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ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PRONUNCIATION TEACHING STRATEGIES IN HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Teaching English pronunciation is not a new issue; however, it continues to play an essential role in English language teaching in non-English-speaking countries, particularly in Vietnam. This study was conducted to investigate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) high school teachers' perceptions and strategies regarding the teaching of English pronunciation in actual classroom settings. A qualitative research design was employed, using semi-structured interviews to explore the objectives of the study. Thirteen EFL teachers from four high schools in a province in the Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam voluntarily participated in the study and responded to the interview questions. The findings revealed that although the teachers recognized the importance of pronunciation instruction in helping students communicate naturally and intelligibly, their teaching strategies were implemented ineffectively both inside and outside the classroom. The teachers were aware of their students' difficulties in learning pronunciation, including anxiety, low motivation, and limited English proficiency. However, they lacked effective solutions to address these challenges.

Keywords: *English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, high school, perception, strategy, teaching pronunciation.*

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NHỮNG CHIẾN LƯỢC GIẢNG DẠY PHÁT ÂM CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH NHƯ MỘT NGOẠI NGỮ TẠI CÁC TRƯỜNG TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG

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Tóm tắt

Việc dạy phát âm tiếng Anh không phải là một vấn đề mới, nhưng vẫn giữ vai trò thiết yếu trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ ở các quốc gia không nói tiếng Anh, đặc biệt là tại Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm khảo sát nhận thức và các chiến lược giảng dạy phát âm tiếng Anh của giáo viên trung học phổ thông trong bối cảnh lớp học thực tế. Nghiên cứu được thiết kế theo hướng định tính với công cụ phỏng vấn nhằm khám phá các mục tiêu đã đề ra. Mười ba giáo viên tiếng Anh bậc trung học phổ thông từ bốn trường tại một tỉnh thuộc khu vực Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long, miền Nam Việt Nam, đã tự nguyện tham gia nghiên cứu và trả lời các câu hỏi phỏng vấn. Kết quả cho thấy, mặc dù giáo viên có nhận thức tích cực về tầm quan trọng của việc dạy phát âm nhằm giúp học sinh giao tiếp một cách tự nhiên và dễ hiểu, các chiến lược giảng dạy của họ lại được triển khai chưa hiệu quả cả trong và ngoài lớp học. Giáo viên nhận thức rõ những hạn chế của học sinh trong việc học phát âm, chẳng hạn như sự sợ hãi, thiếu động lực và trình độ tiếng Anh còn thấp. Tuy nhiên, họ chưa có những phương pháp cụ thể để giúp học sinh vượt qua các trở ngại này.

Từ khóa: *Chiến lược, giảng dạy phát âm, giáo viên tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ (EFL), nhận thức, trường trung học phổ thông.*

1. Introduction

Pronunciation is widely acknowledged as a core component of communicative competence in English language learning, as it enables learners to convey messages clearly and enhances their confidence in speaking (Celce-Murcia et al., 2025; Kochem, 2022; Uchida & Sugimoto, 2019). Numerous studies have so far explored English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perceptions and actual classroom practices regarding the teaching of English pronunciation across different educational contexts worldwide (e.g., Liu, 2020; Madzo, 2021; Reid & Mihal'ová, 2025; Umaroh, 2024). These studies have shown that although teachers generally hold positive beliefs about the importance of pronunciation instruction, the frequency of pronunciation teaching remains relatively limited due to time constraints, examination-oriented curricula, and insufficient training in pronunciation pedagogy. Previous research has also indicated that pronunciation instruction is often intuitive, unsystematic, and decontextualized (Reid & Mihal'ová, 2025). In the Vietnamese context, the importance of pronunciation is reinforced by national educational policy, particularly the 2018 General Education Curriculum (GEC) issued by the Ministry of Education and Training under Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT dated December 26, 2018, which emphasizes the development of communicative competence through the integration of language skills. Despite the growing interest in pronunciation teaching in recent years, a number of challenges persist, including phonetic disparities involving vowel contrasts, final consonants, and consonant clusters, as well as teachers' insufficient pedagogical knowledge (Nguyen & Newton, 2020; Tran & Nguyen, 2020; Vu, 2016a; Vu, 2024). Furthermore, pronunciation instruction is often marginalized in examination-oriented educational systems that prioritize grammar and reading comprehension. Large class sizes and limited access to technological resources also hinder the effective teaching of pronunciation (Harmer, 2015; Tran & Nguyen, 2020; Vu, 2016b).

In the Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam, teachers tend to rely on traditional techniques such as repetition drills and reading aloud activities (Tran & Nguyen, 2020). Furthermore, Bui and Nguyen (2022) identified noticeable gaps between teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices, including students' low motivation to practice pronunciation, teachers' limited repertoire of pronunciation teaching strategies, and the absence of an authentic English-speaking environment. These findings suggest that pronunciation instruction remains largely form-focused and is insufficiently integrated into communicative classroom activities. Still, relatively few studies have investigated pronunciation teaching at the high school level in this region. Therefore, this study aims to investigate both the pronunciation teaching strategies employed by English teachers across different lesson types under the 2018 GEC and teachers' perceptions of pronunciation teaching in classroom practice at high school in Dong Thap province. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

- 1) What are EFL teachers' perceptions of pronunciation teaching at high schools in Dong Thap province, Vietnam?
- 2) What pronunciation teaching strategies are employed by EFL high school teachers in Dong Thap province, Vietnam, across different lesson types?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Key Components of Teaching English Pronunciation

In English language teaching, pronunciation is not limited to the production of isolated sounds; rather, it is understood as a complex linguistic skill. Recent studies have highlighted that effective pronunciation development requires attention to both segmental features, such as consonants and vowels, and suprasegmental features, including stress, rhythm, and

intonation (Almusharraf, 2024). Segmental features involve the accurate production of individual sounds, whereas suprasegmental features influence overall fluency and play an important role across different levels of language proficiency (Winters & O'Brien, 2013). From a phonological perspective, consonant articulation can be described according to key dimensions such as voicing, place of articulation, and manner of articulation (Vocroix, 2021). Accurate consonant production enhances listeners' comprehension of second language (L2) speech, whereas difficulties with segmental contrasts may reduce comprehensibility (Saito, 2021). Vowels contribute to the clarity of spoken words and strongly influence how easily listeners interpret learners' intended meanings (Fazira et al., 2023). Intonation refers to variations in pitch across phrases and sentences, enabling listeners to interpret a speaker's meaning and communicative intentions (Chun, 2002; Wichmann, 2000). In addition, stress and rhythm shape the prominence and timing patterns of spoken English (Cantarutti & Szczepek Reed, 2021).

2.2. Teachers' Perceptions about Teaching Pronunciation in EFL Classrooms

Teachers' perceptions significantly influence the priority given to pronunciation instruction in EFL classrooms. Many EFL teachers perceive pronunciation as closely associated with learners' intelligibility, confidence, and ability to participate effectively in spoken communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 2025; Levis, 2005). Consequently, teachers' perceptions play an important role in shaping their pedagogical decisions and classroom practices. However, these perceptions may vary depending on teachers' professional backgrounds, teaching experience, and instructional contexts. Some teachers feel uncertain about teaching pronunciation due to a lack of formal training or clear pedagogical guidance (Nguyen & Newton, 2020), while others perceive pronunciation instruction as difficult to implement because of large class sizes, limited instructional time, and examination-oriented curricula. Such perceptions may reduce teachers' confidence and lead to inconsistent instructional practices in high school EFL classrooms (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Furthermore, teachers' instructional decisions regarding pronunciation are influenced by the types of lessons taught in EFL classrooms. Pronunciation is not addressed consistently across all lesson types, as teachers adjust their instructional focus according to lesson objectives and curriculum requirements. In some cases, teachers provide explicit pronunciation instruction and controlled practice activities, whereas in others, pronunciation is integrated implicitly into communicative tasks (Celce-Murcia et al., 2025; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005).

2.3. Common Strategies for Teaching Pronunciation in EFL Classrooms

In EFL classrooms, pronunciation teaching can be organized into five main groups: segmental-focused strategies, suprasegmental-focused strategies, perception-production strategies, technology-supported strategies, and feedback and correction strategies. First, segmental-focused strategies aim to develop learners' accuracy in producing English consonants and vowels, especially those sound contrasts that frequently reduce intelligibility. Typical classroom techniques include minimal-pair practice and controlled practice activities such as repetition to stabilize target sound production (Llompert & Reinisch, 2021). Next, suprasegmental-focused strategies focus on stress, rhythm, and intonation, which shape how natural and understandable learners' speech sounds in communication. Practice activities may include shadowing, where learners imitate stress, timing, and intonation patterns. Evidence shows that explicit teaching may improve comprehensibility, particularly when suprasegmental features are emphasized (Darcy & Rocca, 2022; Gordon & Darcy, 2016). Then, in perception-production strategies, learners need to discriminate L2 sounds before producing them in speech. Pronunciation learning often follows a sequence of listening → discrimination → repetition → production, supporting the development of phonological

representations (Mora & Mora-Plaza, 2023). In addition, technology-supported strategies provide learners with additional input, practice opportunities, and feedback (Thomson, 2018). Recent studies show that AI-supported tools can improve both segmental and suprasegmental production (Abdelhalim & Alsehibany, 2025; McCrocklin, 2019), as well as reduce accentedness and increase intelligibility and comprehensibility (Fathi et al., 2025; Mroz, 2020; Sun, 2023). Finally, feedback and correction strategies help learners notice inaccurate forms and develop more stable pronunciation habits. Self- and peer-assessment can raise learners' awareness and improve their pronunciation performance (Isbell & Lee, 2022; Strachan et al., 2019).

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study integrates two influential models in pronunciation pedagogy: the *Communicative Framework for Teaching English Pronunciation* by Celce-Murcia et al. (2025) and the *Six-Domain Model of Pronunciation Instruction* by Levis and Wu (2018). In addition to their popularity in pronunciation research, these models are chosen for their particular relevance to high school English teaching in Vietnam. While the framework proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. (2025) focuses on the pedagogical process of pronunciation teaching, describing what teachers do in the classroom, Levis and Wu's (2018) model explains the contextual factors that shape and constrain teachers' practices, addressing why teachers can or cannot implement certain instructional strategies. The integration of these two models allows the present study to examine pronunciation teaching strategies as they are shaped by teachers' perceptions and contextual conditions, and to explain how challenges arise during their implementation in classroom practice.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Participants

This study adopted a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of how high school English teachers in Dong Thap province, Vietnam, perceive pronunciation teaching and how these perceptions influence the selection, implementation, and adaptation of pronunciation teaching strategies across different lesson types. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate because it enables researchers to explore teachers' perceptions, decision-making processes, and context-dependent classroom practices, which are often difficult to capture through quantitative measures alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participants in this study consisted of thirteen high school English teachers in Dong Thap province, including ten teachers from Lap Vo 2 High School and three from other high schools. All participants were teaching Grades 10, 11, and 12 under the 2018 GEC. Among them, eleven were female and two were male. Twelve teachers held a bachelor's degree in English language teaching, while one held a master's degree in a related field. Their teaching experience varied considerably: six teachers had more than twenty years of teaching experience, five had more than ten years, and two had between five and ten years of experience.

3.2. Research Instruments and Data Collection

A semi-structured interview was used as the primary qualitative instrument to comprehensively investigate the research objectives. The tool enhanced both the reliability and the depth of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were designed to investigate teachers' perceptions, strategic decisions, implementation, assessment activities, and difficulties related to pronunciation teaching. The questions were guided by the literature review and the framework above. Each interview lasted 15 to 30 minutes, was

conducted in Vietnamese to allow teachers to respond naturally, was recorded with participants' permission, and did not include questions sent in advance, so that responses remained authentic and spontaneous. The interview environment was arranged to be quiet and free from disturbance.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

The data were fully transcribed before being used in qualitative content analysis within a theory-informed inductive approach. Analysis involved three phases. Firstly, interview transcripts were reviewed to identify initial codes related to perception, strategy use, assessment type, and classroom context. Secondly, these codes were organized under the five groups of pronunciation strategies. Finally, the emerging themes were refined and interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework to conclude.

3.4. Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure the reliability and scientific validity of the qualitative data, several strategies were employed. Firstly, content validity was established by designing the interview questions directly from the theoretical framework of the five pronunciation strategy groups presented above. Their development was further refined through consultations with the academic supervisor and experts in English language teaching, thereby enhancing the instrument's clarity, relevance, and consistency with the research objectives. Second, an audit trail was maintained throughout the study. All research materials, including audio recordings, interview transcripts, and coding systems, were systematically documented and securely stored. This transparent documentation enabled external verification and reinforced the credibility of the analytical process in accordance with established principles of scientific research.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. EFL High School Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Pronunciation

For the first question about the importance of teaching English pronunciation, all participants (13/13) agreed that it plays a crucial role in English communication. Most of them thought that clear and correct pronunciation helped students with listening and speaking skills and with communicating well with foreigners. However, T4 said that it was not the main priority because the content of English tests at the end of the semesters and the Vietnamese national high school graduation exam did not focus on pronunciation. Instead, students had to learn vocabulary and grammar to serve those tests and exams. Therefore, T4 just taught pronunciation at a basic level. Similarly, T9 indicated that the high school English syllabus on teaching pronunciation was limited; therefore, she could not teach it in depth or often. Besides, T8 recognized that she needed to improve her English pronunciation to model correct, clear pronunciation for students. According to T8, when teachers pronounced English words incorrectly, students would follow those ways.

When asked, "Which aspects of pronunciation are the most important to high school students?", over half of the informants (7/13) focused on intelligibility, stress, word stress, and intonation. They thought these helped convey precise information and the meanings of words to listeners. Three of them answered "stress" and "the ability to distinguish sounds" because students were often confused by homophones, confusing words, and heteronyms. When students were stressed or mispronounced words, listeners could not understand what they were saying, especially when they spoke too fast. The remaining three teachers stated that students pronounced the final sounds and words correctly, which was most important, because otherwise listeners would misunderstand the content of the conversation. Moreover, answering

about EFL teachers' aims for teaching pronunciation, nearly two-thirds of the teachers (e.g., T1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11) aimed to support students in being able to pronounce words correctly and clearly according to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and communicate naturally at a basic level instead of speaking as a native. More than one-third of the participants helped students enable intelligibility in common communication.

The next part is about difficulties in teaching pronunciation in the classroom. T1 and T10 said that the main problem was the diverse levels of students in one class; some of them did not concentrate on the lessons, which made her spend time correcting their incorrect pronunciation. In addition, due to the limited time, apart from pronunciation, there were many other tasks needed to teach (like T9). T2 claimed that many students were unfamiliar with the IPA from lower grades, and that large class sizes made it difficult for teachers to provide close supervision (as in T6). Time was limited, and language lessons were insufficient for in-depth study. There was a lack of pronunciation teaching aids (like T13). Furthermore, students lacked motivation due to limited opportunities for communication (like T13); they often prioritized vocabulary and grammar for exams (like T4). T3's and T7's students were afraid to speak and to pronounce incorrectly; therefore, they rarely practiced pronunciation. This left them without opportunities to improve their pronunciation. T5's students found it hard to remember the ways to pronounce IPA. T8 felt unconfident about her ability to pronounce. T11 indicated that students relied on automatic translation and pronunciation technologies, so they seldom practiced pronunciation actively. T12 said that her students spoke fast but incorrectly.

When asked about difficulties in providing feedback or assessment to students' pronunciation, 100 percent of teachers agreed that they met them. More specifically, T1 responded that some pairs of difficult sounds or stress made me look up the Online Oxford or Cambridge dictionary carefully before teaching them. T2 and T5 shared that she took the time to correct each student's pronunciation because of their poor pronunciation. According to T3, T10, and T12, the large size class made it hard for her to correct pronunciation for the whole class and to give feedback to every student (T9 and T11). T4 showed that her students did not pay attention to pronunciation, so they were rarely concerned with correct pronunciation. T6 said it took her time to listen to and give feedback on students' recordings. T7 found it hard to correct students' incorrect pronunciation without making them less confident. T8 was afraid that she would correct her students' pronunciation mistakes badly. T11 found it difficult to assess students' pronunciation in large classes. T13 said that students seldom practiced pronunciation outside of the classroom.

Regarding suggestions for support or pronunciation training courses for professional development, T1 thought that teachers needed to self-enhance their knowledge and teaching skills in pronunciation by listening to high-quality sources, namely software or online ones, to avoid mispronouncing sounds and students following the wrong pronunciation. T1, T2, T8, and T9 agreed that continuing pronunciation training courses every summer were necessary for EFL teachers. Meanwhile, T3, T6, and T10 wished to receive training in using technology to teach pronunciation, as digital apps can provide standard pronunciation models and support more effective practice. T4, T5, T12, and T13 needed simple, essential pronunciation materials that could be applied easily in the classroom. T7 and T13 suggested a training course about effective pronunciation correction techniques. Moreover, T11 needed standard assessment tools and training courses in pronunciation assessment.

4.1.2. EFL High School Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Pronunciation

In terms of teaching pronunciation activities, T1 shared, *"I usually follow a process of listening to a model → repeating → practicing pronunciation with specific words/phrases/sentences. Sometimes, I teach students basic IPA. When possible, I show*

students videos of native speakers or other reliable sources so they can listen to real voices. I also assign them homework, such as recording their pronunciation, listening back, and adjusting; I will listen to them and provide further corrections in class". T2 often introduced sounds first, showed pictures of the positions of the mouth and tongue to produce those, asked students to practice, and then corrected. T3 and T5 had the same process as T2's, but did not show pictures. T4 only taught students pronunciation when they encountered difficult words or pronounced them incorrectly. According to T4, this approach saved time and focused on students' real pronunciation mistakes. T6 and T11 used model videos to help students listen to native voices and observe the shape of their mouths. T7 and T12 first organized speaking activities, then observed and corrected students' pronunciation mistakes at the end of the lesson without interrupting the conversation. T8 and T13 let students listen to the audios to repeat. T9 only corrected students' pronunciation mistakes. T10 applied the process: 1) recognize sounds/pronunciation mistakes, 2) provide standard samples (e.g., videos, audios, digital apps, etc.), 3) practice pronunciation with instruction, 4) practice pronunciation in context communication, 5) feedback and self-correction. She added that students used technology apps, helping them access standard pronunciation sources and practice sounds many times.

For the second question about techniques or activities to help students improve their pronunciation, more than half of the teachers reported that they have students listen to audio or video samples, repeat them, and complete practice tasks from the textbook in the classroom. T1, T3, and T10 record their pronunciation at home. T1 thought this helped students identify their mistakes, and she focused only on correcting common mistakes in class. T4, T9, and T11 modeled sounds, and students repeated them. T5 let students practice pairs of easily confused sounds. This helped them clearly distinguish the differences between sounds. T7 utilized role-play for students to practice pronunciation in real situations. T10 and T11 also permitted students to use Artificial Intelligence, apps, and communicative activities with instruction. T12 organized groupwork activities for students to practice pronunciation in interactive environments.

When asked about the factors teachers focused on when teaching pronunciation, nearly half of the informants (6 of 13) emphasized stress and intonation to help their students speak naturally and be easily understood. Three of thirteen concentrated on single sounds, which were often pronounced the word wrongly, were a foundation for pronouncing the word exactly. T4 and T9 corrected students' final sounds because this was a common mistake and affected their listening comprehension. T1 emphasized sounds, stress, and word stress.

Via answering question 4 about which lessons were taught or integrated pronunciation, ten teachers were teaching this part in the Language lesson in each unit of the English textbook, since pronunciation was designed as one section in it. Besides, nine integrated pronunciations into the Speaking lesson, and five taught them in the Listening periods. Moreover, T10 and T11 instructed pronunciation in Reading and Writing lessons, while only T3 integrated it into the Getting Started lesson.

For question 5, "*Have you integrated practice pronunciation into listening and communicative tasks in all lessons?*", T1 said that she integrated some, but not much. During the speaking period, she mainly reminded and corrected students on pronouncing entire sentences correctly; during the listening period, she pointed out related pronunciation mistakes so that students could identify words as they listened. T2 often taught pronunciation at the pre-stage of lessons to warm the class before the whole stage. T3 and T11 designed it in discussions and role-play, which helped students practice pronunciation in real communicative situations. T4, T5, T8, T9, and T13 admitted that they rarely taught pronunciation due to time constraints

and the content of the English curriculum; therefore, they only corrected students' pronunciation mistakes when necessary. T6 asked students to follow videos or sample dialogues to practice pronunciation. T7 and T12 pointed out and corrected their mistakes while communicating. T10 often designed communicative activities and asked students to focus on stress and intonation. In Listening lessons, she asked students to analyze stress and linking words from the audio.

To answer question 6, *“Have you ever adjusted pronunciation teaching methods depending on students' background of English or classroom conditions?”*, seven teachers prioritized helping weak students pronounce popular words and sounds. Furthermore, for good students, T1 instructed them to practice sentence-level pronunciation, stress, and intonation, while T10 focused on linking words, fluency, and apps. Due to the limited time, the remaining five teachers only wrote students' common pronunciation errors on the board and corrected them for the whole class.

Regarding ways to observe and assess students' pronunciation levels during classroom activities, teachers (e.g., T2, T3, T4, T7, T9, T12, and T13) observed students' pronunciation while they performed speaking or reading tasks, took notes, and provided corrections. T1, T6, and T10 asked students to record their sound identifications and submit audio files to her. Then, T1 awarded marks on the formative assessment as encouragement; meanwhile, T10 and T11 also used a clear rubric for the Speaking test, with criteria for intelligibility, stress, intonation, and clarity. T5 asked them to read the vocabulary aloud to check their pronunciation. T8 corrected them directly and immediately.

Regarding how to recognize students' pronunciation improvement, T1 responded, *“Students speak more actively in communication, do the tests better, especially the Listening tests.”* T2 let students read previous sounds aloud in the Looking Back lesson. Besides, T2, T3, T7, T10, and T11 observed students' confidence levels and the time they took to take part in activities in classes to consider their progress. The six remaining teachers could see their students make fewer reading mistakes over time. This showed they were memorizing and refining their pronunciation.

Concerning whether teachers provided feedback on students' pronunciation performance, eight of thirteen teachers often let students finish speaking first, then corrected their pronunciation mistakes by modeling and repeating them, without interruption. T5, T9, and T13 corrected the students' wrong pronunciation immediately. T6 gave feedback to students after listening to their recording files. T10 said that she combined direct in-class feedback with detailed feedback from audio recordings that they submitted to her. She also encouraged them to identify their own mistakes before she corrected them.

Regarding whether students had opportunities to self- or peer-assess their pronunciation, T1 admitted that only good and very good students could give opinions on their friends' pronunciation, but it was hard for weaker students because they were not good at listening and distinguishing which words were pronounced correctly or incorrectly. According to the other six teachers, their students had few opportunities to provide feedback to one another; it was the teachers themselves who assessed their pronunciation because the students were too weak to identify their friends' pronunciation mistakes. T3, T7, and T12 asked students to give simple peer feedback to help them share their ideas and listen to each other, improving their awareness of pronunciation. T6 requested students to listen to their records repeatedly to self-adjust their pronunciation. T10 designed a clear rubric for students to practice self- and peer-feedback. T11 did the same as T10 but without a rubric.

4.2. Discussion

The above findings help to answer the two research questions. For the first question, all participants recognized the crucial role of pronunciation in English communication, which is consistent with previous studies (Bui & Nguyen, 2022; Liu, 2020; Umaroh, 2024). However, one participant noted that teaching pronunciation was not a main priority in the English high school curriculum in Vietnam because the content of end-of-semester English tests and the Vietnamese national high school graduation exam did not emphasize it. This echoed prior research by Liu (2020) and Umaroh (2024). This finding implies that examination-oriented educational contexts may influence teachers' priorities and their perceptions of the language components that are considered important in classroom teaching. Consequently, teaching pronunciation was often seen as a secondary component compared with grammar and vocabulary, which are more directly connected to examinations. Additionally, a small number of teachers expressed concerns about their own pronunciation, indicating a need for further professional development. Teachers' lack of confidence in their own pronunciation ability might have influenced their willingness to provide corrective feedback or implement more communicative pronunciation activities in class.

Regarding EFL high school teachers' perceptions of the most significant features of pronunciation for high school students, most participants emphasized intelligibility, stress, word stress, and intonation as key components for effective communication. They also highlighted students' difficulties in distinguishing similar sounds, particularly homophones and final consonants. This suggests that teachers recognized key pronunciation features and were aware of students' common learning problems. These results are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Celce-Murcia et al., 2025; Levis, 2005), which emphasize the importance of intelligibility and suprasegmental features in pronunciation teaching. Regarding instructional goals, all participants aimed to help students pronounce words clearly based on the IPA and communicate effectively at a basic level. This reflects a tendency to prioritize comprehensibility over native-like pronunciation, aligning with communicative approaches to pronunciation teaching. This orientation may reflect the practical communication needs of Vietnamese EFL learners, for whom intelligible communication is generally more feasible and pedagogically appropriate than native-like pronunciation.

The findings revealed several challenges that EFL high school teachers face when teaching pronunciation. These included time constraints, examination-oriented curricula, limited training in pronunciation pedagogy (e.g., Harmer, 2015; Liu, 2020; Umaroh, 2024; Vu, 2016b), large class sizes, and a lack of pronunciation teaching aids (Tran & Nguyen, 2020), as well as students' demotivation of pronunciation practice and limited opportunities for real communicative environment (Bui & Nguyen, 2022). Importantly, these contextual factors appeared to interact closely rather than operate independently. In particular, large class size and limited instructional time reduced opportunities for individualized pronunciation feedback and communicative pronunciation activities. At the same time, examination-oriented curricula encouraged teachers to prioritize teaching grammar and vocabulary, which may have further reduced students' motivation to practice pronunciation actively. However, some other findings differ from those of the present research, as mentioned above. First, students in one class had various levels of English background, which made it difficult and time-consuming for teachers to provide corrections. Second, some of the students lacked attention and confidence, were afraid of making mistakes, and depended on technological tools for pronunciation without sufficient practice. Students' fear of making mistakes may reflect the accuracy-oriented and teacher-centered learning culture commonly found in Vietnamese EFL classrooms, where learners are often concerned about negative evaluation from teachers or classmates. This anxiety may reduce students' willingness to participate in oral pronunciation activities, thereby limiting opportunities for meaningful pronunciation practice and improvement. Furthermore,

pronunciation activities were not sufficiently engaging to motivate students, and some learners found it difficult to remember IPA. In some cases, students spoke quickly but inaccurately, reflecting limited control of pronunciation features. These findings suggest that teachers did not have effective methods for teaching pronunciation or promoting their profession. Therefore, there is a need for more practical and communicative pronunciation teaching strategies that can engage learners more effectively and maintain pronunciation practice.

Additionally, teachers reported specific difficulties related to providing feedback and assessing students' pronunciation. In particular, some teachers lacked confidence in correcting complex sounds and stress patterns, which affected the quality of their feedback. Moreover, assessment practices were largely limited to general observation rather than systematic evaluation. Students also showed limited engagement in self- or peer-assessment and rarely practiced pronunciation independently outside the classroom. This may have reduced students' opportunities to develop self-monitoring skills and learner autonomy in pronunciation learning. Overall, these findings suggest that pronunciation assessment remained largely teacher-centered and that more effective feedback strategies are needed to support students' improvement.

The last part is to investigate teachers' views about professional development in this field. Most of them presented their opinions on continuing pronunciation training courses in the summer. In particular, many requested training in applying technology, digital apps, and quality assessment tools. In addition, a small number of teachers emphasized the importance of improving their own knowledge and skills in pronunciation through self-directed learning. These findings provide further insights into teachers' professional development needs in the context of pronunciation teaching. The strong demand for professional development indicates that many teachers recognized gaps in their own pedagogical knowledge and practical pronunciation teaching skills. Furthermore, teachers' interest in technology-related training reflects the increasingly important role of digital tools in contemporary pronunciation instruction and the importance of using such tools effectively in classroom practice.

For the second research question, the findings indicated that teachers employed a range of strategies to teach pronunciation, including repetition, modeling, communicative activities, and technology-supported practices. These strategies are consistent with previous studies, which highlight techniques such as recasts, perception–production sequences, and communicative pronunciation instruction (Madzo, 2021; Mora & Mora-Plaza, 2023; Sun, 2023). In practice, most teachers followed structured stages of pronunciation teaching, particularly the sequence of listening, discrimination, repetition, and communicative production, and assigned textbook-based exercises for practice. Some teachers integrated pronunciation into communicative activities through observation and correction, although this was not implemented consistently. In addition, some teachers encouraged students to record their pronunciation or use digital tools and applications for practice. These approaches are similar to those suggested in recent studies (Abdelhalim & Alsehibany, 2025; McCrocklin, 2019). However, the use of technology was mainly limited to practice support rather than promoting learner autonomy in pronunciation development. This may suggest that technological tools were often used as supplementary practice resources rather than as tools for developing independent pronunciation learning skills.

Findings on the pronunciation components taught in real classes showed that EFL high school teachers addressed stress, word stress, final sounds, single sounds, and intonation. However, instruction tended to emphasize surface-level features, with limited attention to the communicative functions of intonation, such as expressing attitudes, emotions, and discourse structure (Chun, 2002; Wichmann, 2000). In terms of implementation, pronunciation was

primarily taught or integrated into Language Focus, Speaking, and Listening lessons, while integrating into other lesson types remained limited. This suggests a gap between classroom practice and the requirements of the English curriculum in the 2018 GEC. Furthermore, pronunciation was not consistently integrated into communicative tasks. In many cases, teachers relied on correcting common errors rather than designing systematic pronunciation activities. This practice was partly influenced by the limited time and the examination-oriented education (Harmer, 2015; Vu, 2016b). These findings may indicate that pronunciation teaching in many classrooms is still focused more on accuracy-oriented correction than on communicative pronunciation use. As a result, students may have had fewer opportunities to develop pronunciation skills in real communicative contexts.

Regarding ways to assess students' pronunciation levels or progress, most teachers just observed, asked students to read aloud in class, or had students record their speech at home and submit the recordings. However, few teachers used structured assessment tools, such as rubrics, indicating they were not trained in formative assessment for pronunciation. As a result, students demonstrated limited ability to self-correct their pronunciation or comment on their friends' performances. Assessment practices, therefore, remained largely teacher-centered rather than learner-centered, giving students fewer opportunities to develop learner autonomy in pronunciation learning. This may reflect teachers' limited training in pronunciation assessment and learner-centered feedback practices.

Several notable findings emerged from this study. First, all participants demonstrated a common understanding of the purpose of pronunciation teaching, emphasizing accurate and intelligible communication at a basic level. Second, teachers showed awareness of students' pronunciation difficulties, including mixed proficiency levels, low engagement, and reliance on technological tools without sufficient practice. Third, the teachers have not integrated teaching and correcting pronunciation into all communicative tasks in every lesson of each unit, as required by the 2018 GEC. Fourth, although teachers understood students' limitations, they lacked clear strategies to address learners' anxiety and promote active participation in pronunciation practice. More importantly, limited attention was given to developing learner autonomy, as students were rarely guided to self-monitor or improve their pronunciation independently. This may be linked to teachers' limited training in pronunciation pedagogy, assessment design, and the effective use of digital tools. Overall, these findings provide important insights into pronunciation teaching practices in the Vietnamese high school context and contribute to the existing literature, especially in the local settings.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The qualitative findings of this study revealed that although EFL high school teachers held positive perceptions of pronunciation teaching and were aware of their students' weaknesses, their pronunciation teaching strategies in actual classroom practice did not align with their stated beliefs or with the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum (GEC) issued by the Ministry of Education and Training under Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT. Several contributing factors were identified, including time constraints, examination-oriented curricula, students' limited English proficiency, students' low levels of self-directed pronunciation practice and learner autonomy, as well as teachers' insufficient pedagogical knowledge and limited competence in fostering learner autonomy. To address these gaps, more professional development programs focusing on pronunciation teaching methodology, formative assessment practices, and the application of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools in pronunciation instruction should be provided to support teachers' professional growth. In the next phase of the research, the authors intend to continue investigating pronunciation teaching practices in actual classroom settings to gain deeper

insights into the issue. The study also aims to support EFL high school teachers through practical training courses and workshops related to pronunciation teaching.

6. Limitations

Despite these contributions, several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. *First*, the study relied primarily on interview data without incorporating classroom observations, which may have limited the depth of data triangulation. *Second*, the sample size was relatively small and consisted only of high school teachers in Dong Thap Province, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Future research could involve larger sample sizes and include classroom observations to provide deeper insights into pronunciation teaching practices in Vietnamese EFL classrooms.

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