

PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDINGS: TEACHERS'
BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN
PRONUNCIATION
TEACHING

by

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ABSTRACT

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The relevance of pronunciation teaching has been discussed intensively and extensively during the past thirty years. Coupled with the expanding use of English language in international contexts, explicit pronunciation teaching in English language curricula is acknowledged to promote better communication. To date, limited research documents the teachers' practices and beliefs with regard to pronunciation teaching.

The present study involved three native English speaking teachers (NEST) and three non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST) in an EFL/Expanding Circle context within an elementary level formal educational setting. Through class

observations, simulated-recall interviews, and semi-constructed in-depth interviews, the study explored teachers' practices and beliefs of pronunciation teaching in terms of (1) the context of teaching (i.e. ESL, EFL or EIL), (2) the component of teaching: segmentals or suprasegmentals, (3) the teaching approaches they adopted, and (4) the differences between NESTs and NNESTs.

The results revealed that the beliefs and practices of these teachers generally operate within the EFL context with little EIL inclination. In addition, the NESTs and the NNESTs conceptualized pronunciation differently. They adopted different teaching approaches but both concentrated their teaching on the segmental level. Only one NNEST participant demonstrated her teaching above the sentence level. Although the NNESTs exhibited a highly norm-bound attitude (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005), pedagogical reasons that might account for this attitude were suggested. These results indicate possible gap between the teachers and the academia and offer insights to in-service and pre-service teacher education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the past thirty years, scholars have been discussing the relevance of teaching pronunciation in ELT. It is acknowledged that pronunciation needs to be taught and deserves more attention in a language course. Faulty pronunciation can lead to communication breakdowns and sometimes result in unnecessary tension and conflict. As pointed out by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996), non-native speakers of English need to achieve a “threshold level of pronunciation” to be understood and to minimize oral communication problems (p. 3).

Given the importance of pronunciation, it is expected that teachers would increase their pronunciation teaching practice in their classrooms. Coupled with the expanding global use of the English language, the demand for teaching a better or more intelligible pronunciation heightens. This global trend, for example, sweeps across some Asian countries, such as Taiwan, Korea and Japan and even influences their educational policy. This results in the implementation of formal English education at the elementary level and the recruitment of native English speaking teachers, hoping to develop the learners’ basic communication ability and to introduce a more authentic pronunciation at an earlier stage.

However, scholarly literature documenting teachers’ instructions or any teachers’ instructional variation regarding pronunciation under recent language teaching

contextual change is so scarce that it seems few scholars know how teachers actually place pronunciation in their daily lesson plans. In this sense, there seems to be a potential gap between what researchers of pronunciation know and what practitioners do. Addressing this gap between theory and practice is indispensable because it helps to build a solid ground for further exploration on this specific aspect of language. It also helps to create a mutual and practical objective for both scholars and teachers.

Moreover, based on a substantive study of teachers' beliefs in mainstream educational research, we can reasonably suspect it is teachers' overall belief systems that inform the decisions they make with regard to when and how they incorporate instruction and practice in pronunciation into their lesson plans (Munby, 1982; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Kagan, 1992; Richards, 1998; Richardson, 1996). Failure to discern such teacher beliefs renders an incomplete picture in depicting a teacher's very acts. This insufficient view by no means creates a holistic angle that allows us to delve into the issue of pronunciation teaching. In order to attain an in-depth understanding of these issues, this study explores teachers' beliefs underlying their choices made with regard to pronunciation pedagogy.

Thus, the questions to be answered in this research are: (1) to what extent and how do English teachers in general elementary English classes incorporate instruction in segmental and suprasegmental features of the target language?; (2) Is there any perceived difference in how and to what extent native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers incorporate such features?, and, (3) what beliefs

with regard to pronunciation teaching inform teachers' decision to incorporate or not incorporate such features in certain ways?

I came to these questions in part from research and from my own practical experience as an elementary school teacher undergoing this global and contextual language instructional change. By investigating these questions, I portray teachers' underlying beliefs about pronunciation teaching and further add to the understanding of the role of language teacher cognition of pedagogical practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I start with a review of scholarly literature discussing different ideologies that teachers might adopt when delivering pronunciation instruction in terms of the teaching contexts, teaching approaches, teaching components and teachers. I continue to address the impact of these ideologies on pronunciation research and pedagogy. Then I conclude with research questions I wish to explore in this study.

2.1 Competing Ideologies on Pronunciation Teaching

The expanding global use of English has heightened the demand for English teaching and resurged scholarly interest in pronunciation. With an advanced understanding of the language, specialists currently agree that explicit instruction in pronunciation is essential in language curriculum (Wong, 1987; Kenworthy, 1987; Brown, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Faser, 1999; Jenkins, 2002; Levis, 2005). Competing ideologies concerning pronunciation, however, have emerged from theoretical discussions in the past three decades. These ideologies, mainly discussed under the scope of oral communication, have influenced pedagogical materials as well as teachers' education and professional development. These different ideologies generally center on four issues, respectively: language teaching contexts, teaching components, teaching approaches and teachers. The following sections discuss these ideologies and questions derived from them.

2.1.1. The Context: ESL, EFL or EIL?

One of the most prevalent ideologies concerning pronunciation centers on language use in expanding communicative contexts. As a means of global communication, English is used internationally among native speakers and among non-native speakers nowadays. The speaker-hearer transaction happens not only between non-native speakers and native speakers (NS-NNS) but also between non-native speakers and other non-native speakers (NNS-NNS). These different types of interaction in the use of English in the world today may be seen as the result of the broadening contexts of English language use from English as a Second Language (ESL) (i.e., where English is used as an alternative way of expressing the culture of one's own) to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (i.e., where English is used for the purpose of absorbing the culture of another nation), and to English as an International Language (EIL) (i.e., where English is used as a primary language for communication between non-native speakers in international occasions). The broader communicative contexts raise questions with regard to the presupposed NS-NNS paradigm underpinning most commercially available teachers' resources and pronunciation teaching materials.

For example, the traditional NS-NNS paradigm generally operates in the context of ESL and EFL, where English is assumed to be learned for effective communication with its native speakers by people speaking languages other than English. Drawing on the notion of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) and on contemporary research in discourse analysis, the aim of teaching pronunciation has always been to make the learners intelligible, in this case, intelligible to the native speakers. To become

intelligible, then, learners within such contexts are suggested tacitly to approximate the target language norms as close as possible.

Advocates of EIL (e.g. Taylor, 1991; Widdowson, 1997; Levis, 2005; Jenkins, 2000, 2002, 2004; Seidlhofer, 2004) argue that this approximation overlooks both NNS-NNS interactions that happen in most international arenas and overlooks learners' motivation in learning English. In response to this argument, Jenkins (2000) proposes a Lingua Franca Core (LFC) which emphasizes NNS-NNS interaction. Examining data from NNS-NNS communication, Jenkins notices the learners' phonological converging process and identifies core phonological items which cause miscommunication between NNS-NNS. In addition, she contests the inadequacy of traditional NS-NNS pronunciation pedagogy and encourages pedagogical implementation of her LFC. From this perspective, NS accents are viewed as models, which are variable and approximated more or less according to the demand of specific situations, rather than a norm of absolute correctness (Seidlhofer & Dalton, 1994). Furthermore, as supported by Smith and Bisazza (1982) and Deterding (2005), familiarity with multiple linguistic varieties is an important factor for mutual understanding. To expand learners' interlanguage repertoire and receptive competence in the negotiation process, Jenkins (2002) also introduces different varieties of English in her LFC syllabus.

Regardless of EIL's sound contention, LFC has attracted quarters of opposition. To begin with, the interlanguage talk argument of LFC is based on deficit language produced by the learners. This interlanguage, in Jenkins's sense, ultimately connects to a certain norm and leads LFC to a self contradictory position. Moreover, LFC is built

upon data from conversations of learners with different mother tongues (L1). The accommodation process which occurs between interlocutors of different L1s is unlikely to happen between those of the same L1 (Levis, 2005). Thus, the possibility of LFC implementation seems questionable in most EFL formal educational settings where learners are of homogenous language background. In addition, some phonological items ruled out from LFC appear to contribute to unintelligibility among interlocutors and deserve further exploration. Deterding's (2005) study of Singaporeans' understanding of Estuary English suggests that, to a certain degree, misunderstanding occurs as a result of the fronting of dental fricatives even when listeners themselves tend to avoid using them. Deterding concludes that, for maximum intelligibility, pronunciation teaching should encourage the use of dental fricatives, an item that is eliminated from LFC.

Although the discussion continues among scholars on what ideologies are to be maintained in the contexts of EFL, ESL or EIL, teachers' opinions are not heard as salient as compared to those of the scholars'. Given the central role of teachers as the actors on these ideologies in the classroom, how they view the current discussion in regard to these different contexts is critical.

Sifakis and Sougari (2005) and Jenkins (2005) take the first step to investigate attitudes of teachers toward EIL pronunciation pedagogy. In their survey study on Greek EFL teachers, Sifakis and Sougari (2005) reported that the teachers' practices and beliefs appeared to be paradoxical. When asked about their practice, teachers presented a highly norm-bound focus on teaching NS models. Sifakis defines the norm-

bound focus as an emphasis on “matters of regularity, codification and standardness” (2004, p. 239). Yet, in terms of communication between NNSs, the teachers seemed to believe in the need to create appropriate discourse for specific situations comprehensible for all interlocutors. Specifically as Sifakis and Sougari found, among teachers at different levels of teaching, teachers of the primary level believed that the attainment of native-like accents is of great importance for the learners. The results suggest the complex and often conflicting reasonings teachers undertake. However, due to the nature of Sifakis and Sougari’s study, the teachers’ reasoning cannot be explored in detail. As Pajares (1992, p. 314) pointed out, “individuals are often unwilling or unable to represent their beliefs,” in other words, stated beliefs or practices by no means dictate the actual practice in class or spell out their thoughts completely. In-depth exploration is needed in order to get a more thorough understanding of the teachers’ complex belief system.

In another study, Jenkins (2005) examined the attitudes of eight NNS teachers using in-depth interviews. The data revealed the participants’ “ambivalent” attitude (p. 535) or “love-hate relationship” (Bombose, 1998) toward their own English accents and their hesitations towards pedagogical implementation of LFC. Jenkins came to a temporary conclusion that teachers’ willingness to adopt localized English accents as pronunciation learning models should not be taken for granted. The teachers’ reasonings are complicated and are often connected with personal aims and institutional or societal expectation. Further research provides insights concerning these issues at different

levels of learning settings and insights about English teachers of different L1 backgrounds.

2.1.2 Teaching Components: Suprasegmentals or Segmentals?

Another ideology involves pronunciation teaching components. Traditionally, three types of features are discussed with regard to pronunciation teaching components: segmental features (discrete sounds), suprasegmentals (features that organize streams of speech into meaningful units such as stress, rhythm, intonation, linking, assimilation and deletion) and voice quality settings (articulatory characteristics of native speakers in connected speech) (Wong, 1987; Kenworthy, 1987; Pennington & Richards, 1986; Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Celce-Murcia et. al., 1996). The recent emphasis on suprasegmentals has led to a pedagogical transformation. A brief review regarding the debates between segmental and suprasegmental instruction is presented under the scope of oral communication in this section.¹

Teaching of segmental features started with a concentration on phonetic alphabets during the Reform Movement (Celce-Murcia et. al., 1996, p. 3). Learners, then, were given phonetic training in order to establish good speech habits. Minimal pair drills were largely used to distinguish phonemes in listening practice and oral production (Celce-Murcia et. al., 1996). It was not until Anderson-Hsieh (1990, 1995), that the focus of teaching shifted dramatically to an emphasis on suprasegmentals.

¹ Voice quality settings, mostly used complementarily to illustrate the articulatory positioning of segmental and suprasegmental features will not receive lengthy discussion in this study.

Following Anderson-Hsieh, a number of studies have investigated the extent to which suprasegmentals contribute to speaker intelligibility and its pedagogy (Chela-Flores, 1994; Derwing & Munro, 1997; Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe 1998; Hahn, 2004; among others). Based on these findings and NS corpus data (Cook, 1991), resource books for teachers have largely encouraged the teaching of suprasegmental features at the production level to improve learners' intelligibility (Morley, 1991; Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996).

Nevertheless, questions arise from the above phenomenon. Firstly, as commented on by Brazil (1994), segmentals and suprasegmentals are interdependent “the work students do in one area supports and reinforces the work they do in the other” (p. 3). Without extensive study of the relative distribution of both features in intelligibility, the findings can only be suggestive rather than conclusive to argue one over the other, much less a pedagogical proposal. Secondly, regardless of a few studies (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Derwing & Munro, 2001, 2002), Jenkins (2004) argues that most studies conducted to investigate the problem assume a NS-NNS communication scenario, where native speakers serve as the judges to examine non-native speakers' intelligibility, neglecting NNS-NNS interactions. Contrary to the NS-NNS findings, the NNS-NNS data, according to Jenkins (2004), has revealed unintelligibility as a problem at the segmental level of a major portion rather than at the suprasegmental level. Jenkins (2004) further suspects some researchers' attitude of wholesale transferring NS corpus data to the English teaching realm, the “corpus syndrome,” as she terms it (2000, p. 67).

More importantly, some suprasegmental features appear to be unteachable and require learners' extensive exposure to the target language for acquisition (Taylor, 1993).

Given the close relation between suprasegmental features and the nature of native accents which are unlikely for learners to achieve, whether learners could acquire suprasegmental features at a productive level in a formal educational setting is not clear. Moreover, the extent to which learners' production of suprasegmental features contributes to intelligibility between both NS-NNS and NNS-NNS interaction remains unexplored. Apart from that, SLA literature never clearly indicates how suprasegmental and segmental elements can be integrated gradually into language courses in the same way learners are immersed into grammar and vocabulary (Brazil, 1994; Chela-Flores, 2001). The uncertainties which reside in this issue do not yield a theory of teaching. Final decisions on pedagogical implementation seem to fall back on the teachers. They are left with a great variety of pronunciation issues previously discussed as well as complex linguistic, personal, and social factors that need to be taken account of in their instruction. Coupled with that, teachers are also challenged with finding adequate methods that translate their belief into appropriate and absorbable units for the learners.

2.1.3 Pronunciation Teaching Approaches

Another ideology concerns the general language teaching approach. In line with the dominance of communicative language teaching (CLT), teaching of pronunciation shifts from an aspect of phonological accuracy to a global conversational competence and is thought to be taught as an integral part of oral communication (Pennington & Richards, 1986). It is seen as a by-product of teaching speaking and listening (Murphy,

1991; Celce-Murcia, 1987, 1996). Traditional techniques such as minimal pair drills, in which sounds and words are practiced in isolation, are deemphasized, and replaced with meaningful communicative practice incorporating target features.

Although CLT has been in vogue since the 1980's, issues involving its implementation in class deserve a closer look and need to be addressed. Firstly, teachers' understandings of CLT appear to vary across individuals as they are compared with scholarly definitions (Savington, 2003), and hence their teachings might not necessarily be in accordance with what is defined in the scholars' point of view. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) studied ten Japanese teachers' practical understanding of CLT. The teachers, whose teaching experience ranged from 3.5 years to 10 years, believed that CLT involves mainly speaking and listening and that CLT enhances acquisition of the language. Observation of their practice, however, showed little CLT practice in their classes and a reluctance to promote it. The teachers' actions do not seem to embrace their ideas of supporting CLT. Karavas-Doukas (1996), based on Borg's review (2006), also found the same incongruence in Greek teachers' attitudes and practice toward CLT. The researchers appear to conclude that the teachers in these studies do not put CLT into practice even though it is highly accredited in promoting language acquisition by the teachers.

However, when Nazari's (2007) takes a further step to investigate teachers' CLT beliefs and practices, he differentiates two concepts of CLT, namely, the narrower (vocabulary, forms, and functions) and the broader (social-cultural aspects of language use) concept based on the notion of communicative competence. In his study of three

Iranian English teachers with a minimum of ten-years of experience, he argues that the teachers' implementation of CLT practice appears to be based on a narrower CLT concept because of "the institutional constraints" (i.e. limited class time, big class size and prescribed syllabus) (p. 209) and because of the "teachers' lack of distinction between the two types of communicative competence (p. 210). These studies could possibly suggest the incongruence of scholars' and the teachers' perspectives in defining and explicating their practices in class. It also reflects teachers' complex reasoning underlying their actions. Notwithstanding, little attention has been paid to grammar instruction in the above studies, and none of the studies documented how teachers approach pronunciation specifically. In terms of pronunciation teachers' use of CLT, if any, the picture is unclear.

Secondly, Jenkins (2004) argues that the claim of CLT's integral instruction is an act of marginalizing pronunciation in the belief that it is peripheral to oral communication. It overlooks the critical role pronunciation plays in communication. Jenkin's data (2000) suggests that miscommunication between NNS-NNS happens mostly at the segmental level. Rost (1990) also points out, "most mishearings can be identified as occurring at a segmental level" even among L1 speakers (p. 50). Therefore, Jenkins strongly suggests the need of a more systematic training of individual segmental features and a return to the forgotten minimal pair drills.

Although CLT is highly encouraged in ELT, some English teaching specialists (Xuan, 2007; Sung, 2005) from EFL countries still caution that CLT might not be practical in EFL contexts because English classrooms could be the only place the

learners have exposure to English and receive English instruction. To secure the learners' fundamental knowledge, teachers need to efficiently and practically plan their lesson contents within limited class time. However, pronunciation is hardly addressed in these specialists' works.

2.1.4 The Teachers: NEST and NNEST

A final ideology addresses the polemic of native English speaking teachers' (NESTs) and non-NESTs' (NNEST) proficiency and competence. In part, NESTs have been assumed to possess superiority and privileged status in this profession (Davies, 1991; Medgyes, 1994; Cook, 1999; Braine, 1999; Canagarajah 1999; Lagasabaster & Siera, 2002; Holliday, 2006). Under the premise that native speakers are the arbiters of the language and that learners are to approximate NS norms, NNESTs' linguistic and pedagogical competence are challenged.

Although findings of educational research demonstrate that competence of a language in no way guarantees a level of competence adequate for teaching, and that pedagogical knowledge cannot be equated with subject matter content knowledge (Grossman, Wilson, & Shulman, 1989), as far as pronunciation is concerned, scholarly literature seems to find the learners' preference for NESTs' instruction. Lagasabaster and Siera (2002) reported a general preference for NESTs at primary, secondary and tertiary education level among 76 undergraduate students in Spain, yet no specific reasons for the students' choice were explored in this study.

Cook (1999) contends that people who speak more than one language should not be compared with monolinguals. Multilinguals' "multicompetence", as he termed it,

differs from monolinguals' knowledge qualitatively in terms of language processing and thought process. Successful L2 users, as Cook claims, "have strength and rights of their own by giving learners role models" (1999, p. 204). Yet, Cook does not specify the area of pronunciation in his argument nor did he concretely discuss the definition of successful L2 users in relation to their attainment of L2. Another support for NNESTs comes from Jenkins' (2000) who claims that NNESTs are strongly equipped with phonological and phonetic knowledge in both L1 and English and that they are more likely to have negotiation ability with experiences in EIL contexts. According to Jenkins (2000), NNESTs, with bilingual models, are more sociolinguistically and socio-psychologically appropriate during communication.

Medgyes (1994, 2000) further explored the nature of NESTs' and NNESTs' teaching. He investigates NESTs' and NNESTs' belief and practice by comparing their stated teaching behavior and actual practice in two studies. Based on Medgyes' observation of and interviews with the teachers in secondary schools in Hungary, he notes that the teaching styles of NESTs and NNESTs are distinctly different in general attitude and in attitude to teaching a language. Although NNESTs in the study were all fluent English speakers and were engaging in developing students' oral communication skills, Medgyes states, "They were unable to emulate NESTs on any account of English competence" (2000, pp. 368-369). He concludes that the linguistic divergence of both NESTs and NNESTs considerably impinged on their teaching strategies, and that teachers' stated beliefs cannot be used as reliable indicators of their actual practices. It is thus suggested that NESTs and NNESTs adopt two different teaching styles, and that

linguistic competence, in Medgye's point of view, plays an active role in determining the nature of teachers' practice.

Again, none of these studies pay attention to the teachers' teaching in pronunciation. In terms of teaching pronunciation, the NESTs' and NNESTs' teaching should not be limited within theoretical debates. More concrete evidence is needed to understand the nature of their instruction fully before any conclusion can be drawn. This methodological gap surely deserves more attention in order to lead the discussion to a practical base.

2.2 Linking Theory and Reality: The Research Questions

Considering these ideologies concerning pronunciation teaching and learning, teachers, as the principal actors upon these ideologies, deserve a closer look regarding their actions in class and their thought about the issues. Yet, as Gilbert and Levis (2001) pointed out, pronunciation teaching is "a field that has been notoriously data poor and anecdote rich" (p. 506). Current research concerning pronunciation in the ESL, EFL and EIL contexts primarily focuses on analyzing different aspects of spoken discourse, comprehension, intelligibility as well as attitudes and stereotyped assumptions of different accents (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). Less attention has been paid to examining the actual teaching of pronunciation, and even less to discuss teacher's beliefs about it. What teachers think and do, by far, seems to be a silent part of the research agenda. To inquire into an in-depth understanding of teachers' classroom practice on pronunciation, the research questions addressed in this study are these:

- (1) To what extent and how do English teachers in general elementary English classes incorporate instruction in segmental and suprasegmental features of the target language in their teaching?
- (2) Is there any perceived difference in how and to what extent native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers incorporate such features?
- (3) What beliefs with regard to pronunciation teaching inform teachers' decision to incorporate or not incorporate such features in certain ways?

An understanding of pronunciation teaching in the classroom yields insight into the bigger picture of EFL and of English teaching in the expanding circle (Kachru, 1989), as well as the widespread formal English education at the elementary level in Asia. Additionally, the investigation of teachers' beliefs about pronunciation teaching presents teachers' perceived status as speakers of English in the EFL classroom (Cook, 1999) and their reasoning for pedagogical choices. As a teacher, it is my belief that in understanding what teachers think, know, and do, we further understand teaching in general and can they readjust if necessary.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The present study is aimed at understanding elementary school English teachers' practice in pronunciation teaching and to further explore their beliefs that inform their choices. In order to answer the research questions, relevant methodologies are reviewed to best assist participants in the explication of their beliefs. However, the definition of beliefs is not as straightforward as it seems, cautioned by Pajares (1992). To better understand the nature and scope of teachers' beliefs, a short review of the scholarly literature concerning teachers' beliefs is presented at the beginning of this chapter. It helps to devise a relevant instrument in revealing teachers' beliefs as completely as possible and validate my data collection rationale. Following the discussion on teachers' beliefs, I will introduce the research site, participants, data collection methods and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Teachers' Beliefs

Educational research has provided rich support to assert that teacher's classroom performances are determined by their belief system to a substantial degree. The belief system which incorporates previous experience, prior expectation and habits, serves as a screen, and acts upon all aspects of teachers' decision making, including adopting particular teaching approaches or activities and selecting certain instructional materials over others (Munby, 1982; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Kagan,

1992; Richards, 1998; Richardson, 1996). Only recently have language teachers' thought processes begun to shed light on their classroom performance and generate discussion on language teachers' preparation program and their paths of learning to teach. In this section, I will discuss the definition of teachers' beliefs from research on both general education and language teaching.

3.1.1 Definition of Teachers' Beliefs

The study of beliefs can be found in the contemplations of anthropologists, social psychologists, and philosophers. It is thought among these three disciplines that beliefs are “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (Richardson, 1996, p. 103). Studies of teachers' beliefs emerged in education after a paradigm shift in the 1970s when teachers began to be recognized as thoughtful decision makers who draw their reference upon their complex mental constructs (Clark & Peterson, 1986).

Pajares (1992), synthesizing 35 empirical educational investigations, contends that “individuals develop a belief system which houses all the beliefs acquired through the process of cultural transmission” (p. 325). Teachers' beliefs relevant to teaching reside in this belief system as a subset. However, finding a clear definition for “teachers' beliefs” has always been the major difficulty in this field. Various terminologies, such as “practical knowledge” (Elbaz, 1981), “conceptions” (Freeman, 1993) and “implicit theories” (National Institute of Education, 1975, cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 287), representing somewhat overlapping conceptions of beliefs, generally center on the distinction between belief and knowledge. As argued by Lewis

(1990), all knowledge is rooted in beliefs, and “knowing” are ways of choosing values. One *knows* the phone is ringing because one *believes* in one’s own hearing and because that the thing ringing is a phone until someone says it’s a doorbell instead. Clearly, what is known is evaluated first by one’s beliefs. Drawing on the works of cognitive psychologists Rokeach (1968), Nisbett and Ross (1980) and Abelson (1979), Pajares comes to the conclusion that “knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined, but the potent affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted” (p. 314).

The same confusion is found in research on language teachers’ beliefs. Gross, Wilson and Schulman (1989) set out a study to investigate what they perceive as teacher knowledge. They conclude that a distinction between knowledge and belief is problematic and that it is blurry at best. Woods (1996) notes in his study on ESL teachers’ self report of their teaching practices that teachers’ knowledge, assumptions and beliefs are inextricable and would better be viewed as an interwoven network. Teachers’ beliefs, characterized by Johnson (1994) and Pajares (1992) as a “belief structure,” do not operate in isolation but interrelate with all other beliefs. Teachers’ instruction is thus informed by the interaction of these various constituents. In the present study, I will define the term “teachers’ beliefs” as an umbrella term that encompasses knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold about all aspects of their work and refers to what teachers know, think, and do, relevant to teaching (Johnson, 1994; Woods, 1996; Borg, 1998). In the next section, I present possible sources of beliefs discussed in scholarly literature identifying the scope of

teachers' beliefs. Different names of beliefs will be used according to how the original authors term and refer to their own concepts.

3.1.2 Sources of Teachers' Beliefs

Pajares categorizes 16 assumptions underpinning the study of teachers' educational beliefs. Among them, teachers' educational beliefs are developed through the process of cultural transmission (1992, p. 324-325). The construct of teachers' practical knowledge, according to Elbaz (1983), accounts for how a teacher understands a classroom situation and includes knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of instruction, knowledge of self, knowledge of curriculum and knowledge of the milieu of schooling. Grossman, et al. (1989) speaks of three dimensions of subject matter knowledge. They are content knowledge for teaching, substantive knowledge for teaching and syntactic knowledge for teaching. Grossman, et al. (1986) further distinguishes knowledge from beliefs and categorizes beliefs into two types: beliefs about content they teach and beliefs as orientation toward the content which concerns teachers' conceptions of what students should know and how they know it. Richardson (1996) examines literature on teachers' beliefs of learning to teach, as well as on teacher education programs that are designed to change beliefs. Richardson (1996) identifies three categories of experience influencing the development of beliefs and knowledge about teaching. These are personal experience, experience of schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge, which she defined as "understandings that have been agreed within a community of scholars as worthwhile and valid" (p. 105-106).

On research about language teachers, Johnson (1994) in her study of pre-service teachers' beliefs concludes that beliefs emerge from their images of (1) formal language learning experience, (2) informal language learning experience, (3) images of themselves as teachers, and (4) the teacher preparation program. In a case study, Liu (2001) explores an elementary school English teacher's knowledge base. Liu reports that the teacher's knowledge was shaped by teacher education, teaching experience and reflection, workshop experience, uses of teachers' manual and other materials, and the apprenticeship of observation, a term Lortie (1975) defines as the impact of schooling experience on the development of beliefs about teaching.

To sum up, three major sources of beliefs can be identified through the literature: (1) schooling experience, (2) experience of teacher education, (3) practical teaching experience. For language teachers in particular, personal experience in both formal and informal language learning is crucial. In order to probe into teachers' beliefs regarding pronunciation teaching, investigation was set out centering these three types of experiences. Thus, the study proceeded in two parts to explore teachers' beliefs. On the one hand, class observations were conducted and recorded to examine teachers' actual instructions on pronunciation; on the other, interviews were employed to elicit their beliefs about pronunciation teaching and about their own practice¹.

¹ It is my assumption that one's ideology and actions might not work in accordance. Actions are determined by the evaluative beliefs system. Ideology and perception refer to constituents of the belief system. One can be unconscious about his beliefs due to its underlying nature. Thus, what people say they believe may not reflect what they really believe. "Beliefs must be inferred from what people say, do and intend," as Pajares cautions (1992, p. 314).

The following section starts with an introduction on the research site and the participants. Then, I continue to discuss data collection methods and analysis procedures.

3.2 Research Site and Participants

3.2.1. Research Site

The study was conducted in a school I call Emerald Public Elementary School in a northern metropolitan city in Taiwan. According to the educational policy announced by the Department of Education (DOE) in Taipei, Taiwan, English teaching objectives vary at different educational levels (DOE, 2005). At the elementary level (age 6 to 12), teachers are expected to prioritize their instruction on speaking, listening and related communication skills. One of the main goals at the elementary level is to help learners develop clear and correct English pronunciation.

The school was chosen for its accessibility to the researcher (convenience sampling). As is a prevailing phenomenon in most Asian countries, the school started its English education program in 1998 and had matured a steady system of employing both NESTs and NNESTs since 2000. The NESTs and NNESTs taught cooperatively, shared the same office and held meetings regularly for mutual communication and administrative affairs. Classes were 40 minutes per session. One NNEST and one NEST co-taught the same classes but in different sessions with different materials. The NNESTs adopted American English materials while the NESTs used British English materials produced in Hong Kong, both prescribed by the school. Due to different administrative responsibilities, each teacher had 17 to 24 teaching sessions per week.

3.2.2 Participants

A total of six participants were recruited for this study. The teachers were recruited for their good reputation recommended by homeroom teachers and parents. Among them, three were local NNESTs, all female; the other three were NESTs, all male, married to local Taiwanese and had lived in Taiwan for more than 8 years. Although the recruitment of participants included only one gender group in NESTs and NNESTs respectively, teaching styles resulted from gender difference (Bress, 2000) are considered throughout the study.

The teachers' general background information is given in Table 3.1. Pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity.

Table 3.1 Participants in the Study

Name	Years Teaching	Degree	Formal English Education Training	English Proficiency	Grade Level	Observed Grade Level
Kenya	11	BA	Elementary English Teaching Certificate	Non-native TOEFL 260 ↑	1, 4	4
Keisha	13	MA	Bilingual Education Courses	Non-native TOEFL 260 ↑	1, 2	2
Kiera	7	BA	None	Non-native	3, 6	3
Toby	5	BA	TEFL	Native/NA	4, 5	4
Todd	6.5	BA	CELTA	Native/BR	2, 6	2
Tyler	11	MA	TESOL	Native/NA	3, 5	3

*NA refers to North American English; BR refers to British English. ↑ indicate "above".

*Kenya is also enrolled in a TESOL graduate course in a Taiwanese university at the time of this study.

The teachers' ages ranged from 30 to 40 years old. All of them had experience of teaching children in English cram schools prior to teaching in Emerald. As illustrated

in Table 3.1., Keisha was the most experienced teacher with 13 years of teaching experience while Toby had the least, five years of teaching experience, at the time of the study. Kenya and Tyler earned both taught for 11 years whereas Kiera and Todd had taught for roughly seven and six and half years respectively.

Two participants, Keisha and Tyler had Master's degrees in Technology & Education and TESOL respectively in US universities. Kenya and Todd received bachelor's degrees in English Literature. The other participants were quipped with non-English related bachelor's degrees.

Among the participants, all NESTs had TESOL or TEFL training. Toby, Canadian, had a one-week TEFL certificate; Todd, British, earned a one-week CELTA certificate. Tyler, however, received a two year graduate course in an American university. Among the NNESTs, Kenya was the only elementary English teacher certified by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. Although without certifications, Keisha had taken bilingual education courses in a community college and Kiera had earned great reputation from years of teaching in Emerald. Both Kenya and Keisha had TEFL scores above 260. Difference of the participants' educational background was also considered through out the study.

During the time of the data collection period, Kenya taught grades one and four. She chose a grade four class for observation. Keisha taught grades one and two. She arranged a grade two class for observation. Kiera was the English teacher of grades three and six. She chose a grade three class to be observed. Toby taught grades four and five. He selected a grade four class, the same class Kenya chose, for observation. Todd

taught grades two and six. He chose a grade two class to be observed. Tyler taught grades three and five. He selected his grade three class for observation.

For a better understanding of the participants, a brief account of each participant is provided from the excerpts of the interview transcriptions.

Kenya

Kenya was fascinated by the melody of English speech since she was little. She was always interested in speech sounds and the clear articulation of her English teachers. Chosen to participate in an English speech contest, she received training which further deepened her passion for English and motivated her to choose teaching English as her career. She was impressed by how her professors in her phonology class were capable of describing and imitating different speech characteristics. She thought the training she had received in cram school was very detailed and helpful in teaching. As a teacher, she enjoys introducing stories and dramas in her class.

Keisha

Keisha chose to be an English teacher because of her learning experience. She was surprised by her improvement in English when she studied abroad. She believes herself having solid training from the cram school and is confident about her pronunciation when teaching. As a non-certified English teacher, she is constantly looking for opportunities to upgrade herself in the educational realm.

Kiera

Kiera thought the official teachers' training she had was a mistake. Although she had years of training in cram schools, she was not aware that she had to attend an

additional ELT course before she started teaching in elementary schools, and therefore she always felt a lack of professional expertise when teaching. Even though, she has great confidence in her English pronunciation due to years of international business experience prior to being a teacher. She was once a student with poor English grades but now she gives all the credit of her good pronunciation to years of practice in reading English magazines out loud. She is an eloquent Taiwanese-Mandarin speaker and can speak a little Japanese, too.

Toby

Toby took a one week TEFL course before leaving for Taiwan. He accumulated his teaching experience in Taiwan and found himself enjoying teaching very much. He is satisfied with the changes he made with regard to students. He loves to see students come in prepared and pumped up to learn. He believes his English accent is neutral and is used in most business scenarios. He also thinks that clear pronunciation wins respect from people. Other than English, he speaks a little bit of French and Chinese, but not enough to engage in daily conversation.

Todd

To add a little flavor in his life, Todd decided to take the one week CELTA training and started his teaching in Taiwan. He started to realize the depth of English language and how voices and speech melodies influence listeners' perceptions during this overseas experience. Inspired by the movie star, Jackie Chan, he believes that people should maintain their own accents because accents identify where they are from.

He loves seeing students genuinely enjoying his class and is pleased that he can engage most students in class. He speaks a little Chinese and German.

Tyler

After his studies in TESOL, Tyler started his teaching in Japan but was not satisfied until he came to Taiwan. He enjoys being able to have control over his teaching and realize his teaching ideas. He was satisfied with his Japanese and found immersion in the language environment was of great help in learning the language. But he was frustrated that he forgot most of his Japanese after coming to Taiwan. He believes that improvement of pronunciation takes time but he is always disappointed seeing students not improving as much as he expects. Other than Japanese, he can speak a little Spanish and Chinese.

3.3 Data Collection

Three methods were originally planned for the data collection procedures: (1) semi-constructed, in-depth interviews, (2) classroom observations, and (3) stimulated recall interviews. Due to scheduling inevitabilities, the data collection process extended for four months. Issues emerging at a later period needed to be clarified by participants who already finished their stimulate recall interviews. Email correspondence was added to the data collection process in order to capture their beliefs as completely as possible.

3.3.1 Semi-constructed In-depth Interview

Semi-constructed, in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant as the first step of data collection to gather background information and generate questions for the stimulate recall interview session. As discussed previously, the participants'

thinking is not easily discerned. Incongruence could exist between the researchers' interpretation and the participants' verbalization. It is also possible to find the participants' contradictory in their own commentary. To closely examine and capture teachers' beliefs, Mangubhai et al. (2004) offered the following justification to highlight the value of semi-constructed interview:

...[T]his approach allows prominence to be given to the voice of teachers rather than that of researchers, an important consideration for ensuring fidelity of accounts of practice and their rationales. Second, practical theories are considered to be largely implicit (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Gage, 1977) ...Articulation of implicit theories by teachers can pose difficulties....Teacher engagement in these introspective processes can be encouraged by interviewers being emphatic, supportive, and non-evaluative, asking open-ended questions, seeking clarification and extension of the teachers' remarks and using the language of the teachers where possible.

(Mangubhai et al., 2004, p. 294)

As suggested in Mangubhai et al. (2004), this approach can best assist the participants in elaborating and revealing their practical theories or beliefs in detail. However, how to formulate suitable and relevant interview questions posed a further difficulty for the researcher.

Drawing on Borg's (1998) and Jenkins's (2005) studies exploring language teachers' beliefs and attitudes, I reformulated the interview questions used in their studies and developed a pool of questions relevant to this study (See Appendix A). The

list of questions is not exhaustive but serves as a guideline to direct the interview toward an in-depth and full-scale understanding of the participants. The same question list used in the present study is adapted for the NESTs and the NNESTs. The questions were first tested during two initial pilot interviews. Modifications were made upon the sequencing of the questions, wording, and overuse of technical terms that resulted in the interviewees' confusion. It was found that these questions were not easy for the participants to answer. The pilot interviewees suggested that the participants think through the questions before the interview. The pilot interview also allowed the researcher to practice interviewing techniques in order to elicit relevant data.

Before the interview, the participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and given the interview questions. Interviews with NESTs were conducted in English while interviews with NNESTs were conducted mainly in Chinese with some English, as participants found it more comfortable expressing themselves in Chinese. Key words in English such as *pronunciation* and *accent* were used throughout the interview to prevent confusion and misinterpretation resulting from translation. All 6 interviews were conducted in the PTA office and lasted for approximately 60 minutes. They were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated into English.

3.3.2 Class Observation

The second step of the present study involved a forty-minute class observation of each participant. During the semi-constructed interview, the participants and I went through their typical teaching plans together for the upcoming unit on their syllabus and scheduled one specific teaching session from the unit for observation. The session was

agreed as one session during which the participants believed that they had planned to teach pronunciation or there would be activities regarding pronunciation teaching. These steps were to ensure the class being observed would be a typical teaching session instead of handling administrative affairs. Meanwhile, by walking through the unit plan and working out the observed session, the participants' perceptions and understanding in terms of pronunciation as well as the acts of teaching it were elicited.

During the observation period, I took field notes on activities that, to my understanding, focused on pronunciation teaching. The field notes were compared with the in-depth interview data and were used to generate questions for the next interview. The observation session was video-taped for the following stimulated recall interview.

3.3.3 Stimulated Recall Interview

The third step was a stimulated recall interview. Since my research focus is put on the teachers' beliefs which are the perspectives of the teachers, methodology used to elicit beliefs is crucial. As Pajares commented that "beliefs cannot be observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend and do" (1992, p. 314). The stimulated recall interview involves using the participants' video-taped lesson as stimuli assisting the participants in elaborating on their practices.

During the stimulated recall interview, the video-taped lessons were presented to the participants as stimuli to facilitate the post-lesson interview in discussing their interpretation of class practice and their beliefs. The interview was also used as a cross-checking reference helping the participants supplement and reveal their beliefs that were not discussed in the first interview. Before the interview, the participants were

reminded of the purpose of the study and were asked to stop the recording at the end of any activity and at any point that, in their view, was evidence of pronunciation teaching and to explain their rationales. The recording was also stopped at the end of activities so that notes could be taken and the participants' commentary involving description of the activity they employed, reasons of such an activity, and aims of the activity could be elicited.

Due to schedule conflicts, none of the participants could participate in the stimulated recall interview immediately after being observed. Therefore, all stimulated recall interview were completed with the participants within one week after their class observations. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in English. The transcriptions were verified by each participant in case there was misunderstanding or misinterpretation on my part. Final email correspondence was made to clarify questions emerged during analysis and the transcribing process. All emails were in English.

3.4 Data Analysis

All interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed in English by the researcher. The interview data were first coded based on the original questions as stated in Gibbs and Taylor (2005). After the data was coded, the method of "constant comparison" described by Glaser and Strauss (1967, Chapter V) was employed to elicit common themes among these immense data.

A Priori Codes

According to Gibbs and Taylor (2005), coding can start with a priori ideas which can come from existing theories or questions from the interviews. It is possible

that researchers may have codes already in mind but are also looking for other ideas that emerge from the data. Therefore, the transcribed data was first coded based on the original questions. However, as the interviews were conducted in a relaxed mode and some of the answers did not seem to be addressed to the question straightforwardly. Different topics were sometimes addressed in the same passage. The second step of analysis involved more delicate, straightforward ideas and themes emerged from the data.

Constant comparison

Based on Glaser and Strauss' (1967), the procedure of "constant comparison" allows the researcher to explore all dimensions of the data and keeps the coding in consistency.

In this study, the analysis of data was through constant and recurrent comparison. It did not start after the data collection process was finished but began when the first interview was administered. After the first in-depth interview was completed and transcribed, I read through the passages of the transcription and annotated key words or questions that needed to be clarified in the margins. After the stimulated-recall interview data was transcribed, key words were also annotated in the margins. Transcriptions with similar annotations were grouped together in order to identify themes. They were then compared with the field notes to identify more themes and verify previous themes. Thus, each passage was compared to the previous analyzed data to verify the consistency of existing themes. The data collected from each participant were analyzed continuously in the same way throughout the collection period.

Categories were developed according to the themes that emerged. Among all, evidence of teachers' instruction on pronunciation from the recall interview data was selected and grouped as one category. The results are presented and reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The current study explores teachers' actual practice and beliefs regarding pronunciation teaching. Analysis of data falls into four major categories with nine subcategories in total, as noted in Table 4.1 below. The results yield four major categories: (1) observed teaching practices focusing on suprasegmental and segmental features, (2) the participants' teaching approaches, (3) their beliefs about pronunciation and teaching pronunciation, and (4) their beliefs about accent, with a total of nine subcategories.

Table 4.1 Outline of Results

Observed focus on teaching segmental and suprasegmental features

- Segmental features
- Suprasegmental features

Pronunciation Teaching approaches

- Intuitive-Imitative approach
 - Error correction
- Analytic-Linguistic approach
 - Phonics instruction
 - Rule-Based presentation
 - Written Test-Oriented vs. Spoken Intelligibility-Oriented Objectives

Beliefs about pronunciation and teaching pronunciation

- Perceptions of pronunciation
- Text-Driven presentation: pronunciation as a by-product
- Pronunciation as a step of literacy development

Beliefs about accent

- NNESTs' accent attitudes
 - Beliefs of adopting local accent as teaching models
-

The first category documents the phonological features observed in the participants' class. The second category documents how the participants handle these features. The third category documents the participants' beliefs elicited from triangulation of interviews and practices. The last category documents specifically the NNEST participants' beliefs of accents. The findings are reported and presented following the outline of Table 4.1 in this chapter. All quotes from the participants are exact reproductions of what they said. No changes or corrections were made. Translations were done by the researcher and verified by the participants.

4.1 Teachers' Observed Focus on Pronunciation Teaching

During the stimulated recall interview, each participant was asked to comment on where pronunciation instruction was evident in their recorded instruction. Table 4.2 illustrates their choices of class, the features they touched upon in class, and the strategies of how they handled the features that they discussed in the stimulated recall.

As can be seen in the table (Table 4.2), three participants (Keisha, Kiera and Tyler) chose classes during which they instruct sentence structures for observation, two participants (Todd and Toby) selected review classes to be observed, only one participant preferred to be observed in a class during which dialogue is the main teaching content. It also reveals that the participants' instruction concentrated heavily on the segmental level, and there is only one participant who indicated suprasegmental instruction in class. In addition, as outlined in the table, the NNESTs in this study reported more strategies they use in teaching pronunciation than the NESTs. Two NESTs (Tyler and Todd) in this study identified two strategies in their actual teaching

while one NEST (Toby) did not identify any pronunciation teaching incident during the interview. On the other hand, all NNESTs reported more than four strategies during the interview. Detailed description of phonological features incorporated in the participants' classes is presented in the next section.

Table 4.2 Evidence of Focus

	Choice of observed Class	Explicit Instruction on Segmental Features Identified by the participant	Explicit Instruction on Suprasegmental Features Identified by the participant	Strategies identified during Instruction by the participant
Keisha	Sentence structures	X	-	1. rule explanation 2. visual aid 3. L1 reference 4. teacher modeling
Kiera	Sentence structures	X	-	1. rule explanation 2. visual aid 3. CD modeling 4. note taking 5. teacher modeling
Tyler	Sentence structures	X	-	1. teacher modeling 2. student repetition 3. Error correction
Kenya	Dialogue	X	X	1. listening discrimination 2. L1 reference 3. articulatory exercise 4. visual aid 5. CD modeling 6. teacher modeling 7. student repetition 8. lecture on speech characteristics 9. Error correction
Todd	Review of Unit	X	-	1. teacher modeling 2. student repetition 3. Error correction
Toby	Review of Unit	-	-	-

4.1.1 Segmental features

Keisha's Class

Keisha focused on instruction of sentence patterns: *"This is a crayon"* and *"These are crayons"* in the observation period. She wrote 10 vocabulary words on the blackboard and read through the words with the students. She stopped the recording a few times and made the following comments:

I do not focus on pronunciation here because I already went through the vocabulary with them ...I was emphasizing the "th" and "ts" sounds here because the letter combination didn't sound like "t" or "h". The sounds change. I used Chinese symbols to highlight the "ts" sound and helped them remember it better. ...I was working on the plural and singular nouns here but I didn't focus on the "s" or "z" sounds because I thought they were too young to distinguish voiceless and voiced consonants.

(Keisha, Stimulated Recall, 11/13/07)

Her comments suggest that pronunciation teaching may be emphasized when vocabulary items are introduced. In addition, the recorded class also demonstrated that pronunciation instruction could be delivered when she presented sentence structures. She also emphasized the help of the learners' mother tongue, as she explained why she wrote down the Chinese symbol for the "ts." Letter-sound association received much attention when she identified her terms of pronunciation teaching. The class proceeded with different activities drilling the two sentence patterns until the end so that students could match the singular and plural nouns with the correct sentence pattern.

Kiera's Class

Similarly, Kiera introduced substitute verb phrases used in the sentence, “*Can you ride a pony?*” Paused at the point where she wrote target phrases on the board, she made the following remarks:

In the previous lesson, we had already broken down the words and gone through the phonics rules so that it would be easier for them to sound out the words. I worked on the longer and more difficult words with them and if the word was short then I assumed they could do it by themselves, like the rule “u_e” in “use.” Here I was introducing some more phrases with the CD, we broke the words together and I asked them to notate that on their books.”

(Kiera, Stimulated Recall, 12/19/07)

Later when she was reading through the phrases with the students in the recording, she stopped on where she pointed at a definite article “the” and added, “I asked them the reason why they were supposed to pronounce the word differently, and they remembered the rules I had taught them before” (Kiera, Stimulated Recall, 12/19/07). The class proceeded with different activities drilling the target phrases to ensure that the students could sound out the phrases written on the board.

Both Kiera and Keisha emphasized rule-based instruction that helped students to sound out words in written text. Providing rules to phonetically decode the written text and using the students’ first language to help students memorize sounds were techniques used in the class. Being able to “sound out” individual words in the text was considered the prime target in Kiera and Keisha’s account for pronunciation instruction.

Tyler's Class

Tyler also selected a sentence-pattern period for observation. In his recall, he stopped once at the point he was reviewing vocabulary taught in the previous lesson with the students. He commented that “basically, the way I teach pronunciation is asking them to repeat after me.” He added, “I asked them to repeat the word *fruit* after me for a few times to practice the [u] sound because I thought they might have problems with the sound” (Tyler, Stimulated Recall, 11/21/07). The class proceeded with two activities where students practiced the target question and answer patterns “*Where can I buy an apple? I can buy an apple at a fruit shop*” by substituting different fruit items written on the board. Although Tyler did not specify other occasions of clear pronunciation instruction, he commented that pronunciation could not be separated from his teaching because that was the inevitable part of teaching.

Kenya's Class

Kenya, on the other hand, selected a session where she introduced a dialogue for observation. She stopped the recording first when the students were spelling out days of the week with an extra emphasis on the letter “n”. She stated,

The students were making fun of the “n” sound because I always told them not to say it in a Chinese way. They were actually not producing the right sound but somewhere between the Chinese one and the English one. At least they were demonstrating an awareness of it. It is good enough for them at this stage.

(Kenya, Stimulated recall, 11/16/07)

Later, she paused the recording when the students were replacing the “m” sound with

the “n” sound in the sentence “I’m free.” In the recording, she asked the students to repeat after her for a few times with her hand gestures indicating lip movement, and then had the students distinguish her pronunciation between “I’m free” and “I’n free” a couple of times. She explained,

I had the whole class do this exercise because they had already learned phonics, I wanted them to be able to associate the bilabial sound with the letter “m” they saw and work on their articulators. That was very difficult articulation to them.

(Kenya, Stimulated recall, 11/16/07)

Kenya’s instruction evident at the segmental level is mainly about correcting what was taught but appeared to be problems for the students. Other than providing rules, corrections and explanations on articulation were given to the students to assist their production. She is also the only one who clearly distinguishes her teaching at the production and reception level when certain sounds are introduced or revisited.

Todd’s Class

Todd and Toby both selected review lessons for observation. The class proceeded with activities such as repeating what the teachers was saying and sounding out words on the flashcards. Todd stopped the recordings several times and commented on similar events where students reviewed the target vocabulary by sounding out words on the word cards in an activity. The students constantly omitted the final plural “s.” Todd explained,

The student didn’t do it right so I asked him to say it again but I guess he still didn’t get it. He didn’t say the plural “s” sound. It can be taught so it should be

corrected.

(Todd, Stimulated Recall, 10/08/07)

He further commented that some mistakes appeared to be transferred from the learners' first language and could be described as "natural mistakes" (Todd, Stimulated Recall, 10/08/07), such as the "r" and "l" sounds. Rather than spending a lot of time on these "natural mistakes" which were hard to be corrected, he would focus on something that could be fixed.

Toby's Class

Toby, however, did not stop the recording at any specific point of instruction. During the class, he reviewed the vocabulary words in the unit by asking the students to read them out loud and to make sentences with the words using patterns that had already been taught. In his recall interview, he stated that the class being observed had very good pronunciation in terms that their speech as a whole could be understood clearly by him. He later claimed, "I will fix their pronunciation if they are making mistakes. I will not spend time fixing something that is not broken" (Toby, recall, 11/14/07). At the end of the stimulated recall interview, I asked whether he was teaching pronunciation in the class observed, he replied,

Every period is pronunciation, but if I am not hearing it I will not stop them. That [whether he is teaching pronunciation] is a very debatable question, because if you are telling someone how to say a word, that is teaching pronunciation. In my opinion, by introducing the sounds of a word that is teaching pronunciation.

(Toby, Stimulated Recall, 10/08/07)

Although Toby claimed that the class had pronunciation instruction involved, he did not identify any incident where he clearly indicated an evidence of pronunciation instruction. Yet, it is suggested from the commentary that pronunciation is not treated as an isolated item in his class and involves modeling the sounds of the learning items.

4.1.2 Suprasegmental features

Kenya was the only teacher among all who clearly indicated during the recall interview where suprasegmental features were focused on. She stopped the recording where she played the CD for her students after introducing the lines in the dialogue. She explained,

The CD is very dramatic. I think children are more sensitive to melody and sounds than adults do. They have real [NS] children talking in the CD. I said it before that I like English because of its exotic melody and sound. I think the children would be very interested in imitating how they talk in the CD.

(Kenya, recall, 11/16/07)

After listening to the CD for a few times, she started to discuss different speech characteristics of the main characters in the CD with the students and told the students the importance of clear articulation and speaking in an understandable pace. She added in the recall interview that the students tended to equate being able to speak English fast and being able to speak good English. She would like to rectify that thinking. Later she paused on the point where she was explaining the sentence “What do you do?” She stated that the students might say the sentence with syllabic rhythm so she asked the

students to repeat after her for several times. The class proceeded with her lecture on punctuation marks which appeared in the dialogue.

In summary, teachers' observed practice primarily involve the segmental features of English (except in Toby's class where no specific pronunciation instruction was identified by the participant and the researcher). Suprasegmental features, intonation and speech rhythm, were touched upon only in Kenya's teaching. Pronunciation instruction, as in all the participants' class, did not follow a specific pattern prescribed in the material but appeared to be the by-product of the core content. In terms of their strategies of handling these features, various strategies were employed during observation. Most of the participants focused on the learners' oral production while Kenya was the only one who discriminated learners' receptive and productive abilities in her commentaries.

Through comparison of the recall interview and the in-depth interview data, a basic sketch of the participants' teaching approaches is revealed. In the next section, I will move on to report teachers' approaches to pronunciation instruction.

4.2 Pronunciation Teaching Approaches

By teaching approaches, I refer to the goals and processes in the classrooms. Processes are identified as how the participants handle specific pronunciation items including when, how and how much the participants give these items to the learners in class.

The participants tend to follow two approaches described in Celce-Marcia, et. al (1996, p. 2): the intuitive-imitative approach and the linguistic-analytic approach.

4.2.1. The Intuitive-Imitative Approach

According to Celce-Marcia, et. al (1996), an intuitive-imitative approach believes that the students' pronunciation would develop without explicit instructional intervention. It "depends on the learners' ability to listen to and imitate the rhythms and sounds of the target language," and "presupposes the availability of good models to listen to" (p.2). Based on the participants' commentaries, the NESTs' teaching share more characteristics with the intuitive-imitative approach.

The NESTs' classes consist mostly of vocabulary repetition and sentence structure drills. Although pronunciation is not focused as an individual aspect, all the NESTs claim it to be the basic element of their instruction and they attend to it all the time. After my attempts at identifying the concept of pronunciation with each participant during the interview for a few times, Tyler posed his question,

I am not sure why you keep asking me whether I was teaching pronunciation. I don't think you can separate it [pronunciation] from teaching.... I don't think I have any specific strategies because I felt it [pronunciation] is not my focus. If I hear something wrong, I improve it but that is not the target I am going into the class with. My target is the sentence structure I want them [the students] to use. ...

(Tyler, Interview, 11/16/07)

The other two NEST participants expressed similar viewpoints. Todd said, "You can not not teach pronunciation. Everything of a language comes down to pronunciation...." (Todd, Interview, 10/08/07). Toby explained,

Every period is pronunciation. ...if you are telling someone how to say a word, that's teaching pronunciation. In my opinion, introducing the sounds of a word is teaching pronunciation.

(Toby, Stimulated Recall, 11/14/07)

It could be inferred that pronunciation teaching includes at least one process to the NEST participants' definition: the inevitable process of modeling the sounds. And the learners are expected to acquire or attain the speech sounds naturally by themselves, as Toby commented,

Most students pick up the intonation and pause of speech from my speech. If they make mistakes, we work on that. But a lot of that they pick up from my speech.

(Toby, Stimulated Recall, 11/14/07)

The participants appear to rely on the learners' intuition or ability to pick up the sounds from their teaching. Moreover, the modeling process occurs mostly when the participants introduce new core content, which means sentence structures, vocabulary and grammar points, as noted in Toby's and Tyler's commentary previously and as illustrated below,

I don't really spend a section doing pronunciation. I just think most of this kind of teaching is based on repetition, listening to me, and saying it again....But when I am teaching something new, new vocabulary, I will probably emphasize more on pronunciation....Once they get the pronunciation, you don't really need to work on it much.

(Todd, Interview, 10/08/07)

It can be suggested that pronunciation, to the NESTs' understanding, is no more than sounding out the core teaching contents correctly although it is considered the basic element of a language. Correcting the learners' pronunciation mistakes is also considered in their definition of pronunciation instruction.

Error Correction

The NESTs indicated that they monitored the learners' speech all the time and they corrected the learners' mistakes through modeling and repetition when the pronunciation they heard did not "sink in" (Toby, Interview, 10/19/07) or, as Todd put it, "register to my ear" (Todd, Interview, 10/08/07). The standards of what constitutes a pronunciation mistake appear to be ambiguous, intuitive and depending on their individual tolerance, experience or native knowledge.

For example, Toby considers some of the learners' pronunciation errors as their L1 transfer. He commented with uncertainty that the learners could have difficulties sounding out "l" sound because of the unfamiliar articulatory movement. Therefore, the faulty pronunciation is hard to be corrected and he chooses to ignore the mistakes. Tyler considered a mistake as "something different from my [his] native knowledge of the language" (Tyler, Stimulated Recall, 11/21/07). He added,

A native speaker can do better work with pronunciation because of their native background of the language. A local teacher might model an incorrect pronunciation, not as incomprehensible, just a personal kind of feeling.

(Tyler, Stimulated Recall, 11/21/07)

The remark suggests native speakers' arbitrary knowledge when it comes to judging a learner' production with correctness instead of its comprehensibility. It also implies tacitly that the learners are to approximate a native language model.

As most error correction was done at the segmental level, I further explored the possibility of suprasegmental instruction in the participants' conception. When prompted with whether sentence pronunciation or suprasegmental features could be instructed or even presented in a progressive or systematic manner, Tyler admitted that it never came across his mind but he would rather spend more time on vocabulary and sentences so that the students could express themselves (Stimulated Recall, 11/21/07). Toby first commented that he taught word level stress in class but later insisted that the learners should be familiarized with question/answer patterns because the patterns were the keys to better comprehension (Interview, 10/19/07). The commentaries suggest an overriding focus of grammatical-syntactic structures to pronunciation and overlook pronunciation features that contribute to genuine conversation in real life.

In sum, an intuitive-imitative pronunciation teaching approach can be identified based on the participants' commentaries. The NESTs in this study appear to adopt this approach in teaching, in which vocabulary and sentence structures receive more priority and emphasis than pronunciation. Pronunciation teaching is considered as a by-product of teaching sentences and vocabulary, and it is identified as introducing how the contents should be enunciated through modeling and correction. The extent of the learners' performance depends on the learners' ability to imitate the teachers' speech.

4.2.2. The Analytic-Linguistic Approach

Based on the definition of Celce-Marcia, et. al (1996, p. 2), the analytic-linguistic approach adopts a more analytic view in presenting different linguistic features involved in pronunciation. As Celce-Marcia, et. al state:

An analytic-linguistic approach, on the other hand, utilizes information and tools such as a phonetic alphabet, articulatory descriptions, charts of vocal apparatus, contrastive information, and other aids to supplement listening, imitation and production. It explicitly informs the learner of and focuses attention on the sounds and rhythms of the target language. This approach was developed to complement rather than to replace the intuitive approach, which was typically retained as the practice phase used in tandem with the phonetic information.

As revealed in the participants' commentaries, all three NNESTs believe that explicit intervention would facilitate the learners' acquisition of pronunciation. As Kenya stated, "We need to single out certain sounds in the vocabulary, bring them up to the students' awareness and practice them" (Interview, 10/26/07). On a later occasion, she stated, "To me, teaching pronunciation is to isolate the teaching item and give it a certain focus" (Stimulated Recall, 11/16/07). It is Kenya's belief that the teaching of pronunciation involves bringing the features up to the students' awareness and reinforcing them, as it was also illustrated in Kiera's (Stimulated Recall, 12/19/07) and Keisha's (Stimulated Recall, 11/13/07; Email, 01/30/08) class when Kiera was explaining the rule of sounding out definite article "the" in a sentence and when Keisha was introducing "ts" sound with reference to the learners' L1.

Three themes emerge from the NNESTs' commentaries; (1) an emphasis on the instruction of phonics (2) rule-based presentation, and (3) a test-oriented teaching objective versus communicative objective.

Phonics Instruction

According to the NNESTs' interviews, three core items are mentioned recurrently regarding pronunciation teaching: the alphabet, phonics, and Kenyon & Knott phonetic symbols, often called K.K. phonetic symbols in Taiwan¹. Phonics is the most prominent teaching content in the NNESTs' pronunciation instruction, as it was immediately referred to when the three participants were asked about their pronunciation instruction.

Shortly after the alphabet is introduced, according to the NNESTs, pronunciation is taught explicitly, such that individual sounds are extracted and isolated from vocabulary words and presented to the learners to enhance their awareness through modeling, contrasting, blending activities and with articulator description of difficult sounds. The teaching contents encompass the sounds at the segmental level including short vowels, consonants, diagraphs (i.e., *sh* sound as in the word *fish*), diphthongs (i.e., *ow* sound as in the word *cow*), and r-controlled vowels (i.e., *ar* sound as in the word *car*). On the one hand, the NNESTs introduce the sounds and how they are blended into the phonemic surroundings. As Kenya stated,

I started with the alphabet and its corresponding sounds, then teach the students to sound out the basic CVC combinations. They [the students] need to learn how

¹ K.K. is a phonemic transcription system commonly used in the Taiwanese English education system.

to connect the sounds, read the combinations and listen for individual sounds that are blended in the words.

(Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07)

The remark illustrates Kenya's idea of pronunciation teaching as introducing sounds more than the alphabetical level. Pronunciation teaching includes sound blending and also listening discrimination.

On the other hand, the NNESTs help the learners associate the sound with the letter combinations which represent the sounds. As revealed in the participants' classes and in the interviews, the NNESTs break words or phrases into smaller pronunciation units and present the units to the learners. The following statements can best illustrate the case,

In this session, I focused on the sentence patterns. Pronunciation here I was working on are the words "this" and "these." I am teaching them the "th" sound.

(Keisha, Stimulated Recall, 11/13/07)

Last time when I introduced the vocabulary, I broke the words down so that they can read the words. We went over the long *I* sound represented by "i_e" in the word "ride."

(Kiera, Stimulated Recall, 12/19/07)

Although teaching of these units is not evident in Kenya's class observation, she stated both in her in-depth interview (10/26/07) and stimulated recall interview (11/16/07) that the process of teaching these pronunciation units in her instruction is complete in grade three. For the class she chose to be observed, the instruction of phonics serves as a

minor review. Thus, phonics, according to the NNESTs, includes the teaching of individual sounds, sound blending, listening discrimination, and letter-sound association rules of the smaller pronunciation units.

Rule-based Presentation

Although the NNESTs present the alphabet, phonics, and KK phonetic symbols in the sequential order listed here, Kenya talked about the way she introduces phonics items which follows no specific order:

...actually I don't have a systematic way to teach these contents. I introduce whatever that is presented in the textbook or reinforce them if I know I have taught them [the sounds] before.

(Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07)

Keisha and Kiera also mentioned that they do not follow a specific guideline in presenting the pronunciation units introduced as phonics (Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07; Keisha, Interview, 11/09/07). Instead, Keisha and Kiera present the pronunciation units or the rules of sounds which are embedded in the vocabulary or phrases, in the order of what is present in the vocabulary and phrases.

For example, if the main vocabulary words in lesson one are *dogs*, *spiders* and *frogs*, the participants would possibly introduce the units of *i_e* sound and *er* sound as in *spiders*, *fr* sound as in *frogs*. Following lesson one, if lesson two introduces *trees* and *flowers* as vocabulary words, *tr* sound and *ee* sound as in *trees*, *fl* sound and *ow* sound as in *flowers* will possibly be presented to the learners as the pronunciation units. These rules of sound-letter(s) association are elicited from the words and taught to the learners.

The learners are coached to memorize these rules and to apply the rules in sounding out words when they encounter the same rules again.

Thus, the participants present phonics with a rules-based method but follow no specific order, such that digraph precedes diphthongs or long vowels follows consonant blends, in presenting phonics rules.

Written Test-Oriented Objective vs. Spoken Intelligibility-Oriented Objective

Although the three NNEST participants seem to embrace similar ideas of regarding phonics as a key element in pronunciation instruction, the reasons underpinning their actions vary.

Kiera believes that the learners have to be coached to adapt themselves to the written-test dominated evaluation and to gain confidence in learning through obtaining a better test result. She said,

There is a short term goal and a long term goal [in learning]. I think the final goal of teaching any languages is to help them learn this language well. In school, learning a language well means getting a better test result and if they cannot sound out the words, there is no way they can spell.

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

To Kiera, a better test result guarantees the learners' confidence in learning the language which in turns helps the learners continue the journey of learning in the long run. When asked questions about language in oral communication, she pondered and replied with another question, "Didn't my teaching help them communicate in English?" (Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07) And then she justified herself by stating that

confidence from a good grade would motivate the students for future learning. There seems to be a methodological gap between Kiera's pronunciation instructions and how her teaching assists the students in oral communication.

In terms of suprasegmental features, Kiera claimed that she focuses on developing the learners' "fluency" (Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07). She defined "fluency" as what follows,

They [the students] cannot read it [the sentence] in staccato. It needs to be a fluent stream, and they cannot omit important sounds in a sentence such as final plural "s" so that they can write down the sentences and words without making mistakes.

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

Kiera's comment suggests that learning to read fluently is also a means to help the learners cope with written tests or writing assignments, which is consistent with her justification at the segmental level that pronunciation teaching is to help the learners in spelling and writing.

Kenya, however, holds a different point of view. Kenya considers introducing the alphabet and phonics as a period which aims at establishing the English phonological system in the learners' auditory perception and gradually exercising the articulators involved in English speech production. She uses KK phonetic symbols to help the learners approximate their pronunciation on vowels to the target pronunciation especially when contrasting long and short vowels. She also focuses on the suprasegmental features as she stated below,

When we teach students words, they [the students] may be able to sound out the words well but they might not be able to do that in a stream of sentences because some words, like function words, are less stressed in a sentence. It makes the listeners hard to understand when sentences are strung together. To stress every single word does not sound natural in English.

(Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07)

It appears that her focus on rhythm is linked to the learners' intelligibility to the listeners. She also remembered her experience of having a hard time understanding students in speech contests because of the students' intonation:

They were OK with individual words but they sounded awful when they put the words into sentences. Some of the students alternated the pitch as if they were singing Chinese Opera and thought that they were speaking English perfectly.

(Kenya, Stimulated Recall, 11/16/07)

Kenya's commentaries suggest that rhythm and intonation weigh a lot in intelligible speech. Therefore, instruction on these features is necessary by conforming to the correct pronunciation model. Kenya thinks that through introducing the dialogue with CDs or her own speech, the students can hear the nuances in the utterances and ways of expressions during the process of information exchange. It is important that the students are aware of English rhythmic patterns as well as natural intonation, and grasp these features to make themselves understood by the listeners.

As for Keisha, she did not specify her goals in teaching but stressed the importance of rule-based instruction on phonics (Keisha, Interview, 11/09/07).

Although Keisha's class showed only a rule-based phonics instruction on sentence patterns, she mentioned in her interviews about her plans of teaching intonation and word syllables in higher grades (grade five and six) which had not yet been put into practice (Keisha, Email, 01/30/08). Several prompts were given to elicit more information about Kiera's objectives in teaching intonation and syllables, but they were not successful except for "...helping students to gain confidence communicating with foreigners [native speakers]" (Keisha, Email, 01/30/08).

To sum up, the analytic-linguistic approach was adopted mostly by the NNEST participants in this study. The NNESTs break down pronunciation into smaller units and instruct individual linguistic features. Three themes emerge from their commentaries. First, the NNESTs focus prominently on phonics instruction which emphasizes letter-sound association and rule-based presentation. Secondly, the presentation generally follows what is syntactic-grammatically presented in the textbook, which progresses with no linguistically analyzed pronunciation guideline. Lastly, two distinctive instructional goals are identified. Keisha's teaching is written test-oriented which aims at coaching the learners to spell with pronunciation rules, whereas Kenya emphasizes the learners' spoken language and centers her pronunciation instruction on both segmental and suprasegmental features that promote better intelligibility.

4.3 Beliefs about Pronunciation and Teaching Pronunciation

As noted in the previous sessions, the participants employ different approaches in teaching pronunciation. These different approaches could indicate the participants' different perceptions with regards to pronunciation instruction. This session starts with

reporting the participants' perceptions of pronunciation based on their commentaries. The data reveal the participants' different presentation styles of the phonological features in discussion and two common beliefs underpinning their actions: 1) text-driven instruction, which highlights grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure and regards pronunciation as a by-product, and 2) pronunciation as a step of literacy development.

4.3.1. Perceptions of Pronunciation in General

All participants in their interviews demonstrated their awareness of pronunciation including features at both suprasegmental and segmental levels. Interestingly, these features were presented differently in nature between the NNESTs and the NESTs. The NNESTs' commentaries seemed to exhibit more terminology and rule-based knowledge at the segmental level while the NESTs could provide more anecdotal descriptions of certain suprasegmental features.

The NNESTs

Among the participants, the nonnative English speaking teachers (NNESTs) demonstrated more usage of and elaboration on terminology referring to segmental items such as "KK phonetic symbols", "phonics", "voiced/voiceless consonants," "long/short vowels," and "tensed/lax vowels". For instance, the following are some statements made by NNESTs during interviews

After learning the alphabet, there were ways of sounding out the combination of consonants and vowels, like C+V, V+C or C+V+C. The trainers [from the cram schools] mentioned that our [Taiwanese] students were particularly weak in

listening so students can benefit a lot from practicing KK phonetics in speaking and listening. KK is also very helpful for teachers and students to correct their own pronunciation, like a helping tool for phonics because there are so many exceptions in phonics rules.

(Keisha, Interview, 11/09/07)

I remember the professor spent a lot of time discussing tensed and lax vowels. That was the time I realized that the quality of vowels related to air flow, movement of articulators and not just durations.

(Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07)

...starting with the short vowel rule....I try to break down the words, like the consonant blends, “bl,” and the rule of long vowel sound in “use.”

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

Drawing information from their previous learning history and professional training, NNESTs are able to verbalize their knowledge of the English phonological system using more terminology and in a more systematic way but only at the segmental level. When it comes to suprasegmental features, little could NNESTs remember from the professional teacher training they received; none could recall from instruction they received as an English language learner aside from a mild description on lexical stress.

During the interview, Keisha and Kiera were less certain when discussing suprasegmental features. Among the features mentioned, syllables and stress were mentioned only at the word level; both Keisha and Kiera used the word “intonation” to specifically refer to two prescribed patterns: “Yes/No questions” which ended with a

rising tone and declarative sentences which ended with a falling tone. Other than those two patterns, no specific explanation about intonation or information about how it is used was given. Sometimes, the word “intonation” is also used as an umbrella term that includes pitch, stress, rhythm and the melodic aspect of the language. For instance,

....Although the Japanese people have a different accent, their accent is not wrong. You cannot say their intonation is different so they are wrong. At the elementary level, the learners do not experience an accent problem....

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

The word “intonation” in the above remark refers to the English melodic aspect and accent produced by Japanese people Kiera encountered. The word “intonation” does not seem straightforward in Kiera’s definition.

Kenya, however, was able to elaborate on suprasegmental features drawing from her linguistics class which she took as an English major in the university. She also discussed suprasegmental features in intelligible communication and in songs and chants. Based on Kenya’s teaching experience, she realized that singing and chanting were a medium for students to grasp the feeling, the melody, and the rhythm of the language (Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07).

The NESTs

The NESTs, on the other hand, used “phonics,” “single sound,” “consonant/vowel sounds,” or examples to explicate their ideas at the segmental level. Most of their comments, however, do not focus on the segmental features but on the suprasegmental features.

Toby noted “syllables” and “word stress”. He also expounded on the emotions of speaking and meaning difference when the stress of a sentence shifted (Toby, Interview, 10/19/07). Todd discussed “stress” and “rhythm” in his experience of miscommunication with non-native speakers. He said,

Sometimes, with some people, it’s just a slight shift of stress of the word something like that which is not instantly recognizable. People might put stress in the wrong place and that might change the whole word. Also the timing in the sentence, the beat is kind of off. It doesn’t register to my ear.

(Todd, Interview, 10/08/07)

Todd also recognized that different ways of saying the same thing could refer to various purposes and meanings. Tyler mentioned “the American pronunciation of *a* in sentences” (vowel reduction) and “inflections” of the speech melody that he would emphasize when telling stories to children (Tyler, Interview, 11/16/07).

Thus, in terms of pronunciation, the conceptions of the NESTs and the NNESTs involved in this study appear to be qualitatively different, as the nature of these contents is presented differently in their commentaries. The NNESTs employed linguistic/pedagogical terms and rules to present the concepts of pronunciation, mostly at the segmental level. However, for all NESTs, little was drawn from their formal EFL/ESL training. They elaborated more on suprasegmental features from their teaching experience and language learning history. Discussions of the NESTs exhibited less prescribed rules relating to linguistic features and largely concentrated on anecdotes, language examples or descriptions to demonstrate their conceptions. These conceptions

are less rooted in their training received from academia than their NNEST counterparts and are not seen realized in their observed class sessions. These differences could lead to a stylistically different approach in teaching.

4.3.2. Text-Driven Instruction: Pronunciation as a By-Product

Although the participants in this study appear to adopt different approaches in teaching pronunciation, their actions seem to be influenced by the material they use to a certain degree.

During the first interviews, the participants stated that two sets of different prescribed materials are used. The content in both sets of materials are arranged similarly in that vocabulary words are presented within a dialogue at the beginning, followed by an introduction of new sentence patterns, and then short reading passages or more dialogues using the sentence patterns introduced previously.

Before being video-recorded, the participants went through their typical one-unit lesson plan with me. All participants followed a page-by-page fashion to present the content in the texts. The contents in general are sequenced in the following manner: dialogue, vocabulary/sentence patterns, songs (not available in the NESTs' textbook), reading (short paragraphs, more dialogues, or phonograms introduction in grade 3 and 4) and unit review. Little was mentioned regarding pronunciation instruction in the textbooks or the teacher's manuals. Each of the participants was asked to select one teaching period for recording. The participants agreed that they had planned to teach pronunciation or that some activities regarding pronunciation teaching would take place in those periods. None of the participants singled out one period for pronunciation

teaching. Moreover, the selection of lessons observed varied across categories, including one that focused on vocabulary presentation, two on sentence patterns, one on dialogue, and two on unit review. Comments on these different choices suggest that pronunciation is regarded as a by-product of teachers' instruction; that is, whenever core contents such as new words or sentence patterns are introduced, pronunciation teaching may tag along serving as a reference for the students as to how such core contents should be enunciated from the participants' perspectives. As one teacher commented,

[I teach pronunciation] All the time...If I hear the word and it doesn't sink, I work on that. It doesn't matter which period and which lesson.

(Toby, interview, 10/19/07)

It is also worth noting that in the interview, one participant mentioned how the arrangement of the textbook affects her instruction on pronunciation.

...But I have to say that the most difficult part for the students in the textbook we use is not pronunciation and that the percentage we include pronunciation in our tests is very little. ...Other than that [pronunciation], I teach grammar, sentence structure, reading and writing.

(Kenya, interview, 10/26/07)

Although all participants claimed that they teach pronunciation in class, the planning of instruction seems to be driven by the syntactic-grammatical contents prescribed in the materials. As pronunciation is not prescribed or separated in a special section in the

teaching materials, how much pronunciation is added to the instruction seems subject to the participants' personal evaluation or expertise.

4.3.3 Pronunciation Teaching as a Step of Literacy Development

Almost immediately, five participants out of six, referred to phonics when questions were asked regarding pronunciation teaching. Although not all participants teach phonics in their class, they elaborate on the teaching of phonics to a certain extent. One thing the participants have in common is that pronunciation teaching involves phonics teaching and that phonics is a basic step toward literacy development.

When Toby was asked about when he focused instruction on pronunciation he commented

All the time. Whenever we do the words. If I hear the word that doesn't sink, I work on that. It doesn't matter which period. Phonics is the basic to reading. If you can't read the words properly, it doesn't matter how much you can read by sight.

(Toby, Interview, 10/19/07)

It is clear that Toby links the idea of pronunciation to phonics and reading. It seems that pronunciation, to Toby, is a basic step toward learning how to read. In the same vein, Todd first referred pronunciation instruction to phonics teaching from commentary on his teaching experience prior to teaching at the research site, he stated,

We taught a lot of phonics. Just get the kids practice some consonant sounds like /b/ and /p/. ...Obviously, when you teach phonics it covers some learning how to read and how to make the sounds that contribute to the English language and

teach them [the students] the shape of the mouth. ...certain things with pronunciation, certain words cannot be phonetically produced. So you teach them [the students] that's the correct way to say it.

(Todd, Interview, 10/08/07)

In Todd's explanation, the students learn the basic sounds of English through the introduction of phonics. Yet, to his sense, phonics is more of a method in basic reading instruction. He also commented that the reason he was not teaching phonics is that as a foreign teacher, he was told to focus on listening and speaking instead of reading and spelling (Interview, 10/08/07).

As discussed in section 4.2, in Keisha's, Kiera's and Kenya's commentaries, they also spoke about teaching phonics as a means of teaching pronunciation and learning phonics to enhance the learners' reading ability. Keisha compared phonics with Chinese phonetic symbols and insisted that the learners need to learn phonics in order to read easily (Email, 01/30/08). Kiera's focus of pronunciation teaching mainly dwell on phonics and fluency as noted in section 4.2.2. She commented that the work the learners do on phonics and fluency helps them succeed in written tests because the learners acquire better spelling and reading abilities through phonics and reading aloud practices (Interview, 12/05/07). To Kenya, phonics is only one part of her pronunciation instruction. It is the elementary introduction of English phonological system which builds up a fundamental step of reading.

Although Keisha, Kiera, and Kenya all commented that phonics instruction would complete in grade three, roughly starting from grade four Kenya shifts her

instructional focus toward oral communicative ability while Keisha and Kiera remain focused on teaching the learners how to sound out sentences in a fluent flow. The learners' being able to sound out what they see appears to link to reading or literacy directly. In a discussion of Kiera's upper grade students, she commented,

It is my understanding that if they [the students] cannot sound out the text properly, they probably have troubles sounding out words and understanding the meaning of the text. ... I think at the elementary stage, the ability of being able to sound out words correlates with how well one learns a language.

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

A direct connection between meaning and sound is suggested in her remark. Keisha, too, mentioned her emphasis on pause and fluency on reading out the text in her interview (Interview, 11/09/07). Yet, no clear reference was made as to her intention in teaching fluency and pause.

Through the participants' commentaries, it is revealed that "phonics" is considered as means of teaching pronunciation and as a basic element of teaching how to read. A strong connection between pronunciation and literacy is found. At the elementary level, the teachers seem to consider pronunciation instruction as a means of developing reading ability in addition to a means of developing oral communication.

4.4 NNESTs' Beliefs about Accent

Two subcategories were developed during analysis regarding the NNEST participants' beliefs towards accents. They are the participants' (1) accent attitudes and (2) beliefs about adopting local accents as teaching models.

4.4.1. NNESTs' Accent Attitude

All three NNESTs showed a certain extent of confidence in their own English pronunciation when describing their own accent. Their description also reveals varying degrees of attachment to native speaker accents, in particular, the Northern American Accent and British accent. The following are statements made by NNESTs that bear this point out:

I think my pronunciation is quite good, correct, more like American accent.

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

The teacher didn't really correct our pronunciation....maybe because we were the chosen ones. ... In teaching, yes, I am satisfied with my pronunciation.

(Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07)

My pronunciation was not particularly good compared with native speakers but I did improve when I studied overseas...If we are talking about teaching the lesson contents, I always ask myself to be perfect.

(Keisha, Interview, 11/09/07)

The participants articulated their confidence in terms of pronunciation while incidentally comparing themselves with native accents from time to time. When asked whether a native accent and standard accent are the same, Keisha first clarified her perception about *accent* and *pronunciation*¹ in that *accent* encompasses the ways people speak including different word choices and styles while *pronunciation* refers to

¹ The word "accent" and "pronunciation" are used in English through out the interviews to prevent confusion caused by translation, but the interviews with the NNESTs were conducted in Taiwanese-Chinese, the NNESTs and the researcher's L1.

phonological variations only. She went on to explain, “I don’t think there is a standard pronunciation, if so, a standard pronunciation and native-like pronunciation must be alike” (Keisha, Email, 01/30/08). Kiera replied positively, “I think all kinds of native accents are correct English and they are all standards” (Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07). She added that if a NNEs sounds standard, he or she must sound like some native speaker from somewhere. Kenya defined native pronunciation and standard pronunciation as synonyms, an accent used by educated middle or upper class native speakers. It appears that the participants’ responses to their ideas of their own pronunciation and their perspectives of good or standard pronunciation are associated with native accents and native speakers of the language.

Further, when asked how they would feel if their accents were mistaken for an NS accent, the participants expressed personal references to the NS accents. Keisha said, “I would be very happy if people say I have an American accent. That means I did not waste my money studying abroad.” After her explanation of an orientation toward inner circle varieties, Kiera added,

I would feel ok if people say my English sounds British. But I might get upset if people say my English sounds South African because their accent is so difficult to understand. ...

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

Kenya stated that she wouldn’t feel particularly good although she believes her pronunciation is more American. She commented that “...the fact comes from the language environment to which I exposed myself. It is a cause and effect, inevitable

outcome showing that I have good imitating ability” (Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07). Nevertheless, she rejected some outer circle accents as teaching models. She described their accents as “strong” and “not original”, “not native” (Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07). As the participants maintained, being language teachers, the ability to sound “correct,” like a native speaker, may indicate their language learning ability which essentially marked their qualification for this profession.

The interviews reveal not only an NS-oriented preconception but also the predominance in the American and British varieties, as is also noted in Mastuda (2003) and Sifakis & Sougari (2005). Kiera mentioned that, to her understanding, the Minister of Education in Taiwan recruited only NESTs from the inner circle countries. Among the inner circle varieties, the North American and British varieties were said to be “more clear,” “easy to understand,” “classical,” and “beautiful” (Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07, Keisha, Interview, 11/09/2007, Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07). Interestingly, the British participant also recognized the prevailing admiration of North American accent and claimed that he had to adjust himself to it sometimes when teaching, which seems to suggest a contemporary trend and social demand.

4.4.2 Beliefs about Adopting Local Accent as Teaching Models

When asked about their impression of local English accents, all of the NNEST participants voiced unanimously that they would feel uncomfortable if their English was said to bear a “Taiwanese flavor” (Kenya, Email, 01/30/08) which they believes they did not have but later admitted that they were speaking English with non-native accents of their own. It seems that their accents might be located on the continuum between two

extremes: “Taiwanese accent,” referring vaguely to a local accent with noticeable and stereotyped pronunciation errors such as adding a schwa sound to the ending consonant, and the NS accent, referring to the North American accent, a result of modeling North American variety throughout the learning period, according to Kenya (Email, 01/30/08). The NNEST also claimed that their English, although accented, were intelligible to both native and non-native English speakers while recalling different occasions such as school meetings, receptions of NNS and NS visiting groups (Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07, Keisha, Interview, 11/09/2007, Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07), and business phone calls (Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07), in which they interacted with NS and NNS with little difficulties after a short period of “tuning-in”.

Apparently, the participants were aware of the globalization of English use and adopt English as a default language when conversing with other NNSs. Prompted whether they would, in class, replace the NS model with CDs recorded by any of their colleagues, Kiera expressed her disapproval consistent with her admiration of the “beautiful NS accent”:

... if one wants to learn pronunciation well, they should go to a native speaker. Then they can have beautiful pronunciation just like a native speaker. ...I don't know why, but to be honest, if my kid is going to learn English, I would prefer that she learns from a native speaker.

(Kiera, Interview, 12/05/07)

However, she later contradicted herself, stating that if the model was clear and understandable, she expected the teaching effect of both models to be the same but she

would still prefer an NS accent and deemed it more prestigious (Kiera, Email, 01/30/08). Keisha and Kenya found it a feasible idea but they would only accept accents that are correct and with less “Taiwanese favor.” They thought these non-native models would perform as good as the native ones and also demonstrate attainable objectives for the learners (Kenya, Email, 01/30/08, Keisha, Email, 01/30/08). They argued specifically for a correct and consistent pronunciation model for learners at the elementary or beginning level due to pedagogical concerns.

....at the beginning stage, I prefer the students to stick with only one accent, my accent. Too many varieties tend to confuse the students. After they are fairly familiar with the phonics system, they can imitate whatever accent they like.

(Keisha, Interview, 11/09/07)

As a teacher, it is important to deliver the correct knowledge to the students so that they don't go through the pronunciation correction process....They are still young and will encounter many more accents in the future, but for now they need to establish a solid foundation because this is the time they absorb the sounds like a sponge.

(Kenya, Interview, 10/26/07)

These participants' comments give rise to a pedagogical need for a consistent phonological system at the elementary stage. Tied with a negative impression, the term “Taiwanese accent” was associated with errors but yet with no clear investigation into intelligibility since all of the participants could actually speak with a certain extent of Taiwanese accent and model their own accent in class. Although these two participants

showed interest in teaching pronunciation of local accents, the fact that these local accents they approve are based on native models suggest the perception of viewing NS models as absolute correctness and standards.

4.5 Summary of Findings

In summary, this chapter presents the linguistic features involved in the participants' in class practices, their teaching approaches and beliefs with regard to pronunciation teaching. Driven by syntactic-grammatical oriented texts, pronunciation was taught as supplemental content and the extent varied across individuals. Although all participants claimed that they taught pronunciation, their instruction involved mostly segmental features, and only one participant in this study clearly indicated her instruction on suprasegmental features with exposition on her thought. The results also suggest two qualitatively different conceptualizations and approaches with regard to pronunciation teaching. Firstly, the nature of how the participants elaborated on their perception of individual phonological features differed between the NESTs and the NNESTs in this study. The NESTs relied more on anecdotes, personal experiences and language examples to explicate their ideas while the NNESTs applied more pedagogical and linguistic terminology in their narration.

Secondly, the NESTs in this study take an intuitive-imitative approach with no explicit instruction or explanation of individual linguistic features. Pronunciation teaching is deemed as the inevitable process of modeling the language and corrections on the segmental level based on their intuitive standards. The NNESTs, on the other hand, took a more linguistic-analytic approach and conceptualized explicit

pronunciation instruction systematically and progressively as presenting phonics, syllables and word level stress. The analysis also reveals two distinctive teaching objectives of the NNEST participants.

Moreover, the analysis reveals the NNESTs' attachment to NS models. The attachment is in part influenced by a pedagogical need for the model to be correct, easy to understand, and consistent for teaching at the elementary level. Because the term "Taiwanese accent" might be associated with incorrectness, two participants in this study expressed that they would adopt a local accent with less "Taiwanese flavor" to replace the NS one as the teaching model.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I will address the questions that engaged me in the exploration of teachers' practices and their beliefs in terms of pronunciation teaching. Further, I will discuss insights from the literature review and the results obtained from the data. Finally, I offer my conclusions with regard to the findings.

5.1 Restatement of Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study: (1) to what extent and how do English teachers in general elementary English classes incorporate instruction in segmental and suprasegmental features of the target language?; (2) Is there any perceived difference in how and to what extent native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers incorporate such features?, and, (3) what beliefs with regard to pronunciation teaching inform teachers' decision to incorporate or not incorporate such features in certain ways?

5.2 Interpretation of Results

The previous chapter documents themes of the results that emerged during the research process. In order to understand how the results are relevant to the scope of this study, I will return to the four major competing ideologies discussed in the literature

review and answer the research questions by discussing in-depth what ideologies these teachers draw upon based on their comments and practices¹.

The competing ideologies discussed previously are, (1) contexts: ESL, EFL, or EIL, (2) teaching components: segmentals or suprasegmentals, (3) teaching approaches, and (4) NESTs and NNESTs. They will be discussed respectively.

5.2.1 The Context: EFL Inclination

Although both the NEST and NNEST participants realized, and most likely continue realizing, a global trend of using English as a default language communicating internationally, their practices and commentaries suggest that their instruction generally operates within an EFL context, in which native standards serve as absolute correctness and the interlocutors involved are presumably within the NS-NNS paradigm. All participants in this study focus mainly on the approximation of the native models in their pronunciation instruction. The NNEST result is consistent with Sifakis and Sougari's (2005) finding that NNES teachers at the primary level, believe the attainment of native-like accent is of great importance. In addition, the findings in the present study reveal a possible reason that could partially account for this norm-bound phenomenon in the present context. That is, at the elementary level, the teachers' concern about building a solid foundation for the learners. Variations of the models are not considered, in part, due to pedagogical concerns. According to the NNEST participants, phonics instruction involves letter-sound association. Consistency of this

¹ See p.22 footnote 1.

association is important at the elementary level before the learners can develop their basic reading ability under limited input.

Additionally, the participants' commentaries also reveal an institutional-societal demand for specific native models. The demand seems to partially contribute to the norm-bound conception. As the participants commented, people with better pronunciation are considered those who are equipped with North American or British accent. Further, linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) seems to be obvious even among the NNESTs in NNS-NNS communicative settings in terms of pronunciation. This is apparent when the participants discussed their encounters with other NNSs from the outer and expanding circles (Kachuru, 1989) and even with NSs from certain inner circle countries. As Sifakis and Sougari's (2005) points out, the teachers obviously regard themselves as "the custodian of NS accents."

As far as local accents are concerned, even though some NNESTs are willing to adopt local accents as teaching models, the models they chose are based on NS standards instead of intelligibility. It is consistent with the teachers' conception for a "correct" model. The conception also defines English as a language owned by its native speakers, which echoes premises made within an EFL community where "English is used as reference to a community outside of the country" (Baxter, 1980). What the EIL context proposed and the possibility of NNS-NNS interaction, is largely overlooked in the teachers' teaching and their conceptions, although the teachers themselves reported several accounts of their own NNS-NNS experience.

5.2.2 Teaching Focus on Segmental Features

As far as teaching components are concerned, the participants' practices concentrate heavily on segmental features. This emphasis on the segmental features associates with different objectives and rationales. First, the NESTs consider pronunciation teaching as merely the inevitable process and the by-product when introducing grammatical structures. Grammatical structures, in the NESTs' sense, contribute more to successful learning than pronunciation does. Segmental focus appears only when the learners' errors are corrected. In terms of suprasegmental features, although the NESTs demonstrates capability of elaborating on functions of and characteristics of suprasegmental features, these phonological features do not seem to be organized as presentable units in the NESTs' conceptualization as they are presented . and are explicated in anecdotes and examples instead of coherent units of knowledge.

The NNESTs, on the other hand, regard pronunciation teaching more analytically and consider that pronunciation instruction includes teaching of both segmental and suprasegmental features. Two distinctive objectives that the NNESTs hold are identified and they suggest different attitudes approaching English language. A written test-oriented teaching objective indicates English language as a subject instead of a means for communication. This objective connects with the EFL premises (Baxter, 1980) and also gives rise to a focus on spelling and to de-emphasis on oral communication. Such a local objective constrains the possibility of a more global goal in promoting the abilities of engaging in conversations. In addition, the participant holding this objective also demonstrates her oversight of suprasegmental features at the

sentence level. As revealed in the interviews that other than repeating with the CD, she was unable to pinpoint specific features that help the learners to sound out the sentence fluently when the learners encounter difficulties. However, it could be attributed to the insufficient professional training as an in- and pre-service teacher, and of schooling as a language learner. It might even suggest a gap between academia and the practitioner. On the other hand, an intelligibility-oriented teaching objective emphasizes oral communication and hence directs the teaching toward segmental and suprasegmental features that contribute to oral communication within a NS-NNS paradigm. As indicated in the commentaries and shown in the practices, under teaching with either objective, the learners' prime target is to grasp and approximate the pronunciation of native and native-like models.

5.2.3 Distinctive Teaching Approaches between Teachers

Two levels of teaching approaches need to be differentiated in this discussion; in terms of how the participants approach English language in general, and in terms of how linguistic features are handled in class. In terms of how language is approached in general, only one participant (Kenya), enrolled in a TESOL graduate course, can differentiate language teaching approaches defined scholarly. One participant who received his MA in TESOL explained that he could hardly remember those approaches, and the other participants claimed that they were not familiar with the approaches. Nonetheless, the participants showed a strong inclination of vocabulary and sentence pattern repetition drilling practices in their teaching and commentaries, which they claimed to stem from trainings they received in cram schools. This inclination could

also be traced back to the grammatical-syntactical organization and presentation of the textbook since all participants strongly showed a text-driven orientation in planning their lessons and in delivering instruction. In addition, the repetitive oral drill on sentences and vocabulary appear to connect with the audio-lingual approach defined scholarly as it presumes the approximation of the target language model. Kenya, in her recall interview (11/12/07), discussed teaching in an EFL context. She stated that teaching in EFL contexts requires explicit instruction in all aspects, and lots of drilling practice to ensure the students' acquisition or learning because there might not be sufficient input outside of the classroom. Therefore, she believes that the learners can benefit more from an audio-lingual approach with occasional communicative activities because of limited class sessions. Audio-lingual approach seems to be predominantly employed as the participants' general language teaching approach.

In terms of how the participants handle pronunciation items, two approaches were adopted by the NESTs and the NNESTs respectively. The NESTs take an intuitive-imitative approach when teaching pronunciation while the NNESTs incline to an analytic-linguistic approach. It is suspected that the approaches the participants employ are, to a certain degree, related to how the features are organized conceptually. The NESTs' conceptualization of the knowledge is presented as anecdotes and examples. The NNESTs, drawing from their previous schooling and professional training, conceptualize the features with terminology and units of subject matter knowledge. The NNEST, undertaking a TESOL graduate course, exhibits more awareness of and more explicit instruction of individual suprasegmental features

whereas the other two NNESTs, who are less certain explicating suprasegmental features, exhibit less instruction in their classes. As it suggests, whether the teachers are able to translate their knowledge of these features into individual pedagogical units, prior training appears to be an active factor. However, purpose of the comparison among the NESTs and the NNESTs, or amongst themselves, is not to argue one over the other. To date, scholarly literature does not yield a theory regarding the extent of which explicit instruction should be involved in the EFL curriculum at the elementary level in order to promote optimal acquisition under formal educational settings and with limited input.

5.2.4 Differences between NESTs and NNESTs

The more I probe into the issues involved in pronunciation instruction, the clearer I can see there are distinctive differences between the NESTs' and the NNESTs' approaches in handling and conceptualizing the features in discussion. As discussed in Jenkins (2000), NNESTs are equipped with stronger phonological and phonetic knowledge that could be readily presented to their learners. The findings of the present study confirm the idea and further reveal the NNESTs' reference to L1 in assisting the learners' acquisition of English sounds by contrasting and comparing them with L1 sounds. Explicit instruction on these features also involves the NNESTs' L1 lecture. This might be replicated by the NESTs at the present time, but very unlikely. These differences resonate with Cook's (2000) contemplation of fundamental differences which lie between a multilingual and a monolingual, as the knowledge is processed differently in quality..

On the other hand, the NESTs' instruction, though implicit, is based on the genuine NS-NNS exchange in class. The fact that the correction happens only when the learners' pronunciation does not register to the native speakers' ear, might suggest the learners' pronunciation achieves a status of or above the "threshold level," discussed in Celce-Marcia, et. al (1996, p.3) and hence the learners' pronunciation might not cause communication difficulties. Under this circumstance, further explicit instruction does not seem to be necessary. However, we have to bear in mind that the NESTs participating in this study have lived in Taiwan and have taught Taiwanese children for several years. Possibilities are that they have already been accustomed to certain stereotyped pronunciation features the children might have and have developed toleration for those features. Whether their intuitive-imitative teaching provides the learners with adequate skills and foundation in another NS-NNS or NNS-NNS context remains unexplored.

In summary, to answer the first and second research questions, the results of the study provide a clear description of the NESTs and the NNESTs teaching approaches as well as their underlying beliefs in regard to pronunciation teaching at the elementary level. The third question, which set out to probe into the teachers' beliefs, is discussed through the ideologies they draw upon. That is, the NESTs' and NNESTs' instruction clearly operate within an EFL context and regard native models as absolute correctness. The NNESTs seem to regard themselves as "custodian[s] of native accents," as Sifakis and Sougari's (2005) stated. This conception even creates the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism in the NNS-NNS contexts. Moreover, in spite of the teachers' reliance on

the textbook, diversity amongst teaching and beliefs exists between the NESTs, the NNESTs and amongst themselves as well. The different approaches they adopt might be explained by various beliefs. For instance, the NESTs consider that instruction of syntactic-grammar structure should precede pronunciation for its greater extent in contribution to mutual communication. Some NNESTs consider basic reading ability to be established through pronunciation instruction, while the others believe that oral communication, instead of reading, should be focused on when pronunciation is concerned. These differences present complex reasoning that directs teachers' pronunciation teaching and offers insights to the research realm.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

A few limitations need to be addressed in this study before any conclusion can be drawn from the results. First, the research site and the participants are chosen and recruited for their accessibility to the researcher (convenience sampling). The results, therefore, are not intended to be generalized as a phenomenon of ELT in Taiwan. The imperfect matching participant groups (gender and educational background) and the size sample could both jeopardize the reliability. Thus, the study could only serve as preliminary understanding for further inquiry. Secondly, due to time constraints and the participants' schedules, the observation of the participants' classes ranged only from grade two to four, and did not extend to multiple grades. Possible instructions administered by each participant in a different grade of their choices are not documented but recognized only through inference from multiple interviews. The fact that some participants were more articulate than others could result in the possibility of

me not able to capture the participants' understanding comprehensively. In addition, my own experience and personal theories of being an elementary and cram school English teacher could have also affected my observation and interpretation of this study.

5.4 Implications and Future Research

Having the limitations bear in mind, the findings of this study still seem to raise certain implications regarding pronunciation teaching in teacher education in the EFL context or the expanding circle countries. Teachers are directed by their past experience and onsite reflection on their journey of teaching. In this study, some teachers demonstrate the impact of professional training and others reveal their unawareness of issues related to pronunciation teaching advanced in recent years. This is not to argue one's superiority or others' inferiority in terms of teaching, because pronunciation is only one part of English teaching, among others. However, the present study indicates a need for continual training to provide relevant information/knowledge that allows in-service practitioners to draw upon when making instructional decisions. For example, the notion of EIL should be addressed explicitly and locally in teacher education (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). Such inquiries should also be extended to different formal educational levels such as high school level and university level with adult learners and explore possible gaps between the in-service practitioners and the academia. To initiate dialogues between the practitioners and the academia are of great importance if further inquiry into pronunciation teaching is to pursue.

Furthermore, the results could also serve as a springboard for further research of ELT in the EFL context or the expanding circle countries. By exploring issues

concerning formal pronunciation instruction and teachers' beliefs at the elementary level, the present study provokes more questions; instead of providing answers. One of the questions that call for immediate attention from the teachers could be: To what extent explicit pronunciation instruction should be involved in different levels of formal educational settings in an EFL/expanding circle context to promote optimal acquisition? Besides, as Grant (1995) reminds, "It is possible that some of the lack of progress in pronunciation to date lies not in the limitation within the learners, but in problems with the materials, conditions, and contexts of learning" (p. 121). The teachers in this study rely on the presentation of textbooks to a certain extent, yet the textbooks did not seem to provide sufficient support. Thus, whether pronunciation features could be sequenced into absorbable units at different levels that facilitate acquisition is also begging for an answer. By probing into these aspects, a clearer picture of pronunciation teaching might be unveiled and a stronger bond between academia and the teachers could be sought.

APPENDIX A

SEMI-CONSTRUCTED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Section 1: Language learning background

1. Do you speak any foreign languages?
2. What do you recall about your experiences of learning [the language] at school?
3. Did you receive any instruction on pronunciation?
4. What kind of English accent would you say you have?
5. How would you feel if someone thought your English accent was a native-speaker accent?

Section 2: Professional development

6. How and why did you become an English teacher?
7. Tell me about your professional training experiences
8. How did they encourage pronunciation teaching in any particular way?

Section 3: Reflection on teaching

9. Could you describe your general teaching plan for a unit?
10. Could you describe the way you teach pronunciation?
11. What is your objective of teaching English? What about teaching pronunciation?
12. How important it is for your learners to acquire a native-like accent?

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Hsing-Hui Winnie Chiu was born in northern Taiwan on April 10, 1976. After completing her work at Chung-Shan Girls' High School, Taipei, Taiwan, she entered National Cheng-Chi University, Taiwan and earned her bachelor's degree. During the years of studying in the university, she worked as an English teacher in Ko-Jien Language School. Upon graduation, she received professional TEFL training organized by Ministry of Education of Taiwan, in National Taiwan University, and was certified to be an elementary school English teacher afterwards. She was employed as an English subject teacher in Shangxi, Xiude, and Beitou public elementary schools, Taipei, before Formal English Education was officially implemented. Upon the time Formal English Education was implemented in Taiwan through Educational Reform, she was employed as an official elementary school teacher in Wenhua Elementary school. In spring 2005, she entered the Graduate School of University of Texas.