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A SURVEY OF AN INTERNATIONAL EFL COURSEBOOK SERIES IN TERMS OF PRONUNCIATION TREATMENT

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Abstract

Despite digital advances, coursebooks remain central to language education (Modén *et al.*, 2023), yet pronunciation is still underrepresented (Topal, 2022). This study addresses the gap in research on pronunciation content in tertiary-level EFL coursebooks. An international coursebook series was analyzed across five proficiency levels (A1–C1). The analysis focused on segmentals and suprasegmentals, alignment with Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (2010) communicative framework, and adherence to pronunciation materials design principles (Levis & Sonsaat, 2016). Suprasegmentals dominated, with stress, intonation, and connected speech being common. Segmentals focused on select vowels, consonants, and symbols. Most activities emphasized discrimination and analysis and generally followed design principles. Findings suggest improved integration but highlight areas for further improvement and research.

Keywords: communicative pronunciation teaching; coursebook analysis; pronunciation materials; segmentals; suprasegmentals

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Introduction

Despite the acknowledged significance of intelligible pronunciation for successful verbal communication (Levis, 2018), it remains one of the marginal skills, compared to grammar and vocabulary, in English as a second/foreign (EFL/ESL) language contexts (Jones, 2018; Munro & Derwing, 2015). Many EFL/ESL learners are reported to have finite opportunities for speaking practice (Chen & Goh, 2011), contributing to the salience of instructional materials, coursebooks in particular, in presenting, practicing, producing, and assessing pronunciation (Alghazo, 2015; Zimmerman, 2018). The situation becomes more grave when teachers are personally or institutionally dependent on coursebooks (Tosun & Cinkara, 2019). However, research shows that the pronunciation content of the widely used EFL/ESL materials, primarily coursebooks, is often decontextualized, scarce, or disproportionate to units and proficiency levels (Derwing *et al.*, 2012; Topal, 2022).

Many European countries, including all European Union (EU) states and international language education contexts, have adopted the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020) guidelines in language curriculum and coursebook design (Jordan & Gray, 2019; Little, 2006), since the CEFR aims to serve as a standardized framework for developing language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, assessments, coursebooks, and other materials throughout Europe (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR's updated companion volume also included phonological control (overall phonological control, sound articulation, and prosodic features) as one of the linguistic competences under communicative language competences and expanded the descriptors for the qualitative features of spoken language with phonology (Council of Europe, 2020). Correspondingly, fluency, a closely related skill to connected speech important for speech intelligibility (Thomson, 2015), is one of the pragmatic competences and constructs in the qualitative features of spoken language (Council of Europe, 2020). In that sense, adopting these CEFR benchmarks is expected to promote a shift from mainstream pronunciation models to more intelligibility-based and listener-oriented outcomes in pronunciation teaching and assessment (Isaacs, 2018).

Notwithstanding the growing influence of the CEFR on shaping language learning, teaching, and assessment in general, curriculum design and materials development in particular, the prevalent use of coursebooks as teaching materials among teachers in Europe (Henderson *et al.*, 2012) and around the globe (Richards, 2014; Tomlinson, 2012), there is still need for more empirical evidence on how pronunciation is handled in international coursebooks with regard to activities and design.

The current study addresses this gap by evaluating pronunciation treatment in *Macmillan's Skillful* (A1-C1) through the lens of two well-established instructional models: Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (2010) Communicative Framework for Teaching Pronunciation (CFPT) for activity sequencing and Levis and Sonsaat's (2018) design principles for pronunciation materials. The former is a

graded instructional approach that guides learners from awareness to controlled and communicative use of pronunciation features, while the latter offers design-oriented criteria (i.e., prioritizing intelligibility, relationship with other skills, and teacher support) that must be included in published materials (i.e., coursebooks) for evidence-based, learner-oriented pronunciation instruction. Taken together, both frameworks serve as analytical tools and indicators of optimal practice in pronunciation pedagogy, adding to their relevance to coursebook evaluation in terms of pronunciation treatment.

This study aims to contribute to the line of inquiry on pronunciation in language materials development and offer theoretically grounded and practically relevant insights in assessing the international EFL textbook series regarding pronunciation treatment. Specifically, the findings are intended to inform materials writers, teacher educators, and classroom practitioners through a systematic analysis of pronunciation treatment in a globally used EFL coursebook series and recommendations for more learner-friendly coursebooks that prepare learners for communicative competence in real-world contexts.

Literature Review

This section reviews previous scholarship to evaluate pronunciation treatment in EFL coursebooks and lays the theoretical foundation for the current study. The review is structured around three key strands. First, it examines the status of pronunciation instruction in commercial EFL coursebooks, particularly focusing on how pronunciation has been represented, sequenced, and integrated. Second, it elaborates on two pedagogical frameworks, which provide the analytic lens for this study and merge findings from studies that include the frameworks. Third, it synthesizes findings from prior research that has evaluated pronunciation components of published materials. By organizing the literature this way, the review ensures a focused and theoretically informed basis for the subsequent analysis of Macmillan's *Skillful* series.

Pronunciation in EFL Coursebooks

Appel (2012) once said, "In no other school subject do coursebooks exert a similar influence as in language teaching" (p.50), highlighting the significant place coursebooks occupy in language education contexts. Indeed, previous work confirms this by echoing the prevalence of coursebooks among teachers as primary teaching materials (Henderson *et al.*, 2012; Richards, 2014). In his classification of published materials, Richards (2015) positions language coursebooks within "multilevel coursebook series for domestic or international markets" (p.595). Coursebooks designed for international audiences are produced by major Anglophone publishing houses, including Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Pearson Education, MacMillan, and National Geographic

Learning (Hughes, 2019; Mishan, 2022). However, they are also subject to criticism for representing the Western perspective and ideology, which is also reflected in their content (Andarab, 2015). Specifically, it is argued that globally published EFL textbooks generally portray the source culture and include native varieties (e.g., American English and British English) (Shin *et al.*, 2011; Syrbe & Rose, 2018; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020).

Since "EFL coursebooks inform about the target language, support language practice, provide language experience, urge language use, and assist with language discovery on the part of language learners (Topal, 2021, p.309), they are expected to be "informative, instructional, experiential, eliciting, and exploratory" (Tomlinson, 2012, p.143). However, previous studies reveal insufficient preparation of language learners to interact with non-native speakers in a global world (Nguyen et al., 2021; Su, 2016). Internationally designed language coursebooks do not yet include content that equips learners with the content knowledge for intercultural communication due to their reliance on native English varieties (García & Cerezo, 2020). In addition, language teaching materials (e.g., coursebooks) are disconnected from research findings (Levis, 2016), albeit with attempts to integrate non-native varieties in coursebook content for a more learner-friendly pedagogy (Takahashi, 2014).

It is now well-established that pronunciation instruction must aim for intelligibility and comprehensibility rather than prioritizing native-speakerism (Galante & Piccardo, 2022; Levis, 2005; Munro & Derwing, 2015). Both segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation features influence speech intelligibility (Gordon & Darcy, 2022; Yenkimaleki & van Heuven, 2021). Therefore, coursebook writers must consider a research-based approach to incorporating these features into coursebook content. Similarly, many non-native EFL/ESL teachers lack confidence or training in teaching pronunciation (Barrantes-Elizondo & Gordon, 2024; Couper, 2017; Murphy, 2014). Moreover, most EFL/ESL teachers lack the necessary content and pedagogical content knowledge to teach pronunciation (Barrantes-Elizondo & Gordon, 2024; Topal & Altay, 2024). Accordingly, language coursebooks must be provided with teacher support for pronunciation instruction. Furthermore, research has evidenced that pronunciation may be learned better when integrated or presented with other skills (Jones, 2016; Siccola & Darcy, 2015). Additionally, pronunciation is an underemphasized skill in published materials (Levis & Sonsaat, 2016). Therefore, language coursebooks must incorporate pronunciation activities in an integrated fashion.

Pedagogical Frameworks for Pronunciation Instruction

Historically, the attention paid to pronunciation has evolved across language teaching methods in line with the paradigm shifts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Traditionally, pronunciation activities can be categorized into two main approaches: intuitive-imitative and analytical-linguistic. The prior

hinges on learners' ability to imitate the target language sounds and rhythms through exposure to quality audio models, a process increasingly supported by advancements in recording and playback technologies (Celce-Murcia *et al*., 2010). The latter supplements listening and imitation with explicit instruction using tools like phonetic symbols, articulatory diagrams, and contrastive analysis to raise learners' awareness of target language sounds (Celce-Murcia *et al*., 2010).

However, the emergence of more communicative approaches to language teaching resulted in the renewal of the presentation of pronunciation activities. More situated within a communicative pronunciation instruction is a framework that integrates pronunciation into oral communication rather than a stand-alone skill, prioritizes suprasegmentals and their communicative role, attaches particular attention to prosodic features (e.g., linking, stress, thought groups, and rhythm), promotes a learner-centered approach, includes natural and contextual speech, and presents meaningful and relatable tasks (Levis & Sonsaat, 2017; Munro & Derwing, 2015). Language teachers previously voiced temporal, institutional, and curricular concerns underlying their reluctance to teach pronunciation (Alghazo, 2015; Baker & Murphy, 2011; Couper, 2017). In this regard, they may benefit considerably from targeted, meaningful, evidence-based pronunciation instruction embedded in coursebooks.

Against this backdrop, Celce-Murcia *et al*.'s (2010) CFPT (Figure 1) emerges as a highly recommended approach to pronunciation teaching. Incorporating both form and meaning in pronunciation learning and teaching (Sicola & Darcy, 2015), the framework comprises five phases: description and analysis, listening discrimination, controlled practice, guided practice, and communicative practice. As the components may suggest, the framework endorses progressive integration of activities into the pronunciation lesson, moving from form-focused instruction to contextual and fluent use. The first component intends to raise learner awareness of the target feature through explanation and visual support, while the second trains learners to recognize the feature in input and distinguish it from similar or incorrect forms. The third one provides structured repetition and drills focused on accurate production, while the fourth engages learners in semi-controlled activities where pronunciation features are used with some communicative intent. The last component allows learners to use pronunciation features in authentic communicative tasks that mirror real-life interaction.

Figure 1

The Communicative Framework for Teaching Pronunciation

Communicative Framework for Teaching Pronunciation

Components	Description*	Example Prompt**
Description and analysis	oral and written illustrations of how the feature is produced and when it occurs within spoken discourse	Listen to the words below and complete the table (/s/, /z/, and /ɪz/)
Listening discrimination	focused listening practice with feedback on learners' ability to correctly discriminate the feature	Listen to and read the extracts. Identify one or two examples of catenation or elision in each.
Controlled practice	oral reading of minimal-pair sentences, short dialogues, etc., with special attention paid to the highlighted feature in order to raise learner consciousness	Listen to the conversations. Complete them with "is he" or "is she"
Guided practice	structured communication exercises, such as information-gap activities or cued dialogues, that enable the learner to monitor for the specified feature	Work with a partner. Practice the conversations from Exercise 2.
Communicative practice	less structured, fluency-building activities (e.g., role play, problem solving) that require the learner to attend to both form and content of utterances	Work with a partner. Read and discuss the case studies. Student A: say what you think the punishment should be. Student B: agree or disagree strongly using an adverb, and the "rising-falling" stress pattern.

Source: Celce-Murcia *et al.* (2010)

Relevant studies using the CFPT framework revealed positive attitudes (Nushi & Shahhosseini, 2020), more accurate performances (Canning *et al.*, 2015), support for teachers' pronunciation knowledge and skills (Nguyen & Newton, 2021), alignment with automated speech recognition technologies (Gottardi & Silveira, 2025), and compatibility with mobile technologies (Goodale & Yang, 2019). Comparing the French and Polish secondary school coursebooks using the CFPT, Henderson and Jarosz (2014) reported more pronunciation coverage in French textbooks with a focus on intonation, word stress, and focus, and segmental prioritization in Polish textbooks (e.g., -ed endings and third-person singular endings). In another study, Nowacka (2015) examined English pronunciation books for Polish students and revealed a lack of communicative practice. In his content analysis of state-published English textbooks, Topal (2022) revealed limited, mostly non-communicative pronunciation activities and highlighted a mismatch with curricular goals emphasizing communicative competence.

In another study, Martins *et al*. (2016) developed an instrument to evaluate software programs for teaching English pronunciation to EFL/ESL learners, considering pedagogical and technological characteristics, and tested its reliability and validity. Using the framework for designing online instruction, Dalman (2025) examined L2 learners' perceptions of an online pronunciation course and reported high participant satisfaction and a preference for the online format. In another study, Schaefer and Machida (2025) concluded that Japanese onomatopoeia can be systematically integrated into instruction through culturally grounded, task-based, and technology-supported activities and offer valuable opportunities for pronunciation practice.

Building on Celce-Murcia *et al*.'s (2010) model and the intelligibility principle (Levis, 2005), Levis and Sonsaat (2016) identified three key principles for developing pronunciation materials: prioritizing intelligibility, relationship with other skills, and teacher support. Analyzing twelve intermediate-level four-skills books to investigate their pronunciation teaching practices, Levis and Sonsaat (2016) revealed that pronunciation is often underemphasized and not sufficiently supported for teachers, despite its integration into the books. Therefore, they proposed the three principles, arguing that pronunciation materials should prioritize intelligibility, be integrated into teaching other skills, and provide sufficient support for non-native English-speaking teachers and untrained or inexperienced teachers.

Research on Coursebook Pronunciation Content

The treatment of pronunciation in English coursebooks has been examined in various contexts. For example, Buckledee (2010) examined three English coursebooks and found that the materials promote native-speaker pronunciation models, raising concerns about their relevance for learners who primarily use English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). In the Polish context, Sobkowiak (2012) compared beginner-level EFL textbooks from different periods to examine how pronunciation is treated in initial units. He found that some degree of control is feasible through attention to variables like pronunciation difficulty and L1 transfer, with tools like the phonetic difficulty index, although space for phonetic instruction is limited. In her thesis, Wieczorek (2014) examined the treatment of pronunciation in three widely used Polish secondary school English coursebooks (i.e., New Matura Solutions, English File, and Upstream), revealed significant differences in task variety and quality, and offered insights for materials evaluation and future coursebook development.

Alghazo (2015) explored whether outdated curriculum design and misaligned teaching materials hinder EFL learners' pronunciation development in Saudi Arabia. He revealed that most students view the curriculum as a major obstacle and called for urgent reforms incorporating learner perspectives. Kiczkowiak (2021) analyzed six internally published coursebooks in terms of

pronunciation features important for intelligibility and revealed between five and thirty-three percent representation. In his doctoral dissertation, Lindade (2022) investigated the role of pronunciation in English language teaching in Portuguese public schools by analyzing 57 coursebooks, examining teaching methods and materials, designing communicative pronunciation resources, and collecting teacher feedback to inform future materials development and enhance pronunciation instruction for 21st-century learners.

In the Italian context, Caleffi (2023) explored English pronunciation teaching in primary ELF contexts by analyzing three coursebooks to assess the presence of pronunciation activities, the support provided for teachers, and the extent to which these reflect an emerging ELF-aware pedagogy suited to multilingual classrooms with non-native English teachers. They revealed the learners' and teachers' passive role in pronunciation learning and teaching. In the Turkish context, Katırcı and Karakaş (2023) reported limited ELF interactions, dependence on native-speaker models, and insufficient multicultural content in English coursebooks. In the Spanish context, Juan Rubio's (2024) mixed-methods study indicated the underrepresentation of pronunciation, more emphasis on pronunciation by international publishers than national ones, and a gap in integrating pronunciation as an essential skill.

Relevant studies indicate contextual diversity and recurring issues, from overreliance on native-speaker models to limited support for ELF-aware pedagogy and insufficient integration of pronunciation as a core language skill. Collectively, research urges more inclusive, intelligibility-oriented, and context-sensitive materials that reflect the realities of global English use and address diverse learner and teacher needs.

The Current Study

The coursebook series analyzed in this study is utilized in the Turkish EFL context, particularly in the preparatory school of a major state university. Türkiye has used the CEFR guidelines since 2004 (Hazar, 2021). Turkish EFL students take English courses from the second grade until Grade 12. The twelve grades comprise the primary, secondary, and upper secondary education levels, administered by the education ministry. The exit level from the last education level (upper secondary) is B2 (in CEFR). Relevant curricula indicate little to no emphasis on pronunciation (Ministry of National Education, 2018a, 2018b), also supported in previous work (Topal, 2022; Topal & Altay, 2022).

Preparatory schools serve as a transitional education level between high school and university (Topal, 2024). Universities with EMI programs provide at least one year of compulsory or voluntary English education, typically between B1 and B2 levels, to newly admitted college students. Currently, many state and foundation universities offer preparatory education. Given their potential, these institutions use various internationally published coursebooks by

Oxford, Cambridge, MacMillan, Pearson, and National Geographic Education. In preparatory schools, language instructors are highly dependent on the coursebooks or skills books provided by the administration. They are expected to follow weekly, monthly, or semiannual syllabi from the program and materials units. Preparatory students receive around 20-26 hours of English classes weekly.

That being the case in the Turkish EFL context, few studies have examined how commercially produced, CEFR-aligned EFL coursebooks operationalize pronunciation instruction through a pedagogically grounded lens, despite the growing interest in pronunciation pedagogy and its importance in communicative competence. The present study intends to bridge this gap through a systematic content analysis of Macmillan's *Skillful* coursebook series through the frameworks proposed by Celce-Murcia *et al*. (2010) and Levis & Sonsaat (2016).

The *Skillful* series represents a valuable case for analysis for several reasons. First, it is widely used in international university-preparatory (e.g., Gazi University, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul Commerce University, Karabük University) and academic English programs (De Bartolo & Mancuso, 2021; Gadomska & Krajka, 2018; Kryszewska, 2014), particularly in CEFR-aligned contexts where pronunciation is treated as a core sub-skill within speaking and listening components. Second, Macmillan Education's products claim to integrate 21st-century skills and communicative language teaching principles (Akçay, 2019; Duman, 2024), making it a promising candidate for examining how modern pedagogy is reflected in pronunciation instruction. Third, the *Skillful* series includes student and teacher components, allowing for a more comprehensive review of how pronunciation is treated across materials and instructional guidance.

Parallel to the discussion made thus far, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Which types of pronunciation features—segmental or suprasegmental—are more prevalent in the analyzed coursebook series, and what specific features are included?

RQ2: What types of pronunciation activities are incorporated in the coursebooks, and to what extent do they align with Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (2010) CFPT and Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) design principles for pronunciation materials?

Method

Research Design

The study employed a content analytic approach to examining the prevalent pronunciation features in Macmillan's *Skillful* series and their alignment with Celce-Murcia *et al*'s (2010) CFPT and Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) pronunciation

materials design. Content analysis is a research method that systematically examines print or electronic texts (Krippendorff, 2019). In our case, these were the relevant courseware platform and coursebook print-outs with pronunciation activities. Notwithstanding its different categorization, content analysis typically includes qualitative and quantitative content analysis depending on the data type (numerical vs. non-numerical) (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023; Riffe *et al.*, 2023). In our case, this study utilized both types to answer the research questions: qualitative for the second part of the first research question and quantitative for the rest.

Data Source and Selection Criteria

The data were collected using Macmillan Education, a courseware platform providing comprehensive access to all instructional materials, including digital coursebooks. In addition, the researcher obtained print-outs of these relevant pages. The materials were initially screened to determine which components included pronunciation activities. This screening revealed that the reading and writing books across all levels (L0–L4, corresponding to CEFR levels A1–C1) did not contain any pronunciation activities. Consequently, only the listening and speaking books were retained for analysis. Further details about the analyzed coursebook series can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

The Analyzed Coursebook Series

Level	Book Titles	Authors
A1	Skillful Third Edition L0 Listening & Speaking	David Bohlke & Dorothy E. Zemach
A2	Skillful Third Edition L1 Listening & Speaking	Lida Baker, Steven Gershon, David Bohlke, Dorothy E. Zemach
B1	Skillful Third Edition L2 Listening & Speaking	Louis Rogers, David Bohlke, Robyn Brinks-Lockwood, Dorothy E. Zemach
B2	Skillful Third Edition L3 Listening & Speaking	Louis Rogers, Dorothy E. Zemach, Ellen Kisslinger, Lida Baker
C1	Skillful Third Edition L4 Listening & Speaking	Emma Pathare, Gary Pathare, Lindsay Warwick, Louis Rogers, Dorothy E. Zemach

Overview of Analytical Frameworks

The pronunciation activities were analyzed in relation to the research questions. For the first research question, activities were categorized into segmentals (e.g., individual vowels and consonants) and suprasegmentals

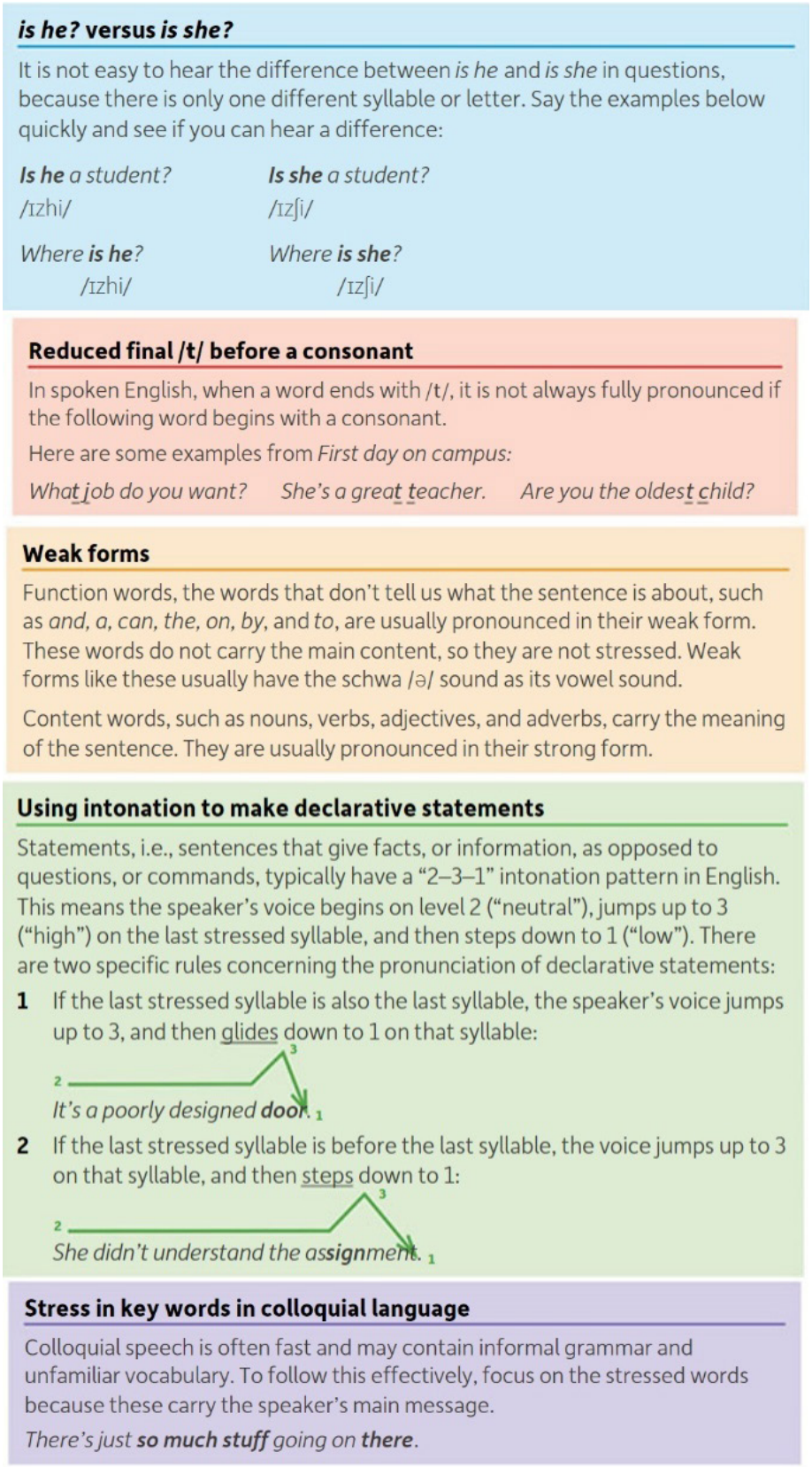
(e.g., intonation, rhythm, stress), and a deeper analysis of the segmental and suprasegmental features in the activities was performed. For the second research question, activities were coded according to the five components of Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (2010) CFPT, whose details are presented in Figure 1. As Celce-Murcia *et al.* (2010, p. 45) described, the CFPT is a progressive model that moves from analysis and awareness-raising to production-focused practice. At the same time, the design of the materials was evaluated based on the three principles outlined by Levis and Sonsaat (2016), which propose that effective pronunciation instruction should (i) prioritize intelligibility, (ii) integrate with other language skills, and (iii) offer sufficient support for teachers.

Coding Scheme and Rating

Prior to analysis, print-outs of the relevant coursebook pages were obtained for future analysis. The researcher created four sheets corresponding to the research questions (two sheets per question) in Microsoft Excel. For the first research question, sample codes included frequencies of pronunciation features across the coursebook levels and identification of the specific pronunciation features across the levels. For the second question, codes involved the alignment of pronunciation features with the CFPT components and the design principles. Examples of pronunciation features from each coursebook level are displayed in Figure 2 (from top to bottom corresponding with A1-C1).

Figure 2

Example Pronunciation Features across All Coursebook Levels (A1-C1)



is he?* versus *is she?

It is not easy to hear the difference between *is he* and *is she* in questions, because there is only one different syllable or letter. Say the examples below quickly and see if you can hear a difference:

Is he *a student?*	***Is she*** *a student?*
/ɪzhi/	/ɪzʃi/
Where ***is he****?*	*Where* ***is she****?*
/ɪzhi/	/ɪzʃi/

Reduced final /t/ before a consonant

In spoken English, when a word ends with /t/, it is not always fully pronounced if the following word begins with a consonant.

Here are some examples from *First day on campus:*

What job do you want? *She's a great teacher.* *Are you the oldest child?*

Weak forms

Function words, the words that don't tell us what the sentence is about, such as *and, a, can, the, on, by,* and *to*, are usually pronounced in their weak form. These words do not carry the main content, so they are not stressed. Weak forms like these usually have the schwa /ə/ sound as its vowel sound.

Content words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, carry the meaning of the sentence. They are usually pronounced in their strong form.

Using intonation to make declarative statements

Statements, i.e., sentences that give facts, or information, as opposed to questions, or commands, typically have a "2–3–1" intonation pattern in English. This means the speaker's voice begins on level 2 ("neutral"), jumps up to 3 ("high") on the last stressed syllable, and then steps down to 1 ("low"). There are two specific rules concerning the pronunciation of declarative statements:

1 If the last stressed syllable is also the last syllable, the speaker's voice jumps up to 3, and then glides down to 1 on that syllable:

It's a poorly designed ***door****.*

2 If the last stressed syllable is before the last syllable, the voice jumps up to 3 on that syllable, and then steps down to 1:

She didn't understand the ***assignment****.*

Stress in key words in colloquial language

Colloquial speech is often fast and may contain informal grammar and unfamiliar vocabulary. To follow this effectively, focus on the stressed words because these carry the speaker's main message.

There's just ***so much stuff*** *going on* ***there****.*

Three experienced EFL instructors, one being the researcher, were recruited to conduct the analysis. All three hold PhD degrees in TESOL and have delivered listening and pronunciation courses at the tertiary level. They were selected based on their familiarity with phonological concepts and frameworks, particularly CFPT and the Levis and Sonsaat (2016) model, which had been previously used in their teacher training programs or academic research. The coders received a 90-minute training session to familiarize themselves with the rubric and data categories before the analyses. During the session, they reviewed (i) definitions and examples of segmentals and suprasegmentals, (ii) operational definitions of each CFPT component, (iii) sample coding using a pilot dataset (i.e., samples from each coursebook level), (iv) criteria for determining integration and teacher support features, and (v) a printed coding manual was also provided as a reference throughout the process.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Each rater received a print-out of the relevant coursebook pages with pronunciation activities. Each then independently coded the entire dataset on the print-outs. For instance, they wrote "segmental" or "suprasegmental" and their frequencies on the print-outs for the first research question. Meanwhile, the pronunciation activities usually included the pronunciation features they were about (e.g., contractions of *be* and weak forms). Therefore, the raters only wrote the specific pronunciation feature. The cases of uncertainty, on the other hand, were resolved in a post-coding meeting. For the second question, the raters matched each pronunciation activity with the components of the two frameworks (CFPT and design principles). The first rater (the researcher) collected all the coded print-outs, held a post-analysis meeting to resolve discrepancies, and entered the codes into the relevant sheets of Microsoft Excel.

Cohen's kappa (McHugh, 2012) was calculated for each major coding category (segmental/suprasegmental and components of CFPT and design principles) to assess interrater reliability. Agreement scores ranged between $\kappa = 0.72\text{-}0.84$, indicating substantial to excellent agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). In total, 12% of the entries showed initial disagreement across one or more dimensions. These were discussed collectively, and a consensus was reached through discussion and reference to the coding manual. No unresolved disagreements remained in the final dataset. The ultimate dataset was then subject to descriptive analyses (frequency and percentage) using Microsoft Excel.

Findings and Discussion

Prevalence and Specification of Pronunciation Features

The first question explored the prevalence and specification of pronunciation features across the analyzed coursebook levels. As Figure 3 displays, suprasegmentals (n = 50) outweighed segmentals (n = 10) across all levels (A1 through C1). This means that a little more than two-thirds of the pronunciation activities were related to suprasegmental (prosodic) features. The frequency of segmentals was quite close at the A1, A2, and B1 levels. However, no segmentals were included in the B2 and C1 levels. This staged approach aligns well with the cognitive load theory and pedagogical practicality (Plass *et al.*, 2010), given the concreteness of segmentals and abstractness of suprasegmentals (Jeong, 2009). Previous studies also found the dominance of suprasegmentals in coursebooks, aligning with our finding (Derwing *et al.*, 2012; Hendersen & Jarosz, 2014; Kralova & Kucerka, 2019; Topal, 2021, 2022).

Figure 3

Prevalence of Pronunciation Features across Coursebook Levels

The predominant presence of suprasegmental features in the coursebook content is congruent with the recommendations of pronunciation researchers (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Gordon & Darcy, 2022; Levis & Sonsaat, 2016). However, the prevalence of suprasegmentals should not necessarily mean sidelining segmentals, as previous research also indicated their impact on intelligibility (e.g., Tang & He, 2024; Yenkimaleki & van Heuven, 2021). Instead, L1-specific problem-causing pronunciation features should be incorporated rather than general segmental or suprasegmental features (McAndrews & Thomson, 2017). Due to contextual and individual factors, research findings on the segmental and suprasegmental debate revealed variations (Wang, 2022). This, in turn, lends credence to the argument that pronunciation instruction, along with teaching materials, must address specific pronunciation problems of non-native English speakers.

The second part of the question determined the specific segmental and suprasegmental features included in the analyzed coursebooks. The findings are presented in Figure 4 and Table 2. Figure 4 shows the distribution of pronunciation features in the coursebook activities by phonological focus across levels, while Table 2 presents the specific features embedded in each coursebook level.

Table 2

Distribution of Pronunciation Features across the Coursebook Levels

CEFR Level	Pronunciation features
A1	• Contractions of be • plural -s sounds • is he/is she • there is/there are • /a/ - /ʌ/ • /θ/ - /ð/ • /əʊ/ - /ʌ/ • reduced *and* • word stress • pausing and intonation in long lists • connected speech in questions • intonation in questions • pronunciation of numbers • saying dates • stress in compound nouns and adjectives • contrastive stress
A2	• Reduced final /t/ before a consonant • word stress in sentences • intonation in statements • stress and intonation in questions • reduced forms 1 • contractions in the present progressive • weak forms • pronouncing syllable stress • thought groups and pausing • /ed/ endings • glottal stop • pronouncing can/can't; be able to/not able to • consonant clusters • stress for emphasis • silent syllables • pronouncing contractions with will
B1	• Elision of vowel sounds • weak forms • stress in phrasal verbs • consonant clusters • continuing speech (intonation) • pauses and thought groups • sounds in dates and numbers • stress in phrases connected with *and* • homophones • stress in modifiers before data • taking time to think (pausing) • catenation • emphatic stress for storytelling • /g/ - /k/ • linking vowel sounds between words • word stress with word suffixes
B2	• Intonation in declarative statements • stress in statements of contradiction • intonation to express feelings and attitudes • intonation to infer attitudes and feelings • word stress with content and function words • intonation with tag questions • question intonation • word stress for agreement and disagreement • thought groups
C1	• Stress in key words in colloquial language • intonation when expressing and eliciting information • intonation for presentations • emphasis for hedging (emphatic stress) • rhythm in rhetorical devices • prominence in questions • pronouncing numbers and math and science symbols • catenation and elision

As Table 2 indicates, a total of 32 pronunciation activities were included in A1 and A2 levels. For A1 level, pronunciation activities about specific grammar points (e.g., be, plural –s, and there is/there are), minimal pairs (e.g., /a/ - /ʌ/, /θ/ - /ð/, and /əʊ/ - /ʌ/), suprasegmental features (e.g., reduction, pausing, intonation, stress, and connected speech), and subjects (e.g., numbers and dates) were included. The A2 level coursebook contained similarities and differences. Different pronunciation features were thought groups, syllable stress, -ed endings, glottal stop, consonant clusters, and silent syllables. Despite the similarities of suprasegmental features, their focus was different, such as the grammar points (e.g., *be able to* and *will*).

Additionally, it manifests the pronunciation features (n = 25) involved in B1 and B2 coursebook levels. The B1 coursebook included an individual minimal pair (/g/ and /k/), suprasegmental features (e.g., elision, linking, word stress, pauses, and intonation), individual subjects like homophones, and segmentals like consonant clusters. The B2 level coursebook was inclined towards suprasegmentals, such as intonation, stress, and thought groups, notwithstanding the variations in focus (e.g., tag questions, content/function words, and statements of contradictions). Moreover, the C1-level coursebook included more advanced uses of suprasegmentals, such as intonation for expressing/eliciting information,

emphasis for hedging, and rhythm in rhetorical devices. This book involved a total of eight pronunciation activities.

Overall, the segmental features included specific consonants and vowels and the pronunciation of numbers, dates, and symbols, while the suprasegmental features covered stress, intonation, and connected speech.

Figure 4

Distribution of Pronunciation Features by Phonological Focus (A1–C1 Levels)

	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	Total
Vowels	2	0	0	0	0	2
Consonants	1	3	2	0	0	6
Lexical Stress	2	1	3	2	1	9
Sentence Stress	1	2	2	1	1	7
Intonation	2	1	1	5	3	12
Connected Speech	2	0	3	0	1	6
Syllables	0	2	0	0	0	2
Grammar-Linked Forms	4	6	1	0	0	11
Thought Groups / Pausing	0	1	3	1	0	5
Minimal Pairs / Homophones	0	0	1	0	0	1
Numbers / Symbols	2	0	1	0	1	4
Rhythm	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Features	16	16	16	9	8	65

Figure 4 illustrates a clear developmental trend from segmental features in earlier levels (A1-B1) to a suprasegmental focus in later levels (B2-C1), aligning with Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (2010) CFPT, positing that early pronunciation instruction often begins with segmental awareness but gradually shifts toward suprasegmental and discourse-level features that support intelligibility and fluency.

Intonation is the most frequent suprasegmental feature, appearing 12 times across all levels, with the greatest concentration at B2 (5) and C1 (3), concurring with Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) findings. However, it diverges from Topal's (2021) results, revealing the prevalence of connected speech and word stress in Pearson's SpeakOut series. This reflects the increasing need for pragmatic competence among advanced learners (e.g., expressing emotion, signaling attitude, or managing interactional turn-taking), coinciding with the communicative functions of intonation (Wickmann, 2015).

Importantly, grammar-linked forms (e.g., contractions of *be*, plural *-s* sounds, is he/is she, there is/there are, and reduced final /t/ before a consonant) appear as the second most common phonological focus. Their accumulation in earlier levels (A1-A2) and disappearance in advanced levels (B2-C1) indicate

their importance in early instruction to support accurate pronunciation of morphosyntactic elements like plural *-s*, contractions, and tense endings (Celce-Murcia *et al*., 2010). The focus on grammatical-linked forms is congruent with the idea that pronunciation should be integrated with other skills (e.g., grammar and vocabulary) (Levis & Sonsaat, 2016; Sicola & Darcy, 2015), and ungrammatical language use affects comprehensibility (Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012; Munro & Derwing, 1999; Varonis & Gass, 1982).

Connected speech and thought groups are most present at B1 (3 and 3 respectively), aligning with the transition from controlled to communicative practice and supporting fluency, prosodic cohesion, and speech naturalness (Celce-Murcia *et al*., 2010). Additionally, the limitation of minimal pairs and homophones to early levels is consistent with the view that phonological contrast and syllable-level decoding are foundational skills best addressed at beginner stages (Baker, 2014; Strange & Shafer, 2008). Ultimately, including rhythm and presentation-related prosody in advanced levels (C1) reflects advanced-level expectations for rhetorical effectiveness, discourse organization, and audience engagement in academic and professional settings (Pickering, 2018).

Overall, the distribution of pronunciation features across CEFR levels (A1–C1) shows a shift from segmental focus at lower levels to suprasegmental emphasis at higher levels. Segmentals dominate A1–B1, supporting early intelligibility (Celce-Murcia *et al*., 2010), while suprasegmentals (e.g., especially intonation, stress, and connected speech) are increasingly targeted from B2 onward to support fluency and discourse competence (Isaacs, 2018; Trofimovich & Baker, 2006). Grammar-linked features are most common at A1–A2, aiding early morphophonemic development (Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012), while rhythm and prosody emerge at C1, reflecting advanced communicative demands (Pickering, 2018).

Adherence of Pronunciation Activities to the CFPT and Design Principles

The second research question addressed how the pronunciation activities in the coursebook levels adhered to Celce-Murcia *et al*.'s (2010) CFPT and Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) design principles. Figure 5 illustrates variations in the total number of pronunciation activities across the coursebook levels. Most activities accorded with the first three coursebook levels, followed by C1 (n = 36) and B2 (n = 31). Concerning the CFPT, the majority of the pronunciation activities were related to the listening and description component (n = 101), followed by description and analysis (n = 65) and controlled practice (n = 53). The number of guided practice (n = 15) and communicative practice (n = 6) activities across all coursebook levels was noticeably low, suggesting more guided and communicative pronunciation practice. Our findings differed from Topal's (2021), concluding the predominance of description and analysis and controlled practice activities in

Pearson's Speakout coursebook series. Similarly, Topal (2021) reported no guided and communicative practice activities in his study. However, the current study revealed 21 related activities, albeit with low frequency. Henderson and Jarosz (2014) equally reported no guided practice and communicative practice activities in Polish EFL textbooks and a relatively low number in French EFL textbooks (8.5% and 1.0%, respectively), coinciding with our study.

Figure 5

Distribution of CFPT Components across the Coursebook Levels

	Description and Analysis	Listening and Discrimination	Controlled Practice	Guided Practice	Communicative Practice	Total
A1	16	28	9	6	1	60
A2	16	25	14	3	0	58
B1	16	20	15	3	1	55
B2	9	15	6	0	1	31
C1	8	13	9	3	3	36
Total	65	101	53	15	6	240

The CFPT is grounded on a continuum in which the risk level increases from description and analysis to communicative practice, the freedom level rises toward communicative practice, and the focus is on form in description and analysis and meaning toward communicative practice (Henderson & Jarosz, 2014). Alternatively, this can be interpreted as the low frequency of meaning-focused pronunciation activities in the analyzed coursebook series. Conversely, most relevant coursebook activities were focused on form, with students taking low risks and having little freedom.

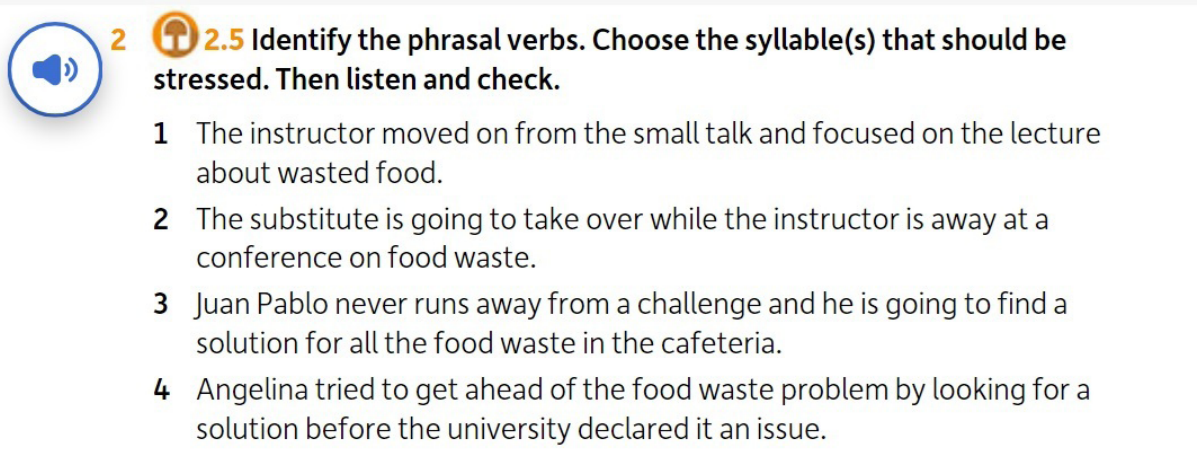
Correspondingly, the second part of the question tackled how the pronunciation activities in the analyzed coursebook series complied with Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) principles of pronunciation materials design (prioritizing intelligibility, integrating pronunciation with other skills, and teacher support). As Table 2 presents, all activities were intended to encourage intelligibility, given their focus on segmentals and suprasegmentals. Previous research indicated the impact of both pronunciation features on intelligibility (Gordon & Darcy, 2022, 2024), supporting our claim. However, achieving intelligibility depends on various factors, from context and individual differences to pronunciation instruction (Gonçalves & Zárate-Sández, 2024; Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2008; Suzukida, 2021).

For instance, the pronunciation activity about stress in phrasal verbs shown in Figure 6 was categorized under the listening and discrimination component of CFPT. As previous research indicated, college instructors may avoid pronunciation activities, including this, due to a lack of confidence and

knowledge and curricular restrictions (Barrantes-Elizondo & Gordon, 2024; Couper, 2017; Murphy, 2014). In parallel, pronunciation is often disregarded in the Turkish EFL context where this coursebook series is utilized, since it is not assessed through quizzes or exams. Furthermore, the CFPT is "well-suited for a course focused entirely on pronunciation, but it can be difficult to implement in a more general communication or multi-skills course, both in terms of in-class time and preparation time" (Rothgerber, 2020, p.1). Therefore, the presence of pronunciation activities aligning with the CFPT does not necessarily mean effective pronunciation teaching, especially within fixed and time-constrained course curricula (Rocha, 2023).

Figure 6

A Sample of Pronunciation Activity in Listening and Discrimination



Concerning the second principle, the coursebook designers assembled the pronunciation activities under listening and speaking skills, as Levis and Sonsaat (2016) pointed out. With a little difference, most pronunciation activities targeted perception (n = 65) rather than production (n = 51). The close gap in quantity of perception and production activities does not inevitably yield desirable learning outcomes in favor of production. Rather, it solely indicates an adjacent amount of pronunciation activities targeting perception and production. The effectiveness of pronunciation learning and teaching, as aforementioned, relies on various individual, contextual, curricular, institutional, and pedagogical factors.

Table 3

Compliance with Pronunciation Materials Design

Levels/Components	Prioritizing Intelligibility		Skills Integration		Teacher Support	
	Yes	No	Listening	Speaking	Yes	No
A1	16	0	16	11	0	16
A2	16	0	16	12	0	16
B1	16	0	16	13	0	16
B2	9	0	9	7	0	9
C1	8	0	8	8	0	8
Total	65	0	65	51	0	65

As Figure 7 displays, regardless of the targeted skill (perception or production), the follow-up exercises may fail to complement teaching or support learning of pronunciation features – consonant clusters in this case. Also, the absence of pronunciation features in the reading and writing components of the coursebook series is another striking finding to discuss. Pronunciation is closely interconnected with both reading and writing, particularly through the development of phonological awareness and spelling-sound correspondences (Ehri, 2022). Similarly, focusing on orthography may promote intelligibility (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). Also, vocabulary knowledge comprises form, meaning, and use (Nation, 2001), entailing the knowledge of how words are pronounced (form), what meanings different pronunciations may convey (meaning), and what stress and intonation patterns to use in different contexts (use).

Pronunciation is also closely connected with grammar (Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 2010), with the success of target grammar use depending partly on its phonetic realization (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). Similarly, specific grammar structures (e.g., statements, listing, and interrogatives) require using different intonation patterns (Levis, 1999). Despite these close relationships between pronunciation and other language skills (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing), Macmillan's *Skillful* series neglects incorporating relevant pronunciation activities, contradicting the second principle of materials design (Levis & Sonsaat, 2016).

Figure 7

A Pronunciation Activity Targeting Speaking (Production)

Consonant clusters

Consonant clusters are groups of consonants in words that are pronounced very quickly together, e.g., *br* in *break*. Many of these consonant clusters fall at the beginning of a word.

Common clusters in English are *bl-*, *br-*, *cl-*, *cr-*, *fl-*, *fr-*, *gl-*, and *gr-*.

blue *brew*
clue *crew*
flee *free*
glass *grass*

3 Create two sentences using one or more of the consonant clusters below.

bl- br- cl- cr- fl- fr- gl- gr-

*The body sometimes wants **fried** foods, but the **brain** wants healthy **fresh fruit**.*

1 _____

2 _____

Regarding the third principle of designing pronunciation activities (i.e., teacher support), analysis of the coursebook content did not reveal any materials to help instructors teach the pronunciation features. The coursebook series only provides some background information (Figure 8) on the specific pronunciation features in the book content, which is already available to learners. This piece of information will be insufficient for instructors with varying pronunciation cognitions. Our finding diverges from Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) in that their examination of the coursebooks included conceptual explanations, reminders, and rules for teachers to varying degrees. No supporting materials were found in our analysis of the teacher's books.

Figure 8

An Example of Background Information on Pronunciation Features

Stress in key words in colloquial language

Colloquial speech is often fast and may contain informal grammar and unfamiliar vocabulary. To follow this effectively, focus on the stressed words because these carry the speaker's main message.

*There's just **so much stuff** going on **there**.*

Overall, the pronunciation activities in the analyzed coursebook series aligned mostly with listening and discrimination (n = 101) and description and analysis (n = 65) components of CFPT, leaving gaps for a more communicative

approach to pronunciation teaching. At the same time, the inclusion of pronunciation activities targeting perception and production does not imply their effective learning or teaching. The lack of integration of pronunciation with other skills, particularly reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar, is something that coursebook writers and publishing houses must consider. Equally, providing sufficient teacher support materials will not only coincide with the third principle of designing pronunciation materials but also enable novice or unconfident teachers to teach pronunciation features.

Conclusion

Motivated by the argument that coursebooks are primary teaching materials preferred by teachers, the underrepresentation of pronunciation in coursebooks, and the scant attention attached to pronunciation treatment in these teaching materials, this study evaluated Macmillan's *Skillful* series (A1-C1), an internationally published coursebook series used in the preparatory school of a Turkish state university. The study specifically addressed the segmentals and suprasegmentals and specific pronunciation features distributed across the coursebook levels. It also examined the congruence of pronunciation activities with the principles of Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (2010) CFPT and Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) materials design.

Concerning the first question, the coursebook content showed similar tendencies to the previous work and the prevalent approach to pronunciation instruction. Specifically, the dominance of suprasegmental features (e.g., intonation, lexical stress, and sentence stress) indicates potential opportunities for an intelligibility-oriented pronunciation teaching. However, the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction does not merely rely on coursebook content and quality but on manifold dynamics (e.g., context, quality of instruction, teacher's knowledge, and individual differences). Similarly, the presence of grammar-linked forms as the second most frequent phonological feature theoretically shows the integration of pronunciation with grammar. However, it does not warrant any desirable outcomes in practice. Equally, targeting perception and production through segmentals and suprasegmentals also does not mean thoroughly addressing these skills. Additionally, the accumulation of activities towards the beginning levels (A1-A2) necessitates a more balanced distribution across all coursebook levels. Accordingly, experimental, classroom, and longitudinal research are needed to corroborate the study's findings.

The second question tackled the conformity of pronunciation activities to Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (2010) CFPT and Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) materials design principles. Despite the varying distribution of pronunciation activities across all CFPT components, the predominance of listening, discrimination, description, and analysis activities implies reduced opportunities for communicative pronunciation practice. Comparably, the existence of both segmentals and

suprasegmentals may appear as a chance for prioritizing intelligibility per the pronunciation materials design principles (Levis & Sonsaat, 2016). However, it does not necessarily guarantee achieving favorable learning outcomes. In parallel, despite the presence of grammatical forms and perception and production activities, the coursebook series fails to address other language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. At the same time, the lack of supplementary materials for teachers disagrees with Levis and Sonsaat's (2016) third principle (teacher support), urging the provision of ancillary materials, such as conceptual descriptions and rule explanations for inexperienced and unconfident teachers.

Notwithstanding the similarities and differences between the study's findings and previous research, the current study recognizes some limitations. First, the findings are limited to Macmillan's *Skillful* series, despite the overlapping and differentiating results. Further studies may explore other products by the same publishing house or compare those by different ones. Second, the study only performed a content analysis of the coursebook series. Future researchers may consolidate the findings through classroom observations and interviews with learners and teachers. Parallel to this, prospective studies may look into the effectiveness of variables (e.g., coursebooks, instruction, affective factors, and individual differences). Nonetheless, the study's findings are expected to contribute to the relevant line of inquiry from theoretical and practical aspects.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT: Datasets related to this research will be available upon contact with the corresponding author.

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