Vidéo 1 - « Course Introduction »

Vidéo 1 is available at http://frenchforthought.com/Phonologie/phonologie_001.html

Transcript

Jean-François Duclos
Hello, I'm Jean-François Duclos, professor of French at MSU-Denver, and author of this course on French phonetics and pronunciation. I am with my colleague Andrew Pantos, professor of Linguistics at MSU-Denver as well. In this short video, we're going to introduce you to a few key concept of phonetics that you will need to understand and use during this course.
First of all, what is phonetics?

Andrew Pantos
Phonetics is the study and description of speech sounds. There are 3 main branches: articulatory, auditory, and acoustic. Articulatory phonetics deals with the manipulation of our articulators in order to create the speech sounds. Auditory phonetics deals with how we perceive speech sounds, and acoustics phonetics deals with the sound waves themselves.

Jean-François Duclos
What is the difference between phonetics and phonology?

Andrew Pantos
Phonetics is concerned with describing speech sounds exactly as produced and/or perceived. Phonology is concerned with speech sounds that are psychologically real to speakers of a particular language. For instance, the final sound for the word *tap* either can be produced as [tɑpʰ], [tɑp̚], or [tɑʔ]. Those are produced in three different ways but are generally interpreted as the same sound in the minds of English speakers. Phoneticians would focus on the differences in these three productions. Phonologists would be interested in the underlying sound that they all refer to.

Jean-François Duclos
What do phoneticians and phonologists do?

Andrew Pantos
Phoneticians study speech sounds in a variety of ways. Phonologists try to figure out which sounds are meaningful in a particular language.

Jean-François Duclos
Why, in phonetics, prosody, that is to say the rhythmic rules of a language is as important as sound production?

Andrew Pantos
Prosody is something we key into as native speakers of a language without realizing it. No matter how well you produce the individual sounds of a language, you cannot approximate the speech of a native speaker until you learn the rhythm of the language. Sometimes incongruent prosody will lead to a complete lack of understanding of what you're trying to say.

Jean-François Duclos
If you are not a native speaker, what sounds are difficult to pronounce in English? Can you tell us why?

Andrew Pantos
It all depends on your native language. Every language has its phonemic inventory and rules of co-articulation. If a sound is completely foreign, it may be hard to produce. If a sound is very similar—but not exactly the same—then it may be hard to produce the sound exactly as it is produced in the other language. English has a few sounds that are somewhat rare cross-linguistically. Those are our rhotic [ɹ], and our interdentals [θ] and [ð]. In addition, some foreign speakers can have trouble with our post-alveolar sounds [ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, and dʒ].

Jean-François Duclos
And what words in particular are difficult to pronounce?

Andrew Pantos
Words with those sounds may be difficult, as well as words that have liquids [l, ɹ] and the glides [w, j] potentially separating syllables. For instance, the words 'towel', 'owl', 'squirrel', 'mayor'. Even native speakers of different dialects of English produce those words in a number of ways.

Jean-François Duclos
Last question: What is a diphthong and why is that important in English?

Andrew Pantos
A diphthong is two vowels produced without an interceding consonant. They are important in English, because all of our tense vowels (so-called 'long' vowels) tend to be produced as diphthongs. For example, the word 'say' is produced as [seɪ] and 'go' is produced as [goʊ]. Since this is not done in most other languages, English speakers need to be careful not to impose this English rule when speaking another language. For instance the Spanish word for taco is [tako], not [tʰakʰoʊ].