

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ENCOUNTERED BY KURDISH EFL TEACHERS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the challenges faced by Kurdish teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) when teaching English pronunciation in public schools across the Duhok governorate of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Despite more than twelve years of dedicated English study, many Kurdish EFL learners continue to experience difficulty in achieving native-like pronunciation, indicating persistent shortcomings in current instructional practices. Adopting a mixed-methods design, the research collected data from 50 teachers working in eleven public schools through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The results reveal that, although teachers acknowledged the central role of accurate pronunciation in effective communication, both internal and external factors impede instruction. Key external constraints include limited classroom time, insufficient instructional resources, inadequate coverage of pronunciation in textbooks, and a lack of institutional training opportunities. Internally, teachers tended to focus predominantly on segmental features of pronunciation, employed limited pedagogical techniques, and often prioritized grammar instruction over pronunciation. Nevertheless, many teachers reported strong motivation and confidence in their own phonological knowledge. The study concludes that strengthening pronunciation instruction in Kurdish EFL contexts requires the provision of richer instructional resources, enhanced teacher professional development, and the integration of more comprehensive pronunciation content into the curriculum.

KEYWORDS: pronunciation teaching, English pronunciation challenges, Kurdish EFL teachers, public schools, *Sunrise* textbook.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is a vital component of language instruction, as it significantly influences the effectiveness of spoken communication. Clear pronunciation enables learners to convey ideas accurately, reduces misunderstandings, and facilitates successful interaction. It also enhances learners' confidence, encouraging more frequent language use, a key factor in sustained practice and improvement. Moreover, accurate pronunciation supports the development of listening skills, thereby improving comprehension of spoken language (Muhammed & Abduljabbar, 2023). In contemporary global contexts, proficient pronunciation can further enhance career opportunities, as employers increasingly value effective oral communication. Despite its importance, pronunciation instruction is frequently underemphasized in EFL classrooms, especially in situations where English is rarely used outside formal educational settings.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), English occupies a central position in foreign-language education (Sofi-Karim, 2015). Following the region's autonomy from Iraq in 1991, expanded international engagement heightened

the significance of foreign-language learning, with English gaining particular prominence. After 2005, the agreement with the Iraqi government mandated the introduction of English as a foreign language from the first grade of basic education through to the university level. Within the Kurdish education system, English is a core subject taught for three to five one-hour sessions per week.

A key curricular reform was the adoption of the *Sunrise* English program, a 12-level series grounded on communicative language teaching designed to foster EFL proficiency among Kurdish learners. Pronunciation is explicitly integrated into the *Sunrise* curriculum. Each level introduces and practices distinct aspects of pronunciation supported by audio files that provide listening and repetition exercises.

Teaching English pronunciation to non-native speakers remains challenging, particularly when learners have limited exposure to authentic English input (Abdulwahid, 2023). Insufficient opportunities to engage with the sounds of English often hinder learners' ability to perceive and accurately reproduce its phonetic nuances. Despite more than a decade of formal instruction in English, many

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Kurdish EFL learners continue to face persistent pronunciation difficulties. Research indicates that Kurdish learners frequently struggle to achieve intelligible pronunciation for native English listeners (Ghafar et al., 2023). These challenges are not attributable solely to learners. As Abdulwahid (2023) observes, when learners acquire inaccurate pronunciation patterns during school instruction, these patterns often persist even after subsequent corrective efforts. Additionally, some teachers may lack the specialized phonological knowledge or pedagogical skills necessary for effective pronunciation instruction, further constraining learners' progress.

The present study aims to investigate the state of English pronunciation instruction in the Kurdish public schools and the specific challenges Kurdish EFL teachers encounter when teaching pronunciation. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of teaching English pronunciation in Kurdish public schools?
2. What are the primary challenges teachers encounter in teaching English pronunciation?

By exploring these questions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of English language pedagogy in general and pronunciation in particular in KRI. The study will help education policymakers to provide practical solutions to improve the English pronunciation education in the Kurdish public schools and will also aid in the development of targeted interventions to address the specific needs of teachers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a crucial aspect of spoken language, enabling accurate articulation of sounds and thereby enhancing effective communication. While pronunciation concerns how listeners perceive speech sounds, articulation refers to the physical production of these sounds within the vocal tract (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). It involves expressing a word in a manner that is widely recognized and accepted within a speech community (Otlowski, 1998 as cited in Ghafar, 2023).

Pronunciation has two major components: segmental and suprasegmental features. Segmental features comprise individual sounds-consonants and vowels-and their combinations, whereas suprasegmental (or prosodic) features include elements of speech that extend beyond single sounds, such as stress, intonation, and rhythm (Kelly, 2000). Sounds, or phonemes, constitute the fundamental units of spoken languages and combine to form words (Hewings, 2004). Intonation refers to the rise and fall of pitch, conveying meaning and emotional nuance, while stress, marked by greater loudness, higher pitch, or increased vowel length, requires additional respiratory energy and can apply to individual syllables or entire words (Afshari & Ketabi, 2016). Rhythm emerges from the patterned arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in speech.

Both segmental and suprasegmental components are essential for clear and intelligible pronunciation. Although often treated separately, these components function interactively to facilitate communication (Yates & Zielinski, 2009). Moreover, pronunciation involves not

only the articulation of individual sounds, but also their combinations and patterned use. As Badger (2024) observes, pronunciation intersects with two key linguistic domains: phonetics, which focuses on the physical production of speech sounds, and phonology, which examines their systematic organization within a language (Katamba, 1989). Together, these fields demonstrate the complexity of pronunciation as a phenomenon that involves both the production and patterned structure of speech sounds.

2.2 Pronunciation in the Kurdish EFL Program

Pronunciation is systematically incorporated into the Kurdish EFL teaching curriculum through the *Sunrise* textbook series, beginning formally at level three. Foundational pronunciation elements, however, are introduced earlier, in levels one and two, where learners encounter basic phonetic principles such as sound-letter correspondences that underpin later phonological development.

From level three onwards, each unit of *Sunrise* contains a dedicated pronunciation section underscoring the centrality of accurate pronunciation for effective communication and language acquisition. In levels three through six, the learners practice core pronunciation rules that enhance phonemic awareness and the ability to articulate target sounds accurately.

At level seven, the curriculum introduces word stress and by level nine, it addresses intonation, or pitch variation in speech. This staged progression reflects a deliberate pedagogical design that moves from fundamental concepts to more complex suprasegmental features, ensuring that Kurdish EFL learners acquire both segmental and prosodic competence.

Pronunciation practice is further reinforced through specific activities, such as 'Listen and Repeat' tasks, and through integrated exercises within listening and reading sections (Hamad et al., 2021). Audio CDs accompanying the textbooks allow learners to model accurate articulation by listening to native or near-native input. Notably, as the series advances, the explicit focus on pronunciation within dedicated sections diminishes: *Sunrise* 3 contains a broader range of pronunciation activities than *Sunrise* 12. From approximately level 10 onward, pronunciation work is increasingly embedded in the listening and speaking sections rather than treated as a standalone skill.

This systematic yet gradually integrated approach demonstrates how *Sunrise* balances explicit pronunciation instruction with communicative practice, supporting the long-term development of Kurdish EFL learners' pronunciation skills.

2.3 Teaching pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation in EFL classrooms has undergone substantial development over the past several decades, reflecting broader changes in language-teaching methodologies. Murphy (2003) outlines three distinct historical orientations. During the 1940s and 1950s, pronunciation instruction followed behaviorist principles, emphasizing careful listening and repetitive imitation of the teacher's model. In the 1960s and 1970s, the focus shifted toward explicit analysis and practice of individual sounds, often utilizing tools like the International Phonetic

Alphabet (IPA) to enhance learners' phonological awareness. From the 1980s and onward, the emphasis moved toward integrating pronunciation practice into communicative, task-based activities, in which teachers provide feedback as students employ target sounds in spontaneous speech. Murphy (2003) further adds that this evolution illustrates a broader pedagogical transition from teacher-centered, drill-based methods to learner-centered, meaning-focused instruction that combines explicit explanation with the interactive practice of pronunciation. Pronunciation instruction remains an important yet complex aspect of EFL education as intelligible pronunciation is essential for effective communication and comprehension (Kelly, 2000; Ghafar, 2023; Ahamed et al., 2023). However, as Kelly (2000) observes, when pronunciation is not neglected outright, it is often addressed reactively rather than as part of a strategic plan. Gilbert (2010) refers to pronunciation as "an orphan" in English-language classrooms worldwide, highlighting how it is frequently undervalued compared with grammar, reading, and writing. The metaphor suggests that pronunciation lacks clear ownership or sustained attention in instructional practice. Similarly, Kelly (1969, as cited in Ahamed et al., 2023) characterizes pronunciation as the "Cinderella area of foreign language teaching," underscoring the persistent need for its prioritization. Moreover, Yoshida (2014) emphasizes that accurate pronunciation is indispensable for effective oral communication: mastery of grammar and vocabulary alone cannot ensure intelligibility. Research further shows that clear pronunciation enhances a speaker's comprehensibility even when grammatical or lexical errors occur, whereas poor pronunciation can impede communication and discourage learners from speaking (Aydin & Aykuz, 2017). Against this background, the present study investigates whether Kurdish EFL teachers' perspectives on pronunciation instruction align with those reported in other educational contexts.

2.4 Problems of Teaching English Pronunciation

Several factors contribute to the difficulties of teaching pronunciation in the classroom. Hayati (2010) classifies these difficulties into direct and indirect factors, while Asikin and Ibrahim (2020) categorize them as internal and external factors. Indirect factors, or external factors, include time constraints, inadequate prioritization of pronunciation instruction, and large class sizes. In contrast, direct factors, or internal factors, comprise teachers' lack of confidence, insufficient knowledge and training, and various pedagogical issues. In addition to these, Tsuraya (2020) highlights the shortage of resources and teaching materials as a further obstacle in pronunciation instruction. A recurring issue is that many teachers prioritize other components of language learning over pronunciation due to limited classroom time. As a result, learners often receive insufficient training in this area. As Yoshida (2014) notes, English teachers are expected to cover a wide range of skills- including grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, and writing-within a restricted timeframe. Furthermore, pronunciation tends to receive less emphasis in formal examinations, which leads students to pay little attention to it (Akbari, 2015).

Teachers' limited knowledge of pronunciation rules may further result in either neglecting pronunciation instruction or adopting ineffective teaching practices. Kelly (2000) emphasizes that inexperience is a major challenge for teachers, noting that both theoretical knowledge and practical skills are essential, supported by effective instructional resources. These challenges appear to be widespread among EFL teachers. The present study, therefore, investigates whether Kurdish EFL teachers encounter similar difficulties in teaching pronunciation.

2.5 Previous Studies on Teaching English Pronunciation in Different EFL Contexts

Several studies have investigated how English pronunciation is taught in EFL contexts, with particular attention to classroom practices, instructional resources, teacher training, pedagogical challenges, and teacher attitudes. These include research in Brazil (Delatorre & Ruhmke-Ramos, 2010), Finland (Tergujeff, 2012), Slovakia (Datko, 2013), across several European countries (Henderson et al., 2015), Japan (Uchida & Sugimoto, 2016; Kokie, 2016), and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Mahmood, 2024). Despite these contributions, limited attention has been paid to the challenges faced by EFL teachers in the public schools of the Kurdistan Region. Existing work, such as Mahmood (2024), has primarily focused on the university-level, leaving a gap in the literature that the present study seeks to address.

Mahmood (2024) examined Kurdish university EFL teachers' perspectives on pronunciation instruction. Although the participants acknowledged the importance of pronunciation in effective communication, they also described pronunciation teaching as difficult and, occasionally, unengaging. A significant number expressed a lack of confidence in their instructional abilities, citing insufficient training and limited resources as major obstacles. Similar findings emerge in Kokie's (2016) study of Japanese college English instructors. While these instructors generally recognized the importance of pronunciation, many struggle to integrate it into their curricula effectively, with most allocating only 10% or less of class time to it. Despite reporting confidence in their phonetic knowledge, particularly with segmentals and suprasegmentals, participants expressed a strong desire for more specialized training. Notably, native Japanese instructors placed greater emphasis on explicit pronunciation instruction than their native English-speaking counterparts.

Comparable challenges have been observed in other contexts. In Brazil, Delatorre and Ruhmke-Ramos (2010) found that teachers faced difficulties due to time constraints and insufficient professional preparation. Uchida and Sugimoto (2016), focusing on Japanese junior high school English teachers, highlighted the role of teacher confidence in pronunciation instruction. They identified two types of broad categories of teachers: those comfortable and confident in teaching pronunciation, who regarded it as beneficial for learners and those less comfortable, who frequently felt inadequate due to limited training and low student interest. Similarly, Datko's (2013) study of Slovak high school EFL teachers revealed three levels of confidence: some teachers felt fully confident, others less confident compared to teaching other

skills (primarily due to a lack of methodological training) and a third group reported fluctuating confidence, particularly when dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary. These variations highlight the impact of training on teacher self-efficacy in pronunciation instruction.

Henderson et al. (2015), drawing on questionnaire data from teachers in seven European countries (Finland, France, Germany, Macedonia, Poland, Spain, and Switzerland), revealed that teacher practices are often influenced by local conditions. Nevertheless, across these contexts, two challenges consistently emerged: limited classroom time constraints and insufficient training in teaching pronunciation.

Overall, research across diverse EFL contexts indicates a remarkable consistency in findings: the main obstacles to pronunciation teaching include time constraints, inadequate training, and low teacher confidence. However, despite these international insights, research remains

lacking in relation to the specific challenges of pronunciation instruction in Kurdish public schools. Addressing this gap is the primary aim of the present study.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

The study employed simple random sampling to ensure diversity in terms of gender and teaching experience. The participants comprised both male and female teachers from basic and secondary schools, all of whom held a bachelor’s degree in English language and possessed between 1 to over 15 years of EFL teaching experience. The teachers were selected from various cities within the Duhok Governorate, including Zakho, Sumel, Akre, Sersink, Tenahi, Hawshke, and Duhok. Table 1 presents the distribution of participants across the three research tools: questionnaire, interview and classroom observation.

Table (1): The number of participants in the research tools: questionnaire, interview, and observation.

Level	Questionnaire		Interview		Observation	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Basic School	11	14	2	3	2	1
Secondary School	12	13	4	1	0	2
Total	50		10		5	

As shown in Table 1, a total of 50 teachers participated in the study, with equal representation from basic (n = 25) and secondary (n = 25) schools completing the questionnaire. In addition, 10 teachers (five from basic schools and five from secondary schools) participated in the interviews. Classroom observations were carried out in three basic school classes and two secondary school classes.

3.2 Research Tools

This study employs three methods for data collection: questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The questionnaire consists of 13 items organized under four thematic areas: perception of pronunciation instruction, teacher knowledge and expertise, motivation and interest, and available resources and challenges. Responses are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The teacher’s questionnaire was adapted from Mahmood (2024), with several items incorporated to suit the specific research context.

The open-ended interview protocol comprises 12 questions designed to elicit teachers’ perspectives on various aspects of pronunciation teaching. These include the adequacy of textbooks, the allocation of classroom time, the relative emphasis on pronunciation versus grammar, teaching challenges, instructional methods, materials, classroom activities, and language use during instruction.

The classroom observation rubric is used to evaluate both the frequency and diversity of pronunciation teaching practices. It contains sections on teaching strategies, time allocation, and overall frequency counts, and covers a range of techniques such as listen-and-repeat, corrective feedback, reading aloud, use of phonemic script, rhyme, explicit rules, dictation, discrimination tasks, and tactile

reinforcement. Moreover, the list of observation rubric was adopted from Tergujeff (2012)

3.3 Validity of the Tools

One of the most effective methods for ensuring the validity of data collection tools is expert evaluation. Accordingly, the tools employed in this study were reviewed by a panel of five specialists in English phonetics and phonology, general linguistics, and applied linguistics. The experts were asked to assess the tools with respect to (1) clarity, (2) the comprehensiveness of the themes presented, (3) appropriateness of the language, (4) adequacy of the response options, and (5) their overall impression on the tools.

The panel generally agreed that the questionnaires and interview protocols addressed the principal challenges involved in teaching English pronunciation. One expert recommended expanding the number of items within each theme to enhance depth, which led to the inclusion of additional questions. Most evaluators considered the items clear, although two recommended rephrasing certain questions for improved clarity. The tools were judged to adequately address major issues in pronunciation teaching, such as availability of resources and learner motivation. However, several experts advised the inclusion of items addressing teachers' awareness of phonetic differences between Kurdish and English.

In response to these suggestions, the Likert scale was revised from three to five points to allow for greater response sensitivity. Minor revisions were also made to the classroom observation rubric, while the interview questions were reorganized for improved flow. Overall, the tools were evaluated as clear, appropriate, and effective for exploring the challenges Kurdish EFL teachers encounter in teaching English pronunciation.

3.4 Reliability of the Tools

A pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. As Delany and Antalíková (2023) note, a pilot study is a small-scale test to evaluate the clarity and effectiveness of the research instrument, enabling necessary adjustments before implementation in the main study. The pilot was carried out from February 25 to March 3, 2025, with ten teachers from different schools completing the questionnaire.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha, which measures the extent to which items within a scale correlate with one another. This statistic is commonly applied to multi-item instruments, representing the average inter-item correlation (Cohen et al., 2007). Cronbach's alpha values range from 0 and 1, with values above 0.7 generally considered acceptable, and values below 0.7 viewed as minimally acceptable. As shown in Table 2, the teachers' questionnaire yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80, demonstrating good internal consistency and stable responses.

Table (2): Reliability coefficient of the teachers' questionnaires

Questionnaire	No. of items	Cronbach value
Teachers' questionnaire	13	0.802914

While pilot testing is often recommended for refining research tools, the interview and observation protocols in this study were not piloted due to their structured design. The interview schedule presented identical questions to all participants in the same order, thereby reducing response variability and enhancing reliability (Cohen et al., 2007). Similarly, the observation categories were adapted from established research and applied consistently across all cases. This approach is consistent with Cohen et al.'s (2018) argument that the reliability of structured observation depends largely on the consistent application of recording procedures.

3.5 Procedures of Data Collection

Prior to data collection, a formal approval was obtained from the Sumel Educational Department, granting permission to conduct school visits during the research process.

Data collection for the primary study was carried out between March 10 and April 23, 2025, across eleven public schools in the Duhok governorate. The process experienced delays due to the March holidays and limited teacher availability. A total of 50 teacher questionnaires were distributed, with 27 administrated online via Google Forms and 23 distributed in person. In addition, interviews and classroom observations were conducted. Although

anonymity was assured, most teachers declined to be audio-recorded, consequently, only a small number of interviews were recorded using a Redmi Note 13 Pro+, while the majority were documented manually. For participants who were unable to express themselves in English, responses were translated from Kurdish to English, which substantially increased the researcher's workload and time commitment. Classroom observations were facilitated with the full cooperation of school staff, and the researcher attended the complete 45-minute pronunciation lesson in each class.

3.6 Procedures of Data Analysis

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The questionnaire data were analyzed using Excel with statistical procedures, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency to identify recurring patterns.

For the qualitative strand, content analysis was employed to analyze the interview transcripts and classroom observations. Content analysis refers to the systematic examination, reduction, and interrogation of texts to generate a concise summary. This method enables both the testing and generation of theory by utilizing predetermined categories while allowing new themes to emerge inductively (Cohen et al., 2007). Interview responses were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently coded to identify key categories and overarching themes. The main purpose of this analytical tool is to examine the frequency of words, terms, or concepts within a given document and, in turn, to assess their meaning and significance in relation to the research focus (Bell, 2010). In addition, the observation rubric was analyzed to determine how often specific terms were employed during the instruction of pronunciation in classroom settings.

4. RESULTS

In this section, the main challenges encountered by Kurdish EFL teachers are identified through the analysis of the data obtained from the research tools, namely the questionnaires, interviews, and class observations. for the purpose of analysis, a mean score of 2.5 was established as the neutral midpoint. Mean scores less than 2.5 were interpreted as indicating negative attitudes, while scores above 2.5 reflected positive views; scores equal to 2.5 were regarded as neutral or undecided responses.

4.1 Questionnaire

1. Perception of Pronunciation Instruction

Table 3 shows the frequency (F) and percentages (%) of participants' responses, as well as the corresponding mean and Standard Deviation (SD) for this theme.

Table (3): Perception of Pronunciation Instruction

No. Item	N	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5	
				(F)	(%)	(F)	(%)	(F)	(%)	(F)	(%)	(F)	(%)

1	Pronunciation is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching English.	50	3.80	1.14	2	4.0%	6	12.0%	10	20.0%	16	32.0%	17	34.0%
2	I feel more uncertain about English pronunciation instruction than about grammar and other language components.	50	3.16	1.13	5	10.0%	10	20.0%	10	20.0%	22	44.0%	3	6.0%
3	English pronunciation instruction is not essential for EFL teaching	50	2.58	1.07	7	14.0%	21	42.0%	9	18.0%	12	24.0%	1	2.0%
Total		50	3.18	1.11	14	9.3%	37	24.7%	29	19.3%	50	14.0%	21	14.0%

As shown in Table 3, item 1, with a mean score of 3.8 (SD = 1.14), indicates that teachers perceive pronunciation as the most challenging aspect of English language teaching. Item 2 yielded a mean score of 3.1 (SD = 1.13), suggesting that respondents expressed greater uncertainty regarding pronunciation instruction compared to grammar. For item 3, the mean score of 2.58 reflects slight agreement with the statement that pronunciation instruction is not essential, though the value remains close to neutrality. The relatively low standard deviation of 1.07 suggests limited variability, implying a general consensus among participants on the

importance of pronunciation. Taken together, the overall mean score across the three items was 3.18 (SD = 1.11), reflecting that teachers hold generally positive attitudes toward the significance and challenges of pronunciation in EFL teaching, albeit with moderate variation in responses.

2. Knowledge and Expertise

The responses under this theme, presented in Table 4, indicate that teachers possess adequate knowledge and expertise in teaching English Pronunciation.

Table (4): Knowledge and Expertise

No. Item	N	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5		
				(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	
4	I do not have adequate knowledge to teach English pronunciation	50	2.14	0.97	12	24.0%	26	52.0%	6	12.0%	5	10.0%	1	2.0%
5	I lack training in teaching English pronunciation effectively.	50	2.50	1.05	7	14.0%	20	40.0%	16	32.0%	4	8.0%	3	6.0%
6	I stay up-to-date with current trends and research in English pronunciation teaching.	50	3.66	0.98	3	6.0%	5	10.0%	8	16.0%	27	54.0%	7	14.0%
Total		50	2.77	1.00	22	14.7%	51	34.0%	30	20.0%	36	24.0%	11	7.3%

The responses from Kurdish EFL teachers regarding item 4 indicate a negative perception, with a mean score of 2.14 (SD = 0.96). This suggests that the respondents predominantly disagreed with the statement that they lack knowledge of English pronunciation instruction, reflecting a generally high level of confidence in their pronunciation

teaching knowledge. In contrast, item 5 yielded a mean of 2.5, placing it between disagree and neutral. The standard deviation of 1.05 shows a more evenly distributed responses, suggesting that while some teachers perceive themselves as undertrained, others feel adequately prepared. Finally, the mean score for item 6 was 3.66 (SD

= 0.98), indicating general agreement among participants. Overall, the combined mean across the three items was 2.77 (SD = 1.00), reflecting a moderately positive perception of teachers' knowledge and training in pronunciation instruction, albeit with some variability in responses.

3. Motivation and Interest

Table 5 shows the responses of the Kurdish EFL teachers regarding their motivation and interest in teaching pronunciation.

Table (5): Motivation and Interest

No.	Item	N	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5	
					(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%
7	I do not have enough motivation and interest in teaching English pronunciation.	50	2.06	1.17	18	36.0%	21	42.0%	3	6.0%	5	10.0%	3	6.0%
8	Pronunciation practice is not emphasized in my teaching.	50	2.20	0.78	5	10.0%	32	64.0%	10	20.0%	2	4.0%	1	2.0%
9	I have actively worked on improving my English pronunciation in the past.	50	4.06	0.89	1	2.0%	5	10.0%	3	6.0%	25	50.0%	16	32.0%
Total		50	2.77	0.94	24	16.0%	58	38.7%	16	10.7%	32	21.3%	20	13.3%

As shown in Table 5, the mean value for item 7 is 2.06 (SD = 1.16), which is relatively low, indicating that Kurdish EFL teachers are generally highly motivated and interested in teaching pronunciation. The relatively high standard deviation suggests that a minority of the teachers reported low motivation. For item 8, with a mean of 2.2 (SD = 0.78), the results imply that most teachers regularly incorporate pronunciation practice into their teaching routines. Finally, item 9 has a mean score of 4.06 (SD = 0.89), suggesting strong agreement that the majority of

participants have made personal efforts to improve their English pronunciation. The overall mean score of 2.77 reflects a slightly positive general response, while the standard deviation of 0.94 indicates moderate variability among participants' responses.

4. Resources and Other Challenges

Table 6 displays the teachers' responses to questionnaire items concerning resources and challenges.

Table (6): Resources and Other Challenges

No.	Item	N	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5	
					(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%
10	The class time is insufficient for me to teach pronunciation.	50	3.54	1.07	1	2.0%	10	20.0%	12	24.0%	17	34.0%	10	20.0%
11	I lack educational resources like speakers, computers, projectors, pronunciation software, specialized pronunciation books, and CDs for teaching English pronunciation.	50	3.54	1.19	2	4.0%	9	18.0%	10	20.0%	16	32.0%	13	26.0%
12	The materials presented in the <i>Sunrise</i> textbook are inadequate for teaching English pronunciation.	50	3.28	0.85	2	4.0%	7	14.0%	21	42.0%	17	34.0%	3	6.0%
13	The learners' mother tongue affects their pronunciation of English.	50	4.14	0.94	1	2.0%	4	8.0%	7	14.0%	16	32.0%	22	44.0%
Total		50	3.63	1.01	6	3.0%	30	15.0%	50	25.0%	6	33.0%	48	24.0%

As presented in Table 7, item 10, with a mean of 3.54 (SD = 1.07), indicates that participants perceive insufficient instructional time as a significant challenge in teaching pronunciation. For item 11, the mean is 3.54 (SD = 1.19), suggesting that most Kurdish EFL teachers agree that

there is a lack of adequate educational resources. Item 12, which has the lowest SD of 0.85 and a mean of 3.28, indicates agreement among teachers that the materials provided in the textbook are insufficient for teaching pronunciation, reflecting a moderate level of

dissatisfaction with the pronunciation content in the *Sunrise* textbook. Item 13 recorded the highest mean score of 4.14 with an SD of 0.94, showing strong agreement among participants that learners’ mother tongue significantly influences their English pronunciation. The total mean of 3.63 suggests general agreement, while the SD of 1.01 shows moderate variability in teachers’ responses.

4.2 Interviews

1. Sufficiency of Pronunciation Materials in the *Sunrise* Textbook

Table 7 summarizes teachers’ perspectives on the adequacy of pronunciation materials in the *Sunrise* textbook.

Table (7): Sufficiency of Pronunciation Materials in the *Sunrise* Textbook

Question 1	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
What do you think about the pronunciation materials provided in the <i>Sunrise</i> textbook? Is it sufficient for teaching pronunciation?	10	Sufficient	5	50%
		Insufficient	5	50%

As shown in Table 7, half of the participating teachers (50%) believed that the pronunciation materials provided in the *Sunrise* textbook were sufficient. For instance, Teacher (T)7 claimed that “ *I think that in our textbooks, there is everything about pronunciation that a teacher needs for teaching pronunciation to their learners,*” while T3 similarly stated that “ *it covers all sounds*”. In contrast, the other 50% of teachers reported that the materials were insufficient, emphasizing the need for more dedicated pronunciation sections. As T1 reported “*they are not*

enough for pronunciation teaching,” and T8 stated that “*it doesn’t cover all sounds*”.

This equal division of opinion indicates a clear divergence in teachers’ perceptions. While some considered the available materials adequate for classroom use, others identified noticeable gaps that may limit the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction.

2. Time Allocation for Pronunciation

Table 8 displays the teachers’ responses regarding the amount of time allocated to teaching pronunciation.

Table (8): Time Allocation for Pronunciation

Question 2	N	Themes		Frequency	Percentage
		Time Range	Sufficiency		
How much time of your class do you dedicate to teaching pronunciation? (Do you think the time is sufficient?)	10	5–10 minutes	Not sufficient	5	50%
		5–10 minutes	Sufficient	1	10%
		10–20 minutes	Not sufficient	1	10%
		10–20 minutes	Sufficient	3	30%

The data indicate that the time devoted to pronunciation instruction ranged between 5 and 20 minutes per lesson. Several teachers reported adjusting the allocated time according to the lesson content. For instance, T4 noted, “*It depends on the section, sometimes it takes an entire lecture, but mostly 5–10 minutes.*” Considering that a standard lesson lasts 45 minutes, this reflects noticeable variation in the extent to which pronunciation receives instructional focus. T6 highlighted time constraints as a key limitation: “*We don’t have enough time... I usually allocate about 5 to 7 minutes, though I may touch on pronunciation during reading lessons.*” Overall, 60% of teachers reported that the time

allocated for pronunciation was insufficient, while 40% considered it adequate, typically involving 10 to 20 minutes of focused practice. These findings suggest that while pronunciation is recognized as an important skill, its integration into lessons is often constrained by curricular and time pressures.

3. Grammar vs. Pronunciation: What’s more important?

Table 9 presents teachers’ responses to the question of whether grammar or pronunciation holds greater importance in English language teaching.

Table (9): Grammar vs. Pronunciation: What’s more Important?

Question 3	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think grammar is more important than pronunciation? Why?	10	Grammar	5	50%
		Pronunciation	3	30%
		Both	2	20%

Table 9 demonstrates that 50% of participants considered grammar more essential than pronunciation, though their rationales varied. Some teachers highlighted grammar’s role in examinations; for example, T8 and T9 noted that grammar carried more marks. Others stressed its functional role in constructing sentences and expressing temporal relations.. T3 and T5 argued that grammar enables learners to communicate effectively and accurately. Similarly, T10 pointed out that Kurdish learners are non-native speakers of English, implying that their priority should be forming grammatically correct sentences rather than perfecting pronunciation. In contrast, three teachers (30%) regarded pronunciation as more important than grammar. Their justifications also differed: T6 and T1 emphasized its role in intelligibility,

noting that communication remains possible despite grammatical errors, whereas poor pronunciation may lead to misunderstanding. This perspective underscores pronunciation as a primary factor in effective communication. T7, however, prioritized pronunciation due to its inherent difficulty, arguing that it requires greater classroom attention. Finally, 20% of teachers reported that grammar and pronunciation are equally important. Overall, the findings reveal differing perspectives on the relative importance of grammar and pronunciation in language teaching.

4. Difficulty in Teaching Pronunciation

The teachers’ responses regarding the difficulty of teaching pronunciation are presented in Table 10.

Table (10): The Difficulty in Teaching Pronunciation

Question 4	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Is it difficult to teach pronunciation? In what way?	10	Difficult	6	60%
		Not difficult	4	40%

The table indicates that 60% of the teachers reported experiencing difficulties in teaching pronunciation, although the underlying causes varied. several participants attributed these challenges to the lack of resources and facilities. For instance, T9 and T10 stated that their schools did not have access to sound laboratories. However, T3 highlighted the linguistic differences between Kurdish, the learners’ first language, and English, suggesting that these contrasts in phonological systems contributed to learners’ struggle with accurate pronunciation. Similarly, T5 noted that the difficulty stemmed not only from the status of English as a foreign language but also from the limited number of pronunciation-focused exercises in the prescribed textbooks.

In contrast, 40% of the participants reported that teaching pronunciation was not particularly challenging. Some teachers attributed this view to the availability of educational resources such as CDs and technological tools,

including mobile phones and speakers. As T1 commented: “No, it is not because we have CDs and technological aids like a phone and speakers.” Similarly, T7 remarked: “I think it is not difficult because we use CDs,” although the teacher acknowledged that some learners still encountered pronunciation difficulties. According to T7, these challenges often arose from English being a foreign language, which could also lead learners to feel embarrassed or be ridiculed by their peers. T8 further supported this position, claiming that pronunciation was generally straightforward for both teachers and learners, though it could become problematic when learners were inattentive.

5. Aspects Taught: Segmental vs. Suprasegmental

Table 11 presents the teachers’ responses to the interview question on which aspects of pronunciation they focused on in their teaching.

Table (11): Aspect of Pronunciation being Taught by Kurdish EFL Teachers

Question 5	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
What aspect of pronunciation do you teach, segmental or suprasegmental?	10	Segmental	6	60%
		Segmental and suprasegmental	4	40%

The results indicate that 40% of teachers reported teaching both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation, while the majority (60%) concentrate exclusively on segmental features.

6. Major Challenges in Teaching Pronunciation

Table 12 shows the principal challenges encountered by Kurdish EFL teachers in teaching pronunciation, including their frequency and percentage distribution.

Table (12): The Major Challenges of Teaching Pronunciation

Question 6	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
What is the major challenge that you face in teaching pronunciation?	10	Lack of educational aids	4	33.3%
		Learner-Related Challenges	4	33.3%
		Linguistic and Phonological Challenges	3	25.0%
		Time constraints	1	8.3%

As shown in the table, the most frequently reported challenges are the lack of educational resources and learner-related challenges, each mentioned by 4 teachers (33.3% of the responses). T7 noted, "learners ignore the class when I am teaching, possibly due to their age. The lack of educational aids is another challenge. I download the audio from YouTube and play it in class. I have one speaker which I bought, we are not provided with anything, we do not even have a teacher's book." In addition to learners' inattentiveness, some teachers mention the influence of learners' mother tongue on their pronunciation as well as their limited knowledge. For example, T2 stated: "Educational resources and learners' lack of knowledge," while T10 claimed that "The effect of the learner's mother tongue is the most challenging issue to address."

The second most reported challenge is related to linguistic and phonological aspects, mentioned three times (25%) by

the teachers. This category underscores the intrinsic complexity of English pronunciation, such as irregular rules, difficult sound combinations, and accent diversity. As T3 noted, "The combination of sounds that are pronounced differently, like the suffix -tion, which is pronounced sh," whereas, T9 believed that having no fixed rules for pronunciation and the presence of various accents in the English language pose an obstacle in teaching its pronunciation. Finally, time constraint was mentioned only once (8.3%), suggesting that while some teachers experience limitations in lesson duration, this factor is less pressing compared to resource-related and learner-related challenges.

7. Methods Used by Kurdish EFL Teachers

Table 13 presents the methods employed by Kurdish EFL teachers to teach pronunciation, along with their frequency and percentage of occurrence.

Table (13): The Methods Used by Kurdish EFL Teachers to Teach Pronunciation

Question 7	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Which teaching method do you use when teaching pronunciation?	10	Repetition and Imitation	5	33.3%
		Audio-Based Instruction	3	20.0%
		Board Work and Explanation	3	20.0%
		Learner Involvement	3	20.0%
		Role-Play and Dialogue	1	6.7%

As Table 13 shows, the most frequently employed method, reported five times (33.3%), is repetition and imitation. In this approach, the teacher reads the sounds aloud and learners are required to repeat them. Kurdish EFL teachers

implement this method in three main ways: writing the sounds on the board, using speakers, or reading the sounds directly from the textbook. In all cases, the teacher models the pronunciation, and learners imitate it. Although this

technique is often combined with the first theme, the second most commonly reported method is audio-based instruction and board work with explanation. In addition, learner involvement accounts for 20% of the reported practices, representing a method adopted by a considerable number of teachers. For instance, T5 claimed that, in addition to using the speaker, “*I pick a student to read the sounds,*” thereby highlighting the active participation of the learners in the pronunciation practices. By contrast,

role play and dialogue emerged as the least reported methods, with only 6.7% of teachers indicating their use.

8. Educational Aids Utilized by Kurdish EFL Teachers

Table 14 shows the educational aids and resources employed by Kurdish EFL teachers in pronunciation instruction.

Table (14): Educational Aids Utilized by Kurdish EFL Teachers

Question 8	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
What educational resources and aids do you employ to teach pronunciation?	10	Speakers	7	43.8%
		Book	4	25.0%
		Mobile phone	2	12.5%
		CDs	2	12.5%
		Flashcards	1	6.2%

Speakers emerged as the most frequently utilized educational tools for teaching pronunciation, as indicated in Table 14, with seven teachers (43.8%) reporting their use. Notably, three of these teachers relied exclusively on speaker, without incorporating any supplementary resources. The remaining teachers combined speakers with other instructional tools such as textbooks, flashcards, cell phones, or CDs. Additionally, CDs and mobile phones, each reported by 12.5% of participants, imply a moderate integration of technology into pronunciation instruction.

Textbooks also played a significant role, with four teachers (25%) employing them. Among these, three relied on the *Sunrise* textbook, while only one used a book specifically devoted to pronunciation. The least employed resource is flashcards, reported by only one teacher (6.2%).

9. Activities for Pronunciation Practices

Table 15 displays the range of activities reported by the Kurdish EFL teachers in their pronunciation instruction.

Table (15): Activities for Pronunciation Practices

Question 9	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
What kind of activities do you use to practice pronunciation?	10	Reading Aloud	5	41.7%
		Group Activity	2	16.7%
		Board work	2	16.7%
		Acting	1	8.3%
		Quizzes	1	8.3%
		No activities	1	8.3%

As presented in Table 15, reading aloud is the most frequently reported pronunciation activity accounting for 41.7% of the teachers’ responses. This activity is often combined with other activities such as board work (16.7%) or acting (8.3%). For instance, one participant reported: “*I often read aloud for the learners, and they repeat after*

me,” while another claimed: “*I read the sounds and words, and let the learners read it, and I write them on the board and ask questions.*”

Group activity is reported twice (16.7%). As T1 explained, “*I make groups and ask them to read a text or talk about a topic and point out the right sound.*” Similarly, quizzes

were mentioned by T8 representing 8.7% of the responses, as an additional pronunciation activity. Finally, T5 claimed using no specific activity and does not prioritize pronunciation activity, explaining: “I do not emphasize that much in my teaching because of the marks.”

10. The Language of Instruction in Kurdish EFL Classes

Table 16 displays the teachers’ main responses regarding the language of instruction, together with their frequency and percentage.

Table (16) The Language of Instruction in Kurdish EFL Classes

Question 10	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Is English the only language of instruction in your English class? If no, specify please.	10	Kurdish	8	80%
		English	1	10%
		Kurdish and Arabic	1	10%

As Table 16 shows, the majority of teachers (90%) reported that they explain English lessons primarily in Kurdish. However, T6 expressed frustration at not being able to use English exclusively due to varied learner reactions, stating: “I want to speak only English in class, and I believe all teachers should do the same. Some teachers don't use English, leading to complaints from learners about my exclusive use of English. While some learners prefer it, others are dissatisfied.” This highlights the tension between teachers’ pedagogical preferences and learners’ expectations.

English as the sole medium of instruction was rarely reported, with only one teacher (10%) indicating its use. Finally, one teacher reported using Arabic alongside Kurdish to accommodate specific learner requests.

11. Training in English Teaching

Table 17 presents the teachers’ responses concerning their participation in professional training programs for English language teaching.

Table (17): Training in English Teaching

Question 11	N	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever participated in an English teaching training program? If yes, please specify.	10	Yes	5	50%
		No	5	50%

The table shows that 50% of Kurdish EFL teachers reported no participation in any English teaching training programs, while the remaining 50% have attended training, though each in a different program. For instance, T6 reported participation in an English teaching training course at the American University of Duhok. Similarly, T4 referred to involvement in a “TDP, teaching development projects by an American organization in Sumel.” T8 claimed that he participated in an annual English training program in Sumel, whereas T10 asserted engagement in training “when the book was changed for the first time about 10 years ago.” Finally, T9 reported participation “at Cihan University, the pedagogy training program.”

12. Additional Comments

In response to final interview questions, most teachers provided no further remarks. However, several highlighted issues related to class time, textbook activities, and their perceptions of pronunciation. T2 noted that the large number of activities in the *Sunrise* textbook often consume a significant portion of the lesson time. In contrast, T8

emphasized that limited instructional time constrained pronunciation instruction. T5 proposed adding more pronunciation-focused activities into the textbook, while T4 recommended making these activities more engaging for learners. T6 stressed the importance of pronunciation, arguing that it is more important than grammar or vocabulary. Conversely, T9 stressed the difficulties learners experience with pronunciation, identifying it as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning.

4.3 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to complement the data collection process and provide a deeper understanding of the practical methods and difficulties associated with teaching and learning English pronunciation. The purpose was to explore the instructional practices employed by Kurdish EFL teachers and to identify the main strategies emphasized in English pronunciation teaching within Kurdish schools. Table 18 presents the frequency of the pronunciation teaching methods employed by each teacher observed.

Table (18): The Data Obtained from the Observation Rubric

Teaching method	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	total
Listen and repeat	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teacher corrects	13	-	3	-	2	18
Teacher points out	6	-	5	5	2	18
Read aloud	-	4	9	10	9	32
Phonemic script	7	2	3	2	9	23
Rhyme	-	-	1*	-	1*	2
Rules	-	-	5	-	-	5
Dictation/spelling	3	-	1	-	1	5
Discrimination	1	-	1	1	-	3
Tactile reinforcement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	30	6	28	17	23	106

*shows that they are not actively mentioned

The classroom observations documented a total of 106 pronunciation-specific activities across five EFL classes. The observation rubric covered ten distinct teaching methods for pronunciation instruction, though the extent to which these techniques were employed varied considerably among teachers. T3 utilized the widest range of strategies, while T2 applied only two. Among the strategies observed, reading aloud emerged as the most commonly used, occurring 32 times, followed by the use of phonemic script (23 instances) and teacher correction (18 instances). Teachers also made regular use of the pointing out techniques, in which they explicitly drew learners' attention to specific pronunciation difficulties,

particularly problematic vowel or consonant contrasts. By contrast, certain techniques-such as rhyme, rules, dictation/spelling, and sound discrimination were either rarely employed or only minimally evident in practice. Furthermore, three techniques-listen and repeat, and tactile reinforcement- are not used at all by the five teachers observed.

In addition to recording the types of techniques applied, the observation also measured the time allocated to pronunciation instruction. Considerable variation was noted, indicating differing levels of importance assigned to pronunciation in the EFL classroom. Table 19 summarizes the amount of time each teacher dedicated to pronunciation instruction.

Table (19): Time Spent on Teaching Pronunciation

Teachers	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Time spent on teaching pronunciation	23 minutes	4 minutes	5 minutes	17 minutes	15 minutes

As shown in the table, the shortest amount of time dedicated to pronunciation instruction was 4 minutes by T2, while the longest was 23 minutes by T1.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the challenges that EFL teachers encounter in teaching pronunciation can largely be categorized into external factors (institutional, curricular, and environmental limitations beyond the teacher's immediate control) and internal factors (personal knowledge, attitudes, and classroom practices). These factors also define the current state of teaching English pronunciation in Kurdish public schools.

5.1 External Factors

External factors encompass institutional, curricular, and environmental limitations that affect teachers' ability to teach pronunciation effectively. These include issues such

as time constraints, inadequate educational resources, and insufficient curricular support. Similar external challenges have been documented in previous research (Tiwari, 2023; Asikin & Ibrahim, 2020; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Time constraints emerged as a major concern among Kurdish EFL teachers. According to the questionnaire, 54% of the teachers and 60% of interview participants reported that insufficient classroom time limited their ability to address pronunciation effectively. Classroom observations revealed that the teachers typically devoted only 4 to 20 minutes to the pronunciation section of each unit, with the remaining time spent on other components of English deemed more important for examination. This aligns with Asikin and Ibrahim's (2020) finding that teachers often prioritize skills that directly support students' exam performance over pronunciation.

Lack of resources and materials is another recurring theme. In the questionnaire, 58% of teachers reported that they

had insufficient materials, while 33.3% of interviewees confirmed this issue. Many teachers reported relying on personal devices due to the unavailability of technological tools such as sound labs, CDs, software, or projectors. Notably, no educational aids were observed in classrooms despite the teachers' claims of utilizing them. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) argue that limited instructional resources contribute to teachers' reluctance to focus on pronunciation. Furthermore, most teachers reported depending solely on the Student's Book, as they had not been provided with the Teacher's Book, which could enhance their instructional practices. Kawther (2016) observes that lack of access to the teacher support materials hinders task completion and restricts pedagogical approaches. In addition, the *Sunrise* textbook series is frequently criticized for its limited support for pronunciation instruction. Questionnaire results indicate general dissatisfaction, and 50% of interviewees expressed a need for more comprehensive pronunciation coverage and additional practice activities. Teachers noted a reduction in pronunciation content in the higher levels of *Sunrise*, a trend also identified by Kawther (2016), who notes that textbooks for grades 10 and 11 give minimal attention to pronunciation despite its role in improving speaking skills. By contrast, Saeed (2022) reports that teachers are generally satisfied with *Sunrise* materials for grades 7-9.

Limited training opportunities and institutional support also contribute to the challenges faced by Kurdish EFL teachers. The majority of teachers in this study reported little to no access to specialized training in English language teaching. Among interview participants, only five have had ever attended training programs, with one reporting annual attendance, while the others stated that participation occurred long ago. The lack of updated training prevents teachers. From adopting modern, learner-centered methods and contributes to continued reliance on outdated approaches. Almusharraf (2024) highlights similar issues, while Sultan and Sharif (2013) show that the absence of professional training in Erbil led teachers to overlook essential listening instruction stages, negatively impacting learners. More broadly, Hassan and Ghafor (2019) identify a shortage of properly qualified English teachers as a major challenge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Learner-related factors are also identified as external challenges, given that they stem from learners' linguistic and educational backgrounds rather than teacher practices. The majority of teachers (76%) in the questionnaire agree that interference from Kurdish, the learners' first language, negatively affects English pronunciation. Several interviewees echoed this point, noting that students often struggle with English absent in Kurdish. Haji and Mohammed (2019) similarly report that Kurdish learners find certain English monophthongs difficult due to lack of correspondence in their native language. This negative transfer complicates the teaching process, as teachers must continually address pronunciation errors shaped by L1 interference. Lehrer (2023) further notes that teachers frequently struggle to shift students away from thinking in

their native language and toward recognizing English-specific sound patterns.

Beyond L1 influence, teachers in this study also mentioned low student motivation, limited vocabulary and grammar, and poor preparation as barriers to effective pronunciation learning. These findings echo Karademir and Gorgoz (2019), who argue that such challenges prevent students from developing fundamental skills. Similarly, low motivation and limited language proficiency have been identified as persistent issues in both school and university contexts (Fareh, 2010).

Linguistic and phonological complexity present additional challenges. As Tahereen (2015) notes, the variety of English accents and the absence of rigid phonological rules complicate the teaching of pronunciation. Some teachers in this study highlighted the unpredictability of English spelling-pronunciation correspondences as particularly problematic. Kenworthy (1987) claims that English lacks one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds, with a single letter often representing multiple sounds. Tahereen (2015) also identifies this inconsistency as a major obstacle. Furthermore, while teachers acknowledge the diversity of accents, most scholars agree that the goal of pronunciation instruction in EFL contexts should be intelligibility rather than native-like accuracy. Tsunemoto et al. (2023, as cited in Almusharraf, 2024) emphasize that pronunciation instruction should focus on producing clear, comprehensible speech rather than imitating specific accents.

5.2 Internal Factors

Internal challenges in pronunciation instruction are often teacher-related, encompassing beliefs, knowledge, motivation, and classroom practices. The first such factor concerns teachers' perceptions and beliefs. Most Kurdish EFL teachers consider pronunciation both essential and difficult to teach. This finding is consistent with Moedjito's (2016), who also reported that despite the challenges, teachers and learners generally recognize pronunciation as vital for effective oral communication (Moedjito, 2016). By contrast, Altoeriqi (2020) indicates that many teachers assign less importance to communicative efficiency and intelligibility and often feel less confident teaching pronunciation compared to grammar or vocabulary. This lack of confidence is commonly attributed to inadequate training in pronunciation pedagogy, insufficient methodological expertise, and limited resources. Kelly (2000) similarly observes that teachers frequently feel underprepared to teach pronunciation because they lack the necessary skills to do so effectively.

Another recurrent belief among Kurdish EFL teachers is that grammar outweighs pronunciation in importance, resulting in pronunciation being neglected. Foote et al. (2011, as cited in Nangimah, 2020) likewise note that many teachers overlook pronunciation instruction because they consider other skills, such as listening, speaking, grammar, reading, and writing, as more central to language learning.

A second internal challenge relates to the limited range of teaching techniques. Classroom observations and teacher interviews demonstrate that most teachers reveal that the

majority rely on a narrow set of techniques, primarily reading aloud, teacher correction, and phonemic transcription. More interactive or learner-centered methods, such as tactile reinforcement, discriminating tasks, and role-playing are rarely employed. These findings corresponds with Kokie (2015) and Jafari et al. (2021), who also reported teachers' reliance on repetitive practices like shadowing, reading aloud, and repetition. Nevertheless, Kokie (2015) emphasizes the importance of providing learners with clear, targeted pronunciation instruction to foster more effective improvement.

A further issue is the predominance of segmental instruction. Most Kurdish EFL teachers focus on segmental components (individual sounds) while giving limited attention to suprasegmental features such as intonation, rhythm, and stress. Although 40% of teachers reported teaching both, suprasegmentals were scarcely observed in practice. Additionally, in the few instances where suprasegmental features (e.g. rhythm) were addressed, explanations were often implicit or incomplete. These findings align with Tergujeff's (2012) and Moedjito's (2016) findings. In contrast, Altoeriqi (2020) found a more balanced instructional method in which both segmental and suprasegmental aspects were incorporated. The language of instruction also plays a role. In this study, only one teacher consistently used English exclusively as the instruction language, while most relied primarily on Kurdish, and a few alternated between Kurdish and Arabic. This finding is consistent with that of Orfan (2023). While moderate First Language (L1) use can facilitate comprehension, excessive reliance on L1 reduces learners' exposure to natural pronunciation input. Although L1 might be helpful when L2 explanations are unclear, regular exposure to English remains essential for pronunciation development (Hermeni, 2019).

Another internal factor concerns teachers' use of Kurdish letters in place of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to explain sound production, especially in the textbook-based pronunciation lessons. For learners unfamiliar with IPA symbols, this method may provide short-term clarification, but it also restricts exposure to widely used pronunciation aids and may impede the development of phonological awareness. Over-reliance on the native script risks limiting learners' ability to internalize English sound patterns. It may also impair their capacity to think and process language directly in English-both crucial for fluency. By contrast, research has shown that IPA-based instruction promotes learner independence (Hismanoglu, 2006), enhances accurate perception and production of target sounds, and supports phonological awareness through visual reinforcement (Mompean & Lintunen, 2015; Fouz-González & Mompean, 2021, as cited in Durukan & Gokgoz-Kurt, 2024).

Not all internal factors are negative. A notable strength among Kurdish EFL teachers is their high level of motivation and active efforts to improve their own pronunciation. This finding contrasts with Lehrer (2023) and Chen (2016), who note low teacher motivation as a barrier, but aligns with Uchida and Sugimoto (2016), who highlight the importance of teacher motivation in effective language instruction.

Finally, while numerous studies highlight EFL teachers' lack of adequate knowledge (Delatorre & Ruhmke-Ramos, 2010; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Aydin & Akyüz, 2017; Fauzia & Amiri, 2023), the present study found that many Kurdish EFL teachers felt confident in their ability to teach pronunciation effectively.

5. CONCLUSION

Pronunciation instruction, often regarded as a neglected component of language education, remains largely overlooked in public schools in Kurdistan. As in other contexts, this negligence can be attributed to a range of barriers, which may be broadly categorized as external and internal. External challenges refer to factors beyond teachers' control, including limited classroom time, insufficient instructional resources, and inadequate training in pronunciation pedagogy. Internal challenges, by contrast, stem from teachers' practices and priorities. Many educators emphasize grammar over pronunciation and concentrate primarily on segmental features, while suprasegmental aspects such as intonation, stress, and rhythm receive comparatively little attention.

Despite these limitations, many teachers report being motivated and express confidence in their phonological knowledge. The findings suggest that pronunciation should be viewed as an essential component of teaching English, rather than treated as peripheral or secondary. Neglecting pronunciation may enable learners to gain great grammatical competence, but they struggle with oral communication due to reduced intelligibility. This, in turn, influences their confidence, fluency, and general communicative skills.

To address these issues, it is recommended that pronunciation be more explicitly integrated into the curriculum with sufficient time allocated to its teaching. Schools should provide updated resources and ensure that teachers receive focused professional development. Additionally, encouraging peer support and emphasizing learners' communicative competence and intelligibility enhances the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction.

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الصعوبات التي تواجه معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من الأكراد في تعليم النطق في المدارس الحكومية

الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة الصعوبات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) من الأكراد عند تدريس النطق الإنجليزي في المدارس الحكومية التابعة لمحافظة دهوك في إقليم كردستان العراق. على الرغم من أكثر من 12 عامًا من الدراسة المتحمسة لتحقيق نطق سليم للغة الإنجليزية، لا يزال العديد من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من الأكراد يواجهون صعوبة في اكتساب نطق يشبه النطق الأصلي، مما يشير إلى وجود مشكلات كامنة في عملية التعليم. باستخدام منهجية البحث المختلط (mixed-methods approach)، تم جمع البيانات من 50 معلمًا يمثلون إحدى عشرة مدرسة حكومية من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات وملاحظات الصف. كشفت النتائج أن المعلمين، على الرغم من إدراكهم لأهمية النطق السليم في التواصل، واجهوا تحديات تعليمية ناجمة عن عوامل داخلية وخارجية. وشملت التحديات الخارجية الرئيسية: قصر زمن الحصة الدراسية، ونقص الموارد التعليمية، وضعف المحتوى المتعلق بالنطق في الكتب المدرسية، بالإضافة إلى نقص التدريب المؤسسي. أما التحديات الداخلية، فقد تمثلت في تركيز المعلمين بشكل أساسي على الجوانب الصوتية الجزئية (segmental aspects)، وعدم تنوع أساليب التدريس، وإعطاء الأولوية لقواعد اللغة على حساب النطق. على الرغم من هذه التحديات، أبدى العديد من المعلمين حماسًا وثقة في معرفتهم الصوتية. وتؤكد الدراسة على الحاجة إلى توفير موارد تعليمية أفضل، وتعزيز برامج تدريب المعلمين، وإثراء المحتوى المتعلق بالنطق في المناهج الدراسية لدعم تعليم النطق في سياق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعليم النطق، تحديات النطق الإنجليزي، معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية الأكراد، المدارس الحكومية، كتاب "Sunrise".

ناستهنگین فیرکرنا لئفکرنا نینگلیزی بین روی ب روی ماموستایین نینگلیزی وهک زمانهکی بیانی بین کورد ل قوتابخانهیین گشتی

پۆخته:

ئهو ناستهنگین ماموستایین کورد، بین بسپۆر د فیرکرنا نینگلیزی وهک زمانهکی بیانی، روی ب روی دین دهمی وانهمان دبیژن ل سهر فیرکرنا لئفکرنا نینگلیزی ل قوتابخانهیین گشتی ل پاریزگهها دهوکی ل ههزما کوردستانا عیراقي، دهینه شروقهکرن. سهرمرای زیدمتر ژ ۱۲ سالان ژ خواندنهکا بهردهوام بۆ گههشتن ب لئفکرنا دروست یا زمانی نینگلیزی، فیرخواز هیشتا ژی د ناستهنگان را دربار دین بۆ فیربوونا لئفکرنا وهکو ناخفتقانیین زمانی نینگلیزی، ئەف چهنده بوونا کیشهیین بهرتهی د پروسهیا فیرکرنا دا نیشان ددهت. بکار نینانا شوازی ریکین تیکه (mixed-methods approach)، زانیاری هاتینه کۆمکرنا ژ ۵۰ ماموستایان ل یازده قوتابخانهیین گشتی برینا لیستین پرسیاران، چافیکهفتنان، چافدیریین د پۆلی دا. نهجامان دا دیارکرنا کو ههز چهنده ماموستایان دانپیدان کر ب گرنکیبا دروست لئفکرنا نینگلیزی دا، ههزمارهکا هوکارین ناخووی و دهرهکی فیرکرنا چوانیبا لئفکرنا نینگلیزی ب زحمهت نیخست. ماوی سنۆردار بی پۆلی، نهبوونا کهرهستین فیرکرنا، کیمیا ناههروکا پهتووک، و راهینانین گلهک کیم ژ لای پهرودری فه بۆ ماموستایان ژ ناستهنگین سهرهکی بین دهرهکی نه. ژ رووی ناخو فه، ماموستا پتر تیشکی د داننه سهر لایهنی گوتنا ههز دهنهکی ب شیوههکی تاک ل شوینا گوتنا تهفاییا پهفان ب شیوههکی دروست، ریکین جودا جودا بین فیرکرنا نهبوون، نهوان پتر گرنگی د دا ریزمانی ل شوینا فیرکرنا لئفکرنا نینگلیزی. ههز چهنده ئەف ناستهنگه ههبوونه، گلهک ماموستایان هاندان و باوهری ب خو بوونهکا مهز نیشان دایه د زانیارییین خو بین زانستی دهنگان دا. دا کو هاریکاری بهیتهکرن فیرکرنا لئفکرنا نینگلیزی دا د چارچووهیی فیرکرنا نینگلیزی وهک زمانهکی بیانی دا، ئەف فهکولینه روناھییی د ئیخته سهر پندقییاتیا کهرهستهیین فیرکرنا بین باشتر، راهینانین باشتر بۆ ماموستایان، و ناههروکهکا باشتر یا چوانیبا گوتنا پهفان د بهرنامهیین فیرکرنا دا.

پهفان سهرهکی: فیرکرنا لئفکرنا، ناستهنگین لئفکرنا نینگلیزی، ماموستایین نینگلیزی وهک زمانهکی بیانی بین کورد، قوتابخانهیین گشتی، پهتووکا "Sunrise"