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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRONUNCIATION TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN HALALE SECONDARY AND PREPARATORY SCHOOL FOCUSING ON GRADE TEN IN ETHIOPIA

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study The main objective of this study was assessing teachers' and students' attitudes towards pronunciation teaching and learning strategies and their implementation in Halale Secondary and Preparatory School focusing on grade ten. To this end, descriptive research design was used. To collect data, questionnaire, interview, classroom observations and textbook analysis were utilized .The data were collected from 243 participants (240 students and 3 teachers). The students were selected using simple random sampling technique while their teachers were selected using available sampling technique. The data collected from the participants using the aforementioned instruments were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The analysis revealed that both teachers and students have positive attitude towards pronunciation teaching and learning. Regarding the implementation, the majority of the teachers did not focus on supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation teaching. The textbook also does not give emphasize to the supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation. Thus, it was concluded that teachers and students have positive attitude for the structural oriented of teaching and learning and the approach of grade 10 English textbook is structural or bottom up and less communicative to help students and teachers who have limited knowledge of the communicative approach of teaching and learning pronunciation. Consequently, it was recommended that the English language textbook of grade ten should address the needs of students on intelligible pronunciation by providing the necessary support on how pronunciation functions in language use through a greater focus on supra-segmental aspects of connected speech that have greater communicative function. This can gear teachers to focus on supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation teaching.

## INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is an area of English language learning which seems to provoke mixed reactions among teachers' and students' attitude. Speaking English language partly requires the ability to produce its sounds in ways that are intelligible to other speakers (Harmer, 2001). The awareness of pronunciation features that can obviously be used by a competent speaker helps for listening competently (Hedge, 2000 & Lynch, 1983), so it is also possible to assert that teaching intelligible pronunciation is addressing the communicative needs of learners. For the development of pronunciation's teaching, Richards and Renendaya (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). This indicates pronunciation's teaching starting all the way from the traditional approach to the current

communicative language teaching has shown a significant change of concern. Pronunciation's teaching has broadened with significant consideration in the communicative era. 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 introduction of communicative approach, with its interest in the use of language in discourse, has been accompanied by a shift of emphasis in pronunciation teaching to 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 us to the increasing awareness of its communicative functions (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Therefore, the present day's EFL instruction claims adequate treatment of pronunciation as part of its communicative objectives. The contemporary concern on 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 supra-segmental d) meaningful and contextual manner of teaching it....etc (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994). It is also quite difficult to separate teachers' and students' attitudes when considering the role of pronunciation in EFL classroom. If teachers try to teach in accordance with learners' needs, it follows those students' attitudes have an effect on classroom practice. Macdonald (2002) suggests that both teachers and students see some value in pronunciation although the extent of this is likely to depend on the learning context and a multiplicity of other factors. So, if teachers feel uncomfortable with the teaching of pronunciation, they may avoid an explicit focus on it, or if they undervalue the need for pronunciation instruction, they might assume their students do not view it as particularly important. Therefore, this research intended to assess teachers' and students' attitude towards pronunciation teaching and learning strategies and their implementation in Halale Secondary and Preparatory School focus on grade ten.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** Descriptive research design was used in this study. It is a fact finding study with adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2003). It describes what is; and it describes with emphasis what actually exists: current conditions, practices, situations, or any phenomena. Since the present study was concerned with assessing teachers' and students' attitudes towards pronunciation teaching strategies and their implementation, the descriptive design of research was an appropriate method to be used.

**Research Setting and Participants:** This research was conducted in Halale Secondary and Preparatory School. This school is located in Kindo Didaye Wereda Halale Town Wolaita Zone South Nation Nationalities and People Regional State of Ethiopia. The data was collected in 2017. The reasons of selecting Halale Secondary and Preparatory school for this study are related to students' difficulty in their English pronunciation and familiarity with the school. In this regard, Vanderstoep and Johncton (2009) said that convenient sampling often involves people whom the researchers know. So that the researchers used convenient setting, this helped the researchers to collect relevant data appropriately. The participants of the study were all English language teachers and 240 sample students. There were three English language teachers in the selected grade level in the school. All English language teachers were selected for this study; the teachers and students were practically engaged in the teaching and learning of English language. Thus, they provided the data needed for this study. The textbook being used in the selected grade level was also used to collect data

**Sampling Techniques:** In Halale Secondary and Preparatory School there were 597 grade ten students in ten sections and three teachers teach in this grade level. Out of 597 grade ten students, 240 sample students were taken as a sample using Slovine's sample size determination formula:  $n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne2}$

Where

$$= \text{sample size} \quad N = \text{Population} = \text{error margin while } 5\% \text{ in social science study. Therefore, } n = \frac{597}{1 + 597 \times (5 \div 100)^2} = 240 \text{ students were the sample size.}$$

Then 240 students were propositionally distributed among the sections. Lottery method was used to select students from each section. For this, the researchers mainly used simple random sampling technique. According to Creswell (2003) simple random sampling is a basic type of sampling method. Its principle is that every subject has the same probability of being chosen. Simple random sampling is a sub set of individuals (a sample) chosen from a large set or population. Each individual is chosen randomly and entirely by chance, such that each individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process and the lottery method was prepared to identify the sample group from the total list. Regarding the teachers, all grade 10 teachers were taken for the study as their number is manageable to study.

**Method of Data Analyses:** After collecting raw data, looking at the data for inconsistency, sequencing and sorting them into categories of similar nature was prioritized. Then, those data requiring numbers and percentages were tabulated and analyzed by using SPSS (statistical packages for social sciences, version 16). The quantitative data that were collected through questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed whereas the qualitative data which were collected through interview, some part of questionnaire, observation and evaluation of textbook were qualitatively analyzed. The analysis of data was on the basis of research questions. And the data that were collected through four tools were analyzed, interpreted and discussed in integrative manner.

## RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

**Students' attitudes towards pronunciation learning:** The first item in the students' questionnaire, table 1, requires respondents' attitudes on the importance of pronunciation. The result shows that 95% of the students agreed (58.4 % of students strongly agreed and 36.6% of students agreed) with the importance of pronunciation. However, 5.0% of them disagree with it. This reveals that tremendous number of the students (95%) expressed their agreement with the relevance of English pronunciation for effective communication. In 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 shows 89 % of the respondents agreed that they want to improve their pronunciation. Hence, the learners have a great desire to improve their English pronunciation. Item number 6 was designed to know the students attitude towards speaking a native-like pronunciation which is related to identity issues that is regarded as an important factor in foreign language learning. The result shows that only 8.4% of the respondents disagreed to appreciate a native like proficiency whereas, 89.1 % of them showed their agreement. These reveal that a huge number of the students have desire to speak with a native- like pronunciation.

In connection to the above information, respondents were also asked to provide reasons regarding their necessities and lacks in learning English pronunciation. Item number 7 was designed to know if respondents actually need to improve their pronunciation skill and to cross-check their responses in the item number 1, 2 and 6. As the results shows, 99.2% of the respondents want to improve their knowledge and skill of English pronunciation for a number of reasons they mentioned.

**Table 1. Students' attitudes towards pronunciation learning**

Key:

Strongly agree-SA Disagree-D

Agree-A Strongly disagree-SD

Undecided-U

Item no	Items	Responses										Total	
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1.	I believe that good English pronunciation is very important to communicate successfully.	139	58.4	87	36.6	0	0	12	5.0	0	0	238	
2	I want the knowledge and skill of English pronunciation to be effective.	136	57.1	75	31.5	7	2.9	20	8.4	0	0	238	
3	I do not think that learning vowel and consonant sounds of English and how they are pronounced in words and speech is important for me as compared to grammar and vocabulary.	0	0	4	1.7	6	2.5	90	37.8	138	58.0	238	
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.	196	82.4	38	16.0	4	1.7	0	0	0	0	238	
5	I need to learn pronunciation features such as consonant and vowel sounds, stress and intonation to be included in my oral communication section like that of vocabulary, and other areas of the language.	190	79.8	44	18.5	2	8	2	8	0	0	238	
6	I appreciate second language speakers who speak English with a native like pronunciation	122	51.3	90	37.8	6	2.5	20	8.4	0	0	238	
		Responses										Total	
		Yes					No						
		F		%		F		%		F		%	
7	Do you want to improve your knowledge and skill of English Pronunciation?	236		99.2		2		8				238	
8	Do you encounter difficulties when you speak or listen in English because of pronunciation problem?	230		96.6		8		3.4				238	

**Table 2. Teachers' attitude towards pronunciation teaching**

Key:

Strongly agree-SA Disagree-D

Agree-A Strongly disagree-SD

Undecided-U

Item no	Items	Responses										Total	
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1.	With poor knowledge and skill of English pronunciation one cannot be rendered as intelligible even if he/she is proficient in other aspects of the language	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
2	Pronunciation is an extra elements 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.	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
3	Pronunciation practice must be an integral part of any oral communicative lesson for EFL learners.	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
		Responses										Total	
		Native like				Intelligible / comprehensible							
		F		%		F		%		F		%	
4	Which of the following should be the goal of teaching English pronunciation for EFL learners?	0		0		3		100				3	

**Table 3. Teachers' Response to the Implementation of Pronunciation Teaching Strategies**

Key:  
 Strongly agree-SA  
 Disagree-D  
 Agree-A  
 Strongly disagree-SD  
 Undecided-U

Item no	Items	Responses										Total
		SA		A		U		DA		SDA		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I believe that any pronunciation teaching must focus first on segmental distinction before prosody.	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
2	I think that helping my students to features of pronunciation such as stress, intonation and connected speed is essential for use of English like that of vocabulary and grammar.	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

**Table 4. Results of textbook analysis related to the approach of pronunciation teaching strategies**

No	Pronunciation Aspects	Unit	Page	Focus			Presentation			Recognition	
				Segmental	Prosody	Connected speech	Exposure	Exercise	Explanation	Micro-focus	Macro-focus
1	Word stress	4	72	X					X	X	
2	Word stress	5	84	X					X	X	
3	Intonation	8	148		X		X				X

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, other said that they need pronunciation because they want to speak English like native speakers. Under item number 8, students were asked whether or not they encounter communication difficulties because of pronunciation problems. As the result shows, 96.6% of them responded that they face pronunciation related problems when they speak in English. The item number 3, 4 and 6 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. Item number 3 requires the respondents to show their agreement or disagreement on learning the distinctive vowel and consonant sound of English and how they are pronounced in words and speech. Out of 100%, 58% of the respondents strongly disagreed to show their awareness about the value of learning the segmental features. The respondents with a 95.8% (37.8%disagreed and 58% strongly disagreed) tell us that most of the students recognized 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 (82.4%strongly agreed and 16% agreed) which is 98.4% of agreement was given by respondents to show the significance of learning word and sentence stress patterns to help them realize important point in speech. Item number 6 was designed to know the respondents attitude towards learning different components of English pronunciation in an integrated manner, the result shows 98.3%( 79.8% strongly agreed and 18.5% agreed) of the students agreed to learn segmental and prosodic features in combination. To get detail information, the researchers made interview with the students. Similar to questionnaire number 11, students were asked their opinion about learning English pronunciation. Most of them replied that they wanted to improve English pronunciation. For instance; S2 said "good pronunciation helps me develop confidence in using English to communicate with other person like foreigners and to be effective English language student." Based on the instruments the students have positive attitude towards pronunciation learning. Most students want to learn the different aspect of pronunciation; the respondents are concerned with stress, intonation, rhythm and aspects of connected speech in addition to individual sound and consonant sound.

This awareness of what pronunciation entails and significance of learning them seems to provide more support on earlier discussions with item number 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8 which revealed that the respondents attitude towards proficient pronunciation in general. Most important of all is that the students desire to learn prosodic features because pronunciation means more than matters 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 (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; Hedge, 2000; Brown, 1994; Kenworthy, 1987; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994.etc.)

**Teachers attitude towards pronunciation teaching:** As the data shows under item number 1 English teachers were asked their belief on the place of pronunciation in a foreign language communicative competence. The result shows that 100 % (33.3% agreed and 66.7% strongly agreed) of them agreed that a person cannot be regarded as proficient without intelligible pronunciation even if he/she is very good at other aspects of the target language. The other item (number 2) required teachers to decide their position on 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. Here 100% of them strongly agreed with the belief .As the result shows, all the respondents believe that pronunciation is an extra element and students should learn it only if there is extra time having dealt with other areas of the target language. Therefore, it can be said that the teachers incline to have negative attitude towards the pronunciation component of a foreign language.

The belief that pronunciation practice must be integral part of any oral communication lesson for EFL learners was posed to respondents under item number 3. As the table shows 100 % (66.3% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed) of them agreed with the item. Unlike the above view, teachers here show a positive attitude towards the coverage of pronunciation in speaking lessons. The other aspect is the belief of teachers on the goal of pronunciation teaching. Item number 4 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 that teaching English pronunciation should help students achieve intelligible pronunciation rather than native like performance. This belief actually conforms to the renewed goal of communicative pronunciation teaching. From the results made on teachers' responses, we can have the following points, teachers have positive attitude towards pronunciation in general, they also reflected positively on the goal (intelligibility) of 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 second language learners of English" the relevant question to ask is not: what is correct in relation to a native speakers' norm (Research participants or otherwise)? But: what is appropriate and necessary to be able to communicate in specific situation? (1994).

**Implementation of Pronunciation Teaching Strategies:** Item number 1 requires teachers to respond to the belief that any pronunciation teaching must focus first on segmental distinction before prosody. The result shows that 33.3% of the teachers agreed and 66.7% of them strongly agreed. The sum

response showed that 100% of the teachers believe that distinctive sound system should precede prosodic features in pronunciation teaching. Item number 2 on Table 3 was concerned with teachers 'opinion on 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 on the table reveals, 100 % of the respondents agreed with the notion of helping students to recognize supra- segmental features and aspects of connected speech. Thus the responses show they have a positive attitude towards the item. Interview was conducted to get detail information. In the interview part teachers were asked how they decide if and when to correct students pronunciation mistakes as opposed to an accentual difference. All of the teachers gave the impression, which they mainly wanted to ensure students were intelligible and could communicate effectively i.e. T1 said "I haven't focused on students' pronunciation mistake correction rather I considered whether or not I understand my students." T2 said "I focus on students' intelligible pronunciation." And also T3 responded "I have not decided if and when to correct students pronunciation mistake." From the above findings it is possible to say that the teaching of pronunciation in grade ten is inadequate as it does not engage learners to use features of pronunciation meaningfully in discourse. Richards and Renendya (2002:183) 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". The result showed in the findings that distinctive sound system should precede prosodic features in pronunciation teaching. However, writers recommended the other way. For example, Cece Murcia and Olshtain noted (2000:32) "a pronunciation course must focus first and foremost on supra segmental as they have the greatest impact on the comprehensibility of the learners".

**The coverage and procedure of pronunciation teaching in the textbook:** Textbook analysis result concerning the coverage and procedure of pronunciation in the textbook will be presented. As can be seen from the above table, the textbook does not give attention to pronunciation lessons. The textbook has twelve units and in each unit there are two subsections and in each sub sections two to three speaking sections were there , but from the total of 53 speaking section only three (in unit 4, unit 5 and unit 8) pronunciation sections with poor preparation were concerned. Except one lesson, the focus of the three sections were on segmental aspects ;the two lessons focus on teaching individual sound segments, pronouncing words by syllabification and stress; whereas no exercises were presented with significant aspects of connected speech such as assimilations, elisions, contractions and weak forms. In general, it is now possible from this poor approach of the textbook to say that the supra-segmental features of pronunciation were not given priority and attention, since the aspects were believed to have greater communicative importance. So, this kind of pronunciation teaching is known as bottom up structural approach (Hedge, 2000, Kenworthy, 1987; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994).

## Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

Based on the findings and their interpretations, it was concluded that teachers and students have positive attitude for

the structural oriented of teaching and learning and the approach of grade 10 English textbook is structural and less communicative to help students and teachers who have limited knowledge of the communicative approach of teaching and learning pronunciation.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn the following recommendations are made. Even if teachers and students have positive attitude in pronunciation teaching, the students should clearly identify aspects of pronunciation that have greater communicative importance and focus on it and also teachers ought to focus on prosodic features of pronunciation teaching. The English language textbook of grade ten should address the needs of students on intelligible pronunciation by providing the necessary support on how pronunciation functions in language use through a greater focus on supra-segmental and aspects of connected speech that have greater communicative function. It is also essential to assist teachers to relate the 'what' of pronunciation to 'how' in their actual teaching. Teachers, material writers and all concerned body should have the counterproductive belief on the priority pronunciation features should be given in teaching.

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