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## Non-native English Speaker Instructors' Beliefs and Self-reported Practices in Pronunciation Teaching

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### Abstract

Despite the fact that teachers and instructors try to focus on four main skills and some other language components whilst teaching the target language, pronunciation is frequently neglected. Nonetheless, research designates that pronunciation is crucial for learning a language. Moreover, since teachers' views in classrooms determine the activities, language skills, and components that will be taught and focused on, paying close attention to the beliefs of teachers and instructors is necessary. Therefore, this study investigates the beliefs and self-reported practices of non-native English-speaking instructors in pronunciation teaching. In the present study, participants were comprised of 72 volunteer non-native speaker instructors in a state university in Turkey and a five-point Likert scale was utilized to collect the required data. Results displayed that the majority of instructors believe that pronunciation is important and it should be taught by integrating into speaking courses rather than having it as a separate course. In addition to that, the instructors were discovered that they focus on the sounds that their students have difficulty with. When the instructors' opinions on the effects of being a non-native speaker are considered, it was discovered that they do not view their non-native status as a barrier to their pronunciation.

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**Keywords:** non-native speakers; teaching pronunciation; teacher beliefs; teacher practices

### Introduction

Learning a new language embraces all language skills and sub-skills. However, although teachers and instructors try to focus on four main skills, pronunciation is generally

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ignored or neglected (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Hişmanoğlu, 2006). Nevertheless, studies demonstrate that pronunciation is of great importance for learning a language. According to Harmer (2007), teaching pronunciation not only heightens students' awareness in different sounds and sound features but also plays a substantial role in improving speaking skills. In addition to speaking skills, Ghorbani (2011) asserts that giving phonetic training to students increases their success in listening skills. Moreover, Baker and Murphy (2011) explored that acquiring pronunciation is important for developing students' ability to communicate because poor pronunciation impedes students from conveying their message effectively (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002). For all these reasons, instructors and teachers should integrate pronunciation teaching into their lessons.

### **Language Teaching Approaches and Pronunciation**

According to Morley (1991), "the question is not whether pronunciation should be taught but what should be taught in a pronunciation type and how it should be taught" (p.263). The field of English Language Teaching has experienced many changes in teaching methods. Correspondingly, the role of pronunciation has changed with the arrival of new methods. To exemplify, the Grammar Translation Method focused on the memorization of grammar rules and ignored pronunciation whereas the Direct Method emphasized the importance of correct pronunciation from the beginning of the course. Similarly, in the Audio-lingual Method, mastering the sound system was considered as vital and pronunciation was taught in language laboratories by discriminating minimal pairs and drill practices. Moreover, this method put great emphasis on native-like pronunciation. Since the new methods claimed that it is unwise and impossible to teach native-like pronunciation after puberty, pronunciation teaching has lost its importance. For instance, in the Silent Way, the interest in pronunciation was decreased, and only acquiring the melody of the language was emphasized. The focus was on stress and intonation but not on any explicit information about individual sounds. Additionally, in the Suggestopedia, since the main concern was the learners' feelings, teachers were more tolerant towards pronunciation mistakes and pronunciation lost its importance. However, with the Communicative Approach, the idea that language is for communication spread and pronunciation teaching has regained its importance since pronunciation is regarded as an inseparable component of communication. As discussed above, in the history of pronunciation

teaching, there has been a shift from nativeness and accent elimination to intelligibility and comprehensibility (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

### **Pronunciation Teaching Approaches**

With the innovations in language teaching approaches and methods, there have been some changes in pronunciation teaching approaches experienced throughout the language teaching history. There are three major pronunciation teaching approaches (Celce-Murcia, 1996). These approaches are the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach, and the integrative approach. In the intuitive-imitative approach, the learners are expected to listen and imitate the sounds and rhythms of the target language without any explicit information about individual sounds or stress, intonation, and rhythm. However, the need for explicit teaching of pronunciation appeared and the analytic-linguistic approach was developed to complement the intuitive-imitative approach (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996). In this approach, learners are provided with explicit pronunciation teaching through the phonetic alphabet or some explanations about stress, intonation, and rhythm. However, with the transformations in language teaching approaches and methods, pronunciation teaching became an integral part of communicative activities. Therefore, instead of explicit teaching and isolated drill practices, meaningful and task-based listening and speaking activities are used with the integrative approach. In addition to that, suprasegmental features of pronunciation such as stress, rhythm, and intonation are emphasized by the use of various activities.

### **Techniques in Pronunciation Teaching**

Similar to the approaches in pronunciation teaching, the techniques employed to teach pronunciation display differences among teachers. When the studies about the techniques that teachers use to teach pronunciation are analyzed, one can see that the most common techniques are traditional ones such as listen and repeat, minimal pairs, drama activities, role plays, drills, visual aids, recordings, chants, and tongue twisters (Buss, 2016; Jones, 2002). In addition to these traditional techniques, teachers can also utilize kinesthetic activities or body movements such as clapping, tapping on the desk, or jumping while teaching pronunciation, especially for lower-grade learners. For instance, to help learners be aware of stressed syllables, teachers make students clap or tap on their desks when they hear stressed syllables, which can make lessons more enjoyable. Moreover, selecting some famous scenes from popular movies can be fun for learners. Chiu (2012) investigated whether film dubbing projects are effective for pronunciation teaching or not. The results demonstrated that film dubbing is a good technique

to improve pronunciation, especially for communicative purposes. Additionally, teachers can also integrate technology into pronunciation courses by using voice or video recorders in their lessons. To exemplify this, Tsubota, Dantsuji, and Kawahara (2004) studied the use of Computer Assisted Language Learning in pronunciation teaching in Japan. The learners had role-play activities and their performances were recorded. Subsequent to the activities, the learners got feedback and error corrections for their pronunciation. The results showed that this technique is beneficial and useful for learners to improve their pronunciation.

### **Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Pronunciation Teaching**

According to Gregoire (2003), unless teachers' practices and beliefs are taken into consideration, the efforts to make any renovations in teaching will fail. Therefore, investigating teachers' and instructors' beliefs needs due attention. Thus, researchers have started to investigate teachers' and instructors' practices and beliefs in teaching pronunciation.

### **Previous Studies in Other Countries**

In a study conducted in the UK, Burgess and Spencer (2000) discovered that almost all respondents claimed that they integrate pronunciation skills into their lesson plans and they generally use chants, role plays, drills, and drama to teach pronunciation. In 2011, Murphy generated a study with 36 instructors in Ireland. Results revealed that the most frequently used technique in pronunciation teaching is listen and repeat activities. Additionally, 97% of the instructors stated that they teach pronunciation at least once per month while 75% of them teach more than once per week. Furthermore, in her study in Brazil, Buss (2016) explored that English teachers believe that teaching pronunciation is important; however, they need to get further training in teaching pronunciation. Similarly, Macdonald (2002) concluded that pronunciation teaching training for both pre-service and in-service teachers is inadequate due to the fact that the results of his study showed that since the teachers don't feel comfortable when they teach pronunciation, and they do not know how to evaluate the pronunciation skill, they are reluctant to teach pronunciation. Moreover, Foote, Holtby and Derwing (2011) investigated teachers' beliefs in Canada and participants stated that pronunciation skill plays a

significant role in language teaching and they focus on the segmental aspects while teaching pronunciation by integrating it into the teaching process of other skills.

### **Previous Studies in Turkey**

When the studies in Turkey are reviewed, it can be realized that the number of studies focused on teacher beliefs is very limited. In 2018, Yağız compared 164 teachers' and academics' beliefs and real practices in pronunciation teaching. Although the beliefs of the participants were positive, their practices were different. In the classroom, the participants were observed that they generally focused on correcting the mispronounced words and neglected suprasegmental features of pronunciation. In 2019, a study conducted by Yavuz and Keser showed that teacher trainees believe that pronunciation teaching should be integrated with the four skills, and they also think that more training on pronunciation teaching should be given to teachers. Furthermore, a recent study by Alcuma (2021) investigated the beliefs and practices of 105 EFL teachers in Diyarbakır and found that the participants show positive attitudes toward pronunciation teaching and they mostly focus on suprasegmental features of pronunciation.

### **Previous Studies Focusing on Non-native Teachers' Beliefs**

In addition to the studies focusing on teacher beliefs, there are also some studies focusing on non-native teachers' beliefs and practices in pronunciation teaching. Levis, Sonaat, Link and Barriuso (2016) found that effective pronunciation teaching is not related to being a native speaker or a non-native speaker. Moreover, non-native and native speaker teachers were found to be equal in terms of comprehensibility of pronunciation skills. In another study, Jenkins (2005) spotted that the participants feel comfortable about their pronunciation when she conducted a study with eight non-native teachers. The participants reflected that they feel happy when somebody finds their pronunciation native-like. Furthermore, in her study, Yapıcı-Sarıkaya (2013) investigated 140 non-native instructors' perceptions and classroom practices in pronunciation teaching and she encountered that when they compared their pronunciation with their native speaker colleagues, the participants reported that they feel less confident. In 2008, Y. Chui interviewed non-native and native speaker teachers in Taiwan and compared their beliefs and practices in terms of pronunciation teaching. The results indicated that both native and non-native teachers teach pronunciation but they focus on mostly segmental features; however, they use different approaches. Moreover,

non-native teachers are found to be more knowledgeable in terms of phonological terminology when compared to native speaker participants.

As explained above, the number of studies focusing on teacher beliefs in pronunciation teaching is very limited; hence, there is a need for further studies. Very little is known about instructors' beliefs and practices in teaching pronunciation in Turkey. That's why the current study attempts to contribute to the field of ELT by investigating instructors' beliefs and self-reported practices in pronunciation teaching.

It is a well-known fact that the methodology or approach used in classrooms, activities and tasks done, language skills and components developed and emphasized are all governed by teachers' beliefs. However, how pronunciation should be taught or practiced in classrooms has been a debatable issue in the field of language teaching because teachers have discrete perspectives and approaches on this issue. This study focuses on non-native English language instructors' beliefs and self-reported practices in pronunciation teaching in Turkey.

In accordance with the purpose of the study stated above, this study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the non-native instructors' beliefs in teaching pronunciation?
2. What are the non-native instructors' self-reported practices in teaching pronunciation?
3. What are the non-native instructors' beliefs in the effects of being non-native on their practices of teaching pronunciation?

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The study was managed in a state university in Turkey. Participants are 72 volunteer non-native instructors. The instructors have distinct educational backgrounds including English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature, Linguistics, English Translation and Interpretation. The ages of the participants range from 25 to 41.

## Data Collection Tool and Data Analysis

The data related to the pronunciation teaching beliefs of non-native speaker instructors were collected through a five-point Likert scale developed by Yapıcı-Sarıkaya (2013). The scale incorporates twenty-nine items. The validity and reliability of the scale were measured by Yapıcı-Sarıkaya (2013). Cronbach's alpha reliability was found .803. Subsequent to the data collection, the responses of the participants were analyzed via SPSS.

## Findings

### The Non-native Instructors' Beliefs in Teaching Pronunciation

Table 1. Frequency table of the non-native instructors' beliefs in teaching pronunciation

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
7. Pronunciation is important for students.	29	40,3	33	45,8	7	9,7	2	2,8	1	1,4
1. Teaching pronunciation is an essential part of teaching English.	27	37,5	36	50,0	3	4,2	6	8,3	0	0
3. Pronunciation should be taught as a separate class.	9	12,5	13	18,1	20	27,8	27	37,5	3	4,2
14. Pronunciation should be taught as part of a class on speaking.	16	22,2	46	63,9	5	6,9	5	6,9	0	0
15. Pronunciation should be taught as part of a class on listening.	17	23,6	38	52,8	8	11,1	8	11,1	1	1,4
16. Pronunciation should be taught as part of a class on reading.	8	11,1	21	29,2	15	20,8	22	30,6	6	8,3
17. Pronunciation should be taught as part of a class on writing.	2	2,8	11	15,3	16	22,2	31	43,1	12	16,7
9. Knowledge of the phonetic alphabet helps students become independent learners.	19	26,4	37	51,4	8	11,1	7	9,7	1	1,4
13. I need to read more about the phonological characteristics of individual English sounds.	9	12,5	36	50,0	11	15,3	15	20,8	1	1,4
27. I need to work on improving my pronunciation of individual English sounds.	6	8,3	36	50,0	13	18,1	16	22,2	1	1,4
22. I need to learn more about stress/rhythm/intonation in English.	10	13,9	40	55,6	10	13,9	11	15,3	1	1,4

The primary research question of the study aimed to detect the non-native instructors' beliefs in teaching pronunciation. As can be seen in Table 1, most of the instructors agreed that

pronunciation is important for students (45,8 %) and teaching pronunciation is an essential part of teaching English (50 %). However, they disagreed with the idea that pronunciation should be taught as a separate class (37,5 %) rather than integrating it into the teaching of the other skills. When they are asked the class in which pronunciation should be taught, most of the instructors (63,9 %) claimed that pronunciation should be taught during speaking classes. In addition to this, the majority of instructors disagreed that pronunciation should be taught as part of a class on writing (43,1 %). Moreover, the instructors believe that knowledge of the phonetic alphabet helps students become independent learners (51,4 %). When they are asked to reflect about their own performances, the results indicated that the majority of the instructors agreed that they need to read more about the phonological characteristics of individual English sounds (50 %) and they need to work on improving their segmental level of pronunciation (50 %). Correspondingly, they also believe that they need to learn more about suprasegmental levels of pronunciation such as stress, rhythm, and intonation (55,6 %).

### The Non-native Instructors' Self-reported Practices in Teaching Pronunciation

The second research question aimed to determine the non-native instructors' self-reported practices in teaching pronunciation. To this end, the related items were analyzed and the results were shown in the table below.

Table 2. Frequency table of the non-native instructors' self-reported practices in teaching pronunciation.

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
8. I make sure that my students know about the difference between Turkish and English sound systems.	10	13,9	37	51,4	10	13,9	7	9,7	8	11,1
2. I spend time on improving the pronunciation of specific English sounds that Turkish students have difficulty with.	20	27,8	40	55,6	7	9,7	5	6,9	0	0
6. I check the pronunciation of unknown words in a dictionary before going to the classroom.	37	51,4	33	45,8	1	1,4	1	1,4	0	0
4. I spend time on teaching how to pronounce individual sounds in my classes.	7	9,7	35	48,6	11	15,3	19	26,4	0	0
5. I spend time on teaching stress /rhythm and intonation in my classes.	5	6,9	27	37,5	15	20,8	23	31,9	2	2,8



10. The amount of time I spend on pronunciation teaching depends on the level of the students.	21	29,2	41	56,9	4	5,6	6	8,3	0	0
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In the classroom, instructors reported that they make sure that their students know about the difference between Turkish and English sound systems (51,4 %), and correspondingly, they focus on improving the pronunciation of specific English sounds that their students have difficulty with (55,6 %). In addition to this, the majority of the instructors strongly agreed that before they go to the classroom, they check the pronunciation of unknown words in a dictionary (51,4 %). In terms of the features of pronunciation, the instructors were found to teach the segmentals (individual sounds) (48,6 %) and the suprasegmentals (stress/ rhythm/ intonation) (37,5 %) during their classes. Furthermore, the majority of the instructors denoted that the time they spend on teaching pronunciation changes according to the level of the students (56,9 %).

### The Non-native Instructors' Beliefs in the Effects of Being Non-native Speakers on Their Pronunciation

The final research question of the current study aimed to reveal whether being a non-native speaker has any effects on the instructors' pronunciation or not. Table 3 reveals the results obtained from the analysis of related items in the scale.

*Table 3.* Frequency table of the non-native instructors' beliefs in the effect of being non-native on their pronunciation

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
21. Having a native-like pronunciation is important for me as a non-native English speaking teacher.	8	11,1	31	43,1	16	22,2	14	19,4	3	4,2
28. I feel confident about my pronunciation as a non-native English speaking teacher.	12	16,7	43	59,7	14	19,4	3	4,2	0	0
19. As a non-native English speaking teacher I don't feel confident enough in my knowledge of English.	0	0	5	6,9	14	19,4	30	41,7	23	31,9
20. Being a non-native English speaking teacher is a hindrance in terms of my pronunciation.	0	0	11	15,3	10	13,9	37	51,4	14	19,4

Considering the results, it can be claimed that although the instructors reported that having a native-like pronunciation is important for them (43,1 %), they feel confident about

their pronunciation as non-native teachers (59,7 %). Similarly, they disagreed with the idea that they do not feel confident in their knowledge of English as non-native speakers (41,7 %). In addition to these results, being a non-native speaker is not considered as an obstacle in terms of pronunciation among the instructors (51,4 %).

## **Discussion**

Consistent with the literature, in the present study, it was identified that instructors believe that pronunciation is important for their students and teaching pronunciation is an essential part of teaching English. A possible explanation for this might be since communication is regarded as the main goal of language learning, pronunciation is given importance because pronunciation plays an important role in the delivery of the messages in the target language.

Another significant finding is that the instructors do not think that pronunciation should be taught as a separate lesson instead of integrating it into the course. This result may be supported by the study conducted by Darcy, Rocca and Hancock (2020). The researchers noticed that integrating pronunciation into the course draw learners' attention more compared to teaching pronunciation separately. In addition to that, they claimed that when pronunciation is integrated into the course, students show improvements in oral skills.

On the other hand, instructors reflected that pronunciation should be integrated into speaking courses. This can be explained by the fact that pronunciation is associated with speaking and listening. Pronunciation flourishes speaking skills by enhancing clarity and intelligibility (Darcy, 2018). Similarly, Cristoph and Nystrand (2001) claimed that in speaking classes, teachers provide input, which has an impact on the output produced by the students. In terms of integration of pronunciation into writing classes, the majority of the instructors also disagreed with the idea of integrating pronunciation teaching into writing teaching. This result might be related to the focus of the lessons. In writing lessons, the focus is on written output rather than spoken one. Therefore, in writing sessions, instructors may concentrate on meaning and vocabulary instead of speaking or pronunciation.

Moreover, the majority of the instructors perceive that they need to learn more about segmental and suprasegmental levels of pronunciation. These results are consistent with the earlier studies in the literature (Baker, 2014; Foote et al., 2011). The reason for this may be the lack of training in teacher trainees' education because generally, teacher trainees are observed

to have very limited information about how to teach pronunciation for the fact that there is no specific course for it. Therefore, pre-service teachers do not get enough training not only in pronunciation learning but also in pronunciation teaching.

With respect to the self-reported practices, it was located that the instructors prefer focusing on the sounds that their students have difficulty with. Instead of spending too much time on teaching the sounds that are easy to produce for the learners, the instructors may help learners strengthen their pronunciation by paying attention to the problematic sounds to save their time.

Furthermore, contrary to the previous studies which revealed that the participants focused on the segmental level of pronunciation and ignored suprasegmentals (Chui, 2008; Foote et al., 2011; Yağız, 2018), in the current study, the instructors reported that they focus their attention on segmentals and suprasegmentals. A possible reason for this might be the syllabus followed or the materials used could require the teaching of both segmental and suprasegmental units.

When we analyzed the instructors' opinions about the effects of being non-native speakers on pronunciation, the instructors claimed that native-like pronunciation is important for them. However, since they do not regard being non-native as a hindrance to their pronunciation, the instructors are found to be confident. This finding is consistent with that of Yavuz and Keser (2019). The participants were found to believe that sounding like a native speaker is important for them, and they also believe that they can produce sounds as good as native speakers.

## **Conclusion**

Since the main focus of language learning and teaching is to have communication in the target language, the eminence of pronunciation learning and teaching increases day by day. Because of the fact that teachers' and instructors' beliefs are determining factors of the methods and techniques to be employed in classrooms, investigating their beliefs and practices is of great importance to make innovations in teaching pronunciation.

When the studies in the field of English Language Teaching are analyzed, it can be detected that pronunciation teaching needs due attention since the number of studies focusing

on pronunciation teaching is quite limited. Furthermore, very little is known about non-native English speaker instructors' beliefs and practices in pronunciation teaching.

With all these in mind, the purpose of the current study was to investigate the non-native instructors' beliefs and self-reported practices in teaching pronunciation. Results showed that the participants believe that pronunciation is an essential component of learning English and it is important for their learners. Moreover, in the classroom, they prefer integrating pronunciation into speaking lessons rather than having it as a separate class. While teaching pronunciation, they generally focus on the problematic sounds that their students have difficulty with. In terms of the features of pronunciation, they spend time on teaching both individual sounds and stress, intonation, and rhythm although they claimed they need to read and learn more about segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation. In addition, the instructors were found to spend different amounts of time on pronunciation teaching due to the different levels of their learners. It was also spotted that they think that sounding like a native is important for them, the instructors feel confident about their pronunciation as non-native speakers, and they do not believe that being a non-native speaker is an obstacle to their pronunciation.

### **Implications**

Taken together, these results highlight the prominence of pronunciation teaching, the beliefs of instructors in how to teach it, the needs of instructors in terms of pronunciation teaching, and the effects of being a non-native instructor on pronunciation teaching. Findings of this study make some contributions to the current literature for the fact that the analysis of the data gathered from the instructors has extended our knowledge of the instructors' beliefs and practices in pronunciation teaching. These results may be helpful for designing a new syllabus or course book through which pronunciation teaching could be improved. Moreover, this study has revealed that instructors need to read and learn more about the features of pronunciation, which puts forward the need for the training of teachers in pronunciation teaching. Thus, the results may be functional not only for shaping teacher education programs in ELT departments for pre-service teachers but also for designing in-service training programs.

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