

PERCEPTION AS AN AID IN TEACHING GERMAN PRONUNCIATION

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The speaker has for a number of years concerned himself with a study of various aspects of German vowels, including vowel perception, phonetic and phonemic considerations, and problems in teaching German pronunciation. Results of these efforts have already been reported in previous phonetics and linguistics congresses. These efforts, in particular those in vowel perception, have now also prompted the undertaking of the writing of a new phonetics instruction manual intended primarily for American students of German.¹ This manual differs from other phonetics instruction manuals in its approach since it is based primarily on perception as both a tool and criterion in the presentation and learning of German sounds. This paper thus concerns itself with a description of the principles underlying this approach in applied phonetics in recognizing the role of perception in learning German pronunciation.

The speaker has long asserted that perception differences underlie and parallel production difficulties. This approach rests in large part on this premise. A perception test based on one already developed will aid in establishing particular perceptual difficulties especially for vowels and can be used to measure progress in eliminating certain perceptual errors.² Furthermore, results of perception tests given to both native Germans and non-native students of German have influenced greatly the manner in which sounds are treated in this approach, as well as the sequence of their introduction and the nature of the drill materials used. Emphasis is placed as much as possible on the difficulty of each sound from a perception standpoint and on perceptual tendencies and interference difficulties American learners have shown in regard to that sound. Further details of this approach are given in the paper.

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- (1) The manual is co-authored by H.H. Wängler and is tentatively titled German Pronunciation: A Phonetics Instruction Manual. The publisher and publication date will be released at the congress.
 - (2) The use of this test in teaching German pronunciation was described in considerable detail in a paper presented by the speaker at IPS-77 (Miami Beach, December 1977) and titled "A Perception Test as a Diagnostic Tool in Teaching German Pronunciation."