

An Investigation of the Present Status of EFL Pronunciation Teaching

(A case study: Faculties of Education&Arts-The Red Sea University)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the teaching of pronunciation in the EFL students' courses at the Red Sea University. The researcher has adopted the descriptive analytic method. The data were collected through a questionnaire and an interview. The findings showed that the teaching of pronunciation is inadequate and bottom-up or structural in its approach. (i.e. it does not aim at intelligible pronunciation) . Moreover, they showed that students exhibited great desire for pronunciation, segmental features were given more priority than prosodic features. Exposure procedure was ignored and teachers adhere to the traditional attitude that pronunciation should be taught atomistically (structural approach). Finally, possible remedial measures such as teachers' training, revising Phonetics Books used and similar investigations in other settings were recommended.

مستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى البحث في تدريس النطق في اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مقررات الطلاب في جامعة البحر الأحمر. تبنى الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي. جمعت البيانات من خلال أداتي الإستبانة والمقابلة. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن تدريس النطق غير كافي ويستخدم الطريقة التركيبية (أي أنه لا يهدف الى نطق واضح ومفهوم). علاوة على ذلك أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الطلاب أبدوا رغبة عظيمة للنطق وأن السمات القطعية أعطيت أولوية أكبر من السمات فوققطعية. تم تجاهل تعريض الطلاب للغة الانجليزية المنطوقة وأن الاساتذة إلتزموا بالموقف التقليدي بأن النطق ينبغي أن يدرس بإتباع الطريقة التركيبية. أوصت الدراسة في النهاية بإتخاذ الإجراءات العلاجية الممكنة مثل تدريب الأساتذة، مراجعة كتب الصوتيات المستخدمة وإجراء بحوث مشابهة في بيئات أخرى (في جامعات أخرى).

1.1 Background of the Study

The EFL instruction nowadays is observed to give intelligible pronunciation. Speaking English competently requires the ability to produce its sounds intelligibly Harmer, (2001). The conscious awareness of pronunciation features that can obviously be used by a competent speaker helps with listening competently (Hedge, 2000; Lynch, 1983). Therefore, teaching intelligible pronunciation addresses the communicative needs of the learners. The development of pronunciation teaching starting all the way from the traditional approach to the current communicative language teaching has shown a significant change of interest. Richards and Renandya (2002) noted that it had almost no place and significance in the grammar translation method. Direct and Audio lingual methods treated pronunciation in a discrete and narrow way (Morley, 1991). Pronunciation teaching has broadened with significant consideration in the communicative

era (Ibid). Hedge (2000:208), for instance, noted “it is worth spending time giving separate consideration to the phonological aspects of learning English as perspectives on these have broadened and changed in recent years”. The coming of the communicative approach, with its interest in the use of language in discourse, has been accompanied by a shift of emphasis in pronunciation teaching of supra-segmental and aspects of connected speech such as sentence stress, rhythm, and intonation (Hedge, 2000; Morley, 1991). This development of pronunciation teaching overtime has brought the increasing awareness of its communicative function (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Therefore, the present day EFL instruction claims adequate treatment of pronunciation as part of its communicative objectives.

The contemporary concern of pronunciation has brought about new principles to be addressed in its teaching. These include a) aiming at intelligibility, b) pronunciation

as an essential component of communication, c) including segmental and supra-segmental (with more focus on suprasegmentals), d) meaningful and contextual manner of teaching it (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994). However, many English language programs are still defective for they do not incorporate the current perspective of pronunciation teaching within their instruction (Richards and Renandya, 2002). The primary reason here is that several language teachers still believe that pronunciation should be given a peripheral place; and they adhere to the traditional attitude (Harmer, 2001). Moreover, pronunciation aspects are taught in isolation which is a typical traditional approach of pronunciation teaching (Brown, 1992; Hedge, 2000).

This challenge, thus, contributes to the failure of many English language learners in communication as it fails to respond to the needs of the learners. (Brown, 1992). Morley (1991) also noted that different organizations and enterprises require employees' fluent speaking ability

with intelligible pronunciation. Taylor (1993) witnessed that some foreign language speakers of English with high levels of proficiency in other areas of the language are seen to be posed constantly to repeat their speech because of their poor pronunciation, they are then rated unintelligible. Therefore, it is difficult to guarantee effective communication and proficiency without intelligible pronunciation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem of teaching intelligible pronunciation in Sudan is reflected in the works of some researchers. For example, Geremew, (2003) studied that the coverage given to English pronunciation in primary schools is negligible. Anegagregn, (2007) also found out that the overall status of pronunciation teaching in secondary school EFL instruction is far less emphasized and the awareness of teachers about the teaching of comprehensible pronunciation is very little. In addition, the researcher's personal experience as a teacher of English at the Red Sea

University rendered the opportunity to observe the situation very closely that many students complain that they faced communication problems partly because of pronunciation. For these reasons, the researcher will study the status of pronunciation teaching at the Red Sea University.

The researcher's keen interest to study the problem at the tertiary level is for the reason that no similar study has so far been done at this level to the researcher's knowledge. Thus, the researcher will study the problem in the faculties of Education and the faculty of Arts and Humanities at the Red Sea University.

This particular study will try to see the problem from two important perspectives. Attitude and approach are the areas of concern. Therefore, the attitude of English language instructors and students towards pronunciation, the component of pronunciation given priority, the aim and the procedure of presentation of the teaching materials are specific areas of concern.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

a. The purpose of this study is to

investigate the status of teaching pronunciation in the faculties of Education and Humanities at the Red Sea University.

b. Determining the attitudes of teachers and students towards pronunciation teaching.

C. Identifying the component of pronunciation given priority.

d. Assessing the procedures of the teaching materials used to present pronunciation topics.

e. Identifying the predominant aim of pronunciation topics.

1.4 Research Questions

The questions of this research are:

i. What are the attitudes of students towards pronunciation?

ii. What are the attitudes of teachers towards pronunciation and its teaching?

iii. Which pronunciation feature is given priority?

iv. What are the procedures used to present pronunciation topics?

v. What is the predominant aim of pronunciation topics?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The researcher believes that this study

is relevant for the following reason:

- The results of the study can help realize problems and causes in pronunciation teaching at the Red Sea University, so that remedial measures may be instituted by concerted efforts to improve the outcome of EFL instruction because intelligible pronunciation is a necessary part of language proficiency as indicated by a number of authorities.
- More specifically, the findings of the study can serve as an input to the decisions that practitioners and material writers make to address the needs of students for comprehensible pronunciation.
- The research can also suggest other researchers make similar inquiries in other institutions to verify, amplify, or negate the findings of the study.

1.6 The Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study will be conducted to determine the status of teaching pronunciation in the faculties of Education and the faculty of Arts and Humanities at the Red Sea University. The aspects under investigation are the attitudes of

teachers and students, the component of pronunciation given priority, the presentation procedures and the aims of pronunciation topics. The sources of the data will be Phonetics courses for teachers and students and the materials used to teach are Phonetics I and II within which pronunciation topics are included explicitly.

2. Method of Research and Procedure

2.1 Method of Research

The descriptive analytical method of research is used in this study. Descriptive method of research is a fact finding study with adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings, Creswell, J. (2003). It describes what is; and it describes with emphasis what actually exists: current conditions, practices, situations, or any phenomena (ibid). Since the present study is concerned with the present status of the teaching of pronunciation in the faculties of Education and Arts at the Red Sea University, the descriptive method of research is an appropriate method of use.

2.2 Study Subjects and Sampling Design

The subjects of this study are the students of the faculties of Education in Port Sudan and Jabeit and the faculty of Arts whose English Language is their major. The total number of them is 320. From these 30% was selected with a stratified random sampling technique as a representative sample with a proportional size from every semester (i.e. a total of 96 respondents).

The questionnaire was distributed to the students and 94 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. There were five instructors giving Phonetics courses. All of them were selected. In addition, two other instructors who taught the course in the previous year were also included to increase the number of the respondents. However, the actual number of the copies of the questionnaire filled up and retrieved was six.

2.3 Methods of Data Collection

The methods of collecting data used are the survey technique and material analysis. Since the

research is a descriptive study, the survey and material analysis are the most appropriate methods to use in gathering data, Creswell, J. (2003).

2.3.1 The Questionnaire

Attitudes can be measured using a questionnaire, Gall et al. (1996). Hence, the questionnaire is used to measure attitudes of the teachers and the students towards pronunciation and its teaching. After reading and studying samples of questionnaires from some related studies, the researcher prepared his own questionnaire separately for the teachers and the students.

For validation purposes, the questionnaire was given to four Phonetics instructors from Kassala and Gadaref Universities and five students from an institute of language studies, Department of English. The students did not participate in the study as they were not from the Language Education Department. After they had filled up the copies, the researcher asked them some questions to find out their assessment of the questionnaire. They were

asked if all the items are clear and unequivocal to them; if the number of items are adequate enough to collect the desired information; and if all the items are relevant to the research problem. All the teachers said that the items are too many; there are repetitions; but the length is alright. The students were asked whether or not there are items they could not understand and said that there are too many items; and most of the items are clear. Then the few questioned items were omitted and most were revised for more clarity and definiteness. The copies of the teachers' questionnaire were then distributed by the department's members and by the researcher to the respondents. A graduating EFL teacher trainee helped the researcher to distribute the students' questionnaire to the respondents.

2.3.2 The Interview

To support the data collected through the questionnaire, students were also interviewed. Items of the interview were open-ended. Since it was as a secondary tool and because of

time constraint, the interview was conducted with only five volunteer respondents. The interview was prepared by the researcher himself, and revised before it was conducted. The researcher took notes of students' responses because respondents did not want to be recorded when asked.

2.3.3 Material Assessment

Evaluation of the materials was made to see 1. The components of pronunciation given priority, 2. The aims of pronunciation topics and 3. The procedures the material uses to present pronunciation points.

The materials analyzed are used to teach Phonetics courses. Both materials (for Phonetics I and II) consist of five units each. Pronunciation points take separate sections. Every pronunciation part includes exercises, notes, procedures of presentation, students and teacher roles and instruction, and steps to follow in using the recorded cassettes as teaching aids. Both the teacher and all the students have the copies of the materials. The researcher prepared a check-list after reading and studying

samples of checklists from other related studies.

2.4 Methods of Data Organization and Analysis

The data gathered through the questionnaires were tallied and tabulated under every item. Then by using frequency, percentage and mean value, the responses were organized.

The data collected by the check-list from the evaluation of the material were first tabulated with their frequency and percentage values. The responses from the students' interview were interpreted along with the discussion of responses to the questionnaire under their respective categories.

The analysis and interpretations of the data were made by sorting the responses in different sections and categories. Under every category, the data were interpreted and discussed. At last, based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations were made.

3. Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Data

The analysis and discussion of the data gathered by different instruments are presented in three parts: students'

responses, teachers' responses and document/material analysis.

The responses from the students and the teachers are discussed under different categories. Each category incorporates responses about items of a similar issue. In the discussion of the attitude scale items, the mean value of each item was first calculated to identify the relative attitude of the respondents. In addition, other items that are prepared for the same purpose (attitude) are also included in the discussion with their percentage value. Moreover, the data collected from the interview are incorporated in the discussion in support of their respective category. The mean score of every item was compared with the value given for the responses.

3.1 Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion of Students' Responses

The data gathered from the students' questionnaire was discussed under three different sections. The first section refers to the students' attitudes towards the skill of pronunciation. This section includes the desires

and beliefs of the learners towards English pronunciation (the affective component). The second section, is concerned with students' attitudes towards the relevance of learning the different aspects of pronunciation. This was to find out the attitudes of students about the different aspects of pronunciation and their relative importance in learning (the cognitive and behavioral component). The

third section refers to the students' attitudes towards the current instruction of pronunciation in spoken English sessions.

3.1.1 The Attitudes of Students towards English Pronunciation: The Affective Component

The following tables show students' attitudes towards the different components of pronunciation and their demands to learn them.

Table 3.1: Students' attitudes towards pronunciation

Item No.	Items											Total	Mean
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I believe that good English pronunciation is currently very important to be successful in the university and to be effective communicator in the world of work	69	73.40	22	23.40	-	-	3	3.19	-	-	94	4.64
2	I want to improve my knowledge and skill of pronunciation	71	75.53	18	19.15	3	3.19	2	2.13	-	-	94	4.68
7	I appreciate foreign language speakers who speak English like the natives (like Americans or British)	58	61.70	28	29.74	1	1.06	7	7.45	-	-	94	4.46

Key: Strongly Agree – SA Agree – A Undecided – U Disagree – DA
Strongly Disagree – SDA

The first item requires respondents' attitudes on the importance of pronunciation. The mean score shows a 4.64 value. This reveals that tremendous number of the students (96.8%) expressed their agreement with the relevance of English pronunciation for effective communication. Item number 2, similar to the first one but more specifically demands the learners' want on improving their pronunciation skill. The result of the item showed a 4.68 mean value, in which 75.53% of the respondents strongly agreed. Hence, the learners have a great desire to improve their English pronunciation for the reasons they mentioned in the next table.

Item number 7 was designed to know the students' attitude towards a native-like pronunciation which is related to identify issues that is regarded as an important factor in foreign language acquisition. The table above shows that only 7.45% of the respondents disagreed to appreciate a native-like proficiency whereas, 91.44% (61.70% strongly

agreed and 29.74% agreed) of them showed their agreement. Thus, a 4.46 mean value reveals that a huge number of the students are happy with a native-like pronunciation performance. From the results of the above three items, the researcher can see that students believe that English pronunciation is an important component in communication and that they want to improve their knowledge and skill of it. Moreover, the respondents showed almost no identity problems if they speak like the natives rather they appreciate it. This kind of attitude is believed to be a fertile ground for foreign language learning because identity issues make learners resistant to learning pronunciation (Brown, 1994; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994).

In connection to the above information, respondents were also asked to provide reasons regarding their necessities and lacks in learning English pronunciation. Table 3.2 below shows the results of the responses. Summary of the respondents' reasons behind their responses is also discussed.

Table 3.2 Students' needs for pronunciation

Item No.	Items	Responses				Total
		Yes		No		
		F	%	F	%	
13	Do you encounter difficulties when you speak in or listen to English because of pronunciation problems?	86	91.49	8	8.51	94
11	Do you want to improve your knowledge and skill of English pronunciation?	92	97.87	2	2.13	94

Item number 11 was designed to know if respondents actually need to improve their pronunciation skill and to crosscheck their responses in the attitude scale in table 3.1. As the data in table 3.2 shows, 97.87% of the respondents want to improve their knowledge and skill of English pronunciation.

Most of them said that pronunciation is very important for effective listening and fluent speaking abilities in English. Some others said that without good pronunciation communicating with native speakers and other second language speakers of English is very difficult. Still, others said that they need pronunciation because they want to speak English like native speakers. Most of them

replied that they wanted to improve English pronunciation because good pronunciation helps them to develop confidence in using English to communicate with foreigners and to be effective English Language teachers to work along with the plasma topics in the future.

Under item number 13, students were asked whether or not they encounter communication difficulties because of pronunciation problems. As table 3.2 shows, 91.49% of them responded that they faced pronunciation related problems when they listened and/or speak in English. Students also identified some communicative situations where they experienced pronunciation related problems that resulted in communication breakdown.

As a response to item number 13, most of them said that because of their poor awareness and skill of pronunciation they often find it very difficult to understand movies in the English Language, to talk to foreigners and to listen to international Radio and Television broadcasts. Some of them added that they are so troubled during listening tests when a recorded material is used.

In short, it can be possible to infer from the above responses that many students need a conscious awareness of pronunciation features and intelligible pronunciation skill to help them be successful in their studies, entertainment and other communicative needs for future job opportunities (as teachers working with plasma instructions). There are also demands of pronunciation in social interactions for some respondents. Therefore, one can understand how much pronunciation is a difficult area for students that should be addressed appropriately in EFL instructions. Because of

the growing needs of learners and the challenges they face in communications, pronunciation should be taught to foreign language learners with due consideration (Morley, 1991; Brown, 1992).

3.1.2 Students' Attitudes towards learning the Components of pronunciation: The Cognitive Component

As mentioned in 3.1 an attempt has been made to identify the students' belief and knowledge about the relevance of learning of different aspects of English pronunciation. Both positive and negative items were designed to elicit the information as indicated in table 3.3 below.

The items shown in table 3.3 were designed in an attempt to know students' particular awareness about the different phonological features of English, their role in oral communication and the value of learning them in combination or in integration.

Table 3.3: Students' attitudes towards features of pronunciation

Item No.	Items											Total	Mean
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
3	I don't think that learning vowel and consonant sounds of English and how they are pronounced in words and speech is important for me like grammar and vocabulary	-	-	4	4.26	6	6.38	36	38.3	48	51.06	94	4.36
4	I think that learning word and sentence stress patterns are helpful for me to understand the focus point when people are speaking in the English language competently	65	69.15	25	26.6	4	4.26	-	-	-	-	94	4.65
5	I don't think that the knowledge of intonation feature of English is very important for me to be effective listener of the language	-	-	8	8.51	20	21.28	34	36.17	32	34.04	94	3.96
6	I need to learn pronunciation features such as consonant and vowel sounds, stress and intonation in combination	67	71.28	23	24.47	2	21.3	2	2.13	-	-	94	4.63

Item number 3 requires the respondents to show their agreement or disagreement on learning the distinctive vowel and consonant sounds of English and how they are pronounced in words and speech. 89.36% of the respondents disagreed to show their awareness of the value of learning the segmental features. The responses with a 4.36 mean value tell the researcher that most of the students recognize the need of learning distinctive sound features and how they are pronounced in words and speech. Under item number 4, students were asked the role of stress to understand the focus point in speech. An overwhelming response (95.75%) of agreement was given by respondents to show the significance of learning word and sentence stress patterns to help them realize important

points in speech. The mean score shows a 4.65 value which shows the margin of the strength of their agreement in learning the different word and sentence stress patterns in English. Item number 5 was designed to ask students' attitudes towards the importance of the knowledge of intonation features for listening competently in English. The table above shows a 3.96 mean score in which 70.21% of the respondents disagreed whereas 21.28% and 8.5% of them showed no opinion and agreement respectively to the item. Since it is a negative item, 70.21% of the respondents have a positive attitude towards learning intonation patterns of English.

The last item in table 3.3, item number 6 was designed to know the respondents' attitude towards learning different components of English

pronunciation in an integrated manner, the result was a 4.63 mean value in which 95.75% of the respondents agreed to learning segmental and prosodic features in combination.

Hence, the researcher can see from the above discussion that most students want to learn the different aspects of pronunciation. The respondents are concerned with stress, intonation, rhythm and aspects of connected speech in addition to individual vowel and consonant sounds. This awareness of what pronunciation entails and the significance of learning them seems to provide more support to earlier discussions in tables 3.1 and 3.2 which revealed the respondents' attitude towards proficient pronunciation in general. Most important of all is the students' desire to learn prosodic features because pronunciation means more than

a matter of distinctive sound segments, incorporating other spoken features of language behaviors which are even more important if foreign language learners are aware of their importance and if they make their effort to learn them (Cele-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; Hedge, 2000; Brown, 1994; Kenworthy, 1987; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994, etc.).

3.1.3 Students' Attitudes to the Pronunciation topics Provided

This section attempts to reveal the students' attitudes to the actual pronunciation topics particularly, in the instruction of the pronunciation component of Phonetics courses.

Table 3.4: Students' attitudes towards their pronunciation

Item No.	Items	Responses											
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA		Total	Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
8	I believe that the coverage given to pronunciation points is very less in Phonetics topics	7	7.45	11	11.70	27	28.72	25	26.60	24	25.53	94	2.49
9	I believe that Phonetics instructors often give me enough support to improve my English language pronunciation	10	10.64	15	15.96	42	44.68	14	14.89	13	13.83	94	2.95
10	I believe that Phonetics courses helped me a lot to improve my knowledge and skill of pronunciation	9	9.57	15	15.96	13	13.83	35	37.23	22	23.40	94	2.51

The data in table 3.4 represent three interrelated views of students on the actual pronunciation instruction incorporated in Phonetics courses. The items were made to elicit respondents' attitudes towards: a) the coverage given to pronunciation points, b) the degree of support and encouragement of Phonetics instructors provide, and c) the overall impact and contribution

the Phonetics course made on the development of students' comprehensible pronunciation. Item number 8 asks students' belief on the coverage given to pronunciation features in Phonetics topics. As the table shows, most of the respondents (52.13%) disagree, i.e. they believe there is enough coverage of features of pronunciation in Phonetics topics; 28.72% of them replied with no opinion

(undecided), whereas 19.15% agreed to say that the coverage is very less. However, the mean value of the responses (2.48) indicates that there is a scattered view of responses with a little negative inclination to show positive attitude toward coverage.

Regarding the students' feelings on the help and support provided by their Phonetics course teachers (item number 9), 44.68% of them preferred no opinion (undecided), whereas 28.72% responded with disagreement. The rest (26.60%) agreed that their teachers often give them enough support to improve their pronunciation skill. The mean score of the responses appeared to be 2.95. Hence, it can be said that most students were not satisfied with the help and support their teachers might have been giving in relation to

pronunciation topics.

In addition, interview question number 3 was made to ask the degree of encouragement teachers provide; some of them said that their teachers often encourage them but others said that their teachers don't like pronunciation topics and they don't give them enough support. Item number 10 asked students' belief in the help or contribution Phonetics courses in general and pronunciation topics in particular provide to their improvement of knowledge and skill of pronunciation. It is shown in the above table that 60.63% of the students disagreed. It means that pronunciation topics did not help them to improve their phonological skill of the English language. The mean score of the responses shows a 2.51 value which shows students' dissatisfaction about

the pronunciation topics. There are also other items that further try to illustrate the above point of discussion.

Table 3.5: Students' attitudes to the pronunciation activities and teachers' support

Item No.	Items	Responses				Total
		Yes		No		
		F	%	F	%	
16	Do the Phonetics course materials include activities that alert students to similarities and differences in intonation, stress, etc. between your native language and the English language	21	22.34	73	77.66	94
17	Do you often receive feedback from your Phonetics teacher on repeated performances with respect to intonation, stress and aspects of connected speech?	39	41.49	55	58.51	94

The items in table 3.5 were prepared to know students' beliefs in the nature of pronunciation activities and the roles teachers played to help students develop their prosodic skills and awareness of several aspects of connected speech that are believed to be helpful for intelligibility as recommended by different writers. With item number 16, students were asked whether or not the Phonetics course materials include activities that alert students to similarities and

differences in intonation, stress, etc. between Sudanese colloquial language and the English language. The data in the table show that 77.66% of the students replied that these comparisons were not included in the topics. Thus, the responses of the majority of the students' is not different from the previous discussion of similar points in table 3.4. However, this result should not be taken as vivid evidence to claim the inadequacy of the teaching materials and the activities because

a thorough analysis of the teaching materials is presented and discussed in a section a head after the discussion of the teachers' responses.

Item number 17 asked students whether or not teachers' often give them feedback on repeated performance with respect to intonation, stress and aspects of connected speech. For this item, 58.51% of the respondents said they do not often receive feedback on repeated performances regarding supra segmental and aspects of connected speech, whereas 41.49% replied 'yes'. Any it might still be possible to approximate the result to the view that a considerable number of the students were not satisfied with the feedback pronunciation/Phonetics teachers provided on their repeated performances in relation to prosodic and connected speech aspects of pronunciation.

In connection to students' feelings to the above points, another item (item number 14) was also included in the questionnaire. It specifically requires students to identify pronunciation

aspects which they spent more time practicing, i.e. aspects their teachers dealt with more during pronunciation topics. Most of them replied that they mostly practiced 'saying words with their right pronunciation' and practicing individual vowels and consonant sounds. Some students also added the use of stress in words and sentences. Few others claimed the use of intonation and changes of sounds that are common in connected speech. Therefore, most students believe that pronunciation topics focus more on accurate production of words. In the interview (item number 4) students were asked to show their reaction towards the overall pronunciation teaching. Most of them believed it to be inadequate. One student said 'we practice saying words with their right pronunciation which is very difficult for me and most of us forget to use it in normal speaking'.

3.2 Presentation and Interpretation of Teachers' Responses

The responses from teachers were presented and discussed in three

major categories. These are the attitudes of teachers towards the significance of pronunciation to EFL learners, the view of teachers on the teaching of pronunciation and their attitude to the current attention given to pronunciation teaching in Phonetics courses.

3.2.1 Teachers' Attitudes towards the Significance of Pronunciation: The Affective and Cognitive Component

This part of the discussion is concerned with teachers' views on the role pronunciation plays in foreign language learning.

Table 3.6: Teachers' attitudes to the relevance of pronunciation

Item No.	Items											Total	Mean
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I believe that with poor knowledge and skill of English pronunciation one can not be rendered as intelligible even if she/he is proficient in other aspects of the language	2	33.335	1	16.67	2	33.35	1	16.67	-	-	6	3.67
2	I believe that pronunciation is an extra element and it should be taught to students only if there is plenty of time, i.e. other aspects of the language should always be given priority	2	33.35	1	16.67	1	16.67	-	-	2	33.33	6	2.83
3	I believe that effective oral communication requires control of supra-segmentals more than control of the target language's vowel and consonant sounds	-	-	3	50	1	16.67	2	33.33	-	-	6	3.17

Under item (1) Phonetics teachers were asked their belief on the place of pronunciation in a foreign language communicative competence. And the mean score of the responses turned out to be 3.67 which means that the average response shows a positive inclination. In other words, three out of six respondents (50%) agreed that a person can not be regarded as proficient without intelligible pronunciation even if he/she is very good at other aspects of the target language. However, two of the respondents (33%) showed no opinion and one (16%) of them disagreed. The result, of course, shows some of the teachers are not aware of the place of pronunciation in communication.

The other item (number two) requires teachers to decide their position from the belief

that pronunciation is an extra element and it should be taught to EFL students only if there is plenty of time after addressing other areas of the language. Hence, 50% of them agreed to the belief whereas 33% disagreed and only one person 16% showed no opinion. As table (6) shows, half the respondents believe that pronunciation is an extra element and students should learn it only if there is extra time after having dealt with other areas of the target language. Therefore, as the mean score (2.83) of the responses show the teachers can be said to incline to a negative attitude towards the pronunciation component of a foreign language.

The last item (number 5) shown in the table demands teachers feelings about the belief that effective oral communication requires control of supra

segmentals more than control of the target language vowel and consonant sounds. The item exhibited a 3.17 mean value of responses which means that most of them incline to agree to the item. 50% (three of the respondents) agreed that effective oral communication requires more supra segmental control than distinctive sound segment control. However, 33% (i.e. two of them) disagreed and thought that effective oral communication is more of a matter of individual sound segment control. Therefore, the researcher can infer from the above discussion that most of the teachers seem to have a positive attitude towards the place of pronunciation in communication. However, they do not want to treat it equally as the other areas of language in their instruction. Hence, such beliefs stand against the needs

of their students the researcher has seen in the previous section.

3.2.2 Teachers' Attitudes towards the Teaching of Pronunciation: The Behavioral Component

This category presents teachers' view of addressing pronunciation in EFL instruction. It tries to depict the belief teachers have on the how of pronunciation teaching.

Item number (4) above requires teachers to respond to the belief that any pronunciation teaching must focus first on segmental distinction before prosody. 66.66% of the teachers (i.e. 4 out of 6) replied to agree to the item. The average response was calculated to be 2.17, and shows that most of them believe that distinctive sound system should precede prosodic features in pronunciation teaching. However, writers recommended the other way as they have the greatest impact on the comprehensibility of the

Table 3.7: Teachers' attitudes to the focus of pronunciation teaching

Item No.	Items	Responses											
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA		Total	Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
4	I believe that any pronunciation teaching must focus first on segmental destination before prosody	2	33.335	2	33.33	1	16.67	1	16.67	-	-	6	2.17
6	I believe that pronunciation practice must be an integral part of any oral communicative topic for EFL learners	1	16.67	3	50	1	16.67	1	16.67	-	-	6	3.67
8	I think that helping my students to recognize features of pronunciation such as stress, intonation and connected speech is essential for their use of English	2	33.335	2	33.335	1	16.67	1	16.67	-	-	6	3.83

learner's English" (2000:31). Giving priority to prosodic features of English not only improves student's comprehensibility but it is also less frustrating for learners (ibid). Therefore, the teachers can be said to have the counter

productive belief of the priority pronunciation features should be given in teaching.

The belief that pronunciation practice must be an integral part of any oral communicative topic for EFL learners was posed to respondents under item number (6). As the table shows 66.67% of them agreed to the item with a 3.67 mean value of responses. Unlike the above view teachers here show a positive attitude towards the coverage pronunciation should take in oral communicative topics.

Item number (8) in the table was concerned with teachers'

opinion about the statement 'helping students to recognize features of pronunciation such as stress, intonation and connected speech is essential for their use of English'. As the data in the table reveal, 66.66% of the respondents agreed to the notion of helping students to recognize supra segmental features and aspects of connected speech. Thus, a 3.83 mean score of responses shows a positive attitude towards the item.

Let us now see the belief of teachers in the goal of pronunciation teaching in table 3.8 below.

Table 3.8: Teachers' attitudes to the goal of pronunciation teaching

Item No.	Item	Responses				Total	
		Native-like		Intelligible			
		F	%	F	%	F	%
9	Which of the following do you think should be the goal of teaching/learning English pronunciation for EFL Learners?	-	-	6	100	6	100

Item number (9) asked respondents what they think should be the goal of teaching English pronunciation to EFL learners. A remarkable result was found that all of the teachers believe in teaching English pronunciation to help students achieve intelligible or comprehensible pronunciation rather than native-like performance. This belief actually conforms to the renewed goal of communicative pronunciation teaching. Many writers recommended that what is relevant for EFL learners is ‘to achieve comfortable intelligibility’ (Kenworthy, 1987;13). Dalton and Seidlhofer also explained that in teaching pronunciation for foreign language learners of English “the relevant question to ask is not: what is correct in relation to native-speakers’ norm” (RP or otherwise?) But: what is

appropriate and necessary to be able to communicate in specific situations? (1994:12).

Therefore, from the discussion made on teachers’ responses so far, the researcher can have the following points, teachers have positive attitude towards pronunciation in general (i.e. positive affective behavior), they also reflected positively on the goal (intelligibility) of pronunciation teaching. However, some of them do not still want to see the phonological component of English as an equally important component as other aspects of the language and they still seem to adhere to the traditional belief that any pronunciation teaching must focus on segmental distinction before prosody, i.e. a bottom-up approach to pronunciation teaching is what they think of.

3.2.3 Teachers' Attitudes towards the Actual Teaching of the Pronunciation Components of Pronunciation Topics

In this particular sub-section, it was tried to investigate the instructors' perceptions of the pronunciation

lectures they currently deliver as part of Phonetics courses. The items included tried to consider beliefs about the focus pronunciation is given in the materials, the role of teachers and perceptions on the learners.

Table 3.9: Teachers' attitudes of the pronunciation topics

Item No.	Items												
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA		Total	Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
5	I believe that pronunciation topics provide students with adequate and meaningful practice to improve their English pronunciation	1	16.67	1	16.67	1	16.67	2	33.33	1	16.67	6	2.83
7	I don't think that such pronunciation features as intonation, stress, rhythm and aspects of connected speech are given more focus than vowel and consonant sounds in Phonetics courses	-	-	1	16.67	2	33.33	2	33.33	1	16.67	6	3.5

Half of the respondents believed that pronunciation topics do not provide students with adequate and meaningful practice to improve learners' English pronunciation as shown in table 3.9, item number (5) above. However, two of the instructors (i.e. 33.33% of them) do not agree with their colleagues' perceptions. The average response shows a 2.83 mean value and means that there is an inclination to negative attitude to the procedures and activities the topics provide. This point was further crosschecked in the documents analysis section ahead in this part of the research. Item number (7) was prepared to know teachers' opinion about the focus prosodic features and aspects of connected speech are given by Phonetics courses they (instructors) teach. Half of them disagreed to the statement, i.e. they believe that those features are covered in the materials well enough. But two of them

preferred no opinion (undecided). The mean value (3.5) also shows that the average responses incline towards a positive attitude on the focus given. Relative focus was also the concern of the analysis made to the materials. Therefore, most teachers believe that the course tried to include pronunciation point that has greater communicative importance, but they don't feel that the materials or the topics do not adequately provide their learners with meaningful activities to help them develop intelligible control of pronunciation.

There was also an open-ended item in the questionnaire (item number 12) that was prepared to know teachers' concern of their students' needs in relation to pronunciation. The item asked instructors' opinion of the current teaching of pronunciation in pronunciation topics in connection with problems learners face in speaking and listening to

the English language. They responded that ‘there is lack of exposure of students to authentic materials’ so the students kept on suffering during listening and remained poor in speaking and listening. Another respondent stated ‘the low level of schema knowledge of students makes it difficult to help them improve their awareness of pronunciation through listening’. Similarly, another teacher wrote ‘students have problems of comprehending and hearing/producing the sounds’. Hence, teachers seem worried that even though there is a huge demand of pronunciation on the students’ side, the topics are inadequate and do not expose learners to meaningful authentic materials for ear training activities.

3.3 Interpretation and Discussion of the Pronunciation Topics in the Materials

In order to evaluate the approach of EFL pronunciation

teaching of a material, Dalton and Seilhofer recommended that the investigation should be made in terms of ‘selection and presentation’ (1994:70). Evaluation of the selection dimension considers the size of pronunciation features which is given priority and attention. Moreover, the aims of the exercises in relation to recognition and production were made. The production component includes two major categories: ‘speech production (micro-focus)’, i.e. a focus on discrete features of articulation, and ‘speech performance (macro-focus)’, i.e. a focus on holistic or global patterns of spoken English (Morley, 1991:497). The presentation component on the other hand, considers the availability and use of such procedures as ‘exposure, exercise and explanation’ (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994:71).

It was from the above

perspectives that two major objectives of the study, i.e. identifying the feature of pronunciation given priority and the recurrent procedure used, were addressed.

3.3.1 Identifying the Component of Pronunciation Given Priority

To investigate the pronunciation feature the materials incorporate with more focus, each feature of pronunciation included in every topic was identified. Frequency and percentage value were used to show the relative priority of aspects in the materials.

Table 3.10: The size of pronunciation components

No.	Aspect	Course				Total	
		Phonetics I		Phonetics II			
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	I. Segmental Distinctive sound segments (vowels, consonants, Diphthongs)	2	25	2	28.57	4	26.67
2	Syllables and word stress	3	37.5	1	14.29	4	26.67
3	II. Supra Segmental sentence stress	1	12.5	-		1	6.67
4	Intonation	-		2	28.57	2	13.33
5	Rhythm	-		1	14.29	1	6.67
6	III. Connected Speech Assimilation and Elision	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Contractions and weak forms	2	25	1	14.29	3	20
	Sum	8	100	7	100	15	100

As can be seen from the table above, the majority of the pronunciation topics included in both courses focus on segmental aspects. 53.34% of all the topics focus on teaching individual sound segments, pronouncing words by syllabification and stress; whereas

no exercise was concerned with significant aspects of connected speech such as Assimilation and Elisions. Only 20% of them focused on teaching contractions and weak forms.

Therefore, it is now possible to say that the segmental

features were given priority much more than those aspects of pronunciation which are believed to have greater communicative importance. Moreover, as the table shows, the first course (Phonetics I) far more emphasized segmental features and gave very insignificant place for supra-segmental features (i.e. only a topic on sentence stress). This kind of pronunciation teaching is known as bottom-up or structural (Hedge, 2000; Kenworthy, 1987; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994, etc).

3.2.2 Evaluating the Procedure and the aim of Pronunciation Topics

Investigation of the aim of the pronunciation topics was made by analyzing the type of activities in line with what the students are expected to do in every pronunciation topic. Hence, it was tried to identify every topic's objectives in terms of recognition (discrimination) and production (both 'micro' and

'macro' focus).

As can be seen from table 3.11, 100% of the topics in both courses were aimed at discriminating the pronunciation features and 93% of them were also aimed at accurate production of aspects. Almost all the exercises require students' accurate production by imitation. The most frequent technique was listen and repeat, i.e. Students were asked to give the correct pronunciation in every exercise. Only two topics require individual students with some kind of controlled speech performance and yet all the pronunciation exercises are to be done individually, i.e. they do not require interaction among students. No pair and group work activities were included to initiate Language. This kind of approach ignores the fact "pronunciation is never use aimed at acquiring intelligible pronunciation. an and Seidlhofer, 1994: preface). From the above discussion, it can

Table 3.11: The aims of pronunciation topics

No.	Aspect	Aim					
		Recognition (Discrimination)		Production			
				Micro-focus (Accurate Production)		Macro-focus (Speech Performance)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Segmental	8	33.33	8	53.33	1	6.67
2	Supra-segmental	4	26.67	3	20	1	6.67
3	Aspects of connected speech	3	20	3	20	-	-
	Total	15	100%	14	93.33%	2	13.34

end in itself but a means to negotiate meaning in discourse” (Dalton be possible to say that the teaching of pronunciation in the given situation is inadequate as it does not engage learners in using features of pronunciation meaningfully in discourse. Richards and Renandya, 2002) assert:

In order to become competent speaker and listener, a language learner needs to attend to the meaningful correlates of pronunciation features in the immediate linguistic context of communication

prioritizes the importance of supra segmental in communication”, “whole person learner involvement” and “a focus on meaningful practice based on learners’ real-life situation”; because “pronunciation is an integral part of communication” (Morley, 1991:493 – 495). Thus, the pronunciation topics investigated merely focused on discriminating features (structural approach).

The above table shows that no exposure procedure was identified in all the topics. It also reveals that most topics (60%) use explanation procedure, whereas, all the topics

A good pronunciation topic

Table 3.12: The presentation procedures of the topics

No.	Procedure	Course				Total of both courses	
		Phonetics I		Phonetics II			
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Exposure	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Exercise	8	100	7	100	15	100
3	Explanation	6	75	3	42.86	9	60

attempt to give exercise. However, most exercises are not integrated and presented with a very narrow context (i.e. word level and sentence level in most cases).

The result indicates that exposure is ignored in the topics, though it is recommended by writers in the area. Exposure is a decisive factor for language acquisition in general and pronunciation in particular (Brown, 1994; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994). Exposure procedure helps the learning of intelligible pronunciation in a way that ‘the use of language will be motivated by some communicative purpose and sounds will be heard as significant and will

be learned as such’ in the context of some task or activity (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994:71 – 72). Thus, the researcher can infer that the materials are inadequate in such regards.

Furthermore, the great imbalance that existed between the procedures as shown in table 3.12 tells that the pronunciation component of the materials also fail to account for the communicative instruction of pronunciation. Dalton and Seidlhofer suggested: “the appropriate way of pronunciation teaching is to combine all the three procedures in various ways rather than precluding one over the other” (1994:72).

4. Summary

This study was conducted for the purpose of determining the status of teaching English Pronunciation at the Red Sea University, English Language Departments. The descriptive method of research was utilized. A random sampling technique was used for gathering data from the students. All the English teachers in the departments were also taken as respondents. The questionnaire and the material analysis served as major instruments for collecting data whereas the interview was considered as a supportive instrument. A 30 percent representative sample of the students was the respondents and the checklist was used to evaluate the pronunciation topics in the materials. Regarding the first research question; ‘what is the attitude of students towards pronunciation?’ amongst them, 94.68% have positive attitude and wanted to be proficient in pronunciation. Moreover, 91.44% of the respondents expressed their appreciation for a native-like

pronunciation proficiency.

The second question of the study was ‘what is the attitude of teachers towards pronunciation?’ and 50% of the respondents, for example, believe that knowledge and skill of pronunciation are essential for intelligible EFL performance. However, half of them said that pronunciation should be taught to students only if there is plenty of time and 66.66% of them said that pronunciation teaching must focus first on segmental features before prosody.

The third research question was ‘which feature of pronunciation is given priority in the material? The finding from the materials evaluation showed that more than 53% of pronunciation topics deal with segmental features and only 26.6% of the pronunciation topics are spent on supra segmental features.

The fourth question was ‘what is the predominant aim of the topics? And it was found out that almost all the pronunciation topics aimed at accurate production and

discrimination of pronunciation features (micro-focus).

The last research question was ‘what is the predominant procedure used to present components of pronunciation?’. The findings showed that ‘exposure’ procedure is forgotten. The materials demand ‘exercise’ procedure to present features of pronunciation all the time and most topics also require explanation.

4.1 Conclusions

From the interpretations of the data and the findings, the following conclusions were made.

- Students’ responses show that the learners have positive attitude towards pronunciation. They also expressed their needs of pronunciation to become competent communicators of English and also to be effective EFL teachers in the prospect. Students’ desire for proficient English pronunciation was because of the problems they face in listening to competent speakers (natives and non-natives) and the challenges they might have

faced when they were talking to foreigners. However, they were not able to clearly identify those aspects of pronunciation that have greater communicative importance. This might be the result of very limited awareness raising topics they have gone through.

- Teachers’ responses showed that the instructors have positive attitude towards pronunciation at large. However, they favored the teaching of segmentals as prior to supra-segmental features. This shows that teachers still adhere to the structural (bottom-up) approach to teaching pronunciation. On the other hand, they suggest that intelligible/comprehensible pronunciation should be the goal of teaching/ learning pronunciation. This conflicting view shows teachers’ limited knowledge of the communicative approach to teaching pronunciation.

- Regarding the component of pronunciation given priority, segmental features were given greater focus in pronunciation topics

and very little emphasis was given to prosodic features and aspects of connected speech.

- Almost all the exercises aimed at simple discrimination and accurate production of features. They do not engage students in meaningful practice in speech performance.
- No pronunciation topic allows interaction of students in pairs or in groups that encourage language use, i.e. all the exercises are to be done individually. Hence, the materials are inadequate to help students achieve intelligibility in pronunciation.
- The procedure of presentation was also inadequate because of the total neglect of 'exposure', but repeated use of exercise only on recognizing features and micro-focus accurate production with explanation. Hence, 'exercise and explanation were the most dominant procedures used for presenting pronunciation points. Besides, all the exercises do not require interaction among students.
- Teaching approach is far less communicative to help learners acquire comprehensible

pronunciation.

4.2 Recommendations

Based upon the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

- The EFL teacher training program at the Red Sea University should address the needs of learners for intelligible pronunciation by providing the necessary support to how pronunciation functions in language use through a greater focus on supra-segmental and aspects of connected speech that have greater communicative function than distinctive sound segments.
- It is also essential to assist teachers to relate the 'what' of pronunciation to 'how' in their actual teaching. Moreover, the materials should provide adequate tasks to initiate meaningful practice by using a combination of 'exposure', 'exercise' and 'explanation' procedures. Furthermore, the exercises should also engage learners in a macro-focus speech performance in addition to the articulation of distinctive features. After all, exposure is one of the major

factors that affect intelligibility – the desired goal of learning/teaching a foreign language.

- Finally, it is recommended that similar researches should be conducted in other places. Other researchers should also make

inquiries into the status of the teaching of pronunciation at other universities, so that if similar problems and deficiencies are found, concerted efforts may be exerted to improve pronunciation teaching in all higher institutions in the country.

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