

PRONUNCIATION MATERIALS

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*O'zbekiston tuman 2-son politexnikumi**Ingliz tili fani o'qituvchisi*

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is increasingly popular in professional conferences where sessions are often filled to overflowing. Similarly, pronunciation materials today show up in a wide variety of sources. Baker and Murphy (2011) tell us that “the past decade has witnessed an explosion in the number of ... classroom textbooks; teacher’s manuals; classroom-based research reports; teacher-training books; book chapters; journal articles; CD-ROMs; videos, computer software; Internet resources, most of which are geared directly toward ESL/EFL teachers” (p. 37). This explosion means that research into pronunciation materials needs to be based on sound research and best practices. Grant (1995) provided an early look at pronunciation materials development, but little attention has been paid to this area until recently. This chapter presents principles that should underlie pronunciation materials and then examines how four skills books follow those principles.

Chapter I. Materials and Teachers

Contextual factor needs of learners and teachers

An important contextual factor is the needs of learners and teachers. Although the needs of learners have been widely studied, the needs of teachers have not captured the same attention. This is surprising because in school environments, teachers are the first users of materials and make decisions about what to cover and what to leave out. However, not all teachers have the same amount of experience, training, or confidence. This may increase the influence of materials. Tomlinson (2005) even says

that coursebooks often control what is actually done in the classroom especially for less experienced teachers that are more dependent on their coursebooks, while experienced teachers like being flexible and selective in their choices of what to teach (Tsui, 2003). Similarly, finds that many teachers did not “have the confidences to challenge the authority of the coursebook” (p. 7). As a result, it should not be assumed that adapting or changing course materials is easy for all teachers. When it comes to teaching pronunciation, teachers’ use of, expectations of and dependency on the course materials may be stronger compared to their experience with general English books. There is evidence that all teachers are more reluctant to teach pronunciation since mostly they do not have sufficient training or confidence to teach it. The lack of confidence might also be related to native speaker status. If native teachers show reluctance to teach pronunciation, nonnative teachers show even more. Spoken language and pronunciation are much more elusive than grammar and vocabulary, and more subject to uncertainty for teachers. If pronunciation materials are to be truly useful, they must be useful to nonnative teachers.

Chapter II. Pronunciation in English language teaching materials

To see whether current ELT materials meet our three principles, we looked at twelve intermediate level four-skills (integrated skills) books¹ (4SB) from three well-known publication houses: Cambridge University Press, Oxford, University Press and Pearson-Longman. All the books sell well in EFL contexts, specifically in the Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey, Iran, and Kuwait. Exploring how pronunciation is taught in Listening-Speaking and stand-alone pronunciation books also requires attention; however, our inquiry will only look at 4SBs because of space and time issues.

Integrate Pronunciation with Other Skills

A quick glance at the table of contents (TOCs) (see Appendix) of the 4SBs shows that pronunciation is a sub-skill that most books include. English Unlimited, Touchstone, New Headway, and New Cutting Edge grouped pronunciation with grammar and vocabulary under the category of language input, while they grouped listening,

113 speaking, reading and writing under language skills. Others such as face to face, New Total English, and English in Common put pronunciation under speaking skills, while Interchange and Top Notch grouped pronunciation with listening. Only three books, English File, English Result and Speak Out placed pronunciation in a separate category. Almost all the books' brochures or webpages claimed that they integrated pronunciation into their materials. By looking at the TOCs (see Appendix) and unit layouts, it is clear that they include pronunciation without isolating it from the other skills. For instance, some books create connections between grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation topics whenever possible (Table 1). Surprisingly, pronunciation tasks were not necessarily linked to the speaking tasks in 4SBs.

CONCLUSION

The increasing interest in second language pronunciation and the growing number of pronunciation instruction materials motivated us to investigate the pronunciation teaching practices in twelve intermediate level 4SBs. We examined them in regard to three materials development principles. First, pronunciation materials should prioritize intelligibility; second, pronunciation should be integrated into the teaching of other skills; and third, pronunciation materials should provide sufficient support for teachers, specifically for NNESTs, untrained or inexperienced teachers. Our analysis revealed that all 4SBs focus on pronunciation features thought to contribute to speakers' intelligibility. Integration of pronunciation into 4SBs is partially achieved but it is mostly integrated into grammar and vocabulary tasks but not strongly into speaking and listening. Additionally, the time (in terms of activities) and space (in terms of visual appearance) devoted to pronunciation in the 4SBs make it seem expendable. Thus, materials developers should also integrate pronunciation into skills other than grammar and vocabulary, and should visually present pronunciation tasks as being essential rather than optional. Last but not least, our analysis showed that many TMs assume that all teachers are well-trained, experienced, or confident in pronunciation teaching, and they do not usually need anything other than the answers to the activities. However, research shows it's opposite; thus TMs should be more informative, taking the role of

being a resource book for pronunciation teaching and teaching the teachers. To conclude, pronunciation is reasonably well-integrated into 4SBs. However, there is still a need for careful design to meet the criteria that will make pronunciation an essential part of language teaching materials.

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