching of pronunciation, the links between theory and practice are stressed yet again.

The editors are convinced that the papers included in the present volume will serve as an inspiration for further research into pronunciation learning and teaching, particularly such that would provide concrete pedagogical implications. Although there are voices that pronunciation teaching should no longer be the priority of foreign language education, mainly because the main focus at present should be on teaching English for international communication, this is surely not the case for the majority of philology students and even when intelligibility is the main goal, good pronunciation instruction can ensure that learners do in fact speak in a way that is understandable to their interlocutors.

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