


English Pronunciation in Use: Intermediate (Second Edition)

August 2019 – Volume 23, Number 2

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Author:	Mark Hancock (2017)	
Publisher:	Cambridge: Cambridge University Press	
Pages	ISBN	Price
Pp. viii + 168	978-1-108-40369-6 (Paper)	\$27.67 USD



For the last twenty years, pronunciation instruction (PI) has received increased attention both in laboratory studies and classroom instruction. *English Pronunciation in Use Intermediate* (second edition) (Hancock, 2017) constitutes a valuable reference for both students and teachers, as it integrates current issues in PI research with creative and engaging aspects of materials design. This book is intended for students at the intermediate level, or B1-B2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference. It is part of a three-book series (the other two being *English Pronunciation in Use Elementary* and *English Pronunciation in Use Advanced*). The content has been designed to be appropriate either for self-study or for a classroom environment.

The book has 60 units that are housed in five sections (A-E). The last section (Section E) serves as a reference and includes a phonemic chart, pronunciation tests, guides for speakers of different first languages, and a glossary of terms and other notes on *English as a lingua franca* (ELF). The main sections (A-D) are ordered from individual sounds (segmentals) to stress and intonation (suprasegmentals). A typical unit consists of two pages: the first page offers illustrations and examples of the sounds being discussed, and the second page includes exercises. Downloadable audio files are also available for every unit for individual practice.

The first section of the book (Section A) covers individual sounds and sound-letter correspondences. The sequencing of the units in each section is more or less alphabetical. For example, the first three units cover the sounds related to the letter *a* (/eɪ/, as in *plane*, or /æ/, as in *plan*), then the letter *b*, and so forth. The author argues that he has avoided minimal-pair distinction content organization because analyzing all possible pairs would have required a significant amount of space (Hancock, 2017). Section B is about stress and rhythm. Students practice common stress patterns of English by circling syllables (for word stress) and words (for sentence stress). Units in Section B follow the same example-exercise structure: students are exposed to concepts or explanations on the first page, and then they complete exercises on the next page.

Section C focuses on intonation. A variety of concepts are introduced, such as speech units/thoughts groups, or how utterances are divided into coherent groups by making logical pauses in the speech stream (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, 2010). Other concepts include contrastive stress, which is the prominence that can be assigned to a word in order to express emphasis and a special meaning in the sentence; and tone, which, in this context, refers to basic pitch patterns of falling and rising contours. Some activities include listening to the audio recordings and recognizing different meanings of a sentence depending on pauses, emphasis, and tone contour.

Section D focuses on connected speech. The emphasis here is on raising students' awareness about some of the phenomena of spontaneous conversation. Many of the activities are based on conversations from radio shows and other types of natural conversations. This section covers discourse concepts (such as fillers), as well as more specific phonetic phenomena (such as linking and assimilation).

One strength of the book is that Hancock uses visually-rich content that serves to illustrate a number of pronunciation aspects (e.g., diagrams of the vocal tract to show place and manner of articulation; pictures and drawings for contextualizing the activities; and circles, arrows, and other symbols to draw attention to particular concepts of pronunciation, connected speech, and so on). The author also uses colors and games, which makes the tasks more appealing. The use of engaging and visually-rich materials in this book provides pedagogical and practical value; students connect to the visual and physical activity of pronunciation as opposed to theoretical lessons about phonetics and phonology.

Another strength of the book is that Hancock encourages learners to record themselves and monitor their progress. This allows students to practice with more freedom and to be more autonomous about their own learning. In addition, the author strongly encourages students to raise their phonological awareness both in perception and production. He does this by suggesting practical tips of using a mirror to look at articulation, using a phonemic chart, and by dedicating Section D to the noticing of features that occur in natural speech. Hancock also encourages teachers to set realistic goals tailored to learners' specific needs, taking into account the students' first languages and the important role of intelligibility (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Hancock uses a dialect from Southern England as a pronunciation reference. Using a single accent in the book might be good for consistency and familiarity; however, it could be more beneficial for learners to be exposed to different accents. The author does successfully explain this limitation. Accordingly, he makes an effort to provide additional help with English varieties whenever possible. He offers an appendix based on the principles of the *Lingua Franca Core* (LFC) (Jenkins, 2000), which organizes English phonological contrasts in hierarchical order depending on how essential these contrasts are for communication. For example, the distinction between /eɪ/ and /æ/ ranks higher in its communicative salience, and therefore it is more important to learn, than the distinction between /θ/ and /ð/.

Overall, *English Pronunciation in Use Intermediate* is a great resource for learners. Exercises are varied, allowing the teacher to make use of various techniques (e.g., guided discovery, shadowing, or dictation) while providing feedback. These techniques are all particularly important as evidence indicates that focused instruction, or targeting specific features based on the learner's intelligibility needs (both at segmental and suprasegmental levels), may lead to long-term learner gains (Lee, Jang, & Plonsky, 2015; Thomson & Derwing, 2015). At the same time, including more supplementary online materials, apart from the audio files, might optimize learner autonomy and motivation; however, students will benefit from the pedagogical value of the book. *English Pronunciation in Use Intermediate* provides a great contribution to the market, with engaging

lessons and emphasis on making pronunciation a skill that can be enjoyable. Hancock makes sure this happens with pedagogical innovations, high quality standards in materials design, and the most recent developments in pronunciation instruction based on research findings.

References

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