

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN CUNNISON 'IAN' CATFORD, IPA Council member and one of the great phoneticians, died peacefully on 6 October 2009. Catford was not only one of the best phoneticians; he was also a good, kind, honest human being. He always gave credit where and when credit was due. Catford first became seriously interested in phonetics when, at age 14, his parents took him to see a stage performance of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. From that time until his death, he maintained a professional interest in phonetics and linguistics. Soon after seeing *Pygmalion*, he found a copy of *A Primer of Phonetics* by Henry Sweet in a second-hand bookstore in Edinburgh. It became his 'bible', and over the next two years he read every book on phonetics and linguistics he found in the Edinburgh Public Library. About the same time, he started keeping notebooks on his ideas and phonetic observations. The following is a quote from one of his notebooks when he was 16 years old. He was ahead of his time:

In Central Scots speech around Glasgow and to some extent in Edinburgh, glottal stop regularly precedes initial stressed vowels, and often brings stressed vowels to an abrupt termination. . . . Sometimes p, t, k are pronounced with closed glottis throughout. The glottal closure taking place just before the (oral) stop is made, and released an instant after.

In 1933, Catford met Daniel Jones at University College London, and DJ gave him a short oral examination on practical phonetics. Catford was told by DJ that he passed the examination but that he had a mixed accent and if he was going into phonetics sooner or later he would find himself teaching English to foreigners and he would need to speak RP (Received Pronunciation) well for that job. After that, Catford eagerly studied RP until he had perfected it. In the summer of 1934, he took a course in French phonetics at UCL. His teachers were H el ene Coustenoble and Lili as Armstrong. At the same time, DJ gave Catford private instruction in the Cardinal Vowels and the phonetics of Urdu. In the same year, 1934, Catford joined the IPA. He also got his first training in instrumental phonetics from Stephen Jones, director of the Phonetics Laboratory at UCL. In 1935, Catford went to Paris to improve his French. During his stay, he met Paul Passy, the famous phonetician and one of the founders of the IPA. At age 18, Catford published his first phonetic study in *Le ma tre phon tique*, precursor to *JIPA*. In 1939, he published an important article, 'On the classification of stop consonants'. He was then hired by the British Council to teach English in Athens, Greece, where he remained until 1941 when the war reached Athens. He was then evacuated to Egypt. In Athens, he had met his first Caucasian language speaker, and in 1942 he published an analysis of Kabardian in *Le ma tre phon tique*. In 1943, he published a description of Avar phonetics, a Dagestian Caucasian language.

From Egypt, Catford was transferred to Palestine to teach English and to be a radio announcer in English. In 1943, he married Lotte, of Austrian background and who had attended a boarding school in Jerusalem from which she graduated. Lotte worked with him as a radio announcer. In 1946, he finally returned to the UK, where he taught English privately and worked for the BBC as an actor, especially when a foreign accent was required. He also taught phonetics at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. In addition, Catford enrolled in Russian and General Linguistics at UCL.

In 1952, Catford was hired as a researcher and lecturer in the Linguistic Survey of Scotland at the University of Edinburgh. In 1957, he was appointed director of the new School of Applied Linguistics (SAL) at the University of Edinburgh. To help him prepare for

his directorship, the British Council sent him on a two-month tour of India and Pakistan to study issues of English teaching. This gave him the opportunity to observe the phonetics of a number of languages including Toda and Burushaski. SAL at Edinburgh was the first institution in the world to have Applied Linguistics in its title, and Catford believed that it was important for SAL to emphasize all the problems of language teaching in light of general linguistic data and theories instead of only a specific method of language teaching.

In 1964, Catford joined the University of Michigan as director of the English Language Institute. He taught an Introduction to Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Translation Theory, English Grammar, Comparative Historical Linguistics, General Phonetics, and Instrumental Phonetics. In teaching phonetics, Catford became convinced that in order to understand phonetic theory the best approach was intensive proprioceptive experimentation in one's own vocal tract, which students seemed to enjoy in many strange sessions of silent mouthing and careful introspective observations of speech production parameters. In 1970, with a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, he went to the Soviet Union to pursue the study of Caucasian languages that he had begun in Athens and the Middle East in the 1940s. He attended linguistic institutes in Moscow, Sukhumi, and Tbilisi. His hosts made it possible for him to work with speakers of 20 different Caucasian languages. In 1977, he made a second trip to the Soviet Union, procuring more data and adding data on 6 or 7 other languages. He also spent six weeks in Indonesia teaching translation theory to speakers of 25 Austronesian languages. After Catford retired from the University of Michigan in 1985, he was a visiting professor at UCLA, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the University of the Bosphorus in Istanbul, where he was able to work with the last competent speaker of the phonetically complex Caucasian language, Ubykh.

Catford's last book, *A Practical Introduction to Phonetics*, second edition (2001), illustrates particularly well his belief in the value of general phonetic training in all subdisciplines of linguistics and language teaching and learning. For his well-trained ear, his articulatory acuity, his elaborate tables of speech sound classifications, his lively spirit, his entertaining fieldwork and teaching techniques, and his ability to explain phonetic processes and theories cogently and definitively, he will be missed but remembered.

The University of Michigan memorial pages will be found at <http://ling.lsa.umich.edu/home/catford.html>.

Catford's retirement lectures are archived at <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/simple-search?query=catford+john>.

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STANLEY ELLIS, the noted dialectologist, died on 31 October 2009. He was well-known to British popular audiences in the latter half of the twentieth century and was probably the person whose phonetic transcriptions were most extensively published in that era. He became in 1952 the principal fieldworker of the eleven phoneticians that Harold Orton sent throughout the length and breadth of England to carry out the extensive Leeds University *Survey of English Dialects*. His share, 118 of the 313 localities all but a few of which were rural, amounted to about 38 per cent of the total. Their findings, which generally required about 18 hours of questioning, were all represented exactly according to this Association's alphabet as constituted then (the 1950s), except solely for the use of [r] for an approximant instead of a flap articulation. The twelve substantial volumes of the *Basic Material* contained all the transcribed responses to over 1300 questions.

Stanley, who was born in 1926, came from a Bradford family involved in the woollen industry. Having entered the Leeds University School of English in 1948, he completed an undergraduate dissertation and then an MA, both on Lincolnshire dialect. He was engaged in 1952 to undertake first extensive fieldwork for the *Survey* and afterwards editorial work on its

findings. Later he became a lecturer on English language. In 1983, at the age of 57, he took early retirement from his senior lectureship and devoted himself more fully to the forensic voice recognition work he had begun to undertake in the sixties. To this he added a series of highly popular broadcasts in which he genially drew from people in many parts of the British Isles fascinating illustrations of their local speech characteristics and verbal lore.

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