

PronPack, Books 1-4. Mark Hancock. Chester: Hancock McDonald ELT, 2017. ISBN 978-0-9957575-4-7

Alla Minasyan

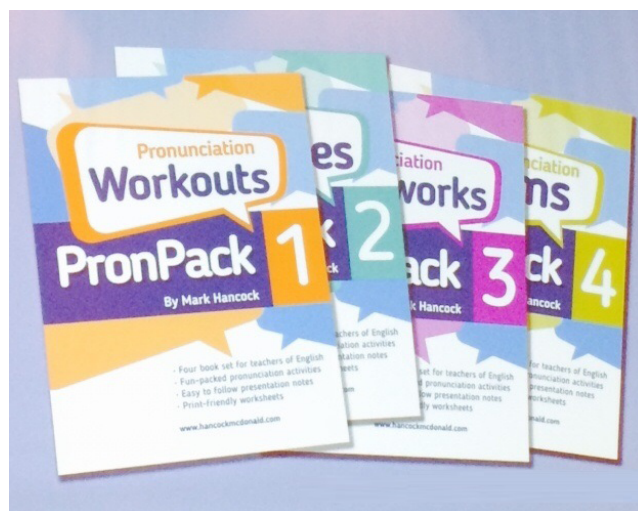
Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Alla Minasyan, Yerevan Brusov State
University of Languages and Social Sciences, Toumanyan St. 42, Yerevan, Armenia, 375002.
E-mail: alla_minasyan@yahoo.com

Every learner of English while learning it wants to speak accurately and clearly. This is why accurate pronunciation is important for people in order to understand and be understood. But not all learners of English can easily obtain this pronunciation skill. Very often something goes wrong: some individuals progress well, others – slowly; some learners make good separate sounds but in connected speech they feel that sounds deteriorate. For many individuals English intonation is a problem. How can teachers help learners of English to obtain this skill? What should be taught and how? Are there any alternatives to listening to speech patterns and drilling them? Mark Hancock answers all of these questions in his PronPack resource books 1-4.

The general approach to teaching pronunciation adopted in the books is to understand others and make them understand you. The pronunciation model is that of the teacher, no matter what country he or she comes from. MP3 Audio files are recorded in British English accent but an American version of the Sound Chart is provided.

PronPack 1, entitled ‘**Pronunciation Workouts**’, focuses on the sound system of English: it provides learners with the Sound Chart, explains rules of articulation of English vowels and consonants and also familiarises learners with such prosodic features as word stress and tone modifications in connected speech. Book 1 gives 13 Workouts and activities with teaching focus on various issues and is meant for choral drill activities. For example, Workout 1 introduces learners into the Sound system of English; Workouts 5 and 6 – into vowels and 7-8 – into consonant system. Activities vary from simple exploration of the sound system to explanations of articulation and spelling patterns. Workout 5 contains a sufficient number of phonetic exercises which are meant to practice not only vowel sounds but also diphthongs of English.



Short and long vowels are practiced separately. All exercises are accompanied by pictures which makes drilling not at all boring. Articulation of vowel sounds is supplemented by pictures of the position of the lips, and of consonants – by pictures of the position of all organs of speech. Word stress is easily explained in Workout 10 as ‘making one syllable stronger, longer, louder and higher in pitch, and the other syllables weaker – often, but not always, by reducing the vowel sounds’. Quite a number of exercises follow which practise word stress in shorter and more extended words, which are grouped according to the position of the stressed syllable. In Workout 11 pronunciation of words in English is linked to grammar. Phonetic exercises of this Workout have three levels of difficulty. Workouts 12 and 13 contain ideas about English rhythm and tonic stress, respectively. Rhythm is explained on the usage of content and function words and strong and weak syllables. Example exercises contain six groups of questions and statements which

practice stressed, stressed-unstressed and stressed-2 unstressed syllables in each of the phrases. The last, 13th, Workout introduces a tone unit or a tone group (which forms sentences) and, specifically, the nucleus or tonic stress. The nuclear tone, which can be placed on any word in the sentence changing its meaning, is practised on simple sentences and special questions.

PronPack 2 ('Pronunciation puzzles') provides pronunciation puzzles – game-like activities which can be done individually or in pairs and even small groups. These activities include mazes, sudoku, word searches, and crosswords. The benefit of using these activities lies in mastering patterns of pronunciation (letter combinations, word stress in word families, and word combinations). The difficulty of puzzles increases starting with individual sounds, proceeding to grammatical endings and ending with word stress, tonic stress and connected speech. Activities 2.1-2.5 involve finding a route through a maze at different language levels; activities 2.6 – sound sudoku; there is also a 'puzzle parquet' and 'stress jigsaw' and 'stress mazes', a spelling puzzle. Puzzle 2.12 is devoted to word chains. All activities are designed for different language levels.

PronPack 3 is called '**Pronunciation Pairworks**', and it was designed for students to work in twos or threes or even fours. Basically pairwork is very beneficial to the students: they develop self-confidence and self-esteem when working without teacher's guidance; it allows them to interact with other learners and exchange opinions and gives them a sense of achievement after they have reached the goal. It could be even more efficient if groupings were varied. PronPack 3 is a book which gives learners all of

these benefits. It, first, focuses on individual sounds through minimal pairs which are practised on maps, sentence pairs, picture descriptions or games. Then pairworks become more sophisticated and concentrate on word stress, tonic stress and phrasal homophones. All the activities cover everyday themes, which are very familiar to the learners: world and street maps, air travel, dominoes, games of dice, pinball, and real life situations. The activities are meant for different language levels: from elementary upwards but can be used by various age groups.

PronPack 4 ('Pronunciation Poems') contains rhymes, chants, limericks, raps, and song lyrics specifically designed to practise individual sounds, consonant clusters, grammatical *-ed* and *-s* endings, weak forms, and connected speech. Poems are easy to remember and, therefore, to drill. They cover such everyday issues as living in woods, appearance description, cat and mouse, looking after a horse, eating out, playing football, wearing shoes, skiing, eating fruit and vegetables, education, playing a musical instrument and others.

PronPack books are logical, well-structured, useful for all language levels and all age groups. They are up-to-date and, taking into account that there are in general not many pronunciation books, allow learners in an entertaining way to obtain pronunciation skills to a level when they understand how they are speaking and they are understood. The books are written by an author who has been writing teaching materials for many years and practising teaching throughout his professional career. Mark Hancock is a teacher who loves teaching pronunciation (a precious quality!) and shares this love with others.