

## Teaching and Learning Pronunciation: EFL Learners' Views and Instructors' Practices

Mehmet Gazan<sup>1</sup> Nurdan Gürbüz<sup>2</sup>

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### Abstract

The discussion surrounding the significance of pronunciation in communication, both in a first language (L1) and a second language (L2), has been a subject of ongoing debate. Previous research has predominantly focused on exploring teachers' techniques and practices regarding pronunciation instruction, as well as investigating students' opinions and perceptions. This study seeks to enhance our understanding of pronunciation instruction within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context by offering insights into both learners' views and instructors' practices jointly. Conducted as a mixed-method study, the research investigated the perspectives of both students ( $n = 112$ ) and instructors ( $n = 14$ ) on the learning and teaching of pronunciation. The findings revealed that learners placed considerable importance on pronunciation instruction and expressed a preference for audio-visual materials, repetition, and imitation techniques respectively. On the contrary, the majority of instructors, who reported including pronunciation in their teaching, emphasized the effectiveness of focusing on the phonetic alphabet the most, while considering textbook-based activities to be the least effective component of their instructional repertoire. These findings may contribute to a better understanding of the teaching and learning of pronunciation in an EFL context and could help inform future instructional strategies and educational practices.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation instruction, L2 pronunciation learning, teaching practices, EFL learners.

<sup>1</sup>  Corresponding Author, Instructor, National Defense University, School of Foreign Languages, İstanbul & Middle East Technical University, Department of Foreign Language Education, Ankara. mehmet.gazan@metu.edu.tr

<sup>2</sup>  Author, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Middle East Technical University, Department of Foreign Language Education, Ankara. nurdano@metu.edu.tr

## Introduction

Since comprehensible and intelligible pronunciation is a fundamental necessity of everyday communication, it stands out as a crucial aspect of language teaching (Monika et al., 2019). Therefore, in foreign language teaching practices, teaching pronunciation has become one of the priorities, driven by the widely held belief that a strong proficiency in pronunciation may positively correlate with effective oral communication (Aydın & Akyüz, 2017). However, perspectives on the role of pronunciation instruction have changed (Diller, 2020). According to Atli and Bergil (2012), the systematic study of pronunciation began to take shape towards the conclusion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked notably by the establishment of the International Phonetic Association in 1886. Subsequently, the emphasis placed on pronunciation teaching in English as a Second Language (ESL)/EFL classrooms has experienced fluctuations (Diller, 2020). Traditional methodologies such as Grammar-Translation Method and the Reading-Based Approach tended to place less emphasis on pronunciation instruction whereas subsequent methods such as the Oral Approach and the Audiolingual Method assigned it a more central role, which may have shaped the current teaching practices (Aydın & Akyüz, 2017; Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). For instance, formerly used pronunciation improvement techniques such as repetition, imitation and phonetic alphabet tool were started to be replaced with using digital devices and AI chatbots (Hoang et al., 2023). In the meantime, how pronunciation is perceived by learners has shown variations as well. In the the so-called post-method era (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) where intercultural and international communication has gained momentum thanks to the so-called *globalization*, the earlier goal of sounding just like native speakers of the target language has shifted to intelligibility and comprehensibility issues as the ownership of the languages has been questioned (Derwing et al., 2014; Sifakis, 2004). In this sense, Tsunemoto et al. (2023) put forward that comprehensibility means how easily listeners perceive and understand speech whereas intelligibility is more narrowly focused on clear and accurate pronunciation. That is, intelligibility, as emphasized by Thomson and Derwing (2015), goes beyond the essential requirement of sounding native-like in speech and pronunciation. No matter how comprehensible speech is and how intelligible pronunciation is, ultimately meaningful communication in an L2 is valued and emphasized (Edo-Marzá, 2014; Gilakjani, 2016). Although teaching approaches have evolved, pronunciation instruction remains a neglected area in Turkish EFL classrooms and receives less attention than other language skills despite its crucial role in communicative competence (Üstünbaş, 2018). To address this knowledge gap, this study investigates teachers' and students' expectations, perceptions, and practices related to pronunciation instruction by examining commonly used techniques and activities in language classrooms and L2 English textbooks (e.g., repetition, word stress, singing songs). Additionally, it responds to calls for research by Xuyen (2019) and Quoc et al. (2021) on exploring both teachers' and students' practices and Jafari et al. (2021) on in-class pronunciation instruction. By bridging the gap between instructors' teaching practices and learners' expectations, this study aims to offer a more comprehensive understanding of pronunciation instruction in Türkiye to contribute to novel pedagogical strategies, curriculum development adaptations, and teacher training programs. Strengthening pronunciation instruction can also enhance learners' intelligibility, boost their confidence in spoken communication, and better equip them for academic and professional settings where English is increasingly required. Given the growing importance of English in Türkiye and global contexts, improving pronunciation teaching can contribute to the development of more competent speakers who can engage successfully in global communication. In this regard, the study provides practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance pronunciation instruction by ensuring that it is more effectively integrated into foreign language education. The following sections review relevant literature from the perspectives of learners and instructors, identifying key research areas and emphasizing the significance of studies aimed at improving L2 pronunciation instruction.

## Literature Review

Regarding the learners, their beliefs about pronunciation have been identified as crucial factors in the learning process, influencing the ultimate outcomes of the learning experience. (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013). Previous studies have commonly involved preferences, goals, and attitudes of the learners toward pronunciation instruction (Lintunen, & Mäkilähde, 2018). In several of them (Ahmad &

Nazim, 2014; Edo-Marzá, 2014; Lintunen & Mäkilähde, 2018) students stressed a lack of pronunciation instruction and their willingness to be trained in that specific area of language. For instance, in Monika et al. (2019)'s study conducted in Indonesia with 22 students, a huge majority of the students emphasized the importance of pronunciation and 54.5% of them expressed the belief that they lacked opportunities to practice English pronunciation. An additional 45.5% felt that they also lacked opportunities to practice outside the pronunciation class. Likewise, in Xuyen (2019), 50 university students maintained that they consider pronunciation as the key to effective communication, 70% felt they lacked real-life opportunities to use English, and 64% admitted their current learning methods were inadequate. In another recent study, Almusharraf (2022) investigated Saudi EFL learners' confidence, attitudes, and practices regarding pronunciation. Using a sample of 336 university students, the study found that learners had above-neutral confidence and highly positive attitudes toward native-like pronunciation. However, no significant difference in confidence was observed between those who had taken a phonetics course and those who had not. The study highlights the need for instructors to address learners' pronunciation needs with appropriate materials and practice opportunities.

In addition to the studies on beliefs and opinions, some researchers explored students' preferences and expectations about specific pronunciation teaching techniques and activities. In Kusz and Pawliszko (2022), the Polish students ( $n = 112$ ) who were asked to order which pronunciation tasks were most preferable for them reported that listening to recordings from textbooks was the top preference, and this was followed by immediate feedback. Participants also favored traditional pronunciation learning activities over modern/technological ones. Similarly, Pawlak et al. (2015) concluded that 110 third-year university students strongly preferred a structural syllabus with preselected pronunciation features and stated overwhelming support for teacher correction. Echoing Kusz and Pawliszko (2022), Dao's study (2018) revealed that minimal pair drills, teachers' use of songs, poems, and jokes, and repeating after models were identified as the most effective methods for pronunciation teaching. Lastly, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) put forward that 100 ESL learners reported self-repetition, paraphrasing and volume adjustment as the most effective techniques to solve the communication problems caused by pronunciation. All in all, while the studies reviewed above consistently highlight students' desire for increased pronunciation instruction, their preferences for specific techniques, methods, and activities exhibit considerable diversity. This variation highlights the importance of tailoring pronunciation teaching to meet differing learner needs and preferences. Moreover, it suggests the necessity of balancing traditional methods with modern, technology-enhanced approaches to maximize engagement and effectiveness. The upcoming section is dedicated to the teachers' perspective on the same issue.

Regarding instructors, there has been a notable increase in efforts to explore their thoughts and actions in various ESL and EFL settings concerning L2 pronunciation instruction in recent years. In most of these studies, the importance of pronunciation instruction has been emphasized (Tegnered & Rentner, 2021; Uzun, 2022) by the teachers involved. However, fewer studies have delved into the specific activities employed by in-service EFL teachers for teaching pronunciation. Among these, some suggest the prevalence of traditional activities with a focus on segmental features (e.g., phonemes, consonants & vowels, diphthongs, etc.). Alsofyani and Algethami's (2017) research carried out with 57 teachers in Canada indicated that they predominantly employed segmental activities, such as utilizing phonetic symbols, individual sound exercises, and minimal pairs. Likewise, Buss (2015) asked 60 teachers to complete an online questionnaire regarding their pronunciation instruction techniques and they ( $n = 22$ ) mentioned engaging in segmental activities, such as conducting perception and sound discrimination exercises. Besides, they were inclined to prioritize word-level features, particularly individual sounds, and heavily relied on activities centered around repetition and the use of the phonetic alphabet. The studies that unearthed repetition as a preferred technique were not limited to these scholars. Jafari et al. (2021)'s research that involved 74 EFL teachers completing a questionnaire and taking part in interviews in the Iranian EFL context revealed their preference in favor of drama, role-play and imitation & repetition respectively. To add, Wahid and Sulong (2013) investigated 27 ESL teachers' rationales that underlie their pronunciation teaching practices. Their findings illustrated that repeating after the teacher, reading aloud and dictionary usage were listed as the most preferred techniques. Another noteworthy study published by Yulia and Saukah (2021) shed

light on our understanding of Indonesian teacher educators' beliefs and practices. According to them ( $n = 3$ ), drilling was the most effective method for developing mechanical habits, which indicated a preference for traditional teaching techniques due to their perceived merit. Unlike the previous researchers who collected data from a single homogenous sample group, Szyszka (2016) questioned teachers' beliefs about pronunciation teaching at three distinct education levels in Poland. The findings suggested that primary school teachers indicated frequent use of instructional strategies, with acting out dialogues with learners and repetitions, both after teacher-led demonstrations and recordings. Reading aloud emerged as the most employed technique among lower secondary school teachers, while repetition after recordings attained heightened popularity within the higher secondary teachers group. As this study also aims to do, and unlike most other studies, Nguyen et al. (2021) examined both teachers and students within the same research. They explored teachers' and learners' beliefs about pronunciation instruction in Vietnamese tertiary EFL education through semi-structured interviews with six teachers and focus groups with 24 students. The findings revealed a shared belief in the importance of explicit and systematic pronunciation instruction and the potential of communicative approaches to enhance pronunciation and overall communicative skills. The study highlights implications for curriculum design and pronunciation pedagogy.

It is worth noting that even though the respondents showed appreciation towards repetition drills, several research findings demonstrated a preference for other instructional techniques and activities. The participants ( $n = 3$ ) in Quoc et al. (2021)'s case study implemented a combination of visual reinforcement, and feedback in the form of audio and phonetic transcriptions in the teaching of pronunciation. As another support for this line of inquiry, Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010) surveyed 103 teachers in North Cyprus and the findings revealed that the preferred techniques for teaching pronunciation were reading aloud, utilizing dictionaries, and engaging in dialogue practice. As the ultimate studies to be briefly elucidated, teacher cognition regarding teaching pronunciation has been investigated by Baker (2013) and Yunus et al. (2016). The former researcher interviewed five teachers and concluded that they primarily relied on controlled pronunciation techniques by manipulating them extensively and regarded them as less communicative. Guided techniques (viz. semi-structured) were infrequently used, indicating potential limitations in consistently incorporating them into oral communication curricula. On the other hand, Yunus et al. (2016) whose article bears a strong resemblance to Baker (2013), reported that the core of teachers' instruction centered around explanations and examples, activity set-up, and checking activities, all falling within the realm of controlled activities, but teachers in lower-level classrooms incorporated certain "free techniques" such as drama and games.

When it comes to Turkish EFL context, the studies carried out regarding pronunciation instruction are quite scarce. To our knowledge, Yağız (2018) investigated 164 English teachers' cognition concerning L2 pronunciation. It was highlighted that the teachers' pronunciation practices were limited to transcription exercises. This study did not tap into students' expectations, beliefs and perceptions. Other scholarly endeavors involved researching methodological concerns (Bakla & Demirezen, 2018; Yakut, 2020) or pre-service teachers (Uzun, 2022).

In sum, recent research on pronunciation instruction highlights the importance of diverse techniques, ranging from traditional approaches like repetitions and drills to activities such as drama and games. However, limited studies in the Turkish EFL context have explored both teachers' practices and students' beliefs within the same research. This study addresses this gap by examining both perspectives simultaneously and aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of L2 pronunciation instruction and learning. As a result, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What beliefs, views and expectations do EFL students in higher education hold about pronunciation instruction and learning?
2. Which pronunciation improvement techniques do EFL students in higher education find most and least effective?
3. Which pronunciation improvement techniques do EFL instructors find most and least effective?

## Method

A convergent parallel mixed-methods research design was employed because comparing different perspectives drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data strands was necessary to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problems (Caruth, 2013; Creswell, 2017). That is, it was intended to check whether there is congruency between the practices of instructors and their reasons, and the views of students. For the quantitative part, a 5-point Likert scale was implemented to capture students' views. This methodological decision not only facilitated the systematic analysis of data but also enabled the quantification and measurement of the degree of agreement or disagreement among participants. The structured nature of the Likert scale provided a standardized framework for participants to express their opinions, enhancing the overall rigor and reliability of the research findings. For the qualitative part, semi-structured questionnaire was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of instructors' practices regarding pronunciation. By adopting this methodology, rich and detailed insights were gathered from instructors, which enabled a deeper understanding of their perspectives, strategies, and experiences related to pronunciation instruction. In the end, two strands of data were merged, and further analyses were conducted.

## Participants

### Student participants

The number of student participants for this study was 112 to reach more generalizable results. All of them were asked to sign an informed consent form in Turkish and participate only if they were willing to do so. They were chosen through convenience sampling (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The participant group can be considered highly homogenous given that all of them were placed in the pre-intermediate level classes at a state university's language preparation school based on an institutional placement test. Besides, they all have been through 27 hours of instruction in English per week from the beginning of the semester till the data collection time. In addition, all of them reported Turkish as their L1 and no hearing and speaking impairments. Their age ranged from 17 to 24, yielding an average age of 18.52. Among the participants, 91.07% ( $n = 102$ ) identified as male, 6.25% ( $n = 7$ ) as female, and 2.68% ( $n = 3$ ) chose not to disclose their gender. Participants indicated an average duration of 8.26 years ( $R = 1-12$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ) devoted to studying English. The mean self-reported score for pronunciation proficiency, assessed on a scale of 10, was recorded as 6.01 ( $SD = 1.48$ ). Finally, a subset of participants ( $n = 37$ ) reported having received instruction or training in pronunciation during either their primary or secondary education, while the remaining participants ( $n = 75$ ) asserted that they had not undergone formal training in pronunciation.

### Teacher participants

A total of 21 EFL instructors working at a state university's school of foreign languages in Türkiye were requested to participate in the study. They were chosen by means of purposive and convenience sampling methods (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The purposive sampling was used because all selected instructors share common specific characteristics such as being the main course teacher at the pre-intermediate level, teaching at least around 20 students in their classes, and having experience in language teaching for more than three years at the same institution. Additionally, the convenience sampling method was utilized since the participant pool was chosen based on their ease of accessibility to us. However, upon receiving the responses of the 14<sup>th</sup> teacher, it was observed that the data reached a saturation level (i.e., new data reiterated what had been conveyed in earlier data) as recommended by Hennink and Kaiser (2022), so no further participants were requested. To mention their demographic information, of whom 10 people identified themselves as female and 4 as male, the average age was 30.38 ( $SD = 2.3$ ,  $R = 27 - 43$ ) and they had an average of 6.84 years of teaching experience ( $SD = 3.6$ ,  $R = 4 - 23$ ).

## Data Collection Instruments

The instruments for data collection include a 5-point Likert Scale for learners (Appendix 1) and semi-structured (mixed-format) questionnaire for instructors (Appendix 2). The first data collection instrument consists of three parts. In the first part, the participants were required to provide details about themselves like their age, gender, years of studying English, and their self-reported

pronunciation level (0-10). In the second part, the respondents indicated their beliefs and opinions concerning pronunciation on a scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The permission to use the scale was obtained from Pawlak et al. (2015) via email. This survey concluded with the third part regarding their opinions about specific pronunciation improvement techniques. Note that the same activities were asked to the instructors to check whether a congruency exists between these two participant groups. The second tool directed to the instructors included open-ended responses such as reason(s) for (not) teaching pronunciation, choice of instructional technique and their reasons. The second item was specifically placed as the same pronunciation teaching practices were provided in the questionnaire that was provided to the students in the Likert scale format.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to the data collection process, ethical clearance was obtained. Then, the data were collected in two concurrent phases, both lasting from 29.11.2023 to 29.12.2023 and completed by the first author. The first phase involved data collection from the students. They were given the questionnaire at a class hour in other instructors' lessons. Printouts were used considering the potential technological problems of online data collection. In the second phase, semi-structured questionnaires were collected via the SurveyMonkey web tool (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). The instructors were directed to the survey via a link, and they were supposed to send their responses in English.

To specify the analysis part for the quantitative phase, the collected responses were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. To ensure accuracy, the entered data were crosschecked twice by both researchers. After that, the data were analyzed on The Jamovi Project (2024) to run the statistical tests and calculate descriptive statistics. As for the scale given to the student participants, a series of analyses were conducted. First, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for the factor analysis conducted on the scale was calculated as .679. Accordingly, the sample size is suitable for factor analysis ( $KMO > .500$ ). Within the scope of the Bartlett's test, the  $\chi^2$  value was calculated as 709.681 and found to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the assumption of normal distribution was met. Based on the KMO and Bartlett's test results, it was concluded that the data are suitable for further factor analyses. Table 1 below indicates the first step of such analyses.

Table 1.

Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	The ratio of explained variance (%)
Item20*	0.746			
Item1	0.723			
Item18	0.664			
Item12	0.628			22.101
Item22*	0.540			
Item21*	0.506			
Item8	0.407			
Item13		0.696		
Item10		0.657		
Item6		0.651		
Item5		0.634		
Item4		0.618		14.272
Item7		0.607		
Item2		0.580		
Item3		0.485		

Table 1 continuing

Item15	0.821	
Item14	0.721	10.076
Item16	0.652	
KMO = .679		
$X^2 = 709.681$		
$p < .001$		

As shown in the table above, as a result of the factor analysis, Item 11 was excluded due to cross-loading, while Items 9, 17, and 19 were removed from the analysis due to factor loadings below 0.40. It is also necessary to mention that factor 1 consists of seven items, with factor loadings ranging from 0.407 to 0.746. The explained variance ratio of this factor is 22.101%. Factor 2 consists of eight items, with factor loadings ranging from 0.485 to 0.696. The explained variance ratio of this factor is 14.272%. Factor 3 consists of three items, with factor loadings ranging from 0.652 to 0.821. The explained variance ratio of this factor is 10.076%. In total, the explained variance ratio of the scale is 46.449%. While the factor loadings and explained variance ratios provided initial insights into the factor structure, a scree plot (Figure 1) was examined to further determine the optimal number of factors (Pallant, 2011; Sağdıç & Şahin, 2015).

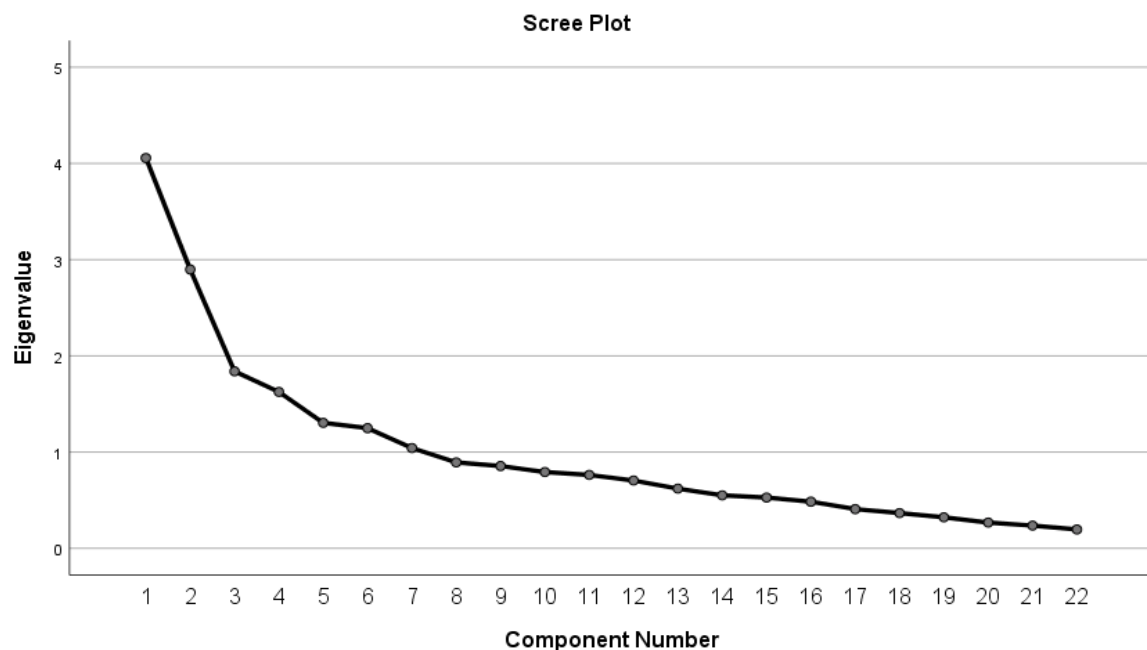


Figure 1. Scree Plot Showing the Eigenvalues for Factor Extraction

Figure 1 above illustrates that the eigenvalues decreased sharply before leveling off at the fourth component, which suggested a four-factor structure. However, in this configuration, one of the dimensions exhibited low reliability. To further validate the factor structure, parallel analysis was conducted. The results indicated that the first three factors had actual eigenvalues of 4.25, 2.80, and 1.95, which exceeded the corresponding simulated eigenvalues of 1.75, 1.60, and 1.45 from the random data. This finding supports the retention of a three-factor solution. Consequently, after further refinement, a three-factor structure was determined to be the most appropriate. After establishing the three-factor structure through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the model's fit and assess the validity of the identified factor structure.

Table 2.  
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Acceptable Fit Indices	Calculated Fit Indices
$\chi^2/sd \leq 5$	1,43
$GFI \geq 0,90$	0,91
$AGFI \geq 0,85$	0,86
$CFI \geq 0,90$	0,94
$RMSEA \leq 0,08$	0,06
$RMR \leq 0,08$	0,07

The CFA results indicate that the proposed three-factor model demonstrates an acceptable fit to the data. The  $\chi^2/df$  ratio (1.43) falls well within the recommended range ( $\leq 5$ ), which suggests a reasonable model fit. The Goodness of Fit Index ( $GFI = 0.91$ ) and Comparative Fit Index ( $CFI = 0.94$ ) exceed the 0.90 threshold, which further support model adequacy. The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index ( $AGFI = 0.86$ ) is slightly below the commonly accepted threshold but remains within an acceptable range. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ( $RMSEA = 0.06$ ) and Root Mean Square Residual ( $RMR = 0.07$ ) both fall within the recommended limits ( $\leq 0.08$ ) and indicate a well-fitting model. Overall, these results confirm that the three-factor structure is statistically supported. To further illustrate the relationships between the latent factors and their respective observed variables, Figure 2 below presents the path diagram of the CFA model, including standardized factor loadings and factor correlations.

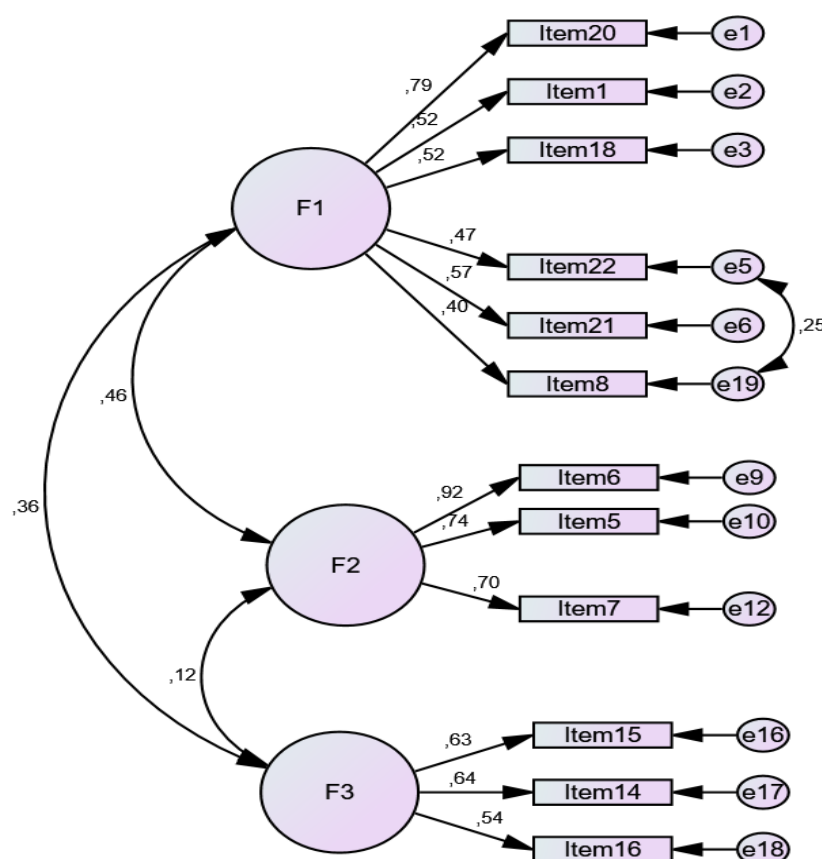


Figure 2. Path Diagram of the CFA Model and the Factor Loadings Per Item

In the CFA conducted, items 12, 13, 10, 4, 2, and 3 were excluded due to low factor loadings. In the final model, all factor loadings were 0.40 or above and statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). After confirming the three-factor structure, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficient was high for factor 2 ( $\alpha = 0.820$ ) and moderate for factor 1 ( $\alpha = 0.722$ ) and factor



3 ( $\alpha = 0.611$ ). The overall scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = 0.759$ ). A comparison with the original scale by Pawlak et al. (2015) consisted of 28 items across six dimensions, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. While the original scale's validity was supported through factor analysis, some subscales showed lower reliability. In contrast, the adapted version in this study resulted in a three-factor model with a final reliability of 0.759 and this aligns closely with the original scale's overall reliability. Factor-level reliability scores for the adapted version were 0.722, 0.820, and 0.611, indicating moderate to high internal consistency. Another key difference is that the original scale identified six factors related to students' perceptions of pronunciation instruction, including syllabus design, instructional techniques, and corrective feedback. However, in this study, factor analysis consolidated aspects of pronunciation learning into three broader categories: motivation and engagement, emotional barriers, and beliefs about learning pronunciation. This adaptation likely reflects the revised focus of the scale and the characteristics of the participant group. Based on factor analyses, items related to learners' concerns and effort were categorized under motivation and engagement with pronunciation learning (items 20, 1, 18, 22, 21 and 8), while those reflecting discomfort and nervousness were grouped under positive attitudes toward pronunciation learning. (items 6, 5 and 7). The third factor, beliefs about pronunciation learning, included items addressing whether pronunciation is learned through practice or considered an innate ability (items 15, 14, and 16). The factor names in this study were determined based on the thematic content of the retained items. The results and their interpretations will be discussed in detail in the next section.

As for the qualitative part, the data were analyzed on MAXQDA Analytics Pro (24.0.0) by abiding by the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) which comprises several key steps. In this approach, the data were initially immersed through repetitive readings to become familiar with its content. Initial codes and subcodes were then generated, identifying significant concepts or phrases within the dataset. The coding process was conducted collaboratively by both authors to ensure reliability and consensus in identifying meaningful patterns. These codes were subsequently organized into potential themes, reflecting broader patterns of meaning. In addition, memos and codebooks were constantly updated for a thorough analysis. Through an iterative process of review and refinement, themes were carefully defined and named to capture their essence. A narrative was then constructed that weaves together these themes, creating a coherent and meaningful story. Rigorous checking against the original data ensured the accuracy and authenticity of the identified themes. Finally, the analysis was presented in a clear and comprehensive report, supported by illustrative examples from the data.

## Findings

### Scale

This section demonstrates the results yielded from the scale to address the research questions. The presentation of findings follows the structure of the factor analysis results and thus reflects the identified factors in order.

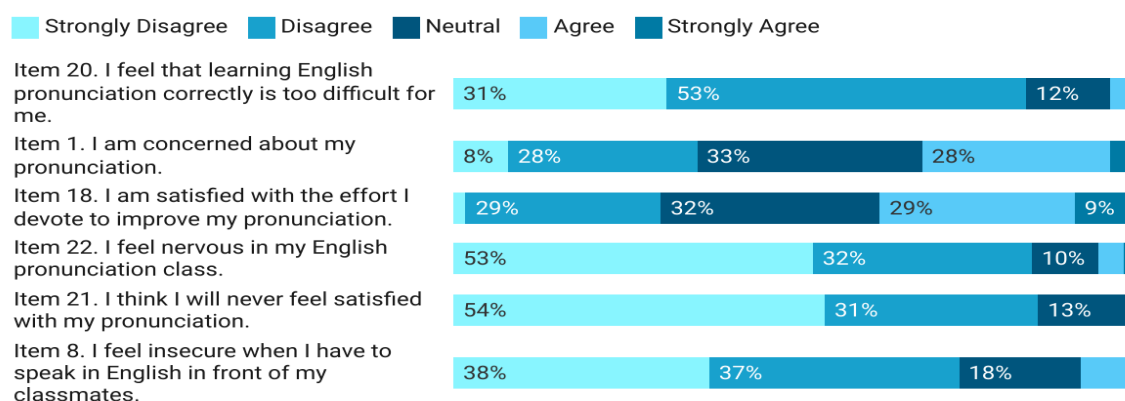


Figure 3. Motivation and Engagement with Pronunciation Learning

Figure 3 illustrates students' motivation and anxiety toward pronunciation learning. Most students (84%) disagreed that pronunciation learning is too difficult (Item 20), suggesting general confidence. However, concerns about pronunciation (Item 1) were mixed, with 33% neutral and nearly equal proportions agreeing (28%) and disagreeing (28%), indicating varied self-confidence. In Item 18, 61% of participants were satisfied with their effort, while 32% remained neutral, suggesting many feel confident but some are uncertain. Anxiety levels were moderate, as 53% strongly disagreed with feeling nervous in pronunciation class (Item 22), yet 42% expressed some level of nervousness. Pronunciation satisfaction (Item 21) showed 54% strongly disagreed that they will never feel satisfied, while 44% were neutral or agreed, reflecting optimism but lingering concerns. Lastly, Item 8 revealed 75% disagreed with feeling insecure speaking in front of classmates, but 18% strongly agreed, indicating a minority still struggles with pronunciation-related anxiety. Overall, students are generally motivated and confident, though some still experience pronunciation-related nervousness and self-doubt.

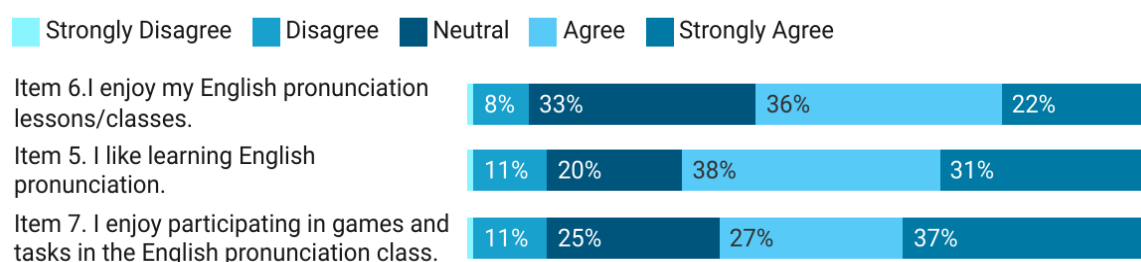


Figure 4. Positive Attitudes toward Pronunciation Learning

Figure 4 presents students' enjoyment of pronunciation learning. In Item 6, 58% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy their pronunciation lessons, while 33% remained neutral and 8% strongly disagreed. This suggests that most students have a positive attitude toward their pronunciation classes, though some feel indifferent. In Item 5, 69% of students expressed liking English pronunciation, with only 11% strongly disagreeing. This indicates that pronunciation learning is generally well-received among students. Item 7, which focuses on enjoyment of interactive pronunciation activities, showed that 64% of students agreed or strongly agreed, while only 11% strongly disagreed. This suggests that games and tasks in pronunciation instruction are engaging for most students. Overall, the results indicate that students generally enjoy learning pronunciation, particularly when lessons involve interactive activities, though a small portion remains indifferent or disengaged.

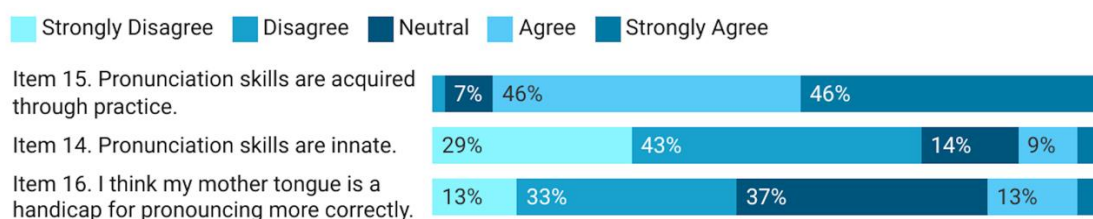


Figure 5. Beliefs about Pronunciation Learning

Figure 5 presents students' beliefs about pronunciation learning. In Item 15, 92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that pronunciation skills are acquired through practice, while only 7% strongly disagreed. This suggests that most learners view pronunciation as a trainable skill rather than an innate ability. Item 14, which examines the belief that pronunciation skills are innate, received mixed responses. While 29% strongly disagreed, 43% were neutral, and only 23% agreed or strongly agreed. The high percentage of neutral responses suggests uncertainty about whether pronunciation ability is natural or learned. Item 16, which concerns the perceived influence of one's mother tongue on pronunciation accuracy, showed that 50% of

students agreed or strongly agreed, while 46% disagreed or remained neutral. This indicates that while many students believe their native language affects their pronunciation, a significant portion does not see it as a major barrier. Overall, the findings suggest that students generally believe pronunciation is learned through practice, but some hold mixed views on whether it is an innate ability and how much their native language influences their pronunciation.

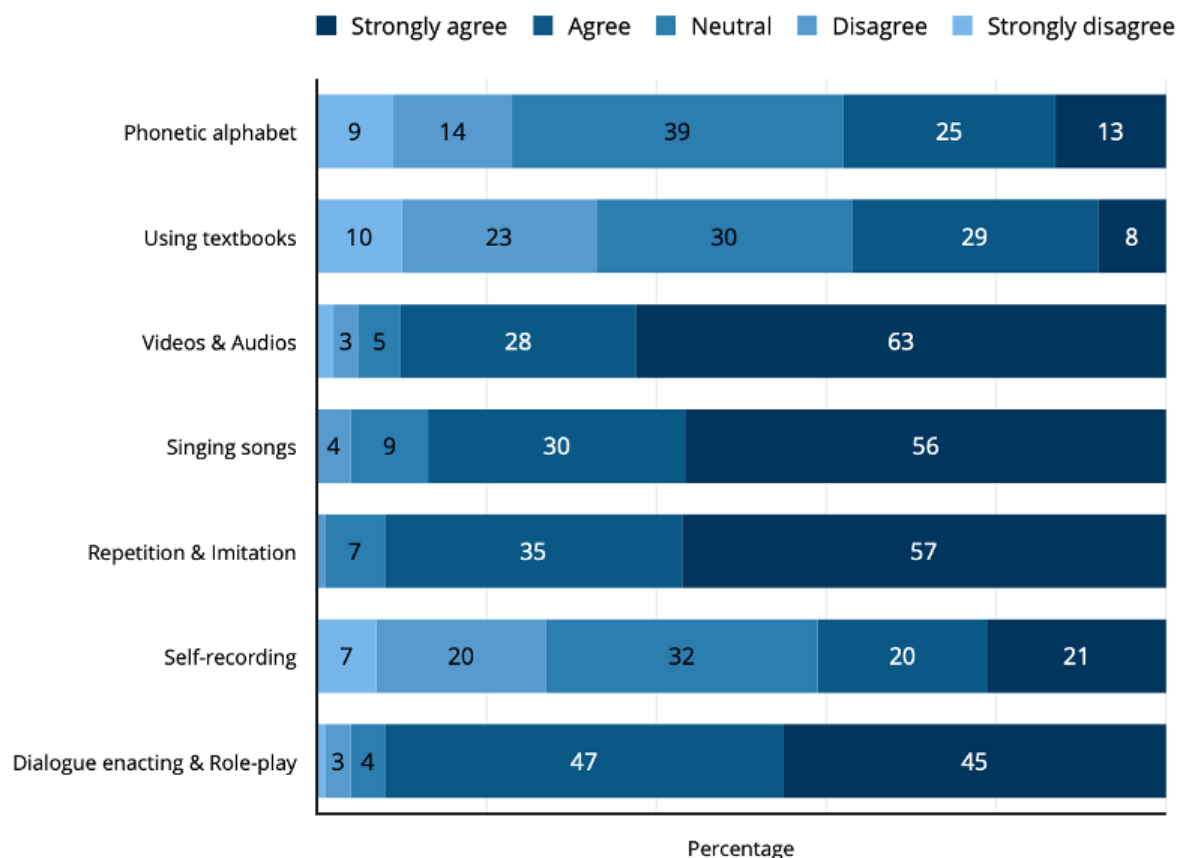


Figure 6. Pronunciation Improvement Technique and Activity Preferences

In the final part of the survey, the instructors answered the items that asked how useful they found specific pronunciation improvement techniques and activities. Judging from the mean scores and combined response percentages, using videos and audios ranked first ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = .85$ ), followed closely by repetition & imitation ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = .67$ ), singing songs ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = .83$ ), and dialogue enacting & role-play ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). On the other hand, participants found using textbooks as a resource for pronunciation learning to be the least helpful technique ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), followed by learning & using the phonetic alphabet ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) and recording their voice in English & listening to themselves ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ). In sum, survey responses indicate a strong preference for video and audio-based methods, repetition, and imitation for pronunciation improvement. Techniques such as using textbooks and learning the phonetic alphabet were perceived as less useful by participants.

### Semi-Structured Questionnaire

This phase of the study involved data collection from 14 EFL instructors about which pronunciation practice the instructors deem the most and least effective including their underlying motives.

Table 1.

## Pronunciation Improvement Techniques Rated by the Instructors

The most effective technique (Phonetic Alphabet)			The least effective technique (Using textbook)		
Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>
Foundational	Forms the basis of pronunciation	4	Ineffective assistance of pronunciation instruction	Being isolated Boring	2 2
Beneficial	Aids increasing accurate pronunciation	3	Mechanical Inauthentic		2 1

As for the most favorable technique, six instructors frequently reported that they apply the phonetic alphabet the most, followed by dialogue enacting & role-play ( $f = 4$ ) and repetition & imitation ( $f = 2$ ). The reasons behind their selection of the phonetic alphabet are outlined in P9:

Phonetic alphabet shows the basis for pronunciation and the sounds differ in English and this difference can be shown to the students with the help of this. After that, other techniques can be used but this alphabet is the key to form the basis.

In accordance with this response, P3 and P4 commonly mentioned that knowing the phonetic alphabet increases accurate pronunciation as people can pronounce even unfamiliar words accurately. Regarding role-plays (i.e., second most preferred technique), P1 said “since role-plays and dialogues include real-life communication, after listening to an authentic dialogue, students can imitate pronunciations of the words of English accents in role-plays.” and P5 said “while role-playing, students hear themselves and the others. They get feedback from me and their friends on their pronunciation too, so they try to be more careful with pronunciation. It is also more fun compared to other options.” Both excerpts illustrate how authenticity is favored by the surveyed language instructors.

As for the least effective technique and activity, analysis of the responses revealed that using textbook activities (e.g., repeating single sounds, identifying (un)stressed sounds, linking, and matching sounds with corresponding phonetic alphabet letters) ranked the first by five instructors. They used several negative adjectives for the use of textbooks such as they are isolated activities that bore students, mostly mechanical and away from being authentic. These codes collectively formed being ineffective theme in pronunciation instruction. To show an example that embraces most codes, P10 concluded “most textbooks are boring for students and the audio doesn’t sound authentic. They aren’t very engaging in terms of pronunciation practice. Students usually experience difficulties following and focusing on textbooks and sometimes do not find the activities of them meaningful.” Moreover, dialogue enacting & role-play technique was mentioned by three participants as the least effective technique for the students although the other participants mentioned it as a useful technique in their responses. For instance, P11 said this technique is particularly less useful for introverted students, P8 said students pay special attention to the completion of the task instead of their pronunciation and P6 does not believe its role in improving pronunciation.

All in all, the most effective technique the instructors found was the phonetic alphabet, due to its perceived effect of increasing accurate pronunciation and forming the foundation of pronunciation. This technique was followed by dialogue enacting and role-play techniques. However, the instructors’ overall tendency (35.71%) was not to find textbook activities as useful as the other techniques. The created theme for this technique was ineffectiveness, obtained by several negative codes in the responses.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate learners’ and instructors’ views and in-class pronunciation instruction practices. The findings revealed students’ positive feelings and viewpoints about pronunciation learning, though some students expressed anxiety and insecurity about their pronunciation skills.

Additionally, there were mismatches between what learners found effective in improving their pronunciation in L2 (i.e., audio-visual content and repetition) and what instructors reckon as useful in-class pronunciation activities and techniques (i.e., phonetic alphabet and dialogue enacting). Concerning learners' views and feelings, our findings did not align with some studies in the literature. For instance, once compared with Edo-Marzá (2014)'s findings, fewer students in our study believed in pronunciation's importance in their lives. However, while Edo-Marzá's participants expressed strong enthusiasm for pronunciation tasks, a notable portion of students in this study remained neutral about their engagement with pronunciation activities. These differences might stem from students' future professional necessities in that only a limited number of students will be required to use professional English in our participant group. In addition, the educational background of the students can be influential as students in that study had an introductory course dedicated to phonetics and phonology and had more opportunities to practice pronunciation, unlike a huge majority of our participants. In comparison with other available research, it was found by Pawlak et al. (2015) that most of the participants reported liking learning English pronunciation. Our study similarly showed that students generally enjoy pronunciation learning and in-class pronunciation activities. However, some students experience pronunciation-related anxiety and insecurity, which may influence their engagement. This could explain why some participants felt uncertain about their pronunciation progress, despite their general enjoyment of pronunciation learning. In agreement with several research studies carried out by Monika et al. (2019), Nguyen et al. (2021), and Xuyen (2019), learners in our study believe in the importance of pronunciation for clearer communication and have positive feelings. Our results further indicate that while most learners see pronunciation as important, they also differ in their confidence and satisfaction with their pronunciation skills. Some students, particularly those who feel insecure speaking in front of classmates, may require additional support to overcome pronunciation anxiety.

As for pronunciation improvement techniques and activities, both in our study and in Edo-Marzá (2014), very few students found written coursebook exercises useful, unlike their instructors' beliefs. This finding might also reflect the way that instructors implement those textbook drills (e.g., pointing out stress in words, repeating whole sentences), which can be perceived as dull by the students, no matter how forced the instructors feel to fulfill curricular requirements. Next, the findings of this study provided support to Kusz and Pawliszko (2022), who reported that listening to recordings from textbooks was the top preference of the students. Similarly, the participants of this study mentioned the effectiveness of audio-visual materials in pronunciation instruction in the first place as well. This could be attributed to the notion that most Gen-Z learners are extensively exposed to audio-visual content through technological devices and this may potentially shape their preferences. In fact, the visual part of the option might have attracted the students' attention more. There was a mismatch regarding the use of repetition in that while students preferred it as an effective activity, it ranked as one of the least favored activities on the instructors' side. One possible interpretation of this finding can be that instructors might consider that solely repeating words or phrases does not lead to meaningful pronunciation skill improvement, but for learners, it requires minimum effort with maximum gain.

Digging deeper into instructors' practices of pronunciation instruction, this study noted that the findings about the most and least effective techniques for students corroborate the findings of some of the previous work. For instance, in both Alsofyani and Algethami (2017) and Buss (2015), the participant instructors favored the implementation of the phonetic alphabet usage over other techniques, which seems to be consistent with this research. The ease of pronouncing even unfamiliar words with the help of symbols and their pedagogical knowledge about the significance of phonetic alphabet instruction might play a key role in their choices. Besides, incorporating the phonetic alphabet into language instruction may not only aid in accurate pronunciation but also cultivate a deeper understanding of linguistic structures and enhance overall communication skills. Its systematic approach to representing sounds might provide learners with a powerful tool for mastering pronunciation, thereby fostering confidence and fluency in speaking. However, the majority of existing studies indicated a preference for repetition over other activities (Wahid & Sulong, 2013; Yulia & Saukah, 2021). The preference for repetition can be interpreted under the assumption that learners can practice intonation, rhythm, and stress simultaneously, ensuring that all learners practice

effortlessly. By repeating phrases or sentences, students can not only reinforce their understanding of the language but also fine-tune their pronunciation and prosody. In contrast, Jafari et al. (2021) found that drama and role-play were preferred by their participants, contradicting the findings of the present paper. The reason might be that the phonetic alphabet might seem harder to teach than wanting the learners to repeat and this can influence the teachers' practices. A further point to consider is students' beliefs about pronunciation learning itself. The majority of participants in this study agreed that pronunciation is learned through practice, rather than being an innate ability. However, some students remained neutral or even expressed agreement with the idea that pronunciation skills are innate, which suggests that learners differ in their fundamental perspectives on pronunciation acquisition. Similarly, many students believed their mother tongue influences their pronunciation ability, but opinions on whether it presents a true handicap were mixed. These varying beliefs may impact students' motivation and learning strategies in pronunciation instruction. The difference between the effectiveness of pronunciation techniques perceived by students and the beliefs held by instructors is apparent. Our interpretation is that the techniques preferred by students are those that do not require effort or burden from their perspective. It is expected for students to opt for the easier option, although it remains unclear whether their decisions are made consciously. What teachers find effective, on the other hand, are techniques that involve the necessary sound and symbol perception for pronunciation instruction and support meaningful communication through dialogue, role-play, and similar activities. They seem to emphasize pronunciation as part of meaningful communication within the context, considering their pedagogical knowledge and teaching experience. This is because learning in isolation may negatively affect communicative skills because they cannot use them. This disconnect could lead to reduced enthusiasm among learners for pronunciation learning and a lack of emphasis on teaching this language aspect by educators. Nonetheless, it might be plausible to meet on a common ground that benefits both sides in in-class activities through communication.

To conclude, this study aimed to explore the perspectives of tertiary-level EFL learners and instructors on pronunciation instruction and learning, prompted by the observation that pronunciation instruction is often neglected. Our main finding revealed a significant difference between learners' and instructors' preferences regarding effective pronunciation improvement techniques and activities. While learners favored listening to audiovisual materials, repetition, and singing songs, instructors leaned towards working on the phonetic alphabet and dialogue enactment and role-play, highlighting an incongruency between the two groups. Beyond technique preferences, the findings also highlight that while many students enjoy pronunciation learning, some experience anxiety and insecurity, which may influence their motivation. Addressing both technique preferences and emotional barriers could lead to more effective pronunciation instruction. These findings contribute to addressing existing knowledge gaps and stress the need for a rigorous understanding of the interplay between learners' views, instructional practices, and contextual factors influencing pronunciation learning in EFL settings.

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**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, methodology, project administration and resources were shared by Mehmet Gazan and Nurdan Gürbüz. Data curation, formal analysis, investigation, visualization, writing - original draft, software and validation were carried out by Mehmet Gazan. Meanwhile, writing - review & editing and Supervision were handled by Nurdan Gürbüz.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Learners' Survey

#### Part 1. Background Questions

1. How long have you studied English? (write in years\_\_\_\_\_)
2. Have you ever studied pronunciation in your previous education? (Yes/No)
3. How do you rate your own skills in English pronunciation from 1 to 10? \_\_\_\_/10
4. Your gender: F / M / Prefer not to claim      Your age:\_\_\_\_\_

#### Part 2. Student Beliefs and Opinions Scale (Pawlak et al., 2015)

Item	Statement
1.	I am concerned about my pronunciation.
2.	I consider "English comprehension and pronunciation" an important subject.
3.	I consider pronunciation a key aspect for communication.
4.	I think English pronunciation is important for my professional future.
5.	I like learning English pronunciation.
6.	I enjoy my English pronunciation lessons/classes.
7.	I enjoy participating in games and tasks in the English pronunciation class.
8.	I feel insecure when I have to speak in English in front of my classmates.
9.	I could do much better when I speak in English in front of my classmates but I feel ashamed and insecure so I deliberately avoid sounding too native-like.
10.	I want to be able to pronounce English just like native speakers.
11.	It is very frustrating not be able to sound as an English native.
12.	I am satisfied with my pronunciation in English.
13.	If I have a good pronunciation, then I will feel more confident in English.
14.	Pronunciation skills are innate.
15.	Pronunciation skills are acquired through practice.
16.	I think my mother tongue is a handicap for pronouncing more correctly.
17.	Knowing the main theoretical rules of phonetics and phonology does not guarantee a good pronunciation.
18.	I am satisfied with the effort I devote to improve my pronunciation.
19.	It is frustrating to see how some classmates have much better pronunciation than me.
20.	I feel that learning English pronunciation correctly is too difficult for me.
21.	I think I will never feel satisfied with my pronunciation.
22.	I feel nervous in my English pronunciation class.

#### Part 3. Pronunciation Improvement Technique Preferences

Item	Statement
23.	I think pronunciation symbols (phonetic alphabet) are useful for learning pronunciation correctly.
24.	I think English textbooks can help me to learn English pronunciation.
25.	I think English videos and audios can help me to learn English pronunciation.
26.	I think that singing songs in English can improve my pronunciation.
27.	I think that repetition and imitation are important aspects to learn English pronunciation.
28.	I think that recording myself is useful to improve my pronunciation.
29.	I find dialogue enacting and role-play exercises useful.

**Appendix 2. Teachers' Pronunciation Practices Questionnaire Items**

1. Please rank the following pronunciation improvement techniques in order of effectiveness for students—1 being the most effective for you.

- \_\_\_ Pronunciation symbols (phonetic alphabet)
- \_\_\_ English textbook activities and exercises
- \_\_\_ Use of audiovisual materials
- \_\_\_ Singing songs
- \_\_\_ Repetition and imitation
- \_\_\_ Recording & listening (i.e., students record & listen to themselves)
- \_\_\_ Dialogue enacting and role-play

2. Why do you think your first pronunciation improvement technique is the most effective for students?

3. Why do you think your last pronunciation improvement technique is the least effective for students?