

Jensen, John T. Principles of Generative Phonology: An Introduction John Benjamins.

xii, 324. US \$42.95

*Principles of Generative Phonology* is, as the author writes in the preface, 'a basic, thorough introduction to phonological theory and practice,' intended for undergraduates in a first course in phonology. The emphasis here is on 'introduction'; the book is not, nor is it intended to be, a guide to the leading current issues in phonological theory. Indeed, the author has deliberately chosen to omit a good deal of what contemporary phonologists actually argue about. Thus, the book, though in some ways rather conservative, is at the same time revolutionary in running against recent trends in phonological theory.

The first chapter is a compact review of phonetics, the study of the sounds of language. Many introductions to phonology begin with such a review, but this one is uncommonly thorough, presenting the rudiments of articulatory phonetics (how sounds are produced) and acoustic phonetics (the characteristics of sounds and how they are perceived). Special attention is paid to phonetic alphabets, in particular the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Whether the symbol [ü] or [y] is used to represent the front rounded vowel in French *rue* 'street' is not the sort of issue that may captivate someone interested in the nature of language, but it is just the sort of thing that can be very confusing to beginning students. The book is quite good throughout at anticipating and explaining such potential sources of confusion.

The reader unfamiliar with linguistics might well wonder what else there is to phonology once we have described the various sounds used in speech. As Jensen puts in (p. 37), 'phonetics is about sounds, while phonology is about the organization of sounds in a linguistic system.' Phonologists are interested in how the sounds of a language pattern, and how they are represented in the mind.

Consider, for example, the pronunciation of the vowel in words like *ride* and *write*. In many dialects of English the vowel in *ride* is significantly longer than the one in *write*. In addition, notably in Canadian dialects, the vowel sound in *write* is higher and more centralized than in *ride*: this is the so-called ‘Canadian Raising’ that also affects the vowel in *out*, as opposed to *loud*, leading to the misperception on the part of Americans that Canadians pronounce *out* and *about* as *oot* and *aboot*. These variations in the sound of the vowel are predictable and depend on the character of the following sounds. We conclude that the vowels in *ride* and *write* are not two contrasting sounds of English, but rather predictable variants of a single sound. It is this more abstract sound that speakers store in their mental representations of both *ride* and *write*.

Phonologists disagree as to how to account for patterns like these. One school, that continues in the path of Chomsky and Halle’s classic *Sound Pattern of English* (1968), views sounds as being subject to a series of ordered rules that constitute a *derivation*. In a derivation, the emphasis is on the *input* to each rule: each rule acts on any input that matches its structural description.

Alternatively, we can put the emphasis on the *output*: rather than a series of ordered rules, we can see phonological representations as being subjected to an array of sometimes conflicting *constraints*. Phonological theory in the last twenty five years has struggled to accommodate both derivations and constraints, with some approaches using the two in various combinations, and some theories attempting to give up derivations altogether in favour of constraints acting in parallel.

The resulting turmoil in phonological theory has posed a challenge to introductory texts: which approach should take precedence, and how much of each should be presented? Recent texts have followed developments in the field, grafting more and more of the constraint-based approaches onto a derivational core, with mixed

results. Jensen's new text aims to present a thorough introduction to 'classical' derivational phonology, the idea being that the basic insights gained from this approach are indispensable to any theory of phonology. What the book gives up in proximity to the cutting edge of the field it gains in coherence and depth of explanation.

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