

## ***Pronunciation Matters***

Lynn Henrichsen, Brent Green, Atsuko Nishitani, and Carol Lynne Bagley. (1999)  
Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press

### **Text:**

Pp. xxv + 382  
ISBN 0-472-08491-7  
US \$18.95 (paper)

### **Teacher's Manual:**

Pp. ix + 102  
ISBN 0-472-08525-5  
US \$12.95 (paper)

### **Cassettes (4):**

ISBN 0-472-0029209  
US \$75.00

## ***Speechcraft***

Laura Hahn and Wayne Dickerson. (1999)  
Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press

### ***Speechcraft: Discourse Pronunciation for Advanced Learners***

Pp. x + 210  
ISBN 0-472-08522-0  
US \$21.95 (paper)

### ***Speechcraft: Workbook for International TA Discourse***

Pp. vii + 187  
ISBN 0-472-08523-9  
US \$18.95 (paper)

### ***Speechcraft: Workbook for International TA Discourse: Cassettes***

ISBN 0-472-00296-1  
US \$20.00

### ***Speechcraft: Workbook for Academic Discourse***

Pp. iii + 187  
ISBN 0-472-08564-6  
US \$18.95 (paper)

### ***Speechcraft: Workbook for Academic Discourse: Cassettes***

ISBN 0-472-00297  
US \$20.00

Comparing *Pronunciation Matters* by Henrichsen et al. with the *Speechcraft* series by Hahn and Dickerson is like comparing apples and oranges. They are similar in shape and origin, but definitely different in flavour. While both series focus on the development of pronunciation and discourse skills, they are targeted at different segments of the ESL population (intermediate/advanced with *Pronunciation Matters* versus advanced/academic with *Speechcraft*), which may account for some of the variation in methodology and presentation. [-1-]

*Pronunciation Matters* (for which a detailed Teacher's Manual is available) is subtitled *Communicative, Story-Based Activities for Mastering the Sounds of North American English*. To this end, each instructional unit is based on story contexts, many of which were "based on real-life incidents" (p. xix), according to the authors. Each story is designed so that a particular sound contrast makes a difference in meaning. This focus on contextualization is one of the primary strengths of this book. The stories in most sections are interesting, fun, and relatively topical. However, the illustrations which accompany each story are basically stick figures or line drawings. Authentic images, such as photos, could have taken the book from slightly childish to more adult-appropriate.

The textbook offers a comprehensive self-diagnosis questionnaire to help learners and their teachers identify areas of strength and weakness in pronunciation. This questionnaire facilitates the identification of areas of difficulty, and also provides a cross-reference to

the relevant sections of the text addressing those specific pronunciation problems. In fact, the authors have clearly made an attempt to provide easy referencing within the book, as well as between the student text and Teacher's Manual. In addition, the index to key words and phrases used in Pronunciation Matters would be quite helpful to language learners (such a system is unfortunately missing in *Speechcraft*).

Throughout *Pronunciation Matters*, learners receive extensive and diverse practice with both segmental and suprasegmental contrasts as they progress through the various learning activities, which include listening to stories and contrasting sentences, phonological explanations, cards for practising listening and speaking, story reading, story dictation, cloze reading, story retelling from an outline, free story-telling, creating parallel stories, and creating mini-dramas. Topics covered include vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, reduction and blending, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, and segmentation.

In general, with the amount of material available in *Pronunciation Matters*, this book could be used either as a primary text for a specialized course in pronunciation, or for individualized practice, as the text offers enough diversity so the teacher (and students) could pick and choose material specific to individual problem areas. The explanations in the text are generally accessible to even lower level students, as the authors avoid over-using unnecessary linguistic terminology. In addition, the four cassettes that accompany the text offer additional exposure to native English speech for individual practice and classroom supplementary material. However, more accurate pictures of the mouth would be helpful in the section on pronunciation explanations.

Finally, the *Pronunciation Matters* Teacher's Manual is very well developed. It includes very detailed, scripted lesson plans, which would be particularly helpful for novice ESL or pronunciation teachers. For example, the Manual offers reproducible masters of speaking and listening activity cards to accompany the student text, as well as other suggestions and teaching ideas. This combination of text and Teacher's Manual provides a comprehensive approach to contextualized pronunciation teaching. [-2-]

By contrast with *Pronunciation Matters*, the *Speechcraft* series offers a generally less structured approach. The purpose of the *Speechcraft* series is to provide discipline-specific pronunciation and speech practice to a traditionally under-served population, in terms of pronunciation: advanced academically oriented ESL students. The *Speechcraft* series includes one primary text, *Discourse Pronunciation for Advanced Learners*, and two workbooks, *Workbook for International TA Discourse* and *Workbook for Academic Discourse*. *Speechcraft: Discourse Pronunciation for Advanced Learners* is a pronunciation textbook directed towards advanced non-native speakers of English who anticipate interacting with native speakers in academic and professional settings. The focus is on developing intelligibility by providing rules, strategies, and contextualized practice in stress, rhythm, and melody of English words and discourse.

Positive attributes of the *Speechcraft* series include explicit statements concerning the importance of learners taking full responsibility for their own learning, an emphasis on the necessity for on-going "covert" (sub-vocalized) rehearsal, and the use of level-appropriate topics and texts in the workbooks (e.g., distinctive practice routines for TAs vs. academics). As will be discussed below, the content of the workbooks helps overcome some of the fundamental difficulties with the primary text.

The primary text is organized around four main areas: groundwork (overview of segmentals and suprasegmentals), discourse level topics (message units, rhythm, primary stress, and intonation), word level topics (word foundations and word stress domains), and appendixes (suggestions for instructors, vowel and consonant predication patterns, and answers to items). The workbooks are intended to provide additional contextualized practice. They are divided into four sections: academic terms (a list of relevant terminology), discourse domains (comparing and contrasting, lists and series, choice questions and answers, yes/no questions and answers, tag questions and answers, information questions and answers, narrowed questions and answers, repetition questions and answers), word stress domains (key stress rule, VVC stress rule, left stress rule, prefix stress rule, and stress of constructions), and appendixes (oral practice projects, checklists for covert rehearsal, answers to items).

Difficulties with the primary text include written explanations that are overly wordy, even for advanced learners, and which often include a mix of linguistic terminology that some learners may not be familiar with (e.g., *vl* and *vd*, rather than *voiceless* and *voiced*, without defining the abbreviations) and apparently idiosyncratic terminology (e.g., *trimming* rather than *reduction*). There is also a tendency for the text to "jump around." For example, the topic of the syllable is addressed on p. 14, p. 92, and p. 104, with little comprehensive discussion in any one section. Learners would be better served with specific sections focussing on the fundamentals of the syllable in detail, or on stress or rhythm, and so forth. With the current organisation, it would be difficult for learners to develop an integrated perspective on the relevant phenomena. Furthermore, the decision to revisit the same dialogue throughout the text makes not only for boring reading, but may also undermine the generalizability of the diverse language points by implicitly encouraging readers to memorize the specific dialogue. [-3-]

Fortunately, as noted above, the content and focus of the workbooks help to compensate for some of the deficiencies of the primary text. The workbooks begin with a list of academic terms from which learners are encouraged to choose forty words to practice and learn, based on frequency of occurrence and difficulty of pronunciation. Cloze activities focussing on stress and rhythm lead to interview and discourse level activities in which "real language" is practiced. The accompanying cassettes also provide additional practice in listening and speaking skills.

In conclusion, both the *Speechcraft* and *Pronunciation Matters* series address the goals of the targeted student populations. However, *Pronunciation Matters* appears to offer a more even balance of presentation and practice, with the *Speechcraft* workbooks offering some discipline-specific pronunciation and speech practice to advanced academically oriented ESL students.

[Karen Woodman](#)

The Second Language Learning Group

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