

Teaching English pronunciation at the secondary level in the context of Bangladesh



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ABSTRACT

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Keywords

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In order to make learners communicatively competent and transform them into resourceful global citizens, it is necessary to teach correct pronunciation. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to raise awareness among teachers and learners about English pronunciation at the secondary level in Bangladesh. Additionally, the objectives of the current study are to determine the underlying causes of pronunciation errors and effective ways of learning and teaching pronunciation. The researchers adopted a mixed-method research approach and collected both quantitative and qualitative data in the form of a questionnaire survey. The participants of the study were secondary-level learners and teachers in the Mymensingh region of Bangladesh. The findings indicate that there are no specific instructions, lessons, or aids in the textbooks to facilitate pronunciation learning. The results addressed the need for a drastic change in the curriculum and textbooks, as well as the integration of modern technological devices to impart intelligible pronunciation. While the learners have a tendency to utilize modern audio-visual aids and devices to learn pronunciation, teachers tend to use dictionaries. Moreover, learners rely on the pronunciation patterns of their teachers. Therefore, effective teacher training is imperative. The study endorses the inclusion of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as part of the English textbooks and the introduction of speaking/pronunciation assessment in the board exams. It also suggests that further in-depth studies on the nature of pronunciation errors among the learners at the secondary level are required.

Contribution/ Originality: The study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the nature and pattern of pronunciation errors of foreign language learners, offering new insights into their underlying causes, and suggesting effective ways of learning and teaching pronunciation within the contextual realities of Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contextual realities of the present world, English serves as the global language. To make the learners communicatively competent, the National Curriculum of Bangladesh also follows the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to design syllabus and materials for primary to higher secondary levels. Though teachers are busy with teaching grammar, vocabulary, dialogues, and other productive skills, little scope is found to teach pronunciation. Jahan (2011) implies that learners' poor English pronunciation skills result in foreign language anxiety and self-doubt (p. 36). According to Anis (2021), learning various aspects of pronunciation allows learners to speak fluently and improve their listening comprehension significantly (p. 132).

Yates (2002) argues that pronunciation matters more than grammar. A student can still be understood even if he or she is grammatically incorrect. However, it is next to impossible to understand weak pronunciation. Moreover, weak pronunciation at times can result in confusion in conversations (Fauzia & Amri, 2023). It also creates negative impressions of the speaker. Incorrect English pronunciation is a deeply rooted problem at the primary, secondary, higher secondary, and tertiary levels of education in Bangladesh. Alam and Uddin (2019) argue that the speaker who possesses poor pronunciation skills in English is often perceived as being like a person wearing dirty clothes (p. 30). Kabir, Ahsan, and Akter (2010) also feel that speaking loses its value without good pronunciation. In a foreign language teaching context like Bangladesh, speaking, listening and pronunciation are consciously or unconsciously ignored (Haque & Baki, 2012) as cited in Siddique (2023). According to Hasy (2024) “Despite the introduction of pronunciation skills as a course at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh, learners often fail to attain proficiency in pronunciation” (p. 2). Rahman (1996) recommends teaching pronunciation from an early age, since the use of the mother tongue increasingly influences foreign language learning as children grow older. Unfortunately, the curriculum hardly includes any specific course on pronunciation, and secondary-level textbooks overlook it entirely. Therefore, secondary students’ pronunciation issues must be identified so that solutions can be recommended. Regarding correct English pronunciation, Huq (1990) argues that most of the educated people in Bangladesh can read, write, and understand English well. However, very few of them can use it intelligibly while speaking (p. 164). The situation is even worse in suburban areas. Teaching pronunciation is often overlooked by curriculum designers, policymakers, scholars, and teachers alike. Very little research has addressed the pronunciation difficulties of secondary level learners in Bangladesh, particularly in suburban regions. Therefore, this study addresses a crucial part of gaining communicative competence in English and offers practical support for both teachers and students.

The theoretical basis of teaching pronunciation is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Though CLT emphasizes meaningful interaction, the ultimate goal of learning is gaining communicative competence. However, CLT does not advocate teaching pronunciation in isolation; rather, this approach aims to integrate pronunciation through communicative activities. The Input Hypothesis by Krashen (1982) suggests that learners learn language when exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. It implies that pronunciation instruction should occur in contextually rich environments where students can both hear and produce authentic language. Besides, most Bengali learners face difficulties pronouncing certain English phonemes. These errors hinder them from being competent in auditory and oral skills. Imam, Ropum, and Arif (2015) identified the reasons behind pronunciation errors at the primary level. They found that Bangladeshi learners (BL) mispronounce English sounds partly because some English phonemes have no Bengali equivalent, and partly because of geographical-historical differences between the two language communities. Moreover, Tahereen (2015) blames the influence of local dialects and accents for learners’ poor pronunciation. In Abedin (2011) observation, “The influence of the dialects on Bangladeshi learners’ pronunciation of English is very prominent” (p. 273). Therefore, these regional dialects shape and affect learners’ English pronunciation skills predominantly. The national education board is also responsible for this, as it has not included IPA symbols alongside the English alphabet/s (Anis, 2021). Here, the dearth of pronunciation materials, lack of time and practice, and lack of competent exposure can be identified as the major reasons for pronunciation difficulties. It is challenging for a teacher to address and rectify every student’s pronunciation problem in the classroom. Besides, there is no individual way to assess learners’ speaking and pronunciation skills in the public examinations. Though pronunciation is a very important aspect of communicative competence, very little empirical research has been done on how pronunciation is taught, practiced and perceived, especially in the Mymensingh region. Hence, this context-specific study identifies the reasons for pronunciation difficulties and errors among secondary-level learners while contributing to the broader international literature on pronunciation teaching in EFL settings.

1.1. Research Objectives

The present study aims to accomplish four specific objectives. They are—

- (i). To critically analyze the causes of pronunciation errors.
- (ii). To identify the ways that students prefer to learn English pronunciation at the secondary level.
- (iii). To develop awareness among teachers and learners regarding English pronunciation.
- (iv). To provide some recommendations to deal with pronunciation problems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The status of teaching English pronunciation around the world is very poor, as identified by Gilbert (2008) who viewed pronunciation as an aspect that is highly ignored or inadequately addressed in English programs around the world (p. 1). However, Gilbert (2008) did not identify the reasons why curricula and institutions deprioritize pronunciation. Barua (2022) remarked that pronunciation is a serious roadblock for second and foreign language learners since it is closely associated with learners' interactions with one another (p. 403). However, there is little scope to understand how specific pronunciation affects communicative interaction.

Brown (2001) maintains that the importance of appropriate pronunciation in developing learners' proficiency in English is undeniable and most of the teachers and learners are conscious of the fact that poor pronunciation is a significant barrier to their successful English language learning outcomes. Begum and Hoque (2016) cited that the learners of English as a second or foreign language encounter problems in their pronunciation. They argued that the learners are interested in learning pronunciation, but teachers avoid teaching this aspect of language. Because of globalization, the government is now focusing on English proficiency. Communicative language teaching emphasizes the four essential skills of the English language and the secondary level syllabus is designed to address and highlight reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. However, oral skills and pronunciation are still ignored to a great extent, leading to the gap between curriculum intentions and classroom implementation. Maniruzzaman (2008) identified the major reasons for learners' carelessness towards English pronunciation. According to Maniruzzaman (2008) learners' performance in the target language and communicative competence depend on their command of all the skills. In the context of Bangladesh, learners are psychologically motivated by the grammatical and lexical knowledge of English. This may also lead to a sort of carelessness in correct English pronunciation. Thus, psychological barriers are a major hindrance to teaching and learning English pronunciation.

Faizullah (2022) studied Bangladeshi students' English pronunciation problems and tried to find out possible reasons and solutions. The study conducted interviews with both teachers and learners in the Bhola district and suggested possible remedies. The sample was potentially limited and homogeneous. Moreover, deeper analysis is needed on the impact of the local Bangla language on English pronunciation. Besides, Maniruzzaman (2006), as cited in Mumeneen (2011) states that pronunciation is an inevitable fact in the case of listening and speaking, as the reception and production of information are highly influenced by intelligible pronunciation (p. 12). Similarly, Hancock (2003), as cited in Mumeneen (2011) maintains that pronunciation is inseparably tied to listening and speaking. He mentioned that secondary-level and tertiary-level education in Bangladesh assigns little importance to pronunciation while teaching and learning English. However, Mumeneen (2011) conducted a study on tertiary-level learners that had a limited sample size, and there is also a lack of quantitative evidence to generalize the results.

Regarding the causes of pronunciation errors of EFL learners, Kenworthy (1987) as cited in Nunan (1991) identified mother tongue, age, phonetic ability, identity and attitude, amount of exposure to English, motivation and concern for proper pronunciation as the key indicators that influence pronunciation learning. Likewise, Qader, Ashraf, Monira, Islam, and Rahman (2024) conducted a systematic review of the challenges of pronunciation practices in Bangladesh and pointed out large class sizes, mother tongue interference, and limited teaching resources as major factors that impede effective pronunciation instruction (p. 143). However, the study recommends further empirical research on the causes of pronunciation errors of the learners in the context of Bangladesh. Seraj (2012) also

mentioned the classroom environment, lack of trained teachers, teaching methods, regional influence, deficiency of modern teaching-learning materials, poor infrastructural facilities, and the education system as significant barriers to learning proper pronunciation. In this connection, Sultana and Arif (2006) also located several causes behind Bengali learners' continuous use of mispronunciations while speaking English, such as their lack of focus on speech sounds, their unawareness of the variations between the letters and sounds of a word, their inability to maintain phonological divisions of words, and their use of a wide variety of dialects having different pronunciations, stresses and intonations. However, their study did not include teachers' opinions regarding pronunciation errors. Thus, the present study investigates the influence of mother tongue in the Mymensingh region of Bangladesh. Along with this, Yasmin (2022) claimed, "As pronunciation teaching needs visual aids, classrooms should be well-equipped with advanced technological resources" (p. 64). This finding also deserves further field-level investigation. Salma (2020) reviewed the practices and challenges of teaching English pronunciation to secondary students in Dhaka. She found that misconceptions regarding pronunciation, low levels of motivation among teachers and students, less teaching instruction, and higher emphasis on reading and writing skills act as significant challenges to learning effective pronunciation. Mumeneen (2011) advocates that the recommended books should be balanced with theoretical and practical aspects of English pronunciation. Materials like computers, more practice-based books, audio and video CDs, headphones, pictures of speech organs, and IPA figures should be arranged. The present study investigates teachers' perceptions towards this opinion. Kabir et al. (2010) also added that pronunciation is an integrated and integral part of second or foreign language learning since it directly affects learners' communicative competence as well as performance. Their study used a survey questionnaire with closed-ended yes/no questions among students and teachers. The study followed classroom observation in a structured way. However, their way of data collection is closed-ended only and detailed teachers' opinions are not taken into account. The study recommends contributing a lot regarding the teaching of pronunciation in the Khulna division of Bangladesh. According to Hoque (2011) teachers only give importance to the reading, writing and grammar sections of the textbooks that are relevant to passing the SSC and HSC examinations. Moreover, Shuchi (2013) adds that some teachers might lack qualifications and that's why they are not aware of their own linguistic limitations in English. However, in support of the claim, the study did not provide enough statistical evidence. The novelty of the current study lies in examining the causes of pronunciation errors among secondary-level EFL learners in semi-urban areas of Bangladesh, with a particular focus on learners' preferred methods for learning pronunciation and teachers' awareness of these errors. By addressing these research gaps, the present study sheds light on the challenges of teaching pronunciation. As no prior study has been conducted in the Mymensingh region, the researchers sought to explore teachers' and learners' attitudes towards and awareness of English pronunciation errors.

3. METHODOLOGY

The current research is based on an empirical investigation of the target samples. It incorporates two kinds of data (Quantitative and qualitative) through questionnaire surveys. The study investigates learners' preferred ways of learning pronunciation through structured questions. Thus, the research is mixed-methods in nature. However, this study only deals with a few students at the secondary level in suburban areas around a specific region. It does not cover students in rural areas. It also excludes the higher secondary and tertiary level learners due to a number of limitations.

3.1. Sample

The present study was conducted in three different government secondary schools in the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. Two of them were Government Laboratory High School, Mymensingh, and Mymensingh Zilla School, both situated in Mymensingh Sadar; the other was Bhaluka Govt. Girls' High School, located in Mymensingh. In the questionnaire survey, a total of 191 respondents participated across the three schools. The researchers selected 130

respondents from Mymensingh and 61 from Bhaluka using a stratified sampling technique. These students were in classes 9 and 10 and were approximately 14 to 16 years old. Thus, their levels of competence were almost the same. The researchers also selected 10 English teachers from Mymensingh Zilla School and Government Laboratory High School and 5 from Bhaluka Govt. Girls' High School, all of whom had similar demographic and professional profiles. Both male and female teachers and students participated in the study. The participants were invited to express their views regarding learners' pronunciation problems.

3.2. Instruments

The study employed a questionnaire survey comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Part I of the students' questionnaire included four yes/no questions that took into account their proficiency levels. This part also included one multiple-choice item. Part II consisted of seven statements regarding learners' preferred ways of learning pronunciation. Specifically, this section sought to identify the ways in which they preferred to learn pronunciation. The statements were rated on a five-point Likert scale according to respondents' levels of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Before data collection, consent was obtained from the administration and respondents. A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents from Vidyamoyee Govt. Girls' High School, which is similar to the target sample. The teachers' questionnaire included yes/no, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. It consisted of two parts. Part I included seven multiple-choice items, and Part II included three open-ended questions. Informed verbal consent was obtained from the teachers before data collection. Data confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study.

3.3. Data Analysis

The quantitative data were presented using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. For responses collected from teachers and learners in the form of statements, the researchers conducted statistical analyses using percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. The qualitative data on teachers' views, derived from semi-structured and open-ended questions, were subjected to thematic analysis, direct quotations, and an examination of common responses. Combining the quantitative and qualitative results provided a more comprehensive picture of the research problem.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

The researchers strictly adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki while conducting the study. The selected participants voluntarily took part and were informed of the nature, objectives, duration, scope, and benefits of the research. They were also free to withdraw at any stage. In addition, informed verbal consent was obtained before both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously maintained, and the data were used solely to meet the research objectives.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Findings of Learners' Questionnaire Survey

The students' research questionnaire consists of four yes/no questions, one multiple-choice question, and seven statements having five options, in which 191 students of class 9 and class 10 took part. However, in the case of the Likert Scale statements, two scripts were blank, and 189 scripts were analyzed and presented in the tables. The summary of the results is given below in the tables with a logical explanation.

In the questionnaire, the first question was about an English dictionary. The researchers believed that an English dictionary is a basic aid for learning pronunciation. The question was added to familiarize the learners with the research area and help them understand that they would be expected to answer questions related to English language

learning. Questions 1–5 introduce the research area. These questions also make the learners aware of pronunciation and remind them of their shortcomings, which is the third objective of the study.

Table 1. Do you have an English dictionary at home?

Options	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	184	96.3%
No	7	3.7%
Total	191	100%

Table 1 shows that 184 students (96.3%) agreed that they had English dictionaries at home, whereas only 7 participants (3.7%) disagreed.

Table 2. Do you know the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols?

Options	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	26	13.6%
No	165	86.4%
Total	191	100%

Table 2 demonstrates that only 26 (13.6%) participants out of 191 were aware of the IPA symbols. However, in this case, a large number of participants, 165 (86.4%), disagreed with the second question, citing that they do not know the IPA symbols of English pronunciation.

Table 3. Do you have any books on English pronunciation?

Options	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	82	42.9%
No	109	57.1%
Total	191	100%

The results of Table 3 disclosed that more than half of the participants, 109 to be specific (57.1%), do not have any book on pronunciation, whereas 82 (42.9%) participants have books dedicated to English pronunciation.

Table 4. Have you heard about English vowel and consonant sounds?

Options	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	91	47.6%
No	100	52.4%
Total	191	100%

The question in Table 4 elaborates on Question 2. Here, 91 (47.6%) participants reported being aware of English vowel and consonant sounds. However, 100 (52.4%) participants were unfamiliar with English vowel and consonant sounds.

Table 5. Which of the aids do you use to learn English pronunciation?

Options	No. of students	Percentage (%)
Notes with Bengali pronunciation	6	3.2%
Mobile	145	75.9%
Dictionaries	40	20.9%
Total	191	100%

Table 5 offers a multiple-choice question that has three options. The results show that more than 75.9% of the participants (145 out of 191) use mobile phones to learn correct pronunciation, while 20.9% of the participants (40

out of 191) use dictionaries to perform the same objective. However, only 3.2% of the participants (6 out of 191) use notes with Bengali pronunciation. The findings from Tables 6 to 12 reveal learners' preferred ways of learning pronunciation, which is the second objective of the current study.

Table 6. I like to follow my teachers' pronunciation.

Likert Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly Agree (SA)	61	32.3%	4.05	0.87
Agree (A)	90	47.6%		
Neutral (N)	27	14.3%		
Disagree (D)	9	4.8%		
Strongly Disagree (SD)	2	1.1%		
	Total=189	Total=100%		

Table 6 shows that learners are more willing to follow their teachers' pronunciation. Here, 90 (47.6%) learners agreed, and 61 (32.3%) learners strongly agreed with the statement. However, only 9 (4.8%) learners disagreed, and 2 (1.1%) learners strongly disagreed. In addition, 27 (14.3%) learners did not express an opinion, as they were neutral. Thus, the mean score and standard deviation for this statement were 4.05 and 0.87, respectively. A high mean and a low standard deviation indicate that the learners demonstrated consistency in their responses.

Table 7. I am afraid of pronouncing unknown words.

Likert Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly Agree (SA)	13	6.9%	2.98	1.12
Agree (A)	63	33.3%		
Neutral (N)	37	19.6%		
Disagree (D)	60	31.7%		
Strongly Disagree (SD)	16	8.5%		
	Total=189	Total=100%		

Table 7 presents the statistics related to learners' anxiety or fear of pronouncing new or unfamiliar words. It shows that 33.3% of the learners agreed with the statement and 6.9% of them strongly agreed. However, 31.7% of the learners disagreed and 8.5% strongly disagreed, which denotes that they are not afraid of pronouncing new or unknown words. Here, 19.6% of learners were neutral, as they could not decide. Therefore, the calculated mean of 2.98 is close to the midpoint and slightly neutral. Moreover, the standard deviation of 1.12 indicates a moderate dispersion of responses, suggesting that they do not completely agree or disagree with the statement.

Table 8. I generally follow the pronunciation of my peers.

Likert Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly Agree (SA)	11	5.8%	2.99	1.04
Agree (A)	58	30.7%		
Neutral (N)	54	28.6%		
Disagree (D)	54	28.6%		
Strongly Disagree (SD)	12	6.3%		
	Total=189	Total=100%		

Table 8 shows a balanced distribution of the responses. In this statement, 30.7% of the students agreed and 5.8% strongly agreed, revealing that they like to follow their peers' pronunciation. However, 34.9% disagreed and 28.6% of the total learners were neutral with respect to this statement. The mean score is 2.99 and the standard deviation is 1.04. Again, the mean score is close to neutral and the standard deviation shows their scattered views regarding this statement.

Table 9. I listen to English songs/poems to improve my pronunciation.

Likert Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly Agree (SA)	72	38.1%	4.14	0.89
Agree (A)	89	47.1%		
Neutral (N)	12	6.3%		
Disagree (D)	15	7.9%		
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1	0.5%		
	Total=189	Total=100%		

Table 9 presents the results regarding learners' preference for listening to poems or songs to develop their speaking skills. Here, the results indicate that they are very willing to listen to audio materials, as 38.1% of learners strongly agreed and 47.1% agreed. A very small number of learners (8.4%) disagreed and 6.3% of learners did not express any preference, as they were neutral. The mean and the standard deviation for this statement are 4.14 and 0.89, respectively. The high mean and the low standard deviation revealed learners' uniformity regarding this. Except for textbooks, they are now aware of learning pronunciation with modern devices.

Table 10. I listen to TV news to improve my pronunciation.

Likert Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly Agree (SA)	45	23.8%	3.62	1.14
Agree (A)	79	41.8%		
Neutral (N)	18	9.5%		
Disagree (D)	43	22.8%		
Strongly Disagree (SD)	4	2.1%		
	Total=189	Total=100%		

In the case of visual materials as presented in the statement of Table 10, the learners again show a strong preference. They watch and listen to TV news to improve their English pronunciation, as 23.8% and 41.8% of learners strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. 9.5% of learners were neutral about this statement. However, 22.8% of learners disagreed and 2.1% of learners strongly disagreed with the statement. The mean score is 3.62 for this statement and the standard deviation is 1.14. Though the learners expressed moderate preference for this statement, they did not show uniformity regarding their responses, as the standard deviation was high.

Table 11. I find English movies an enjoyable pronunciation material.

Likert Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly Agree (SA)	76	40.2%	4.13	0.94
Agree (A)	81	42.9%		
Neutral (N)	16	8.5%		
Disagree (D)	13	6.9%		
Strongly Disagree (SD)	3	1.6%		
	Total=189	Total=100%		

In this statement presented in Table 11, the researchers wanted to know whether the learners like English movies as enjoyable material to learn English pronunciation or not. The results show that 40.2% and 42.9% of learners strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, with the statement. However, 6.9% and 1.6% of learners disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, which suggests that they did not find movies to be essential material to develop their pronunciation skills. Only 8.5% of learners remained neutral. Therefore, the mean score is 4.13 and the standard deviation is 0.94. This draws the attention of the teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers regarding learners' preference for materials other than textbooks.

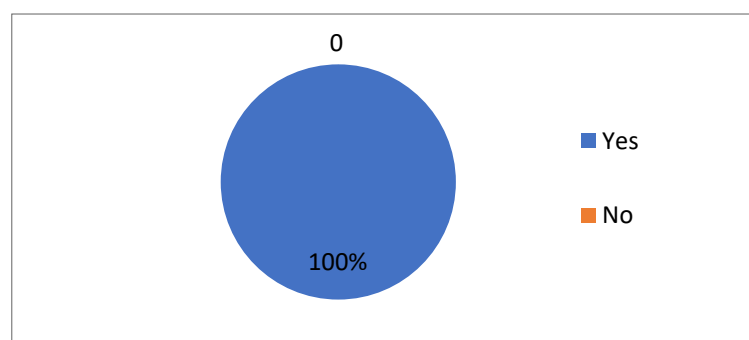
Table 12. I hesitate to speak because of my poor pronunciation.

Likert Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strongly Agree (SA)	17	9%	3.04	1.19
Agree (A)	67	35.4%		
Neutral (N)	33	17.5%		
Disagree (D)	51	27%		
Strongly Disagree (SD)	21	11.1%		
	Total=189	Total=100%		

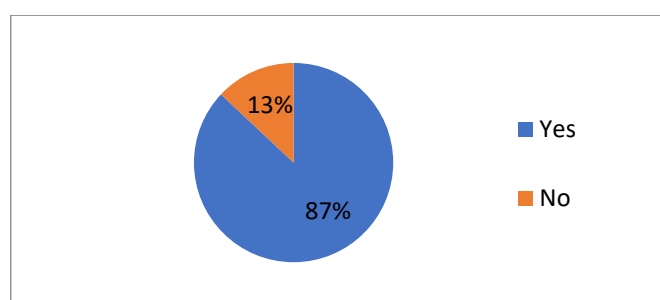
This statement used in Table 12 is connected to the influence of poor pronunciation on developing learners' speaking skills. It shows that 9% of learners strongly agreed and 35.4% agreed with this. However, 27% and 11.1% of learners disagreed and strongly disagreed in line with this statement. 17.5% of learners remained neutral. Thus, the mean score turns out to be 3.04, and the standard deviation is 1.19. This statement addresses the importance of pronunciation in developing communicative competence. Because of poor pronunciation, they felt hesitant to speak in English.

4.2. Findings of the Teachers' Questionnaire Survey

Part I of the teachers' questionnaire includes three yes/no questions that are related to the third objective of the research. Also, there were four multiple-choice questions and three open-ended questions answered by 15 teachers. They were given the freedom to provide their feedback and suggestions that can be taken into account regarding teaching pronunciation to secondary-level students. A summary of the results, including a valid interpretation, is presented in the figures below.

**Figure 1.** Do you think teaching English pronunciation is necessary for secondary level learners?

The first question in the teachers' questionnaire concerns the necessity of teaching pronunciation to secondary-level learners. The results presented in Figure 1 reveal that all teachers (100%) felt it was necessary to teach English pronunciation to secondary-level learners. This implies that teachers are well aware of the importance of teaching pronunciation in EFL classrooms.

**Figure 2.** Do you think that the textbook should have lessons on English pronunciation?

In the second question, teachers were asked to express their opinions on whether textbooks should contain lessons on English pronunciation. From the results presented in Figure 2, it is clear that 13 teachers (86.7%) out of 15 gave positive feedback, while 2 teachers (13.3%) did not support the idea of lessons being exclusively dedicated to English pronunciation in textbooks. This result directly indicates that the textbook does not have a lesson on pronunciation, which implies the neglect of this criterion of language learning.

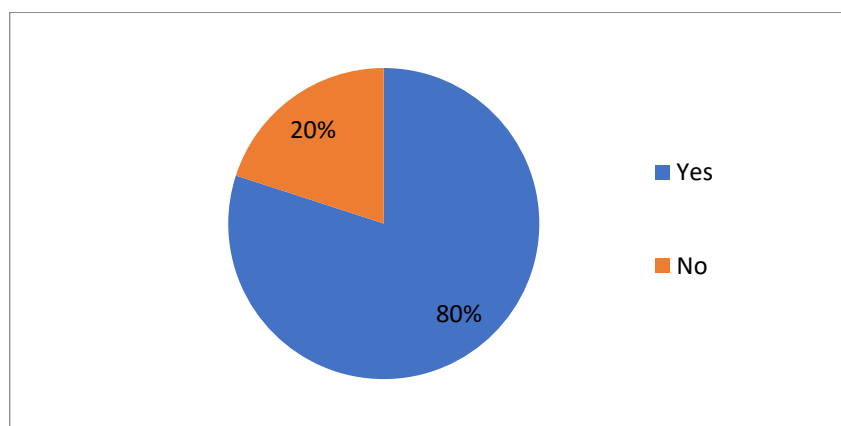


Figure 3. Do you find any influence of the local dialect of Mymensingh in English pronunciation?

The third question in Figure 3 addresses the influence of the regional dialect of Mymensingh on learners' English pronunciation skills. Here, 12 teachers (80%) confirmed that learners are affected and influenced by the local dialect of Mymensingh to a great extent while developing their pronunciation skills. However, 3 teachers (20%) refuted this view. The mother tongue has a direct influence on foreign language learning and in this case, the teachers acknowledge this fact. However, the types of influence and the errors caused by the mother tongue should undergo extensive analysis through research.

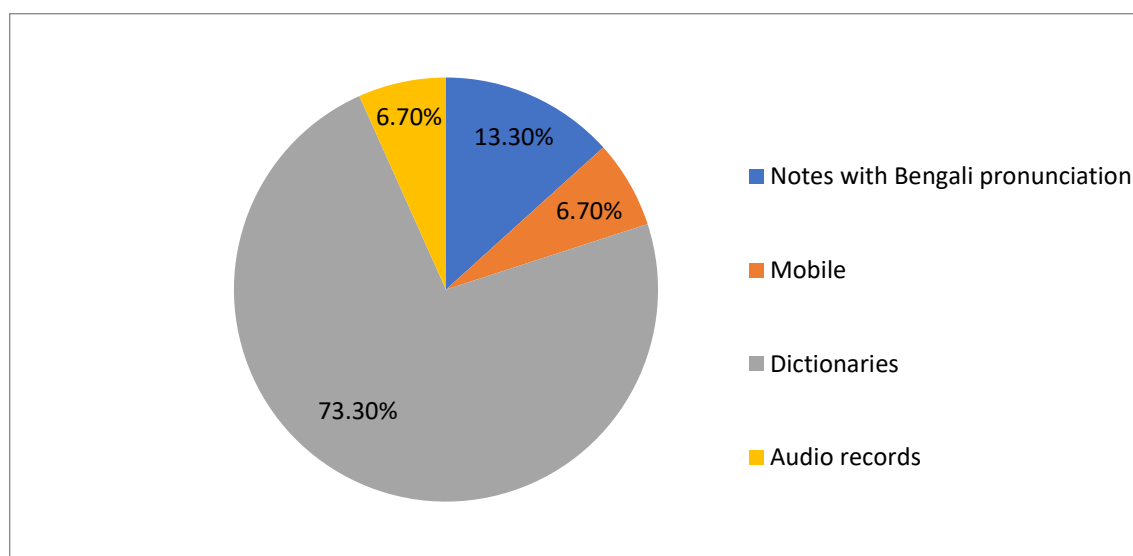


Figure 4. Which of the aids do you prefer to teach English pronunciation?

Against this question, there were four options and they were requested to select the best one in line with their preference. From the results as presented in Figure 4, it is found that 11 teachers (73.3%) were in favor of dictionaries, and 2 teachers (13.3%) advocated for notes with Bengali pronunciation. Besides, 1 teacher (6.7%) promoted the utility of mobile phones, and another teacher supported the use of audio recordings to teach English pronunciation.

Regarding this, there is a gap in the perspectives of learners and teachers. The learners prefer mobile and digital aids more, whereas the teachers prefer dictionaries. Therefore, the results aim to inform teachers about the pronunciation learning style preferences of their students.

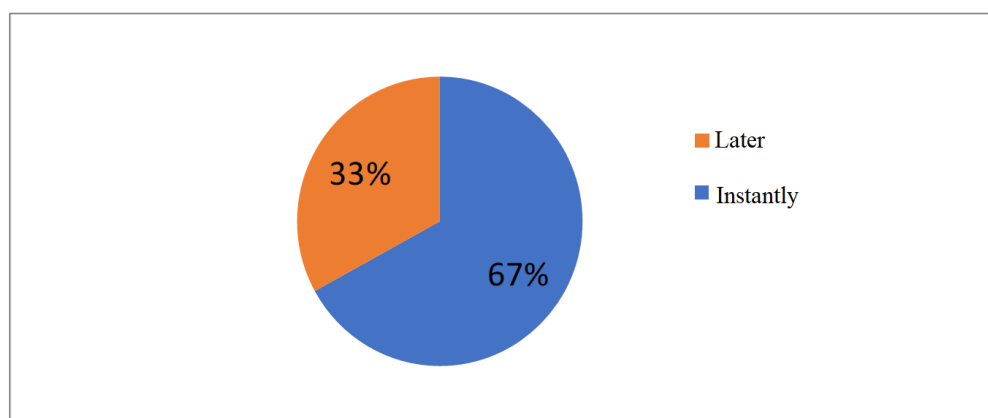


Figure 5. When do you correct learners' mispronunciations?

Figure 5 presents a multiple-choice question with two options. Teachers were asked whether they corrected learners' pronunciation errors immediately or later. The results in Figure 5 show that 10 of the 15 teachers (66.7%) chose to correct learners' mispronunciations immediately. Conversely, five teachers did not share this view and preferred to correct learners' mispronunciations later. Most teachers correct learners immediately because they believe that incorrect pronunciation can become a habit if it is not corrected.

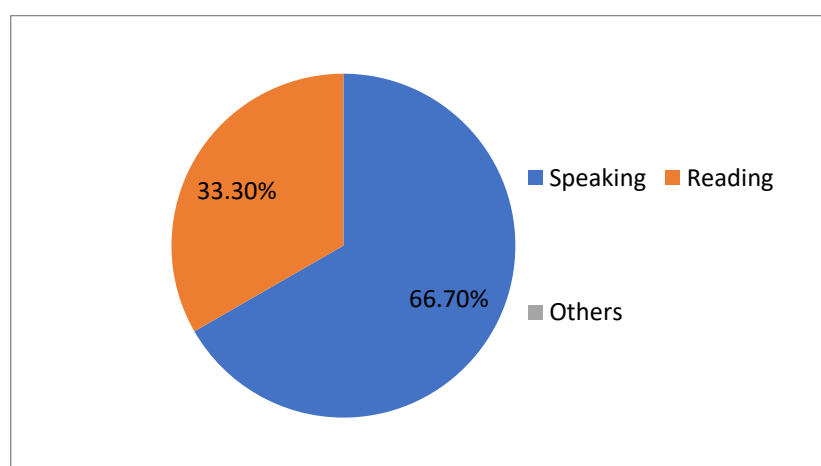


Figure 6. How do you identify the learners' pronunciation problems?

The 6th question is another multiple-choice inquiry that includes three options: through speaking, through reading, and others. Here, the teachers were asked how they detect learners' pronunciation problems. In this aspect, the results from Figure 6 demonstrate that 10 teachers (66.7%) identified learners' pronunciation-related problems through their speaking and 5 teachers (33.3%) recognized them when they read. This result indicates that students speak in the classroom and the teachers are aware of this. It is a positive sign that the learners speak and the teachers have the opportunity to correct them in the classroom.

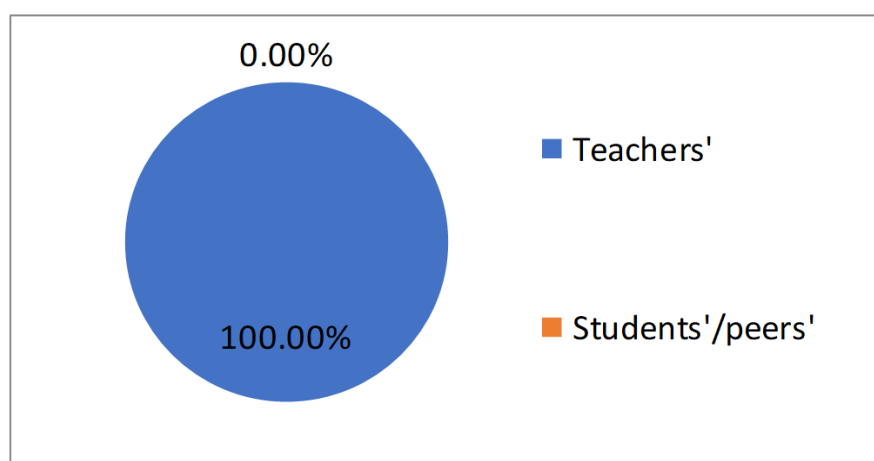


Figure 7. Whose pronunciation do the learners follow?

This question encompasses two options. The results presented in Figure 7 show that the learners are highly dependent on their teachers instead of their classmates or friends. All teachers (100%) accepted that the students' English pronunciation is primarily shaped by their teachers. There is a gap between teachers' and learners' perceptions regarding this issue.

4.2.1. Results of the Open-Ended Questions

The second part of the teachers' questionnaire addresses the first objective of the research. To identify the reasons behind learners' pronunciation errors and to critically analyze, the researchers included open-ended questions so that the teachers could express their views.

(i). What are the reasons behind learners' English mispronunciations?

In response to this open-ended question, most of the teachers answered in a uniform manner. The most common reason given is that students struggle to understand their teachers due to poor listening skills. Occasionally, they follow traditional mispronunciations of some words that they learn from their family, friends, and teachers. One of the teachers can be quoted—

'In our country, some words are mispronounced because people have heard them that way since childhood, and students do not change their pronunciation even when corrected. Because they do not understand the phonetic transcription in the dictionary, it becomes difficult to help them grasp the difference.'

Teachers also mentioned that the interference of the mother tongue is a significant factor, and they identified students' unwillingness as a root cause of poor pronunciation. The learners' poor listening skills and lack of motivation are also responsible. Furthermore, the majority claimed that the examination system is responsible for this. Because final board exams do not assess speaking and listening skills, and textbooks exclude pronunciation lessons, learners ignore pronunciation accuracy.

(ii). How do you like to teach English pronunciation?

This question seeks to address the second and fourth objectives of the study. The teachers recommended their preferred ways to teach pronunciation at the secondary level. Their responses can be represented in a bar Figure that offers a summary of the key findings. The Figure summarizes these based on the frequency of their descriptive responses.

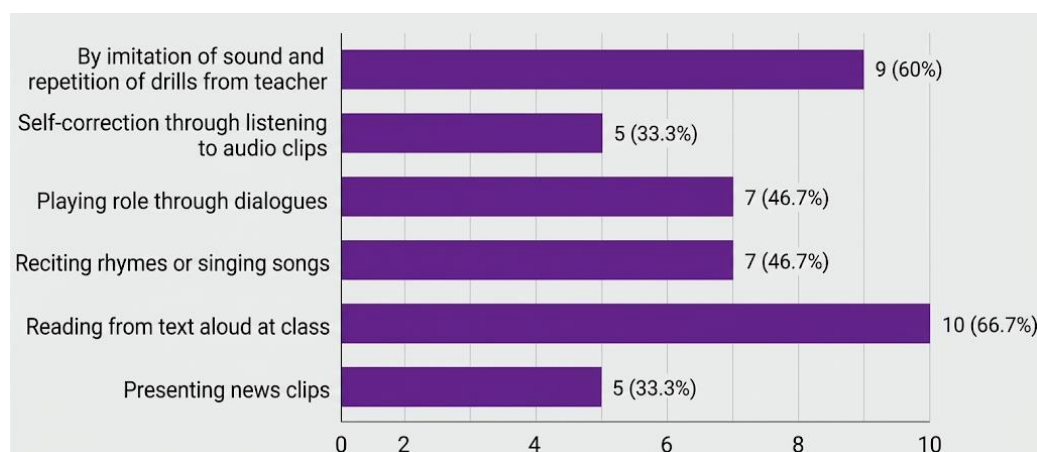


Figure 8. How do you like to teach them English pronunciation?

The results exhibited in Figure 8 reveal that 66.7% of 15 teachers were in favor of making students read texts aloud in the classroom, whereas 46.7% preferred role-playing through dialogues. Moreover, 46.7% chose reciting rhymes or singing songs as effective techniques for teaching English pronunciation. Additionally, 33.3% of the teachers supported learners' self-correction through listening to audio clips, while an equal proportion regarded the use of news clips as suitable methods for teaching and developing English pronunciation skills. As modern and audio-visual aids are not widely available in secondary-level English classrooms, teachers still prefer reading aloud as a method of teaching pronunciation. Similarly, the majority of teachers prefer learners to imitate sounds and practice repetition drills provided by the teachers.

(iii). *Write your suggestions for teaching pronunciation at secondary-level schools.*

This statement addresses the fourth research objective, which seeks to recommend ways of teaching English pronunciation at the secondary level. Teachers believe that large classes are unmanageable for teaching pronunciation. However, they recommend the use of modern technological devices to minimize these gaps. The majority of the teachers mentioned:

'Textbooks should include chapters on pronunciation, provide clear instructions for teaching pronunciation, and ensure that teachers receive proper training. The evaluation system should be modified as well.'

They also recommended that difficult vocabulary should be practiced by writing it on the whiteboard by the teachers so that all students can follow. Others suggested that:

'Teachers should make the learners speak in class and correct their pronunciation.'

Moreover, the teachers added that students should read English newspapers regularly to learn new words every day. Furthermore, watching English documentaries was suggested as a way to improve learners' speaking skills.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Discussion of the Students' Questionnaire

The findings of the learners' questionnaire survey are presented through percentages, means, and standard deviations. Regarding the general questions, the majority of students responded positively. Most learners reported having dictionaries at home, which implies that if they are taught how to use dictionaries effectively, it may have a positive impact on their learning. This view is well supported by the findings of Nation (2022) who emphasized access to supporting materials with proper instruction as an effective teaching aid.

However, Tables 2 and 3 show that the majority of learners are not familiar with IPA symbols, which form the basis of English pronunciation. Additionally, more than 50% of the students do not have any supplementary books on English pronunciation. Since many learners already have English dictionaries at home, teaching IPA symbols and

their usage could guide them towards correct pronunciation. The findings of Setter and Jenkins (2005) have also demonstrated the necessity of teaching IPA for speaking accuracy and fluency. Table 4 is particularly alarming because the majority of students lack basic concepts of consonant and vowel sounds. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010) argued that learners require foundational instruction in phonology for effective language comprehension. Table 5 demonstrates learners' preferred methods of learning pronunciation and interestingly, 75% of students agreed that they use mobile phones to learn pronunciation. It implies that nowadays the learners rely on digital devices more than dictionaries and guides. This finding aligns with previous research showing that mobile and digital devices are effective learning tools for their interactive nature (Burston, 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2017). This result serves as an indication for policymakers and curriculum designers that digital literacy, mobile phones, and audio can be effective aids for the purpose of teaching English pronunciation to learners.

For Table 6, the mean score of 4.05 indicates that learners are highly interested in following their teachers' pronunciation. The low standard deviation of 0.87 suggests that responses were closely clustered around the mean, reflecting consistency among learners. Derwing and Munro (2015) made a similar claim, noting that teachers' modeling plays a critical role in pronunciation instruction. However, learners' responses reveal a discrepancy: in Table 8, a lower mean score ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.04$) indicates that they also follow their peers' pronunciation. Therefore, teachers should be aware of this difference in learners' perceptions and pay careful attention to both their own pronunciation and learners' needs. Similarly, Table 7 shows a mean score of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 1.12, indicating that learners are not highly afraid of pronouncing unfamiliar words. It implies that teachers should encourage and facilitate learners' interest in learning the pronunciation of unknown words, as they are not afraid and show a reasonable level of confidence to a great extent. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) also supported the view that the teachers should foster pronunciation confidence through communication and regular practice.

Tables 9 and 10 investigate what the other aids are that the learners follow to improve their pronunciation. The tables have 4.14 and 3.62 mean scores, respectively. They listen to TV news, audio songs and recitation to improve their pronunciation. In the same manner, Table 11 presents that the learners find English movies as an enjoyable source of learning English pronunciation (mean score 4.13). Thus, the teachers and curriculum designers should consider incorporating audio-visual aids into pronunciation instruction. The standard deviations for these tables (0.89, 1.14, and 0.94, respectively) indicate moderate variation in responses. Previous studies have also revealed that authentic input with audio-visual materials increases learners' motivation to pronunciation (Vanderplank, 2016; Wang & Liao, 2017). Finally, Table 12 presents how the poor pronunciation affects learners' speaking fluency and accuracy. The results show that it highly affects speaking performance (mean score=3.04 and $SD=1.19$). Since pronunciation is closely related to speaking skills, teaching correct, and intelligible pronunciation is mandatory for making learners communicatively competent and improving their performance (Hymes, 1972). Levis (2018) findings supported this view suggesting that pronunciation is closely related to communicative competence and overall speaking proficiency.

5.2. Discussion of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire survey, including multiple-choice and open-ended questions, revealed the necessity of teaching pronunciation at the secondary level. Not only for language comprehensibility but also for the development of communicative competence, teachers emphasized pronunciation accuracy. The findings align with Levis (2018), who considers pronunciation an effective foundational component for language comprehensibility. Furthermore, effective pronunciation plays a crucial role in building learners' confidence in real-life communication (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Addressing gaps in current instructional materials, the teachers recommended the inclusion of pronunciation lessons in the textbooks, a view also supported by Derwing and Munro (2015). To improve learners' pronunciation systematically, pronunciation-focused activities should be incorporated in the instructional materials (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Teachers also expressed their concern regarding the influence of the local dialect of Mymensingh on students' English pronunciation. This phenomenon, known as first language (L1) transfer, often leads to pronunciation errors. Swan and Smith (2001) argue that such resistance is very difficult to change without targeted intervention. Teachers demonstrated awareness of this issue and identified it as a major challenge in teaching pronunciation. In addition, there has been a significant technological shift in language learning, leading to a divergence between teachers' preference for traditional resources, such as dictionaries, and learners' interest in digital and mobile tools. This shift is also supported by Godwin-Jones (2017). Walker (2010) also advocates the integration of technology and audio-visual materials to facilitate pronunciation practice.

Regarding error correction, the majority of teachers agreed on the importance of providing timely feedback. Similar findings are reported by Lyster and Ranta (2013) who emphasize timely error correction to prevent fossilization of incorrect forms. However, the researchers suggest the manner of error correction should be context-sensitive to avoid discouraging learners. Moreover, the teachers recommended curriculum and materials reform, teacher training, and the integration of modern technology to facilitate pronunciation practices (Goodwin, 2014).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

To summarize the study, it can be concluded that contextual realities should be addressed by curriculum designers as well as institutional heads to improve the teaching of pronunciation. Textbooks should be designed accordingly, and modern language labs with audio-visual aids should be used. Currently learners have little or no knowledge of IPA symbols. Therefore, textbooks should include IPA symbols from the elementary level. Textbooks and audio-visual aids motivate learners to learn pronunciation. Learners mostly follow their teachers' pronunciation. Hence, teachers should receive proper training. Besides, there are some gaps between teachers' and learners' perceptions regarding the teaching of English pronunciation and these gaps should be addressed rightly. Special training programs should be arranged regularly on English pronunciation for teachers so that they can facilitate learning in large classrooms. The inclusion of specific lessons on pronunciation in textbooks can further ease the learning process. Moreover, pronunciation skills should be measured consistently in public examinations to spot learners' problems and track their progress. As the learners prefer modern language learning tools such as mobile applications, audio, and video materials, authorities and teachers should take this preference into account. Teaching pronunciation should be given equal importance to the teaching of vocabulary and grammar. Regular practice and demonstration of movies, documentaries, and audio clips can improve learners' overall language skills as well as their pronunciation skills. Based on the research findings, the present study recommends further research on the nature of pronunciation errors among secondary level learners through empirical analysis.

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Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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Appendices.

Appendix A presents 'Students' Questionnaire'.

Appendix A. Students' Questionnaire.

Title of the study: "Teaching English pronunciation at the secondary level in the context of Bangladesh"

Name of Institution:

Male/Female:

Hello dear students! Good day! The purpose of this survey is to identify the ways of learning English pronunciation among secondary learners, especially of class ix and x. The researchers will identify the problems in your pronunciation and will seek the opinions of the respected teachers to recommend some solutions. You are requested to respond to each statement individually; do not share your views with others. Your response will be kept confidential.

Part I: Yes/no Question Items

1. Do you have an English dictionary at home? Yes/No
2. Do you know the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols? Yes/No
3. Do you have any books on English pronunciation? Yes/No
4. Do you know the vowel and consonant sounds? Yes/No
5. Multiple-choice question: Which of the following aids do you use to learn pronunciation?

Notes with Bengali pronunciation/ mobile/dictionaries

Part II- Agreement scale: Please read the statements and put a (✓) mark on the right scale to express the extent of your agreement or disagreement.

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I like to follow my teachers' pronunciation.					
2.	I am afraid of pronouncing unknown words.					
3.	I generally follow the pronunciation of my peers.					
4.	I listen to English songs/poems to improve my pronunciation					
5.	I listen to TV news to improve my pronunciation.					
6.	I find English movies as an enjoyable pronunciation material.					
7.	I hesitate to speak because of my poor pronunciation.					

Thank you!

Appendix B presents 'Teachers' Questionnaire'.

Appendix B. Teachers' Questionnaire.

Title of the Study: "Teaching English pronunciation at the secondary level in the context of Bangladesh"

Name of Institution:

Male/Female:

Greetings! Good day! The purpose of this survey is to identify the difficulties in English pronunciation among secondary learners, especially of class ix and x. The researchers will identify the problems and hereby seek the opinions of the respected English teachers in order to recommend some feasible solutions on the basis of teachers' suggestions. Your response will be kept confidential.

1. Do you think teaching English pronunciation is necessary for secondary level learners? Yes/No
2. Does the textbook have any chapter on English pronunciation? Yes/No
3. Do you find any influence of the local dialect of Mymensingh in English pronunciation? Yes/No

4. Which of the following aids do you prefer to teach English pronunciation?

Notes with Bengali pronunciation/ mobile/dictionaries

5. How do you correct learners' mispronunciations? *Instantly/ later/ others*

6. How do you identify the learners' pronunciation problems?

Through their speaking/ through their reading

7. Whose pronunciation do the learners follow? *Teachers'/classmates'*

8. Please mention the reasons behind learners' English mispronunciations.

9. How do you like to teach them English pronunciation?

10. Please add your suggestions for teaching English pronunciation at secondary-level schools.

Thank you for your cooperation!

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