

A note on reviews and reviewers

1. It is a real mystery why the *Linguist List* accepted and published a ‘review’ of our book on *German Pronunciation & Accents* (2016²), written by a guy, whom we will call ‘Mr Yolk’ (or, in Dutch, ‘Heer Dooier’ – ie Franz Dotter): https://linguistlist.org/issues/28/28-5087.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.

This ‘clever reviewer’ of ours must have vaguely read (probably skipping many pages) and wrongly understood our whole book, because of his clearly poor previous knowledge of even basic phonetics.

What he says is something like complaining about the fact that a cookbook only provides recipes, instead of actual tasty meals. Or, perhaps, because most recipes do not include the use of... yolk. Some friends suggest to sue that guy.

All in all, what he does is similar to criticizing Picasso because he did paint like the Flemish painters, or vice versa.

Other, more forgiving, friends suppose that he simply stopped taking his prescribed medicines. For the time being, the most important thing is to establish the truth on what he says about our book and what the book itself actually gives.

However, ‘kindness’ for ‘kindness’ –or ‘unkindness’ for ‘unkindness’– be that as it may, here is what we think inevitable to do, feeling confident on really straightforward people.

2. Thus, this document has been prepared as a kind of explanatory answer aiming at correcting the wrong assertions (or, rather, accusations) written by a clearly ‘unauthorized staff member’. However, we seriously doubt that that guy may be able to understand all this. Anyway, it may serve as a necessary caveat for people who might happen to read his ‘original’ series of ungrounded claims, due to continuous misunderstandings of our book.

That ‘review’ ended like this (but people who can really see the original book, part of which can be freely downloaded from our *canipa.net* website, can certainly make their own considerations.

He wrote: Summarizing, Caneparis’ [sic!] book shows so many phonetic inadequacies, methodologically questionable shortcomings, basic contradictions in the model itself, or crooked statements (cf. the definition of variants and their evaluation) that it cannot be positively evaluated. Conversely, the readers have to be warned not to take the author’s transcriptions as an adequate representation of today’s German variants. Adding the sociolinguistic comments on diverse variants and the unclear relation of normative and descriptive factors, the book is a danger for linguists and students to be misled completely when trying to get information about German, phonetically and sociolinguistically.

3. Thus, we always have to keep in mind his own problems. In fact, he is not able to clearly distinguish terms such as *sound*, *phone*, *taxophone*, *phoneme*, and *di-*

aphoneme. Otherwise, he would not run the risk of writing so many mistakes and self-evident falsities. And he does not even know what *phonemic diphthongs* and *phonetic diphthongs* are.

He also proves that he does not even know the difference between *dialect* and *accent*. In fact, he did not understand that we present regional accents as simple variants of the same phonemic system, while dialects are really different ‘languages’ with their own systems. Even young people of fifteen years of age understand that by themselves, after simply reading (and enjoying) our books.

He also missed the chance to normally understand what in our books is meant for *neutral*, *traditional*, *mediatic*, *international*, and *native-like international* accents (among others, perhaps too many for him).

Nor did he catch the fine useful distinction we make between *normative* and *normalized* transcriptions. This is probably due to an incomplete preparation on the subject, which has nothing to do with his own one, ie deaf sign languages. In fact, they are worlds apart: phonotactics is completely grounded on linguistic sounds, while a deaf sign language only considers visual representations of concepts and spelling.

Following only his own crooked thoughts, instead of our expositions, he also ignores the principles of geolinguistic cartography.

4. Hoping to be convincing and (perhaps in his mind) smart, he objects that no audio files are indicated or provided. Should he be able to really understand and adequately interpret both our method and symbols, he would not repeat his usual mistake to blame us for his own professional gaps.

We used so many recordings directly collected for all the regional (and foreign) accents, which we accurately described, by means of our *canIPA* symbols and very many clear and different diagrams. Perhaps, he is not even able to collect some of his own Salzburg and Klagenfurt areas?

High-school and university students do that without problems, and those of them who are ‘talented’ in our sense, once they free themselves from defective, incomplete, and castrating, traditional teaching, readily, realize –and declare– that our symbols and diagrams are what they were looking for. Also well selected youtube files can serve, for a start.

5. It is not even worthwhile trying to clarify certain other objections, which are not such if one actually reads our books (or simple chapters), without being blinkered by insufficient preparation and absurd preconceptions.

Let us only add that in our descriptions we show both taxophones and all possible variants found, depending on their frequency, by showing them in convenient and well-considered normalized ways (but avoiding the messy and confusing things we find in usual acoustic treatises, based on debatable recordings of single speakers).

According to our ‘illuminating’ reviewer our transcriptions are ‘not phonetically adequate’. He mainly considers vowels, without realizing that, in each single cell of the thirty present in our vocograms, we can actually put at least 27 vocoids

(with even further finer shifts), without having to use 27 symbols, as any real (even very young) Natural Phoneticians know.

6. It has been proven (also by the review which originated this note) that Natural Phonotronics is not for anyone! In fact, this wonderful artistic science requires certain special talents, which are not within anybody's reach.

Some of us thought it was not the case to state it so explicitly, just trying to avoid making people think we may be unpleasantly presumptuous.

The fact is that an extremely unfriendly reviewer openly demonstrates just the opposite of what he tried to express. To be true, it is certainly not his own fault if he clearly lacks any of the special talents, which are necessary to actually understand Natural Phonotronics.

In fact, honest reviews are useful and welcome when they are done after *fully* reading and *understanding* books, by somebody who is really sure to know the *methods and principles* on which a given book is based. In a word: its real spirit.

7. So, the worst possible reviewer for Natural Phonotronics books is somebody who is a slave both to the limits of official IPA and to the 'endless possibilities' provided by unsystematic non-normalized acoustic data.

Furthermore, if such 'reviewers' try to judge those books on the basis of a limited knowledge of both general phonetics and even of the pronunciation of their own mother tongue, the inevitable conclusion is that their reviews can only reveal their unfitness for the task of reviewers.

Probably, they do not even realize that what they actually do is just to make fools of themselves. Anyway, if they are happy so, we are happy, too.

8. Comically, it seems that such fools can easily be found among self-defined specialists in deaf sign languages, but clearly hopeless even at basic phonetics. Arguably, Natural Phonotronics substantially *means* sounds. A very rich quantity of interesting linguistic sounds, which deaf people cannot even imagine, sadly. Almost like music, but much more important.

A number of deaf sign language teachers are deaf people themselves. Some of them can also read speakers' lips. This last case adds to deaf communication the welcome usefulness of basic phonetics.

Well, our unjustifiedly negative reviewer, a teacher of deaf sign languages, must belong to those people who can only use signs. Otherwise, the obvious natural connection between articulatory phonetics and lip movements (and at least general tongue articulations, not only for consonants produced in the front part of the mouth) would have been clear to him, as well.

Unfortunately, this seems not to be the case. He has also been a general linguist, probably among those who consider Phonetics (let alone Tonetics) as a very marginal part of Linguistics (almost outside it), if not a mere nuisance. We have never met this guy, unless he is that queer freak who, in Klagenfurt, once stamped on our left foot, without apologizing. And that is all.

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