The Sound Structure of English (McCully)

CHAPTER 2: Website

CHAPTER 2: CONSONANTS (CONTRASTIVENESS)

COMMENT ON IN-CHAPTER EXERCISES

2.1, PAGE 20: Consider the structure that is a box of matches, including its contents. If I said to you 'All the matches in this box are similar', what allows me to make this claim?

- **The matches are all made of wood**
- **All have combustible heads**
- **All are around 2cm. long**
- **And the question is further answered in-text….!**

2.2, PAGE 22: You'll probably be aware – or you're coming to be aware – that on a daily basis you make many sounds that are *not* parts of the phonology of your variety of English. Can you give any examples of such sounds?

- **Rapidly-indrawn breath through rounded lips (indicating eg. surprise)**
- **'tut' of disapproval**
- **'brrr' ('I'm chilly' – a sound involving a *bilabial trill*)**
- **….and several others**

2.3, PAGE 25: We've got a small problem, in that we can't just redeploy the familiar alphabetic symbols to indicate the relevant consonant phonemes. Can you work out why not?

Because many of these letter-combinations are ambiguous when it comes to representing the spoken system: <ch> may be pronounced as 'sh' (<louche>), as 'k' (<Chris>) or as 'tch' (<much>); <th> may be pronounced as voiceless (<breath>, <teeth>) or voiced (<breathe>, <teethe>). For further commentary, see text.

2.3, PAGE 27: So far we only have a small list of consonants, ten in all. Of course you'll have noticed that there are several other consonants of English that haven't yet figured in our work. Can you work out what these other consonants are? And can you work out why the existence of these consonants couldn't have been deduced from the above exercise and its substitution frame?

This is fully answered in-text.

2.4, PAGE 29: To establish the existence of the consonant segments /w/ (*win*), /j/, /r/, /l/, /ŋ/, /ʒ/ and /ʤ/, what do we do? Precisely: we construct minimal pair tests. Try it.

This is fully answered in-text.

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CHAPTER 2: SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO END-OF-CHAPTER EXERCISES

Exercise 2.A. **You are set some simple transcriptions. In the text, I completed the first set of three transcriptions for you. Here is a selection (why should I do all the work?) of the rest:**

chin /ʧɪn/	*chest* /ʧest/	*pinch* /pɪnʃ/
shin /ʃɪn/	*shed* /ʃed/ (or /ʃɛd/)	*edge* /eʤ/ (or /ɛʤ/)
edging	*fishing* /fɪʃɪŋ/	*win* /wɪn/
whin /ʍɪn/	*winning*	*pending*
prince /prɪns/	*prints* /prɪnts/	*brittle* /brɪtl/
meddle	*tipple*	*bringing* /brɪŋɪŋ/
in which	*string*	

Exercise 2.B. **You need a tape recorder, dictaphone or other recording device for this one.**

You're on your own here – there's no way I can comment usefully on the recording(s) you might have made. One specific thing, though, is worth your attention. Researchers have found that men tend to report using more *local* feaures of speech – even when they do not in fact use such local features; women, on the other hand, seem to report using more *non-local* or *prestige* forms – even when they do not do so. Is that obervation true for the speech you've recorded? And if it is true, why might that be?

Exercise 2.C and D.

You are set exercises concerning 's' and 'z', 'f' and 'v'. You might at this stage like to access www.phonetics.ucla.edu/ (this is the late Peter Ladefoged's website, to which you were introduced in Chapter 1) and click on

http://www.phonetics.ucla.edu/course/chapter1.1/sounds1.1/peterssszzz.aiff

Exercise 2.E. In this chapter we've made a great deal of use of the procedure that uses minimal pairs to detect what phonemes exist in English. Can you think of any other way in which the sound-structure of your variety of English might be reliably – that is, scientifically - analysed?

There are a number of different ways we could attempt to analyse sound-structure, of course: (a) we could make recordings, and make precise measurements in the differences there were between eg. consonant sounds; (b) we could study X-rays of differences in pronunciation between consonants and vowels; (c) we could give our analysis a comparative twist, and see how the same words were pronounced in different language-families. For example, in the West Germanic language family, which includes English, Dutch and German, we could study differences in pronunciation of the word which is spelled in English <house> (Dutch <huis>, German <Haus>); (d) we could give our analysis an historical twist and look at evidence from the spelling of centuries-old varieties of English. For example, and again focussing just on the present-day word <house>, we might (well, we *would*) find evidence that at some point in the past the word was spelled differently, as <hūs>. We might infer – correctly, as it turns out – that the change in spelling meant that the word's pronunciation had changed over the centuries.

Links to other sites

Again, at this stage the most useful site to you is probably

www.phonetics.ucla.edu/

As well as accessing the 'ffffvvvv' exercise (see above), you should click on Ladefoged's Exercise 1.3, where pairs of words which differ in the pronunciation of their first consonants are pronounced (<thigh> and <thy>, <Sue> and <zoo>…)

A further interactive site, at which you can browse pronunciation (including the production of discrete consonant sounds) and watch QuickTime films of the production of those same sounds is

http://international.ouc.bc.ca/pronunciation/

(Thanks to my former colleague Wander Lowie for this link.