INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND PHILOLOGY

DOI: https://doi.org//10.69648/AHHO7620
International Journal of Education and Philology (IJEP), 2025; 6(2): 31-51
ijep.ibupress.com
Online ISSN: 2671-3543

Application : 08.10.2025
Revision : 28.11.2025
Acceptance : 23.12.2025
Publication : 30.12.2025

Stevkovska, M. (2025). An analysis of phonetic and phonological content in English curricula for high schools in North Macedonia. International Journal of Education and Philology, 6(2), 31-51. https://doi.org//10.69648/AHHO7620

An Analysis of Phonetic and Phonological Content in English Curricula for High Schools in North Macedonia

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Abstract

In today's world of global communication through English as a Lingua Franca, raising EFL learners' awareness of English phonological features is essential for enhancing students' intelligibility. Sound articulation and prosody are key elements that support effective interaction without requiring native-like pronunciation. Phonological awareness enhances EFL learners' listening, speaking, and communicative skills. This study examines the incorporation of phonetics and phonology content in English curricula for high schools in North Macedonia, their alignment with CEFR scale for phonological control, and congruence with the English coursebooks concerning phonological awareness and pronunciation exercises. While the national curricula emphasize all four language skills, phonology remains insufficiently addressed. The qualitative research design through document and content analysis of national curricula and approved coursebooks reveals varying degrees of phonology-related exercises, highlighting a disconnect between curricula and teaching materials. The study's findings indicate the need for curriculum developers and policymakers to integrate explicit phonological content and align national curricula with contemporary linguistic research.

Keywords: Phonetics, Phonology, English national curriculum, CEFR, coursebooks

Introduction

In a world where English is increasingly used as a global lingua franca, pronunciation remains one of the key features of successful communication. English is spoken by a quarter of the world population, approximately 2 billion people, making it a truly universal language (British Council, 2013; Crystal, 2008). The significance of English as a Lingua Franca is further underscored by the fact that approximately 80% of all conversations in English occur between non-native speakers (Timmis, 2002). It is important to note that pronunciation should not be conflated with native-like speech or accent. In a world of many Englishes, it is impossible to define a single "correct" pronunciation (Crystal, 2003). Therefore, pronunciation, in the context of teaching English as a foreign language, refers primarily to clear and comprehensible articulation of the English sound system, rather than the attainment of native-like pronunciation (Jeong et al., 2022). Foreign accents often result from L1 transfer and have a minimal effect on intelligibility (Council of Europe 2018, p.136).

In the context of North Macedonia, English plays a vital role in international communication. This role is further reinforced by the widespread presence of English in the media, such as television, radio, and the internet. Given the fact that English is taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools, it is crucial to consider how and whether English phonetics and phonology are included in the national curricula for English.

There is a lack of research on how national curricula for English as a foreign language integrate crucial aspects of English phonetics and phonology explicitly and whether they align with both the aims of the coursebooks and the CEFR in North Macedonia.

The study has four aims:

1. to investigate if and how phonetics and phonology are included in the North Macedonian national curricula for English in high schools;
2. to analyze the phonetic and phonological content and exercises in the English coursebooks used across high schools in North Macedonia;
3. to examine the phonetics- and phonology-related goals of the CEFR; and
4. to assess the extent to which the national curricula align with the coursebooks and the CEFR to identify potential congruencies and differences.

The main hypothesis is that there is little alignment between the national curricula for English taught in high schools and a) the sections in the English coursebooks and b) the CEFR referring to developing students' pronunciation, listening, and communication competence.

Document and content analysis of the curricula, the coursebooks, and the CEFR is used to conduct the analysis and make the comparison.

The results of the study will contribute to existing research by providing an evidence-based analysis of how English phonetics and phonology are taught in English classes in high schools in North Macedonia. The findings will offer insight into the local context and the degree of alignment with international guidelines on teaching pronunciation of English sounds. The analysis will also support teachers in improving their students' pronunciation, speaking and listening skills so that they can be better understood and communicate more effectively when using English as a Lingua Franca worldwide.

Literature Review

Roach (2009) defines phonetics as the study of the actual, i.e., physical sounds humans produce across languages. It consists of articulatory phonetics (how sounds are actually produced by speech organs), acoustic phonetics (properties of sound waves), and auditory phonetics (how sounds are perceived by the listener). Phonology, on the other hand, is 'the study of the sound patterns within a particular language' (Rogerson-Revell, 2011, p.12). While phonetics focuses on the segmental features such as specific sounds (phonemes), phonology studies the suprasegmental properties of speech that include larger units such as syllables, words, and phrases. These consist of the following features - stress, intonation, pitch, rhythm, and length, all of which add to the melody and prosody of speech rather than focusing on individual phonemes.

Raising students' awareness of the importance of the phonological features of English is crucial for three major reasons. Firstly, knowledge of English phonetics and phonology enables accurate and intelligible communication among EFL speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. According to Deterding (2013), errors in pronunciation are one of the main causes of miscommunication in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF); therefore, teachers should focus on the essential elements of English pronunciation as described in the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000). Jenkins (2000) argues that not all traditional native English pronunciation features

are essential for mutual intelligibility among non-native speakers of English. In fact, many of them can be considered acceptable variations in the speakers' interlanguage rather than errors. Walker (2022) summarizes four key areas in Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core: clear pronunciation of most consonant sounds; proper articulation of consonant clusters; vowel length distinctions, and nuclear (sentence) stress placement. Piccardo (2016) narrows these to three: articulation, prosody, and accentedness.

Secondly, phonological awareness improves EFL learners' listening, speaking, and communicative skills in a global English context. Non-native speakers of English can decode, produce, and manipulate English sounds more effectively if they are familiar with the English sound system. This is particularly important since learners typically communicate with speakers of varied accents, be they native or non-native speakers. Instruction that emphasizes phonological features like stress, intonation, and sounds typical of English supports intelligibility, thus promoting successful communication instead of favouring imitation of native-like accent (Jenkins, 2000; Newbold, 2021).

Finally, teaching these aspects of the English phonetic and phonological system fosters self-monitoring, and it also helps students become more confident and effective ELF users. Several studies have shown that phonological awareness instruction increases students' motivation to speak since it has a positive effect on students' pronunciation, leading to clearer articulation of phonemes, more accurate stress placement, and better intonation (Alghazo et al., 2023; Wardana et al., 2022, Derwing, 2017).

The Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) is the unit in the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia that is responsible for preparing the national curricula for all courses taught in primary and secondary schools in the country. English as a foreign language is introduced as a mandatory subject starting in grade 1 of primary school and is taught throughout all nine years of primary education, followed by an additional 4 years of high school education. Since there is a lack of goals related to developing phonetic and phonological awareness in the national curricula for English in primary schools, the study focuses solely on English curricula for secondary (gymnasium) education with a duration of four years. These curricula are aligned with the language proficiency levels defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Specifically, after the first year, students should attain A2+ level, followed by B1 in the second year, B1+ in the third, and finally B2 in their fourth and final year.

The curricula incorporate all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as well as grammar and vocabulary. Apart from the curriculum for the first year, where language skills are categorized as language functions, lexical sets, and grammatical structures, the curricula for the second, third, and fourth year divide skills in line with the CEFR (2001). However, the phonology component, which was added to the updated and extended illustrative descriptors in the 2018 edition of the CEFR, is not included in any of the current curricula (CEFR, 2018, p.47). Namely, since the phonology scale was the least developed, and it was implied that the norm was that of a native speaker, a new scale for phonological control was developed. The criteria included overall phonological control, sound articulation, and prosodic features (CEFR, 2018, p.136). The update focuses on intelligibility, which is in line with current research on the Lingua Franca Core, as mentioned above (Newbold, 2021; Piccardo, 2016; Jenkins, 2000). This is especially relevant in the context of preparing descriptors to build on plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires.

Concerning the course books approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia, schools could choose several books by different publishers: *Close-Up, Focus*, and *Think*. Schools typically use course books from the same series in the first and second years and different books in the third and fourth years. In July 2025, the Ministry approved the use of the *Get Involved* series (covering A2+ to B2 levels) in all secondary schools in the country. In contrast to the insufficient emphasis on phonetic and phonological skills in the national curricula, the analyzed course books contain exercises aimed at raising students' awareness of their phonological control of the English sound system to varying degrees. These types of exercises include listening activities, pronunciation drills, and other types of exercises that foster phonological awareness of English phonemes, stress, and intonation patterns. A detailed analysis and comparison of the content related to English phonetics and phonology is presented in the *Results* chapter. There is an obvious discrepancy between the curricula on one side and the CEFR new descriptors from 2018 and the course books on the other. The curricula have not been updated to reflect the latest trends in teaching aspects of English phonology to EFL learners.

The study aims to offer an understanding of the extent to which phonetic and phonological awareness is incorporated into the national curricula, specifically within the North Macedonian context. It also examines the lack of alignment of curricular aims with coursebook content in phonetics and phonology, as well as the new descriptors

for phonological control in the CEFR. This should increase the awareness of relevant authorities and teachers about the importance of incorporating phonetics and phonology content into English national curricula in North Macedonia, which would ultimately lead to improving students' speaking and communication skills.

Methods

The study adopted a qualitative research design utilizing content analysis to examine relevant documents and content. This method was used due to its suitability for a) exploring extensive textual data within educational materials, and b) employing analytical strategies that emphasize meaning, context, and recurrent themes rather than mere frequency counts. Content analysis is a systematic way to make inferences from texts based on the context of the content (Krippendorff, 2019). Its benefits include a nuanced interpretation of large volumes of data, as well as improved reliability and validity of research findings through transparent coding and systematic procedures.

The following data sources were analyzed:

- the national curricula for English covering first to fourth year in high schools in North Macedonia, prepared by the BDE and available on the website of bro.gov.mk, dated 28 July 2025
- four EFL course books, including *Close-up A2, Close-up B1, Focus 1 (2nd ed.), Focus 2, Focus 3 (2nd ed.), Focus 4, Think level 1 student's book (2nd ed.), Think level 2 student's book (2nd ed.), Think level 3 student's book (2nd ed.), Think level 4 student's book (2nd ed.), Get involved! A2+ student's book, Get involved! B1 student's book, Get involved! B1+ student's book, Get involved! B2+ student's book,* and the CEFR for Languages (2018).

The content analysis was conducted using several coding categories related to phonetics and phonology, including the criteria for phonological control as defined in the new CEFR Illustrative Descriptor Scales – overall phonological control, sound articulation, and prosodic features (CEFR, 2018, p. 136). A comparison was made between the criteria in the curricula and the CEFR. Next, the explicitness, depth, and variety of phonetics and phonology content in the national curricula and the course books were analyzed. Finally, the alignment concerning coverage depth, sequencing, and instructional approach between curriculum objectives and learning outcomes, and coursebook exercises was examined.

The analysis procedure consisted of three steps:

- *Step 1*: Systematic extraction of relevant curriculum statements and goals mentioning phonetics and phonology as shown in Table 1 below.
- *Step 2*: Cataloguing phonetics/phonology-related content and exercises in the coursebooks, as Table 2 below indicates.
- *Step 3*: Comparing findings to identify matches, gaps, or mismatches.

This rigorous qualitative content analysis provided a nuanced understanding of the phonetic and phonological emphasis in English language education across secondary schools in North Macedonia.

Validity and Reliability of the Study Results

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, several rigorous strategies within the qualitative content analysis framework were employed. First, established standards such as the CEFR Illustrative Descriptor Scales for phonological control were consistently applied to minimize bias. Next, reliability was enhanced through detailed documentation of the coding process, which enabled reproducibility and ensured transparency. Triangulation was achieved using three different data sources—the national curricula, multiple EFL coursebooks, and the CEFR. This provided cross-verification and a more comprehensive understanding of the findings. Finally, step-by-step procedures for data extraction, cataloguing, and comparison ensured consistency in the interpretation of the true nature of phonetic and phonological content in North Macedonian English curricula for secondary schools.

Results

The study focuses on phonetics and phonology content in the national curricula for English as the first compulsory foreign language in high schools in North Macedonia. Primary school national curricula for English are not included in the study, as they do not contain a language skills division; listening skills are mentioned only in grades 7, 8, and 9, with no reference to phonetic- or phonology-related content.

The results of the content analysis are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1:

Curriculum statements and goals mentioning phonetics and phonology in national English curricula for high schools in North Macedonia

Year	overall phonological control	sound articulation	prosodic features
First year (A2+ level)	/	/	/
Second year (B1 level)	Aim: to be able to interact successfully in simple oral communication with correct pronunciation	/	- Can accurately place stress on both basic and derived words. - Can derive nouns from verbs and vice versa by appropriately shifting stress. - Can use rising and falling intonation patterns with precision. - Can produce sentences where stress placement clearly determines meaning.
Third year (B1+ level)	Aim: to be able to interact successfully in simple oral communication with correct pronunciation	/	-Can accurately stress compound nouns and adjectives. -Can correctly use intonation patterns in interrogative, imperative, and declarative sentences to convey meaning.
Fourth year (B2 level)	Aim: to be able to interact successfully in oral communication with correct pronunciation	/	- Can accurately place stress on compound words - Can correctly use intonation patterns in interrogative, imperative, and declarative sentences, and in requests.

The first-year curriculum was prepared in 2025. As Table 1 shows, it does not contain any content related to phonetics and phonology, neither as aims nor as can-do statements. It is important to note that although the English curriculum for the first year is the most recent one, written and uploaded on the BDE's website in 2025, the CEFR Companion volume with the new descriptors (including the phonological control) from 2018 has not been taken into consideration.

The curriculum for the second year that can be found on the BDE's website was written in 2015. The results of the analysis of the second-year curriculum show that there is a division of language into 8 components: lexical units, grammar, functional language, listening comprehension, speaking (both spoken production and spoken interaction), reading comprehension, writing, and culture. Regarding the activities and methods, teachers are provided with a list of activities such as listening and repeating sentences, reading aloud, impromptu speech, describing pictures, drama activities like roleplays and simulations, interviews, surveys, and discussions.

The English curriculum for the third year was designed in 2016. As with the second year, the third-year curriculum is organized according to the 8 components. The same methods and activities are suggested as in the second year, with an additional activity of comparing and identifying the differences in intonation between English and students' mother tongue.

The latest uploaded version of the fourth-year English curriculum was written in 2017, and it follows the same pattern as the curricula for the second and third years. The aims and prosodic features are the same as those for the previous two years. The recommended methods and activities resemble the ones in the second-year curriculum.

Although the foundation of the national curricula across all four years is the CEFR, the changes in the CEFR from 2018 are not fully reflected in any of the curricula.

Four EFL coursebooks approved by the Ministry of Education were analyzed in terms of phonetics/phonology-related content and exercises. Until the academic year of 2024-2025, schools could choose one or more books from the coursebooks recommended by the Ministry: the *Close-up*, *Focus* and *Think* series. As of 2025-2026, the *Get Involved!* The series will be used in all high schools across the country. The curricula analyzed in this study had been written before this series was approved. The *Get Involved!* coursebooks are included in the analysis to provide future perspectives for the officials from the BDE who prepare the English curricula and

to motivate them to update the curricula in line with the new coursebooks and novelties in the CEFR for languages, specifically the descriptors in the new scale for phonological control.

Table 2 shows the analysis of the phonetics/phonology content and exercises across the four English coursebooks approved by the Ministry.

Table 2:

Phonetics/phonology-related content and exercises in the English coursebooks

Coursebook	Overall phonological control section	Sound articulation	Prosodic features	Exercises
Close-up A2 (used in the first year)	No explicit reference to phonetics and phonology	/	/	/
Close-up B1 (used in the second year)	No explicit reference to phonetics and phonology	/	/	/
Focus 1 (used in the first year)	Phonological control is included in the listening skills section under the term *Pronunciation focus*.	- the letter c - silent letters - numbers - /θ/ and /ð/ - /iː/ and /ɪ/ - the letter a -the letter o	/	yes
Focus 2 (used in the second year)	Phonological control is included in the listening skills section under the term *Pronunciation focus*.	- long vowel sounds - large numbers - silent letters - diphthongs	Word stress in particular lexical sets (personality adjectives, scientists, countries and nationalities, stress in job names	yes

Focus 3 (used in the third year)	Phonological control is included in the listening skills section under the term *Pronunciation focus*.	-numbers - long vowel sounds - vowel sounds	word stress in compounds, Word stress in particular lexical sets	yes
Focus 4 (used in the fourth year)	Phonological control is included in the listening skills section under the term *Pronunciation focus*.	-word families -verbs ending in *-ise* -sounds and spelling –consonants -long and short vowel sounds -vowel and consonant minimal pairs	Sentence stress – future question forms, Word pairs – nouns and verbs; Word stress, Word stress in four-syllable words, word stress in word families	yes
Think level 1	Phonological control is included in the pronunciation section.	- /s/, /z/, and /ɪz/ - contractions - /iː/ and /ɪ/ - er /ə/ at the end of words - /d/, /t/, and /ɪd/ - vowel sounds /uː/ and /ʊ/ - strong and weak forms of *was* and *were* - /ɪ/ and /aɪ/ - voiced /ð/ and unvoiced /θ/ consonants -the h consonant	-Stressed syllables in words - sentence stress	yes

Think level 2	Phonological control is included in the pronunciation section.	-words ending in /ə/ - the short /ʌ/ vowel sound -/iː/ and /ɪ/ - /f/, /v/, and /b/ consonant sounds - the /juː/ sound - /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ - silent consonants	- Intonation and sentence stress - word stress - intonation of question tags - intonation: rude or polite	yes
Think level 3	Phonological control is included in the pronunciation section.	- initial consonant clusters with /s/ - strong and weak forms: /ɒv/ and /əv/ - the schwa /ə/ in word endings - the /ʒ/ phoneme - short and long vowels sounds: /ɪ/ -/iː/, and /ɒ/ - /əʊ/ - strong and weak forms" /tuː/ and /tə/ -different pronunciations of *ea*	- consonant-vowel word linking - intonation: inviting, accepting, and refusing invitation -intonation: expressing surprise - moving word stress	yes

Think level 4	Phonological control is included in the pronunciation section.	-diphthongs: alternative spellings - pronouncing words with *gh* - the schwa /ə/ sound - weak forms with conditionals	- phrasal verbs stress - adding emphasis - linking words with /dʒ/ and /tʃ - intonation: encouraging someone - linking: intrusive /w/ and /j/ - linking: omission of the /h/ sound - stress on modal verbs for speculation - linking: intrusive /r/	yes
Get Involved! A2+	There is a section: pronunciation:,	- silent letters - do you and /dju/ - /iː/ and /ɪ/ - can - /n/ and /ŋ/ - past simple endings /d/, /t/, and /id/ - /ə/ -will		yes

Get Involved! B1		-ed endings -recognizing contractions - /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/ - diphthongs - weak forms: /ə/ with *was* and *were*	- intonation in reported speech - sentence stress	yes
Get Involved! B1+		-words starting in s+consonant - /w/ and /h/ - weak forms with past perfect - /g/ and /dʒ/ -weak forms with *have to* - /ʃən/ - /e/, /iː/, and /eɪ/ - /θ/ and /ð/	- stress in question tags - word stress with phrasal verbs - word stress in longer words - intonation in conditional sentences - intonation in reported questions	yes
Get Involved! B2		- /h/, homophones - /**æ**/, /ɑː/ and /eɪ/ - /b/ and /v/ - /ʃ/ and /tʃ/	- word stress: nouns and verbs, -connected speech: word linking - sentence stress in conditionals - word stress: expressions with make and do - intonation when interrupting	yes

As the table shows, all coursebooks, except *Close-up A2* and *Close-up B1,* contain similar phonetics and phonology-related content and exercises. This content is included under different sections, labeled as *Listening skills: Pronunciation focus* in the *Focus* series, and *Pronunciation* in the *Think* and *Get Involved!* coursebooks. Overall phonological control is not explicitly defined, but the material refers to sound articulation and prosodic features, without a specific division under separate headings. For the purposes of this analysis, the author categorized the content as either sound articulation or prosodic features. All course books, except *Close-up*, have exercises related to the content.

The 2018 updated CEFR, along with its Companion volume containing new descriptors, was analyzed because the national English curricula for years 1 to 4 are designed in alignment with the CEFR, as stated in each curriculum. However, the results reveal discrepancies between the CEFR's new scale for phonological control and the curricula. Namely, sound articulation is not included among the aims of any of the curricula. In contrast, prosodic features such as word and sentence stress and intonation patterns are part of both the curricula and the 2018 version of the CEFR.

A similar mismatch is evident between the curricula and the coursebooks. Apart from *Close-up A2* and *Close-up B1,* all the other books include sound articulation, which is absent from the national curricula.

Discussion

The results of the content analysis of the national English curricula show that phonetic and phonological aspects are neither explicitly nor comprehensively incorporated into North Macedonia's national English curricula. Aspects like phonemic awareness, pronunciation accuracy, and phonological rules are not clearly defined and emphasized. Specifically, the curriculum for the first year contains no aims related to phonetics and phonology, despite the fact that it was prepared in 2025, which is 7 years after the CEFR had been updated. The content for years 2 to 4 refers only to prosodic features, while sound articulation is not addressed. Furthermore, the curricula do not include aims such as enhancing overall phonological control or conducting contrastive analysis with Macedonian phonology, both of which could help students improve their pronunciation and intelligibility.

The analysis of the coursebooks reveals that most of the books contain phonetic and phonological content and exercises. Regarding sound articulation, the

coursebooks for the first year include different English sounds, with *Think level 1* covering more sounds than *Focus 1* and *Get Involved! A2+*. Diphthongs are added in the second year (in *Focus 2* and *Get Involved! B1*), while in the third-year course books, the repertoire of sounds is broadened, except in *Focus 3*, where the focus is only on certain long and short vowels. The books for the fourth year further broaden the phonemes, including strong and weak forms of certain verbs, homophones, and minimal pairs.

Prosodic features are covered in all coursebooks for years 1 to 4, except *Focus 1*, where the emphasis is only on sound articulation. In *Focus 2-4*, word stress—particularly in specific lexical sets and compounds —is practised, but there are no exercises on different intonation patterns or sentence stress. The *Think Level 1-4* series begins with word and sentence stress in the first level, continues with various intonation patterns in levels 2 and 3, and ends with phonological processes in connected speech, such as intrusion, in the fourth and final level. The *Get Involved!* series introduces prosodic features starting from the second-year coursebook and follows a similar progression in the third- and fourth-year books.

To summarize, the coursebooks fully support the curriculum's aims regarding the prosodic features and offer relevant exercises. However, they also provide extensive content on sound articulation and appropriate activities, which are not listed among the curriculum's aims. The sound articulation criterion was introduced in the new CEFR 2018 scale on phonological control. All coursebooks, except *Close-up A2* and *Close-up* B1, align with the latest changes in the CEFR for Languages and address most Macedonian learners' needs. Therefore, the curricula should be revised and updated to reflect CEFR trends and to raise students' awareness of the correct pronunciation of certain sounds that are typical of English but do not exist in Macedonian.

The main hypothesis is partially confirmed, as the content analysis indicates a partial alignment between the national English curricula for high schools, the English coursebooks, and the updated 2018 version of the CEFR in terms of phonological control. Prosodic features are emphasized across all three data sources, except for first-year students, but sound articulation, which is present in the coursebooks and the CEFR, is not addressed in the curricula.

The national curricula should be improved to better integrate phonetics and phonology, which would have a positive impact on learners' phonological competence and on teaching practices. With clearer curriculum guidelines, more structured and

varied phonological exercises, and the inclusion of cross-linguistic awareness, the textbooks, which already have more phonetics and phonology content than the existing curricula, would support the curricula's aims more efficiently. The content scope of the official curricula should be widened to cover both segmental (phonemes and minimal pairs) and suprasegmental phonological features (stress, rhythm, intonation, and connected speech processes such as elision, intrusion, assimilation, and linking). These features are included to varying degrees in the coursebooks, as Table 2 indicates. It is not necessary to include theory and transcription using the International Phonetic Alphabet. Instead, practice should be emphasized through applied activities. Additionally, L1-L2 contrasts (L1-L2 interference and transfer) should be included in the curricula, particularly in connected speech, which is what students find most difficult to understand. Developing students' speaking and listening skills begins with increasing the number of listening discrimination exercises. This allows students to initially focus on receptive (listening skills) through sound recognition and distinction, which can then be followed by pronunciation practice. This approach helps students improve their productive (speaking) skills by engaging in activities focused on articulation, intonation, rhythm and stress.

Concerning the pedagogical approach and methodology, the curricula provide teachers with the same methods and activities across all four years. These approaches should be more specific and aligned with the latest developments in AI educational technology. Recommendations for specific AI and digital tools, as well as other supplementary resources, should be included to help teachers integrate technology effectively and enhance language learning outcomes.

Since the national curricula are said to be aligned with the CEFR for Languages, expected outcomes and phonological competencies should be added to the curricula.

Changes in the curricula also necessitate teacher training. This would help teachers improve their phonetics and phonology awareness and develop resources to teach the aspects of phonetics and phonology that students find challenging.

Conclusion

In North Macedonia, English is a compulsory subject in primary and secondary education, and it plays a vital role for Macedonian EFL learners engaged in international communication. According to the CEFR (2018), intelligibility is more important than native-like pronunciation, so it is important to examine the inclusion of English phonetics and phonology in the national curricula. Currently, there is a

lack of research on how this is integrated into the curricula and whether there is alignment with the goals of English coursebooks and the CEFR for Languages.

The study aimed to investigate the presence of phonetic and phonology content in North Macedonian high school English curricula, analyze related content in coursebooks, review the CEFR's goals on these topics, and assess the alignment among these three document types. The hypothesis suggested limited consistency between the national curricula, EFL coursebooks, and CEFR concerning pronunciation, listening, and communication skills. The document and content analysis provided evidence that, while prosodic features such as stress and intonation are included both in the curricula and most of the coursebooks, sound articulation is not considered in the curricula. Although the curricula state that they are based on CEFR, there is no complete congruence between the new scale with descriptors of phonological control and the curricula. These insights can assist curriculum developers, educators, and EFL book authors in explicitly incorporating phonetics and phonology. This could ultimately enhance students' pronunciation and communication competence for the effective use of English as a global lingua franca.

Recommendations for Further Research

In light of the study's findings, further research could focus on effective digital and AI tools that can be incorporated into the curriculum section on teaching methods and activities for improving students' pronunciation and intelligibility. Additionally, since the results of the study were based solely on content and document analysis, future empirical classroom-based studies could examine the actual use of phonetics and phonology exercises, teacher perceptions, and learner outcomes.

Limitations

The study had two limitations. Firstly, the research focused on documents without classroom observation or teachers' perspectives. Despite the lack of phonetic and phonological content in the curricula, teachers may include such types of instruction in their classes. Secondly, the study included selected materials, i.e., the English course books recommended by the Ministry of Science and Education. Teachers have access to a variety of elective course materials they can use with their students.

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