“Pronunciation, although so often neglected by teachers, syllabuses and coursebooks, is fundamental to language – Who could speak without pronouncing?”

Like all books in its series, The Book of Pronunciation is structured in three parts that focus in turn on theory, practical classroom ideas and teacher development, and as it aims to provide a wide variety of convenient and adaptable classroom activities for learners at all levels, the second part - practice- takes up almost three quarters of the book. But although the main focus is on classroom games and exercises, parts A and C contain clear, succinct profiles of the ‘why?’, ‘when?’ and ‘what next?’ of teaching pronunciation.

Part A, the section on the theory of teaching pronunciation, kicks off with a longish chapter on 'reservations and recommendations', addressing different aspects of the question '(Why) Should I teach pronunciation?', including among others: “There's no time for pronunciation”; “What type of pronunciation should my learners aim for?”; “Can I teach pronunciation of I'm not a native speaker myself?”; “Will learners think I'm trying to make English unnecessarily difficult?” This chapter provides a condensed version of the rationale behind teaching pronunciation and establishes the authors' motivation for producing the book. The second chapter is akin to a short glossary of pronunciation-related terminology, including clear explanations of relevant terms ranging from assimilation and chunking to syllabic consonants and voicing. 'Short' meaning just under twenty pages - but if what you are looking for is a thoroughly comprehensive view of the more theoretical side of pronunciation, a better choice would be Teaching Pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, Cambridge University Press: 2010). Much of the information in this chapter of The Book of Pronunciation is unnecessary for the majority of learners, for being too analytic and technical, but it will be extremely helpful for teachers who are trying to understand the issues involved in pronunciation and attempting to get clear ideas across to their students. Previous knowledge of the theory behind pronunciation, especially skills in reading phonemic symbols and transcribing, is required for using this section of the book.

Moving on, Part B is where the practical activities are, and there are more than even the fastest-working class would ever have time to do in a single school year, or indeed need to. The introductory chapter focuses on presenting learners with general concepts and raising their awareness of the importance of pronunciation, and the other five chapters are about the following: sounds; sounds and spelling; word stress; connected speech; and -last but not least- stress, rhythm and intonation. Each activity has thorough step-by-step explanations of what to do, including a description of objectives, pre-teaching and follow-up exercises. The focus of the exercises ranges from basic issues such as spelling and the pronunciation of -ed or -(e)s endings to more advanced aspects - how to pronounce ough clusters or interpreting fast colloquial speech, for instance. There is quite a strong focus on pronunciation as a listening skill, especially in the later chapters devoted to connected speech and rhythm and intonation. Many of the activities are highly adaptable, allowing the user to swap the sounds in the example activity for those which learners are actually having difficulty with. Lots of the activities can be classified as games, and many of them are competitive, with learners working in teams or small groups.

Part C is a sort of appendix that addresses issues that do not fit into any of the previous chapters. There are activities that teachers can do to raise their own awareness of pronunciation issues which
are quite fun and could feasibly be used in short teacher training sessions. You can test your knowledge of some of the technicalities and terminology involved in the teaching of pronunciation, and find out just how difficult pronunciation can be for learners by doing a quiz on pronunciation in languages other than English. In the 'More ... about teaching' section of Part C there are interesting and thought provoking 'case problem' questions, presenting the reader with pronunciation-related classroom conundrums and giving possible solutions and extra tips about teaching pronunciation - such as finger correction or backchaining - that don't appear in either Parts A or B of the book.

Precisely because many activities are adaptable, this is not a collection of ready-to-photocopy handouts that you can pick up off the shelf in the last minute and use right away in class, because many of the exercises need preparation if they are to be tailored to your learners' needs. That being said, many others look like they would be very easy to use in class as spur of the moment solutions to learner questions and pronunciation difficulties. Another drawback may be that the audio CD only contains recordings for one activity from each chapter, so it is mostly up to the teacher to provide learners with a model. And finally, there is a problem regarding how each classroom activity is graded for difficulty and duration; activities marked with one dot are easier and less time-consuming, those with two dots being more of a challenge and longer. For busy teachers who may be looking for a quick fix for something they want to do in class, this is not a very useful grading system, but as the authors themselves point out in their introduction to this part of the book there are obvious difficulties to a finer classification: large differences between different groups of learners that the activities can be used with, different first languages, varying degrees of familiarity with the phonemic symbols, etc.

So, is *The Book of Pronunciation* 'a definitive account of the key role pronunciation plays in teaching and learning'? I'd say no; there are other more authoritative books already out there with a comprehensive discussion of the role of pronunciation in EFL teaching, but this book definitely lives up to its title, putting forward a whole lot of *proposals for a practical pedagogy* in a concise, organised and engaging manner.

Further reading and references:
The phonemic chart used in this book is taken from Adrian Underhill's *Sound Foundations* (Macmillan: 2005). The Book of Pronunciation includes several activities for introducing learners to phonemic symbols, but for further ideas about presenting sounds and their phonemic symbols to learners, especially in conjunction with this version of the phonemic chart, *Sound Foundations* is a recommended read.