An Analysis and Evaluation of Two Pronunciation Textbooks

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Abstract

It is acknowledged that pronunciation is vital to daily communication. Therefore, pronunciation in foreign language teaching is important and it is of significance to evaluate pronunciation textbooks. The present research is to make evaluation of *English Pronunciation and Phonetics for Communication (second edition)* and *English Phonology (second edition)*. The research aims at determining whether the two textbooks can meet the demands of English learners. To this end, surveys are conducted to investigate the degree of satisfaction of the textbooks for English learners. According to the analysis, the two textbooks are satisfactory and can meet their demands to some extent. The researchers hope that their suggestions based on the analysis of target needs, learning needs and textbooks could be of some help to materials compilers in their future work.

Key terms: English Pronunciation and Phonetics; Materials Evaluation; Target Needs Analysis; Learning Needs Analysis

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Some researchers do not think English phonetic instruction is necessary to learners. For instance, a study by Suter (1976) concluded that little relationship exists between teaching pronunciation in the classroom and attained proficiency in pronunciation and that pronunciation will *take care of itself* with the students' exposure to the target language. Contrarily, some scholars hold the view that teaching phonetic knowledge and theories are absolutely essential in the process of language learning. Morley (1991) claims that explicit pronunciation teaching can enhance 1earners' awareness to improve their communicative ability and help learners master the language and build up self-confidence in interactive verbal communication. Therefore, the attitude towards the necessity of teaching phonetics has shifted. It seems that more emphasis should be placed on comprehension-based or communication-oriented approaches, which means that learners' pronunciation in a foreign language needs to be taught in conjunction with communicative practice for the learners to be able to communicate effectively (Zhang, 2009).

Nevertheless, the current situation of phonetic learning for current college students in China is still not optimistic for the following reasons. Firstly, pronunciation learning is deemed as one of the hardest skills to acquire for learners (Zhang, 2009). It takes a long period of time to make improvements in pronunciation. Thus pronunciation teaching and learning is naturally ignored by both teachers and learners. Many teachers even claim that students do not need to learn pronunciation at all because it will *take care of itself* as the students develop their overall language ability (Zhang, 2009). The lack of attention on this issue from the beginning leads to serious problems with respect to phonetics for students in college. *College English Curriculum Requirements* (henceforth shortened to *Requirements*), states that non-English major students should give a brief speech on a familiar topic after practicing with correct pronunciation and intonation (2007). However, most of the college students cannot achieve this goal according to Shi (2010). In addition, the phonetic courses given in university are not sufficient to fulfill the R*equirements*. The *Requirements* (2007) demands that tests for non-English major students should include written tests and oral tests in that pronunciation and intonation could be rightly judged during the oral tests. Nevertheless, the importance and purpose of oral English tests is neglected. The way of oral English tests to evaluate pronunciation and intonation is not effective. Besides, textbooks are considered as principal sources of getting knowledge. Nunan (1988) believes that "materials are often the most tangible and visible aspect of a curriculum". Therefore, textbooks of phonetics are also counted as a major reason for the insufficient learning of pronunciation specifically (Zhang, 2009). To students who have not been trained systematically before, teaching materials with high-level theories and methods are essential in the learning process. Liu (2010) indicates that the choice of phonetics textbooks has an impact on the course design and implementation of teaching methods.

Researchers at home and abroad regard phonetics as an important part of speaking, reading, writing and listening experiences; an essential system that learners use along with other kinds of information (Deng, 2005). Nevertheless, up to now, researches on phonetics in western countries have tended to focus on the variables that impede or enhance the acquisition of a reasonable pronunciation or focus on the process of pronunciation acquisition. Cook (2000) believes that teaching or correcting a single phoneme may not have any effect on the student's pronunciation or may have the wrong effect. Cook reinforces the point by using a vivid simile: "it (teaching or correcting a single phoneme) is like taking a brick out of a wall and replacing it with another. Unless the replacement fits exactly in the structure of the whole wall, all the other bricks will move to accommodate it, or at worst the wall will fall down." (2000). Cook also concludes that the teaching of phonetics should be related to the particular stage the learner is at, emphasizing individual words at the beginning, relating pronunciation to learners' actual circumstances, and tailoring the sound system of the new foreign language for students (2000).

In China, though in recent years the interest in the research on phonetics teaching and learning has gradually drawn scholars' attention, the study from the perspective of college students' pronunciation cannot be easily found. The participants in Wu's research indicate that in high schools they are asked to repeat what teachers say and imitate what they hear (Wu, 2011). However, their teachers of English lack appropriate teaching methods to give instruction in phonetics. Some teachers know little about stress, rise or fall. Most of their pronunciation is somewhat Chinglish. (Chinese English). Wu states that the reason for the great difficulty in pronunciation after entering college is that they have not received any professional phonetic knowledge and training (2011). It is necessary for students to get guidance from professors before getting a right understanding of a subject. Therefore, the formal and professional pronunciation skills provided by either teachers or textbooks are important for college students. But studies on phonetics teaching are quite limited, let alone studies on the materials of English phonetics and pronunciation.

1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The present study is to make a comparative analysis of two phonetics textbooks, which are *English Pronunciation and Intonation for communication* published by Higher Education Press *(second edition, 2005) and English Phonology* published by Shanghai Foreign Language Educational Press (second edition, 2008) based on the new evaluation framework for non-English major college students. The present research analyzes those two popular phonetics textbooks respectively written and edited by Wang Guizhen and Wang Wenzhen. Because there are seldom papers or essays on evaluation of materials or textbooks of English phonetics, it is significant to figure out what problems exist with phonetics textbooks. Do these textbooks help to improve students' English communicative abilities and pronunciation skills? The study will explore to what extent students are satisfied with their textbook and what should be contributed to improving the utility of the textbooks.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

This present research aimed at making a comparative analysis of two currently popularly used phonetics textbooks. The two phonetics textbooks were for giving training in pronunciation and communicative skills for non-English major college students. The study was designed to examine whether these two textbooks meet the demands of learners in pronunciation knowledge. The research mainly contained four questions as follows:

1. To what extent are college students satisfied with their pronunciation textbooks?

2. Do the two phonetics and pronunciation textbooks evaluated meet the needs of learners?

3. What can be done to make improvements to the utility of phonetics textbooks?

2.2 Participants

A total number of 102 students from Zhejiang University participated in the research, among whom 24 were freshmen, 43 sophomores, 34 juniors and 1 senior. They were asked to carefully fill in the questionnaires prepared by the researchers. Specific information about participants, including grades and corresponding numbers, is listed in the following table.

Non-English Majors	Grade	Percentage %
102	1-4	100
24	1	23.5
43	2	42.2
34	3	33.3
1	4	1

Table 1: Information about participants

2.3 Instruments

The materials evaluation questionnaire and needs analysis questionnaire, together with the analysis of textbooks were the main ways to solve the proposed research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative data would be provided through these instruments.

2.3.1 Questionnaires

Three major steps were proposed for evaluations which are, selecting a unit from a volume of the textbook, deciding and defining the criteria for evaluation, and analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of the textbooks in matching their claims with learners' needs (Rea-Dickens and Germaine, 1992). To select the criteria for evaluation, the researchers browsed theories and works of two scholars (Cheng, 2002; Wu, 2011). Finally, it was decided to select those features which are approved by the two scholars are common and at the same time necessary for the evaluation. Then, a questionnaire was prepared by the researchers concerning the degree of satisfaction and learning needs for learners of phonetics textbooks.

The outline of the questionnaire consisted of three main parts, which were personal background, investigation of phonetics textbooks evaluation, and needs analysis of phonetics textbooks. Personal background required students to fill in the information of grade, major, and gender. Personal information like the student's name was not necessary as this questionnaire was an anonymous investigation. Investigation of phonetics textbooks evaluation contained many subparts such as the attributes of the curriculum, layout, content, exercise, motivation, skill. To cover aspects of evaluation as much as possible, the questions were designed in detail. The last part, which was concerned with the needs analysis of learners, explored the expectation of learners for learning pronunciation and phonetics. Questions 22-28 were in regard to the learning background of the respondents, such as the reason why they want to learn English, which skill they view as most valuable, the current learning progress of phonetics knowledge, etc. Questions 29-48 were concerned with the available methods of learning pronunciation, expected improvement to phonetics courses, as well as their personal view of pronunciation. In order to avoid misunderstanding and enhance validity, the questions in the questionnaires were written in Chinese.

2.3.2 Textbook analysis

The researchers selected two popularly used textbooks among learning materials in the market and made evaluation of them. The first textbook under investigation is *English Pronunciation and Intonation for Communication* written by Wang Guizhen, which was first published by Higher Education Press in 1996. Because of its authority and popularity among teachers and students, it was modified and the second edition was issued in 2005. The book is composed of a pretest, 15 units, tests, as well as a CD. The second textbook is *English Phonology* written and edited by Wang Wenzhen, which was first published by Shanghai Foreign Language Educational Press in 1999. It was modified and republished in 2008 and also came with a CD.

2.4 Procedure and Data Collection

To obtain the result of whether the two phonetics textbooks meet the demands of learners, the whole evaluation process was carried out in three different steps. To begin with, in the first step, an internal evaluation was applied. In terms of basic compiling principles, the framework of the whole book including exercises and pronunciation instructions were evaluated. Then, a detailed external evaluation was provided. Finally, an analysis of the data collected from the questionnaires was processed. The questionnaires were distributed to non-English major students who were taking a phonetics course. All the data obtained from the questionnaires were processed by computer with Excel.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Results from the Questionnaires

The questionnaires consist of two parts, which are target needs questionnaire (Questions 1-21) and learning needs questionnaire (Questions 22-48). The analysis will discuss the two parts separately. The participants used one of the evaluated textbooks English *Pronunciation and Intonation for Communication* in their pronunciation course. Detailed tables and diagrams are presented in order to show explicitly what the users expect from the textbook.

3.1.1 Results of Target Needs Questionnaires

The non-English major students in this research were taking the English pronunciation course. Therefore, all the participants indicated that they took the English pronunciation course, and the textbook used is *English Pronunciation and Intonation for Communication* with a CD-ROM attached. 111 students participated in the questionnaire, but 9 results were invalid because of missing information. Therefore, the valid respondents totaled 102 students.

Questions 5-6 were concerned with the role of the textbook. Eight students chose extremely helpful, 53 helpful, 28 not sure, and 13 not that helpful. 52 percent of the students considered the textbook helpful. From Questions 7 to 9, the students were supposed to evaluate the motivation, content and difficulty of the textbook. The following figure shows the results explicitly.
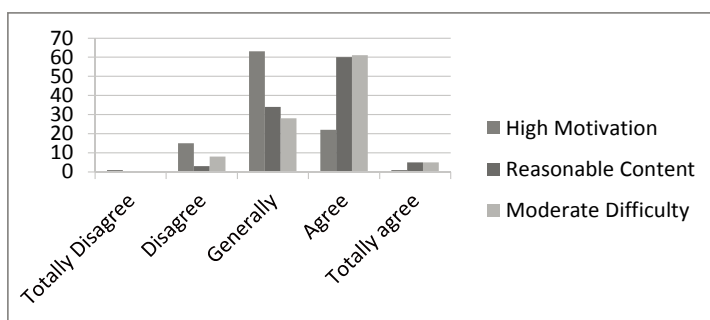

Figure 1: Motivation, content, and difficulty of the textbook

From Figure 1, we can see that the students considered that the motivation of the textbook is generally high, and only 14 students disagree with this point. 99 students and 94 agree that the textbook has reasonable content and is moderately difficult respectively.

Question 10 was designed to elicit in what aspect students consider the textbook to be difficult. Many choices were given including technical terms, abstract conceptions, language expression, unclear chart expression, too-general content, pronunciation without instruction, and others. The students were allowed to make more than one choice. About 70 students chose technical terms. Abstract conception came as the second with 35 students choosing it. Figure 2 shows the result clearly.
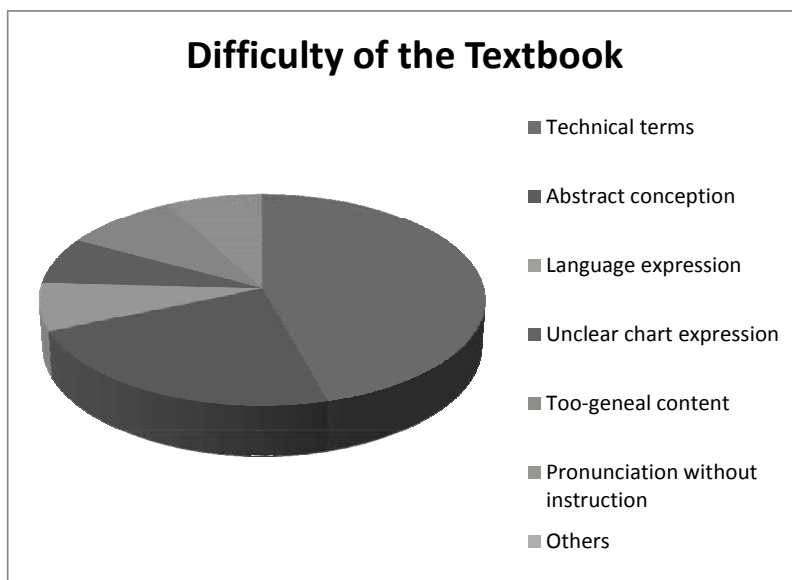
Figure 2:   Difficulty of the textbook

Questions 12-15 are concerned with the students' degree of satisfaction with the exercises in the textbook, including the aspects of appropriate difficulty, moderate quantity, motivation and helpful effect. According to Figure 3, we can see that about 65% of the students agreed that the textbook's exercises offer appropriate difficulty. The students generally agreed or agreed with the design with regard to exercises in the textbook. A majority of students were satisfied with the provided exercises.
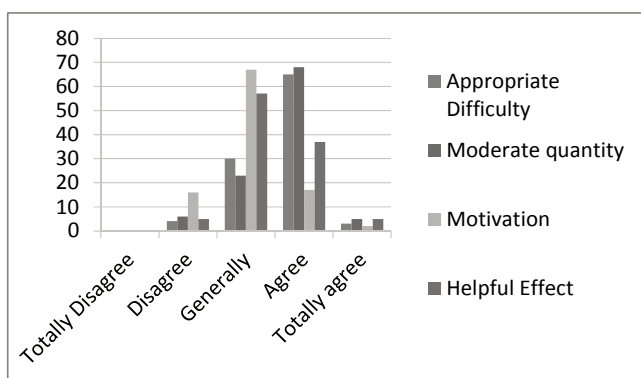

Figure 3:   Difficulty, quantity, motivation and effect of exercises

From the results of questions 16 and 17 (See Figure 4), an explicit interpretation shows that the students generally had a comprehensive understanding of pronunciation knowledge and phonetics through learning from the textbook. In addition, they indicated that the textbook helped them boost their confidence in phonetics and pronunciation. 99 students were contented with the textbook: *English Pronunciation and Intonation for Communication* (second edition). 29 students chose generally agree, 64 chose agree and 6 totally agree. Only three were dissatisfied with the textbook.
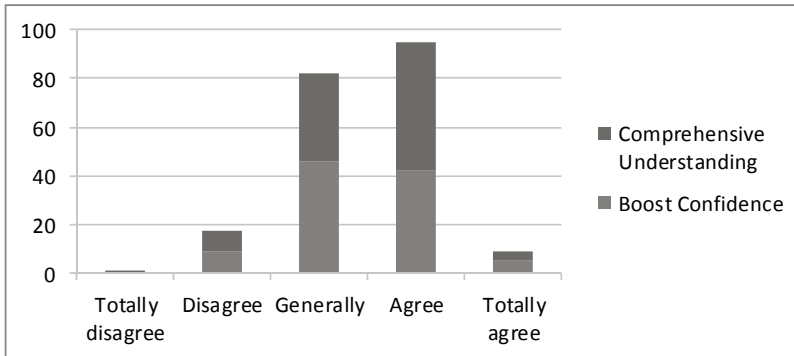
Figure 4:   Understanding of the textbook

3.1.2 Results of the Learning Needs Questionnaires

Questions 22-48 are concerned with the students' learning needs. The pronunciation course in the university concerned is an elective one. The duration of lesson is 90 minutes each week and lasts 16 weeks. 100 students thought that it was necessary to have a pronunciation course. Among them, 28 chose 'extremely necessary', and 72 'necessary'. Question 32 asks the students about their attitude towards teaching time allocated to the phonetics course. 61 students thought that the length of the phonetics course was not sufficient, while three thought the time was too short. On the contrary, 3 thought the length of the course which lasts for two semesters was too long. 35 chose right enough exactly. On the whole, a majority of 64 considered that the pronunciation course should be extended.

Question 22 explores learners' reasons for studying English and more than one choice is allowed. As is shown in Table 2, personal improvement (74.5%) occupied the highest rate, followed by personal interests (66.7%). 52.9% of the participants chose job application. 41.2% chose passing examinations and going abroad, 28.4% professional development and 3.9% others. The results show that the students are more concerned with their future development. Thus the materials should be compiled according to the needs of their future jobs and interest. The materials for learners should be flexible because of various requirements for pronunciation learning.

Reasons for Studying English	No. of Students	Percentage
Job application	54	52.9
Passing examinations	42	41.2
Going abroad	42	41.2
Personal interests	68	66.7
Professional development	29	28.4
Personal improvement	76	74.5
Others	4	3.9

Table 2: Reasons for studying English

Questions 23-25 are concerned with students' opinion about the order of the five language skills with regard to importance, difficulty, and urgency to improve. As for Question 23, 48.1% of the students considered speaking the most important and 57.8% considered speaking as the second most important skill in English. For Question 24, 37.5% of the students considered speaking the most difficult skill to learn, and 58.8% considered speaking the second most difficult skill in English. Only 3.9% considered speaking as the least difficult skill to learn.

With more attention to speaking and listening by the students, compared with reading, writing and translating, the results show that learners recognize that listening and speaking are important.

Question 29 is concerned with what textbooks should focus on. The researchers gave the respondents four choices: pronunciation instruction, learning theories, imitation training, and others. Figure 5 shows the result. 61.8% wished imitation training could be paid more attention to. 37.3% considered pronunciation instruction as the most important. It implies that pronunciation skills are considered important for the students. They want to learn practical pronunciation skills instead of formal theoretical knowledge. Learning theories therefore is not urgent for them.

Focus of the textbook

- Pronunciation Instruction
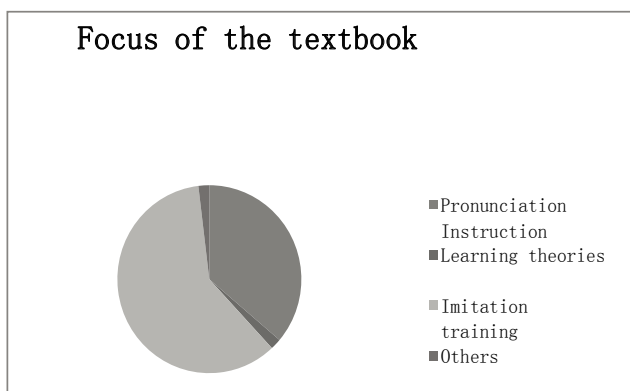- Learning theories
- Imitation training
- Others

Figure 5: Focus of the textbook

Questions 35-36 are mainly about the suggestions of the students for the textbook. As for Question 35, 26.5% indicated they strongly hoped the textbook contains graphics, 54.9% chose hope, 12.7% chose generally hope, and the rest did not see it as a necessity. For Question 36, 97.1 percent of the students wished a textbook should come with instructional materials, such as MP3 files, a CD-ROM, etc. The result indicates that the students need practical skills and helpful instructions should be considered in guiding students' learning of pronunciation.

- Suggestion for Graphs in Textbook
- Suggestion for instructional materials

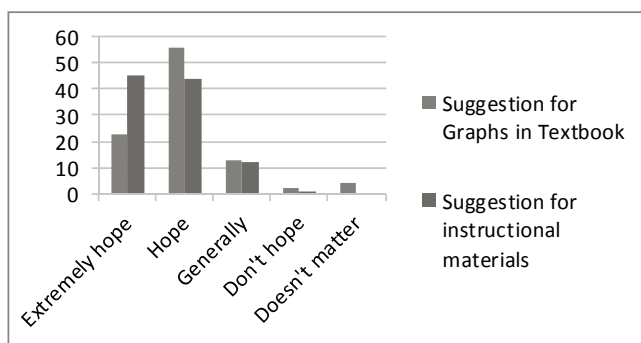(Categories: Extremely hope, Hope, Generally, Don't hope, Doesn't matter)

Figure 6: Suggestion for the textbook

The rest of the questions are related to students' understanding of pronunciation. 83 students (81.4%) thought their pronunciation was inappropriate, and they needed to improve their English accents. 61% of the respondents could not even tell which accent they speak with. This indicates that they did not know the difference between British accents and American accents. In

the researchers' questionnaire, British accents and American accents are listed as two typical English accents among all the accents people speak. 41.2% preferred British accents but indicated that a British accent was harder to learn. 39.2% preferred American accents, and pointed out that it was easier to learn. 16.7% thought it difficult to learn either of the two accents. Only 2.9 percent of the students thought both accents were easy to learn. According to the data, 71.6% paid attention to their pronunciation ordinarily, while 23.9% did not. The remaining 4.5% showed no interest in their accent. The students who paid no attention ordinarily to their accent wanted to have an authentic pronunciation but they put no efforts, while the students who showed no interest did not care about their pronunciation.

Question 41 is about the effective methods of learning phonetics in relation to the order of importance. Seven choices were given, which were 'listen more, compare more', 'read aloud', 'practice about stress, connected speech and pause', 'individual help from teacher ', 'intonation practice', 'sounds comparison with native speakers' and 'mutual help among students'. The students were asked to choose the effective methods for them in the order of effectiveness and importance. The top three choices were 'listen more, compare more', 'read aloud' and 'intonation practice'.

Order	Non-English Majors	No.
1	listen more, compare more	41
2	read aloud	29
3	intonation practice	21

Table 3: Effective methods in the order of effectiveness and importance

Question 42 is about the materials they like for practicing pronunciation. Ten different kinds of materials are given for the students to choose from in the order of effectiveness and interest. The ten kinds of materials are movie subtitles, stories, celebrity lectures, dialogues, lyrics of popular songs, poems, student lectures, tongue twisters, single sentences, and words. According to the data collected from the questionnaires, movie subtitles are the most popular for non-English majors, followed by celebrity speeches, stories and lyrics of popular songs. 23 students chose stories as the second most important resources for practicing, and 24 chose it as the fifth in terms of its importance.

Order	Non-English Majors	No.
1	movie subtitle	50
2	celebrity speech	23
3	story	19
4	lyrics of popular songs	17
5	story	24

Table 4: Materials in the order of effectiveness and interest

In sum, the results of the questionnaires, which consist of a target needs questionnaire and a learning needs questionnaire, can help the researchers find the answer to the proposed research question: To what extent are college students satisfied with their textbook?

According to the collected data from the students, a majority of them are satisfied with their textbook. After reading the guidance of the textbook, the students have a comprehensive understanding of English pronunciation and phonetics. Overall, they

are content with the layout, context, and design of the textbook. The students are especially satisfied with the exercises of the textbook and they think that the textbooks are motivating as well.

3.2 Results from the textbook evaluation

In this section, the researchers comply with the principles that are proposed by Cheng (2002). This part will focus on the evaluation of the two textbooks and try to answer the other research questions the researchers have proposed, which are, do the two evaluated phonetics and pronunciation textbooks meet the needs of learners? And what can be done to make improvements in the utility of the two phonetics textbooks?

The researchers use the systematic evaluation which is composed of internal evaluation and external evaluation. A general analysis will be concentrated on the following aspects: compiling principles, framework, and design. For the principles of external evaluation, the researchers will carry out investigation with regard to content and exercises and answer the questions by making summaries of both internal evaluation and external evaluation.

3.2.1 Results of Internal Evaluation

3.2.1.1 Compiling Principles

At first, the researchers evaluate the two textbooks with regard to compiling principles. Materials compilation is generally based on one or more theories of language teaching and learning, reflecting the compilers' views on the nature of the language as well as the process of language learning and teaching.

The textbook *English Pronunciation and Intonation for communication* (T1) is compiled by the principles of cultivating students' abilities of using English and of helping autonomous learning with its various exercises and additional listening. T1 consists of 15 units of detailed phonetics information in order to help students to master phonetic knowledge. Besides, tests are included in T1, which are for students to train on their own.

As for the textbook *English Phonology* (T2), it is said that it is compiled on the basis of author's abundant teaching experience and academic achievements. It also follows teaching theories and principles of a pronunciation course and conforms to the specific context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning and teaching in China. In addition, the last section of T2 is *English Show*, including poems, extracts famous plays, an American family and English songs. In this way, the authors not only focus on phonetics information, but also pay attention to cultural knowledge in order to cultivate students' language abilities as well as to widen their cultural knowledge through language learning.

3.2.1.2 Framework

In this section, the researchers will explore the organization of the two textbooks and the frameworks of the two books will be presented.

T1 consists of 15 units, which are basic conceptions for unit 1, consonants for units 2-4, vowels for units 5-7, stress for units 8 and 9, strong forms and weak forms for unit 10, linking for unit 11, rhythm of English speech for unit 12, and intonation for units 13-15. Besides, a pretest, test, answer keys and further readings are included in T1.

As for T2, the organization is really different from that of T1. T2 is mainly composed of three parts: British English Phonetics, American English Phonetics, and English Show. In the first part, there are eight units, which are phonemes and transcription, pure vowels, diphthongs, rules of reading of English vowel letters, consonants, and connected speech (I) (II) (III). The second part contains four units, which are pure vowels, diphthongs, consonants, and intonation. And the last part consists of four categories, which are poems, extracts from famous plays, an American family, and English songs. In addition, keys to exercises are included in this textbook. The main differences from T1 are that T2 divides British and American English Phonetics into two parts and English knowledge is introduced to learners.

3.2.1.3 Design

The design of materials involves graphics, color, layout, medium forms and length of a book. Are the graphics in the textbooks depicted clearly? Are the color and layout attractive to learners? Although they are minor parts of the teaching materials, they can play important roles in the teaching and learning process. Medium forms refer to books, cards, tapes, CDs, or website resources. The modern educational technology is important in teaching and learning and what really matters is how the media are used so that they can contribute to the process of pronunciation teaching and learning.

Both T1 and T2 contain a CD-ROM with pronunciation instructions. Learners can easily listen to the CDs repeatedly and grasp the pronunciation skills in an easier way. T2 contains two kinds of English pronunciation, which are British accent and American accent. Learners can tell the two accents apart and can choose the accent they favor.

In the aspect of graphics, T2 does a better job than T1. T1 contains very few graphics of organs to show how the sounds are produced or very few pronunciation instructions. This is reinforced by the respondents who participated in the questionnaires. 26.5% indicated they strongly hope the textbook contains graphics, 54.9% chose hope, 12.7% chose generally, and the rest do not see it as a necessity. For question 36, 97.1 percent of the students wish the textbooks should be accompanied by more instructional materials, such as MP3s, CD-ROMs, etc. Any helpful resource should be considered in guiding students' learning of pronunciation.
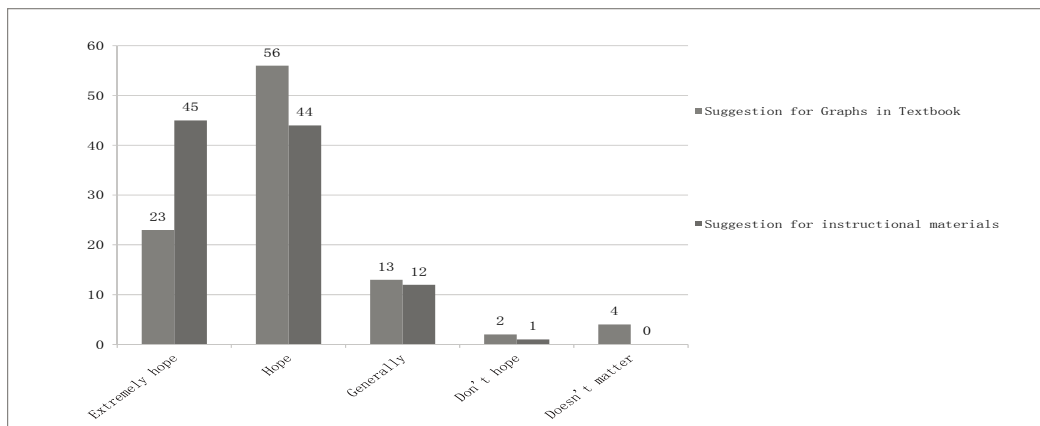

Figure 7: Suggestions for the textbook

As for color and layout, T1 is better than T2. T2 lacks pictures and other interesting contents. The researchers deem that learners may feel bored with such a kind of textbook. Although T1 contains pictures to attract learners, the respondents still indicate that interesting content should be added.

3.2.2 Results of External Evaluation

3.2.2.1 Content

In terms of T1, the respondents of the questionnaires indicate that the motivation of the textbook is high enough to attract them. A majority of the participants show interest in learning pronunciation by using this book. In addition, question 8 of the target needs questionnaire explores whether this book has a reasonable content. Most of the students choose the choice of 'generally' or 'agree', from which it can be known that they are satisfied with the content of T1. By analyzing the content of T1, the researchers find the content coherent and detailed. The book is written in English, so it is hard for many students. Many students suggest that the textbook should be written both in English and in Chinese.

As for T2, firstly, the book is written in Chinese. So it is easier for Chinese students. Secondly, the book contains many clear charts and graphics that can be helpful to students' practice. Thirdly, the content of T2 is very clear and coherent, but not as detailed as that of T1. T2 contains information about both British and American-English phonetics, which is useful for students.

3.2.2.2 Exercises

The researchers think that exercises are an indicator for judging the nature of a textbook. A textbook with many exercises can be considered as teaching practical skills. Contrarily, a book with few exercises can be viewed as a more theoretical textbook.

For T1, the students are satisfied with the exercises. According to the target needs questionnaire, Questions 12-15 are concerned with the degree of satisfaction in the textbook, including the aspects of appropriate difficulty, moderate quantity, motivation and helpful effect. According to the figure below, we can see that the students generally agree or agree with the design with regard to exercises in the textbook. A majority of the students felt satisfied with the provided exercises. They are content with the difficulty, quantity and motivation. Most of the students consider the exercises of T1 to have a very helpful effect on their pronunciation practice.
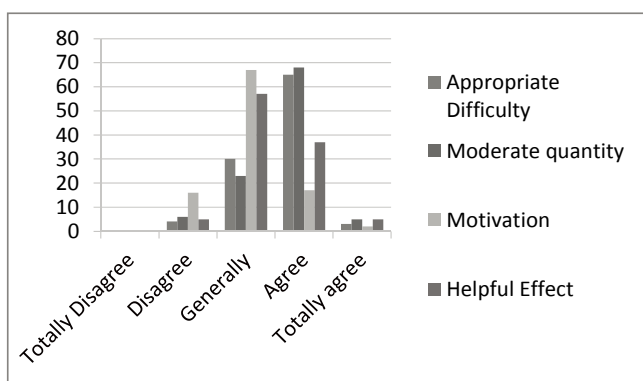

Figure 8: Exercises

For T2, there are three or four exercises in each section. Each unit has two to six sections. Students are required to listen to the materials and answer the questions. However, the big problem for the design of the exercises of T2 is that the forms of the exercises are too simple. The usual exercises of T2 are to read the following words correctly and to pay attention to the bold words. Such exercises lack motivation for learners to practice. What is more, the third part of English Show is designed to provide materials for learners to practice. But the problem is that there are no listening materials in this part. Even if students want to practice on their own, no guidance is provided.

3.3 Discussion

By analyzing the two textbooks, the researchers found out both advantages and disadvantages. In terms of *English Pronunciation and Intonation for Communication*, the design of exercises and content are satisfactory. The content is coherent and detailed. The problem is that it is hard for students to read in English, because the book contains so many abstract conceptions and technical terms.

As *English Phonology* is written in Chinese, the above problem can be avoided. The advantage of this textbook is that it gives both American and British English phonetics so that learners can learn what they are interested in and will not be confused by the two accents. Another advantage of this textbook is that it contains a variety of materials for learners to practice, from poems, extracts from famous plays, songs, to stories. However, this textbook has its problems. On the one hand, the sign (by this word we mean the marking system that is used in the textbook to indicate the activity or task for learners) for listening materials is not clear. There should be a sign showing that there is something to listen to for the exercise. Also, the textbook mentions some examples in

the content, but there is no listening instruction for them, especially when some examples are exceptions for the given pronunciation regulations. Moreover, as the researchers have mentioned above, there should be listening materials for the third part of the textbook.

All in all, the students are satisfied with both textbooks. The content, design and instruction can meet the demands of learners' needs, as well as the requirements of the curriculum. Some problems of the two textbooks are pointed out and if they can be solved, the two textbooks will surely be more effective to teach phonetics and pronunciation to students.

4. Conclusion

This research was mainly conducted to figure out whether the two textbooks evaluated can meet the demands of students in pronunciation, to what extent students are satisfied with their textbooks, and what can be done to facilitate the utilization of the textbooks. To explore answers to the questions stated, a target-needs questionnaire, a learning-needs questionnaire, and a textbook evaluation were carried out. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses are made for the textbook evaluation. With the analysis and textbook evaluation based on the data collected from the questionnaires, a comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the two pronunciation textbooks is presented.

The principle taken by the researchers is the systematic evaluation (Cheng, 2002). Internal evaluation and external evaluation are both applied in the evaluation process. Indicators such as compiling principles, framework, content, and exercise are the main aspects used to make the evaluation. The textbook *English Pronunciation and Intonation for communication* is compiled by the principle of cultivating students' abilities of using English. As for the textbook *English Phonology*, it is said that it is complied on the basis of abundant teaching experience and academic achievements. The former contains many exercises and can motivate learners' interest in pronunciation. The latter consists of both British English phonetics and American English phonetics. The distinction between the two kinds of English phonetics helps learners become familiar with both accents and tell the two accents apart. The former is written in English, which causes trouble for many learners because of the unfamiliar technical terms and abstract concepts in English. As for *English Phonology*, the biggest problem is the lack of signs for listening materials. What is more, it provides some examples in content, but there is no listening instruction for them, which is especially problematic when some examples are exceptions to the given pronunciation regulations. Moreover, there should be listening materials for the third part of the textbook.

Generally speaking, the participants are satisfied with the textbook *English Pronunciation and Intonation for Communication*. According to the data collected from the questionnaires, the participants indicate that the layout, content, exercises and motivation of that textbook are satisfactory. The researchers conclude that the two textbooks are both favorable and acceptable. They can meet learners' demands.

In order to cultivate learners' abilities of applying English to their future development, textbooks' compilers should do better than before to meet learners' requirements. Therefore, the following suggestions should be taken into consideration. First, textbooks can be written both in English and in Chinese so that it is easier for students to be familiar with abstract conceptions and technical terms. Second, American English phonetics and British English phonetics should be dealt with separately. One of the current problems of college students in pronunciation is that they can not tell the differences between British and American accents. This is because many teachers of English in China were taught British accents and in their teaching they do not point out the differences between British and American accents, and their students are influenced by their teachers' accents. And outside the classroom, students are more familiar with American accents through TV, radio, the Internet, etc. as now China has much more contact with the USA. This way, many students are a bit confused about the accents of their teachers of English and those they get from other resources. So it is the textbook compilers' responsibility to include the two systems of pronunciation in order that the students can choose what they prefer and learn to practice with their favorite accent. Third, listening materials should not be only for exercises, but also for the other listening materials cited in the textbook. Fourth, there should be a variety of materials used for practice to attract learners' interest, and compilers should use various materials, such as movie subtitles, stories, celebrity speeches, lyrics, poems and other popular materials. A well-compiled textbook can be positive in arousing students' attention and interest. As a result,

textbooks should be designed with reasonable content, clear graphics as well as illustrative pictures. In addition, compilers should try their best to make the materials close to students' daily life. Last, it is significant to know that theories of phonetics are important, but it is more useful for non-English major learners to master pronunciation skills for daily communication.

Although some findings have been acquired by the researchers, the present research has a number of limitations. First, due to the limited time and resources, the number of participants who completed the questionnaires is not large enough to typically present college students in China. Additionally, participants should come from various universities, and not be restricted to only one. Besides, more pronunciation textbooks should be evaluated. Much work needs to be done to the present research so that better pronunciation textbooks for college students can be compiled in the future.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire of English Pronunciation textbooks' degree of satisfaction

1. Personal Background:

 Grade： _____ Major _____ Gender： _____

Evaluation of the English Pronunciation Textbook

2. The curriculum on Pronunciation Course in your university:

A． Compulsory Course B. Selective Course   C. No such course

3. Have you taken the pronunciation course before (including taking now)

A． Yes (Please answer questions **1-47**) B. No (Please switch to question **22**)

4. Does your pronunciation course provide a textbook?

A.Yes, the name is _____ B. Yes, but I can't remember   C. No, we only have notes and handouts.

4. Does the textbook have tapes, CD-ROM, or mp 3?

A. Yes   B. No

5. What do you think of the textbook in helping you learn pronunciation knowledge?

A. Extremely helpful   B. Helpful C. Not sure D. Not that helpful E. Not helpful

6. What do you think of the textbook in helping you improve your accent and pronunciation?

A. Extremely helpful   B. Helpful C. Not sure D. Not that helpful E. Not helpful

7. Do you agree that the interesting content of the textbook can stimulate your motivation?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

8. Do you agree that the contents of the textbook are reasonable and are written from easy to hard?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

9. Do you agree that the textbook is written with moderate difficulty, and can match your present level?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

10. Which do you think reflects the difficulty of the textbook (Multiple choices are allowed)

A. Technical terms B. Abstract conception   C. Language expression D. Unclear chart expression E. Too-general content F. Pronunciation without instruction

G. Others

11. Do you agree that the textbook contains all the pronunciation information? (speech and sound, stress, intonation, and rhythm)

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

12. Do you agree that the exercises of the textbook are appropriately difficult?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

13. Do you agree that the exercises of the textbook are in moderate quantity?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

14. Do you agree that the exercises are interesting to stimulate your motivation towards pronunciation study?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

15. Do you agree that the exercises or skills have helpful effects on your study?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

16. Do you agree that the textbook boosts your confidence in learning pronunciation?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

17. Do you agree that you have a comprehensive understanding of pronunciation knowledge through using the textbook?

A． Totally Disagree B. Disagree C. Generally D. Agree E. Totally Agree

18. Are you satisfied with the layout of the textbook?

A．Totally Disagree   B. Disagree   C. Generally   D. Agree   E. Totally Agree

19. Do you agree that the textbook is written reasonably and logically?

A．Totally Disagree   B. Disagree   C. Generally   D. Agree   E. Totally Agree

20. On the whole, are you satisfied with the textbook?

A．Totally Disagree   B. Disagree   C. Generally   D. Agree   E. Totally Agree

21. What's your suggestion for the textbook to improve?

Appendix II

Questionnaire of Needs Analysis for Pronunciation Textbooks Evaluation

Target Needs

22. Learners' reasons for studying English_____ （Multiple choices are allowed）

A． Job application   B. Passing examinations C. Going abroad   D. Personal interests

 E. Professional development   F. Personal improvement   G. Others

23. Which skill do you think is the most important? Please rank in the order of importance.

A． Listening   B. Speaking C. Reading D. Writing E. Translating ____>____>_____>_____>_____

24. Which skill do you think is the most difficult? Please rank in the order of difficulty.

A． Listening   B. Speaking C. Reading D. Writing E. Translating ____>____>_____>_____>_____

25. Which skill do you think is urgent to improve? Please rank in the order of urgency. A． Listening   B. Speaking C. Reading D.

Writing E. Translating ____>____>_____>_____>_____

26. What is your own assessment to your English ability?

A. Excellent   B. Good   C. Fair   D. Bad   E. Too bad

27. What is your own assessment to your level of pronunciation knowledge?

A. Excellent   B. Good   C. Fair   D. Bad   E. Too bad

28. What do you think of your current pronunciation learning?

A. Quite satisfactory   B. Basically satisfactory   C. Generally

D. Dissatisfactory   E. Very dissatisfactory

29. Which aspect do you think the textbook should be focused on?

A. Pronunciation instruction   B. Learning theories   C. Imitation training   D. Others

30. What do you think about the subject of English pronunciation?

 Learning Needs

31. Do you think it is necessary to give a pronunciation course in universities?

A. Extremely necessary   B. Necessary   C. Doesn't matter

32. What is your attitude towards the teaching hours allocated to the phonetics course?

A. Too much   B.A little much C. Rightly enough   D. Not enough   E. Too few

33. What is your view of appropriate teaching duration?

A.1 Semester   B.2 semesters   C.3 semesters   D. More semesters

34. Your degree of interest in English phonetics learning_____.

A. Very interested, feel it attractive B. Pretty interested, bored sometimes C. Generally, depending on the teaching style D. Not at all

35. Do you hope that the content of the textbook contains graphics?

A. Extremely hope   B. Hope   C. Generally   D. Don't hope   E. Doesn't matter

36. Do you hope that the textbook contains instructional materials, such as tapes, CD-ROMs, or Mp3?

A. Extremely hope   B. Hope   C. Generally   D. Don't hope   E. Doesn't matter

37. Do you have problems with your English pronunciation?

A. Yes, big problems   B. Yes, need to correct   C. Yes, but doesn't matter   D. No

38. Which part do you think is hard for you?

A. Intonation   B. Liaison   C. Strong and weak forms

D. Stress   E. Consonants   F. Vowel

39. Do you think it necessary to take a pronunciation course to improve your accent?

A. Extremely necessary   B. Necessary   C. Generally   D. No necessary   E. Doesn't matter

40. What is your view of pronunciation learning strategies?

A. I completely ignored the pronunciation learning strategies when I learned English pronunciation.

B. I just imitated the English accent when I learned English pronunciation.

C. I learned English pronunciation by comparing the English pronunciation system with the Chinese one.

41. Please rank the effective methods of learning pronunciation in the order of importance.
（1）Listen more, compare more (　　)
（2）Read aloud (　　)
（3）Practice about stress, connected speech and pause (　　)
（4）Individual help from teacher (　　)
（5）Intonation practice (　　)
（6）Sound comparison with native speakers (　　)
（7）Mutual help among students (　　)

42. Please rank the practice materials in the order of effectiveness and interest.
（1）Movie subtitles (　　)
（2）Stories (　　)
（3）Celebrity lectures (　　)
（4）Dialogues (　　)
（5）Lyrics of popular songs (　　)
（6）Poems (　　)
（7）Student lectures (　　)
（8）Tongue twisters (　　)
（9）Single sentences (　　)
（10）Words (　　)

43. Do you pay attention to your pronunciation ordinarily?

A.Yes　　　　B. No　　C. Doesn't matter

44. Which accent do you favor?

A. British　　　B. American　　C. Others (such as Canadian)：_____

45. Which kind of accent do you have?

A. British　　　　　　　B. American　　　　　　　C. Can't tell them apart

D. Others (such as Canadian)：_____

46. Do you know the difference between British and American accents?

A. Yes, very clearly　B. Yes　　C.Know a little　D. Know nothing

47. Which culture do you know (literature, music and drama)?

A. American　　　B. British　C. Both　　　D. Neither　　　E. Others: _____

48. What is your view of British and American accents?

A.　The British accent sounds better, but is more difficult to learn.

B.　The American accent sounds better, and is easier to learn.

C.　Both are hard to learn, and there is no difference.

D.　Both are easy to learn.