

REVIEW ARTICLE

ON ASPIRATION*

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Bernhard Hurch's monograph *Über Aspiration* is a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of aspiration within the framework of Natural Phonology. The very fact that the language of the monograph is German constitutes one of its advantages: it satisfies the need for well-grounded Natural Phonology works "im deutschen Sprachraum". Consistently with the above purpose, Hurch includes the chapter on basic principles of Natural Phonology (I. *Grundbegriffe der natürlichen Phonologie*) which introduces the reader into the framework as well as acquaints him or her with the author's contributions to its understanding and interpretation.

Since the language of this review is English, one of its aims may be to acquaint the English-language reader with the content of the book. Hereafter, therefore, follows a short overview of the chapters. Chapter Two (II. *Phonetische Vorbemerkungen*) is devoted to the discussion of a variety of existing phonetic definitions of aspiration, and, thus, aspiration as an extra burst of air, /h/ as a manner of articulation, pre-aspiration of vowels are discussed. Among others, the author argues against identifying aspiration bidirectionally with variation in VOT ("voicing lag"), i.e. the latter does not have to imply aspiration. He also discusses the status of aspiration against the background of the articulation/phonation distinction: while he questions the existence of any phonetic grounds for the latter, he treats aspiration as articulatory. At that point the direct aim of the work becomes specified i.e. to analyze the parallels between /h/ and aspirated consonants.

Chapter Three (III. *Zur Phonologie der Aspiration*) concentrates on the status quo of the natural process of deaspiration and the limitations it undergoes. On the basis of paradigmatic and syntagmatic characterization of the process and its substitutions, the preferences for particular configurations

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of vowel and consonant aspiration are justified and supported by examples.

In Chapter Four (IV. *Prozesse und Regeln der Aspiration*) the reader finds an account of syntagmatic phenomena which are either process of aspiration itself or have to do with aspiration in some way or other. Among the former are the following processes: C→h, O→h, C→C^h and preaspirations. The latter comprise both segmental changes (like insertions or assimilations) and suprasegmental conditionings (like stress and tone).

Chapter Five (V. *Evidenzen zu Deaspiration, Aspiration und Beschränkungen*) constitutes a substantial contribution to the discussion of aspiration by supplying a wide variety of evidence for the analysis of the process conducted by the author. The evidence comes from acquisition, diachrony, sociolinguistic variation, phonostylistics, contrastive studies and loan-phonology. The treatment of this type of evidence as a constitutive part of phonology implies adherence to the principles of Natural Phonology.

Chapter Five is followed by *Nachword*, seventeen pages of bibliography and the index of languages.

The following are some general comments on the monograph. I think the work possesses three basic merits from the point of view of the framework of Natural Phonology. First, it demonstrates the high applicability of the model in accounting for a single cross-linguistic phenomenon and, simultaneously, supplies feedback to the theory through furthering the understanding and interpretability of its principles. Second, it draws data from a high number of languages (about 100) and, thus, the claims put forward by the author may aspire to possess a universal status. Third, one of the five chapters of the book is a collection of the so called substantial evidence verifying the workability of aspiration and deaspiration processes. Substantial evidence, rather than being "external" to the theory, like e.g. in orthodox generative framework, constitutes internal linguistic substance in Natural Phonology. To pass to more detailed remarks: I have selected a number of smaller exemplary issues which I would like to comment on, in the order of the chapters.

Chapter I.

(1) Hurch criticizes the use of a term "abstract" in Natural Phonology (he refers here to Wojcik 1979), overlooking (intentionally or not) the plausible reading of the term, i.e. "abstract" as *not pronounceable* in a given context and not as *unpronounceable* in principle.

(2) The use of the term "preferred" for contexts of lenitions and fortitions reveals the author's "feeling" for Natural Phonology, since in this way one no longer talks about "exceptional" contexts for natural processes.

(3) To distinguish between a morphophonemic process and a morphophonemic rule does not seem very fortunate terminologically. Compare a much more transparent classification of processes by Dressler 1985.

(4) Another terminological remark concerns the use of the modifier "intentional (un)aussprechbar" ("phonologisch unaussprechbar" in Chapter IV). The latter constituent refers to a concrete phonetic ability and, thus, is not compatible with the former, coming from a psychologically real level of phonology. It was probably meant to signify: "disallowed by language-specific phonotactics".

(5) Hurch claims that the notion of biuniqueness has no use in Natural Phonology. This is contradicted by the existence of semiotic criteria for the differentiation of process types (Dressler 1985) which include biuniqueness (others are, e.g. iconicity, indexicality, default value). As such, biuniqueness is helpful as one of the criteria deciding about the degree of naturalness of a process. (I used it, e.g., when classifying processes in a study of L2 acquisition, cf Dziubalska-Kolaczyk 1990).

Chapter II.

(1) A Swedish word *nolla* when reproduced backwards is perceived by native listeners as *hallon*. For Hurch this serves as evidence for an initial, pre-vocalic aspirate. However, what might also be involved here is a simple analogy to the existent word with an initial aspirate.

(2) Examples of spectrograms could have illustrated well the author's quoted sonographic study of Hindi.

Chapter III.

(1) h-deletion is said to be rare word-initially (in accordance with its lenitive status). Later in the book, a sociolectal counterexample from English is given. It is not sociolectal as far as it concerns English pronouns, however. (Unless by word-initially Hurch means content-word-initially only.)

(2) As for the contexts for s→h process, the data presented by Hurch have been claimed to be largely misinterpreted (again, the word-initial position is an issue) by J. Mendez Dosuna. For the discussion I refer the reader to Dosuna's paper "May weakening processes start in initial position?" and his forthcoming monograph: *A Natural Typology of /s/-Aspiration*.

(3) The lack of voiced aspirated consonants is supported, according to Hurch, by the following example:

gehabt → ghabt → [k^hapt]

However, is the anticipatory devoicing here conditioned exclusively by an aspirate, or may it be any voiceless consonant? If the latter is the case (as it seems to be), then the quoted example does not prove anything which would be specific of an aspirate only.

Chapter V.

In the section on phonostylistic variations Hurch mentions the scarcity of existent sources. Still, there are some studies which might have proved useful e.g. by Shockey, Ramsaran or Dressler and Wodak (cf. the references).

Before summing up, I will add two minor remarks of a rather formal nature. Firstly, at a few points in the monograph one can find statements which could have sounded more convincing had they been illustrated by examples. Secondly, at some points, especially at the beginnings of chapters, the author becomes unnecessarily repetitive, looking too much back and forth into the work.

Notwithstanding the drawbacks, Bernhard Hurch's monograph *Über Aspiration* is both a methodologically sound and a conceptually innovative study. While it demonstrates the attractiveness of the model of Natural Phonology, it is also a resource for data collectors. On the whole, the book constitutes a commendable piece of linguistic literature.

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