Foreword PHONUS 2 (1996)

This volume of PHONUS contains the proceedings of the workshop "English Pronunciation Training at German Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics" held at the Sonnenberg International Centre, St. Andreasberg/Harz from the 25th to the 28th of September 1995. The workshop was jointly organised by Tony Addison of the English Section at the Language Teaching Centre of the University of Göttingen and Bill Barry of the Department of Phonetics at the University of the Saarland (Saarbrücken).

The workshop may be seen as a continuation, or rather a revival, of the activities in the field of pronunciation teaching at tertiary level that took place in Germany in the 1970s, when two similar meetings took place - the first a workshop for English lecturers on the teaching of English pronunciation, which was held at Cologne in 1972 under the aegis of the British Council, the second an AKS workshop on pronunciation teaching in general at the Language Centre of the University of Bonn in 1974. This flurry of interest in pronunciation training in the early 1970s was, it should be noted, closely bound up with the concurrent widespread installation of language laboratories in German universities and the need to find appropriate uses and develop suitable materials.

Since that time, virtually nothing has been done to provide opportunities for exchanging experiences and discussing potential innovations, and thus to support the initiatives of individual teachers involved in English pronunciation training at German universities. As a result, teachers of pronunciation, whether they want to or not, work for the most part in isolation, with virtually no possibilities for airing their problems and difficulties with others in similar situations. And while language laboratories continue to be widely used in pronunciation training, little progress has been made since the 1970s in developing new materials and approaches - some of the programmes developed, and even published commercially, at that time have, it is somewhat surprising to find, by no means been supplanted: they are still in use today.

This decline of interest in pronunciation training in German universities was, until recently, reflected in a general neglect of pronunciation in the field of teaching English as a foreign language as a whole. The last few years have been characterised, however, by a marked revival of interest, as can be seen from the date of publication of many of the titles listed in the bibliography included in this volume. In Germany itself, renewed awareness of the relevance of pronunciation training as an essential component of language teaching is reflected in the Colloquium "Zur Rolle von Phonetik und Intonation im Unterricht Deutsch als Fremdsprache"(DaF), organised by the Goethe Institut and the Gesellschaft für Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft (GAL) in the Spring of 1993. It has also been recently illustrated by the inclusion, for the first time, of a phonetics section at the most recent DaF conference, which was held at Leipzig University in August 1993.

The Sonnenberg workshop was intended, among other things, to extend the revival of activity relating to English pronunciation training in general to the narrower context of higher education in Germany and, for the first time in more than twenty years, to provide a forum specifically organised for interested colleagues to discuss common problems and issues. That there was indeed a need for such a forum is evident from the fact that of those colleagues to whom invitations were sent (about 150 in all) just over a third responded and either attended the workshop itself or completed the pre-workshop questionnaire (see below). When one bears in mind that a considerable proportion of those involved in pronunciation training are in fact part-time teachers (Lehrbeauftragte), the size of this response is all the more gratifying.

While the format of the Sonnenberg workshop followed the general pattern of the previous meetings mentioned in the first paragraph, the organisers decided from the moment of conception to introduce two important innovations. In the past there has been much talk on a theoretical level of interdisciplinary co-operation and cross-fertilisation in the field of foreign-language teaching. Only
on rare occasions, however, has theoretical discussion been translated into practice. With regard to
pronunciation training the contribution and influence of the discipline of phonetics are long-
standing and unquestioned. Yet at the same time, pronunciation teachers have very rarely looked
beyond the boundaries of their own field for other sources of ideas, approaches and methodologies.
The organisers shared the view that there are in fact at least two related disciplines which could
potentially make important contributions to pronunciation training: speech therapy (Logopädie,
Sprachheilkunde) and speech training (Sprecherziehung, Sprechwissenschaft). They decided,
therefore, to invite a representative of each of these two disciplines to give a paper at the workshop.
Both contributions turned out to be highly interesting and stimulating and met with a lively
response from the audience, thus confirming the initial hopes of the organisers.

As part of the preparations for the workshop, the participants were asked to complete a detailed
questionnaire about their current teaching practice. In all, fifty completed questionnaires were
returned and a summary of the most important findings was presented at the opening plenary
session. We have refrained from including this summary in the workshop proceedings, partly
because the findings of the survey were based on only a limited sample and partly because the
picture that emerged was so heterogeneous.

The proceedings presented in this volume are the revised versions of oral presentations given by
participants at the workshop. The authors were specifically requested by the editors to include -
explicitly or implicitly - summaries of important points raised in discussion. There are four sections:

Section I consists of one short paper given at the opening plenary session. The purpose of this paper
was to set the tone of the meeting and to give participants the opportunity to "get things off their
chests" in a general free-for-all. The informal, anecdotal character of the paper meant that its
purpose was admirably served and many of the issues raise in the initial discussion that followed
were to recur throughout the workshop.

Section II contains the three papers that look at pronunciation training from a wider perspective,
that is, in the light of external, but related disciplines. These are the two papers mentioned above
which examine the relationship and parallels between pronunciation training on the one hand and
speech therapy and speech training respectively on the other. The third paper is a discussion of the
fundamental phonetic issues underlying the acquisition of foreign-language pronunciation.

Most of the presentations given at the workshop are to found in Section III. A wide range of topics
was covered, with the result that it has not really been possible to structure the section in any
meaningful way. For this reason the papers are presented here in alphabetical order by author. In
almost all cases the subject of the paper is immediately evident from its title. One further comment
needs to be made: not all the oral presentations given at the workshop have been written up for
inclusion in this volume - a number of those participants who gave presentations rightly felt that the
nature of their contributions was such that a written version was not feasible or would even be
meaningless (e.g. presentations consisting of video recordings for analysis).

Section IV contains a select bibliography of relevant and recent publications which it was felt
would be of interest to participants and/or readers of these proceedings.

The volume concludes with a brief afterword where we outline a number of directions which, in our
opinion, further work relating to pronunciation training could profitably take.

As editors we would make one final comment. We were well aware that most, if not all, of those
colleagues who have contributed to these proceedings are first and foremost practising teachers
fully engaged in carrying out their professional duties and functions. In many cases, therefore, they
have had little practice and experience in preparing written accounts of their activities and ideas.
The resulting collection of papers is, therefore, necessarily variable with respect to approach and
style. Several contributions differ considerably and refreshingly from the usual run of academic
writings. We have consciously refrained from suggesting severe stylistic revisions in the realisation
that liveliness and spontaneity are a true expression of the commitment of the authors to their
difficult and demanding task.

Tony Addison and Bill Barry
Göttingen and Saarbrücken in September 1996