



www.EUROKD.com

## Language Testing in Focus: An International Journal



Language Testing  
in Focus  
An International Journal  
**LTiF**



ISSN : 2717-9087

2025 (11)

### Assessing motivation and challenges of L2 pronunciation improvement beyond the classroom

**Rizgar Qasim Mahmood**

*The University of Wollongong, Australia*

#### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords

*Corrective Feedback,  
Learning beyond the  
Classroom, L2  
Motivation, L2  
Pronunciation*

#### Received

*15 June 2024*

#### Received in revised form

*20 October 2024*

#### Accepted

*12 November 2024*

#### Correspondence

*concerning this article  
should be addressed to:*

*[Rqm841@uowmail.edu.au](mailto:Rqm841@uowmail.edu.au)*

*Pronunciation is crucial to successful communication and plays a significant role in high-stakes tests and job and education interviews. Therefore, the massive attention paid to pronunciation and pronunciation instruction, including specifically designed courses to improve L2 learners' pronunciation, is evidence of its importance. Although learning pronunciation motivations and strategies have been extensively researched, mainly focusing on formal instructions and in the classroom, little has been explored beyond the classroom. Therefore, this study investigates the motivations, strategies, and challenges of learning pronunciation among 18 ESL learners in Australia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The main findings reveal that professional (i.e., jobs) and social motivations are primary drives among learners to enhance their pronunciation. Regarding the strategies, the findings show that self-directed learning, such as watching movie series, listening to songs, repetitions, shadowing, and asking others to provide corrective feedback (CF), was among the most commonly used strategies. Furthermore, the learners reported a lack of immediate, accurate corrective feedback, and managing social insecurities, such as discrimination, were among the main challenges. This study offers several theoretical and pedagogical insights, such as the call for a more holistic approach and designing more user-friendly resources with the ability to use more authentic features when used by learners.*

#### How to cite this article (APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition):

Mahmood, R. Q. (2025). Assessing motivation and challenges of L2 pronunciation improvement beyond the classroom. *Language Testing in Focus: An International Journal*, 11, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.32038/ltf.2025.11.01>

## Introduction

Pronunciation is a vital component of spoken language proficiency. It influences both communication effectiveness and the perception of competence in various settings (Levis, 2018; Levis, 2022). In the context of native speakerism, pronunciation often becomes a key criterion for evaluating language ability. Research reports show that native-like pronunciation is frequently equated with fluency and expertise. This bias has significantly affected learners. So much so that they commonly believe that deviations from native norms and pronunciation can lead to stereotypes, social exclusion, or perceived linguistic inadequacy (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Jenkins, 2000).

Despite the sociolinguistic impact of Pronunciation on L2 speakers, it plays a crucial role in high-stakes situations, such as standardized tests (e.g., TOEFL, PTE, IELTS, etc.) and job and academic interviews. In these contexts, pronunciation affects both intelligibility and the impression of professionalism. Furthermore, mispronunciation leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding, which reduces the candidate's chances of success despite having strong language skills in other areas, such as listening, reading, and writing (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Kang & Ginther, 2017). Furthermore, non-native pronunciation can shape social identities and perceptions. In that case, for L2 speakers, it creates barriers in professional and academic settings where native-speaker norms are dominant (Miller, 2003). Hence, pronunciation is not only an asset for achieving native-like proficiency but also a crucial factor for learners' academic, professional, and social advancement. Although the importance of pronunciation has drawn much attention in recent research, it is still considered a neglected target language (TL) aspect during the teaching process. However, previous studies show that learners give significant importance to pronunciation and aim to improve their pronunciation skills as soon as they start learning a TL. Meanwhile, teachers have been trying to use various techniques and approaches to teach pronunciation in L2 classrooms.

Previous studies have extensively investigated the effectiveness of formal instruction on L2 learners' pronunciation skills. Results have shown positive effects of L2 pronunciation instructions and strategies (Derwing & Rossiter, 2003; Levis & Echelberger, 2022; Meritan, 2022; Morley, 1991; Nguyen et al., 2021; Saito, 2021a; Stratton, 2023). However, it has also been reported that not every L2 teacher is willing to teach pronunciation due to their inability to teach this skill. A lack of training and sufficient materials has also been reported as another factor that prevents pronunciation from being taught in L2 classes (Sardegna et al., 2018). Based on the current literature, teacher pronunciation instructions might affect learners' pronunciation improvements. Still, learners might spend less time in the classroom than they spend using English as the language of communication, especially in ESL contexts. To fill the gap of insufficient pronunciation teaching, L2 learners seek other ways to work on their pronunciation, which has happened to be beyond the classroom. However, little research has investigated the motivations and challenges of pronunciation learning among ESL learners beyond the classroom. Therefore, a considerable gap is left unfelt, which can significantly contribute to the current literature and provide insightful pedagogical implications for teachers and learners. Theoretically, the results of the current study can reveal another crucial aspect of learning pronunciation to motivation and self-directed learning theories. It can further broaden

our understanding of learners' other strategies to improve their pronunciation. Furthermore, it adds to the ongoing debates on using authentic materials as the primary source of L2 learning. In that sense, authentic materials are “the language produced by native speakers and the language produced by a real speaker/writer, a real audience, conveying a real message.” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 98). Due to the nature of ESL learners’ situations beyond the classroom, this study aims to explore ESL learners’ motivations, strategies, and challenges in pronunciation learning. Therefore, the following questions are addressed to fulfill the objectives of the study:

**RQ1:** What motivates ESL learners to improve their pronunciation beyond the classroom?

**RQ2:** What strategies do ESL learners use to enhance their pronunciation?

**RQ3:** What are the challenges ESL learners face due to their pronunciation and pronunciation learning beyond the classroom?

## **Literature Review**

### ***Conceptual Framework***

This study builds its foundation and explores pronunciation beyond the classroom from L2 learners’ perspectives, motivations, and challenges to better understand the current topic under research, utilizing theories of motivation, self-directed learning, and pronunciation pedagogy as the conceptual framework. According to Gardner et al. (1985), highly motivated learners learn faster than low-motivated learners, and they connect achievement to the level of motivation. In their study, Gardner et al. (1985) found that motivation affects the rate at which L2 materials are learned. Therefore, the relationship between motivation and self-directed learning pronunciation is worth investigating. Similarly, Dörnyei (2001) further posits that motivation is a dynamic force shaped by personal goals, social contexts, and experiences. Furthermore, this study attempts to look at pronunciation learning from the perspective of self-directed learning theory (Knowles, 1975). According to this theory, it is necessary for learners to “design a learning plan” (p. 12). Furthermore, Knowles (1975) stated, “People who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things, and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners) (p.14). In this regard, Knowles (1975) believes that “self-directed learning is more in tune with our natural processes of psychological development” (p.14). Therefore, these two theories can help us unveil various aspects of pronunciation learning beyond the classroom, which might not be easy to investigate through classroom-based research.

### ***Importance of Pronunciation***

Sorry, what did you say? Pardon me. Ohhhh! You mean that. These statements and many more are often heard during a conversation between a listener whose English is proficient and a speaker who is still learning English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL). Therefore, it can be inferred that intelligibility (i.e., the extent to which a listener can understand spoken words correctly) and comprehensibility (i.e., how difficult a listener perceives the speech to understand) are key elements of successful communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 1997, p. 2; Levis, 2020; Martin, 2020b). Hence, pronunciation plays an essential role in conveying messages while conversing. On the contrary, poor pronunciation hinders communication and might result in misunderstanding, demotivating the L2 speaker,

and being perceived as having “inferior mental ability and less credibility ” (Martin, 2020a, p. 457). Similarly, Pourhosein Gilakjani et al. (2020) reported that teaching pronunciation is crucial as it improves learners' ability to convey the target language messages successfully. Although pronunciation has been considered the central component of effective communication, it is one of the most overlooked aspects of L2 teaching (Nguyen & Newton, 2019; Pourhosein Gilakjani et al., 2020).

### ***Pronunciation Teaching***

Before the communicative language approach, teaching pronunciation received the least attention from both teachers and researchers, but after that, pronunciation gained its position in second language acquisition (SLA), and much emphasis was put into teaching and research both teaching and learning pronunciation (Pennington-2021). An extensive body of literature has been conducted on teaching and learning pronunciation, how to teach pronunciation effectively, approaches, and strategies in both lab and classroom settings (Brown, 1988; Couper, 2003, 2011, 2022; Derwing et al., 1998; Gordon et al., 2013; Inceoglu, 2022; Pennington & Richards, 1986; Phuong, 2022; Saito, 2011, 2012; Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2014; Yenkimaleki et al., 2022). These studies have looked into the effects of pronunciation instructions such as explicit, implicit instructions and CF with its various types, the role of first language (L1), the role of technology on perception and production of the target language segmental and suprasegmental features (Bu et al., 2020; Kartushina et al., 2015; Olson, 2014; Thomson, 2013). Based on the reported results from these studies, pronunciation teaching instruction, including various strategies, was found to be effective on L2 learners' pronunciation skills regardless of the context, such as in a traditional classroom and online environment (Meritan, 2022).

One of the most researched aspects of teaching pronunciation is the role of oral (OCF). A significant body of research investigated the effects of OCF on learners' pronunciation development (Couper, 2022; Dlaska & Krekeler, 2013; Gao, 2022; Ha et al., 2021; Li, 2021; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Lyster et al., 2013; Oliver & Adams, 2021; Phuong, 2022; Saeli et al., 2021; Saito & Lyster, 2012; Scheuer & Horgues, 2021; Uddin, 2022; Yang & Lyster, 2010; Zhao & Ellis, 2022). Overall, OCF has been found effective for improving pronunciation among ESL/EFL learners. However, the effectiveness of OCF depends on the nature of the CF provision (Mahmood, 2024). Therefore, it is evident that there is a significant focus and emphasis on pronunciation teaching. Still, previous studies have mostly stayed inside the box, that is, in formal instructional settings such as classroom environments where teachers are the primary source of instruction and information, and learners are the primary receivers. Therefore, thinking out of the box and investigating pronunciation learning beyond classrooms is crucial because several other factors, such as motivation, might affect learners' attempts at pronunciation improvement.

### ***Pronunciation Improvement beyond Classroom***

Research shows that learner autonomy is a significant aspect of L2 learning (Dörnyei et al., 2015). In this regard, Benson (2001) stated that “Autonomy, or the capacity to take charge of one's own learning, was seen as a natural product of the practice of self-directed learning, or

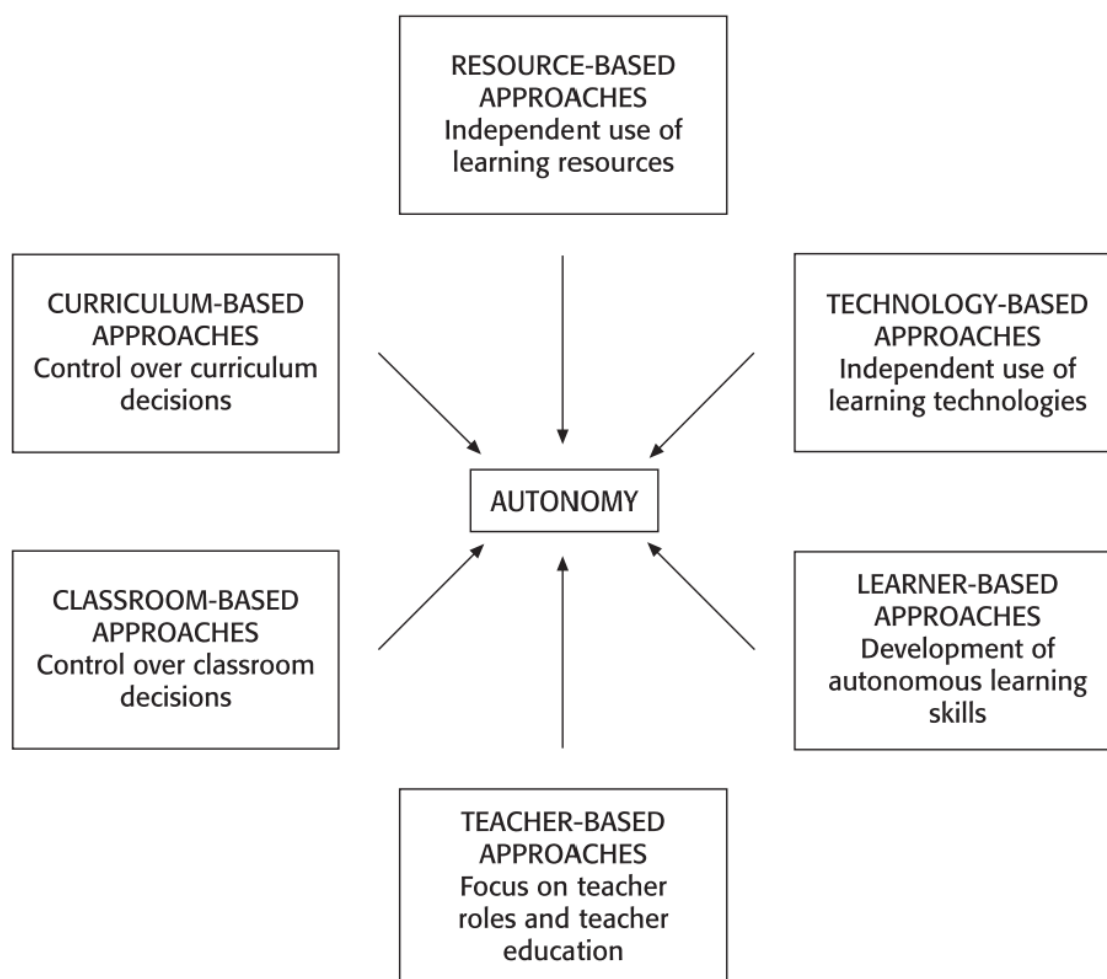
learning in which the objectives, progress and evaluation of learning are determined by the learners themselves” (p. 10). Furthermore, Knowles (1975, p. 18) defines self-directed learning as follows:

In its broadest meaning, ‘self-directed learning’ describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Therefore, autonomy can be considered an opportunity for self-directed learning because learners can adapt various learning strategies to meet their L2 learning needs. According to (Benson, 2001, p. 125), “Autonomy” can be seen as:

### Figure 1

*Autonomy in Language Learning and Related Areas of Practice*



According to Figure 1, autonomous learners can utilize the available resources around them at their own pace, such as using resources beyond the textbook or the teachers’ notes and

instructions in the classroom, such as technological tools, and finding effective self-learning strategies. In terms of pronunciation improvement, L2 learners have access to a variety of resources, such as conversations with native speakers, as with ESL learners. In contrast, EFL learners can rely on authentic materials such as movies, songs, and YouTube videos or use tools that are very well-equipped to lead to pronunciation improvements, such as YouGlish or tools that help learners notice their current pronunciation issues compared to native speakers such as Praat for immediate and explicit CF and computer-assisted pronunciation training (CAPT) (Mahmood, 2024a, 2024b; Osatananda & Thinchana, 2021; Tsai, 2019).

### ***Motivation and L2 Pronunciation Learning***

Although learners' autonomy is a crucial element of the L2 learning process, motivation can be seen as the dynamo of this journey. Motivation is "What moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action." (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 4). Furthermore, Dörnyei (2001) stated that some key aspects should be considered to maintain motivation, such as creating primary motivational conditions, supporting learners' motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that motivated learners are more likely to persist in self-directed learning, leading to more chances of improvement (Tsang & Lee, 2023), especially in their accents (Smit & Dalton-Puffer, 2000). Similarly, Yousofi and Naderifarjad (2015) found that motivation is a primary factor in pronunciation achievement. However, motivation alone may not be enough to maintain L2 learning. Therefore, L2 learners require practical resources and strategies to enhance their independent practice (Busà, 2015; Everly, 2018).

L2 learners might have different types of motivation when learning pronunciation. For example, previous literature suggests that learners often state that professional development, the desire for fluency, and social integration are primary motivators for improving pronunciation (Muñoz, 2008). In this regard, (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 519) demonstrated that "Success in L2 learning is a function of the learner's attitudes towards the linguistic-cultural community of the target language, thus adding a social dimension to the study of motivation to learn an L2." Therefore, it is paramount to investigate the pronunciation learning process beyond the classroom.

### ***Pronunciation beyond the Language Classroom***

For decades, pronunciation was connected to "being like a native speaker;" Nativeness was considered the correct model of accurate pronunciation. However, with the current diversity in societies, workplaces, and communities, both culturally and linguistically, intelligibility and comprehensibility are the achievable goals of pronunciation learning. Thus, more tolerance can be observed when it comes to pronunciation. Furthermore, speaking skills and pronunciation directly affect how others see the speaker in society. Therefore, pronunciation has not only been recognized as an essential component of an L2 linguistically, but it also directly affects "education, psychology, sociology, management, and speech science" (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019, p. 344). Therefore, pronunciation penetrates the classroom walls and researches learners' social lives, including "business and health communications, politics, forensic linguistics, speech technology, phonological impairment, and L1 literacy"

(Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019, p. 344). As a result, exploring pronunciation from an outside classroom lens is necessary, especially now, as English is considered a lingua franca and spoken by approximately 1.75 billion people (Jenkins, 2014).

Although English is considered a lingua franca and is essential in various multilingual settings, it is not without challenges, especially for L2 speakers, especially in pronunciation (Seidlhofer, 2003). In this regard, Jenkins (2000) stated, “There is evidence that phonological problems regularly get in the way of successful communication in international contexts” (p. 78). Hence, segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation are crucial factors affecting communication (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). Therefore, pronunciation beyond the classroom includes more than just learning to articulate sounds accurately or putting stress on the correct positions. Thus, based on the literature, it is evident that exploring pronunciation beyond the classroom greatly contributes to the current literature theoretically and pedagogically; for example, it contributes to how motivation, individual differences, and learners’ sociological and psychological aspects affect pronunciation development. Furthermore, it gives educators, teachers, and learners insights into directing and encouraging learning pronunciation outside the classroom in a self-directed approach.

## **Methodology**

### ***Design***

This study implemented a qualitative research design to investigate pronunciation development, motivation, and challenges beyond the classroom among ESL learners. This study purposefully used this approach to effectively explore L2 learners' experiences and perspectives, as it allows for in-depth, detailed, context-rich insights that may be overlooked in quantitative research (Creswell, 2013; Fetters et al., 2013).

### ***Participants***

Twenty-three ESL learners were recruited for this study. During this study, they were studying general English at one of the language colleges in Sydney, Australia. Their ages ranged between 19 to 37 (M = 18). Based on the college’s placement test, their proficiency levels were upper-intermediate. Those learners had been in Australia for at least three months and worked in various fields such as hospitality, aged care, construction, and restaurants. They also reported spending much of their daily life speaking English with native and non-native English speakers during work interactions. The participants were from various countries, such as Latin American countries, Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador, and Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Thailand.

To follow the ethical aspects of participant recruitment, the researcher (also a teacher at that language college) announced the need for participants in a study on pronunciation beyond the classroom. The written announcement stated that participation is voluntary and does not affect them as learners at the language college. Then, those who agreed to participate contacted the researcher for a 10 to 15-minute interview. Before each interview, oral consent was obtained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study up to two weeks after the interview.

### ***The Context of the Study***

The current study's context is Australia, an ESL context. Several key factors influenced the selection of this context. First, pronunciation plays a more prominent role in ESL settings due to the use of the target language beyond the classroom and the frequency of interaction between learners and speakers of English, including both native and L2 speakers (Derwing & Munro, 2015). In contrast, EFL contexts often feature more tolerance towards non-standard pronunciation as listeners are accustomed to diverse accents in their local environment (Levis, 2018).

Secondly, as L2 learners engage in everyday conversations with various speakers, they become more aware of their pronunciation skills. This level of awareness impacts learners' perceptions of their pronunciation development and motivation to improve (Saito, 2021b). Third, the availability of resources for learning pronunciation, particularly opportunities for interaction with native speakers, provides a unique advantage in the ESL context. This study hopes to find more results from learners' viewpoints regarding the concept of "native speakerism" and how this concept affects learners' social and professional lives in an ESL context. We hope to contribute to the current literature on the ongoing debate on native and non-native speakers (Holliday, 2006).

### ***Data Collection***

The qualitative data was collected using a semi-structured interview style (*See Appendix A*). Each participant's interview took about 10-15 minutes. The researcher and the participant met in a quiet and friendly environment to ensure a comfortable experience for both. The interview questions varied from when the learner started focusing more on pronunciation learning and the motivations behind that decision to other questions related to learning strategies, sources of feedback, and challenges linguistically and socially that the learner faced during communication due to their pronunciation outside the classroom. Finally, the interviews were transcribed and prepared to be analyzed thematically. To maintain the participants' confidentiality, the researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym as LP1 and LP2 (i.e., LP stands for learner participant).

### ***Data Analysis***

After the data collection phase, the data was analyzed following Roulston's (2010) steps in interview analysis. First, data transcription: in this phase, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Secondly, data reduction: in this phase, the main ideas and themes through extracting constructs were highlighted. Third, data reorganization: in this phase, the researcher reorganized the data using codes and categories to identify themes and patterns. Finally, data interpretation and representation: in this phase, data were analyzed according to the themes, patterns, and constructs and interpreted thematically, which, according to Willig (2017), "Thematic analysis refers to the process of identifying themes in the data which capture meaning that is relevant to the research question, and perhaps also to making links between such themes." (p. 147).



## Results

This study investigated ESL learners' motivations, strategies, and challenges in improving their pronunciation beyond the classroom. Based on the research questions, three main themes were constructed: *Motivations for Pronunciation Learning*, *Strategies for Pronunciation Improvement*, and *Challenges in Pronunciation Development*.

### *Motivation for Pronunciation Learning*

The current findings indicate that the majority of the participants' motivations to improve their pronunciation outside the formal setting, such as in the classroom, were professional, social, and psychological factors. They indicated that to secure a good job, having high language proficiency with good pronunciation increases their chances. The following are some comments address the type of motivation mentioned above:

*LP1: "I want to improve my pronunciation to find a better job and be more professional, and I believe good pronunciation is essential to succeed in your job, especially when you have to use English as the main language of communication."*

*LP18: "I work in hospitality and want to communicate professionally. I want to communicate accurately without making any errors."*

*LP11: "My job is a hairdresser, and as I need to talk to the clients most of the time, I believe good pronunciation is crucial as it helps me to comment with my clients and have better chances of keeping the job."*

Furthermore, the findings show that social interaction was another motivation among the participants, pushing them to work harder to improve their pronunciation. For example, they wanted to feel belonging, build relationships, and avoid misunderstandings. They stated that achieving this goal requires good pronunciation to have a full conversation. Some of the participants' responses are listed below:

*LP 17: "I don't want to feel stressed because of my pronunciation. I am shy even when I speak my first language; think about situations where you pronounce some words and phrases inaccurately; this stresses me out and stops me from continuing the conversation. I also want to work on my accent as it helps me to integrate with native speakers better."*

Interestingly, improving pronunciation was not the only goal among the participants; accent reduction was also mentioned significantly. Although they mentioned having good pronunciation skills is essential, a strong accent was another concern, and they believed that alongside pronunciation improvement, accent reduction was also their goal. In addition, some participants commented that, in some cases, such as working as a receptionist, pronunciation and accent play a significant role in whether you get the job. The comments below represent some of the viewpoints expressed:

*LP 12: "I want to get rid of my Brazilian accent because it is very strong, and sometimes people look down upon me because of it."*

*LP 9: "I know my accent shows where I am from, and it is like my identity, but my goal is to improve my pronunciation and then work on my accent."*

*LP 15: "I was on the train speaking English with my partner. Someone yelled at us and said go back to your country if you cannot speak English properly."*

*LP 3: "I was not offered a job because of my heavy accent and poor pronunciation. During the job interview, the interviewer told me I needed to improve my English and pronunciation because clients face difficulties understanding me at my current level. This made me feel less capable, so I enrolled in some language courses to improve my English and pronunciation."*

Another primary motivation among the learners, especially when speaking to native speakers, was feeling accepted and belonging. They also stated that having a proficient level of English with good pronunciation builds more trust between you and others. Therefore, it can be concluded that ESL learners have intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for pronunciation improvement. The following comments support the discussed points:

*LP5: "I work in a packaging company, and most of my co-workers are native English speakers. When I started this job, I could not understand them very well, nor did they understand me due to my pronunciation and heavy accent. I had to ask for repetitions repeatedly, and I sometimes reached a point where nobody wanted to talk to me."*

### ***Pronunciation Improvement Strategies among ESL Learners***

Generally acknowledged, learning pronunciation requires continuous practice and perseverant learners. Learners use various approaches and strategies to enhance this skill, such as other language skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing). However, little research has explored pronunciation strategies outside the classroom. The current study investigated this aspect. The results reveal that ESL learners use different strategies depending on their preferences. These strategies included listening to music, listening to native speakers, and watching TV series and movies. The following are some comments from the participants:

*LP10: "I watch movies and TV series, and whenever I hear a new word, I pause the video and repeat it many times, then, I repeat pronouncing it similar to what I have heard, yes, like you (the teacher) recommended the shadowing strategy for accurate sound production and stress."*

*LP7: "I like listening to podcasts on health topics as a bioscientist, which helps me improve my pronunciation and learn more about my field of interest."*

*LP2: "Sometimes I watch YouTube videos on how to improve my pronunciation. However, sometimes I still have difficulties mastering some sounds."*

Repetition was widely used as a strategy among the participants. They stated that this strategy is effective mainly because it helps them practice and repeat sounds that do not exist in their L1. Some participants believed that learning to make sounds accurately is essential as they directly affect intelligible pronunciation. For example, they stated:

*LP8: “When I talk to others, sometimes, they cannot understand some words I say, and then, I ask them to say the word, and after that, I try to repeat the word as many times as possible.”*

*LP4: “When I make pronunciation errors, I ask native speakers for feedback. Although feedback is important, and I want feedback whenever I make a mistake, sometimes, I ask for some explanations or rules, but they cannot explain it to me explicitly. They say this is the correct pronunciation.”*

Therefore, it can be concluded that learners try to use the strategies that are effective for them, including self-directed learning from watching and listening and help from a more proficient one, such as feedback from native speakers.

Interestingly, the participants were asked if they assessed their pronunciation. Only four participants evaluated their pronunciation by themselves, such as recording. For example:

*LP9: “When I send voice messages to my English-speaking friends and colleagues after recording the message, I listen to it several times to check for errors. If I am unsure about some words, I check online dictionaries, such as Google or Cambridge Dictionary, then re-record the message and send it.”*

This participant was further asked if she used any IA tools, and she stated that she did not like them because *“AI or sometimes technological pronunciation is a machine; learning from humans is more natural and authentic.”*

Despite these strategies, the participants revealed that asking others, mainly native speakers, for CF is not always effective because they might not be able to give direct or explicit feedback; for example, in the case of some sound production and their mechanics, such as in the learner’s mouth. For example:

*LP11: “When I ask someone to point out my error and give me the correct pronunciation with some feedback, they cannot explain it. They say this is how we pronounce it, which is not always helpful.”*

### ***Pronunciation Improvement Challenges among ESL Learners***

Pronunciation has been considered one of the most challenging components of L2 learning. Therefore, it is imperative to teach and learn it effectively. Alongside learners’ motivations and strategies, the participants of this study were asked to share the main challenges they face while trying to improve their pronunciation beyond the classroom. The results show that ESL learners face numerous challenges, including psychological, social, and linguistic barriers. For example, feeling embarrassed and losing confidence were among the common challenges. Furthermore, poor pronunciation had negative social consequences, such as discrimination. Additionally, linguistic challenges, such as inaccurate sound production, result in misunderstanding and heavy accents. Similarly, a fast-speaking rate was also reported as another challenge. The below quotations address these challenges:

*LP12: “When I make pronunciation errors, I feel embarrassed and lose confidence, and I cannot continue the conversation.”*

*LP1: “People sometimes look down on you because of your accent and poor pronunciation. This makes me sad but motivates me to work harder on my pronunciation improvement.”*

*LP13: “Sometimes people do not pay attention to what I say due to my pronunciation. They have difficulties understanding me, especially when I give instructions and talk to our service staff. This makes me lose my self-confidence and self-esteem.”*

*LP4 “Native speaker’s English is too fast, and their pronunciation and accent are hard to understand.”*

*LP10: “Sometimes people are rude to me; it is upsetting, but it encourages me to learn more and try harder.”*

*LP3: “My pronunciation and accent made it hard to get a good job. It felt like my skills did not matter because of how I spoke during the interviews.”*

## **Discussion**

This study explored ESL learners’ motivations, strategies, and challenges in improving their pronunciation beyond the classroom. The current study's findings are discussed using the theoretical framework, notably Gardner et al.'s (1985) motivation theory and Knowles's (1975) self-directed learning theory while integrating insights from the literature. The findings reveal complex dynamics between motivation, autonomy, and socio-psychological factors, shedding light on learners’ experiences in pronunciation improvement beyond the classroom.

The first research question that this study attempted to answer was exploring ESL learners’ motivations for pronunciation improvement. The participants had several motivational factors to enhance their pronunciation beyond the classroom, such as professional, social, and personal motivations. The participants highlighted that good pronunciation is essential for career success. This finding is consistent with Muñoz (2008), who emphasized professional growth as a central motivation for pronunciation learning among L2 learners (Tsang & Lee, 2023). However, while previous research often referred to professional motivation as a long-term objective, the current study revealed a more immediate link between pronunciation and workplace interactions. For example, the participants usually reported how they face pronunciation challenges daily during communication with others at work. Therefore, we suggest that professional motivation in real-world contexts might be more urgent than previously recognized in the literature. This finding contrasts the mentioned framework; for example, the participants frequently noticed that an immediate workplace requires good pronunciation, which is critical for daily interaction. While Gardner et al. (1985) Focused on long-term motivations. This study underscores the importance of situational, context-dependent factors in learners’ motivations to improve their pronunciation.

Furthermore, social integration played a significant role in pronunciation improvement as the participants wanted to build relationships and reduce the risk of misunderstanding. This finding is congruent with Jenkins (2000) and Dörnyei (1994), who emphasized the importance of social

acceptance in L2 learning. However, the findings extend beyond these studies by illustrating the emotional consequences of poor pronunciation. Many participants reported feelings of exclusion and discrimination tied to their heavy accents, especially around native speakers. While previous literature often encourages and focuses on the cognitive aspects of intelligibility (Seidlhofer, 2003). This study highlights its social-psychological dimensions. It indicates how pronunciation can affect learners' self-esteem and social standing. Therefore, it is important that learners gain more awareness regarding the effects of society on L2 learners' pronunciation to prepare them to be ready for any psychological effects which negatively impacts learners' motivations.

Furthermore, intrinsic motivations, such as overcoming insecurities and accent-related stigma, were also prominent. These findings complement Smit and Dalton-Puffer's (2000) argument that intrinsic motivation fosters better pronunciation outcomes. However, they challenge the simplistic distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Instead, the current findings suggest that there is a complex interplay where external discrimination increases internal insecurities, which drives learners to improve their pronunciation. This finding indicates that motivational theories must account for how external discrimination can produce internal solutions; this dimension has yet to be researched in previous studies.

The second research question investigated participants' strategies to enhance their pronunciation. Knowles's (1975) self-directed learning theory emphasizes proactive learner behaviors such as diagnosing needs, setting goals, and evaluating progress. The findings revealed that the strategies used by participants for pronunciation improvement were diverse, reflecting both traditional and innovative approaches. For instance, listening to native speakers through media such as movies and TV series was the most common strategy as a type of effective authentic material (Busà, 2015; Everly, 2018). However, while previous research emphasizes the pedagogical value of such resources, this study highlights learner's preference for media over technological tools like AI-driven software. Participants perceived these tools as impersonal and less effective than human interaction, contrasting with Tsai's (2019) positive findings on computer-assisted pronunciation tools. This discrepancy suggests a gap between technological advancement and learning preferences, raising questions about designing and implementing AI tools in language learning. Furthermore, this study highlights a critical gap: while learners demonstrated autonomy in resource selection, their strategies often lacked explicit guidance for addressing complex phonetic issues. For example, while repetition helped participants improve sound articulation, it failed to address underlying phonological challenges without structured feedback. This finding supports Sardegna et al.'s (2018) argument that learners require external scaffolding to maximize the effectiveness of their strategies. Another strategy used by some learners was shadowing (Hamada, 2016; Inceoglu, 2022). These findings reinforce what other researchers have reported regarding the effectiveness of the shadowing strategy for both segmental (i.e., vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental (i.e., stress, intonation, pitch, and connected speech) features of pronunciation. In addition, repetition was also found to be one of the strategies among ESL, especially for those learners struggling with sound articulation. These findings further support Saito's (2012) findings, which stated that when learners rely on repetition and emphasis on problematic sounds, it helps them overcome

these problems. Although this technique might seem effective, the reliance on repetition without explicit guidance exposes limitations on learners' approaches, so much so that the learner might perceive the target sound inaccurately, creating more issues than benefits. This is an indication that some learners might need to receive explicit instructions and feedback (Mahmood, 2023). This is also supported by Sardegna et al. (2018), who argue that structured feedback is essential for effective pronunciation learning. This aspect was also noticed when some learners' strategy was seeking assistance and feedback from native speakers; they also stated that sometimes the received feedback was not very helpful as native speakers could not identify the causes of the errors and the mechanics of sound production; therefore, it might be necessary for those who give feedback to have some training (Gao, 2022). This gap between learner's needs for explicit feedback and the limitations of untrained interlocutors underscores the importance of integrating expert guidance into pronunciation practice. This is not limited only to learning pronunciation beyond the classroom. Still, some pronunciation training is crucial for those who teach pronunciation in formal settings, such as inside the classroom. Furthermore, this finding can be used as an initiative to create pronunciation teaching content that helps learners have more positive perceptions of non-human pronunciation assistant tools such as online applications and AI tools, which enable learners to receive more authentic and natural input and feedback.

The third research question explored participants' challenges in improving pronunciation beyond the classroom. The findings revealed significant challenges learners face in improving pronunciation. For example, psychological barriers such as embarrassment and lack of confidence were particularly pronounced. Participants often linked these challenges to negative social experiences, such as being dismissed or judged for their accents. These findings resonate with Pourhosein Gilakjani et al. (2020), who highlighted the emotional obstacles in pronunciation learning; however, the present study provides a better understanding by connecting these barriers to specific incidents of discrimination and exclusion. For instance, several participants recounted workplace and social interactions where their pronunciation errors led to feelings of inadequacy and frustration, reinforcing the social stigma associated with non-native accents. Furthermore, linguistic challenges, such as mastering familiar sounds and understanding diverse accents, further complicate learners' efforts. These findings are consistent with Pennington and Rogerson-Revell's (2019) discussion of the logical complexities of L2 pronunciation; nevertheless, participants' frustration with the lack of explicit CF adds a critical dimension to this issue. While previous studies (e.g., Lyster & Saito, 2010), highlight the effectiveness of CF in classroom settings, this study suggests that learners beyond their classroom often lack access to such resources. The reliance on native speakers for feedback despite their inability to provide detailed explanations highlights a significant gap in the support system for self-directed learners. This finding is vital to raise awareness among learners that focusing on intelligibility rather than nativeness is a more measurable and achievable goal.

One of the unique aspects of the current study's findings is that the participants particularly highlighted psychological and social challenges. They frequently reported that discrimination in negative social interactions negatively affected their lack of confidence. This finding

underscores the need for holistic approaches to pronunciation teaching that address both the linguistic and socio-psychological dimensions of learning. While much of the existing literature focuses on cognitive and pedagogical aspects, this study emphasizes the importance of considering learners' emotional and social experiences as integral to their pronunciation development. These findings can further be understood in the light of motivation theory, which directly affects the learning process (Dörnyei, 2001). It can be inferred that pronunciation is not only a pure linguistic aspect of an L2 but also an integral part of societal norms. This encourages learners to put more effort into improving their pronunciation.

This study contributes to a growing body of research that explores pronunciation learning beyond the classroom. It challenges the dominant focus in the current literature on classroom-based approaches (Derwing & Rossiter, 2003) by highlighting the complexities of real-world learning environments. The findings also call for reevaluating existing frameworks for self-directed learning (Knowles, 1975) theory, which assumes that learners can independently diagnose their needs and evaluate their progress. However, the participants in this study demonstrated high levels of autonomy. Their reliance on external feedback and struggles with complex phonetic issues suggest that self-directed learning in pronunciation requires more scaffolding than previously acknowledged.

### **Conclusion**

This study explores L2 learners' pronunciation learning, motivation, and challenges beyond the classroom. The findings reveal that pronunciation plays a significant role in learners' personal, social, and professional lives. These factors lead to having different motivations among learners during learning and improving their pronunciation; further, the most common pronunciation challenges and strategies were explored.

This study highlights the critical role of social and psychological factors and the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, offering new perspectives on the complexities of pronunciation learning. For example, finding a better job and feeling belonging among the learners were two primary motivations for pronunciation improvement. Furthermore, learners reported many challenges, such as misarticulations and mispronunciation, which led to misunderstandings. In addition, psychological challenges, such as loss of confidence, were highlighted. The findings revealed that learners use additional traditional and modern pronunciation learning approaches. It can be concluded that learners attempt to find resources that meet their needs regardless of their type. This study offers several theoretical and pedagogical implications. For example, it encourages developers of AI-driven pronunciation tools to prioritize user-friendly designs that provide explicit personalized feedback while maintaining a natural conversational interface. Another unique finding of this study is the relationship between pronunciation and the socio-psychological aspect of the target language. This finding encourages researchers to conduct more research on other factors rather than cognitive ones. That is external factors and motives behind pronunciation improvement and its effects on L2 learners' social and career-related status.

Additionally, educators must adopt more exclusive approaches to pronunciation teaching, fostering greater awareness and acceptance of linguistic diversity within and beyond the classroom; by addressing these social psychological barriers that learners face, educators can create more supportive learning environments that empower learners to overcome pronunciation challenges. However, the concept of “native speakerism” is still dominant. There is still a huge gap between moving away from “native speakerism” and going towards the “intelligibility principle.” Finally, by integrating these insights into research and practice, we can better support learners in achieving their pronunciation goals in diverse real-world contexts.

This study provides valuable insights into ESL learner's motivation strategies and challenges in improving their pronunciation beyond the classroom. However, it has limitations. First, the study used a qualitative approach using self-reported data collected through semi-structured interviews; it may introduce bias, such as social desirability, where participants might present their strategies or challenges more favorably. Future research could incorporate mixed methods combining qualitative with quantitative measures, such as acoustic analysis or proficiency tests, to evaluate learners' pronunciation development beyond the classroom.

The second limitation is that the participants were upper-intermediate learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, all based in an English-speaking environment (Australia). This diversity enriches the findings. However, it limits the generalizability to learners in non-English-speaking environments or EFL contexts with varying proficiency levels. Future studies could explore pronunciation learning in EFL contexts where access to authentic interactions with native speakers may be limited to determine how these factors influence motivation strategies and challenges.

#### **ORCID**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5987-8884>

#### **Acknowledgments**

Not applicable.

#### **Funding**

Not applicable.

#### **Ethics Declarations**

#### **Competing Interests**

No, there are no conflicting interests.

#### **Rights and Permissions**

#### **Open Access**

This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which grants permission to use, share, adapt, distribute and reproduce in any medium or format provided that proper credit is given to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if any changes were made.



## References

- Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. Longman.
- Brown, A. (1988). Functional load and the teaching of pronunciation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22(4), 593-606. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/3587258>
- Bu, Y., Li, W., Ma, T., Chen, S., Jia, J., Li, K., & Lu, X. (2020, October). Visual-speech Synthesis of Exaggerated Corrective Feedback. In *Proceedings of the 28th ACM International Conference on Multimedia* (pp. 4521-4523). <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3394171.3414444>
- Busà, M. G. (2015). *New perspectives in teaching pronunciation*. University of Padova.
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide* (2nd ed. ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Couper, G. (2003). The value of an explicit pronunciation syllabus in ESOL teaching. *Prospect*, 18(3), 53-70.
- Couper, G. (2011). What makes pronunciation teaching work? Testing for the effect of two variables: socially constructed metalanguage and critical listening. *Language Awareness*, 20(3), 159-182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2011.570347>
- Couper, G. (2022). Effective feedback for pronunciation teaching. In J. M. Levis, T. M. Derwing, & S. Sosaat-Hegelheimer (Eds.), *Second language pronunciation: Bridging the gap between research and teaching* (pp. 174-193). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Steps in conducting a scholarly mixed methods study*. DBER Speaker Series. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/dberspeakers/48/>
- Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (1997). Accent, intelligibility, and comprehensibility: Evidence from four L1s. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 19(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263197001010>
- Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). *Pronunciation fundamentals: Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/llt.42>
- Derwing, T. M., Munro, M. J., & Wiebe, G. (1998). Evidence in favor of a broad framework for pronunciation instruction. *Language Learning*, 48(3), 393-410. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00047>
- Derwing, T. M., & Rossiter, M. J. (2003). The effects of pronunciation instruction on the accuracy, fluency, and complexity of L2 accented speech. *Applied Language Learning*, 13(1), 1.
- Dlaska, A., & Krekeler, C. (2013). The short-term effects of individual corrective feedback on L2 pronunciation. *System (Linköping)*, 41(1), 25-37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.01.005>
- Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(3), 273-284. <https://doi.org/10.2307/330107>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., Henry, A., & Muir, C. (2015). *Motivational currents in language learning: Frameworks for focused interventions*. Routledge.
- Everly, P. (2018). Expanding pronunciation instructional time beyond the classroom: Microsoft Office 2016 OneNote Class Notebook as an interactive delivery platform. *TESOL Journal*, 10(1), e421. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.421>
- Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs-principles and practices. *Health Services Research*, 48, 2134-2156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.12117>
- Gao, X. (2022). Oral corrective feedback on Mandarin pronunciation in live online classes. In Y. Zhang & X. Gao (Eds.), *Frontiers of L2 Chinese language education: A global perspective* (pp. 90-109). Routledge.
- Gardner, R. C., Lalonde, R. N., & Moorcroft, R. (1985). The role of attitudes and motivation in second language learning: Exploring correlational and experimental perspectives. *Language Learning*, 35(2), 207-227. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1985.tb01025.x>
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), 97-118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004144>
- Gordon, J., Darcy, I., & Ewert, D. (2013, Aug. 2012). *Pronunciation teaching and learning: Effects of explicit phonetic instruction in the L2 classroom*. Proceedings of the 4th Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference, Ames, IA: Iowa State University. <https://www.iastatedigitalpress.com/psllt/article/id/15215/>
- Ha, X. V., Nguyen, L. T., & Hung, B. P. (2021). Oral corrective feedback in English as a foreign language classrooms: A teaching and learning perspective. *Heliyon*, 7(7), e07550-e07550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07550>
- Hamada, Y. (2016). Shadowing: Who benefits and how? Uncovering a booming EFL teaching technique for listening comprehension. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(1), 35-52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815597504>
- Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal*, 60(4), 385-387. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl030>

- Inceoglu, S. (2022). Developing pronunciation learner autonomy with Automatic Speech Recognition and shadowing. In S. McCrocklin (Ed.), *Technological resources for second language pronunciation learning and teaching: Research-based approaches* (pp. 171-192). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language: New models, new norms, new goals*. Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, J. (2014). *Global Englishes: A resource book for students*. Routledge.
- Kang, O., & Ginther, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Assessment in second language pronunciation*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315170756>.
- Kartushina, N., Hervais-Adelman, A., Frauenfelder, U. H., & Golestani, N. (2015). The effect of phonetic production training with visual feedback on the perception and production of foreign speech sounds. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 138(2), 817-832. <https://doi.org/10.1121/1.4926561>
- Knowles, M. S. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. Follett Publishing Company.
- Levis, J. (2018). *Intelligibility, oral communication, and the teaching of pronunciation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Levis, J. (2020). Revisiting the intelligibility and nativeness principles. *Journal of Second Language Pronunciation*, 6(3), 310-328. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jslp.20050.lev>
- Levis, J. M. (2022). Teaching pronunciation: Truths and lies. In C. Bardel, C. Hedman, K. Rejman, & E. Zetterholm (Eds.), *Exploring language education* (Vol. 2, pp. 39-72). Stockholm University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2x6f02h.5>
- Levis, J. M., & Echelberger, A. (2022). Integrating pronunciation into language instruction In J. M. Levis, T. M. Derwing, & S. Sonsaat-Hegelheimer (Eds.), *Second language pronunciation: Bridging the gap between research and teaching*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Li, S. (2021). Oral corrective feedback. In H. Mohebbi & C. Coombe (Eds.), *Research questions in language education and applied linguistics: A reference guide* (pp. 353-357). Springer Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79143-8>
- Lyster, R., & Saito, K. (2010). Oral feedback in classroom SLA: A meta-analysis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 32(2), 265-302. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263109990520>
- Lyster, R., Saito, K., & Sato, M. (2013). Oral corrective feedback in second language classrooms. *Language Teaching*, 46(1), 1-40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000365>
- Mahmood, R. Q. (2023). Enhancing EFL speaking and pronunciation skills: Using explicit formal instruction in a Kurdish university. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(4), 1421-1440.
- Mahmood, R. Q. (2024a). ESL learners' perceptions of using High-Variability Phonetic Training (HVPT) through YouGlish to improve pronunciation skills. *Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(3), 1818. <https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.v7n3.1818>
- Mahmood, R. Q. (2024b). The impact of visual corrective feedback on pronunciation accuracy in L2 sound production: Empirical evidence. In T. C. Bang, C. H. Nguyen, & H. P. Bui (Eds.), *Exploring contemporary English language education practices* (pp. 158-189). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-3294-8.ch008>
- Martin, I. A. (2020a). Pronunciation can be acquired outside the classroom: Design and assessment of homework-based training. *The Modern Language Journal*, 104(2), 457-479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12638>
- Martin, I. A. (2020b). Pronunciation development and instruction in distance language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 24(1), 86-106. <https://doi.org/10.125/44711>
- Meritan, C. (2022). Integrating online pronunciation instruction: The case of learners of French. *Foreign Language Annals*, 55(3), 877-893. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12646>
- Miller, J. (2003). Audible difference: ESL and social identity in schools. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Morley, J. (1991). The pronunciation component in teaching English to speakers of other languages. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(3), 481-520. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586981>
- Muñoz, C. (2008). Age-related differences in foreign language learning. Revisiting the empirical evidence. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 46(3), 197-220. <https://doi.org/10.1515/IRAL.2008.009>
- Nguyen, L. T., Hung, B. P., Duong, U. T. T., & Le, T. T. (2021). Teachers' and learners' beliefs about pronunciation instruction in tertiary English as a foreign language education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.739842>
- Nguyen, L. T., Newton, J. (2019). Corrective feedback in pronunciation teaching: A Vietnamese perspective. In J. Levis, C. Nagle, & E. Todey (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 10th Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference*, ISSN 2380-9566, Ames, IA, September 2018 (pp. 201-212). Ames, IA: Iowa State University. <https://www.iastatedigitalpress.com/psllt/article/id/15377/>
- Oliver, R., & Adams, R. (2021). Oral corrective feedback. In E. Kartchava & H. Nassaji (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of corrective feedback in second language learning and teaching* (pp. 187-206). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108589789.010>

- Olson, D. J. (2014). Benefits of visual feedback on segmental production in the L2 classroom. *Language Learning & Technology*, 18(3), 173-192. <https://doi.org/10.125/44389>
- Osatananda, V., & Thinchon, W. (2021). Using Praat for English pronunciation self-practice outside the classroom: Strengths, weaknesses, and its application. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 14(2), 372-396.
- Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (1986). Pronunciation revisited. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(2), 207-225. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586541>
- Pennington, M. C., & Rogerson-Revell, P. (2019). *English pronunciation teaching and research: Contemporary perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan London. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-47677-7>
- Phuong, T. T. H. (2022). Feedback on pronunciation: Vietnamese EFL teachers' beliefs and practice. *SAGE Open*, 12(3), 21582440221126612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221126612>
- Pourhosein Gilakjani, A., Namaziandost, E., & Ziafar, M. (2020). A survey study of factors influencing Iranian EFL learners' English pronunciation learning. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 5(2), 103-123. <https://doi.org/10.29252/ijree.5.2.103>
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288009>
- Saeli, H., Rahmati, P., & Dalman, M. (2021). Oral corrective feedback on pronunciation errors: The mediating effects of learners' engagement with feedback. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 12(4), 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.12n.4.p.68>
- Saito, K. (2011). Examining the role of explicit phonetic instruction in native-like and comprehensible pronunciation development: an instructed SLA approach to L2 phonology. *Language Awareness*, 20(1), 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2010.540326>
- Saito, K. (2012). Effects of instruction on L2 pronunciation development: A synthesis of 15 quasi-experimental intervention studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(4), 842-854. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.67>
- Saito, K. (2021a). Effects of corrective feedback on second language pronunciation development. In E. Kartchava & H. Nassaji (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of corrective feedback in second language learning and teaching* (pp. 407-428). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/9781108589789.020>
- Saito, K. (2021b). What characterizes comprehensible and native-like pronunciation among English-as-a-second-language speakers? Meta-analyses of phonological, rater, and instructional factors. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55(3), 866-900. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3027>
- Saito, K., & Lyster, R. (2012). Effects of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback on L2 pronunciation development of /r/ by Japanese learners of English. *Language Learning*, 62(2), 595-633. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00639.x>
- Sardegna, V. G., Lee, J., & Kusey, C. (2018). Self-efficacy, attitudes, and choice of strategies for English pronunciation learning. *Language Learning*, 68(1), 83-114. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12263>
- Scheuer, S., & Horgues, C. (2021). Corrective feedback and unintelligibility: Do they work in tandem during tandem interactions? In A. Kirkova-Naskova, A. Henderson, & J. Fouz-González (Eds.), *English Pronunciation Instruction: Research-based insights* (pp. 223-252). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aals.19.10sch>
- Seidlhofer, B. (2003). *Controversies in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Smit, U., & Dalton-Puffer, C. (2000). Motivational patterns in advanced EFL pronunciation learners. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 38(3-4), 229-246. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/iral.2000.38.3-4.229>
- Stratton, J. M. (2023). Explicit pronunciation instruction in the second language classroom: An acoustic analysis of German final devoicing. *Journal of Second Language Pronunciation*, 9(1), 71-102. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jslp.22038.str>
- Szpyra-Kozłowska, J. (2014). *Pronunciation in EFL instruction: A Research-based approach*. Multilingual Matters.
- Thomson, R. I. (2013). Computer-assisted pronunciation training: Targeting second language vowel perception improves pronunciation. *CALICO Journal*, 28(3), 744-765. <https://doi.org/10.11139/cj.28.3.744-765>
- Tsai, P.-h. (2019). Beyond self-directed computer-assisted pronunciation learning: A qualitative investigation of a collaborative approach. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 32(7), 713-744. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1614069>
- Tsang, A., & Lee, J. S. (2023). The making of proficient young FL speakers: The role of emotions, speaking motivation, and spoken input beyond the classroom. *System*, 115, 103047. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103047>
- Uddin, M. N. (2022). L2 teachers' oral corrective feedback practices in relation to their CF beliefs and learner uptake. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 12(4), 617-628. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1204.01>
- Willig, C. (2017). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555>

- Yang, Y., & Lyster, R. (2010). Effects of form-focused practice and feedback on Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 32(2), 235-263. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263109990519>
- Yenkimaleki, M., van Heuven, V. J., & Soodmand Afshar, H. (2022). The efficacy of segmental/suprasegmental vs. holistic pronunciation instruction on the development of listening comprehension skills by EFL learners. *The Language Learning Journal*, 51(6), 734–748. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2022.2073382>
- Yousofi, N., & Naderifarjad, Z. (2015). The relationship between motivation and pronunciation: A case of Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 2(4), 249-262. <https://jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/view/77>
- Zhao, Y., & Ellis, R. (2022). The relative effects of implicit and explicit corrective feedback on the acquisition of 3rd person -s by Chinese university students: A classroom-based study. *Language Teaching Research*, 26(3), 361-381. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820903343>

## Appendix A

### *Interview Questions*

1. Can you tell me about your experiences with learning pronunciation? What first motivated you to focus on pronunciation improvement?
2. How long have you been actively trying to improve your pronunciation outside of the classroom, and what prompted you to start?
3. What motivates you to practice pronunciation outside of formal language classes?
4. How do you think improved pronunciation will impact your personal or professional life?
5. What methods, resources, or tools do you use for practicing pronunciation outside of class? (e.g., apps, videos, speaking partners)
6. Are there any activities or techniques you find most helpful? Why do you think they work for you?
7. What challenges do you face in trying to improve your pronunciation on your own?
8. Have you experienced any difficulties with finding helpful resources or feedback? If so, could you share an example?
9. Is feedback important to you? If so, where or from whom do you get feedback on your pronunciation?
10. How comfortable do you feel practicing pronunciation around others, such as friends or native speakers?
11. Have you ever felt nervous or self-conscious while practicing? If so, could you describe those experiences?
12. What are your thoughts on learning pronunciation outside of the classroom? Do you find it enjoyable, challenging, or both?
13. Do you feel that practicing pronunciation independently has changed your approach to learning language overall?