

Learner Perceptions of L2 Pronunciation Instruction: A Comparative Study

Nguyen Anh Duc Dao*



Use your smartphone to scan this QR code and download this article

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand the perceptions of Vietnamese learners on potential learning difficulties and the role of teacher-related factors in English pronunciation learning. It compares the way more successful learners and their less successful counterparts view pronunciation instruction as well as the challenges they face while learning the L2 phonological system. In this mixed-methods study, 48 first-year English major students (26 strong and 22 weak) at a university in Vietnam were surveyed for their perceptions on learning problems and the role of instruction. Then, four strong learners and four weak ones were selected, using both human raters and a computer-aided rating scheme, to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The results show strong and weak learners differ in terms of the problems they encounter, their learning goals and language models, and their evaluation of the teaching focus and techniques. Several important implications were made regarding the learning goals, the status of non-native teachers and the discrepancy between learner perception and teacher cognition of pronunciation instruction.

Key words: L2 pronunciation instruction, learner perception, good language learners

1 INTRODUCTION

It is beyond dispute that developing good pronunciation is crucial to successful L2 learning (Dickerson, 2019; Sugimoto & Uchida, 2018; Yates, 2017)¹⁻³. However, until recently, compared with other fields of second language acquisition (SLA), not much has been understood about how L2 pronunciation can be taught and learnt effectively, and more importantly, learners' perspectives on L2 pronunciation related issues still have considerably low visibility in research. The current research aimed to identify what stronger and weaker Vietnamese learners perceive to be their learning difficulties as well as to understand how these two groups of learners evaluate English pronunciation instruction. The instruction investigated in the study involves the learning goals, the language models available to the students, the teaching focus, and the techniques used by the teacher. In a context where the learners are at the same age, speak the same L1, possess a relatively similar L2 proficiency, and receive the same instruction, there must be some other factors that might contribute to the different levels of success in English pronunciation learning. This insightful understanding is expected to bring pronunciation instruction closer to learners' needs.

26 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the study addresses the following two research questions:

1. What do strong and weak learners view as their difficulties in learning English pronunciation? 29
2. How do these two groups of learners perceive the pronunciation instruction provided to them in class? 30-31-32-33

LITERATURE REVIEW 34

Potential difficulties in learning English pronunciation 35-36

According to Isaacs and Trofimovich (2017), pronunciation encompasses segmental features (individual sounds) and supra-segmental features (stress, rhythm and intonation). Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011)⁴ claim that many second language learners have major difficulties with pronunciation even after a long time of learning the language. Researchers and teachers have attempted to predict and analyse areas of difficulty utilizing contrastive analysis or error analysis so that appropriate remedies can be made, and learning can be facilitated. From a relatively old-fashioned perspective, Hockett (1950) acknowledges two sources of learning difficulty: the habits of pronouncing L1 sounds and the habits of hearing. The former, to some extent, reflects the role of L1 transfer while the latter recognizes the importance of listening skill – perception - in L2 pronunciation learning.

More recent researchers have identified other areas where learners may encounter problems. Cenoz and

International University – VNU-HCM, Vietnam

Correspondence

Nguyen Anh Duc Dao, International University – VNU-HCM, Vietnam
Email: dnaduc@hcmiu.edu.vn

History

- Received:
- Accepted:
- Published Online:

DOI :



Copyright

© VNUHCM Press. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.



Cite this article : Dao N A D. Learner Perceptions of L2 Pronunciation Instruction: A Comparative Study. *Sci. Tech. Dev. J.* 2025; 26(SI):1-12.

Lecumberri (1999) claim that learners also make errors when they apply communication strategies such as overgeneralization or approximation. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011)⁴ views the issue from a cognitive perspective, explaining that L2 learners have problems because they need to reconceptualize the patterns they have internalized for the L1 sound system, rearranging them or even forming new categories for the L2 system.

As regards which component of the phonological system – segmentals or suprasegmentals – may cause more trouble for learners, Derwing and Rossiter (2002)⁵ claim that little research has been dedicated to finding out what learners perceive to be difficult in learning or what they believe to be the best ways to overcome the hindrances. To fill the gap, they interviewed 100 students about the areas of difficulty in learning English pronunciation and found that the vast majority of the problems identified by the respondents were segmental.

Some researchers have studied potential areas of difficulty for specific groups of learners. For example, several studies have been conducted on common problems Vietnamese learners of English face in learning pronunciation. Those include omission of sounds (Ha, 2005)⁶, shortening of sounds and distinction of long and short vowels (Nguyen, 1998)⁷. Tran (2019)⁸ reported the same error types in her study on EFL students at a university – omission of final sounds and mispronunciation of vowels. She also saw her students struggling with consonant clusters – one of the most common error types found among Vietnamese learners. Sharing the same research interest, Tran and Nguyen (2022)⁹ employed a pronunciation test to investigate how 39 university EFL learners pronounced this feature. The results showed that the types of error depended on the types of clusters and there was a tendency to simplify the complex clusters by deleting one or more consonants in the group.

Learner perceptions of L2 pronunciation instruction

In his study, Alghazo (2015)¹⁰ reported that the students were dissatisfied with both the amount of instruction given and the balance of features covered. Although these students were at a low proficiency level (under the intermediate level, as mentioned by the author), they seemed to know clearly what worked and what did not work for them in terms of course design, teaching styles and language of instruction. Hence, their perspectives are indeed helpful in determining the teaching approach.

In 2004¹¹, Pardo conducted a comparison between teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the impact of pronunciation teaching and found that while many teachers were unsure of the effectiveness of instruction, the learners tended to consider it very beneficial. To add to this, Henrichsen and Stephens (2015)¹² reported that even though there was a lack of progress in their performance, the learners still found instruction beneficial in terms of the increased awareness, heightened confidence, improved listening skills, and gains in pronunciation learning strategies. They appreciated the benefits of instruction that are likely to extend beyond the end of the course: their confidence, self-awareness, motivation, and strategies for continuing improvement. These are the key to success in L2 pronunciation learning in the long term.

Teacher-related factors and their effects on L2 pronunciation learning

Learning goals

According to Crystal (2012)¹³, approximately one-fourth of the world's population can use English with only a small proportion of them being native speakers. Ketabi (2015)¹⁴, Levis (2005)¹⁵, Moghaddam (2012)¹⁶ and Setter (2008)¹⁷ claimed that in an age when English functions as the basic channel of international communication, native-like pronunciation seems to be unrealistic, unnecessary, and undesirable. Therefore, the current goal in pronunciation instruction should be "intelligibility", or "acceptable pronunciation" (Gilakjani, 2012)¹⁸. Murphy (2014)¹⁹ even added that it is unfair and unethical for teachers to make their learners believe that they will ever be able to achieve such a goal.

Pronunciation models

There are several reasons why native speakers should not be considered as the only models for pronunciation teaching: the need of practical knowledge of both L1 and L2 phonetics (Walker, 2001)²⁰, the intelligible nature of many English varieties (Jenkins, 2000)²¹, the expected preparation to teach students at various language levels (Moszynska, 2007, as cited in Setter, 2008)¹⁷, and the popularity of non-native English language teachers (Miller, 2009)²².

There are also good reasons why non-native teachers of English should be included as models for pronunciation instruction: the presence of more aspirational, accessible and relevant models to learners' needs (Murphy, 2014)¹⁹ and the ability to support learners using their knowledge of both L1 and L2 phonological systems and their own experience in

157 learning (Moghaddam et al., 2012)¹⁶. Recently, Levis,
 158 Sonsaat, Link, and Barriuso (2016)²³ conducted a
 159 study on how native and nonnative teachers affect L2
 160 learners' performance. The results postulated that in-
 161 struction on pronunciation skills is more dependent
 162 on knowledgeable teaching practices than on native-
 163 ness.

164 **Teaching focus**

165 Until recently, there has been a long-standing debate
 166 over which should be taught in the pronunciation
 167 class, segmentals or suprasegmentals. In fact, find-
 168 ings from research on this controversy are divided,
 169 with some supporting the teaching of segmentals,
 170 while others advocating instruction on suprasegman-
 171 tals. Since the beginning of the new millennium, there
 172 has been a more balanced view of the issue (Ketabi
 173 & Saeb, 2015)¹⁴ when it is acknowledged that both
 174 segmental and suprasegmental features can harm in-
 175 telligibility. The question now is no longer whether
 176 to teach segmentals or suprasegmentals, rather, what
 177 features to teach so that learners can communicate ef-
 178 fectively (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Levis, 2005; Moghad-
 179 dam et al., 2012)¹⁴⁻¹⁶.

180 **Teaching techniques**

181 Pronunciation teaching techniques can be classified
 182 into more traditional categories (Celce-Murcia et al.,
 183 2010)²⁴ and more innovative ones (Rogerson-Revell,
 184 2011)²⁵, both of which can be used for teaching dif-
 185 ferent aspects of pronunciation such as sounds, sylla-
 186 bles, rhythm, connected speech, and intonation. Lear-
 187 (2011)²⁶ admitted that "there is a significant dispar-
 188 ity between learner and teacher beliefs about the use
 189 of language learning activities" (p.131), but while a
 190 large body of research has been done from the point of
 191 view of the teachers, learners have rarely been asked
 192 for their opinions about what they find useful or what
 193 they often use after class for further practice. For ex-
 194 ample, the Pronunciation in Second Language Learn-
 195 ing & Teaching Annual Conferences have taken place
 196 since 2009, producing nearly 150 articles published
 197 in the conference proceedings (Levis et al., 2016)²⁷.
 198 Among those, only about a dozen were dedicated to
 199 the learner's perspective on L2 pronunciation instruc-
 200 tion.

201 **Methodology**

202 **Design**

203 A mixed-method research design was employed, in-
 204 tegrating questionnaire surveys and semi-structured

interviews. In the quantitative phase, 48 first-year En- 205
 glish major students (22 strong learners and 26 weak 206
 ones) at a university in Vietnam were surveyed for 207
 their perspectives on pronunciation learning prob- 208
 lems and the role of instruction. Then, in the qualita- 209
 tive phase, four successful learners of pronunciation 210
 and four others who were struggling in their study 211
 were carefully selected to participate in the semi- 212
 structured interviews. 213

214 **Participants**

215 The population of the study included 167 first-year 215
 English majors at a university in Vietnam. At the 216
 time of the study, they were enrolled in a compul- 217
 sory pronunciation course. In the quantitative phase, 218
 the researcher employed intensity sampling (Ary et 219
 al., 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)^{28,29} to recruit 220
 the participants. Based on the results of the pronun- 221
 ciation course's mid-term test supplied by the faculty, 222
 22 students with the highest scores ($\geq 8.0/10$) and 26 223
 others with the lowest scores ($< 5.0/10$) were asked to 224
 complete a questionnaire. The numbers of strong and 225
 weak students were unequal as a result of the students' 226
 performances on the mid-term test. Then, criterion 227
 sampling was utilized to select the interviewees for the 228
 qualitative phase. Invitations were sent to all 48 learn- 229
 ers, but only 24 of them (15 strong and 9 weak) agreed 230
 to join. More strong students were willing to continue 231
 their participation in the study than the weak ones, 232
 possibly because they found it more comfortable talk- 233
 ing about their learning progress and achievements. 234
 They were asked to record their voices while working 235
 on some pronunciation tasks and the recordings were 236
 evaluated by both a computer-aided system and human 237
 raters. The procedure is described below. 238

239 First, the participants' pronunciation was assessed 239
 through a computer-aided rating system using both 240
 ASR technology and acoustic analysis. They were 241
 recorded reading aloud a diagnostic passage (Prator 242
 & Robinett, 1985)³⁰ and 12 sentences (For a copy of 243
 these materials, see the Appendix 1). The passage 244
 was used mainly for the assessment of segmental fea- 245
 tures. The recordings were filtered to remove the noise 246
 and then played to Dictation – Online Speech Recog- 247
 nition (<https://dictation.io/>), a computer application 248
 that internally uses the built-in speech recognition en- 249
 gine of Google Chrome to transform one's voice into 250
 digital text. To assess the students' performances on 251
 supra-segmentals, the pitch contours of the recorded 252
 12 sentences were analysed using PRAAT, a computer 253
 software package for the scientific analysis of speech 254
 in phonetics. These pitch contours were then rated 255

256 against those of native models. Moreover, to ensure
 257 the reliability of the scores given, this part was marked
 258 by two raters and the results were discussed before the
 259 final scores could be decided.

260 Second, the participants were asked to respond to
 261 some questions (See Appendix 2 for examples of the
 262 questions). After that, their recordings were rated by
 263 two native speaker (NS) and one non-native speaker
 264 (NNS) teachers of English. Inter-rater consistency
 265 was measured using Cohen's Kappa coefficient. The
 266 average pairwise percent agreement for the 24 partic-
 267 ipants' performance was 83.3% while the average pair-
 268 wise Cohen's Kappa was .61, which is considered to be
 269 substantial (Landis & Koch, 1977)³¹.

270 The human raters' opinions and the results produced
 271 by the computer-aided rating system, were compared
 272 and then combined. Finally, the students in each
 273 group were ranked according to their total scores,
 274 and the interviewees were selected based on that order,
 275 starting from the highest for the strong learners'
 276 group and the lowest for the weak learners' group.
 277 Eventually, the number of interviews stopped at eight,
 278 with four strong and four weak learners, whose per-
 279 formances remained consistent throughout. The sam-
 280 pling procedure is summarized in Figure 1.

281 **Instruments**

282 There were three parts in the questionnaire: the first
 283 one addressed the difficulties that the surveyed stu-
 284 dents encountered during the pronunciation course
 285 they were attending, the second aimed to investigate
 286 their perceptions of the instruction they received dur-
 287 ing the course, and the last one helped to collect de-
 288 mographic information on the participants.

289 The semi-structured interviews were used as an in-
 290 strument for the collection of qualitative data. There
 291 were two parts in the protocol, with the first one fur-
 292 ther exploring the causes of L2 pronunciation learn-
 293 ing difficulties and the second one devoted to gaining
 294 better insights into the impact of pronunciation in-
 295 struction on the learning process. (For a copy of the
 296 questionnaire, see Appendix 3)

297 **RESULTS**

298 **Potential learning difficulties**

299 There are eight items in this subsection of the sur-
 300 vey, with four related to segmentals and the other four
 301 concerning suprasegmentals. The participants were
 302 asked to rate the difficulty level in learning these fea-
 303 tures on a scale from 1 (Easy) to 5 (Difficult). The
 304 results show that both strong and weak learners ap-
 305 peared to encounter the same problems in learning,

306 the biggest three of which are intonation, sentence
 307 stress and consonant clusters. See Table 1 below for
 308 more detailed statistics.

309 In the interviews, the researcher asked the intervieu-
 310 wees to explain why they found these features dif-
 311 ficult to learn. Remarkably, both strong and weak
 312 learners complained about pronunciation instruction
 313 at high school, saying that it was either hardly taught
 314 or taught in ineffective ways. For example, Weak
 315 Learner 2 gave some detailed description of how she
 316 was taught to produce intonation and consonant clus-
 317 ters at high school:

318 *The teacher did not give much practice. If there was*
 319 *some, then she did not correct our intonation. She said*
 320 *just to say it correctly, just repeat it, just say it, as long*
 321 *as it is clear enough to hear, then that's it.*

322 *... In the past, I... in general, I just listened to however*
 323 *the teacher said. She did not analyze this, like there are*
 324 *3 sounds, for example. She just said "scream", then I just*
 325 *repeated after her. (W2)*

326 **Effects of pronunciation instruction on learning**

328 **Learning goals**

329 The six items in this section of the questionnaire were
 330 aimed at determining which of the two goals in learn-
 331 ing English pronunciation – nativeness versus intel-
 332 ligibility – was more common among these learners
 333 (Q9, Q11, & Q13) and the effect of the teacher on such
 334 a goal (Q10, Q12, & Q14). If a participant is uncer-
 335 tain about any item, he or she can opt for *Don't Know*
 336 (*D/K*) instead of *Yes* or *No*. A comparison between
 337 the results of the strong and weak learners' groups has
 338 led to two remarkable differences, as shown in Table 2.
 339 First, more learners in the former group than in the
 340 latter group aimed at nativeness (Q9: 77.3% vs 61.5%
 341 and Q13: 77.3% vs 69.2%). Second, the weak learners
 342 tended to be more heavily affected by their teachers
 343 than their counterparts in aiming to sound native-like
 344 (Q10: 69.2% vs 54.5%).

345 When the two groups of interviewees are compared,
 346 two differences, though not very obvious, were seen.
 347 First, while all the strong learners insisted on native-
 348 ness as their goal, Weak Learner 4 admitted that de-
 349 spite a preference for a native accent, she knew it was
 350 impossible to achieve it, and so was only aiming at be-
 351 ing understood by other people. Second, the strong
 352 learners gave a variety of reasons for their answers,
 353 which are quite personal and unique, such as having a
 354 good feeling when speaking like native people (S3), or
 355 wanting to be like their idols, who speak English with
 356 a native-like accent (S4). Whereas, the weak learners

Table 1: Potential learning difficulties – Means and Standard Deviations

		Suprasegmentals															
Segmentals		Vowels		Cons.		Cons. clusters		Final sounds		Word stress		Sent. stress		Inton.		Linking	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Strong		2.64	1.093	2.68	.796	3.23	1.445	2.95	1.046	2.77	1.541	3.64	1.255	3.64	1.560	2.68	1.171
Weak		2.58	1.102	3.08	1.171	3.65	.846	3.23	1.070	2.69	1.011	3.50	.906	3.92	.935	3.23	1.142

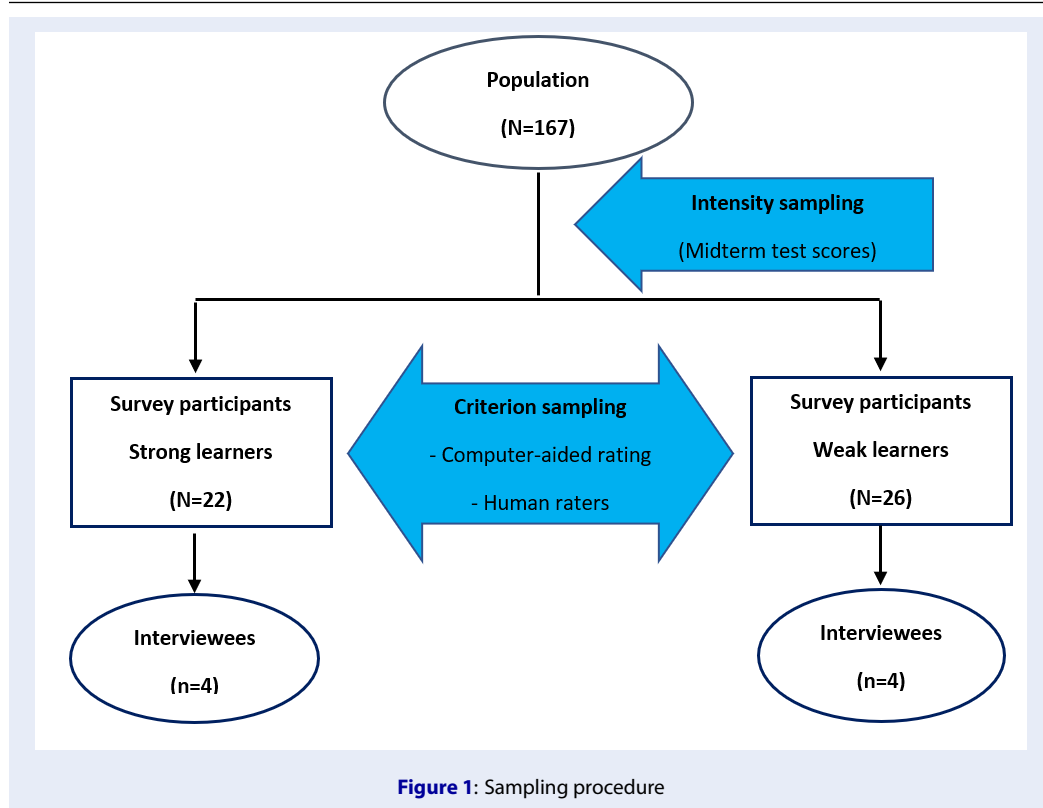


Table 2: Learning goal

	Nativeness		Intelligibility									
	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
		W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
Yes (%)	77.3	61.5	54.5	69.2	45.5	46.2	45.5	46.2	22.7	23.1	9.1	15.4
No (%)	22.7	15.4	31.8	23.1	36.4	42.3	45.5	30.8	77.3	69.2	68.2	69.2
D/K (%)	0.0	23.1	13.7	7.7	18.2	11.5	9.1	23.1	0.0	7.7	22.7	15.4

357 mentioned two common reasons: better proficiency
 358 (W1, W2) and confidence in communication (W1,
 359 W3). One student explained:
 360 *I want to be more confident in communication. Back*
 361 *then, I was in middle school trying to communicate with*
 362 *foreigners. I was very afraid (shy), partly because my*
 363 *pronunciation was not good. (W3)*

364 **Language models**

365 The participants were asked to state how much they
 366 agreed or disagreed with four statements concerning
 367 the language model in a pronunciation class. The
 368 first two items in the section were intended to find

369 out whether they would like to study with a native 369
 370 (NS) (Q15) or non-native (NNS) model (Q16) while 370
 371 the last two looked into their attitudes towards the 371
 372 pronunciation teachers' knowledge of both the L1 372
 373 and L2 (Q17) as well as their shared learning expe- 373
 374 rience (Q18). There is hardly any difference in the 374
 375 responses provided by the two groups of participants. 375
 376 Both groups still valued NS teachers over NNS ones, 376
 377 but they did acknowledge the benefits of studying 377
 378 with a NNS teacher. The majority of the respon- 378
 379 dents agreed that one of the strengths of non-native 379
 380 teachers is their knowledge of both English and Viet- 380
 381 namese while even higher percentages admitted that 381

382 non-native teachers can be good models because they
 383 can share their learning experience with the students.
 384 Findings from the interviews revealed two differ-
 385 ences. First, only the weak learners expressed doubts
 386 about the accuracy of the non-native teacher's pro-
 387 nunciation; the strong learners just reported feeling
 388 bored. Second, while most strong learners named
 389 a benefit of working with a non-native teacher, two
 390 weak ones (W1 and W2) did not and another (W4)
 391 only appreciated the possibility of using the L1, which
 392 seems to be irrelevant in an L2 pronunciation class-
 393 room.

394 **Teaching focus**

395 In this section, the respondents were requested to in-
 396 dicate the amounts of instruction that their teachers
 397 provided for the eight pronunciations aspects (Q19 –
 398 Q26): vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, final
 399 sounds, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, and
 400 linking. They rated the amounts based on a scale from
 401 1 (*Little*) to 5 (*A lot*). The results also revealed that the
 402 two groups of strong and weak learners largely agreed
 403 with each other, with word stress, sentence stress and
 404 and vowels reported to receive the greatest amount of
 405 instruction (See Table 3).

406 A comparison of the two groups of interviewees un-
 407 covers two differences. Firstly, while most strong
 408 learners attributed the teacher's focus on word stress
 409 to a lack of understanding of students' needs, the four
 410 weak learners were inconsistent, giving a variety of ex-
 411 planations ranging from the teacher's not understand-
 412 ing what the students need (W4), or making a deci-
 413 sion based on students' performance (W2 and W3)
 414 to teaching what is tested (W1). Secondly, while all
 415 the strong learners complained about not receiving
 416 the instruction they need, which led to unwilling self-
 417 study outside class, only two weak learners shared the
 418 same criticism. The other two (W3, and W4) found it
 419 acceptable for the teacher to so do, saying that it did
 420 not harm their learning.

421 **Teaching techniques**

422 The respondents were asked to rank the techniques,
 423 tools, and activities that their teachers used in the
 424 classroom according to their usefulness in helping
 425 them improve their pronunciation. They were also re-
 426 minded that if a certain activity/tool was not used in
 427 their class, they should choose *N/A* (Not Applicable).
 428 Table 4 below shows the mean scores and the percent-
 429 ages of respondents selecting 4 and 5 combined for all
 430 items.

The findings show that both groups perceived mini- 431
 mal pair drills (Q30: M=4.64 & 4.12) and IPA prac- 432
 tice (Q33: M=4.36 & 4.42) to be the most useful tech- 433
 niques. In contrast, the least useful one is using clap- 434
 ping and tapping (Q31: M=2.36 & 2.54). A closer look 435
 at the mean scores indicate the weaker's preference for 436
 the teacher's use of concept explanations, visual aids, 437
 songs and poems, IPA practice, role play, group/pair 438
 work, films and dictation exercises while the stronger 439
 seem to favor repetition, minimal pairs, games and In- 440
 ternet materials. Yet, the biggest differences can be 441
 found in two items: Q27 and Q30, when the percent- 442
 ages of respondents rating the techniques at 4 and 5 443
 were combined. For one thing, weak learners found 444
 the teacher's explanation of theoretical concepts more 445
 valuable than strong learners (57.7% vs 27.2%). For 446
 another thing, doing minimal pair drills seemed to be 447
 less useful for them than for their strong counterparts 448
 (73.1% vs 100%). 449

450 **DISCUSSION**

451 **Difficulties encountered in learning by** 452 **strong and weak learners**

453 The results from the survey show that both strong
 454 and weak learners find it more difficult to deal with
 455 supra-segmental features, especially intonation and
 456 sentence stress. This contradicts what Derwing and
 457 Rossiter (2002)⁵ found in their study. Yet, no conclu-
 458 sion can be made from this comparison. The teach-
 459 ers in the current research might have focused more
 460 on teaching supra-segmental features, especially word
 461 stress, so their students might have encountered more
 462 difficulties learning them due to greater amounts of
 463 exposure to the features. Derwing and Rossiter, how-
 464 ever, provided no information about the focus of in-
 465 struction that their subjects received. Therefore, their
 466 subjects may have spent more time learning segmen-
 467 tals and thus may have had more problems dealing
 468 with them.

469 In addition, the findings from the interviews reveal
 470 three major reasons why both groups of respondents
 471 find intonation, sentences stress and consonant clus-
 472 ters difficult to learn: the complex nature of these fea-
 473 tures, the influence of the L1 and, the most important
 474 of all, the pronunciation instruction that they received
 475 at high school. First, it seems to be true that some
 476 features are really difficult for Vietnamese learners to
 477 acquire, for example, the fricatives *s*, *z*, *ʃ*, *ʒ*, *θ*, and
 478 *ð* and the affricates *dʒ* and *tʃ*. This finding is echoed
 479 by Ha's (2005)⁶ study, which claims that the absence
 480 of the features *ʃ*, *ʒ*, *θ*, *ð*, *dʒ* and *tʃ* in the Vietnamese

Table 3: Teaching focus

	Vowels		Consonan		Consonan		Final		Word		Sentence		Intonation		Linking	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Stro	3.82	1.09	3.82	1.22	3.14	1.42	3.64	1.36	4.00	1.06	3.77	1.34	3.32	1.39	3.27	1.162
Wea	3.62	1.02	3.54	1.17	3.27	1.00	3.62	1.13	4.00	1.13	3.73	1.34	3.69	1.40	3.35	1.441

Table 4: Teaching techniques

Teaching technique/tool	Strong			Weak		
	Mean	SD	% of 4 and 5	Mean	SD	% of 4 and 5
Q27: Teacher’s explanation of concepts	2.59	1.532	27.2	3.35	1.742	57.7
Q28: Teacher’s use of visual aids	2.73	1.856	45.5	2.96	1.509	42.3
Q29: Repeating after models	4.18	1.006	68.1	3.85	1.008	57.7
Q30: Minimal pair drills	4.64	.492	100	4.12	.909	73.1
Q31: Use of clapping and tapping	2.36	1.590	22.7	2.54	1.334	23
Q32: Teacher’s use of songs, poems, etc.	2.82	1.967	50.0	3.12	1.505	53.9
Q33: Doing IPA transcription practice	4.36	.953	77.2	4.42	.703	88.4
Q34: Role-playing	3.45	1.595	54.6	4.00	1.131	73.1
Q35: Pair/group work	3.77	1.602	63.6	4.04	1.076	76.9
Q36: Watching films/video recordings	2.95	2.126	63.7	3.35	1.495	53.9
Q37: Dictation exercises	3.05	2.104	63.6	3.58	1.301	57.7
Q38: Playing pronunciation games	3.50	1.921	68.2	3.12	1.681	57.7
Q39: Teacher’s use of Internet materials	3.45	1.792	68.2	3.50	1.581	57.7

481 sound inventory, the misperception of sound aspira- 496
 482 tion, and the inability to distinguish between aspira- 497
 483 tion and friction are the causes of their difficulty in 498
 484 learning these sounds. 499

485 For the second cause given by the interviewees, Gilak- 500
 486 jani and Ahmadi (2011)⁴ explained that L2 learners 501
 487 have to reconceptualise the patterns they have inter- 502
 488 nalized for the L1 system. In this case, for example, 503
 489 Vietnamese learners of English need to form new cat- 504
 490 egories for the English sounds θ , δ , $d3$ and t_f , which 505
 491 do not exist in the Vietnamese phonological system. 506
 492 This reconceptualisation is obviously not an easy task 507
 493 for them to perform. 508

494 Finally, the majority of the interviewees considered 509
 495 the way English pronunciation was taught in high

school as a main cause of their current learning dif- 496
 497 ficulties. What can be recognized from their narra- 498
 499 tives is a lack of practice and feedback, the use of inap- 500
 501 propriate methods, or even the absence of pedagogy 502
 503 (when the teacher was reported to just tell the students 504
 505 “just to say it correctly, just repeat it, just say it” while 506
 507 teaching intonation). This is, however, not surpris- 508
 ing in the context of Vietnam at the moment, when 509
 the Ministry of Education and Training reported that 510
 only 69% of English teachers nationwide are linguisti- 511
 cally qualified (H. Nguyen, 2019)³², with many of 512
 them struggling with speaking skills in general and 513
 pronunciation in particular. 514

509 **Strong and weak learners perceive pronun-** 510 **ciation instruction differently.**

511 It is undeniable that L2 teachers themselves and the
512 instruction they deliver have certain impacts on learn-
513 ers and their learning. The current study has found
514 that these influences are dissimilar for strong and
515 weak learners, which may contribute to the different
516 levels of achievement. Firstly, the survey results show
517 that a native-like accent seems to be more relevant to
518 strong learners than weak ones while the latter group
519 appear to be more affected by their teacher. In other
520 words, the successful learners seem to know what they
521 want, set it as their goal, plan for it, and are motivated
522 enough to work hard towards it. In contrast, the un-
523 successful ones may only try to work towards what the
524 teacher sets out for them without knowing whether it
525 is achievable or not and thus can be demotivated once
526 little progress can be seen.

527 Secondly, the weak learners show a lack of trust in
528 their non-native speaker teacher's pronunciation, nei-
529 ther do they recognise any benefits from learning with
530 such a teacher. Their stronger counterparts, in con-
531 trast, still find it beneficial, in one way or another, to
532 study with a non-native teacher. This might indicate
533 a heavy dependence on the native language model
534 among the less unsuccessful learners. This could re-
535 sult from the belief in nativeness as a proper learn-
536 ing goal and a lack of guidance from the L2 teacher
537 regarding the legitimacy of intelligibility as an alter-
538 native goal in learning pronunciation. The successful
539 learners seem to be less reliant on the teacher as a lan-
540 guage model.

541 Thirdly, the interview results show that the weak
542 learners perceive what the teacher focuses on in the
543 classroom as appropriate and reasonable while the
544 strong ones are more critical of what is taught. They
545 actively reflect on their own learning and then expect
546 the teacher to respond more closely to their needs. In
547 other words, for the successful learners, there is an
548 element of choice and relevance (Tominaga, 2009)³³
549 regarding what should be taught and learnt. In con-
550 trast, the less successful learners, once again, appear
551 to be more reliant on the teacher, accepting what is
552 provided without much questioning.

553 Finally, the findings from the survey indicate that
554 strong and weak learners value the teaching tech-
555 niques employed by the teacher differently. This
556 demonstrates the disparity between learner perception
557 and teacher's cognition of language learning activities
558 (Lear, 2011)²⁶. To be more specific, in the current
559 study, what teachers assume to be harder, such as the-
560 oretical concepts, is actually preferred by weaker stu-
561 dents, while simpler activities, like minimal pair drills
562 might not work for them.

563 **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

564 The first implication the researcher would like to
565 make is based on the finding that strong learners tend
566 to be more independent of their teachers. Teachers
567 can generate and facilitate such independent learning
568 in several ways, especially for weaker learners. Teach-
569 ers should make students aware of the benefits of ac-
570 tively selecting appropriate learning methods and the
571 necessity of continuing study outside the classroom
572 and after the course. For example, they may orga-
573 nize class discussions in which students are asked to
574 suggest different ways they have used or think they
575 can use to learn certain features more effectively or
576 ask students to keep a diary in which they reflect on
577 how certain activities have worked for them. Addi-
578 tionally, Vietnamese learners need a lot of know-how.
579 They need to know how to plan their study based on
580 their own needs, carry out their learning using appro-
581 priate strategies, techniques, and tools, monitor their
582 progress, and assess their performance. For instance,
583 teachers can inform their students of the potential of
584 using an ASR dictation program such as Google Voice
585 Typing for assessing their own production, especially
586 segmentals, for getting feedback and for practice out-
587 side the classroom as this program "may now rival hu-
588 man listeners particularly for free speech" (McCrock-
589 lin et al., 2019, p. 197)³⁴.

590 Another implication is as Vietnamese students may
591 not trust their English pronunciation teachers be-
592 cause of their non-native accents, the teachers need to
593 be reminded to constantly improve their own pronun-
594 ciation to win their learners' trust and to foster under-
595 standing in communication (Gilakjani, 2012)¹⁸. In
596 an age when learners have easier access to native ac-
597 cents, it is necessary that the non-native teachers of
598 English have accurate production of both segmental
599 and suprasegmental features and be comfortably in-
600 telligible. As a result, they can be confident when
601 talking to their students and their students can also
602 feel confident about learning L2 pronunciation with a
603 non-native speaker teacher.

604 All in all, this paper hopes to have provided L2 teach-
605 ers and researchers with useful information on how a
606 specific group of learners are learning an L2 phono-
607 logical system. More importantly, it has, in one way
608 or another, listened to learners' voices, exposing their
609 views to teachers, making them reconsider what they
610 are doing in their classes. It might also have brought
611 research work closer to the real classroom, providing
612 more practical ideas for teachers. In a nutshell, it is
613 expected that this research has contributed to the em-
614 powerment of L2 learners, helping them to achieve
615 more success in learning L2 pronunciation.

616 **BIODATA**

617 **Dao, Nguyen Anh Duc** has been teaching English
 618 for more than twenty years and is currently a lecturer
 619 at the School of Languages– International University
 620 (Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City),
 621 Vietnam. She also works as a local trainer for Cam-
 622 bridge University Press. She earned her Ph.D. from
 623 the University of Nottingham. She holds an MA in
 624 TESOL Studies from the University of Queensland,
 625 and an MBA from Bolton University. Her research
 626 interests are teaching methodology, L2 pronunciation
 627 teaching and learning, and teacher education.

628 **APPENDICES**

629 **Appendix 1**

630 *A diagnostic passage*

631 When a student from another country comes to study
 632 in the United States, he has to find out for himself the
 633 answers to many questions, and he has many prob-
 634 lems to think about. Where should he live? Would it
 635 be better if he looked for a private room off campus, or
 636 if he stayed in a dormitory? Should he spend all of his
 637 time just studying? Shouldn't he try to take advan-
 638 tage of the many social and cultural activities which
 639 are offered? At first it is not easy for him to be casual
 640 in dress, informal in manner, and confident in speech.
 641 Little by little he learns what kind of clothing is usu-
 642 ally worn here to be casually dressed for classes. He
 643 also learns to choose the language and customs that
 644 are appropriate for informal situations. Finally he be-
 645 gins to feel sure of himself. But let me tell you, my
 646 friend, this long-awaited feeling doesn't develop sud-
 647 denly, does it? All of this takes will power.

648 (Prator & Robinett, 1985)

649 *The 12 sentences*

650 (In 2-line dialogues, students will read B's lines only.)

- 651 1. Eat it with some cheese!
- 652 2. What do you think?
- 653 3. She's given him some money.
- 654 4. Excuse me, I think you're in my seat.
- 655 5. Do you want a super burger or a regular burger?
- 656 6. I know your parents live here, but were they born
657 here?
- 658 7. A: We've won a holiday for two in Jamaica!
- 659 B: Brilliant!
- 660 8. A: I've crashed the car again!
- 661 B: Well done!
- 662 9. They took his computer, television, video, CD
663 player and all his CDs.
- 664 10. A: Do you have a nice flat?
- 665 B: Yes, a very nice flat.
- 666 11. A: Excuse me, can you help us?

- B: Yes? 667
- 12. A: OK, well go across the bridge and turn right. 668
- B: Turn right? 669

Appendix 2 670

Prompts: 671

- 1. Please introduce yourself. 672
- 2. Tell me about your family. 673
- 3. Tell me about something you love doing in your
674 free time. 675
- 4. What did you do on your last holiday? 676

Appendix 3 677

Figure 2 678

REFERENCES 679

- 1. Dickerson W. The ripples of rhythm: Implications for ESL in-
680 struction. Proc 10th Pronunciation Second Lang Learn Teach
681 Conf. 2019;36-54;. 682
- 2. Sugimoto J, Uchida Y. Accentedness and acceptability ratings
683 of Japanese English teachers' pronunciation. Proc 9th Pronun-
684 ciation Second Lang Learn Teach Conf. 2018;30-40;. 685
- 3. Yates L. Learning how to speak: Pronunciation, pragmat-
686 ics and practicalities in the classroom and beyond. Lang
687 Teach. 2017;50(2):227-46;Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444814000238>. 688
- 4. Gilakjani AP, Ahmadi M. Why is pronunciation so difficult to
689 learn? Engl Lang Teach. 2011;4(3):74;Available from: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n3p74>. 690
- 5. Derwing TM, Rossiter MJ. ESL learners' perceptions of their
691 pronunciation needs and strategies. Syst. 2002;30(2):155-
692 66;Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(02\)00012-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(02)00012-X). 693
- 6. Ha CT. Common pronunciation problems of Vietnamese
694 learners of English. J Sci Foreign Lang [Internet]. 2005;Avail-
695 able from: http://js.vnu.edu.vn/Ngoanguing_1/Bai3.pdf. 696
- 7. Nguyen TH. Difficulties of Vietnamese learners with the length
697 of English sounds when they produce and suggested strate-
698 gies. Tap Chi Khoa Hoc Cong Nghe. 1998;112(12):231-5;. 699
- 8. Tran U. Major problems in pronouncing English: A case study
700 at the university of Dalat. Tap Chi Khoa Hoc Ngon Ngu va Van
701 Hoa. 2019;3(3);Available from: <https://vjol.info.vn/index.php/nvvh/article/view/49827>. 702
- 9. Tran TKL, Nguyen AT. Common mistakes in pronouncing Eng-
703 lish consonant clusters: A case study of Vietnamese learn-
704 ers. CTU J Innov Sustain Dev. 2022;14(3):32-9;Available from:
705 <https://doi.org/10.22144/CTU.JEN.2022.040>. 706
- 10. Alghazo SM. Advanced EFL learners' beliefs about pronun-
707 ciation teaching. Int Educ Stud. 2015;8(11):63;Available from:
708 <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v8n11p63>. 709
- 11. Pardo DB. Can pronunciation be taught? A review of research
710 and implication for teaching. Rev Alicantina Estud Ingleses.
711 2004;17(November):6-38;. 712
- 12. Henrichsen L, Stephens C. Advanced adult ESL students' per-
713 spectives on the benefits of pronunciation instruction. In:
714 Levis J, Mohammed R, Qian M, Zhou Z, editors. Proc 6th Pronun-
715 ciation Second Lang Learn Teach Conf, Santa Barbara, CA.
716 Ames: IA: Iowa State University; 2015. p. 197-205;. 717
- 13. Crystal D. English as a global language. 2nd ed. Cambridge
718 University Press; 2012;. 719

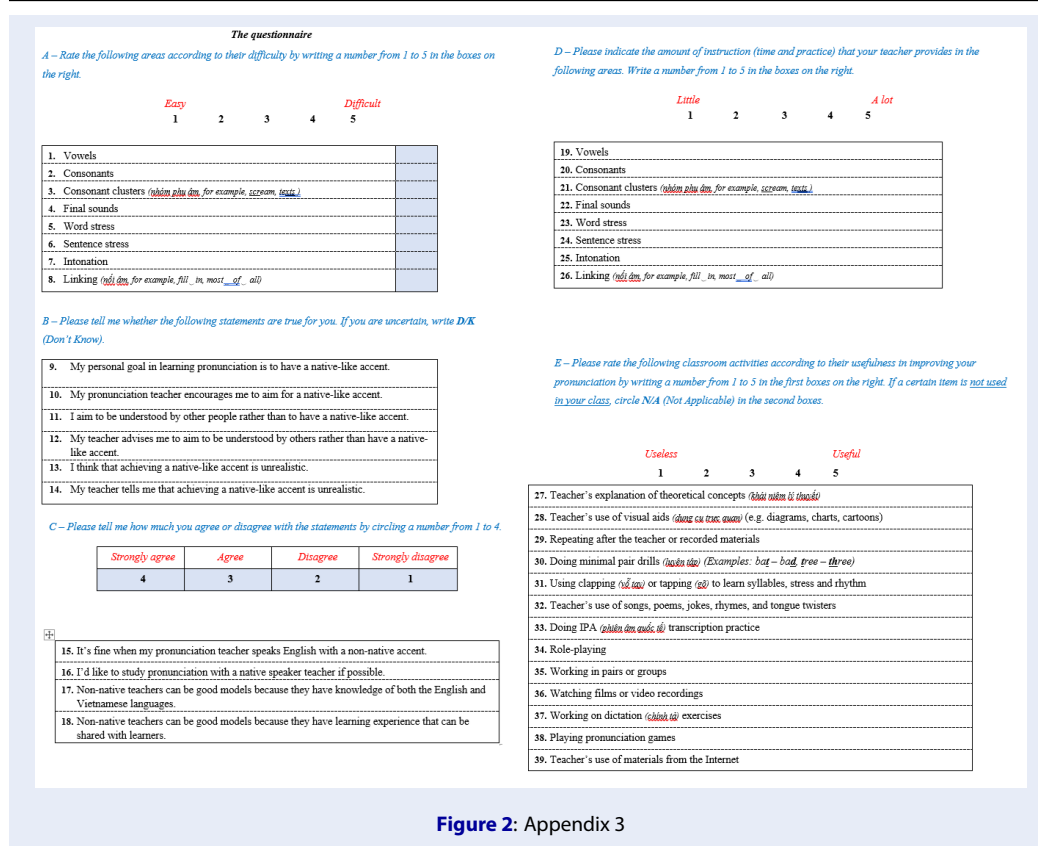


Figure 2: Appendix 3

724 14. Ketabi S, Saeb F. Pronunciation teaching: Past and present. Int
725 J Appl Linguist Engl Lit. 2015;4(5):182-9; Available from: <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.5p.182>.

726

727 15. Levis J. Changing contexts and shifting paradigms in pronun-
728 ciation teaching. TESOL Q. 2005;39(3):369-78; Available from:
729 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588485>.

730 16. Moghaddam MS, Nasiri M, Zarea A, Sepehrinia S. Teaching
731 pronunciation: The lost ring of the chain. J Lang Teach Res.
732 2012;3(1):215-9; Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.3.1.215-219>.

733

734 17. Setter J. Theories and approaches in English pronunciation. In:
735 Monroy R, Sanchez A, editors. 25 Years of Applied Linguistics
736 in Spain: Milestones and challenges. Universidad de Murcia;
737 2008. p. 447-57;.

738 18. Gilakjani AP. The significance of pronunciation in English lan-
739 guage teaching. Engl Lang Teach. 2012;5(4):96-107; Available
740 from: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n4p96>.

741 19. Murphy JM. Intelligible, comprehensible, non-native mod-
742 els in ESL/EFL pronunciation teaching. Syst. 2014;42:258-
743 69; Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.12.007>.

744

745 20. Walker R. Pronunciation priorities, the lingua franca core, and
746 monolingual groups. Speak Out! 2001;18:4-9;.

747 21. Jenkins J. The phonology of English as an international lan-
748 guage. OUP; 2000; Available from: [https://books.google.co.uk/](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=0TvHACfrUjEC)
749 books?id=0TvHACfrUjEC.

750 22. Miller J. Teacher identity. In: Burns A, Richards JC, editors.
751 The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education.
752 Cambridge University Press; 2009. p. 172-81; Available from:
753 <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139042710.023>.

754 23. Levis J, Sosaat S, Link S, Barriuso TA. Native and nonnative
755 teachers of L2 pronunciation: Effects on learner performance.
756 TESOL Q. 2016;50(4):894-931; Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.272>.

757

758 24. Celce-Murcia M, Brinton DM, Goodwin JM, Griner B. Teaching
759 pronunciation: A course book and reference guide. 2nd ed.
760 Cambridge University Press; 2010;.

761 25. Rogerson-Revell P. English phonology and pronunciation
762 teaching. Continuum; 2011; Available from: <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350934177>.

763

764 26. Lear E. Using guided reflective journals in large classes: Moti-
765 vating students to independently improve pronunciation.
766 Asian EFL J Q. 2011;13(September):113-37;.

767 27. Levis J, Le H, Lucic I, Simpson E, Vo S. The importance of dedi-
768 cated conferences to the field of second language pronuncia-
769 tion. In: Levis J, Le H, Lucic I, Simpson E, Vo S, editors. Proc 7th
770 Pronunciation Second Lang Learn Teach Conf. IA: Iowa State
771 University; 2016. p. 1-13;.

772 28. Teddlie C, Tashakkori A. Foundations of mixed methods re-
773 search: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches
774 in the social and behavioral sciences. Sage; 2009;.

775 29. Ary D, Jacobs LC, Sorensen CK. Introduction to research in ed-
776 ucation. 8th ed. Wadsworth Cengage Learning; 2014;.

777 30. Prator CH, Robinett BW. Manual of American English pronun-
778 ciation. 4th ed. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston; 1985;.

779 31. Landis JR, Koch GG. The measurement of observer agree-
780 ment for categorical data. Biometrics. 1977;33(1):159; Avail-
781 able from: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2529310>.

782 32. Nguyen H. Thất bại tiếng Anh trong trường phổ thông: Chỉ
783 69% giáo viên đạt chuẩn | Giáo dục | Báo điện tử Tiền Phong
784 [Internet]. Tien Phong; 2019 Mar 12; Available from: [https://](https://www.tienphong.vn)
785 www.tienphong.vn.

786 33. Tominaga Y. An analysis of successful pronunciation learners:
787 in search of effective factors on pronunciation teaching. J
788 Pan-Pac Assoc Appl Linguist. 2009;13(1); Available from: [https://](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ921032.pdf)
789 files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ921032.pdf.

790 34. McCrocklin SM, Humaidan A, Edalatishams E. ASR dictation
791 program accuracy: Have current programs improved? In:
792 Levis J, Nagle C, Todey E, editors. Proc 10th Pronunciation Sec-
793 ond Lang Learn Teach Conf. Ames, IA: Iowa State University;
794 2019. p. 191-200;.