

# **Phonological Accuracy in the EFL Classroom: The Impact of Moroccan Teachers' Mispronunciations on Learner Development**

**Mr. Ali Wari<sup>1</sup>, Prof. Toufik El Ajraoui<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>EFL Teacher, English Department, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco

<sup>2</sup> University Professor, English Department, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco

## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the significant influence that Moroccan teachers' pronunciation can have on the language development of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates both qualitative observations and quantitative data to examine the consequences of teachers' phonetic inaccuracies on a sample population of 427 learners. The research methodology is carefully selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue, drawing on a combination of direct classroom observations, students' feedback, and linguistic assessments to paint a holistic picture of the phonological challenges faced by EFL learners. The qualitative phase involves systematic classroom observation and thematic analysis to identify patterns of mispronunciation and its effects on students. The quantitative phase employs descriptive statistics to measure the degree of impact of deliberate mispronunciations on learners' language proficiency levels, ranging from A1 to C2. The study reveals that despite access to technological resources for language learning, students still regard teachers as primary sources of knowledge, and teachers' mispronunciations significantly hinder students' language development. The findings indicate that these mispronunciations can lead to error fossilization among students, especially those at beginner levels. The study also examines the effects of mispronunciation on teachers' credibility and reputation, highlighting the importance of phonological accuracy in teaching. The paper concludes by addressing implications concerning the role of teachers as language models and the extent to which their mispronunciations can affect students' language development.

**Keywords:** Mispronunciation, teachers' credibility, EFL learners, language fossilization.

## **1. Introduction**

Most people notice your pronunciation when you speak English and this unquestionably underscores its significance. Simple syntax and simple vocabulary words can be used to convey your message; nevertheless, there is no such thing as simple pronunciation. If the pronunciation is poor, neither grammar nor vocabulary would compensate for it. Effective communication relies mainly on accurate and clear pronunciation. It serves as the bridge that connects ideas and words, making sure that ideas are communicated clearly and precisely. Correct pronunciation removes potential communication obstacles by fostering mutual comprehension between speakers and listeners. Moreover, it is essential for establishing influence, creating connections, projecting a more credible professional image, and

effectively communicating ideas in many contexts, including business settings, language study settings, cross-cultural contacts, and ordinary discussions. It improves one's ability to adjust to different cultures and gives people the confidence to express themselves freely. By valuing and improving pronunciation abilities, we foster successful communication and accept the rich language diversity that shapes our interconnected global community.

Given the crucial role that phonology plays in the learning of language and the development of literacy, teachers should be well-versed in it so that they do not end up transmitting false knowledge to their learners. Teachers themselves serve as language models for students. That is to say, if a teacher has correct pronunciation, students are more likely to learn and reproduce accurate sounds, words, and sentences. Incorrect pronunciation could lead to students picking up errors or struggling with comprehension. Phonologically aware teachers not only can effectively convey information, and ensure clarity in verbal instructions, explanations, and discussions, but they are also considered professional and credible. Consequently, it makes them more equipped to meet the needs of various students. They can fill in the phonological gaps between the instructional language and the students' native tongues, allowing for a seamless transfer to new phonetic patterns. By assisting learners in identifying syllables, rhymes, and word patterns, this understanding also aids in the growth of their vocabulary, which in turn improves their ability to comprehend language as a whole. Teachers who have a strong understanding of phonology may create customized lesson plans, choose the best teaching aids, and provide students with precise instructions to meet their individual phonemic needs. The ability to model accurate pronunciation, syntax, and intonation is provided by this awareness of the linguistic nuances.

Pronunciation; however, is still neglected in the majority of language classrooms. The lack of attention allotted to pronunciation is also reflected in the amount of research that deals with it. Hence, the primary focus of this study is to investigate the impact of teachers' incorrect pronunciation on the linguistic advancement of students. The foundation of this research rests on the notion that the erroneous pronunciation by teachers has an adverse influence on the progress of students' language skills. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to raise awareness among English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals in Morocco and educators of foreign languages in general regarding the significance of accurate pronunciation in facilitating students' English learning. The main impetus behind this study is to prompt Moroccan educators to re-evaluate their perspective on pronunciation, encouraging them to allocate greater focus toward refining their classroom speech. Another driving force behind the present paper is my genuine interest in Discourse and Applied Linguistics. Thus, the current study is an opportunity for us to deepen our understanding of discourse features with a particular focus on Moroccan teachers' pronunciation.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Pronunciation**

A narrow and restricted view of pronunciation regards it as a mere production of individual consonants and vowels of a language (Brown, 2000). Yates (2002 as cited in Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2016) added to the former definition of pronunciation "conveying meaning", which is the reason why sounds are produced. In the same way, Gilakjani (2016) defines pronunciation as the production of language sounds. He believes that it is learned by repeating the sounds and being corrected when one says words that do not match the sounds of the language. Pronunciation according to Paulston & Burder (1976) is the construction of a sound system that does not interfere with communication, either from the standpoint of the speakers or the

listeners. Richard & Schmidt (2002) put more emphasis on how the hearer perceives sounds than how a particular sound or sounds are created. Hornby (1987) sees it as the way in which language is spoken; the way in which a word is pronounced; the way a person speaks the words of language.

A broader view of pronunciation, on the other hand, regards it as all aspects of the oral production of consonant and vowel sounds as well as stress, rhythm, and intonation (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Setter & Jenkins, 2005). Kelly (2000) believes that proper pronunciation occurs when a speaker employs all of the same speech organs to create the sounds we have grown accustomed to hearing. Similarly, Kan and Ito (2020) view it as the ability to produce the sounds, intonation, and stress patterns of a language accurately and fluently. Bogach et al. (2021) define the term 'pronunciation' as the way in which sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation are produced and perceived in a particular language. It encompasses both segmental aspects, such as individual sounds and phonemes, as well as suprasegmental aspects, such as stress patterns, intonation contours, and rhythm. According to Dalton & Barbara (1994, p. 195), pronunciation is the production of significant sounds in two senses. First off, the sound is significant because it forms a key component of a given language's code. The use of sound to convey meaning in the context of use makes it crucial. Lado (2017, p. 27) claims that using a sound system when speaking and listening is what is meant by pronunciation. Here, Lado just discusses the process of pronouncing words as it occurs during speaking and listening; he makes no mention of how the sounds are created. Dalton in Hassan (2014) adds that pronunciation is the production of a major sound that is used as a component of a particular language's code and to achieve meaning in the context of use. To put it another way, pronunciation is the general manner a person utters a word or language.

Multiple studies targeted the issue of pronunciation such as William & Cooper (2021) who investigated the process of learning Welsh, a minority language, particularly for those who learnt it as adults. Their studies concluded that adults who learn a language and aim to sound like a native, do not usually achieve this goal. Their investigation also adds that there may be conflicts between traditional and new Welsh speakers and that it may be challenging for new Welsh speakers to integrate into communities where the language is spoken, particularly in places where there are few Welsh speakers. It implies that it is crucial to have channels of communication for both new and established speakers. Similarly, Kan and Ito (2020) went over the value of pronunciation in language learning, especially when acquiring Mandarin Chinese tones. Their research draws attention to the difficulties non-native speakers have learning correct pronunciation and raises the possibility that further advanced pronunciation training may not be necessary. Instead, it suggests the employment of perceptual training software aimed at enhancing learners' capacity for tonal recognition and classification. In regards to the significance of pronunciation, we have the investigation of Lee et al. (2018). Their work focuses on the significance of pronunciation in language learning and how it affects speech comprehension and intelligibility. A multilingual, multi-speaker Text-To-Speech (TTS) model's phoneme embeddings were examined in the study, and it was discovered that these embeddings accurately captured the relationship between pronunciations in various languages. This shows that the model learned how to pronounce phonemes in various languages similarly.

## **2.2 Mispronunciation**

According to Richard Nordquist (2019), mispronunciation is the act or habit of pronouncing a word in a way that is regarded as nonstandard, unconventional, or faulty. Sometimes people purposefully pronounce words and names incorrectly for comic or malicious purposes. Peng et al. (2022) define the term 'mispronunciation' as the incorrect or inaccurate pronunciation of words or sounds in a particular language. It is a common challenge faced by language learners, especially those learning a second language.

Mispronunciation can occur at the phonetic level, where individual sounds or phonemes are pronounced incorrectly, or at the prosodic level, where the stress, intonation, or rhythm of speech is incorrect. Calik et al. (2023) link the term to the Arabic language learning context and define it as the errors made by non-native speakers in pronouncing Arabic phonemes or letters because the muscles of the mouth of non-native speakers may not be able to accurately produce the nuances and sounds of the Arabic language, leading to mispronunciations.

The study of Calik et al. (2023) focuses on mispronunciation but not in terms of definitions only. They worked on the detection of mispronunciation, which is an important aspect of computer-aided language learning systems. This approach aims to improve language proficiency and pronunciation accuracy. Various machine learning algorithms and ensemble learning techniques are used to detect and classify mispronunciations in different languages, including Arabic. The proposed framework in the study focuses on detecting mispronunciations of Arabic phonemes using machine learning algorithms and ensemble learning techniques. The proposed method outperforms deep learning-based approaches in terms of performance and computational load. In regards to learning challenges, Plantinga et al. (2019) believe that mispronunciation is a common challenge that learners face as they acquire new languages. It can hinder effective communication and comprehension, and therefore, it is important to identify and address mispronunciations to improve language skills. In the study, mispronunciation detection and diagnosis are explored using automatic speech recognition (ASR) and deep learning models. The results of the experiments show that these techniques can effectively improve the performance of the models in identifying mispronunciations. Similarly Peng et al. (2022) also explain how mispronunciation is a common challenge faced by language learners, and it can hinder their oral proficiency. Mispronunciations can occur at both the segmental level (individual sounds) and the supra-segmental level (stress, intonation, rhythm). In the context of language learning, mispronunciation detection and diagnosis (MDD) techniques are used to provide learners with instant feedback on their pronunciation errors and help them improve their oral skills. These techniques can detect and diagnose mispronunciations by comparing the learner's pronunciation with the correct pronunciation, usually provided in the form of a reference text or transcription.

Yan and Chen (2021) added that mispronunciation can be detected and diagnosed using computer-assisted pronunciation training (CAPT) systems, which provide feedback and guidance to learners on their pronunciation skills. Pronunciation scores are used to assess the similarity of a learner's pronunciation to that of native speakers. Mispronunciations can be detected by comparing the learner's pronunciation to the canonical phone sequence of a given prompt. Mispronunciation detection and diagnosis can be performed using various methods, including confidence measures derived from automatic speech recognition (ASR), phonological rules, and recognition of articulatory features. Deep neural networks, such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and SincNet, have been used to learn complex representations directly from speech waveforms for mispronunciation detection and diagnosis. The performance of mispronunciation detection and diagnosis can be evaluated using metrics such as recall, precision, F-1 measure, and Diagnostic Accuracy Rate (DAR).

Uchihara et al. (2022) believe mispronunciation is linked to the inability to accurately produce the sounds and intonation patterns of a target language and it is characterized by heavily accented speech that is difficult for listeners to understand. Bad pronunciation can hinder effective communication and may result from insufficient exposure to spoken input and limited practice in producing the target language sounds. Pronunciation learning is influenced by the frequency of exposure to spoken word forms, with repeated

encounters promoting the development of accurate phonological representations. Cognateness, or the similarity between words in different languages, can also affect pronunciation learning, with cognates being easier to learn than noncognates. The study mentioned aimed to investigate the effects of repetition and cognateness on learners' recall and pronunciation of previously unknown L2 words.

The paper of Kheir et al. (2022) introduces a fine-grained data augmentation pipeline called SpeechBlender for generating mispronunciation errors in low-resource settings. SpeechBlender linearly interpolates raw input signals using different masks and mixing factors to modify different regions of a target phoneme. The proposed framework generates new training samples using only good pronunciation units, allowing for the generation of MD training data from any native/non-native speech datasets. The effectiveness of the SpeechBlender augmentation is evaluated using the Speechocean762 dataset, which is designed to assess the pronunciation quality of L2 learners. The results show that the SpeechBlender augmentation outperforms both text-based and GOP-based augmentation techniques, as well as a multi-task learning setup. The different masks used in the SpeechBlender are also compared, and it is found that the smooth blending masks create more practical variation in mispronunciation and accented phonemes compared to the Cut/Paste method.

### **2.3 Literature gap**

While the existing body of literature offers a thorough grasp of pronunciation and mispronunciation in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, the role of the teacher seems to be neglected in such a significant matter. Numerous studies have explored various methods to improve learners' pronunciation skills and have proposed tools to assist teachers in spotting and rectifying learners' mispronunciation issues. However, a conspicuous gap in the literature is the lack of focus on teachers' mispronunciation and its potential impacts.

The role of teachers in language learning is pivotal, as they are often seen as the primary source of the target language, especially in EFL contexts. Therefore, teachers' pronunciation errors could have a significant impact on learners' language development. Despite this, no study has in-depth explored the problem of teachers' pronunciation errors. Given the possible detrimental impact of teachers' pronunciation errors on students' language acquisition, this gap in the literature is alarming. Moreover, the impact of teachers' mispronunciation on their credibility remains unexplored. Teachers' credibility is crucial in the educational context, as it can influence students' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Teachers who mispronounce words may lose credibility because learners may start to doubt their language skills and teaching abilities. Yet, there are no insights into this problem offered by the existing literature.

Thus, this study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating how students' linguistic growth and teachers' credibility are impacted by teachers' mispronunciation. By doing this, it aspires to support the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the function of pronunciation in EFL teaching and learning.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research design**

The present paper involves a combination of the qualitative approach as well as the quantitative one, for it suits the purpose of this study, its objectives, and its questions. First, this study requires the collection of data through a systematic classroom observation over a relatively long period of time. Furthermore, to gauge the impact of teachers' mispronunciation on students' language development, numerical data is crucial, facilitating the inclusion of descriptive statistics.



The current investigation follows a sequence starting with a qualitative phase and then transitioning to a quantitative phase. This approach is specific to the exploratory sequential design within mixed-methods research. In this design, the qualitative phase informs and guides the subsequent quantitative analysis.

### **3.2 Research objectives**

The aforementioned research purpose will be achieved through the following research objectives:

- Drawing upon pre-existing gathered data consisting of commonly mispronounced words by English teachers who currently hold complete classroom responsibility.
- Exposing students to the previously mentioned data and closely observing its influence on their English language skills.

### **3.3 Research Questions**

To precisely define this study's path, the present paper seeks to respond to the following questions:

1. Are teachers still considered to be models of the target language?
2. To what extent does teachers' mispronunciation affect students' language development?
3. How does mispronunciation affect teachers?

### **3.4 Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses are generated from the research questions above:

- Teachers are no longer models of the target language.
- Teachers' mispronunciation does not affect students' language development.

### **3.5 Data collection: instruments and procedures**

This paper utilizes previously gathered data, situated below, that demonstrates words frequently mispronounced by teacher trainees. This data will be incorporated into the researcher's classroom discourse. The researcher intentionally and repetitively mispronounced the mentioned words for a month for the students to internalize them. Following this, students were given the word list to read at the end of each class, allocating 15 minutes per class until all words were covered. To prevent students from adopting the incorrect pronunciation, the words were then accurately pronounced. The researcher made observations, identified recurring patterns, and conducted thematic analysis. Subsequently, the qualitative data underwent a quantitative phase, describing the qualitative data using descriptive statistics.

Words	Pronunciation	Mispronunciation
1- Consider	/kən'sɪdə \$ -ət/	/kən'saɪdə \$ -ət/
2- Determine	/dɪ'tɜ:mɪn \$ -ɜ:r-/	/dɪ'tɜ:mɪn \$ -ɜ:r-/
3- Idea	/aɪ'diə/	/aɪ'di/
4- Choose	/tʃu:z/	/tʃu:z/
5- Close (adj.)	/klaʊs \$ klouz/	/klaʊz \$ klouz/
6- This/that	/ðɪs/ - /ðæt/	/ðɪs/ - /ðæt/
7- Think	/θɪŋk/	/tɪŋk/
8- Live	/lɪv/	/lɪv/
9- Support	/sə'pɔ:t \$ -ɔ:rt/	/sə'pɔ:t \$ -ɔ:rt/
10- Suggest	/sə'dʒest \$ sə'dʒest/	/sə'dʒest/
11- Should	/ʃəd; strong ʃud/	/ʃuld/
12- Would	/wʊd/	/wʊld/
13- Could	/kəd; strong kud/	/kuld/
14- Talk	/tɔ:k \$ tɔ:k/	/tɔ:lk/
15- Walk	/wɔ:k \$ wɔ:k/	/wɔ:lk/
16- Mustn't	/'masənt/	/'masənt/
17- Emphasis	/'emfəsɪs/	/'emfəsəz/
18- Knowledge	/'nɒlɪdʒ \$ 'nɒ:-/	/'nɒlɪdʒ/
19- Pronunciation	/prə'nansi'eɪʃən/	/prə'nansi'eɪʃən/
20- Dessert/Desert	/dɪ'zɜ:t \$ -ɜ:rt/ - /'dezət \$ -ət/	Mixed up.
21- Half	/hɑ:f \$ hæf/	/hɑ:lf/
22- Comfortable	/'kʌmfəbəl 'kʌmfət- \$ 'kʌmfərt-, 'kʌmf-/	/'kʌmfə:terbəl/
23- Iron	/'aɪən \$ 'aɪən/	/'aɪən/
24- Parent	/'peərənt \$ 'per-/	/'pə:rənt/
25- Listen	/'lɪsən/	/'lɪsən/
26- Raise / Rise	/reɪz/ - /raɪz/	Mixed up
27- Shape / Sheep / ship	/ʃeɪp/ - /ʃi:p/ - /ʃɪp/	Mixed up
28- Both / Boat	/bəʊθ \$ bəʊθ/ - /bəʊt \$ bəʊt/	Mixed up
29- Vague	/veɪg/	/vɑ:g/
30- Every	/'evri/	/'evəri/
31- Favourite	/'feɪvərət/	/'fə:vərət/
32- Point	/pɔɪnt/	/pɔ:wɪnt/
33- Probably	/'prɒbəbli \$ 'prɒ:-/	/'prɒbə:bli/
34- Rule/Role	/ru:l/ - /rɔ:l \$ rɔ:l/	Mixed up
35- Rude / Road	/ru:d/ - /rɔ:d \$ rɔ:d/	Mixed up
36- Interesting	/'ɪntərəstɪŋ/	/'ɪntərəstɪŋ/
37- Realize	/'ri:əlaɪz/	/'ri:lɪz/
38- Memory	/'meməri/	/'memɔ:ri/
39- Interpret	/mɪ'tɜ:prɪt \$ -ɜ:r-/	/mɪ:tɜ:prɪt/
40- Women	/'wɪmɪn/	/'wɪmɪn/
41- Develop	/dɪ'veləp/	/dɪvələp/
42- Clothes	/klaʊðz, klaʊz \$ klouðz, klouz/	/klaʊðz/
43- Peer / Pair	/pɪə \$ pɪr/ - /peə \$ per/	Mixed up
44- Does	/dəz; strong dɔ:z/	/d:z/

## 3.6 Data analysis procedures:

### 3.6.1 Qualitative phase

In this study, thematic analysis, as approached by (Braun and Clarke 2006), was used. These researchers consider "phases " of analysis that allow for a systematic way of seeing and processing qualitative information using "coding". The several phases of the thematic analysis used in the current research are described in the following:

**Data familiarization and generating initial codes:** This phase involves transcribing the qualitative data, reading and re-reading the data, and highlighting the significant and recurring notes. The highlighted observations formed initial codes from which themes are generated.

**Searching for themes across the data and reviewing them:** The cycle of reading and rereading the data was done multiple times to reduce the number of codes and classify them into discernible themes. The codes were subsequently evaluated and categorised into themes representing the effect of mispronunciation on students' target language.

**Producing the report:** the report, in this case, takes the form of a dissertation. Every theme was vividly discussed to answer the research questions.

### 3.6.2 Quantitative results

After analysing the qualitative phase, SPSS was used to conduct descriptive statistics following this path: Analyse → Descriptive statistics → Descriptives.

Quantitative results and discussion :

### 3.6.3 Descriptive statistics: placement test

**Descriptive Statistics**

MidS Ss	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students	314	1	314		
ENGLlevel A1	8			-A1	4,30
ENGLlevel -A1	306				1,1

**Descriptive Statistics**

HighS Ss	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students	129	1	129		
ENGLlevel A1	11			-A1	3,17
ENGLlevel -A1	118				1,3

**Descriptive Statistics**

University Ss	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students	427	1	427		
ENGLlevel A1	41				3,17
ENGLlevel -A1	16				2,3
ENGLlevel A2	23			B2	3,12
ENGLlevel B1	59				2,9
ENGLlevel B2	128				1,2
ENGLlevel C1	86				1,92
ENGLlevel C2	74				2,4

The tables presented in this section illustrate the outcomes derived from a placement test administered to middle school, high school, and university students. The results cover a spectrum from -A1 to C2, depending on the proficiency levels. The researcher employs the online platform "Altissia" for teaching at the university, this has facilitated the determination of the precise English proficiency levels of all his students.

### 3.6.4 Interpretation- Middle school students:

**N:** The variable "N," characterized by a minimum and maximum value, represents the overall count of students who participated in the test. Beneath it, the figures depict the number of students attaining specific scores based on their proficiency levels in English.

**The mean:** refers to the average score achieved by the students in question, specifically within the -A1 proficiency level in this instance. Most of these students are language beginners to say the least.

**Std. Deviation ( Standard Deviation):** it measures the degree of dispersion of data concerning the mean.



A low or small standard deviation suggests that the data is tightly clustered around the mean, while a high or large standard deviation indicates that the data is more widely spread out. When the standard deviation is close to zero, it signifies that data points are closely aligned with the mean, whereas a larger standard deviation implies that data points are more distant from the mean. In the context at hand, a low standard deviation, which is close to 1, would naturally be associated with the average score obtained (-A1). This indicates that the data values are closely clustered around the mean, reflecting the proximity of the scores to the average.

### 3.6.5 Interpretation - High School Students:

**Mean:** Refers to the mean score attained by common core students, which, in this case, is also - A1.

**Std. Deviation:** The interpretation provided above applies similarly in this context ([refer to Interpretation - Middle School students](#)).

### 3.6.6 Interpretation - University Students:

**Mean:** in relation to the target population, it refers to the average result achieved by the participants, which is in this case B2. Most of these students possess an upper-intermediate English according to *CEFR*.

**Std. Deviation:** The reason why the lowest standard deviation value (1.2) corresponds to the average score (B2) is twofold: firstly, because B2 represents the typical outcome achieved by these students, and secondly, because it is the level most commonly attained among all other levels.

## 4. Data Presentation and Interpretation: Descriptive Statistics - Degree of Impact

The tables below depict the extent to which the deliberate mispronunciation of previously introduced words affects the students' developed English language. In this section, the researcher uses DoI and that stands for “degree of Impact”.

Total number of middle school Ss	Number of students affected.	DoI percentage.
314	314	100%

Total number of High school Ss	Number of students affected.	DoI percentage.
129	117	90,69%

Total number of University Ss.	Number of students affected.	DoI percentage.
427	381	89%

### 4.1 Discussion

It appears that the majority of students, irrespective of their educational level (middle school, high school, university) or proficiency level, were influenced by the intentional mispronunciations made by the teacher. It is important to highlight that university students were specifically studied to demonstrate that proficiency level does not necessarily mitigate the impact of intentional mispronunciations. Interestingly, the only students who were not affected by the teacher's intentional mispronunciations were those who attained proficiency levels of C1 and C2. These levels are rarely achieved by high school and middle school students. Students at the A1 level who were not impacted by the mispronunciations were those who became aware of the researcher's intentions. This awareness occurred when other students informed them that the teacher was intentionally mispronouncing words for research purposes. Subsequently, the teacher

provided the correct pronunciation to these students.

## **5 Qualitative results**

### **5.1 Data Presentation and Interpretation: Thematic analysis**

The researcher diligently observed each class, taking comprehensive notes on relevant aspects to identify recurring patterns. This meticulous process ultimately facilitated the formation of two primary themes: teachers' reliability, credibility, and reputation, and fossilization. The observation was mainly based on noting down facial expression made by the students when he deliberately mispronounces a given word as well as the reports given by his informants at the university level. The observation primarily involved recording the facial expressions of students when the teacher intentionally mispronounced a word, along with feedback provided by informants at the university level

### **5.2 Discussion**

#### **5.2.1 Teachers' Reliability, Credibility and Reputation**

According to the researcher's informants (C1 and C2 students), my credibility suffered, and students began questioning my English proficiency, particularly after hearing that my language contained mistakes and that I was deemed unworthy of teaching them. The other students, ranging from A1 to B2 levels, started relying heavily on their phones to verify the phonological accuracy of my utterances. The situation escalated to the administration, which eventually clarified that I deliberately mispronounced words for research purposes. Once the students were informed about the research objectives, trust was restored, and they recognized my high competence and dedication to maintaining a positive reputation. I took the opportunity to caution them about encountering incompetent teachers who could negatively impact their language skills, advising them to attentively verify the phonological correctness of the words presented to avoid language fossilization.

For middle school and high school students who are beginners in English, my reliability and credibility remained unaffected because of their limited awareness of correct pronunciation. This scenario is quite ideal, for if I had high-achieving students in my class, my reputation would have been significantly impacted.

#### **5.2.2 Fossilization**

Due to the frequent deliberate mispronunciations I introduced, especially to absolute beginner English language learners, there was a discernible impact on fossilization. This necessitated a total of 90 minutes of corrective pronunciation practice (15 minutes at the end of each class for a total of 6 classes), which proved to be quite strenuous. This highlights the blind trust these students placed in me. Furthermore, this issue is a significant concern that all teachers should address, as these students may eventually become teachers themselves and potentially transfer these mistakes to their students. Even when students, as observed in this case study, were exposed to accurate pronunciation, addressing fossilization remains difficult. In many instances, students may not have the opportunity for correction, as teachers often perceive their own utterances as correct simply by virtue of their role.

## **6. Conclusion**

The comprehensive analysis of student experiences and data emphasizes the great influence teachers exert on the phonetic development of their students. Teachers' mispronunciation can unintentionally instill persistent errors in learners, particularly challenging to rectify as students advance in their language

studies. This effect is augmented for beginners who depend heavily on their teachers for accurate pronunciation cues. Without timely correction, these learners may internalize and sustain linguistic inaccuracies, complicating their English language journey.

The research also sheds light on the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students, with the latter holding their instructors in high esteem and expecting exemplary language skills. A teacher's recurrent pronunciation errors can undermine this respect and shake students' confidence in their own language abilities.

In conclusion, the findings of this study serve as a call for educators to prioritize phonetic precision in their teaching repertoire. Effective language instruction transcends the realms of grammar and vocabulary; it encompasses the responsibility of being an exemplary oral communicator. Teachers are encouraged to refine their pronunciation, thereby ensuring they equip their students with a solid foundation for English language proficiency. This commitment to phonological excellence is not merely an instructional obligation but a vital ingredient in nurturing confident and competent language users.

## 7. Implications

The implications of this study extend into multiple fields of educational practice and policy:

1. **Teacher Influence:** The significant role of teachers as primary linguistic models in the classroom cannot be overstressed. Their pronunciation directly shapes students' linguistic abilities, and consistent errors can lead to entrenched learning barriers, particularly in the acquisition of phonetic skills.
2. **Student Perception:** The authority and effectiveness of a language teacher are partly judged by their ability to pronounce words correctly. Teachers who struggle with pronunciation may unintentionally weaken their own effectiveness and the learning environment, potentially leading to decreased student engagement and confidence in the language learning process.
3. **Error Fossilization:** The study highlights the danger of pronunciation errors becoming deeply embedded in students' language use, especially for those in the early stages of language acquisition. This fossilization can be challenging to correct and may hinder students' future language proficiency.
4. **Phonological Awareness:** There is a clear need for teachers to develop an enthusiastic awareness of their own pronunciation patterns. Without this awareness, teachers may unknowingly promote errors that can negatively impact students' language development.
5. **Resource Utilization:** Despite the availability of technological aids for language learning, the study highlights the lasting significance of the teacher's role. Technology should complement, not replace, the need for teachers to provide accurate linguistic models.

## Recommendations

To address these implications, the following recommendations are put forward to improve language teaching and teacher preparation:

1. **Pronunciation Training:** Teacher education programs should prioritize pronunciation instruction, ensuring that all language teachers have a solid foundation in the sounds of English and effective techniques for teaching pronunciation.
2. **Continuous Professional Development:** Institutions should facilitate ongoing training and workshops focused on phonetics and phonology. This could include peer observation and coaching, where teachers can learn from colleagues with exemplary pronunciation skills.
3. **Pronunciation Assessment:** Regular, structured assessment of teachers' pronunciation should be

instituted. This could involve self-assessment tools, peer reviews, or even feedback from language experts, with the aim of providing constructive feedback and personalized development plans.

4. ***Student Feedback:*** Creating a classroom culture where students feel comfortable providing feedback on their teacher's pronunciation can be beneficial. This feedback should be managed in a way that is respectful and constructive, fostering a collaborative learning environment.
5. ***Use of Technology:*** Teachers should be encouraged to integrate technology effectively into their teaching practice. This could involve using apps that provide pronunciation models, software that gives instant feedback on pronunciation, or online platforms that allow for interactive pronunciation exercises. Teachers should be trained in selecting and utilizing these tools to improve their teaching practices.
6. ***Reflective Teaching:*** Teachers should be encouraged to adopt reflective teaching practices, where they regularly assess their own pronunciation, through recording and reviewing their speech. This reflection can help them identify specific areas for improvement and track their progress over time.
7. ***Awareness Raising:*** Educational leaders should initiate campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of accurate pronunciation in language teaching. These campaigns could highlight successful strategies and the positive outcomes associated with improved teacher pronunciation, and consequently motivating teachers and institutions to prioritize this aspect of language education.
8. ***Collaboration with Linguists:*** Language teachers could benefit from collaborations with linguists and phoneticians who can provide expert insights into pronunciation. Workshops or seminars led by these experts can offer teachers advanced knowledge and practical strategies for improving their pronunciation skills.
9. ***Mentoring Programs:*** Establishing mentoring programs where novice teachers are paired with experienced teachers with strong pronunciation skills can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and good practices. This peer mentoring can also provide a supportive network for continuous professional growth.
10. ***10-Curriculum Design:*** Language curricula should explicitly include pronunciation objectives and provide sufficient time and resources for teachers to address these goals. This ensures that pronunciation is not marginalized but is treated as an integral part of language proficiency.

Educational institutions and language instructors should strive to provide a more productive language learning environment by considering these suggestions. The ultimate objective is to improve students' overall language competency and confidence by providing them with the phonological competence required for clear and successful English communication.

### **Ethical Consideration**

In the context of the research on the impact of teachers' mispronunciation on students' language development, ethical considerations are thoroughly integrated into the study's framework, particularly given the dual role of the researcher as the teacher of the participants. The study is founded on the principles of informed consent, with participants fully briefed on the research aims and their involvement. Confidentiality is of paramount importance, with all data anonymized to safeguard participant identities. Deception is avoided, and any deliberate mispronunciation for research purposes is promptly disclosed and clarified to participants. To address the unintentional adoption of incorrect pronunciations, the teacher-researcher dedicates fifteen minutes of each session to correct any mispronunciations, ensuring issues are resolved before progressing with the classes. This proactive approach not only educates potential harm but

also reinforces the educational objectives of the study. The research is conducted with integrity, with findings reported transparently, and concludes with a debriefing session to discuss the outcomes and educational implications. Upholding participant autonomy, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to beneficence, the study aims to enrich the field of language education with ethical precision and valuable insights.

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