

Book Review

Costin-Valentin Oancea. *Contemporary American English: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology*. Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2022, 200 pp.

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The book under review, *American English: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology*, consists of five chapters, followed by a glossary, an index and the references.

The first chapter, “Varieties of English: the origin of American English” (pp. 11-44) briefly tackles the evolution of American English, taking into account the sociocultural, political and economic factors that have contributed to the shaping of American English as we know it today. Included here is also a discussion of regional, social and ethnic dialects of American English (with a focus on African American Vernacular English), vocabulary and spelling differences between British English and American English. The chapter ends with a brief review of standard and non-standard English.

In the second chapter, “Language, linguistics, grammar” (pp. 45-77), the author embarks on a journey across the intricate areas of language, linguistics and grammar with a view to drawing a distinction between these three concepts. One of the most important theories that has shaped the domain of linguistics in the twentieth century, i.e., structuralism, is briefly highlighted followed by prescriptive and descriptive approaches to grammar. Also addressed are the parts of speech (with a focus on the difference between lexical and function words) and the parts of a sentence. The final section of this chapter presents English as an SVO language.

Chapter 3, “The sounds of language: phonetics” (pp. 78-107), represents an introduction to the study of phonetics. The three branches of phonetics are presented, but the focus is only on articulatory phonetics, as the author acknowledges in the first part of the chapter. The author discusses the vowel and consonantal system of American English and mentions the criteria used in describing consonants and vowels. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to phonetic transcription and the International Phonetic Alphabet.

As the title suggests, Chapter 4, “The sound patterns of language: phonology” (pp. 108-128), delves into the study of phonology. The author starts by defining phonology and the concepts that lie at the heart of phonology, i.e., phonemes and allophones. The second part of the chapter is

devoted to classes of sounds (*obstruents* and *sonorants*) as well as consonant phonemes, consonantal allophones and vowel phonemes. The last part of this chapter tackles feature-specifications for American English consonants and vowels, followed by several feature-changing rules (e.g., assimilation, elision, dissimilation).

The last chapter, “Word formation: morphology” (pp. 129–173) focuses on the area of morphology. Important concepts in morphological analysis, for instance, morphemes, allomorphs, are discussed at length. Included here is also a section on the interface between phonology and morphology. Several derivational processes are presented in the second part of the chapter (e.g. *prefixation*, *suffixation*, *compounding*). The author also explains the difference between compounds and phrases, as well as morphological anaphora. The chapter ends with a section on inflectional morphology versus derivational morphology.

Costin Oancea’s book *American English: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology* is an introductory textbook designed for undergraduate students. Its main aim, as the writer acknowledges, is to introduce students to the study of linguistics in general and the evolution of American English. The most salient phonetic, phonological and morphological features of contemporary American English are presented in easy-to-follow way. The accurate description of key concepts, the clear and lively style, the detailed glossary, all will be useful in guiding students for assignments or revision during exams. The book is a welcome contribution to the ever-growing study of American English for which the author is to be commended.