

**García Lecumberri, M. Luisa & John A. Maidment.** *English Transcription Course.* London: Arnold, 2000.

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This book, as the title and introduction make clear, is intended for students of English as a foreign language who wish to improve their phonetic transcription skills. Since the authors had set themselves this practical objective only the most essential aspects of theory are discussed. The book begins with some basic principles (lessons 1 and 2) and then deals with stress, rhythm and weak forms (lesson 3), linking 'r' (lesson 4), syllabic consonants (lesson 5), elision (lesson 6), assimilation (lesson 7) and glottalization (lesson 8). Lesson 9 cannot be strictly regarded as such since no new material is introduced. Instead the lesson is made up of six complementary texts "for further practice". These might more simply have been grouped together under a single rubric since the same instructions are given in each case viz., "transcribe the following passage, including all we have seen in previous lessons (weak forms, sandhi 'r', syllabicity, elision, assimilation and glottaling)". The lessons include examples with commentaries on the transcription issues presented, exercises and various texts for transcription, the answers to which can be found in the Appendix.

A book of this type intended to teach and practise phonetic transcription is certainly not a novelty. There is already a wide range of publications concerned with English phonetics, among which the most noteworthy are Jones, Daniel. *Phonetic Readings in English.* Carl Winter. Universitätsverlag. Heidelberg. Germany, 1955, 1962; Tibbitts, E. Leonard. *Practice Material for the English Sounds.* Heffer, Cambridge, 1963; Scott, N. C. *English Conversations* in simplified phonetic transcription with intonation marking. Heffer, Cambridge, 1942, 1965, 1969; Arnold, G.F. & Tooley, O. M. *Say it with Rhythm* 1, 2, 3. Phonetic Readers. Longman, 1971; O'Connor, J. D. *Phonetic Drill Reader.* Cambridge English language Learning, CUP, 1973, 1976; Lewis, J. Windsor. *People Speaking.* Phonetic Readings in Current English, Cornelsen & OUP, 1977. Somewhat curiously none of these are cited by García Lecumberri and Maidment.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *English Transcription Course* is the special attention given to those aspects of phonology most likely to prove problematic for non-native speaking students of English i.e., stress, rhythm and sounds in the speech chain. Another feature that is bound to please students in particular is the fact that the transcriptions are accompanied by commentaries. It is not my view, however, that linking 'r' and glottalization (the authors choose to use the less familiar terms "sandhi 'r'" and "glottaling") merit entire chapters especially at the expense of other topics such as intonation, which is not even mentioned.

It also seems a pity that narrative texts are used exclusively and that these are, being narratives, excessively long. The authors give no indication of the criteria used for text selection but it would appear that they were chosen at random since on page 72 they state that: "Almost any passage of English prose could serve as an exercise: a piece of a modern

novel, a passage from a newspaper or magazine, even this paragraph". Finally, it should be said that in the answer key, the "edited autographic versions" add little or nothing.

**Cruttenden, Alan. *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*. 6th ed. London: Arnold, 2001, xix+339 pp.**

Reviewed by Antonio Lillo  
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If one could use the phrase 'classic text' at this point in the history of phonetics literature, A.C. Gimson's *An Introduction to English Pronunciation* would aptly fit the description. Since its publication in 1962 it has established itself as one of the most accessible and comprehensive accounts of RP, and this sixth edition, revised by Professor Alan Cruttenden of the University of Manchester, testifies to its on-going popularity among professional phoneticians and advanced students of English alike.

As in the previous edition, Cruttenden retains the original organization and approach of Gimson's work, the core of the book being constituted by a commendably full treatment of the vowels and consonants of RP, with a wealth of examples, articulatory descriptions, variants, chief sources and advice to foreign learners. In this updated edition, however, those parts of the book which had already been extensively revised in the fifth edition (1994) have been improved in several ways, especially the sections on the syllable and on phonotactics. These have been considerably enriched by the inclusion of relevant subsections on syllable constituency (pp. 50-51) and on the syllabification of word-medial sequences (pp. 244-245).

Other major additions include a new section on pronouncing dictionaries (pp. 317-318) and the illustration of the acoustics of vowels and consonants, with useful information on the formant frequencies for pure vowels in connected speech (p. 99) and spectrograms for vowels (pp. 100-101), obstruents (p. 157) and sonorants (p. 194). Another novel aspect of this edition is the treatment of current changes within RP (pp. 81-83), which Cruttenden breaks down into four categories, namely 'changes almost complete' (e.g. [eə] > [ɛ:]), 'changes well-established' (e.g. [u:] > [ʊ:]), 'recent innovations' (e.g. the increasingly frequent use of high rise terminals) and 'innovations on the verge of RP' (e.g. [ɰ] > [ʊ]). The coverage of the phonetic features of Estuary English (or 'London Regional RP' to use Cruttenden's term) is also most welcome, since this accent was only touched on in passing in the previous edition.

Even though a book of this type is not expected to dwell excessively upon stylistic variation, I believe both the relationship between Cockney, Estuary English and RP and the description of some of the new trends in RP would have been made somewhat clearer by appealing to the notion of style (cf. McArthur's [1998:117] description of Estuary English as an 'accent-cum-style'). The existence of a range of styles within each accent (RP or otherwise) is clearly stated in the section on stylistic variation (pp. 293-295) and further implied in Cruttenden's statement that "there are no categorical boundaries between the

three types of RP [*sc* General RP, Refined RP and Regional RP] nor between RP and regional pronunciations" (pp. 80-81). However, the fact that style and even such social parameters as sex and age come into play in the classification of the changes and innovations mentioned above should also be explicitly stated. To take an example, the realization of dark *l* as a vowel in the region of [ʊ], which Cruttenden regards as a pronunciation 'on the verge of RP', is indeed typically associated with Cockney and Estuary English, but is also a feature of casual RP. Quite why this pronunciation should be considered as 'on the verge of being acceptable as part of General RP' (p. 83) may not be altogether clear to foreign learners. They should be made aware that some features may be well-established in casual RP, but on the verge of being acceptable in another, more formal style of pronunciation.

Similarly, Cruttenden's claim that the coalescence of accented alveolar plosive and following palatal approximant (/t, d/ + /j/ > /tʃ, dʒ/) is 'well-established' in RP is also debatable. My impression is that such pronunciations as *tune* /tʃu:n/ and *endure* /ɪn'dʒʊə/, though increasingly used by younger speakers of RP, have a distinct Cockney or Estuarine flavour and are still strongly disapproved of by many speakers of General RP. Again, it would perhaps be more realistic to claim that this type of yod-coalescence may be heard in casual RP.

Bearing in mind that the book is widely used in phonetics and pronunciation courses around the world, it is welcome that Cruttenden has complemented the sections dealing with advice to foreign learners by introducing useful tips for Arabic, Cantonese and Bantu learners. A sprinkling of advice is also given to learners of such linguistic backgrounds as Thai and Malay. It is only very occasionally that relevant information that may be of interest to foreign students seems to be lacking. Thus in the section on neutralization (p. 46), a brief reference to the neutralization of /i: - ɪ/ and /u: - ʊ/ (e.g. *silly* /'sɪli/, *to evaluate* /tu ɪ'vælju:et/) would seem to be in order if only because the symbols /i/ and /u/, albeit not really phonemic, are now used in the two major pronouncing dictionaries (Jones 1997 and Wells 2000), as well as in a number of advanced learner's dictionaries (both these symbols were adopted by *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* in 1978) and phonology textbooks. Of these two neutralizations, only the realization of word-final unaccented /ɪ/ as [ɪ ~ i ~ i:] is briefly dealt with in two different sections (pp. 82, 107), yet no mention is made of other environments in which the /ɪ - i:/ opposition is commonly neutralized (e.g. in morpheme-final position before a vowel). In my view, the advice that learners can use either [i] or [ɪ] for the ending <y> in words like *pity* and *memory* (p. 109) should be qualified by noting that the vast majority of British and American speakers actually use [i].

I would venture to say that the additions and corrections any phonetician can make to this book are likely to concern minor points. The few observations I have offered here should make it sufficiently clear that this new edition is a *tour de force* of useful, well-explained information that accurately reflects both the current state of RP and the findings of recent research on pronunciation. Cruttenden's reputation as a phonetician plainly shows throughout the book. Once I started reading it, I could not help but wonder if perhaps Erasmus was mistaken when he said "as no one is so good that he cannot be made better,

so no book is so complete that it cannot be improved" (letter to John Botzheim, 1523).

### References

- Jones, D. (1997): *English Pronouncing Dictionary*. Edited by P. Roach and J. Hartman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1st ed. 1917).
- McArthur, T. (1998): *The English Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, J.C. (2000): *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Harlow: Longman (1st ed. 1990).