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Preface

This book contains twelve chapters introducing the basic characteristics of the pronunciation of standard English, and it is designed for a one-term course with twelve weekly topics elaborated on in ten to twenty pages on average. It is the authors' intention to keep both the amount of material covered and the students' reading load to the absolute minimum: the book leaves, on purpose, considerable time and space for practice, revision and assessment as well as for the inclusion of the personal preferences of the instructor teaching the course.

Primarily for pedagogical reasons, but also out of space limitations, the book describes the pronunciation of the standard dialects of English only, though reference is made, whenever relevant to the topic, to non-standard regional varieties, too. As usual in similar textbooks on English used in Hungarian higher education, the description focuses on standard British English pronunciation ("RP"), as this is the accent which most Hungarian students of English appear to be familiar with. However, an attempt is made to include the characterization of standard American English ("GA") as well, especially where the two reference accents significantly differ, both because neither of the standards should be considered inferior to the other and neglected, and because Hungarian students seem to be exposed to American English at least as much as, if not more than, to British English. In addition, the authors believe that all students holding a degree in English are required to be aware of what pronunciation differences are to be expected between native speakers of different linguistic backgrounds. Once the major varieties are introduced, it is generally accepted that the two together present a good starting point for the discussion of other dialects.

Throughout the book, a certain amount of preliminary knowledge of the basic notions of linguistics is assumed since most BA programmes contain an introductory tier with at least one course in elementary linguistics. Nevertheless, all the discussions aim to be as self-explanatory and self-contained as possible. At the end of this section you will find a list of the terms which are considered to be elementary.

The book is accompanied by a digital material, which contains exercises to practice and revise the topics covered by the readings. These exercises are primarily meant to be used in their interactive form as home practice for the weekly readings. Alternatively, their static version can be handed out in class – this is totally at the instructor's discretion.

As it has been mentioned several times, the book grants considerable freedom to the instructor, and ample opportunities for extension. Also, it covers so little phonological theory that it leaves the way open for advanced studies in both BA and MA programmes to elaborate on all the topics in more detail.

Before you study this book, check whether you are familiar with the following terms: adjective, adverb, allomorph, allophone, articulation, assimilation, bound morpheme, complementary distribution, compound, conjunction, consonant, demonstrative pronoun, diacritic, diphthong, distribution, free morpheme, free variation, function word, homophone, idiomatic, interrogative pronoun, lexical content word, loanword, manners of articulation, minimal pair, monomorphemic, monophthong, monosyllabic, morpheme, noun, phonetics, places of articulation, root, schwa, segment, speech organs, spelling, stem, stress, suffix, syllable, triphthong, verb, voicing, vowel, Wh-question, Yes/No question