

A REVIEW OF ENGLISH CONSONANTAL PHONOLOGY FOR
HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS IN TAIWAN

by 6408

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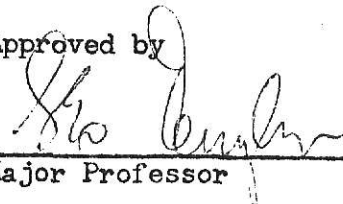
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

Today in Taiwan it is a rare discussion of English language teaching problems that fails to make reference to the views of descriptive linguistics, but the fact is that classrooms are still manned largely by Chinese teachers of English who do not have access to the benefits of applied linguistics, and whose own proficiency in the language is not perfect. This is the case in the school operated by my family in the southern part of Taiwan. Our school has about 2,500 students at the junior and senior high school level and is oriented to the commercial curriculum and business training. Five hours per week instruction in English is compulsory for all students, in line with national requirements for accreditation. There is a great problem for our teachers to help students pronounce English sounds with anything like intelligibility, when even they themselves have trouble producing them adequately.

There has been a good deal of work in contrastive analysis of English and Mandarin, and of English and Formosan, but it is scattered in the literature and largely unavailable to high school teachers such as those in my family's school. There is a need for a practical review of English phonology, then, for the junior and senior high school teacher in Taiwan who has both speakers of Mandarin and speakers of Formosan as students in classes in English. This report is an attempt to collect and synthesize some of the otherwise atomistically distributed information on dealing with problems in pronunciation of English encountered by both Mandarin and Formosan speakers, for the convenience of junior and senior high school teachers in Taiwan. If this review is also useful to other students and teachers at other levels and

in other places, so much the better, but it is the Chinese teacher of English in the high school in Taiwan that we have specifically in mind and to whom this report is specifically addressed.

Though consideration is given to such other aspects of phonology as vowels and intonation as they come to bear on the realization of consonants, primary attention is given here to the consonants. This limitation is largely arbitrary, occasioned by considerations of scope. A review of other aspects of phonology is certainly needed, but is not possible to include here.

1.2. Review of Literature

Since World War Two the teaching and learning of English has developed as a popular business in every corner of the world and many linguists have given much attention to the linguistic problems in teaching and learning English phonology. We can find many books concerned with the contrastive analysis approach to the teaching of English phonology which are very useful to this report. Some important ones are as follows:

1.2.1. Studies of English Linguistics and Phonology

Bloomfield (1933) in his major work states that the first step in the description of a language is phonology. He views vowels and consonants as primary phonemes, stress and pitch as secondary phonemes. In chapter five Bloomfield describes the English consonants comparing them with consonants of some European languages from the view point of articulatory differences. Trager and Smith (1957) represent in many ways the linguistic developments since Bloomfield. They set up an analysis of the sound system of American English including stress, pitch, and juncture. They deal with consonants and consonant clusters in page twenty-nine through thirty-five. Their widely accepted analysis of English providing a stable phonemic system accounting for