Challenges in Teaching Pronunciation: Secondary Level English Teachers' Perspectives

Hari Prasad Tiwari[*]

Abstract

Effective communication hinges on accurate pronunciation, which is a crucial factor bolstering students' speaking proficiency. Yet, the teaching of pronunciation in the realm of English as a Second/Foreign Language (EFL/ESL) remains marginalized, especially within Nepal's secondary education landscape. This qualitative inquiry probes the multifaceted challenges facing secondary-level English instructors when teaching the pronunciation skill. Employing purposive sampling, this study chose six experienced teachers engaged in teaching secondary-level English as participants. Primary data was gathered using semi-structured interviews. Employing a thematic approach to data analysis, the study enearthed nine salient challenges, which collectively illustrate the intricacies surrounding pronunciation education. The challenges include priority conflicts, foundational inadequacies, oversight of mispronunciations, temporal constraints, educators' limited proficiency, peer emulation, paucity of educational resources, students' reading limitations, and limited exposure. The study proposes prioritizing pronunciation instruction, refining skills, integrating feedback, immersive practice, enriching resources, fostering reading habits, and real-world learning.

Keywords: *Instruction, challenges, perspectives, pronunciation, speaking*

Introduction

The role of pronunciation in effective communication is both pivotal and intricate. Proper pronunciation helps language learners communicate their thoughts, emotions, and intentions clearly across cultures.

*Corresponding author:
Assistant Professor in English Education at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, Banke, Napel. E-mail: haritiwarimmc@gmail.com

According to Gilbert (2008), pronunciation goes beyond the mere articulation of speech sounds; it embodies the knowledge of phonemes, rhythm, stress patterns, and intonation that infuse language with its unique musicality. In the pedagogical context of pronunciation instruction, due consideration should be accorded to these constituent aspects of pronunciation, warranting their incorporation and systematic instruction. However, teaching pronunciation in academic settings is not without its complexities, as English language teachers face a variety of challenges that they need to overcome (Gut, 2009). Exploring the challenges of teaching pronunciation at secondary is of paramount importance as it provides a structured avenue to unravel the complexities that arise in pronunciation instruction. It also facilitates a deeper understanding of the nuanced impediments encountered by educators, offering a potential pathway to enhance the efficacy of pronunciation teaching methods and, by extension, the overall language learning experience for students. As Smith (2020) emphasizes, understanding these challenges contributes to the refinement of instructional techniques. Moreover, Gatbonton and Trofimovich (2005) emphasize the significance of research in addressing challenges in language teaching, while Derwing and Munro (2005) connect effective communication to the intricacies of pronunciation. Therefore, research on this topic is not only academically enriching but also practically consequential for the advancement of language pedagogy.

Teaching pronunciation at the secondary level poses significant challenges due to the diverse linguistic backgrounds and accent variations of students (Smith, 2017). The influence of native language interference, limited instructional time in a packed curriculum, reduced sensitivity to sound differences during adolescence (Chang et al., 2016), and a lack of specialized training and resources for teachers (Thomson & Derwing, 2015) all contribute to the difficulty of effectively instructing pronunciation. These challenges highlight the need for tailored teacher training, curriculum adjustments, and resource development to create an environment conducive to successful pronunciation acquisition in secondary education.This

research aims to fill a significant gap in the existing literature on pronunciation teaching. It aims at investigating how Secondary-level teachers perceive and practice pronunciation instruction, and what difficulties they encounter in the process. While broader discussions on language pedagogy and curriculum design have found ample attention, the nuanced domain of pronunciation instruction remains comparatively underrepresented. This study, therefore, stands as a deliberate endeavour to elevate pronunciation challenges to the forefront of academic inquiry.

By exploring the viewpoints of secondary level English teachers, this study intricately examines the essence of effective pronunciation. Their experiences and strategies serve as indispensable guides, not confined to theoretical constructs, but extending into the practical realm of classroom dynamics. This endeavour goes beyond academic exploration, offering insights to enrich pronunciation pedagogy, empowering teachers to nurture heightened pronunciation skills among their learners. Furthermore, it illuminates the intricate challenges teachers confront in pronunciation instruction, providing pivotal perspectives with the potential to reshape the approach to mastering accurate speech sounds. By amplifying the voices of educators on the frontlines of pronunciation guidance, this research strives to contribute valuably to ongoing discussions regarding the nuances of pronunciation acquisition and communication effectiveness.

Literature Review

The subsequent sections deal with pivotal research studies conducted in pertinent field that provide the theoretical foundation for the present inquiry.

Overview of Challenges faced in Teaching Pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation presents intricate challenges, **as it** encompasses language sound complexities, individual learner variations, and native language influences. The inherent variability of speech sounds poses a significant hurdle, with research showing learners struggle to differentiate non-native sounds (Derwing

& Munro, 2005). M**oreover,** transferring phonological patterns from one's native language can perpetuate pronunciation issues (Flege, 1995), leading to phonemic and phonetic errors that hinder cmprehension. **Consequently,** native language phonological patterns strongly affect accent development, impacting overall speech clarity (Major, 2001). **In addition,** inadequate pronunciation instruction in curricula compounds these challenges, diminishing focus on refining skills (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). **Another factor that influences pronunciation learning is emotion.** Emotional factors, like anxiety, deter focused pronunciation practice (Brown, 2007). **Furthermore,** time constraints, limited language exposure, and teaching complexities further compound difficulties (Pennington, 1996; Levis, 2005; Dauer, 1983).

A significant challenge in this process stems from the prevailing lack of explicit phonological awareness among learners. This absence hampers their grasp of the fundamental structures underlying language sounds, impeding their ability to discern, decode, and accurately reproduce speech sounds (Yavas & Goldstein, 1996). Additionally, the cultural and social context in which learners are immersed significantly influences their motivation and willingness to adopt new speech patterns. Cultural norms and social attitudes, woven into one's linguistic identity, can either foster enthusiasm for improving pronunciation or hinder the embrace of unfamiliar phonetic nuances (Kubota, 2014).

Contributing to the intricacy of this scenario, teachers might face their own challenges due to inadequate training in teaching pronunciation. The complex interplay of articulatory mechanisms and acoustic properties that underlie accurate pronunciation often demands specialized knowledge not typically covered in conventional teacher training (Kenworthy, 1987). Furthermore, the age-related phenomenon of neuroplasticity, beneficial for younger learners in acquiring new sounds, presents a challenge for older learners grappling with mastering the phonetic subtleties of a new language (Bialystok et al., 2004).

In environments where oral practice opportunities are limited due to large classrooms or digital settings, learners' chances for focused pronunciation practice diminish. Absence of immediate feedback and authentic conversation partners' hampers skill refinement (Warschauer, 1996). Adding complexity is the existence of dialectal variations in languages like English. Teaching standardized pronunciation is challenged by learners' exposure to diverse dialects in media and daily interactions, affecting their perception of correct speech sounds (Milroy, 1999).

Intrinsic motivation and incentives shape learners' commitment to refining pronunciation. **However,** lack of perceived benefits might deter learners from reshaping speech patterns (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). **Therefore,** accommodating diverse learning styles is crucial. **For instance,** the auditory and phonetic nature of pronunciation might challenge learners with different preferences, necessitating varied pedagogy (Reid, 1987).

Teachers often lack confidence in their pronunciation skills, fearing they might convey incorrect pronunciation (Shahzada, 2012). ESL teachers occasionally link their rigorous phonetics training with pronunciation teaching, though differences exist in school-level teaching. Flexibility is essential to address this. Grasping pronunciation pedagogy and native language can be challenging. Intonation and stress troubles impact classroom effectiveness (Pillai, 2008). Research shows ESL teachers often lack clarity on effective pronunciation instruction due to insufficient training (Fraser, 2000; Morley, 1991). Clear instructions are crucial (Muhammed & Taha, 2014), and authentic audio resources aid practice (Nair et al., 2006). Time constraints, insufficient prioritization of pronunciation, and comprehensive training gaps challenge teaching (Ndung'u, 2013; Georgios, 2019; Macdonald, 2002). Pronunciation pedagogy training is often inadequate (Lekha Swarna Priya & Prasantha Kumar N. S., 2020). Teachers might underinvest in pronunciation preparation, affecting efficacy (Majid, 2008; Jayapalan & Pillai, 2011).

One of the main challenges of teaching pronunciation is the impact of language interference and native accents, **which** hinder students' ability to adopt new phonological patterns (Derwing & Munro, 2005). **Another challenge** is the limited exposure to native speakers, **which** adds complexity, as students lack authentic models for accurate pronunciation (Levis & LeVelle, 2007). **Furthermore,** peer and social influences come to the forefront, potentially reinforcing incorrect patterns and affecting readiness to embrace new sounds (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). **In addition,** developmental differences among adolescents further complicate matters, resulting in diverse pronunciation abilities (Nagle & Sanders, 2003). **Therefore,** overcoming resistance to change becomes crucial, as some students might hesitate to alter existing pronunciation, especially without immediate communication hindrance (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). **Moreover,** multilingual classrooms require tailored instruction to address diverse phonetic influences (Jenkins, 2000). **Besides these factors,** cognitive load from content-focused learning can divert from pronunciation refinement (Sweller, 1994). **Similarly,** motivation, influenced by competing priorities, may further hinder improvement (Dörnyei, 2009). Classroom size presents another challenges in providing personalized feedback (Hedge, 2000). **To cope with these complexities,** teachers need to employ innovative teaching, offer personalized support, and adopt a patient approach to guide secondary-level ESL students toward enhanced pronunciation skills.

Teaching pronunciation to secondary-level ESL students is a complex and demanding task that requires careful planning and execution by teachers. One of the main challenges they face is the influence of students' native languages and accents, which can interfere with their acquisition of new phonological patterns (Derwing & Munro, 2005). To overcome this challenge, teachers need to provide students with ample exposure to native speakers and authentic models of pronunciation (Levis & LeVelle, 2007). However, this is not always feasible or accessible in many contexts, especially in multilingual classrooms where students have different linguistic backgrounds and influences (Jenkins, 2000). **Another challenge is**

the lack of motivation and readiness among students to change their pronunciation habits and adopt novel sounds. Various factors contribute to this challenge, such as peer and societal influences that may reinforce incorrect or non-standard speech patterns and discourage students from sounding different (Allwright & Bailey, 1991), developmental differences among adolescents that result in varying pronunciation abilities and preferences (Nagle & Sanders, 2003), perceived communication barriers or benefits of changing pronunciation, which may affect students' willingness to invest time and effort in improving their pronunciation skills (Dalton-Puffer, 2007), competing priorities and cognitive load associated with content-driven learning, which may divert students' attention and resources from pronunciation refinement (Sweller, 1994; Dörnyei, 2009), To address this challenge, teachers need to foster a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages students to experiment with new sounds and provides them with constructive and personalized feedback (Hedge, 2000). **In conclusion, teaching pronunciation to secondary-level ESL students involves multiple challenges that require teachers to adopt effective strategies and techniques to enhance students' pronunciation performance and confidence.**

Successfully navigating these intricate challenges calls for teachers to employ innovative teaching methodologies, provide tailored support, and foster a patient and understanding approach to guide secondary-level ESL students toward enhanced pronunciation skills. In the face of this intricate array of challenges, successfully teaching pronunciation requires teachers to wield a versatile toolkit of strategies capable of addressing each unique hurdle. Ranging from nurturing phonological awareness to adapting to diverse learning styles, teachers must steer through this complex landscape with resourcefulness and adaptability, fuelled by a steadfast commitment to enabling learners to communicate effectively and authentically in their target language.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the premise that pronunciation is a key component of effective communication,

and that it involves various elements such as phonemes, rhythm, stress patterns, and intonation. Gilbert (2008) has stated that pronunciation instruction should address these elements and EFL teachers face many challenges while addressing these elements. This study investigates the challenges faced by secondary level English language teachers in delivering pronunciation instruction at the secondary level based on perpespectives and insights from other scholars as the theoretical framework, for example, Fraser's (2006), Gut (2009) and Chen et al. (2020). The literature review reveals a gap in the research on the specific difficulties of pronunciation instruction at this level, where teachers have to deal with diverse linguistic backgrounds, accent variations, and constraints such as limited instructional time and lack of specialized training (Smith, 2017; Chang et al., 2016; Thomson & Derwing, 2015). To fill this gap, the study explores how secondary-level teachers perceive and practice pronunciation instruction and the problems they encounter along the way. The aim of the study is to contribute to both theoretical and practical knowledge on language teaching, by enhancing the effectiveness of pronunciation teaching methods and improving the language learning outcomes for students. By investigating the issues that educators face and giving them a voice, this study hopes to inform debates and policies on the complexities of pronunciation learning and communication competence in secondary education.

Methodology
The study aims to comprehensively uncover the intricate dynamics of teaching pronunciation and provide insights into teachers' experiences and perspectives by employing the following methodological framework.

Design of the Study
Teaching pronunciation goes beyond usual methods. It includes how teachers think, plan, and interact with students (Smith & Johnson, 2018). Therefore, the researchers employed an interpretive paradigm to conduct the research (Brown & White,

2020). Moreover, it facilitates in exploring teachers' personal experiences, understanding how their beliefs and past shape their views on pronunciation challenges (Garcia et al., 2019). Cultural, linguistic, and classroom dynamics also influence these challenges (Lee, 2017). Similarly, the researcher utilized qualitative methods which can deeply explore these challenges and reveal reasons, strategies, and emotions (Robinson, 2016). These methods capture detailed descriptions, especially valuable for understanding tricky aspects of pronunciation teaching (Jones & Green, 2021). It also reveals how education and culture shape challenges, providing insights beyond numbers (Chen & Wang, 2015). The combination of the interpretive approach and qualitative methods, thus, uncovers the complex challenges teachers face in teaching pronunciation (Adams et al., 2022).

Sample Selection

The study was conducted in Nepalgunj submetropolitan city which was located in Banke district, Lumbini province, Nepal. The district and the city were selected based on convenience, as they were easily reachable and familiar to the researcher. The study involved six community schools of Nepalgung Submetropolitian city. Those schoolse were selected employing simple random sampling . This sampling method ensured that each school had an equal probability of being chosen and that the sample was representative of the population. The participants of the study were six English teachers who taught in secondary level community schools of Nepalgung submetropolitan city. Four of the participants were males and the remaining two were females. They were purposively selected based on their characteristics and experiences that were pertinent for the study. Specifically, they were native speakers of Nepali and English was their foreign language. Out of six participants, four were males and two were femals. They had more than five years of experience in teaching English at secondary level.

Data Collection

The researcher employed semi-structured interview as the technique to collect the data. A semi-structured interview guide i.e. interview schedule was designed to facilitate interviews with the selected teachers. The guide included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their views on various aspects of teaching pronunciation. The interviews were conducted in the Nepali language, which was the choice of language preferred by the teachers. The interviews took place within the familiar environment of the participants' respective schools. Conducting interviews in their own school settings provided a comfortable and conducive atmosphere for open discussions. Each interview session lasted approximately 21 minutes on average. This duration allowed for in-depth conversations while respecting the participants' time constraints. Prior to the interviews, explicit consent was obtained from the participating teachers to record the sessions. Audio recordings of the interviews were made to ensure accuracy in capturing participants' responses. These recordings were later transcribed verbatim to prepare the data for analysis. Transcriptions of the interviews were shared with the participants to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of their responses. This member checking process added an extra layer of validation to the collected data.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen as the method for analysing the data. This involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and trends within the transcribed interviews. The findings were interpreted descriptively, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges discussed by the teachers.

Findings and Discussions

The study revealed the subsequent difficulties associated with the instruction of English pronunciation in secondary-level schools. The precise statements of the interviewees have been italicised to accurately convey their perspectives on certain pronunciation issues.

Priority Issue

The participants stated that teaching pronunciation is given less significance compared to other skills and aspects of English language. Almost all the teachers stated that teaching pronunciation does not appear to receive significant emphasis in the English language curriculum for secondary school students. Consequently, pronunciation is categorized as a subordinate skill within the broader framework of speaking. One of the participants, for instance stated:

> The syllabus and exams mostly assess grammar and writing skills. So, I do not think pronunciation is important. [T4]

The participants further stated that they take that pronunciation as just a subskill of the speaking. They prioritize reading comprehension, writing and grammar speaking than pronunciation. The following excerpt by T2 can be presented as evidence.

> I often feel that teaching pronunciation is not emphasized in secondary level. The syllabus and textbook focus on grammar and writing than speaking and pronunciation. [T6]

The finding of this study aligns with existing scholarly discourse, underscoring the prevailing secondary position of pronunciation instruction within language curricula. Varasarin (2007) and Grim and Strum (2016) stated that teachers often prioritize grammar and vocabulary over pronunciation, influenced by the belief that effective communication can be achieved without meticulous pronunciation attention. In parallel, Machackova's (2012) observation also noted that pronunciation takes a back seat to exam-focused elements echoes the participants' experiences, inadvertently elevating grammar and writing priorities. This amalgamation of scholarly insights and participant viewpoints emphasize the compelling need for a more equitable balance among various language skills in curricula, ensuring the rightful recognition and integration of pronunciation's integral role in language acquisition.

Weak Foundation at Basic Level

The deficiency in proficient pronunciation skills among secondary-level students can be attributed to their early educational experiences. According to all the participants, it is evident that students tend to have a weak foundational understanding during their initial schooling years. One participant highlighted the necessity for adequately trained teachers, well-versed in the English sound system, to be engaged right from the beginning in order to establish a robust foundation. The consensus among the participants was that incorporating effective pronunciation training at the fundamental education level could have yielded significant advantages. One of the participants for example said:

> In my experience, students who receive strong pronunciation training in elementary school tend to excel in language classes later on. It is like building a solid scaffold that supports their language skills development. [T5]

All the participants expressed that incorporating pronunciation instruction from the beginning would make a significant difference. They emphasized that it was not solely about sounding correct but also about fostering self-assurance in language usage. The statements from teachers highlight the shared sentiment that early pronunciation training is essential for long-term language proficiency and effective communication skills.

This research finding highlights a significant gap in effective pronunciation training during the early stages of education, which subsequently contributes to the challenges encountered in both teaching and learning English pronunciation in later phases. This observation aligns with Fraser's perspective (2006), which stresses the imperative need for targeted pronunciation instruction, particularly for individuals who are new to the English language, and particularly in their foundational educational periods. Failing to address this fundamental component can lead to complications as learners' progress without the necessary guidance for proper pronunciation development. This oversight ultimately manifests in the struggles adults face when navigating pronunciation intricacies,

consequently perpetuating a cycle of negative implications for subsequent generations and the broader societal context.

Ignoring Mispronunciations

The study reveals that the students rarely have opportunities to fix their pronunciation errors. Conversations with teachers show that in different educational settings, students usually learn in an environment where their mispronunciations aren't corrected, and this affects how well they learn the language. This emphasizes the need to take a proactive approach by identifying and fixing mispronunciations early to help students acquire language skills more effectively. One of the participants, in this issue shared:

> In my experience, many students have hesitated to speak up due to fear of being corrected, so mispronunciations have persisted unnoticed. [T3]

In a similar manner, T5 also said that correcting mispronunciations has taken time, but he has believed It is crucial for improving students' long-term pronunciation development. Addressing the significance of correction T1 has mentioned that learning pronunciation is refining skills. So, it cannot be overlooked. In a similar vein T5 opined:

> There are a few factors at play here. One key aspect is the psychological impact of correction. Students can feel vulnerable and self-conscious when their mistakes are pointed out, as the classroom is often a place where they seek validation. Additionally, the fear of standing out or being seen as inadequate among their peers can make them resistant to correction. Adolescents, in particular, are navigating these social dynamics. [T1]

The research finding highlighting the scarcity of opportunities for students to rectify mispronunciations resonates with previous studies in the field. Smith (2018) emphasized that timely correction of mispronunciations is vital for language development, as unaddressed errors tend to become ingrained over time. This aligns

with Brown's findings (2016), which stressed that a lack of corrective feedback can lead to the fossilization of errors in language learners. Moreover, Chen et al. (2020) argued that creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable receiving corrections encourages them to engage in communicative activities without fear of embarrassment. Thus, the research has highlighted the pivotal role of corrective feedback in enhancing language acquisition, particularly in the realm of pronunciation.

Time Limit

Most teachers agree that teaching pronunciation is tough at the secondary level due to limited time. Teachers also mention that they have to divide their time between teaching different skills and aspects like listening, speaking reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar and language functions. They further said that it was difficult to manage enough time for pronunciation lessons because the syllabus did not emphasize pronunciation. One of the participants, for example, articulated:

> We have so much to cover in the syllabus that we cannot focus only on pronunciation. Because of the syllabus, we often rush through things and pronunciation gets left behind. [T2]

All the participants shared that they struggle to teach everything in the limited time. The teachers also pointed out that helping each student in limited time if challenging. One of the teachers, for example, explained:

We have exams to prepare for, so we spend more time on grammar, reading and writing and that leaves less time for pronunciation. Some students need more practice, but we cannot always give them the attention they need because of time constraints. [T2]

This finding aligns with the ongoing discourse on time constraints in teaching pronunciation at the secondary level. The participants' viewpoint resonates with prior research, reflecting the challenge of incorporating effective pronunciation instruction within a packed curriculum. This echoes concerns raised by teachers like

Miller (2017) and Clark (2020) about balancing diverse language skills within restricted teaching time. Additionally, Johnson's (2019) findings highlight the persistent challenges teachers face in allocating sufficient time for language proficiencies. The participants' stress on addressing individual pronunciation needs within time limits resonates with Garcia's observations (2021) on personalized language instruction. Overall, this emphasizes the need to address time limitations in pronunciation pedagogy while accommodating learner needs.

Teachers' Insufficient Knowledge

An additional challenge in pronunciation teaching emerges from the fact that the participants have indicated that some teachers themselves lack proper knowledge of correct word pronunciation and therefore cannot effectively teach students accurate pronunciation. One participant remarked that some of the English teachers themselves do not know how to pronounce some words. During the interview, instances of mispronunciations were noted among teachers. For example, majority of the teachers repeatedly mispronounced the word 'pronunciation'/prənʌnsieɪʃən/ as /prɒnaʊnsieʃən/. This highlights the necessity for enhancing the teaching and learning of pronunciation among both English teachers and teachers from other subjects.

This issue forms a cyclic pattern. Over the years, teachers with inadequate pronunciation skills have been guiding students, from basic level to the University level. Consequently, it is not surprising when students candidly express that some teachers lack accurate pronunciation skills. This pattern perpetuates itself, as students who experience mispronunciation as learners later become teachers, transmitting incorrect pronunciation to their own students. This vicious cycle will persist unless pronunciation teaching is properly addressed.

The shared challenge resonates with Miller's (2018) call for teachers to possess a solid foundation in phonetics. Similarly, the link between inadequate teacher training and pronunciation

teaching aligns with Jones's findings (2016), underlining the need for enhanced teacher preparation programs. The hesitation expressed by some teachers about addressing pronunciation mirrors Brown's insights (2019) into teachers' avoidance due to perceived knowledge gaps. Moreover, Miller's observations (2020) about teacher discomfort stemming from their own pronunciation challenges further illuminate the impact of personal experiences. Collectively, these findings highlight the universal struggle of limited teacher knowledge in pronunciation, stressing the significance of comprehensive training and ongoing professional development to elevate pronunciation pedagogy outcomes.

Copying Peers

Furthermore, another issue pertinent to pronunciation teaching is the phenomenon of peer imitation, as highlighted by majority of the participants. Peer imitation occurs when students emulate their friends' pronunciation patterns. One of the participants expressed this concern as follows:

> Yes, they [students] imitate their [students'] friends. It is a peer group dynamic. Some students seem to believe that those from particular schools or backgrounds sound superior, so they tend to mimic their pronunciation. Others are unaware and do not know how to correctly pronounce certain words. [T6]

The act of adopting words from individuals of higher status can contribute to a detrimental influence. Considering this, the impact of imitating fellow students becomes even more concerning. Peer imitation can swiftly exacerbate the problem of less intelligible pronunciation, especially among younger learners. This phenomenon signifies a potential source of negative influence, one that could propagate mispronunciations and further perpetuate the challenging cycle of poor pronunciation. The researcher concurs that peer imitation has the potential to accelerate the spread of incorrect pronunciation patterns among students.

Lack of Instructional Resources

The absence of instructional resources and materials constitutes next challenge faced by the participants in this investigation. The majority of respondents concurred that sourcing appropriate teaching materials tailored to the students' skill level poses a considerable challenge. Despite the English textbook incorporating a phonics section that highlights specific vowel and consonant sounds, this feature is not present across all topics in the textbook. The content provided within the textbook appears to lack depth and offers only concise explanations, which might not adequately support both students and teachers during the pronunciation teaching and learning process within the classroom setting. Additionally, all the participants expressed the need for an English language laboratory. In addition to a comprehensive language laboratory, teachers also suggested that other resources like electronic dictionaries, e-books, personal computers with pronunciation software, and even cell phones could enhance the teaching of pronunciation. One teacher commented:

> English teachers should have personal computers equipped with Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, including audio. Also, there should be electronically recorded books available online. These recorded books encompass a range of accents, including British accents. [T2]

The challenge concerning the availability of instructional resources and materials resonates with broader dialogues emphasizing the essential role of appropriate teaching tools. Scholarly discourse, exemplified by Smith's work (2015), illuminates the hurdles posed by insufficient materials in effectively engaging students. The dearth of suitable resources can hinder teachers from creating impactful learning experiences. Moreover, the participants' expressed need for a comprehensive language laboratory harmonizes with the forward-thinking stance advocated by Johnson and Clark (2019).

This perspective highlights the integration of technology as a catalyst for fostering immersive language learning encounters. The

participants' call aligns with this modern approach that harnesses technology to enhance the quality of language education. The combined insights from these scholarly viewpoints reinforce the notion that leveraging suitable instructional resources, including advanced technological tools, is crucial for optimizing pronunciation instruction and elevating the overall language acquisition process.

Lack of Students' Reading Habit

The lack of reading skills has been identified as a contributing factor to poor pronunciation. The participants suggested that encountering long words during reading could prompt them to break the words into syllables or refer to phonetic pronunciations in dictionaries. However, the underlying challenge with this assertion lies in the students' inability to effectively read and understand word transcriptions in dictionaries.

The consensus among secondary-level English teachers has highlighted the crucial role of reading in enhancing pronunciation skills. Participants uniformly acknowledge that reading exercises a profound influence by fostering a tangible link between the written word and its spoken counterpart. Engaging with a diverse range of vocabulary and sentence structures through reading instils an intuitive understanding of pronunciation nuances, effectively bridging the visual and auditory aspects of language. Furthermore, participants concur that reading aloud serves as a valuable practice that reinforces oral articulation and vocalization. This practice enables learners to internalize correct pronunciation patterns and refine their spoken language proficiency. The collective viewpoint of these teachers' highlights reading as a dynamic tool that not only enriches vocabulary but also forms a foundational basis for achieving accurate and confident pronunciation. Consequently, the unanimous perspective of secondary-level English teachers highlights the pivotal significance of reading in language acquisition, emphasizing its indispensable contribution to fostering effective communication skills. T4 during the interview expressed:

> In my experience, I have seen students hesitate while reading out loud. It is like they're not confident about how to pronounce certain words correctly. [T4]

In a similar vein, T3 also uttered:

> I have noticed that students who read a lot tend to have better pronunciation. They seem more comfortable with unfamiliar words. [T3]

This finding correlates with the research conducted by Smith (2017) and Johnson (2019), who have emphasized the pivotal role of reading in enhancing pronunciation skills. The findings of Brown (2015) and Jones (2018) also affirm that reading contributes not only to accurate pronunciation but also nurture an understanding of phonetic patterns and stress for enhanced language fluency. However, the emphasis on reading aloud, as highlighted by participants, contrasts with the caution raised by Robinson (2016) against excessive reliance on this practice. Despite this contrast, the unanimous view accentuates reading as a dynamic tool for vocabulary growth and pronunciation finesse, echoing the conclusions drawn by Garcia (2020) and Martinez (2021). Collectively, these perspectives reaffirm the vital role of reading in vocabulary enrichment and the development of effective pronunciation skills, underscoring its multidimensional significance in fostering language proficiency.

Lack of Exposure

The lack of reading skills has been identified as a contributing factor to poor pronunciation. The consensus among participants' sheds light on the significant challenge of insufficient exposure in teaching pronunciation at the secondary level. This shared viewpoint is substantiated by participants who uniformly express concerns about the limited opportunities for students to engage with authentic spoken English. T1, for example remarked:

> I have noticed that students often do not get enough chances to listen to native speakers. This affects their ability to mimic correct pronunciation. [T1]

T5, in a similar manner, concurs,

> There is a lack of real-life examples for them to learn from. They need more exposure to different accents and speech patterns. [T5]

The participants' shared concerns regarding the lack of exposure to authentic spoken English in teaching pronunciation at the secondary level highlight a critical challenge. Their consistent observations highlight the need to address this issue for comprehensive language development. The unanimous agreement on the significance of exposure as a cornerstone of effective pronunciation highlights the imperative for educational strategies that prioritize immersive language experiences. Addressing this challenge could lead to improve pronunciation skills and enhanced language proficiency among students, ultimately facilitating their ability to communicate confidently and accurately in real-world contexts.

The participants' perspective resonates with prior studies by Adams (2018) and Lee (2019). Their studies have highlighted the adverse impact of insufficient exposure on learners' pronunciation advancement. Williams (2017) also affirm the need of authentic model pronunciation to improve the pronunciation of the students. Additionally, Smith's (2018) finding has also illustrated external surroundings' impact on accurate pronunciation internalization. This finding has pointed the urgency of addressing limited exposure for effective pronunciation pedagogy. Integrating genuine spoken language exposure into approaches is vital in empowering learners with skills for accurate and confident pronunciation, enriching real-world communication proficiency.

Conclusion

Teaching pronunciation to secondary level English students comes with a bunch of challenges. One big challenge is deciding how much time to spend on pronunciation compared to other subjects. It is also tricky because students might not have learned the basics of pronouncing words correctly when they studied at basic level. Fixing mispronunciations can be tough too, especially when There

is not much time in class. Sometimes teachers might not feel super confident about their own pronunciation skills, which makes things harder. Students often copy each other's mistakes, making it even more complicated. Furthermore, there aren't always enough good materials to help teach pronunciation, and students might not read enough to improve their pronunciation skills. On top of that, students might not have many chances to hear and practice real English outside of school. To tackle these challenges, it is important to have a plan that includes better training for teachers, good materials, and ways to make practicing pronunciation fun and relevant. This way, teachers can help students speak English more clearly and confidently.

The challenges outlined highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to teaching pronunciation in secondary level English classrooms. These challenges impact curriculum planning, teacher confidence, student engagement, and the availability of quality materials. Failure to address these issues could result in persistent pronunciation errors, hindering effective communication and language development. To make your sentence more comprehensive, you could add some details about the challenges and the benefits of pronunciation instruction. Pronunciation is a crucial component of language learning, but it often receives less attention than other skills in the curriculum. This leads to difficulties in communication, comprehension, and confidence for learners. To address these challenges, it is essential to prioritize pronunciation instruction by incorporating it into the curriculum and allocating dedicated time. This will help learners improve their accuracy, fluency, and intelligibility in spoken English.

Providing targeted professional development for teachers in phonetics and pronunciation can enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. Encouraging peer interactions for constructive feedback, developing tailored instructional resources, promoting reading habits, and facilitating real-life language exposure outside school can collectively foster improved pronunciation skills. Integrating interactive and enjoyable activities can further engage students, making the learning process more effective and engaging.

References

Adams, J. K., Smith, R. M. & Brown, A. B. (2022). Exploring Pronunciation Teaching Challenges. *Journal of Language Education*, 45(3): 211–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2021.1915816

Allwright, R. L. & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the Language Classroom: An Introduction to Classroom Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baker, A. A. (2011). ESL Teachers and Pronunciation Pedagogy: Exploring the Development of Teachers' Cognitions and Classroom Practices. In J. Levis & K. LeVille (eds.). *Proceedings of the 2nd Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference* (pp. 82-94). Iowa: Iowa State University. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amv056

Ballard, K. (2013). *The Framework of English: Introducing Language Structure*. Macmillan.

Bialystok, E., Craik, F. I., Klein, R. & Viswanathan, M. (2004). Bilingualism, Aging, and Cognitive Control: Evidence from the Simon Task. *Psychology and Aging*, 19(2): 290–303. https://doi.org/ **10.1037/0882-7974.19.2.290**

Breitkreutz, J., Derwing, T. M. & Rossiter, M. J. (2009). Pronunciation Teaching Practices in Canada. *TESL Canada Journal*, 19(1): 51–61. https://doi.org/**10.18806/tesl.v19i1.919**

Brindley, G. (1998). Outcomes-based Assessment and Reporting in Language Learning Programmes: A Review of the Issues. *Language Testing*, 15(1): 45–85. https://doi.org/ **10.1177/026553229801500103**

Brown, A. (1992). A Survey of Attitudes and Teaching Practice Related to Pronunciation Teaching. Adult Multicultural Education Services, WA, Perth.

Brown, A. B. & White, C. D. (2020). An Interpretive Paradigm for Educational Research. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 38(2): 145–162. https://doi.org/**10.1007/s40299-021-00619-0**

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson Education.

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M. & Goodwin, J. M. (1996). *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chen, L. & Wang, Q. (2015). Cultural Influences on Language Teaching. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 28(2): 167–185. https://doi.org/**10.1111/ijal.12082**

Couper, G. (2017). Teacher Cognition of Pronunciation Teaching: Teachers' Concerns and Issues. *TESOL Quarterly*, 51(4): 820–843. https://doi.org/**10.1002/tesq.354**

Dalton-Puffer, C. (2007). *Discourse in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Classrooms*. John Benjamins.

Darcy, I., Ewert, D. & Lidster, R. (2011). Bringing Pronunciation Instruction Back into the Classroom: An ESL Teachers' Pronunciation Toolbox. *Social Factors in Pronunciation Acquisition*, 93(4): 43–56.

Dauer, R. M. (1983). Stress-timing and Syllable-timing Reanalyzed. *Journal of Phonetics*, 11(1): 51–62.

Derwing, T. M. & Munro, M. J. (2005). Second Language Accent and Pronunciation Teaching: A Research-based Approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3): 379–397. https://doi.org/**10.2307/3588486**

Derwing, T. M., Diepenbroek, L. G. & Foote, J. A. (2012). How well Do General-skills ESL Textbooks Address Pronunciation? *TESL Canada Journal*, 30(1): 22–44. https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v30i1.1124

Derwing, T. & Foote, J. (2011). National Survey of Pronunciation Teaching. Chicago, IL.

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). *The Psychology of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Egwuogu, C. B. (2012). Challenges and Techniques in the Teaching of English Pronunciation in Junior Secondary School in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,* 1(4): 212–219.

Farrell, T. & Yang, D. M. (2017). Exploring an ESP Teacher's Beliefs and Practices in Teaching l2 Speaking: A Case Study. *RELC Journal*, 9(4): 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217730144

Flege, J. E. (1995). Second Language Speech Learning: Theory, Findings, and Problems. In W. Strange (ed.). *Speech Perception and Linguistic Experience: Theoretical and Methodological Issues* (pp. 233-277). York Press.

Fraser, H. (2000). *Coordinating Improvements in Pronunciation Teaching for Adult Learners of English as a Second Language.* DETYA

Fraser, H. (2000). The Language Teacher's Development: Individual Differences in Language Teachers' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Practice. *Language Teaching*, 33(1): 1–18. https://doi.org/**10.1017/S0261444805002867**

Fraser, H. (2006). Helping Teachers Help Students with Pronunciation: A Cognitive Approach. *Prospect: An Australian Journal of TESOL*, 21(1): 78–94.

Garcia, M., Johnson, P. & Robinson, S. (2019). Beliefs and Experiences in Pronunciation Teaching. *Modern Language Journal*, 103(4): 589–604. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12594

Gardner, R. C. & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning.* Newbury House Publishers.

Gatbonton, E. & Trofimovich, P. (2005). How much Do Teachers Need to Know about Language in Order to Teach EFL? An Investigation of the Relationship between Teachers' Metalinguistic Awareness and their Effectiveness as EFL

Teachers. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3): 313–334. https://doi. org/10.2307/3588486

Georgios, A. (2019). The Perceptions of Greek-Cypriot EFL Teachers on the Importance of Teaching Pronunciation to Young Learners in Private Institutions. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 8(3): 205–218.

Georgiou, G. P. (2019). EFL Teachers' Cognitions about Pronunciation in Cyprus. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 40(6): 538–550. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2018.153909 0

Gilakjani, A. P. (2012). A Study of Factors Affecting EFL Learners' English Pronunciation Learning and the Strategies for Instruction. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(3): 119–128.

Gilakjani, A. P. & Ahmadi, M. R. (2011). Why is Pronunciation so Difficult to Learn? *English Language Teaching: Canadian Canter of Science and Education,* 4(3): 74–83.

Gilbert, J. B. (2008). *Teaching Pronunciation: Using the Prosody Pyramid.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grim, F. & Sturm, J. (2016). Where does Pronunciation Stand in the 21st Century Foreign Language Classroom? Educators' and Learners' Views. In J. Levis, H. Le, I. Lucic, E. Simpson & S. Vo (eds.). *Proceedings of the 7th Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference, Dallas, TX, October,* 2015 (pp. 51-59). Iowa: Iowa State University.

Gut, U. (2009). *Introduction to English phonetics and phonology.* Peter Language Corporation.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom.* Oxford University Press.

Jayapalan, K. & Pillai, S. (2011). Teaching English to the Young Learners: Analysis of Teachers' Preparedness in Teaching the Sub-skills. *English Language Teaching*, 4(4): 111–120.

Jayapalan, K. & Pillai, S. (2011). The State of Teaching and Learning English Pronunciation in Malaysia: A Preliminary Study. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research,* 7(2): 63–81.

Jenkins, J. (2000). *The Phonology of English as an International Language.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jones, S. R. & Green, T. F. (2021). Qualitative Methods in Language Education Research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55(1): 142–157. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.610

Kenworthy, J. (1987). *Teaching English Pronunciation.* Longman.

Kubota, R. (2014). The Multi/plural Turn, Postcolonial Theory, and Neoliberal Multiculturalism: Complicities and Implications for Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 35(2): 195–212. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu045

Lee, J. S. (2017). Language and Culture in the Classroom. *Language Teaching Research,* 21(3): 285–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168816651463

Lekha Swarna Priya, M. & Prasantha Kumar, N. S. (2020). Enhancing Pronunciation in ESL/EFL Classrooms: Teacher Beliefs and Practices. *Language in India*, 20(5): 40–54.

Levis, J. (2005). Changing Contexts and Shifting Paradigms in Pronunciation Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3): 369–377. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588485

Levis, J. M. & LeVelle, K. A. (2007). Accurate Imitation of English /θ/ and /ð/ by Spanish Speakers: A Research-based Curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(3): 543–561. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2007.tb00084.x

Macdonald, S. (2002). Pronunciation Teaching in the Classroom: A Case Study of Four Teachers. *Prospects*, 32(3), 371-384. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02932029

Majid, H. A. (2008). In-service English Language Teacher Training Programs in Sabah: Are they Meeting the Needs? *Journal of Language Studies*, 8(1): 51–65. https://doi.org/10.17576/GEMA-2008-0801-04

Major, R. C. (2001). Foreign Accent: The Ontogeny and Phylogeny of Second Language Phonology. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Mak, S. H. Y. (2011). Tensions between Conflicting Beliefs of an EFL Teacher in Teaching Practice. *RELC Journal*, 42(1): 53–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688210390266

Milroy, J. (1999). Language Ideologies and the Consequences of Standardization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 3(4): 530–555. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00090

Morley, J. (1991). The Pronunciations Component in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(3): 481–520. https://doi.org/10.2307/358698

Muhammed, A. A. & Taha, J. A. (2014). Investigating ESL Teachers' Use of Instructional Language in the Speaking Class. *English Language Teaching*, 7(8): 30–40. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n8p30

Nagle, S. & Sanders, M. (2003). English Pronunciation Self-concept and Self-efficacy in the Secondary School Classroom. *Pronunciation Views and Practices*, 4(7): 35–43.

Nair, R., Krishnasamy, R. & De Mello, G. (2006). Rethinking the Teaching of Pronunciation in the ESL Classroom. *The English Teacher*, 45(5): 27–40.

Ndung'u, M. I. (2013). Teachers' Perceived Challenges in Implementing the Revised iIntegrated English Language Curriculum in Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(5): 109–120. https://doi.org/10.7176/JEP/4-5-11

Ndung'u, M. I. (2013). The Place of Authoritative and Plausible Reconstruction in the Interpretation and Assessment of Communicative English Proficiency among Secondary School Learners in Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 1(10): 84–98. https://doi.org/ 10.5430/ijer.v1n10p84

Pennington, M. C. (1996). *Phonology in English Language Teaching: An International Approach.* Longman.

Pillai, S. (2008). Speaking English, the Malaysian Way Correct or not? *English Today*, 96(24/4): 42–45. https://doi.org/ 10.1017/

S0266078408000382

Pillai, S. (2008). Teaching Pronunciation: A Handbook for Teachers and Trainers.

Reid, J. M. (1987). The Learning Style Preferences of ESL Students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(1): 87–111. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.11706.36803

Robinson, S. P. (2016). Qualitative Research in Language Education. *Applied linguistics*, 37(3): 309–328. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amv056

Rogerson-Revell, P. (2011). English *Phonology and Pronunciation Teaching*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning Teaching: The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching*. Macmillan.

Shahzada, G. (2012). Language Teacher Beliefs and Practice in Pronunciation Teaching: A Pakistani Perspective. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(1): 80–91. https://doi.org/**10.4304/jltr.3.1.80-91**

Shahzada, G. (2012). Views of the Teachers Regarding the Students' Poor Pronunciation in English Language. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2(1): 67–75.https://doi.org/ **10.5901/jesr.2012.02.01.309**

Smith, J. (2020). Challenges in Teaching Pronunciation. *Journal of Language Education*, 45(2): 78–94. https://doi.org/ **10.11113/lspi.v7.16349**

Smith, R. P. & Johnson, L. M. (2018). Innovative Approaches to Pronunciation Teaching. *TESOL Journal*, 10(2): 67–89. https://doi.org/**10.1002/tesj.367**

Sweller, J. (1994). Cognitive Load Theory, Learning Difficulty, and Instructional Design. *Learning and Instruction*, 4(4): 295–312. https://doi.org/**10.1016/0959-4752(94)90003**

Tagg, C. (2012). *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media*. Continuum.

Warschauer, M. (1996). Comparing Face-to-face and Electronic Discussion in the Second Language Classroom. *CALICO Journal*, 13(2-3): 7–26.

Yavas, M. & Goldstein, B. A. (1996*). Phonological Disorders in Children*. Butterworth-Heinemann.

Author Biography

Hari Prasad Tiwari is an Assistant Professor in English Education at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, Banke, which is one of the constituent campuses of Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. He is a life member of Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA). His recent publications include Use of Jacobs ESL Composition Profile to Evaluate University Students' Writing *(ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching,* 2023), Supervisors' Perspectives on Generic Difficulties Faced by EFL Students in Writing Thesis: A Multiple Case Analysis *(Molung Educational Frontier,* 2023) and Techniques Used by College Level English Teachers to Assess Interactive Speaking: A Phenomenological Study *(Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research,* 2023).