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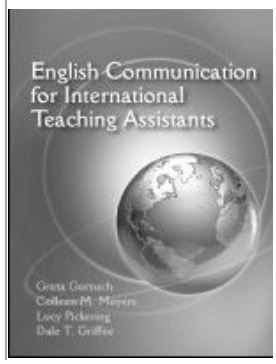
English Communication for International Teaching Assistants			
Author:	Greta Gorsuch, Colleen M. Meyers, Lucy Pickering, Dale T. Griffee (2010)		
Publisher:	Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press		
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Pp. vii + 178	978-1577666462 (paper)	$23.95 U.S.	

Often, in classrooms dedicated to preparing ITAs for upcoming teaching responsibilities, teachers face a struggle, constantly trying to balance speaking, listening, and pronunciation, as well as cultural and strategic training. A new textbook, *English Communication for International Teaching Assistants*, by Gorsuch, Meyers, Pickering, and Griffee (2010), may be a solution to this problem as it effectively addresses the many needs of ITAs. The textbook not only provides a good base of information (rules and tools to predict and produce comprehensible speech), but also manages to provide numerous original activities to do in class to practice and prepare.

The 178 page textbook, which is heavily influenced by work by David Brazil, an English phonologist, focuses on Discourse Intonation (DI), including thought groups, prominence, pitch movement and tone choice, and pitch level and key choice. These skills are built in the first section of the book (Chapters 1-5) through numerous, different and creative listening and production activities. These numerous listening and speaking activities are an advantage over some other popular ITA training textbooks, such as *Communicate: Strategies for International Teaching Assistants* (Smith, Meyers, & Burkhalter, 1992). For many of the topics, along with the listening activities, students are shown visual representations of the speech phenomenon, such as pitch and intensity diagrams, which have been captured through computer programs (for examples, see pp. 12 & 24-27). Each chapter also addresses challenges the TAs are likely to face, based on their L1. The text not only shows where problems are likely to occur, but also points out the ramifications and possible meaning interpretations arising from those mistakes. Each chapter also includes self-reflection questions, which ask students to think about their own pronunciation, and test presentation assignments at the end which are particularly useful because they come with a rubric for

evaluation which includes not only pronunciation features (grammatical competence), but also includes textual, sociolinguistic, and functional competence, which will help prepare learners in the full range of communicative competencies.

Although the first section gives a thorough overview of each of the features of DI, a few of the chapters are lacking essential explanations. For example, when introducing prominence the following rule is given, "In a new topic, the last meaningful word is usually prominent" (p. 25). Although this is true, the book fails to adequately define what makes a word meaningful. Because meaning in English is primarily conveyed by content words; nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, the textbook could have created this distinction. Also, the textbook introduces rising intonation as indicating shared knowledge. While rising intonation may be one way of indicating shared knowledge, especially on non-final message units, the authors fail to introduce the relationship of intonation to types of questions a teacher may ask of students. For example, most WH- questions (who, what, where, when, how) are asked with a falling intonation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010). This added detail is not introduced in the textbook. Instead, the textbook includes an activity on intonation where students play a game similar to Trivial Pursuit. Although all of the questions given are WH-questions, students are encouraged to use a rising intonation "where appropriate," which is presumably when the asker of the question assumes the listener will know the answer (p. 50). In addition, the section on intonation lacks an explanation of what happens when destressed, old, given, or presupposed information occurs after the prominent word in the phrase. These words would have a low and flat intonation (Bolinger, 1986, pp. 126-127). Instead, the textbook mostly ignores the words after the prominence. Although there is some essential information lacking, these issues could be easily remediated by adding a few supplementary details while teaching.

The second section (Chapters 6-9) confronts practical teaching situations such as "Introducing Yourself and Your Course", "Leading Labs and Classes", "Giving Instructions and Advice", and "Asking and Answering Questions" (p. v-vi), which are introduced through the DI tools already presented in section 1. This section covers many important skills such as outlining and organizing presentations, utilizing charts and figures, signaling and phrasing questions, and giving examples. For each, practical information, tips, and practice activities are given.

Finally, in the last two student directed chapters (Chapters 10 & 11) the textbook introduces strategies to overcome communication breakdowns, as well as techniques to improve overall DI, including the mirroring technique, in which the student would take a recording of a native speaker and mimic both the speech and body language, and transcription work.

Not only does the book excel in providing a comprehensive look at DI, it has many other beneficial features. One of the primary advantages of this book is that it focuses on cultural expectations of the U.S. classroom. Starting with the very first page of Chapter 1, the book asks students to think about their own expectations and expected problems within the classroom (p. 3). This introduction of cultural expectations will not only help students teach more effectively, but will also help them sort out misunderstandings when problems do arise.

The textbook also comes with a CD, which contains both audio and video files. What is particularly remarkable about the media is that the files are clearly recorded in classrooms and contain both non-native and native English speakers from many different fields of study, from art to chemistry, communication studies to math. In addition, instead of using the non-native samples to show faulty presentation and the native speakers to show correct presentations, the textbook shows non-native speakers as many of the examples of good, target speech. Seeing non-native speakers as the good examples will be encouraging to students, giving them a realistic and obtainable goal.

The materials also utilize technology beyond just the CD provided. The textbook reaches out to websites, such as youtube.com and americanrhetoric.com to compliment the textbook materials. For example, in Chapter 5, when introducing the concept of "speech paragraphs", the textbook sends students to http://americanrhetoric.com to watch a speech given by George Clooney, a famous actor who also happens to give speeches with clear speech paragraph indicators. Through using these websites, the materials not only feel more modern, but also are likely to be found more entertaining by students.

Despite the drawback of somewhat limited descriptions of the rules underlying DI, this textbook provides a comprehensive overview of DI in a way that students can apply to their own teaching. With numerous creative activities, the textbook provides students not only with a chance to practice and improve their speaking and pronunciation skills, but also with the sociolinguistic information students need in order to successfully understand and communicate in actual classrooms.

References

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