



EXPLORING SECONDARY SCHOOL ESL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRONUNCIATION CONTENT AND INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Pronunciation is often regarded as a de-emphasized component of English language teaching, despite its importance for effective communication. The study used a qualitative research design to explore secondary school ESL teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward pronunciation content and instruction in government and private schools within the Makran region of Pakistan, drawing on Borg's (1997) two-dimensional model of teacher cognition, schooling, and professional coursework. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 ESL teachers, and data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. The findings of the current study revealed five major themes: pronunciation as a key communicative competence; prioritizing intelligibility over native-like accents; limited exposure to pronunciation instruction in their formal schooling and professional development; contextual barriers to pronunciation teaching, such as overcrowded classrooms, L1 interference, and inadequate teaching resources; and positive attitudes toward pronunciation teaching despite these contextual barriers. The findings suggest that teachers' perceptions regarding pronunciation preparation were largely absent and unstructured, with implications for professional development programs and a review of the present curriculum structure. The study recommends that future research combine Borg's (1997) model of teacher cognition with Burgess and Spencer's (2000) Strategic Pedagogic Model to examine the congruence between teachers' stated perceptions and their actual classroom practices.

Keywords: *ESL Teachers, Pronunciation Instruction, Teacher Perceptions.*

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1. Introduction

English as an international language has become very popular worldwide. It is considered a second and official language in Pakistan. The majority of English language users are non-native speakers who consider it a second or foreign language. English is widely used for communication purposes by those whose first language is not English, people from diverse cultures around the world. (Seidlhofer, 2005), Non-native speakers use it to communicate with the rest of the world. David Crystal (1997) reported that an estimated 1.4 billion people are competent users of English worldwide, and 335 million people use it as their first language. English as a global language has led to a rapid increase in the number of non-native English speakers worldwide, while native speakers remain in minorities. Widdowson (1994) argues that native English speakers have no authority to claim ownership of the language because it belongs to every individual who speaks it. Similarly, Brumfit (2001) explored the concept of ownership by the total competent users of English. He claimed that 700 million people use English as a second or foreign language, which is more than half of the total native speakers. This indicates that non-native users of English worldwide play a pivotal role in the development and maintenance of the English language. English as a lingua franca, a native speaker's model, received criticism for its impractical and unrealistic nature (Alptekin, 2002). On the other hand, Seidlhofer (2005) challenged the concept of native-like accents and preferred intelligibility in the EIL context. He emphasized that clear communication suffers from the complexities of native language.

According to Jenkins (2004), English as a Foreign Language and English as a Lingua Franca are distinct paradigms; research shows that EFL speakers often emulate the native-speaker model of English, whereas ELF speakers use it to communicate with people worldwide from diverse linguistic backgrounds. ESL learners' mimicry may not be relevant in the Pakistani context, where English, as an international language, reflects colonial history, global positioning across various fields, and its status as a language. It has connections with various institutions: education, politics, business, and government. Learners with strong linguistic and cultural identities often face challenges in developing their competence in English as a lingua franca (ELF), especially when pronunciation instruction and content are limited (Raza, 2008). Furthermore, he stated that learners adopt three main types of accents (broad, regional, and non-regional) in communicating English. He termed Pakistani or South Asian accents non-regional accents, which identify learners' region and country. In a similar vein, a highly localized accent is termed a broad accent, such as Saraiki or Sindhi. Lastly, through regional accents, learners recognize their own identity as learners of urban Punjabi and Urdu accents.

1.1. Research Question

1. What perceptions and attitudes do teachers hold regarding pronunciation content and instruction?

1.2. Theoretical Framework

The present study used Borg's (1997) model of four interrelated dimensions based on language teacher cognition, schooling and professional coursework, classroom practices, and contextual factors; these interconnected sources shape teacher cognition as shown in Figure 1. According to Borg (1997), beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge are language teachers' cognitions that develop cumulatively through teachers' own experiences as learners during their schooling years and continue through professional training.

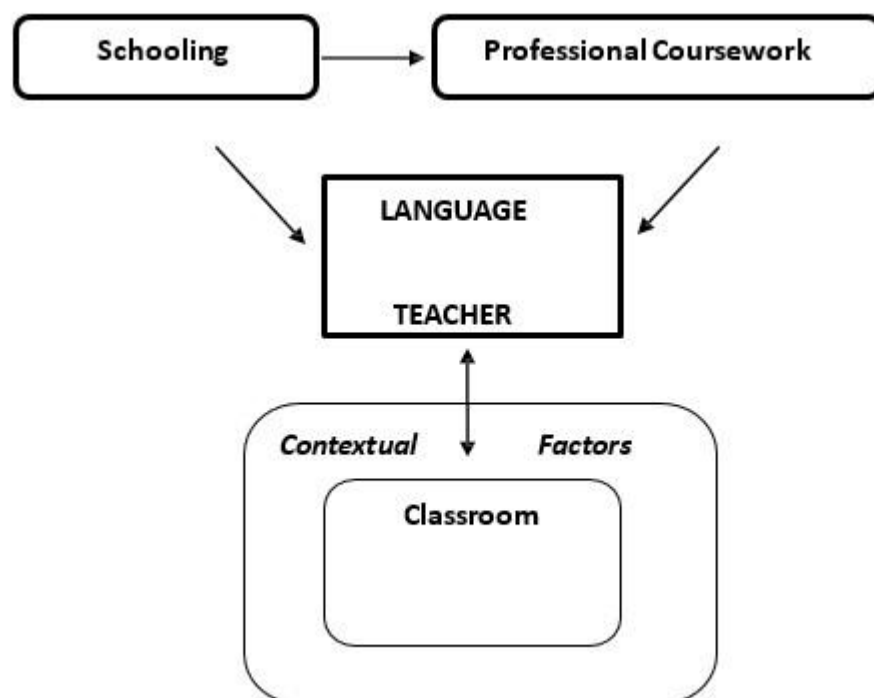


Figure 1. Teacher cognition, schooling, professional education, and classroom practice (Borg, 1997)

However, the researcher used two dimensions of this model to answer the research question. The research question on teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding pronunciation content and instruction involved two dimensions of Borg's (1997) model: schooling and professional coursework. Based on the theoretical framework, the study conceptualizes teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding pronunciation content and instruction, as teacher cognition is shaped by gradual schooling and professional

coursework dimensions that inform teachers' understanding of what content to teach and how to teach it.

2. Literature Review

English as a second language holds an important place in Pakistani schools, colleges, and universities. It is taught as a compulsory subject in all educational institutions in Pakistan. The National Single Curriculum (SNC) of Pakistan recognizes the importance of pronunciation for learners' spoken and communicative competence. Khan & Ali (2023) surveyed 28 government school teachers' perceptions regarding pronunciation teaching. Findings revealed that teachers perceived the importance of English pronunciation as an international language. Furthermore, several English teachers endorsed an intelligibility-oriented approach for their learners and expressed that international English is more intelligible and understood by all speakers. Low (2014) stated that students' speech must be intelligible and comprehensible. The majority of Pakistani English speakers prefer to adopt Pakistani English because they learnt it in school as a second language.

Medgyes (2001) emphasized the importance of non-native English teachers for learners because they provide better learning models. He claimed that native English teachers don't need to be the ideal for learners. This extends the philosophy of favoring intelligibility for learners' communicative competence. English teachers viewed technological resources, such as multimedia and projectors, as more beneficial for English pronunciation (Khan & Ali, 2023). English language teachers face several challenges regarding teaching pronunciation in the classroom (Bateman, 2008). It is important to understand teachers' perceptions and attitudes about pronunciation teaching because these can provide insights into their instructional decisions and classroom practices (Jamal & Zaman, 2025).

English is taught as a second or foreign language in Pakistan. In Pakistan, English language teaching approaches are mostly focused on reading and writing rather than explicitly focusing on listening and speaking. This conundrum is directly linked to students' communicative competence because of a lack of adequate opportunities to practice pronunciation (Majoka, Khan, & Khan, 2016). They explored 80 teachers' perceptions of their pronunciation instruction; results revealed that teachers faced several challenges in teaching pronunciation, such as a lack of knowledge, professional training, and insufficient pronunciation teaching methodologies. According to Warsi (2004) and Rehman (2010), Pakistani students use incorrect English pronunciation due to their weak listening and speaking skills. According to Gilbert (2010, p. 1), English pronunciation remained the 'orphan' of EFL/ESL for more than a decade

Brown, A. (1992) emphasized that ESL and EFL teachers should consider several pronunciation teaching issues. These concerns may provide initial assistance on how to teach pronunciation in ESL and EFL contexts. "What to teach in pronunciation" was one

of the questions he addressed among those concerns. Firstly, this connects to the pronunciation model. Received Pronunciation (RP), or British English, is a widely accepted model in ESL and EFL contexts (Pillay, 2004). Secondly, it highlights which pronunciation element should be used in ESL and EFL classrooms. Should English teachers focus on segmental features or suprasegmental features such as stress, intonation, and rhythm?

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

The present study adopted a qualitative research design to explore perceptions and attitudes regarding pronunciation content and instruction. The study is based on teachers' perceptions and attitudes—qualitative research provides in-depth data rather than fixed-response instruments (Borg, 2006; Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to participate actively in the research and provide in-depth data on teachers' perceptions and attitudes.

3.2. Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 ESL teachers in Makran, Balochistan. The participants were purposively selected based on their teaching experience and qualifications at different schools. Most teachers currently teach English as a second language at primary and secondary schools.

3.3. Instrument

Data were collected face-to-face through semi-structured interviews with 20 ESL teachers; each interview lasted about 30 to 35 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' prior consent, and later interviews were transcribed verbatim. Participants were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity; participants' real names were not used throughout the analysis section, and each participant was assigned a code for identification.

3.4. Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework was used for thematic analysis of participants' semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to decode participants' interviews, identifying themes and new themes. The framework consisted of six phases. The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study, and consent was obtained before data collection.

3.5. Findings

The findings of the current study were thematically organized using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Borg's (1997) two-dimensional theoretical framework was used in the present study: schooling and professional coursework, followed by teachers' perceptions and attitudes, pronunciation content, and instruction. This resulted in the emergence of a research question. The present study involved 20 ESL

teachers in government and private schools within the Makran region. Teachers were asked 34 questions related to perceptions and attitudes, pronunciation content, and instruction. The government of Pakistan promotes the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) for educational institutions. The Single National Curriculum (SNC) is a framework that emphasizes a standard education system for private and government institutions. The following are the thematic findings of 20 ESL teachers regarding pronunciation content and instruction.

3.6. Theme 1: Importance of Pronunciation for Communication

Teachers perceived the importance of pronunciation for communication. They demonstrated that pronunciation enhances learners' communicative competence. Pronunciation plays a pivotal role in reducing ESL learners' phonological barriers in communication. Teachers expressed the need for correct pronunciation for their learners because mispronunciations create challenges for learners to communicate effectively. Teachers perceived that pronunciation is the foundation of learning any language. The words and sentences must be understandable for intelligible communication; otherwise, communication breakdowns happen among speakers. The participants prioritized the primary need to be understood during English communication. As one of the participants responded, *"Well, I believe that pronunciation plays an important role for learners. If they don't understand the basic differences in how words are actually pronounced, they encounter significant challenges; for instance, "take" and "disease" versus "decease," both of which are commonly mispronounced by most students"* (P-11). The participant emphasized the importance of pronunciation at the word level, giving examples of minimal pairs *"disease" versus "decease"*. P-11's teaching philosophy revealed that poor pronunciation directly leads learners to various challenges. He suggested that limited pronunciation skills create functional barriers for learners rather than an aesthetic limitation. The majority of teachers viewed pronunciation as the backbone of English. Another senior teacher endorsed the demonstration of P-11, elaborating on the significance of pronunciation as *"Pronunciation is very important because it has direct effects in communication. No problem if they know grammar and vocabulary are clear, but pronunciation can create misunderstandings"* (P-12). Emphasize that learners encounter significant challenges if they do not understand the basic concept of pronunciation, even if learners have potential skills in vocabulary and grammar. This finding highlights the importance of pronunciation as compared to other skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, and suggests that communicative competence depends on effective pronunciation. Pronunciation is viewed as critical to communication, outweighing other language skills, such as vocabulary and grammar. P-11 and P-12 justified that learners' mispronunciation has negative effects on learners' learning behaviors. On the other hand, another respondent stated that correct pronunciation is necessary for secondary and matric-level students, and

believed that learners at the initial stage absorb English from various sources. Stating that *“it is very important, especially for the student of lower class or up to matric/secondary level. It is because they will get slowly, but importantly get everything, whatever they learn from, whatever they speak, whatever they listen from the internet, interviews etc.”* (P-15). This suggests that learners at this stage may influence learners for future language use. P-15, compared to P-11 and P-12, believed that learners can learn through different forms of exposure, such as listening to interviews and watching English news; on the other hand, the other two participants focused on explicit pronunciation in the classroom environment. Furthermore, P-15 stressed learners’ out-of-school exposure for pronunciation learning. This is categorized as a more recent communicative approach than the other two participants.

Theme 2. Intelligibility Over Native-like Accents

Intelligibility in communication refers to clear and understandable speech between speakers and listeners. On the other hand, a native-like accent is pronunciation that represents a native speaker of any language, who has learnt it as a native language. Participants prioritized intelligibility over native-like accents. The teachers revealed that learning a second language does not require a native-like accent; however, they emphasized that most educated people in Pakistan use their local accent for communication purposes. This shows that participants appreciated effective communication over native accents. As one participant explained, *“native accent is not important but understandable. I think 90% of educated Pakistanis use their own accent for other languages”* (P-2). This articulately emphasizes that learners are not required to adopt native-like accents for communication; a locally acceptable accent can replace it. Similarly, another respondent shared the same perspective as *“According to me, as far as I am concerned, it is not necessary, but the pronunciation is very important because every, uh, people live in different, uh, areas. They have their own native language”* (P-1). Learners with various linguistic backgrounds and their native languages influence English speech. This perspective shows that intelligibility and effective communication rely on learners’ own native language. The majority of the participants endorsed the idea of intelligibility in communication. Participants believed in an intelligibility-oriented approach for pronunciation instruction.

In contrast, two respondents emphasized the importance of teaching a native-like accent for their learners. P-15 believed that learners should be taught the British and American accents during the early stage of learning English, describing it as *“It is equally important likewise, the British and English accent... in initial days, native accent is necessary for the students”* (P-15). In a similar vein, another respondent endorsed the same perspective for their learners: *“It is very important, sir. They should speak with a native accent... if we try, we will. It should be close to that”* (P-13). Learners should be taught to

achieve native-speaker pronunciation norms rather than solely focusing on an intelligibility-oriented approach.

Theme 3. Teachers' Commitment to Continuous Learning and Professional Development

Pronunciation learning was viewed as an ongoing process, acknowledging the need for improvement in pronunciation teaching. Teachers perceived themselves as lifelong learners and sought assistance from the internet and digital tools when encountering challenging words to pronounce. The teacher expressed his opinion on the importance of technological resources to enhance pronunciation instruction. As one of the teachers stated, *"I try to improve in English. So, I am do my best effort. i find difficult Some words difficult for me. I prepare myself with Google and the internet"* (R-7). The teacher emphasized that self-directed learning will assist in professional development regarding pronunciation teaching. This indicates learners' learning is based on effective teaching strategies and command of knowledge. On the other hand, some teachers demonstrated the importance of professional and pedagogical training for better pronunciation teaching. Another teacher explicitly stated that professional development in pronunciation teaching will enhance teachers' pronunciation instruction, and proper training for professional growth is a must. *"I would like to improve myself by receiving proper training about teaching pronunciation"* (R-8). Teachers' responses demonstrate that pronunciation is a complex task, and explicit pronunciation instruction would be challenging for them.

The findings show that teachers lacked professional and pedagogical training in pronunciation. Teachers' statements indicated that they were not taught pronunciation during their schooling years. Most of the teachers explicitly expressed the same perspective in their interviews as *"We didn't have the pronunciation teaching at school, but we had it at language center"* (P-13). This indicates that explicit pronunciation teaching at the school level was not evident, reinforcing the importance of pronunciation training for professional development. Teachers' demonstrations show that limited exposure to pronunciation at school causes challenges in teaching pronunciation.

The overall findings indicate that the majority of the participants reported a lack of pronunciation learning during their formal education at school. As a result, they highlighted the significance of professional training in pronunciation instruction and knowledge for effective pronunciation teaching.

Theme 4. Challenges in Pronunciation Teaching

Participants viewed pronunciation teaching as a challenging component in implementing pronunciation instruction in the classroom. Teachers highlighted several challenges in pronunciation instruction, such as a lack of teaching resources, curriculum, and syllabus; influences from learners' native language; and overcrowded classrooms. These pronunciation instruction challenges have been identified as sub-themes.

a. Insufficient Teaching Resources

Teaching resources play a pivotal role in developing teachers' instructional strategies when teaching pronunciation. Teachers highlighted the technological issues that they face during classroom activities. These technological aids include projectors, multimedia, audio, and other such equipment that can enable teachers to integrate pronunciation skills effectively. Some of the senior teachers highlighted the significance of these resources in their pronunciation instruction and emphasized the need for these technological aids to provide effective pronunciation practice to learners. As one of the participants demonstrated, *"I think the most important is the lack of technological aid, for instance, audio devices, projectors, classes, multimedia, and other logistics which are used in learning and teaching pronunciation in their schooling"* (P-2). On the other hand, another teacher reported a lack of knowledge of English phonetics as *"Yes, I think there is a lack of facilities and, uh, lack of awareness also is there"* (P-1). Teachers reported a lack of teaching facilities in schools and, most importantly, a lack of awareness of pronunciation instruction, which remained unfocused on phonetics-related knowledge. This indicates that teachers' limited access to technological aids and pronunciation instruction creates challenges for teaching communicatively effective pronunciation.

b. Limited Pronunciation Content in the Curriculum and Syllabus

Curriculum and syllabus are considered essential elements for achieving the primary goal of teaching. English education in Pakistan follows the Single National Curriculum (SNC), implemented across government and private institutions. Unfortunately, the provincial-level syllabus does not meet the needs of teachers and learners. Participants in this study reported this as a challenge in their teaching strategies. Teachers get little attention from the curriculum designed for teachers and learners, especially in Balochistan. Participants viewed the syllabus as less effective in teaching English pronunciation. Teachers revealed that English pronunciation teaching is considered a formality in school, and most of the teachers do not teach it, as one explained, *"Our curriculum does not give pronunciation importance, 'pronunciation is not taught in school is only a formality'"* (P-2). Pronunciation teaching does not occupy a strong position in schools; the English curriculum is often treated as a formality rather than integrated with other components of English. This marginalization of pronunciation teaching indicates a serious issue in classroom activities. Another participant had a similar response, *"We have few contents in our syllabus for pronunciation"* (P-15). The participant indicated that the textbook lacked sufficient content to teach pronunciation. The limited content of pronunciation directly affects teachers' perceptions of effective pronunciation teaching. The participant revealed that limited aspects of pronunciation marginalize the teaching of pronunciation in the classroom.

c. Overcrowded Classrooms

Overcrowded classrooms are one of the biggest challenges, especially in government schools, where large class sizes make teaching and learning difficult. Teachers reported that large classroom sizes hinder the quality of teaching because it is directly related to class timing, as one participant highlighted, *“limited class time and large student numbers can hinder my approach sometimes”* (R-7). Due to these challenges, participants reported that integrated pronunciation-teaching approaches receive limited attention in the classroom. These challenges affect the teaching and learning process despite effective pedagogical strategies. The majority of the teachers from government schools reported that overcrowded classrooms hindered effective implementation of pedagogical skills. The credibility of sufficient feedback and interaction with the students will not be ensured. *“We get problems from the students. There’s a large classroom in school. Clearly not pronounced. They pronounce the words within lack of facilities.”* (R-5). Teachers reported that overcrowded classrooms make it difficult to address students’ pronunciation issues and to provide them with effective feedback. These contextual constraints impede teachers’ pronunciation instruction, corrective feedback, and monitoring of students’ learning behaviors in pronunciation learning.

d. First Language Interference in English Pronunciation

English is considered a second and official language in Pakistan. It is spoken in all educational institutions as a medium of instruction. Pakistan is considered a multilingual society where people live and communicate with various native languages. Most of the teachers identified learners’ native languages as an inference in learning English pronunciation. As one teacher stated, *“we cannot achieve our target, and our Balochi is an inference”* (R-8). This indicates that teachers’ targeted approach to pronunciation instruction faces hurdles due to learners’ mother-tongue interference. This indicates that learners’ native-language phonological influence may affect the achievement of English speech sounds in classroom activities. In addition, another teacher said, *“Another difficulty is first language interference. Students naturally apply sound patterns from their mother language”* (R-4). The teacher expressed that learners with phonological barriers with respect to their mother tongue naturally pronounce English words. These overall responses indicate that learners’ L1 persistently affects pronunciation instruction activities in the classrooms. It is challenging for teachers to support pronunciation learning effectively in English classrooms.

Theme 5: Positive Attitudes Towards Pronunciation Teaching

Teachers showed positive attitudes and confidence towards teaching pronunciation in the ESL classrooms. They believed in the importance of pronunciation for communicative competence. The research included 20 ESL teachers from various government and private schools. As one the teachers stated, *“Sometimes i feel difficult for*

me. And I plan myself, but a student did not get that time. I, i try my best to teach them” (R-8). This indicates a positive approach towards pronunciation teaching, even though teachers expressed difficulty in the situation. Teachers highlighted several challenges for teaching pronunciation and struggled to plan effective teaching strategies to improve learners' pronunciation skills. Teachers showed positive attitudes towards pronunciation instruction and commitment to pedagogical challenges in classroom activities despite time constraints. Another teacher demonstrated the importance of pronunciation and recognized its contribution to effective communication. R-7 emphasized the value of pronunciation teaching in helping learners to gain communicative competence. The teacher said, “*I like myself for pronunciation teaching. i share my knowledge and help students make their communication better skills. i know the value of correct pronunciation for learners' communication skills*” (R-7). The participant demonstrated that pronunciation is not an isolated component of language but an integral part of communication skills.

4. Discussion

The study was based on exploring secondary school ESL teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards pronunciation content and instruction. This study was framed through schooling and professional coursework dimensions of Borg's (1997) model of teacher cognition. Despite several contextual constraints, most teachers viewed pronunciation as a central component of communicative competence and demonstrated positive attitudes towards pronunciation instruction. The findings of the present study are discussed here in relation to the existing literature and the theoretical framework used in this research.

4.1. Pronunciation for Communicative Competence

The importance of pronunciation was framed as a prominent component of English learners' 'communicative competence' rather than accent accuracy. This aligns closely with a pedagogical shift from teaching pronunciation as a native accent to intelligibility as the primary goal of pronunciation instruction (Levis, 2005). The majority of the teachers explicitly mentioned pronunciation as a “gatekeeper” because it undermines learners' communication skills despite having command over vocabulary and grammar, echoing Derwing and Munro's (2005) argument, which prioritized comprehensibility and intelligibility over native-speaker norms in pronunciation instruction. This finding is prominent because it suggests that teachers without formal training in pronunciation instruction independently held beliefs that largely align with current applied linguistic research. In other words, teachers' demonstrations are linked to the current perspective on pronunciation instruction, even though they have never been exposed to it through professional and pedagogical training.

The habits of learning pronunciation at the secondary and matric levels can have a lasting influence on learners' future language use. This highlights that such a perspective of pronunciation teaching has received less attention in research that broadly focuses on

adult and tertiary-level learners (e.g., Couper, 2016; Foote et al., 2016). This suggests teachers who teach younger and secondary-level students may not hold beliefs about language-related issues but also prioritize learners' ages and learning needs. This suggests learners' age and educational level should receive more attention in pronunciation teaching; these also influence teachers' beliefs about pronunciation instruction.

4.2. Intelligibility versus Native-Like Pronunciation

Intelligibility over a native-like accent is another notable theme that extends the discussion by revealing that the majority of participants emphasized an intelligibility-oriented approach for their learners. The participants viewed English as an international language and focused on comprehensibility and intelligibility to enhance learners' communicative competence. Among 20 ESL teachers, only 2 participants favored a native-like accent for their early-stage learners, such as American and British models. In this situation, the Nateness Principle and the Intelligibility Principle raise a long-standing debate among language researchers (Levis, 2005). However, the findings of the current study revealed that the majority of the teacher cohort held monolithic perceptions of intelligibility-based pronunciation teaching. Most of the participants in this research who favored intelligibility linked their views to Pakistan's multilingual context, where competent users of English often retain local accent features. This finding is directly linked to the World Englishes scholarship (Jenkins, 2000; Kachru, 1985), which emphasized the importance of an intelligibility-oriented approach for learners using English as a second language. This suggests that professional teaching training alone may not influence participants' beliefs; their experiences as multilingual speakers in the Pakistani context may also shape participants' beliefs. Borg's (1997) framework directly aligns with these contextual factors; teachers' beliefs are widely shaped by their social and professional environment. These contextual factors, such as the social and professional environment, strongly shape teachers' beliefs and are directly aligned with Borg's (1997) framework.

4.3. Training Gaps and the Cognition–Practice Gap

The present study used Borg's (1997) model of four interrelated dimensions based on language teacher cognition, schooling and professional coursework, classroom practices, and contextual factors; these interconnected sources shape teacher cognition as shown above in Figure 1. However, the researcher used two dimensions of this model to answer the research question. The research question on teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding pronunciation content and instruction had two dimensions of Borg's (1997) model: schooling and professional coursework. The findings of the current study revealed an important theme: the majority of teachers did not receive formal pronunciation instruction during their own schooling, which aligns with the theoretical framework used in this study. Teachers also revealed that they have not received any professional training in pronunciation, and some used self-directed strategies, such as Google and other

resources, to improve pronunciation skills. The majority of the teacher cohort expressed a desire for professional and pedagogical training on pronunciation instruction. The findings of the current study are relevant to Borg's (1997) schooling and professional coursework dimension. The teachers' perceptions regarding pronunciation preparation appeared largely absent and unstructured. On the other hand, most participants realized this gap and struggled to address it through independent learning.

This finding is relevant to previous research by Baker (2014) and Burri, Chen & Baker (2017), who identified a gap in recognizing the significance of pronunciation and limited professional training regarding pronunciation instruction. This indicates that pronunciation teaching has been neglected in ELT teacher training for a long time (Derwing & Munro, 2005). The present study opens this discussion to the Pakistani secondary ESL teachers' context, viewing the existence of this contextual gap within the Makran region, Balochistan. The present contextual gap may be important in such a regional context where teachers lack basic infrastructure and institutional support; these restrict teachers from implementing effective pronunciation strategies.

4.4. Institutional and Contextual Barriers to Pronunciation Teaching

In this study, contextual factors were identified that shape and restrict teachers' pronunciation instruction, aligning with Borg's (1997) teacher cognition model. The present study identified four important barriers linked to teachers' professional work: a lack of teaching resources, pronunciation content inadequacy in the curriculum promoted by the Single National Curriculum (SNC), large class sizes, and learners' mother-tongue interference. The present study's findings consistently correspond with the previous research that identified teachers' restraints and overcrowded classes as challenges to pronunciation teaching (Gilakjani, 2016), neglecting pronunciation curriculum (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Foote et al., 2016) and mother-tongue influence on developing second language pronunciation (Ellis, 2008).

ESL teachers strongly criticized the pronunciation component of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), describing it as a mere formality in pronunciation instruction. Although the SNC was designed to address learners' needs, its pronunciation content was perceived as ineffective in supporting classroom instruction, highlighting a significant misalignment between the national curriculum and teachers' instructional needs.

4.5. Positive Responses to Contextual Challenges

Teachers revealed several challenges during their semi-structured interviews and, despite these major barriers, showed positive attitudes towards pronunciation teaching. Despite these contextual constraints, teachers did not hesitate to continue teaching pronunciation. The participants already revealed these prominent challenges in themes 3 and 4, and continued to motivate teaching pronunciation.

4.6. Synthesis within Borg's (1997) Framework.

In understanding teachers' perceptions and attitudes, the findings support the relevance of Borg's (1997) schooling and professional coursework dimension. ESL teachers' own schooling. The absence of pronunciation instruction in teachers' own formal schooling, combined with inadequate professional development, seems to have influenced teachers' intelligibility-oriented approach; limited pedagogical training hindered the translation of these perceptions into classroom activities. This finding supports Borg's (1997) view that teachers' preparation in formal schooling and its absence shape teacher cognition.

4.7. Implications of the Study

The study's findings have significant implications for teacher education and curriculum design in Pakistan. Pre-service and in-service teachers must receive proper pedagogical and professional training in pronunciation instruction. The Single National Curriculum (SNC) has limited pronunciation content and needs to be reviewed to ensure teachers have relevant pronunciation content to teach pronunciation effectively.

4.8. Limitations of the Study

This study explored secondary school ESL teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward pronunciation content and instruction and has several limitations. The sample was limited to 20 ESL teachers from the Makran region of Balochistan, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other provinces of Pakistan. Because the study relied on semi-structured interviews, it captures teachers' *stated* perceptions rather than their actual classroom practices, leaving open the possibility of a gap between the two. Additionally, the study applied only two of Borg's (1997) four dimensions—schooling and professional coursework—while classroom practices and contextual factors, though discussed, were not directly observed.

4.9. Future Research

Future research should incorporate classroom observations and compare observed practices with teachers' reported perceptions. Studies should also include teachers from diverse regions of Balochistan to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, future research should employ Borg's (1997) four-dimensional model to examine the congruence between teachers' stated perceptions and their classroom practices.

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