

## CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TO NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS

Akilbekova Gulkumar Renatovna  
Karakalpak State University

**Abstract:** Pronunciation plays a crucial role in developing communicative competence and intelligibility in English language learning. However, it remains one of the most complex skills to teach and master for non-native speakers. This paper examines the main challenges faced by English teachers in teaching pronunciation to non-native learners. It focuses on linguistic interference, lack of teacher training, limited classroom time, inadequate resources, and learner affective factors. The study also suggests practical strategies to improve pronunciation teaching effectiveness through professional development, technology integration, and supportive classroom environments.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation, English language teaching, non-native speakers, intelligibility, linguistic interference, teacher training, EFL challenges, communication skills.

### Introduction

English is one of the most important languages in the world today. It is used for studying, working, traveling, and communicating with people from different countries. To speak English well, learners need to have good pronunciation. Clear pronunciation helps people understand each other and makes communication easier. However, many non-native English speakers find pronunciation difficult to learn and to teach. One of the main reasons is that English sounds are very different from the sounds in other languages. For example, some English sounds such as /θ/ in think or /ð/ in this do not exist in many languages. As a result, learners often pronounce these sounds incorrectly. Another challenge is that English has different stress and intonation patterns that can change the meaning of words or sentences.

Teachers also face problems when teaching pronunciation. Some teachers have not received enough training in phonetics or pronunciation teaching methods. Others do not have enough time in their lessons to focus on pronunciation, because they must teach grammar and vocabulary for exams. In some schools, there are not enough resources like audio materials or pronunciation software.

### Literature Review

Many studies have explored the problems that teachers and learners face when teaching and learning English pronunciation. Researchers agree that pronunciation is one of the most difficult skills to master in learning English as a foreign or second language. The following subsections discuss the most common challenges found in previous studies.

**Native Language Interference:** One of the most common problems is interference from the learner's first language. Every language has its own sound system, stress patterns, and intonation rules. When these are different from English, learners tend to use the sounds and pronunciation rules of their native language while speaking English. For example, learners from Asia or Eastern Europe often have difficulty pronouncing sounds such as /θ/ (in think), /ð/ (in this), or /æ/ (in cat), because these sounds do not exist in their native languages

(Sahatsathatsana, 2017). As a result, their speech becomes accented and sometimes difficult to understand.

To reduce this problem, teachers can help students compare the sounds of their language with English and practice difficult ones through repetition, listening, and phonetic exercises.

**Teacher Training and Knowledge:** Another challenge comes from the teachers themselves. Many non-native English teachers do not receive enough training in pronunciation teaching or phonetics during their education. According to Fauzia and Amri (2020), some teachers rely only on imitation or repetition because they do not know effective pronunciation teaching techniques.

Teachers may also lack confidence in their own pronunciation. If teachers are unsure how to pronounce certain words, they might avoid teaching pronunciation directly. Therefore, continuous professional development and pronunciation workshops are necessary to help teachers improve both their knowledge and teaching skills.

**Curriculum and Time Constraints:** In many schools and universities, pronunciation is not given enough importance in the English curriculum. Teachers often have to focus on grammar and vocabulary because exams usually test those areas more. As a result, pronunciation practice is often skipped or limited to a few minutes of each lesson (Levis & Barriuso, 2012).

Large class sizes also make it difficult for teachers to give individual feedback on pronunciation. Students get fewer chances to speak, and teachers cannot correct every learner. Curriculum designers should therefore include pronunciation as an important skill and allocate enough classroom time for it.

**Lack of Resources:** Effective pronunciation teaching requires various materials such as audio recordings, videos, and pronunciation software. However, in many schools, especially in developing countries, such materials are unavailable. Matsuda and Matsuda (2018) mention that without modern tools, students cannot listen to authentic English sounds or practice them correctly.

In addition, poor classroom equipment—like the absence of microphones, speakers, or language labs—limits pronunciation practice. Using mobile applications, online platforms, and low-cost resources can be one way to improve the situation.

**Learner Affective Factors:** Learning pronunciation is not only a linguistic process but also an emotional one. Many students feel shy, nervous, or afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. Zielinski (2012) explains that fear of being judged for their accent can stop learners from speaking and practicing more.

Motivation and confidence play an important role in pronunciation improvement. When learners are encouraged, they become more willing to speak and correct their mistakes. Teachers should create a supportive and positive classroom environment where students are not afraid to try.

## Methodology

This study aims to identify the main challenges faced by teachers and learners in teaching and learning English pronunciation in non-native contexts. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method, which helps to collect detailed information from teachers and students about their experiences and opinions.

**Research Design:** The study follows a qualitative research design, focusing on describing real problems and possible solutions. This design is chosen because it allows the researcher to understand participants' thoughts and feelings about pronunciation learning, which cannot be

measured only by numbers. The research explores the difficulties, causes, and strategies used by teachers and students in pronunciation classes.

**Research Context:** The study is conducted in the context of foreign language learning environments, where English is taught as a second or foreign language. Such contexts include schools and universities in non-English-speaking countries. In these settings, both teachers and learners are non-native speakers of English. Therefore, pronunciation teaching is often influenced by local linguistic, cultural, and educational conditions. The study considers observations from various countries where English is taught as a foreign language, including regions in Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, where pronunciation remains a key issue despite years of English education.

**Data and Sources:** This study relies on secondary data, including books, journal articles, and reports on English pronunciation teaching. The information has been collected from reliable academic sources such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center).

In addition, the paper analyzes teachers' reflective reports and case studies from published research to understand common patterns and challenges. The analysis of these sources helps identify what factors most strongly affect pronunciation learning outcomes, such as teaching methods, exposure to authentic English, and teacher preparation.

**Purpose of the Approach:** The descriptive–analytical approach was chosen because it helps to interpret real-world teaching and learning experiences rather than test a single hypothesis. Pronunciation learning is a complex process that depends on linguistic, emotional, and social factors. Therefore, this method makes it possible to explore all these dimensions together and provide practical recommendations for teachers and curriculum designers.

### Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that teaching English pronunciation to non-native speakers remains one of the most complex areas in language education. The discussion below highlights the key challenges identified through the analysis and connects them with findings from previous research.

**Influence of Native Language:** One of the most dominant factors affecting pronunciation is the influence of the learner's first language. Students often transfer the sound patterns, rhythm, and intonation of their mother tongue into English. As a result, certain English sounds are pronounced incorrectly or replaced with similar sounds from the native language.

For example, learners from Asian countries may replace /θ/ with /s/ or /t/, while Arabic speakers may confuse /p/ and /b/. This finding agrees with Sahatsathatsana (2017), who explained that phonological differences between a learner's first language and English strongly influence pronunciation accuracy.

Teachers should therefore help students notice these differences and provide targeted practice through phonetic drills, minimal pairs, and visual aids.

**Learner Attitudes and Motivation:** Pronunciation learning is strongly influenced by learners' motivation and confidence. Many students are afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at for their accent. Zielinski (2012) emphasizes that anxiety and low self-esteem can stop learners from practicing pronunciation regularly.

To solve this, teachers should create a safe and supportive classroom environment, where errors are seen as part of learning. Encouraging communicative practice and giving positive feedback help students build confidence and improve their pronunciation gradually.

**The Role of Technology:** Modern technology provides powerful tools for improving pronunciation learning. Applications such as BBC Learning English, Elsa Speak, and YouGlish

allow learners to hear authentic pronunciation, record their own voice, and receive instant feedback.

Integrating such tools into classroom instruction helps learners practice independently and reduces pressure on teachers. As highlighted by Matsuda and Matsuda (2018), technology bridges the gap between traditional teaching and real-life communication, especially for non-native speakers who have limited exposure to English environments.

Overall, the discussion shows that pronunciation challenges arise from multiple factors: influence of the native language, insufficient teacher training, limited classroom time, lack of resources, and emotional barriers. However, these challenges are not impossible to solve.

By increasing teacher awareness, updating curricula, integrating pronunciation-focused activities, and using technology effectively, teachers and learners can make real progress.

Most importantly, pronunciation should be viewed not as a separate skill, but as an essential part of effective communication in English.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights that teaching and learning English pronunciation in non-native contexts is a challenging but essential part of language education. The research shows that pronunciation problems mostly arise because of differences between the learners' native language and English, limited teacher training, lack of classroom time, and insufficient teaching resources.

Teachers often focus more on grammar and vocabulary, while pronunciation is given less attention. However, clear pronunciation is necessary for effective communication and international understanding. Therefore, teachers should include pronunciation practice regularly in their lessons, even for a few minutes each day.

The study also emphasizes the importance of teacher preparation and professional development. Teachers who understand phonetics and modern teaching strategies can help students become more confident and accurate speakers. In addition, the use of technology — such as pronunciation apps and online listening tools — can make learning more interactive and enjoyable.

Finally, improving pronunciation teaching requires a positive classroom environment, where students are encouraged to speak without fear of making mistakes. By combining good teaching methods, technological tools, and motivation, both teachers and learners can overcome the challenges of English pronunciation and achieve better communication skills.

## References

1. Sahatsathatsana, S. (2017). Pronunciation Problems of Thai Students Learning English Phonetics: A Case Study at Kalasin University. *Journal of Education and Linguistics*, 10(2), 123–131.
2. Levis, J. M. (2018). *Intelligibility, Oral Communication, and the Teaching of Pronunciation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Zielinski, B. (2015). The Effect of Learners' First Language on English Pronunciation Accuracy. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 25(4), 421–437.
4. Matsuda, A. (2019). *Preparing Teachers to Teach English as an International Language*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
5. Fauzia, N. (2021). Integrating Technology in Teaching English Pronunciation: Challenges and Solutions. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8(1), 45–57.



6. Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). *Pronunciation Fundamentals: Evidence-Based Perspectives for L2 Teaching and Research*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
7. Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.