

## Teachers' Beliefs and Practices of Pronunciation Teaching in EFL Classrooms: A Literature Review

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### Abstract

Pronunciation is considered one of the crucial features of second language acquisition (SLA) since its importance has been emphasized to improve English listening and speaking performance. In addition to that, many teachers and researchers have investigated and applied pronunciation instructions in TEFL. However, in some recent research, pronunciation has been undervalued and neglected in some tertiary English teaching programs due to several limitations and obstacles in instructions. Therefore, teachers have believed that great attention should be paid to pronunciation training to contribute to the English proficiency of EFL learners.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation, listening and speaking, English proficiency

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### Introduction

Pronunciation instruction (PI) has brought an important potential in terms of informing theory and practice (Lee et al., 2014). In particular, it is acknowledged to be an initial part of one's speaking performance in a second language so that poor pronunciation may cause misunderstanding and lead to unsuccessful oral communication. This view was also supported by Zhao (2008), who stated that the rich moderate language that can be understood is essential in the process of learning foreign languages because comprehensible inputs absorb only the language learners, they possibly grasp this foreign language. Pronunciation may help EFL learners be successful in communication because it is regarded as the firm foundation of a language learner's speaking performance (Atli & Bergil, 2012; Basuki, 2018; Ghorbani, 2019). Thus, PI should be considered a key element to ESL learners' speaking proficiency. Many scholars have held the view that applying pronunciation training to improve English speaking skills should be paid great attention to in the discipline of SLA.

### Literature reviews

Pronunciation has gradually regained some of its former prominences in the second language (L2) classrooms over the last few years, even though it is considered one of the most challenging subjects to teach. Many scholars, therefore, have agreed that pronunciation training in the classrooms is much essential in the field of TEFL (Burri, 2015).

At first glance, Saito et al. (2019) focused on L2 pronunciation development regarding aptitude by examining how aptitude and experience influence L2 pronunciation learning. The participants in the study were 40 Japanese freshmen students. Based on the framework of Meara (2005), three aptitude components related to the production of pronunciation are associative

memory, phonemic coding, and sound sequence recognition. The instrument employed in the study was the LLAMA test which was used to measure language learning aptitude. The findings essentially showed that individual differences in their development of L2 pronunciation could be related to their profiles of aptitude and experience.

In a communicative language learning context, Foote et al. (2016) also provided an insight into the relationship between teachers' behaviors and their teaching of L2 pronunciation. The data were collected by observing how three experienced teachers integrated pronunciation teaching in the classrooms in Quebec, Canada. The research results illustrated that pronunciation instruction was less paid attention to in the lesson plans utilized, and these teachers mainly focused on corrective feedback regarding students' pronunciation mistakes. Moreover, professional pronunciation training should be considered for improving the quality of teacher's teaching.

Additionally, to clarify the effects of movies on the Affective Filter of the students (motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety) in the process of English acquisition, Nath et al. (2017) carried out a study in a university in Malaysia. Participants chosen were low-achieving students. In order to data collection, three research steps were employed. Remarkably, the students were asked to discuss the movies through Facebook groups, write their thoughts in reflective notes and answer semi-structured interview questions. Interestingly, most of the students were excited about the integration of movies in learning English because it helped minimize anxiety and increase motivation and self-confidence. Thus, to help students effectively acquire certain language skills (vocabulary and pronunciation knowledge), English teachers should think of using movies as a teaching and learning tool.

From another perspective, Baker (2014) investigated teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices of teaching English pronunciation and explored pronunciation-oriented techniques they obtained in the classrooms. In the study, interviews and classroom observations were two key instruments utilized for five experienced English teachers, whereas questionnaires were designed for students. The findings illustrated that guided techniques were the least frequently used in pronunciation instruction, so that teachers played a pivotal role in employing appropriate techniques to raise students' motivation. For that reason, teachers should provide concise explanations of English pronunciation and supervised and directed practices on learner pronunciation.

In terms of difficulty in learning languages, many ESL learners are aware of the challenges in obtaining English pronunciation due to phonetic system, segmental the suprasegmental levels (Cenoz & Lecumberri, 1999). According to Dwi Warry (2019), some main factors causing English pronunciation mistakes were investigated. The instrument was employed in the research through questionnaires. The data were gained through a sample consisting of 10 randomly selected from 32 students. The findings revealed that both internal and external factors contributed to the students' English pronunciation errors. As a result, second language learners should emphasize the importance of practicing English pronunciation in order to communicate effectively in English. Likewise, Zielinski (2012) emphasized exploring perceptions of English learners on pronunciation difficulties affecting effectively communicative ability. Data were obtained from 26 participants in Australia as part of a broader longitudinal study. In the research results, although many surveyed people believed that pronunciation problems might not influence everyday communication, some of them valued the confidence in speaking English with good pronunciation.

According to Vančová (2019), it has been highlighted that pronunciation plays a crucial role in communication; however, little attention has significantly been paid to the English pronunciation acquisition. Thus, EFL learners are not aware that it should be one of the primary things to be mastered if they want to have good speaking performance. Additionally, it was importantly noted that the application of efficient teaching techniques is expected not only to better learners' English pronunciation but also to empower them with some listening and speaking skills (Nguyen, 2014).

Hence, in terms of pronunciation teaching, Leung and Brice (2012) examined several factors affecting English pronunciation in Hong Kong. Data were descriptively collected and analyzed from 37 adult participants who were native speakers of Cantonese. As a result, there are five suggested instructional methods for speech development. Besides, Priya and S (2020) shed light on the significance of phonetics in pronunciation instruction by figuring out some factors that influence ESL learners' English pronunciation. An experiment was conducted on Indian tertiary students. To improve students' English pronunciation, methods and techniques were applied in the classrooms based on CLT theory. The instrument used in the study was observed for exploring students' needs and problems they encountered regarding pronunciation. The findings showed that drilling and minimal pair techniques effectively assisted language teachers in providing learners with an understanding of the English sound system and promoting spontaneous speaking development.

In addition to that, the objective of the research by Pardede (2018) was to improve English pronunciation by the use of the explicit teaching approach. The activities included watching English videos and listening to phrases that contained English pronunciation features difficult for students. This study consisted of 21 participants who were majored in English education at a university in Indonesia. Then the study employed tests and questionnaires for collecting data. The results from the tests showed an improvement in students' English pronunciation skills. Furthermore, the questionnaires also indicated that the participants were interested in this method and believed the helpfulness of developing their pronunciation as well as oral communication.

Besides, the drilling method was employed to enhance the students' mastery of pronunciation by training phonetics and word stress (Basuki, 2018). This experimental research consisted of two cycles, and there were four phases in each cycle. The participants were fourth-semester students who majored in English language education. In the process of doing research, some pronunciation tests were given to the students, and their pronunciation practice was observed and recorded in the classroom. The collected data were then qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The research results revealed that the drilling method should be considered using as an effective way to enhance students' pronunciation ability and meet the learning outcome in the syllabus. In a similar vein, Wi and Mora (2018) focused on investigating the effectiveness of integrating captioned videos on pronunciation teaching. The Reading Index for Dynamic Text adapted by Kruger and Steyn (2013) was utilized in the research as a measure of learners' pronunciation development. The research findings shed light on the relationship between reading and audio-text integration skills, and it was suggested that efficient reading might be what led to modality integration.

Regarding pronunciation testing, Liu and Hung (2016) was aimed to see how effective computer-assisted pronunciation teaching in English pronunciation was in Taiwan. The participants were 51 Taiwanese first-year students, and they received an eight-week pronunciation training and then were given computerized speaking tests for evaluating their quality of

pronunciation improvement. The findings showed that the participants' pronunciation was considerably improved and that they favored audio-visual feedback on this technique. In addition to that, Baker and Burri (2016) examined the ways experienced English gave feedback on the students' performance of pronunciation. Key research instruments included interviews and classroom observations. The teachers' beliefs and practices revealed that a combination of explicit and targeted feedback could be a powerful force leading to English comprehensible achievement. Furthermore, some fundamental tools were suggested for addressing pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms.

However, it has been assumed that phonetic transcription and word stress have been neglected in several pronunciation programs of teaching English in tertiary education due to some obstacles in instructions, although the significance of pronunciation has been emphasized. In addition to that, recent research has shown that pronunciation instruction is underrated and frequently ignored in both published textbooks and classroom practice despite increasing some evidence for the effectiveness of properly organized pronunciation teaching in ESL/EFL contexts (Nguyen & Newton, 2020b). Therefore, in recent years more research has been paid on teachers' beliefs because they have influenced their approaches to teaching pronunciation in real situations.

In particular, Bai and Yuan (2019) explored the beliefs and practices of non-native English teachers regarding pronunciation teaching in Hong Kong. In the study, written reflections and follow-up interviews with teachers were used to collect data. The findings suggested the teachers valued the importance and objective of pronunciation teaching; however, it seemed they did not feel confident and well-prepared for their teaching. In the same vein, Burri (2015) explored teacher cognition about pronunciation teaching and some factors affecting its goal. The researcher was a non-participant observer and used questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews to gather information from 15 English teachers. The findings provided several valuable insights into the cognition development of the teachers in learning and teaching pronunciation.

Saito (2014) also designed an investigation into the usefulness of experienced teachers' perceptions for clarifying important pronunciation problems for students' intelligible pronunciation acquisition. A qualitative approach was employed with a sample of 120 experienced teachers in New Zealand. The research suggested that teachers should focus on students' needs, pay attention to their pronunciation problems in order to help improve their English pronunciation through effective practices in the classrooms. Moreover, the syllabus for teaching pronunciation should be considered to design appropriately. Later, Buss (2016) contributed to this research theme by examining the beliefs and practices of EFL teachers in Brazil. Particularly, a number of 60 participated in the research, and the surveys via email were utilized as a major instrument. The findings showed that most of the teachers had positive attitudes toward pronunciation teaching; however, their teaching practices tended to be applied traditional methods to their teaching in the classroom. Therefore, more professional pronunciation training should be designed for teachers to improve their English proficiency as well as teaching ability.

As part of a research project in Vietnamese contexts, Nguyen (2019) researched exploring the Vietnamese EFL learners' needs for pronunciation teaching. In particular, six EFL teachers were interviewed individually, while focus group interviews were conducted with 24 students. The data were then transcribed for content-based analysis. As a result, both the teachers and students valued the essence of pronunciation in English learning. In addition to that, the pronunciation was suggested to be taught explicitly and systematically to promote the general communicative purposes of EFL learners.

Nguyen and Newton (2020b) continued to emphasize the essence of the practices and beliefs of the teaching of pronunciation by EFL teachers. The research methods used were non-participant classroom observations and follow-up interviews with six teachers for gathering data. The findings showed that the teaching of pronunciation by these teachers was generally unplanned and reactive, mainly employed corrective feedback techniques to learners' mistakes. Interestingly, they figured out a mismatch between what the teachers informed their pronunciation teaching preparation and how they performed it. Besides, the teachers opined that the lack of professional pronunciation training caused them the limitation of teaching pronunciation.

Hence, Nguyen and Newton (2020a) continue to research to investigate the teachers' beliefs of the value of The role of teacher professional learning (TPL) in the workshop. Specifically, the study adopted a case study approach with the participation of six teachers. Data were collected from classroom observations and individual interviews. The results provided that the workshop training encouraged cooperative learning, grabbed students' interests, and created an effective learning environment for pronunciation teaching with the goal of communicative practice. Furthermore, the study contributed to understanding the potential of TPL for pronunciation pedagogy in EFL contexts of education.

### Implications for further research studies

Many teachers and researchers have devoted large quantities of time to exploring SLA research because it focuses on the learner's needs. Several studies have also revealed that EFL learners have not met satisfactory results in their English learning, particularly pronunciation. In addition to that, there is a lack of professional knowledge, little attention to pronunciation teaching in the design of EFL curricula, and professional training for English teachers. More and more research, therefore, has continued to examine the pivotal role of pronunciation instruction and some problems in the context of TEFL both teachers and students have encountered. Specifically, the LLAMA test, explicit teaching approach, drilling methods, auditory techniques, and movies are considered effective instruments to help learners overcome their barrier of learning pronunciation and enhance English listening and speaking proficiency. More importantly, some recent paper concludes with several practical solutions and implications for teacher education programs because they wish for more pronunciation training and future research.

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