Phonetic transcription is widely used as a pronunciation teaching tool in many higher education institutions in Europe, where large numbers of advanced students in English language and linguistics programs are expected to acquire transcription skills, normally at the phonemic level, with some insight into allophonic variation. Broad transcription is also a regular component in MATESOL phonology-oriented courses in the U.S., as Murphy (1997) reports.

There has long been a need for a book that offered substantial practice in these skills, and English Transcription Course certainly seems to provide the means to achieve them. One may argue that doing transcriptions is not conducive to pronunciation learning per se, and there is to my knowledge no empirical evidence to support this idea, although there is some indication that students perceive transcription exercises as highly beneficial. For instance, Edwards (1992: 226) found that learners rank transcription activities as the most useful, only second to laboratory work. The authors of the volume claim, I think quite rightly, that phonetic transcription is particularly useful for raising learners’ awareness of the radically different pronunciation of words in citation and in context (i.e. connected speech). A more questionable aim proposed for phonetic transcription is that of auditory training, a claim made by Ashby et al. (1995: 171).

The linguistic framework of the handbook is grounded on the transcription usage commonly known as the Gimson-O’Connor system, exemplified by two excellent
pronunciation dictionaries, Roach and Hartman (1997) and Wells (1990), taking
so-called RP English as the accent model. Choosing this accent model has both
advantages and disadvantages; on the positive side, as the authors point out in the
Introduction, RP has been charted and described linguistically, and has been
the teaching standard both in and outside of the U.K. for many decades. The
sociolinguistic limitations of RP should not be overlooked; only an estimated 5%
of the population of the U.K. are natives of this accent, and it is being increasingly
challenged as a pronunciation model in BSL contexts.

Linguistically, the problem with this model is that idiosyncratic features like vowel
monophthonging, smoothing, intrusive r, and plosive assimilation, all of them
covered in the book, are restricted to (some versions of) RP, and are blatantly
incompatible with other widespread accents of English.

The volume consists of an Introduction, a Glossary, a Bibliography, and 9 units
labeled ‘lessons’, probably to stress its ‘course-like’ nature. The structure of each
lesson includes a very clear and to-the-point presentation of a connected speech
topic, supported with relevant examples. Then a sample transcription follows,
which contains several instances of the process, conveniently highlighted. This
sample transcription is supplemented with comments, as is the rest of the texts to
be transcribed. Then more texts (sometimes sequences of sentences) for
transcription follow. There is an answer key that is especially helpful because it
provides the model transcription and relevant comments. There are over 40 texts
for transcription; 82% of the exercises have a passage format, about 10% of the
exercises involve sentence-level transcription practice, and 8% word level. The
average length of these passages is between 450 and 500 words. A minor criticism
in this respect is that in the Introduction "a number of exercises of various types"
are announced (p. 1), an announcement not fulfilled in the subsequent chapters
of the book, where the vast majority of activities are transcriptions of texts.

The Introduction and lessons 1 and 2 offer a succinct but very clear description
of the phonetic symbols and basic terminology of phonetics. The important
difference between citation and connected speech forms of a word is excellently
explained, and each of the lessons deals with a single connected speech process.
One problem I see here is that transcriptions are introduced assuming the reader’s
familiarity with sound to symbol correspondences, an assumption that in some cases
will not be true. Because the volume is presented as a course, the reader should
be provided with prior training in establishing the appropriate links between the
notation symbols and the sound-letter relationships for which they stand, given that
transcription is expected to happen from the very beginning of the course. Before
transcribing passages, the learner in a transcription course should probably have
the opportunity to master more basic tasks.

Lesson 3 deals with stress, rhythm and weak forms, but it focuses mainly on weak
forms of function words. In the pedagogic tradition mentioned, a great deal of
attention is devoted to describing and systematizing the form and function of these
weak forms. It is not clear, however, whether failure to reduce function words
hinders intelligibility in the speech of learners, at least when English is used among
non-native speakers (Jenkins 2000: 146-148). Language produced by native
speakers, on the other hand, is problematic for non-native listeners who typically
have trouble with reduced speech that affects function words, some very frequent
lexical words, and even entire phrases. Another criticism is that sentence stress is
not explained but is marked in the transcriptions; the reader is left with no clear
criteria for marking stress in utterances in the passages for transcription.

Lessons 4 and 5 respectively introduce sandhi r and syllabic consonants. Lesson
6, dealing with elision, could have been usefully related to Lesson 3; this would
have assured a clearer association between this connected speech feature and
rhythm, and more generally with stress. In addition, only schwa deletion is
mentioned, while the broader concept of unstressed vowel would be more helpful
(cf. “medicine” or “aspirin”). Lesson 7 covers assimilation phenomena, mostly
within plosives in contact, and Lesson 8 introduces glottalling. The final unit,
Lesson 9, offers exercises for further practice, all of them in the form of passages
to transcribe.

Exercises make up the bulk of the book (79 pages), and the remaining 77 pages
constitute an Appendix, with answers to the exercises. This means that half of
the text is devoted to the answer key. A volume that is entitled “course” and whose
chapters are called “lessons” should include some type of testing of the material
and exercises, perhaps in the form of self-evaluation at the end of each unit.

Despite the minor criticisms noted, this book is an excellent resource for
transcription practice, is clear in its layout and content, and responds to the needs
of learners and teachers who want to acquire or improve on their transcription
skills.
**Reviews**

**Works cited**


---

**INTRODUCING TRANSLATION STUDIES: THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS**

Jeremy Munday
(by Mª Pilar Mur Dueñas. University of Zaragoza)

In his work, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, Munday offers a valuable compilation of the main analytical frameworks and theories that have evolved since Translation Studies came to be regarded as a new, independent discipline worthy of academic research. This volume has been designed to be used as an introductory university coursebook. As such it will be of particular interest for teachers, students and, very especially, for novel researchers in the field.

The book is divided into eleven chapters, that—in an attempt of gaining clarity and precision—Munday develops following the same scheme. After an introductory chart in which the key concepts and ideas to be dealt with are summarised, the corresponding theories and approaches are analysed and evaluated. A case study together with its discussion follows. An interesting feature of this book is the great diversity of languages—English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Punjabi— and of genres that Munday examines in his case studies. These include an analysis of passages translated from the Bible, fragments from the novel *Harry Potter* and from the prose of García Márquez and Proust, a tourist guide, a cookery book for children and several official documents. After the case study, Munday offers a concise summary of the main points discussed followed by useful section on relevant further reading designed for researchers. He ends each chapter with a series of questions and commentaries aimed at encouraging his readers to launch out on their own reasearch.