

**CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN LEARNING ENGLISH
PRONUNCIATION: A LOOK THROUGH THE LENS OF
THE LEARNER**

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ABSTRACT

It is beyond dispute that developing good pronunciation is crucial to successful second language learning (Dickerson, 2019; Sugimoto & Uchida, 2018; Yates, 2017). However, until recently, compared with other fields of SLA, not much has been understood about how L2 pronunciation can be taught and learnt effectively, and more importantly, learners' perspectives on L2 pronunciation related issues still have considerably low visibility in research.

This research project looks into how English pronunciation is being learnt in Vietnam, examining factors that may affect success in learning, ranging from motivation, attitudes, identity, learning skills and strategies to methodology, language models, learning goals, instructional content, and teaching techniques and activities. More importantly, the research investigates successful approaches to L2 pronunciation learning. All of these issues are explored through the eyes of the learner.

A mixed-method research design was employed, integrating questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews. In the quantitative phase of the study, 156 first-year English major students at a university in Vietnam were surveyed for their perspectives on pronunciation learning problems and the role of instruction. Then, in the qualitative phase, from the same group of students, four successful learners of pronunciation and four who struggled to learn were carefully selected, using both human raters and a computer-aided rating scheme, to participate in the semi-structured interviews. They were encouraged to not only

share their opinions on certain key findings from the survey but also reveal their approaches to learning English pronunciation.

Key findings reveal that the low level of intrinsic motivation, the weak intent to take actions, poor critical listening skills, the lack of autonomy in assessing learning progress, the infrequent use of learning strategies, and the difficult nature of suprasegmental features are potential problems that Vietnamese learners encounter in learning English pronunciation. Besides, the current teaching approaches, choice of nativeness as a learning goal, teaching focus, use of techniques and activities, and the learners' negative reaction towards the non-native teacher's pronunciation may hinder success in learning. Finally, the differences between the strong and weak learners' skills and qualities, perception of the teacher's influence, types of learning activity, and inspiration may contribute to the dissimilar levels of achievement in pronunciation learning.

This research is intended to contribute to a better understanding of how successful learning can happen in the field of L2 pronunciation. It also attempts to disclose to L2 pronunciation researchers and teachers how learners perceive the available instruction and which strategies and techniques they prefer to use for learning. As a consequence, teachers can be more assured of providing beneficial while learners can be better informed of useful measures they may adopt for their independent study as well as for achieving better pronunciation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L1	First language
L2	Second language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOEFL iBT	Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based Test
IELTS	The International English language testing system
PET	Preliminary English Test
FCE	First Certificate in English
CAE	Certificate in Advanced English
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SCT	Sociocultural Theory
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
PAM	Perceptual Assimilation Model
SLM	Speech Learning Model
LFC	Lingual Franca Core
IPA	The International Phonetic Alphabet
CAPT	Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Teaching
ASR	Automatic speech recognition
QUAN	Quantitative
QUAL	Qualitative

NS	Native speaker
NNS	Non-native speaker

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 L2 pronunciation: Cinderella on the way to the ball

A Google search with the key phrase “pronunciation AND Cinderella of language teaching” returns 66,600 results in less than one second, highlighting what many researchers and language teachers believe to be the status of pronunciation teaching in comparison with the teaching of other language skills. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996) also refer to the “Cinderella syndrome” to describe the fact that pronunciation is “kept behind doors and out of sight” (p. 323) in most language programs. While this metaphor is still widely used by several authors such as McCrocklin (2015), Seyedabadi (2015), and Marks (2011), many other metaphors have also been used for the same purpose. For example, pronunciation teaching is seen as an “orphan” by Gilbert (2010), a “neglected aspect” by Alghazo (2015a) and Seyedabadi et al. (2015), “the poor relation of the English language teaching world” by Pardo (2004), and “the lost ring of the chain” by Moghaddam et al. (2012).

However, a look at available literature on this aspect shows that at present the situation is changing. Jenkins (2004) declares that “pronunciation has come of age and is unlikely to remain on the margins of language teaching in the 21st century as it did for much of the final part of the 20th” (p. 120). Levis (2016) claims that “research into teaching/learning pronunciation in a second language (L2) is on the upswing in applied linguistics and language teaching” (p. 423). The evidence that he quotes includes conferences or conference sessions dedicated to L2 pronunciation. Among these are the International Conference on English

Pronunciation: Issues & Practices and the Pronunciation in Second Language Learning & Teaching Annual Conference; the former takes place in Europe while the latter is held in North America. Additionally, published works in the area of pronunciation research, teaching, and learning have witnessed upwards trends in both quantity and quality. According to Levis (2016), from 2010 to 2012, there were “at least 55 articles on L2 pronunciation from 31 different journals most commonly cited in applied linguistics / TESOL”, while Deng et al. (2009, as cited in Levis, 2016) report that from 1999 to 2008, only 3% of the articles published in 14 high-profile journals were on topics related to pronunciation. In today’s situation where English has become a world lingua franca for foreign policy, international trade, scientific research, or educational purposes, being able to speak this language with comfortable intelligibility is extremely important (Setter, 2008). As a result of globalization and the need for international communication, new perspectives on English pronunciation teaching and learning have emerged (Gilakjani, 2012).

According to a recent review of literature conducted by Thomson and Derwing (2015), learner factors, learning goals, teaching contents, teaching methodology and techniques, and the use of technology in teaching are popular trends in research on L2 pronunciation instruction. Yet, a closer look at the perspectives from which those studies were carried out reveals a big gap that demands more in-depth research, and which the current thesis aims at addressing: There is little literature surrounding the learner’s perspective on how English pronunciation can be learned successfully. For example, the Pronunciation in Second Language Learning & Teaching Annual Conferences have taken place

since 2009, producing nearly 150 articles published in the conference proceedings (Levis, Le, Lucic, Simpson, & Vo, 2016). Among those, only about a dozen were dedicated to the learner's perspective on L2 pronunciation instruction, for example, their attitudes, beliefs, and preferences. These statistics justify Alghazo's (2015a) claim that "one dimension of pronunciation teaching which has received hardly any attention to date is that of learner cognitions or beliefs about the way teachers of L2 pronunciation should approach this sub-skill" (p. 63). Even more surprisingly, just a few studies looked at how L2 phonological learning actually happens.

So, Cinderella – L2 pronunciation research - is now on the way to the ball but she has to decide which path to take (Marks, 2011). Either she would take the traditional route, looking at issues already explored by many, or she would opt for an off-the-beaten-track, examining aspects relatively unknown but promising pedagogical topics such as learners' attitudes towards pronunciation instructions (Çakır & Baytar, 2014) or their beliefs about effective learning. In fact, learners' voices must be heard so that teachers can understand their problems and respond to their needs promptly and appropriately for better learning outcomes.

1.2 Origin of the study

I am a lecturer at a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. I design and teach courses on pronunciation, phonetics, and phonology to the English majors. In the past decade, I have experienced what Pagnotta (2016) describes: "Teaching pronunciation skills in an ... adult classroom is truly an adventure". On this adventure, L2 teachers are often unguided (Couper, 2006; Gilner, 2008; Seyedabadi et al., 2015) as they lack training in pedagogy (Breitkreutz, Derwing,

& Rossiter, 2001; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Foote, Holtby, & Derwing, 2011). As a result, teachers follow their intuition in making decisions on what to teach and how to teach it (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005), and many of them “lack the ability to critically evaluate faulty beliefs and practices” (Thomson, 2013, p. 229). Without doubt, I have often been questioned by my students why they have been learning hard but are still often sound unintelligible to others and what else they should do to overcome their problems. I cannot say much in reply.

I started my Ph.D. study with the initial aim to understand why Vietnamese learners of English often make certain types of pronunciation errors and in the hope to help Vietnamese teachers show their students how to avoid such mistakes. However, as I researched further, I reconsidered the relevance of this topic to the current teaching and learning context in my home country - Vietnam. Reading the book “The Phonology of English as an International Language” by Jenkins (2000) made me ponder a number of issues.

Firstly, are the phonetic realizations produced by my students necessarily errors, especially when they do not seem to affect intelligibility?

Secondly, is there a real need for Vietnamese learners to attain a native-like accent? And is that goal achievable?

Thirdly, even if I can find out the causes of those so-called problems, are those issues teachable and learnable? If they are not, then what am I going to do with them, as a teacher?

Finally, what is the relationship between teaching and learning, and how might individual learner factors influence the learning of pronunciation?

Overwhelmed by these thoughts, I decided to change my topic and focus instead on learners and their perspectives, as “while teachers have training in pedagogy and teaching approaches, students know what they want to learn, what they find difficult, and what they want to improve” (Grim & Sturm, 2016, p. 58).

1.3 English pronunciation learning and teaching in Vietnam: A transition

On September 30th, 2008, the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project was approved by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. This project, which was estimated to cost a total of 9,400 billion VND (approximately 500 million US dollars at that time), is aimed at reforming the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the national educational system. The ultimate goal is as of 2020, the majority of Vietnamese young citizens will have the ability to use a foreign language independently and confidently for communication, work, or study in a multilingual and multicultural environment (“National Foreign Languages 2020 Project,” n.d.). Since the launch of the project, foreign language teaching in general, and English language teaching in particular, have experienced great changes in all aspects (curriculum design, teacher training, and re-training, textbook writing), at all levels (from primary level to tertiary level) and in all types of educational institution (formal and outside the formal educational system) (Hoang, 2010).

As required by the new policy, English teachers have to prove they are qualified for the job, otherwise, they will have to undergo re-training, and students have to prove they can use the language satisfactorily to obtain their degrees. Standardised tests such as TOEFL iBT, IELTS, FCE, and CAE are commonly used

for those two purposes. For example, non-English major graduates need to achieve a B1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages while the English majors need to be at a C1 level to graduate. Since the international testing systems assess language users in four skills, including speaking and listening, pronunciation, as an integral element of these skills, has gained more weight in English language programs and received more attention from both teachers and learners.

In this context, where there is an increasing genuine need for English learners to understand and be understood, pronunciation seems to have created tremendous worries for English teachers in Vietnam. Chan and Brinton (2016) conducted a study on “hot topics” among members of an electronic mailing list for international pronunciation specialists and found out that from August 2014 to August 2015, “techniques for helping Vietnamese speakers learn English pronunciation”, a topic initiated by a university lecturer in Vietnam, received the greatest interest and in-depth discussion.

Some important aspects of the current situation of teaching and learning pronunciation in Vietnam can be better described through the findings from the personal observation and reflection I did at the beginning of my Ph.D. programme to explore the potential of researching learners’ perspectives. In less than a month, I talked to three groups of a total of 38 students whom I could easily reach through my contacts at work. The first group consisted of 18 first-year English majors who, at the time of the study, had not attended the compulsory pronunciation training course in their undergraduate program. The 10 students in the second group were

second-year English majors who had already taken that course. Therefore, they had the opportunity to improve their pronunciation through various classroom activities given by their teacher, who designed instructional activities based on the course book “English Pronunciation in Use – Intermediate” by Mark Hancock (2003). The last group’s members were adult learners at a major English language centre where pronunciation instruction was integrated into macro-skill lessons such as Listening and Speaking classes. Since the conversations I had with them were informal and open, the participants were encouraged to share with me their concerns about their pronunciation learning. Our talks centered on the following issues.

- The in-class and outside class activities they use for learning pronunciation
- The most useful activities for learning pronunciation
- Their difficulties in learning pronunciation
- Their attitudes towards attaining a native-like accent
- Their evaluations and expectations of pronunciation instruction

The responses were varied, but there were still some shared opinions. Firstly, many learners reported that they just listened and repeated after the teacher, which not all of them found useful. Secondly, most of them did try to get exposed to the native speech by watching movies and TV, listening to music and news, and accessing websites like YouTube and TED Talks. Thirdly, many of these learners only evaluated an activity as useful if they could explain why and how they used it. Next, a number of them reported having problems with final sounds, stress and intonation, and some easily confusable pairs of sounds.

Another point worth mentioning is that almost all of them were positive about achieving a native-like accent, as for them, this would be proof of success in learning. Last but not least, even though the learners highly appreciated the benefit of receiving pronunciation instruction, many admitted that this instruction was not always available (as in the case of those studying at the English centre, where there is no separate pronunciation course), and many others expected to have a wider variety of activities with more authentic communicative tasks.

I was better informed of the current teaching and learning context by those commonalities. More importantly, I was also enlightened about what would need a closer investigation. First of all, while many learners, who were at the same age and attending the same class, did the same learning activities, why did only some of them find the activities useful for improving their pronunciation? What did they actually do during those activities for learning to happen? Second, a number of them found it difficult to study some aspects of English pronunciation, but why did some others have no problems dealing with those aspects? What did they do to learn? Finally, these learners had their preferences for certain types of teaching activities. Then, what is the role of instruction in their learning? These are the issues that have paved the way for my current research.

1.4 Research objectives and research questions

The current research is concerned with how Vietnamese adult learners learn English pronunciation. It also takes a closer look at why some learners are more successful than others in improving their pronunciation. When learners are at the same age, speak the same L1, possess a relatively similar L2 proficiency,

and receive the same instruction, there must be some other differences that might affect the way individual learners plan their study, activate their existing knowledge and skills, process the input, and practice the newly acquired information so as to improve their pronunciation. According to Munro and Derwing (2015), individual learners differ in terms of such factors as aptitude, L1 identity, motivation, and learning strategies, and these person-specific factors interact with each other, which results in differences in L2 perception and production (Trofimovich, Kennedy, & Foote, 2015).

In light of those objectives, the research questions of the current study are stated as follows.

1. What difficulties do Vietnamese learners encounter in learning English pronunciation?
2. To what extent do teachers facilitate or hinder the process of learning pronunciation?
3. What do successful Vietnamese learners do to improve their English pronunciation?

This study addresses the questions using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design which involves collecting statistical results from a sample and then following up with a few individuals to probe those results in more depth. In the first, quantitative phase of the study, survey data were collected from first-year students at a major university in Vietnam to identify factors affecting pronunciation learning, their potential learning problems, and their perceptions of the role of instruction. In the second, qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted to help

explain the quantitative results regarding the possible causes of learning difficulties and reasons for learners' beliefs about instruction. More importantly, this qualitative strand was aimed at gaining insights into how successful learners make their learning happen, specifically what techniques and strategies they use to control their learning, how they make use of available resources such as teachers' instruction, scaffolding and feedback, and how they explain why they do what they are doing.

It is vital to acknowledge the fact that since this research was done from learners' perspectives, the answers to the research questions, especially the second one regarding the extent of the teacher's influence on the learning process and outcome, will very much depend on the participants' responses, which may look subjective. This limitation will be discussed further in the last chapter.

1.5 Rationale for the study

So far, researchers have expressed great interest in the effect of instruction on pronunciation learning. Statistics from review articles on this aspect of L2 pronunciation teaching and learning (J. Lee, Jang, & Plonsky, 2015; Lyster & Saito, 2010b; Pardo, 2004; Thomson & Derwing, 2015) show that hundreds of studies have been carried out on this aspect. The issue here is that instruction is just one among the many factors which contribute to the development of L2 pronunciation and other factors seem not to have received the attention that they deserve. Hence, an investigation into the learners and their learning may open new windows to the understanding of successful L2 phonological acquisition.

It is the learners who “take responsibility for their own success” (Acton, 1984) and who “decide what and how they want to learn” (Nunan, 1995). However, “research from the learners perspective on learning pronunciation is limited” (Chongning, 2009, p. 39) and “little is known about EFL learners’ efforts to improve their pronunciation skills on their own and outside of class” (Sardegna, Lee, & Kusey, 2014, p. 162). Obviously, an understanding of learner preference for and use of certain strategies, techniques, and activities may better inform the teachers in planning and implementing teaching activities so as to create more opportunities for successful learning to happen.

Finally, Rubin (1975) states that “the differential success of foreign language learners suggests a need to examine in detail what strategies successful language learners employ.” (p. 41) This is definitely true for pronunciation learning, as acknowledged by Véliz (2012). It is important for language teachers to identify “what the good learner does and impart this knowledge to less successful learners.” (Rubin, 1975, p. 43)

1.6 Significance of the study

From a theoretical point of view, this research hopes to make contributions to the less researched aspect of L2 pronunciation – that part on learners and their learning. It offers an opportunity for learners to speak out their views of pronunciation teachers and their teaching, and in so doing, it urges teachers to embrace learners’ voices, recognise their problems, and respond to their needs. It puts learners at the center of all teaching activities, demanding that L2 teachers,

and possibly researchers, change their ways of working by asking themselves what learners need, instead of what they think is good for learners.

For adult learners, success in learning depends on a number of principles, two of which are learners' control of their own learning and the amount of learning that takes place without the presence of the teacher (Acton, 1984). However, not all learners know what they should do and how they should do it for better outcomes. Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2015) remark: "We often study the end product, the definition of a concept that a learner can produce but not the thinking that produced that definition." (p. 67) This study hopes to bring to teachers an understanding of how pronunciation learning, especially successful learning, happens, thereby encouraging them to shift the responsibility for success onto learners by selecting learnable contents, designing meaningful activities, equipping learners with necessary strategies, informing them of available tools and techniques, and then allowing them to plan and implement their independent learning, only providing support when needed. In fact, this is evidence of learner empowerment.

For English teachers in Vietnam in general, and those who are reluctant to teach pronunciation in particular, for example, those working at the English centre mentioned earlier in my personal observation and reflection, this thesis attempts to prove to them that learners highly value instruction that is given to them and that "even adding only a relatively time-limited explicit pronunciation component in a primarily communicative classroom can lead to beneficial results in production for learners." (Gordon, Darcy, & Ewert, 2013, p. 201) This improvement, however,

may not be seen immediately in the form of better production, since learning takes time, and it takes place not only in class but also outside class.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. This first chapter has described the nature of the study, clarifying its general backgrounds, motivation, and origin, specific research context, objectives, research questions, rationale, and significance.

The next two chapters present a critical review of the literature within which the thesis is grounded. While Chapter 2 is dedicated to theories related to pronunciation learning and learner factors, Chapter 3 not only focuses on key issues related to pronunciation teaching but also provides a critique of previous studies on similar or very close topics.

Chapter 4 details the methodology and design used for this project. Findings from both the qualitative and quantitative studies are summarized in Chapters 5 and 6 while discussions of the findings can be found in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8 summarizes the key research findings and presents the main conclusions drawn from the findings and discussions. It then discusses the implications for L2 pronunciation teachers, teacher trainers, program designers, and policymakers. Finally, limitations of the study are outlined and suggestions for future research are also offered.

CHAPTER 2 – PRONUNCIATION LEARNING AND THE L2 LEARNER

2.1 Introduction

Thomson and Derwing (2015) maintain that “pronunciation research and instruction should be primarily concerned with helping learners become more understandable” (p. 327). Though the concept of being “more understandable” (or intelligible) is somewhat unclear and problematic, and thus demands more elaboration, for now, this thesis shares this view, looking at English pronunciation learning and teaching from the learners’ perspective in the hope to help them improve their skills. In so doing, it attempts to address three issues: what difficulties Vietnamese learners encounter in learning the new phonological system, how the teachers affect their success in learning, and what they do to learn English pronunciation successfully.

The current chapter is aimed at establishing the theoretical background for the study in regard to the first and the last research questions, placing learning at the centre, looking at how pronunciation learning happens as well as how the learner works in that process. The chapter starts with an examination of how two major learning theories - Second Language Acquisition Theory and Sociocultural Theory - operate in the field of L2 pronunciation. The former triggers a discussion on the role of the native language while the latter entails a description of the Zone of Proximal Development in language learning. The chapter continues by presenting several models of L2 pronunciation learning before attempting to explain how different pronunciation components (segmentals, suprasegmentals)

are acquired. The skills and learning strategies needed for learning the L2 sound system are also considered in this chapter. The remaining sections centre around the learners, discussing the influence of individual factors like age, exposure, aptitude, motivation, attitudes, and identity on learning and their potential learning difficulties. The chapter ends with a definition of successful learners in L2 pronunciation and a restatement of and elaboration on the rationale for the current study.

2.2 The linguistic and psycholinguistic perspective: Theories of pronunciation learning

2.2.1 Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Krashen (1982) claims that central to the theory of SLA is the distinction between acquisition and learning, or what other researchers see as “implicit knowledge” and “explicit knowledge” about the language (Couper, 2015; Ellis, 2009). With regard to pronunciation, this acquisition – learning distinction may help to explain why there are phonological features that cannot be taught, or as Jenkins (2000) says, they are not “learnable”, regardless of the instructional method and can only be acquired through extensive (probably non-pedagogic) exposure to the second language (p. 107). This lack of teachability might originate from either the universal difficulty with certain L2 pronunciation features, or the absence of threats to intelligibility, which, in turn, may deprive learners of the motivation needed to make efforts to master the features. This phenomenon suggests another issue: pronunciation instruction. Which features of L2 pronunciation can be taught? How should they be taught? For those that are unteachable, what can teachers do to

enable learning to happen? This controversial aspect, however, will be discussed in Chapter 3, which is dedicated to issues related to pronunciation teaching.

The second hypothesis of SLA that Krashen (1982) discusses is the Natural Order Hypothesis, which states that grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order. While this hypothesis has been widely researched in the fields of morphology and syntax (Krashen, 1982), it seems quite unpopular in the field of pronunciation. Lightbown and Spada (2013) claim that “there has been little research to document the developmental sequences of individual sounds in second language phonological acquisition” (p. 69). In the course of reviewing the literature for this study, I could hardly find any paper on the order in which phonological features are learnt. In fact, while discussing language universals, Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) mention two studies on an implicational hierarchy (Jakobson, 1941; Macken & Ferguson, 1987, as cited in Celce-Murcia et al., 2010) which helps to predict the acquisition of some consonants. The implications are that stops are acquired before nasals and nasals, in turn, are acquired before fricatives. However, Celce-Murcia et al.’s references could be questioned for two reasons. First, there has been no empirical research that supports the existence of such orders. Second, these studies were conducted on children’s L1 phonological acquisition (Hansen, 2006) and Celce-Murcia et al. do not state whether the principle can be applied to L2 learning.

Another piece of evidence for this uncertainty is in the existing instructional materials. A quick look at some pronunciation training course books like “Ship or Sheep?” (Baker, 2006) and “English Pronunciation in Use: Intermediate”

(Hancock, 2003) shows that the features are arranged in different sequences. Mark Hancock even suggests that teachers deliver the lessons either in the order given in his book or in a sandwich approach, giving one lesson on sounds, followed by another on stress, then another on intonation, and then returning to sounds. The only reason he gives for doing so is to avoid boredom.

If the first hypothesis states that both acquisition and learning take place during an adult's L2 learning, the third one – the Monitor Hypothesis – explains that these two processes operate in different ways (Krashen, 1982). Applied to pronunciation learning, this hypothesis means that the former process initiates normal speech, creating fluency, while the latter works as an editor, modifying the output of the acquired system either before or after it is spoken (in the form of self-correction). Krashen also remarks that for conscious learning to happen, three conditions need to be met: time, focus on form and know the rule. The most important implication of this hypothesis is that “formal rules, or conscious learning, play only a limited role in second language performance” (p. 16) as it is difficult for all the three conditions to be satisfied at once, and even when they are, it is just necessary, not sufficient for learning to happen. This has not only raised questions about other factors that may affect learning such as motivation, exposure to input, interaction, and feedback from others but also directed attention to the debatable role of pronunciation instruction, which I will return in more detail in the next chapter.

The next hypothesis of SLA which Krashen (1982) presents is the Input Hypothesis, which other researchers refer to as the Comprehensible Input

Hypothesis (Couper, 2015; Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013; Zhao, 2008). This input “should not surpass the learner’s learning capability, but contains slightly higher language structure than that of the learner’s existing language ability” (Zhao, 2008, p. 120). Given that the first hypothesis were true – that instruction would not be able to affect the “unlearnables” – then the role of the teacher would be reduced to only supplying comprehensible input (Doughty, 2003), input that Zhao (2008) describes as being understandable, interesting, close correlative, ... and massive (p. 120).

Mitchell et al. (2013) argue that Krashen's (1982) definition of comprehensible input is vague and imprecise. In other words, there is no clear indication of how we can determine the existing level and then the comprehensible level. Translated into the field of pronunciation, this criticism might get worse. As discussed earlier, the Natural Order Hypothesis may not always operate in pronunciation learning, so it is not easy to decide on the sequence of features that should be and can be taught. As a result, how can different levels of comprehensibility be defined so that comprehensible input can be provided?

The final hypothesis presented by Krashen (1982) is the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which “captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters” (p. 31). The variables he mentions are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Krashen maintains that it is the input that is the key to success in L2 acquisition and that affective variables just act to impede or facilitate the learner’s receiving that input. Regardless of the focus on

the importance of the input, Krashen did open a new horizon to later research on learner factors such as motivation and emotion, which will be proved to be essential to pronunciation learning in the second half of this chapter.

2.2.2 The Interaction Hypothesis

While Krashen believes that one-way comprehensive input is sufficient for second language acquisition, other researchers take an interactionist position, emphasizing the role of two-way communication. Michael Long proposes the Interaction Hypothesis in an attempt to bring together Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Evelyn Hatch's statement that conversation is important in language development (Ebrahimi, 2015; Ellis, 1991; Ghaemi & Salehi, 2014; Mackey, 1999; Muho & Kurani, 2011). He postulates that input is made comprehensible through modified interaction, or negotiation of meaning, and comprehensive input promotes acquisition, so interactional adjustments facilitate acquisition (Muho & Kurani, 2011). In other words, when meaning is negotiated, input comprehensibility is usually increased and learners tend to focus on salient linguistics features, which may lead to learning benefits (Ariza & Hancock, 2003). This hypothesis also implies that both the modified input and the way in which other speakers interact with learners are beneficial to language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Several issues need to be taken into consideration at this time. First, do all types of interaction produce comprehensive input? Second, when interaction comes into play, many other factors, for example, individual differences, the

relationships between the learner and the teacher as well as other learners, the interactional environment, and so forth, will also be involved. How do they operate in the conversational process and to what extent do they affect the quality of the input that is modified? Third, does comprehension actually promote acquisition? In other words, do learners acquire new forms through their comprehension of the input or their processing of such input? Long did address the last issue and revised his hypothesis. The updated version of the Interaction Hypothesis defines “interaction as a connection between input, learner internal capacities, and output” (Ghaemi & Salehi, 2014, p. 28). In this way, interaction is approached both interpersonally and intrapersonally. An important implication of this revision for pronunciation learning is that what is modified depends very much on the people interacting and their notions of intelligibility. Then, factors like learners’ identity, their attitudes towards achieving a native-like accent, and their learning goals may affect the negotiation of meaning, which will contribute to the success (or failure) in L2 pronunciation learning.

One last point to make in this section is that researchers may consider the Interaction Hypothesis either as a theory that explains how learning happens through interaction or as a learning model in which several processes take place (V. Cook, 2016; Mayo & Soler, 2013). From the second viewpoint, learning happens when learners are exposed to input, produce output, and receive feedback on that output. This gives rise to the need to examine the role of output and feedback in L2 acquisition, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.2.3 The role of output, noticing and feedback

The new version of the Interaction Hypothesis places output in a position not less important than that of input. Gass (1997) states that comprehension can be gained from input, but it is production that provides learners with opportunities to process new forms, which enables learning. In proposing the Comprehensive Output Hypothesis, Swain (1985, 1993, 2000) asserts that language production “ensures mental grammatical processing and is the most effective stimulus for the development of the learner’s interlanguage” (Donesch-Jezo, 2011, p. 11). To be more specific, she argues that comprehensive output can enhance fluency, create awareness of language gaps, provide opportunities to experiment with language forms and structures, and obtain feedback from others (Ariza & Hancock, 2003).

This hypothesis has received several criticisms, some of which are from Krashen (1998) who reviewed studies on and related to the availability of comprehensible output and its effects on second language acquisition. He summarizes three major issues that the hypothesis needs to address: the scarcity of output, especially comprehensible output, the possibility of developing high levels of language competence without output, and the lack of direct evidence of language acquisition through comprehensible output. When translated into the field of L2 pronunciation learning, these concerns raise a number of questions. Does the conversational partner have the need to request for modified output from the learner if both of them share the same L1 and thus their L2 forms are mostly intelligible to each other? If the output is modified, is this modification an instance of acquisition? In other words, does the learner actually notice the difference

between the undesired form and the comprehensible output and make efforts to understand how this output is made so that he will be able to reproduce it in a different context? If these processes do not take place, then comprehensible output may not lead to L2 pronunciation learning.

Both the Interaction Hypothesis and the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis recognize the important role of attention and noticing in second language acquisition. To be more specific, when learners notice that the form they produce is different from the input, or that they cannot say what they want to say accurately in the L2, they will pay conscious attention to that feature, make comparison and store that information in their short term memory (Ebrahimi, 2015). Schmidt (1990) proposed the Noticing Hypothesis, claiming that noticing a form in the input must occur in order for that form to be acquired. In other words, noticing is necessary and sufficient for converting input into intake (Schmidt, 1993). He concludes that this awareness determines whether or not learners make progress and thus is a requirement for learning.

Another integral element of the Interaction Hypothesis and especially the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis is feedback. Donesch-Jezo (2011) defines feedback as “a kind of interaction providing learners with error correction and with metalinguistic information, facilitating improvement of the accuracy of L2 production” (p. 14). It is feedback that induces learners’ noticing of any mismatches between the input and their knowledge, which, in turn, may lead to the acquisition of new forms, as postulated by the Noticing Hypothesis discussed above. Feedback can be positive or negative, can be given explicitly or implicitly, and can

come from teachers, peers or learners themselves. As I assume that the amount and type of feedback, as well as its effect on learning, largely depends on the learning activities learners undertake inside (and possibly outside) the classroom, the planning, and implementation of which are often considered part of the teachers' activity, I am going to revisit this issue in more detail in Chapter 3.

2.2.4 The role of the native language (L1) in pronunciation learning

"Most contemporary scholars take for granted that a learner's L1 plays some role in the acquisition of L2" (Thomas, 2013, p. 28), and "no one can deny that the L1 influences L2 performance" (Navehebrahim, 2012, p. 519). As an extension of the discussion on SLA theories of pronunciation learning, this section is devoted to reviewing the theories and hypotheses of second language phonological acquisition that see L1 either as part of the mechanism of learning or as a source of learning difficulties. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) suggest looking at the following six theories and hypotheses, commenting that they are not mutually exclusive.

The first hypothesis is the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis (Lado, 1957, as cited in Celce-Murcia et al., 2010), which Zhao (2008) refers to as the mother tongue transfer theory. The central idea of this hypothesis is that it is possible to predict features that will cause difficulties in learning and those that will not. Lightbown and Spada (2013) elaborate that "a greater difference between the learner's native language and the target language can lead to greater difficulty (p. 69). Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999) confirm the validity of this hypothesis in

pronunciation learning, claiming that “transfer from the first language is usually recognized as playing an important role in second language pronunciation, both at the segmental and suprasegmental levels” (p. 5).

In an attempt to investigate the English pronunciation of Farsi speakers, Navehebrahim (2012) carried out a contrastive analysis of the phonological system of English and Farsi language, reasoning that this analysis worked best in identifying the differences and similarities between the phonological characteristics of the two languages, and thus can help predict the areas where difficulties may happen. He argues that contrastive analysis is claimed by many researchers (G. Cook, 1999, Ringbom, 1994 and Richards, 1984, as cited in Navehebrahim, 2012) to be most successful in the area of pronunciation, especially at the level of phonology. However, this is not to say that this hypothesis receives no criticism. Mitchell et al. (2013) provide some real examples from the language classroom, stating that predictions made by contrastive analysis are not always correct. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) also point out its inability to predict the degree of difficulty learners may experience with a certain feature identified as a potential learning problem.

Eckman (2008) proposes his Markedness Differential hypothesis in response to the criticism that the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis cannot predict the degree of difficulty the learner may encounter in learning a certain feature. This theory assumes that marked structures – those that are more specific, less frequent, and more limited (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010) are more difficult to acquire than the unmarked structures – those that are more widely distributed, more basic

and more natural (Broselow & Kang, 2013). Eckman explains the theory using voiceless obstruents, oral vowels and open syllables as examples of marked structures in contrast to, respectively, voiced obstruents, nasalized vowels and closed syllables as examples of unmarked structures in the phonological system.

The discussion of the role of the L1 in L2 acquisition will be interrupted for a while to bring in another theory that contradicts Eckman's Markedness hypothesis: the role of salience in SLA. It is commonly assumed that some features are inherently more prominent or salient than others and that learners' attention will be drawn to those salient items of the input (S. E. Carroll, 2006; S. E. Carroll & Shea, 2007). In other words, high salience items are "more likely to be perceived, to be attended to and are more likely to enter into subsequent cognitive processing and learning" (Cintrón-Valentín & Ellis, 2016, p. 386) while "low salience cues tend to be less readily learned" (Ellis & Collins, 2009, p. 331). O'Grady, K. Kim and C. Kim (2017) remark that in early work, salience is conceptualized as acoustic prominence with variables such as phonetic substance, stress level and position in the sentence. This notion has been expanded in recent works to encompass items that "stand out from the rest" because of either acoustic or non-acoustic features like visual and conceptual ones.

Most existing studies on salience theory were conducted on the acquisition of grammatical features (Almahammed, Ariff, & Sidek, 2015; Bardovi-Harlig, 1987; Hracs, 2016; Mastropavlou, 2005), lexical items (S. E. Carroll & Shea, 2007) or morphological aspects (Cintrón-Valentín & Ellis, 2016; O'Grady et al., 2017). This concept seems to be under-explored in the field of pronunciation learning. In fact,

I have found no empirical research on the effect of salience on the order in which phonological features are acquired. In addition, Almahammed, Ariff, and Sidek (2015) acknowledge that in some studies, salience is the determining factor in the acquisition of linguistic features while the findings of some other studies support the role of language transfer – or markedness. They also find that these two constructions operate simultaneously in some other studies. Therefore, no conclusion can be made at this time as to which theory – Markedness or Salience – is more valid in second language acquisition in general and in L2 pronunciation learning in particular. This uncertainty can be illustrated by some examples from Vietnamese learners of English. Being non-existent in the L1, and less frequent and more limited in the L2, the sound ʒ is certainly marked to Vietnamese learners, but it has caused little trouble to them. In contrast, the sounds ð and θ are high salience items to this group of learners, but they always complain that these sounds are difficult to learn despite the great efforts made. Another good example is the production of final consonants. Although this feature is one of the highest salience items, it is also one of the biggest problems for Vietnamese learners.

Let us return to our discussion on the role of L1 in L2 pronunciation learning by examining the second hypothesis – Error Analysis. This systematic investigation of the learners' errors which is believed to originate from the researchers' and teachers' interest in the language produced by the learners (Mitchell et al., 2013) – is claimed to complement the contrastive analysis. Richards (1971) classified these errors into three categories: interlingual, intralingual, and developmental errors. Two new issues have arisen at this stage.

Firstly, why is there attention only to learners' problems, not to their accomplishments? Secondly, where do the errors come from? (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 2013) To elaborate on this line of reasoning, some other questions can be raised here. Would it be possible to think of these undesired forms as being continually refined while learners are moving in the direction of the target forms? Could they be considered the outcome of a stage in an ongoing learning process? The response to these questions leads to the third hypothesis – the Interlanguage hypothesis.

Mitchell et al. (2013) define the interlanguage first as a unique system in its own right, and then as a dynamic system which evolves over time. In other words, second language learners move along a dynamic continuum that functions independently of either the L1 or the L2 towards an increasingly target-like system. An example of interlanguage phonology can be observed in the case of some Vietnamese learners of English who use epenthesis strategy while learning to pronounce consonant clusters in initial positions. To be more specific, they tend to add a schwa after the first consonant, so words like “play” and “cry” may be pronounced as /pəleɪ/ and /kəraɪ/. Research on interlanguage phonology is various, ranging from studies on the development of L2 learner's phonology, models of such development to the acquisition of different components of the L2 phonological system such as the syllable structure, or suprasegmental features (Hannahs & Young-Scholten, 1997; Ioup & Weinberger, 1987).

The next hypothesis of the role of L1 – Language Universals – when applied to the phonological system, postulates that “the languages of the world draw on a

remarkably finite inventory of sounds and share remarkably similar combinatory and hierarchical principles that explain how natural languages are spoken” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 26). This theory, therefore, suggests that there are features that are the same across different languages and that similar features are easy to learn and. It is also noted that further research needs to be done on finding out the links between phonological universals and universals of phonological acquisition.

Finally, the Information Processing theory derived from the field of cognitive science maintains that language learners tend to interpret L2 sounds in two manners. In the first manner, L2 sounds will be processed based on the learners’ existing knowledge of their L1 sound system, which McLaughlin (1987) refers to as “controlled processing”. Learners’ attention and awareness are required so that new information can be stored in short-term memory. These controlled processes are thus tightly capacity-limited and take more time. In the second manner, information stored in the short-term memory will be transferred to the long-term memory and learners will be able to produce L2 sounds with greater speed and less mental processing, which is called “automatic processing”. McLaughlin (1987) and Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) differ in suggesting the order in which the two types of processing can occur. For McLaughlin, skills are learned and become automatic only after the earlier use of controlled processes. However, Celce-Murcia et al. claim that these two modes of processing are often conducted in tandem.

So far I have reviewed the SLA theories of pronunciation learning and the role of the native language in the acquisition of L2 phonology. Some issues have emerged up to this point. First, SLA theories do not deny the role of learner factors

like confidence, anxiety, and especially motivation in phonological acquisition, but to which extent may these factors affect pronunciation learning? Second, language knowledge in general and phonological knowledge in particular are believed to form through interaction within a social context (Sanz, 2005). In such interaction, what or who can assist the learners to move further than when they study alone? Both of these concerns mandate that another learning theory be called into attention: the sociocultural theory.

2.2.5 The sociocultural theory

A number of recent publications on language learning theories are devoted to the discussion on the sociocultural theory (SCT) of second language learning, like those by Swain et al. (2015), Mitchell et al. (2013), Gánem-Gutiérrez (2013), and Ohta (2013). From a sociocultural perspective, Gánem-Gutiérrez (2013) defines development in L2 learning as “the increasing ability to use the new language as a mediation tool, both socially and cognitively” (p. 129). He presents the sociocultural theory of second language learning by addressing key issues in three major aspects: L2 knowledge, L2 learning and development, and L2 learner and learning environment.

First, knowledge of the L2 is created, modified, and extended in and through both collaborative and individual learning. Vygotsky, the founder of SCT, considers concepts, either scientific or spontaneous, an ideal unit for instruction that helps learners acquire knowledge. Second, L2 learning happens when individual learners can “make use of the culturally created means of mediation” (Gánem-

Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 135) and of others' assistance to control mental activity. Then, when learners can manipulate mental activity to carry out practical activity in real life, internalization – development – of the L2 has taken place (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Another concept central to the development of the L2 is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which will be discussed shortly. Finally, L2 learners carry out their learning under the influence of their aptitude, experiences, prior exposure, goals, motivation, and beliefs. Moreover, learning is enhanced in an environment where there are opportunities for meaningful action – i.e. for the ZPD to be enacted - not in the one that depends on the comprehensible input as viewed from the SLA perspective (Van Lier, 2000).

2.2.6 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The ZPD is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as:

“the difference between the child’s developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (p. 85)

Other researchers have conceptualized the ZPD for the learning of an individual – either a child or an adult. Their definitions all reflect a process in which the learner moves from independent learning to assisted learning to gain new knowledge and skills (Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2013; Ohta, 2013; Swain et al., 2015).

A review of literature related to the concept of the ZPD has presented two important points. Firstly, the ZPD can be enacted with the provision of assistance of various types such as words, tone of voice, gesture, eye gaze, facial expression, or visual aids. For example, McCafferty (2002) studied the video-recorded conversations between a Taiwanese university student in the US with his ESL instructor and found out that the instructor's use of gesture increased the ZPD and encouraged the learner to convey his thoughts more frequently and effectively. Moreover, assistance can come from not only the more expert partner – teachers or tutors - but also peers, as what De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) found in their research on two ESL intermediate learners. Results show that scaffolding provided in a peer-revision writing task is mutual rather than unidirectional, which helps to activate the ZPD.

Secondly, the ZPD is distinct from Krashen's comprehensible input in that while Krashen's hypothesis focuses on the availability of the input in the form of instruction, assistance for the activation of the ZPD can come from different sources and in different forms, as discussed above. Learning seen from the SLA perspective is rather staged, as instruction needs to be carefully ordered for the provision of comprehensible input. In contrast, learning within the ZPD seems to be more of a continuum which depends on the learner's ability to make use of the resources available. Additionally, unlike the stand-alone instruction associated with SLA theory, the assistance the learners receive when working within the ZPD involves the relationship between the participants in the interaction as well as their individual differences, which may affect the outcome and thus should deserve

more attention. These factors and their effects on language learning, especially on L2 pronunciation learning will be discussed later in this chapter.

2.2.7 Models of L2 pronunciation learning

Several learning models account for the acquisition of the L2 sound system. In this section, the two most frequently cited models will be presented. Another model, which is very recent, will also be discussed.

Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM)

In Best (1995)'s original version of PAM, which aims at naïve listeners of an L2 and operates only at the phonetic level, it is claimed that "L2 phonetic segments are perceptually assimilated to L1 phonological categories on the basis of their gestural similarity to L1 phonetic segments" (Strange & Shafer, 2008, p. 170). To be more specific, the two members of an L2 contrast will be most difficult to discriminate if they are both typical examples of a single L1 category, and easiest to distinguish when they are exemplars of separate L1 categories. For example, Egyptian Arabic /i:/ is the only label selected for both of the vowels in the Australian English contrast /i:/ vs /ɪə/ and thus discrimination accuracy would be moderate or even poor (Faris, Best, & Tyler, 2018). Best later extended her model (PAM-L2) to L2 learning to address both the phonetic and phonological levels (Best & Tyler, 2007).

Speech Learning Model (SLM)

This model proposes that if certain L2 segments are identical or similar to the L1 counterparts, they will be assimilated to the existing L1 phonetic categories

through equivalence classification; otherwise, if certain L2 sounds are unfamiliar, new categories will be formed (Flege, 1995).

PAM and SLM share the view that similar sounds will be difficult to discriminate and differentiate, whereas the unfamiliar or new sounds will be easier to perceive and to produce (Chang & Weng, 2013; Major, 2008; Strange & Shafer, 2008). This view seems to contradict Eckman's (2008) Markedness hypothesis, as has been discussed earlier.

Interactive Alignment

Central to this model is the idea that learning may happen in natural conversations when the participants, who share common backgrounds, adopt and reuse each other's language patterns. In the field of pronunciation, Gambi and Pickering (2013) assume that the higher similarity there is between the two interlocutors, the higher alignment will occur. Yet, as has been discussed earlier about the Interaction Hypothesis, learners may not have the need to align with each other when there is little threat to intelligibility thanks to their common backgrounds. In addition, it is also uncertain as to whether interactive alignment operates in the L2 learning context, where learners might not share a common language or any background knowledge. However, Trofimovich (2013) is quite positive about the consideration of interactive alignment as a teaching-friendly view of learning and its use as a pronunciation teaching tool. He observed 34 learners of English working on information-gap tasks and found out that some of them could "converge on a common pronunciation in the speech of their interlocutor through

repetition” (p. 415). Obviously, further research needs to be conducted to validate his proposal.

2.2.8 The acquisition of segmentals and suprasegmentals

There is a substantial amount of research on the acquisition of certain individual phonological features ranging from sounds (Bradlow, Akahane-Yamada, Pisoni, & Tohkura, 1999; Gulinello, 2010; Koffi, 2011; Saito, 2011b), syllable structure (Osburne, 1996), stress (Field, 2005; Zetterholm & Tronnier, 2014) to intonation (Busà & Stella, 2015; Buss, Cardoso, & Kennedy, 2015). However, only a little literature is available for an overview of how each component (segmentals vs suprasegmentals) of L2 pronunciation is acquired. This section will review the works by Broselow and Kang (2013) and Cook (2016) to provide an understanding of the acquisition of L2 segmental and suprasegmental features.

Broselow and Kang (2013) describe the acquisition of segmental features, syllable structure, and the prosodic system by addressing three major issues: the role of L1 transfer and language universals in L2 acquisition, levels of acquisition (phonetic vs. phonological), and the relationship between L2 perception and production.

As regards the acquisition of segmentals, Broselow and Kang (2013) discuss how L2 learners learn stops, vowels and liquids. The discussion reveals the important role of L1 on L2 sound learning, especially for L2 vowels, and the influence of acoustic cues on perception as well as of context on production. For example, to distinguish between /i/ and /ɪ/, many L2 learners of English, including

Vietnamese learners, tend to use a durational difference instead of vowel-quality differences, which are the primary cues utilized by its native speakers.

In terms of the acquisition of syllable structure, Broselow and Kang (2013) reviewed studies on the consonant clusters and syllable coda and found out that L1 restrictions strongly affect both L2 production and perception. An example of the processes commonly used by the L2 learners to deal with the differences in L1 and L2 syllable structures is vowel insertion, in which a vowel is added to make the L2 words fit with the more restrictive syllable structure conditions of the L1.

As for the acquisition of prosody, Broselow and Kang (2013) claim that “the body of research on the acquisition of L2 stress and rhythm suggests a correlation between the similarity of the L1 and L2 prosodic systems and success in the acquisition of L2 prosody, as well as a tendency for L2 stress errors to reflect the native language stress system” (p. 546). However, they admit that there are few studies on the acquisition of L2 pitch, tone and intonation. Two key points concerning this topic are that the type of language (syllable-timed language vs stress-timed language) may affect the success in learning intonation and that problems may occur when the same pattern has different meanings in the two languages. For instance, intonation is one of the most common problems encountered by Vietnamese (a syllable-timed language) learners of English (a stress-timed language).

Cook’s (2016) overview of the acquisition of L2 pronunciation components is generally similar to that of Broselow and Kang (2013). He also looked at the learning of phonemes, syllable structure, and intonation and discussed the role of

L1 transfer as well as universal processes in L2 pronunciation learning. To illustrate the influence of L1 on L2 learning, he cited an example from the work of Wieden and Nemser (1991, as cited in Cook, 2016), who examined how Austrian schoolchildren learnt English phonemes and features. Findings show that learners went through three stages: presystemic, transfer, and approximate in learning L2 phonemes. To account for the employment of universal processes by L2 learners, Cook makes use of the Ontogeny Phylogeny Model of language acquisition devised by Major (2001). This is how the model operates:

“... the early stages of L2 learning are characterised by interference from the second language. Then the learner starts to rely on universal processes common to all learners. The L2 elements themselves increase over time till finally the learner possesses the L2 forms.”

There are still many concerns about the actual learning taking place within this model. What makes the learners move from the middle stages (where universal processes operate) to the final stage where the L2 form is supposed to be achieved? Do all learners go through the whole process, from beginning to end stages? Will all learners reach the L2 stage? How long does it take for learning of an L2 sound to complete? A lot more work needs to be done to address these concerns.

Cook (2016) also discusses two phenomena that are not mentioned by Broselow and Kang (2013): learning also happens below the phoneme level – the acquisition of distinctive features, and an interlanguage phonology is developed

when learners realize that L1 transfer alone cannot help produce the target sounds and that they can make use of a temporary system in an attempt to approximate L2 sounds.

2.3 Skills and strategies needed for pronunciation learning

2.3.1 Perception vs production: The importance of listening skill

Barreiro (2002) and Couper (2011) maintain that speech perception, or listening, plays an essential role in second language acquisition. In the field of L2 phonology, the relationship between listening and pronunciation development has always been emphasized. “The effect of listening experience seems to have a positive influence on pronunciation” (McCandless & Winitz, 1986, p. 357) and the achievement of a good pronunciation is claimed to be “tied up intimately with ...the task of learning to hear the new language correctly” (Hockett, 1950). It is believed that “perceptual training can facilitate category formation” (Couper, 2011, p. 161) and “can lead to automatic improvement in production” (Rogerson-Revell, 2011, p. 212). Barreiro (2002) adds that “until we hear L2 sounds properly any attempt to reproduce them will be unsuccessful” (p. 7).

2.3.2 Critical listening

Undeniably, listening plays a vital role in the acquisition of an L2 phonological system, but how does it actually help with learning? The concept of critical listening may serve to address this concern. Couper (2011) points out that poor listening skills may distract learners’ attention from finer phonetic details and,

instead, draw their attention to wrong cues for phonological differences. He defines critical listening as learners' ability to listen for the contrast between acceptable and unacceptable phonetic realizations (Couper, 2015). Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) add that learners need to listen to their own as well as others' speech, compare it with that of native speakers, and then learn to identify features that may harm comprehension (p. 79). In developing critical listening, learners are expected to improve noticing (and attention), a cognitive skill also contributive to pronunciation learning as discussed earlier in the section on the role of output, noticing and feedback. An important question to raise here is how learners capitalize on critical listening to learn pronunciation? To put it another way, what do they actually do during the listening, comparison and discrimination so as to learn a particular L2 phonological feature? This issue is one topic that this thesis is investigating.

2.3.3 Cognitive and metacognitive skills

Hockett (1950) stated that to achieve good pronunciation, learners need motor skills and ear training. Present-day researchers would only partially agree with such a statement since second language pronunciation is a cognitive skill which involves cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains (Brown, 2008). L2 learners need to conceptualize, discriminate, and categorize sounds before being able to reproduce them (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Kissling, 2014; Rogerson-Revell, 2011). They need both cognitive skills such as self-regulation (Ushioda, 2008), self-monitoring, attention, reasoning, analyzing, and metacognitive skills

like planning, goal-setting, reflection, and evaluation (Moyer, 2014) to achieve success in pronunciation learning. The degree of success in learning, thus, is driven by the differences in these skills and also in learner factors, which will be discussed shortly.

2.3.4 Pronunciation learning strategies

Griffiths (2018) defines language learning strategies as “actions chosen by learners for the purpose of learning language” (p. 19). As regards pronunciation learning strategies, several definitions have been devised. In the first empirical study on pronunciation learning strategies, Peterson (2000) characterized such strategies as “steps taken by students to enhance their own pronunciation learning” (p. 7). Pawlak (2010) elaborated on this definition, describing pronunciation strategies as “deliberate actions and thoughts that are consciously employed, often in a logical sequence, for learning and gaining greater control over the use of various aspects of pronunciation” (p. 191).

Sardegna (2012) remarks that little empirical research has been done in the area; however, findings from the literature show that the use of learning strategies related to pronunciation does lead to improvements in learning (Akyol, 2013; Mirza, 2015; Sardegna, 2011, 2012; Smemoe & Haslam, 2013). For example, in Sardegna (2012)’s experiment, students’ scores increased significantly by 24.6% only after four months of instruction on and practice with learning strategies.

One issue arising from the review of this body of literature is that there has been no definite inventory of pronunciation learning strategies for easy reference

and use by language teachers. Smemoe and Haslam (2013) used the Strategic Pronunciation Learning Scale devised by Eckstein (2007), which categorizes learning strategies into practicing, noticing, hypothesis formation, hypothesis testing, and motivation strategies. Akyol (2013) and Mirza (2015) made use of Oxford's (1990) strategy inventory, in which learning strategies are classified into six groups: memory, compensation, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social/cooperative. Applied to pronunciation learning, these categories consist of such strategies as making up songs and making associations to remember the pronunciation of new words (memory), using a dictionary to look up phonetic symbols (compensation), recording own voice (cognitive), learning about phonetics (metacognitive), rewarding oneself (affective) and asking for correction (social/cooperative) (Akyol, 2013).

Besides the above-mentioned tools, Pawlak (2010) also designed the Pronunciation Learning Strategy Survey, which was intended to tap the frequency of strategy use. However, the author himself admitted that the instrument "was constructed with English philology students in minds, which considerably reduces the range of situations in which it can be employed." (Pawlak & Szyszka, 2018, p. 304). More importantly, this tool has only been piloted in a study involving 80 subjects and the refined version has not been available.

On one hand, these two sources – Eckstein's (2007) Strategic Pronunciation Learning Scale and Oxford's (1990) strategy inventory - will be of great use to the current study for the selection of research instruments. On the other hand, attention needs to be paid to the relevance of the strategies to my

research aims and context. Otherwise, I may fail to maintain the focus while addressing the research questions since learners' use of learning strategies will help to respond to only the first and last questions. The findings from the aforementioned personal observation and reflection would be useful guidance at this stage.

2.3.5 Learner autonomy

Bajrami (2015) claims that autonomous learners are those who have developed appropriate learning strategies and can use them to control their own learning. The current discussion on pronunciation skills and strategies is, therefore, going to end with a section on learner autonomy since such skills and strategies are expected to “empower [students] to practice their pronunciation on their own, so that they will not be reliant on a teacher or school for pronunciation training” (McCrocklin, 2016, p. 25). Holec (1981) describes autonomous learners as having the responsibility for setting learning goals, defining learning contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring learning progress, and evaluating acquisition. It has also been found that autonomy leads to higher motivation and learning achievement (Dickinson, 1995).

McCrocklin (2016) admits that there is very little research on learner autonomy in pronunciation learning and books with a focus on autonomy tend to avoid pronunciation topics. She warns that “students are likely to be at a loss if simply handed the reins of their [pronunciation] learning”; they need practical tools

and strategies to learn independently. Some of those tools and techniques will be reviewed in the next chapter.

2.4 Learner factors

A vast amount of research conducted on L2 pronunciation learning and teaching has been dedicated to learner factors that are believed to influence pronunciation achievement. Moyer (2014), Lightbown and Spada (2013), Rogerson-Revell (2011), and Celce-Murcia (2010) all provide an overview of these factors in their recent works. I would like to highlight some key issues before taking a closer look at these variables.

First, phonological acquisition is not exclusively a linguistic matter (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010) and “decontextualized pronunciation instruction is not enough” for successful learning to happen (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). L2 pronunciation learning requires a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic factors such as learner age, L2 exposure, aptitude, motivation and identity, each of which operates differently in different contexts.

Second, there are factors over which teachers have little or no control, but of which they need to be aware so that they can accurately assess learners’ performance as well as adopt appropriate attitudes towards such performance. Yet, other factors can be manipulated to allow for success in pronunciation learning. Teachers need to be cognizant of the extent to which these factors can facilitate or hinder learning before making any decisions on instruction planning and delivery.

In light of such classification of learner variables, I am going to discuss three factors in the first group: age, exposure and aptitude before leaving space for a detailed examination of three factors in the second group including, motivation, attitudes and identity.

2.4.1 Age

A review of literature on the effects of age on language learning in general and on the learning of pronunciation, in particular, shows that researchers have divided themselves into two groups: supporters and opponents of the Critical Period Hypothesis of language learning.

Those who argue for the existence of such a period claim that “learning an L2 beyond early childhood appears to result in often incomplete, non-nativelike mastery of the language” (Trofimovich et al., 2015, p. 354). For L2 pronunciation learning, it will be extremely difficult for adult learners to achieve a perfect accent (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Piske, Mackay, & Flege, 2001; Saito, 2015b). The review work by Piske, Mackay and Fledge (2001) shows that many researchers acknowledge the existence of several critical/sensitive periods, each of which affects a different linguistic ability, and “the first ability to be lost [after the critical period] would be the one needed to develop a native-like pronunciation of an L2. Saito (2015b) studied the effect of age on the development of L2 oral abilities. He found out that while the age factor may play a role in determining the degree of success in developing oral proficiency (seen in the improvement of segmental and prosodic features), it might not have any effect on learners’ development of

vocabulary and grammar usage. Trofimovich, Kennedy and Foote (2015) state that there is ample evidence to support this hypothesis. Griffiths (2008a) also provides anecdotal evidence to prove that young L2 learners, who may show slow progress at first, will eventually outperform adult learners.

Critics of the concept of a critical period in language learning base their arguments on a lack of empirical evidence for this hypothesis. They also cite success stories in which L2 adult learners could actually attain a target-like pronunciation (Moyer, 2014; Neufeld, 1978, as cited in Griffiths, 2008a). Nonetheless, among these late learners, these failures to master the L2 pronunciation seem to outnumber successes, and those who do succeed are considered exceptional cases. Yet, this criticism of the Critical Period Hypothesis introduces an important issue: The hypothesis neglects factors that may matter more with adults than with children in language learning; those factors include exposure to the target language, attitudes, motivation, and so forth. (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

2.4.2 Exposure to the target language

As has been discussed earlier, it is postulated by the Input theory that L2 learners acquire the new phonological system from the input that is given to them, and they need to receive enough comprehensible input before being able to produce L2 sounds (Krashen, 1982). If this theory is true, then exposure to the target language plays a vital role in achieving good pronunciation. Suter (1976)

claims that L2 exposure is the third most important factor in determining success in pronunciation learning.

However, what I have realized from the observation of my students and acquaintances who are studying and living overseas in English speaking countries is that being immersed in daily conversations mainly in English does not guarantee their improvements in learning in general and in pronunciation learning in particular. Social and affective factors like motivation, attitude and identity seem to come into play in their situations.

In EFL settings, where contact with native speakers is limited, teachers are often expected to provide good models of the target language and to create ample opportunities for outside-class activities in which learners could be exposed to authentic samples of the L2 (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Chien, 2014). This practice, however, is losing ground for a number of reasons. First, it is too ambitious and quite impractical for nonnative teachers to have a perfect accent, as explained earlier; the requirement should now be in accordance with language learning goals in an international context: being proficient for the teachers, and intelligible for the learners. Second, authentic input may be provided via other means such as TV, DVDs, podcasts, and the Internet. Third, the responsibility for out-of-class study should be shifted to the learners, who will select the type of tasks and genre of input of their preference. This autonomous learning should, however, be done under the teacher's guidance so that support and advice can be provided promptly and suitably for better results.

Another issue related to the provision of L2 exposure is the amount and type of prior instruction that learners have received. Learning experiences may have shaped the learners' pronunciation skills and knowledge and even formed their errors. Therefore, an understanding of such experiences may help the teachers with syllabus design and teaching technique selection.

2.4.3 Language learning aptitude

According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), all language learners can succeed with perseverance, but those “with high aptitude may learn with greater ease and speed” (p. 80). Language learning aptitude is believed to comprise several aspects, due to which learners are differently capable of learning different linguistic components (J. Carroll, 1981; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Smemoe & Haslam, 2013; Trofimovich et al., 2015). Carroll identifies four traits of language aptitude: phonemic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability and memory, to which Trofimovich et al. add rote learning, mimicry, musical ability as well as transfer and combination skills.

In the field of L2 phonological acquisition, researchers seem to contradict each other about the effect of aptitude on pronunciation learning. For example, while Trofimovich et al. (2015) consider musical ability a component of language learning aptitude, Piske et al. (2001) claim that it has no significant effect on L2 accent, and Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) feel that relating musical skill to pronunciation skill is a misconception. In another instance, language aptitude is believed to affect pronunciation accuracy (Smemoe & Haslam, 2013) or even work

as a predictor for the degree of native-like accent that L2 learners can attain (Granena, 2013). On the contrary, Suter (1976) downplays this factor, saying that it is much less important than other factors in L2 pronunciation learning. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) support this view, claiming that “the network of factors influencing an individual’s acquisition of L2 phonology is a tremendously complicated one” (p. 20), and that researchers and teachers need to go beyond language aptitude and educational experience to see how factors like motivation and attitudes affect learning. These areas, together with identity, will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

2.4.4 Motivation

Trofimovich et al. (2015) describe motivation as comprising variables related to the willingness, interest, and desire of learners to engage in a learning process. This factor is thought to be at the heart of success in foreign language learning (Dewaele, 2013) because “it provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 65). Jenkins (2000) defines the importance of motivation in second language learning as follows:

“...if a particular feature was potentially unteachable because of strong transfer effects, but was also crucial to ... intelligibility, then learner’s motivation to be intelligible may override unteachability.” (p.

166)

Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that motivation in second language learning is a complex phenomenon. This complexity can be first observed in its nature. Polat (2011) describes this factor as “not a fixed factor that L2 learners carry round with them; rather, it is essentially situated in learning environments...” (p. 23). Dewaele (2013) supports this view, adding that motivation is not stable and that it can appear and disappear even over a short time (p. 161).

The second instance illustrating the complexity of motivation is the way in which researchers have attempted to categorize motivational components. Gardner and Lambert's (1972) theory is interpreted as having two components: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, both of which are related to success in second language learning, but which are sometimes difficult to distinguish from each other (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In his study on “the interaction of motivation and achievement in advanced EFL pronunciation learners”, Smit (2002) examined the effect of learner-related, subject-related, and classroom-related motivational factors on pronunciation development. Polat (2011), unlike many other researchers who normally classify motivation into binary variables, looks at types of motivation from a different viewpoint, labelling them as external, introjected, identified, and integrated regulations. He describes motivation as “multifaceted and dynamic, with aspects which may even seem self-contradictory (p. 21).

Last but not least, motivation is also complex in that it is difficult to measure the extent to which it affects achievement in language learning. Smit (2002) conducted a study on 141 students at Vienna University to investigate the

interaction of different kinds of motivational factors and achievements in English pronunciation learning. Results show that the factor most relevant to achievement was not part of the motivation construct while motivational factors turned out to have little or even no relevance. This inconclusive finding is not uncommon; Martinsen et al. (2014) and Trofimovich et al. (2015) confirm that similar studies have shown contradictory results. Therefore, although motivation has been believed to influence L2 pronunciation achievement, its precise role has not been established.

2.4.5 Attitudes

An integral element of motivation for language learning is the attitudes learners adopt towards the target accent and the goal of attaining such an accent. Seyedabadi et al. (2015) quoted Willing (1993) to acknowledge the fact that most learners consider learning pronunciation a priority. Moyer (2007) discovered that learners' attitudes demonstrated great relevance to the long-term attainment of English phonology and Smit (2002) assumed that a positive attitude towards pronunciation seems to be useful in helping learners achieve good results.

The majority of studies on students' attitudes towards L2/FL pronunciation teaching and learning focus on English, though a few others are dedicated to other languages. For example, Elliot researched how attitudes affected the learning of Spanish phonology. Interestingly, he obtained inconsistent results from his own studies. In the first study on the relationship between attitudes and Spanish pronunciation accuracy (A. R. Elliott, 1995a), findings show that "subject attitude

towards developing native or near-native pronunciation was the most significant variable in relation to target language pronunciation". In his later project (A. R. Elliott, 1995b), subject attitude or concern for pronunciation accuracy was also examined in relation to improvement in pronunciation. This time, findings reveal that this variable was not a significant predictor of improvement in pronunciation but teaching method was. This contradiction may exemplify what Mitchell et al. (2013) conclude about the role of attitudes in L2 pronunciation learning: favourable attitudes alone are not a strong predictor of achievement.

Another key concept related to language attitudes is the acculturation model (Berry, 1998) which looks into how L2 learners react towards the issues of retaining their cultural identity and/or maintaining relationships with other groups. This model, however, may not be relevant to my specific research context since my subjects have little or no direct contact with the L2 culture except through their teacher and their experience of the L2 culture is mainly through the media (movies, the Internet, or computer games) or the stereotype in their own culture (V. Cook, 2016).

2.4.6 Identity

The issue of language learner's identity has interested a lot of researchers. It has been considered as a factor which can significantly affect both teaching practices and learning outcomes (Griffiths, 2015; Maftoon, Sarem, & Hamidi, 2012). Maftoon, Sarem and Hamidi (2012) defines it as follows:

“... the ways in which language learners understand their relationship to the social world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how the learner understands possibilities for the future.” (p. 1161)

One key feature of this factor which many contemporary researchers acknowledge is its dynamic nature. Kim (2013) describes it as a continuing and developing process influenced by a variety of socio-cultural factors. Norton and Toohey (2001) theorize the identity of the language learner as multiple, a site of struggle and subject to change in accordance with the community of practice. Miller and Kubota (2013) elaborate on this concept, explaining that L2 learners first engage in a community (e.g. classrooms) in limited ways, but then, given a space for participating in the practices of that community and sufficient resources for doing so, learners will be able to develop insider identities.

Another key issue related to L2 learner identity is the relations of power that are negotiated in classrooms and communities where there are mutual interactions (Kim, 2013). Whether learners will subscribe to or resist a role or a learning opportunity that is offered to them depends on the negotiated value that they receive from the community. In this regard, relations of power either promote or constrain the process of language learning (Majidi, 2012).

The identity of language learners has been examined in many aspects: ethnic, social, cultural, personal, and classroom learner. For example, Gathbonton, Trofimovich and Magid (2005) studied the relationship between ethnic group affiliation among Francophone and Chinese in Quebec and their L2 pronunciation

accuracy. Findings reveal that the Chinese learners saw no threat to their ethnic group's identity, so they chose a person with a moderate or no accent to be their leader for the reason of efficiency in the L2. In contrast, since the Francophones felt that their group identity was threatened, they selected a heavily accented leader to confirm their sense of belonging to the group. This outcome has not always been seen by other researchers. Existing research shows that most students want to sound like native speakers despite their sense of ethnic identity (McCrocklin & Link, 2014). Derwing (2003) found that 95 % of the multicultural students surveyed in Alberta, Canada desired to have a native accent if they could.

It is worth mentioning here that an ethnic group's affiliation may not operate in the specific context of the current study, as the subjects all live in Vietnam, where there is little struggle over maintaining or discarding the L1 identity. However, other aspects of identity, for instance, its construction in the language classroom, may be at play. Cruickshank (2012) reckons that the learning context can determine the identity positions offered to the learners, which, in turn, may affect their success in learning. His auto-ethnographic study conducted throughout three semesters of Arabic learning with three different instructors shows that "the identity positions open to the learners in the classes were circumscribed" (p. 179). Learners' prior knowledge was devalued; their experiences became irrelevant; their multiple identities were denied. As a result, "learners were ... faced with the options of resisting or complying and changing their learning goals and approaches" (p. 179)

2.5 Potential learning difficulties

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) realise that many second language learners (ESL learners in his case) have major difficulties with pronunciation even after a long time of learning the language. Researchers and teachers have attempted to predict and analyse areas of difficulty utilizing contrastive analysis or error analysis so that appropriate remedies can be made and learning can be facilitated. Some of them have examined where problems might come from. From a relatively old-fashioned perspective, Hockett (1950) acknowledges two sources of learning difficulty: the habits of pronouncing L1 sounds and the habits of hearing. The former, to some extent, reflects the role of L1 transfer while the latter, which is still valid in present days, recognizes the importance of listening skill – perception - in L2 pronunciation learning.

More recent researchers have identified other areas where learners may encounter problems. Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999) claim that learners also make errors when they apply communication strategies such as overgeneralization or approximation. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) views the issue from a cognitive perspective, explaining that L2 learners have problems because they need to reconceptualize the patterns they have internalized for the L1 sound system, rearranging them or even forming new categories for the L2 system.

As regards which component of the phonological system – segmentals or suprasegmentals - may cause more trouble for learners, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) claim that little research has been dedicated to finding out what learners perceive to be difficult in learning or what they believe to be the best ways to

overcome the hindrances. In light of that criticism, they interviewed 100 students about the areas of difficulty in learning English pronunciation and found that the vast majority of the problems identified by the respondents were segmental. However, as no information about the focus of instruction that those students received is available, this finding may not be conclusive. One possibility is when the teacher aims to teach segmental features, the students may encounter more difficulties learning them while suprasegmental features seem to have caused fewer problems as they are less discussed in class.

Some researchers have studied potential areas of difficulty for specific groups of learners, among which Chinese learners of English have received a great deal of attention. For example, Chang and Weng (2013) examined the production of tense and lax vowels by adult Chinese learners of English and discovered that they were more likely to mispronounce those sounds than the younger learners. In another study, Liang (2015) assumed that Chinese learners would have problems with making connected speech. Results from the study on 50 English majors confirmed his hypothesis, indicating that those learners' performance in making connected speech was poor.

Several studies have been conducted on common problems Vietnamese learners of English face in learning pronunciation. Ha (2005)'s error analysis reveals that Vietnamese learners often omit *l*, *ɔʒ*, *r*, *s*, *i*, *ei*, and *k* in medial positions and *z*, *s*, *t*, *v*, *ks*, and *ɔʒ* in final positions but tend to add *s* and *z* at the end of a syllable or a word. Moreover, they find it difficult to produce some English sounds and thus replace them with existing Vietnamese sounds. Some typical examples

of this phenomenon are the English *f* and the Vietnamese *t* or *tr*, the English *ð* and *θ* and the corresponding Vietnamese *z* or *d* and *s* or *t*. Some other works specifically focus on how this group of learners deals with final consonants and final consonant clusters (N. Nguyen, 2002; Thi Hoa Nguyen, 2002; Osburne, 1996). In addition, Nguyen (1998) attempted to validate the claim that English sounds made by Vietnamese learners are too short, and to investigate learners' omission of final sounds and distinction of long and short vowels.

While findings from these studies may help identify linguistic factors that may interfere with the way Vietnamese people acquire English pronunciation, such findings should not be treated as predictors of their success in learning for a number of reasons which have been discussed earlier, but which I would like to state again for ease of reference. First, greater attention has been paid to the production of segmentals, which are believed not to harm intelligibility (Simon & Taverniers, 2011). Second, researchers analysed data obtained from their own knowledge of the L1 and their observations of learners' performance; very few empirical studies, especially from the learner's perspective, have been conducted to find out about the struggles learners actually undergo, their perception of the value of such struggles (i.e. whether it is worth spending time and effort learning a certain feature) and the approach they use to overcome the hindrances. Among those few studies was Hansen's (2006) longitudinal research on the acquisition of L2 consonants by a couple of Vietnamese immigrants in the USA. Their findings show that "the acquisition of English syllable margins by native speakers of Vietnamese is a complex process which is affected by multiple constraints, primary

and secondary linguistic constraints as well as social constraints” (Hansen, 2006, p. 165). Only when we are informed by both the researchers/teachers and the learners about potential difficulties will we be able to plan for successful learning to happen.

2.6 Successful learners

The last part of this chapter still places the learners and their learning at the centre of the discussion, looking at the outcome of the learning process in an attempt to explain why some learners have better performance than the others. Papers with a focus on good/successful/effective language learners will be reviewed with the expectation that commonalities among those learners can be identified.

A large body of literature on the theme of high-achievers in L2 learning, including Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), Wong and Nunan (2011), and Griffiths (2015), involves a discussion on the learning strategies that this specific group of learners employs. This implies that these individuals not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also learn how to do it effectively. Although the role of learning strategies is still questioned by some researchers such as Porte (1988), who claims that his unsuccessful learners did use a large number of strategies, many other studies have found a positive relationship between strategy use and language development (Griffiths, 2008b; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Wong & Nunan, 2011). Besides strategy use, other variables such as self-efficacy, motivation, attitude, and personality can interact to mediate successful

language learning (Young, 2009). Osguthorpe (2006) adds to the list the identity of a successful language learner: A person “who easily can learn whatever necessary, not someone who has to overcome problems in order to learn.”

Brown (2008) recognises similar variables in good L2 pronunciation learners, namely motivation, aptitude for acquiring pronunciation via sound imitation, and opportunity to use the target language. In his analysis of successful pronunciation learners, Tominaga (2009) found that motivation, learning strategies, and role models are among the effective factors on pronunciation learning. The successful pronunciation learner subjects selected in his study show substantial discrepancies from other learners in “having incorporated elements of choice, interest, relevance, expectancy, and outcomes” (p. 136). In return, they have attained exceptional results thanks to their heightened interest, involvement, and responsibility in pronunciation learning.

Two researchers (Moyer, 2014; Szyszka, 2015) have attempted to delineate a profile of a good pronunciation learner. In defining such a profile, Szyszka (2015) mainly investigated the learning strategies employed by those learners with good English pronunciation. Findings show that these learners used two strategies – forming and using hypotheses about pronunciation, and reading reference materials about L2 pronunciation – more frequently than other learners. They also preferred doing listening-based activities, repetition, imitation, and singing songs in learning English pronunciation. Besides, the study reveals that these good learners recognise the contribution of living in an English speaking country and getting ample exposure to the target language to their success in

acquiring the L2 phonological system. This factor, however, is expected to be irrelevant to the current research as very few Vietnamese students return to attend the university in the country after they have had the chance to live in an English-speaking country.

In discussing exceptionally successful learners in terms of L2 pronunciation, Moyer (2014) postulates that “the phenomenon ...signifies a nexus for two dominant paradigms of SLA: a decidedly cognitive or psycholinguistic approach on the one hand, and on the other hand, a largely sociolinguistic perspective focused on the “whole person” (p. 2). He describes those learners as having greater cognitive flexibility, a conscious and selective approach to strategies, a high level of motivation, and access to authentic input and interaction.

Although the work of Moyer (2014) provides useful insights into cases of exceptionality in L2 pronunciation learning, it should not and could not be treated as a model based on which success in L2 pronunciation learning can be defined. Selinker (1972) admits that only 5-10% of adult learners can reach a native-like level in L2 learning, and this number is even lower for the attainment of a native-like accent. Aiming at a larger population of learners whose goal may be achieving a comfortably intelligible pronunciation (and a perfect one, is possible), the current study will refer to Moyer’s success stories at the stage of devising interview questions so that in-depth information can be retrieved, and also at the stage of analyzing the qualitative data so that important themes can be recognized and discussed.

2.7 Conclusion

Up to this point, the current chapter has reviewed key theories of second language acquisition in general and their applications to L2 pronunciation learning in particular. The purpose of such a review is threefold. First, it aims to provide a sound theoretical background on which the study is based. Second, it helps to position the present study within the literature on L2 pronunciation learning by identifying research gaps which could be filled by the study. Finally, it seeks to prepare for the planning of research instruments and data analysis by highlighting key themes related to how successful L2 pronunciation learning may happen. The research gaps and the cautions for research methodology, some of which have already been mentioned in previous sections, will be summarized here for ease of reference.

SLA theories of L2 phonological acquisition inform researchers and teachers of the way learners acquire features of the L2 sound system and their potential difficulties. However, the degree of success in learning seems to rely partly on the learners and their view of learning. Learners have, in their own right, the options to aim for either a native-like pronunciation or simply comfortable intelligibility. The present study takes into account such goals and corresponding motivation when investigating cases of more successful learners and less successful ones.

SCT theory enlightens us with the image of independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning, building on available assistance, and moving forward within their ZPD. Language development, therefore, “is ultimately

determined by both the increasing ability to control our linguistic resources for communication and the increasing ability to make use of those resources for self and other regulation” (Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 136). However, what are the conditions for the ZPD to be enacted for pronunciation learning? Is any type of assistance more useful than the others? Do successful learners treat available assistance differently from less successful learners? If so, how? Answering these questions demands in-depth qualitative research on the learning activities done by L2 learners, which is the most important part of the current study.

Dewaele (2013) admits that researchers might get confused by the many theories related to learner factors, and also find it difficult to interpret the mixed results obtained from studies in which a wide variety of independent and dependent variables are combined. In fact, it is hard to examine each learner factor separately since they often intertwine with each other. For example, attitudes are part of motivation; aptitude, motivation, L1 exposure, and age all contribute to the identity construct. To further complicate the situation, Ahmadi and Maftoon (2015) conclude that “the language learner does not have a particular identity” (p. 269) because “we do not have direct access to the learner, and our understanding of the ways in which he/she is learning a language is mediated depending upon the type of theory we rely on” (p. 271).

Personally, I think the situation has been slightly exaggerated and those researchers have been quite pessimistic in viewing the issue. There is some truth in the fact that researchers may have difficulty approaching the learners, and the use of personality trait questionnaires, which are normally devised based on

certain theories, may not help to get insightful information about the effect of learner factors on language learning. The present study, acknowledging the conceptualization of different theories, looks at L2 pronunciation learning through the lens of the learners, allowing them the opportunity to exhibit their own identities through the expression of their learning goals, attitudes towards L2 pronunciation learning, selection of learning activities and perceptions of pronunciation instructions. The choice of a mixed-method and the careful development of research instruments are expected to fulfill such a mission.

CHAPTER 3 – PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, there will be a discussion on issues related to L2 pronunciation teaching in an attempt to mainly address the second research question as to how teachers hinder or facilitate the learning of the L2 phonological system. This discussion starts with an overview of the history of language teaching approaches, looking specifically at how pronunciation teaching is realized under the influence of each approach/method. The subsequent sections are intended to examine important issues related to the integration of pronunciation into the language classroom and the current English pronunciation teaching in Vietnam. The chapter then briefly looks at research studies on the role of instruction in an attempt to identify the extent to and the ways in which instruction may contribute to success in L2 pronunciation learning. The next section reviews activities and techniques currently in use in teaching pronunciation. This review also helps to address part of the last research question as learners may use some of the activities and techniques for self-study outside of the classroom, which is believed to be important to success in second language acquisition. Other teaching-related aspects such as materials, use of technology, feedback, and scaffolding will also be taken into consideration.

Second, this chapter will also take a closer look at previous research studies on L2 pronunciation learning from the learners' perspective, critically examining what objective each project aimed to achieve and whether or not it was achieved,

how the participants were chosen, which methodology was selected, which instrument was utilized, or how the data were collected and analyzed. The insight into these issues would not only reaffirm the need for the current study but also provide the researcher with valuable guidance on the selection of appropriate methodology.

3.2 The history of L2 pronunciation teaching

Upon describing the development of L2 pronunciation teaching and research, Levis (2005) makes the following comment:

“The history of pronunciation in [English] language teaching is a study in extremes. Some approaches to teaching, such as the reformed method and audiolingualism, elevated pronunciation to a pinnacle of importance, while other approaches, such as the cognitive movement and early communicative language teaching, mostly ignored pronunciation. Currently, it seems clear that pronunciation deserves neither fate, either to be unfairly elevated to the central skill in language learning or banished to irrelevance.”

(Levis, 2005, p. 369)

3.2.1 The general approaches to pronunciation teaching

According to Celce-Murcia (2010) and M. Hismanoglu and S. Hismanoglu (2010), the 150 – year – old history of second language teaching has witnessed three general approaches to the teaching of pronunciation: the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach and the integrative approach. The first

two approaches align with SLA while the last one fits in with the sociocultural theory of language learning. They were developed to complement, rather than to replace, each other.

In the intuitive-imitative approach, the development of L2 pronunciation depends on the learner's ability to listen to and imitate the rhythms and sounds of the L2 without the intervention of any explicit information. The availability of input is enhanced by the invention of the language labs and recording technologies such as tape recorders, audio-video cassettes, compact discs, and digital video discs. This view, which is still held by many modern language teachers, seems to be grounded in the belief that perception and cognitive skills play important roles in pronunciation learning. However, it is worth mentioning again that learning a new phonological system is a complex process involving more than just listening to a sound and imitating it. For example, issues of attitudes towards the language, identity as well as learning motivation are also involved. More research is needed to clarify the extent to which this view holds true in the field of pronunciation teaching. (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010, p. 984)

Unlike the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach emphasizes the importance of an explicit intervention of pronunciation pedagogy in language learning. With developments in the fields of phonetics and phonology, language teachers utilize pedagogical tools such as a phonetic alphabet, articulatory descriptions, charts of the vocal apparatus, explanations of the form and function of prosody, and practical exercises such as minimal pair drills and rhythmic chants to supplement listening, imitation and production. This approach

informs the learners of and draws their attention to the sounds and rhythms of the L2. In a typical analytic-linguistic language lesson, aspects of the intuitive-imitative approach will be incorporated into the practice phase (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 2). However, I wonder if this order will work with low proficiency level students who may not have sufficient meta-linguistic knowledge to talk about the language and thus may just feel more confident in imitating new patterns. In such a case, it would be better to “start teaching with intuitive-imitative approach to make students more motivated to pay attention, and then continuing with analytic-linguistic approach to make students acquire the exact pronunciation” (Jam & Adibpour, 2014, p. 757)

The integrative approach claims that intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence (Morley, 1991); therefore, pronunciation instruction focuses not only on the linguistic competence (phonetic-phonological) but also on more global elements of communicability (discourse, sociolinguistics and strategic competence) (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). In addition, practice on segmental as well as suprasegmental levels needs to be integrated with broader level communicative activities for the exchange of meaningful information (Pennington & Richards, 1986). In this approach, pronunciation is thought to be best taught in context and in conjunction with other language skills such as speaking and listening (Hinkel, 2006; Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Moghaddam et al., 2012).

However, this integrative approach is not without criticism. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), in an attempt to incorporate pronunciation into their

language classroom, teachers need to balance the needs of students within a somewhat fixed curriculum and find ways to do it appropriately. Unfortunately, most language teachers integrate pronunciation incidentally into other aspects of language, which is similar to the *focus on form* (FonF), in which learners' attention is drawn to linguistic features only when they are needed for communication (V. Cook, 2016, p. 102). Cook justifies his argument with the fact that some teachers correct wrong pronunciations when they arise on an *ad hoc* basis, which may result in a focus on only single phonemes rather than on their role in the whole system or improve learners' pronunciation of single words said in isolation.

In addition, teachers also have difficulty in finding sufficient time to focus on the wide range of pronunciation problems encountered by a variety of L2 learners, who might even come from different L1 backgrounds, in just a single course (Munro & Derwing, 2006). This concern was also expressed by the third group of subjects of my observation and reflection who studied at an English language centre. I will discuss their comments in more detail later in the section on the current teaching of English pronunciation in Vietnam. For the time being, more research is needed to help teachers find more effective ways to integrate pronunciation into existing curriculum and textbook materials.

3.2.2 Pronunciation teaching methods – Past to present

Table 3.1 briefly describes the ways L2 pronunciation is taught under the influence of different language teaching methods developed throughout history. This summary is based on the review articles by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010),

Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010), Gialakjani (2012), Ketabi and Saeb (2015), Morley (1991), and Murphy and Baker (J. M. Murphy & Baker, 2015). It is worth noticing that there are not smooth cut off points between any two consecutive approaches; instead, there are gentle movements onwards as a result of teacher training unevenly arriving at different geographical regions. In fact, some of the methods listed under earlier periods are still in use today. Additionally, up until the 1970s, the methods employed are mostly based on SLA while the more modern ones such as Communicative Language Teaching and Task-based Language Teaching embody a sociocultural view of language learning.

Table 3.1

Methods of pronunciation teaching

Years	General approach	Pronunciation teaching method	Teacher's activities	Learner's activities
Early 1800s	Grammar Translation	Not applicable	Oral communication is not the primary goal; almost no attention is paid to pronunciation.	
Late 1800s & early 1900s	Direct Method	Intuitive-imitative	Teachers provide a model of the target language (their own voice).	Learners listen to the model and try to approximate it through imitation and repetition.
1930s	Reading-based approach	Not applicable	Pronunciation is mostly ignored.	

1940s – 1950s	Audiolingual Method (US) / Oral Approach (Britain)	Analytic- linguistic	<p>Pronunciation is taught explicitly from the start.</p> <p>Teachers (or recordings) model sounds, words or utterances.</p> <p>Teachers use a visual transcription system or articulation charts.</p> <p>Teachers highlight features such as phonemic contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, phonotactic rules.</p>	<p>Learners imitate and repeat after the model.</p> <p>Learners practice the target sound system through pattern drills and minimal pairs.</p>
1960s	Cognitive Approach	Analytic- linguistic	<p>Pronunciation is mostly abandoned as a native-like accent is assumed to be unrealistic and unattainable.</p> <p>Time should be spent on more learnable aspects such as grammar and vocabulary.</p>	
1970s	Silent Way	Intuitive- imitative	<p>Accuracy of the sounds and structure of the target language are emphasized from the start.</p>	<p>Learners focus on the L2 sound system without having to learn a phonetic</p>

			<p>Teachers guide the students through gestures and try to talk little.</p> <p>Teachers use tools such as sound-color charts, the Fidel chart, word charts, and coloured Cuisenaire rods.</p>	<p>alphabet or explicit linguistic information.</p>
	Community Language Learning	Intuitive-imitative	Teachers work as a resource.	<p>Learners initiate and design the syllabus.</p> <p>Learners decide what they want to practice and how much repetition they need.</p>
	Total Physical Response	Intuitive-imitative	<p>Teachers are not expected to teach pronunciation directly.</p> <p>Teachers are tolerant of learners' errors.</p>	<p>Learners' production is delayed until they are ready.</p> <p>They are expected to make errors in the initial stage.</p>
	Natural Approach	Intuitive-imitative	Teachers provide input through visual aids and actions.	Learners focus on listening without any pressure and then

			Teachers are not expected to teach pronunciation directly.	internalize the target sound system.
Late 1970s – early 1980s	Communicative Language Teaching	Integrative	<p>Pronunciation is generally disregarded or even abandoned from communicative instruction.</p> <p>Teachers do not have adequate strategies for teaching pronunciation communicatively.</p> <p>Instruction focuses more on suprasegmental features.</p>	
Mid 1980s			<p>“Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence.” (Morley, 1991, p. 488)</p> <p>There is a more balanced view of the segmental/suprasegmental debate.</p> <p>A variety of techniques are utilized.</p>	
1990s	Task-based Language Teaching		<p>“a more natural approach where focus on form is not artificially imposed but rather driven by the context the task is placed in” (Mora & Levkina, 2017, p. 383)</p> <p>Empirical studies examined the use of tasks in teaching L2 pronunciation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of recasts, task complexity, and explicit instruction to create a focus on vowel production accuracy, word stress, sentence prosody, etc. (McKinnon, 	

			2017; Parlak & Ziegler, 2017; Solon, Long, & Gurzynski-Weiss, 2017) - Use of collaborative communicative tasks to teach lexical stress (Jung, Kim, & Murphy, 2017)
Present	Post-communicative	CAPT	Use of technology in L2 pronunciation teaching such as computer software, the Internet, ASR

Remarkably, most of the approaches under discussion are still in use by language teachers as the decision as to which approach to adopt towards pronunciation teaching still largely depends on the teachers' ideology about how language is learnt and intuition (Levis, 2005). Some teachers are not confident in their knowledge about pronunciation, their own pronunciation of the target language, or their ability to teach it (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). Many teachers assume that students will master the L2 pronunciation on their own via exposure to input while others even question whether it is worth spending time and effort teaching the phonological system of a foreign language (Gilakjani, 2012). These teachers will tend to minimize or even leave pronunciation instruction out of their lessons. On the other hand, many teachers who embrace the current trends in language teaching are finding ways to integrate pronunciation into their language classrooms. This attempt, however, may not succeed unless L2 teachers are aware of such issues as language models, learning targets, teaching contents, and

their role in the pronunciation class. Contemporary views on these topics will be presented in the next section.

3.3 Integrating pronunciation into the language classroom: Current trends

3.3.1 Key concerns

Pronunciation is an essential element of oral communication; therefore, it is crucial to constantly address the pronunciation needs of students, starting at an early stage. However, as Sicola and Darcy (2015) admit, it is unfortunate that very few students can have a class solely dedicated to pronunciation; it is often “relegated to the occasional side lesson in the context of a broader oral communication course” (p. 471). They state that the attempt to integrate pronunciation into the curriculum and the language lesson may encounter three challenges: a lack of teacher training in pronunciation, a lack of systematic assessments of pronunciation in proficiency placement tests, and a late introduction of specific pronunciation instruction. Seyedabadi, Fatemi, and Pishghadam (2015) also identify three serious risks for both teachers and students when pronunciation instruction is integrated into the language classroom: insufficient attention to pronunciation due to a lack of time, ineffective guidance on how to teach it, and an over-reliance on textbooks and software programmes due to teachers’ lack of training. As a result, instruction will become tedious and irrelevant, which is disappointing for both teachers and learners (Gilbert, 2008, 2010). These concerns will be addressed in the following sections.

3.3.2 Pronunciation models

Rogerson-Revell (2011) defines a pronunciation model as “a set of standard pronunciation forms for a particular accent” that can be used as “a point of reference or guideline” (p. 8). Until recently, target models for teaching English have been native speakers from such countries as the United States, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa (Levis, 2005). To be more specific, in English pronunciation dictionaries and books on English phonetics and phonology, the accents commonly selected as models are Received Pronunciation and General American. The former is found in Hong Kong, India, and African and European countries while the latter is normally used in Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and many countries in South America. According to Setter (2008), “this approach to the selection of a model is intuitive rather than empirical and can be based on sociocultural, political or market-driven choices” (p. 448). In the school that I researched, British English is the main language model in the classroom, and the textbooks for most courses, including the Pronunciation Practice course mentioned earlier, use this accent in their speech samples.

There are several reasons why native speakers should not be considered as the only models for pronunciation teaching. First, while “the best instructor is the person with a detailed practical knowledge of both the L1 and L2 phonetics” (Walker, 2001, p. 8), this is often not the native speakers (Setter, 2008). Second, many varieties of English are not intelligible even to other native speakers, let alone non-native users (Jenkins, 2000). Third, native speakers are not automatically “fully prepared to teach students at various language levels”

(Moszynska, 2007, as cited in Setter, 2008). Finally, the vast majority of English language teachers are now non-native speakers of English (J. Miller, 2009, p. 176).

In addition, there are good reasons why non-native teachers of English should be included as models for pronunciation instruction. Murphy (2014) identifies two advantages of working with nonnative English language samples: they seem to be more aspirational and accessible models as well as more relevant to learners' pronunciation needs when their learning goal is not attaining a native-like accent. Moghaddam (2012) claims that non-native teachers are better able to help learners build up their pronunciation abilities thanks to the possibility of making use of the L1 sound system, their knowledge of both the L1 and L2 phonological systems and their own experience in learning. In addition, recently, Levis, Sonsaat, Link, and Barriuso (2016) conducted a study on how native and nonnative teachers affect L2 learners' performance. The results offer encouragement to nonnative practitioners in postulating that instruction on pronunciation skills is more dependent on knowledgeable teaching practices than on nativeness.

However, it does not follow that any particular non-native language sample could be used for instructional purposes. Murphy (2014) asserts that "samples of nonnative English speech are useful as pronunciation models as long as they are intelligible and comprehensible" (p. 258). This gives rise to another issue: What can be described as intelligible speech? The appropriate answer to this question could only be found when the context of instruction and learners' goals are taken

into consideration (Levis, 1999b; Murphy, 2014). A discussion on this topic will be presented in the subsequent section.

The inclusion of highly intelligible nonnative teachers as models for pronunciation instruction should not be understood as a negation of the value of native speech samples. The existence of both native and nonnative speaker speech samples in a pronunciation lesson and any differences found between them do not prevent the teacher from giving explanations and feedback (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). In fact, it is recommended that learners be exposed to as many different native speakers' voices as possible so that their perceptual learning and listening skills become more robust (Bradlow et al., 1999). This can be done easily in the present day thanks to advances in recording technology and the vast availability of audio and audio-visual resources.

While it is mentioned in Chapter 2 that those two factors – perception and listening - may contribute to development in L2 pronunciation, extensive exposure to native speech alone does not automatically lead to the acquisition of new L2 phonological features. We also know that besides input, learners make use of noticing, feedback, and output in order to automatize the new features. What is still largely unknown to us is how more successful learners tap into this extensive input, how they overcome difficulties in learning on their own, and how teachers can assist learners in dealing with their learning problems, especially outside class? The current study aspires to gain insights into these issues.

3.3.3 The goal of teaching pronunciation

Before any detailed discussion on the goal of L2 pronunciation teaching, a couple of key concepts should be defined to aid understanding. The first one is nativeness, which holds that it is possible and desirable to achieve native-like pronunciation in learning an L2 (Levis, 2005). This paradigm in language teaching and learning fails to acknowledge the active role of the listener, especially the non-native listener. In so doing, it tends to take for granted such factors as the listener's attitude towards the target language and the interlocutor's accent, their relationship as well as their identities while these factors may, in one way or another, determine the extent to which the speaker's pronunciation is understandable to the receiver.

In contrast, the intelligibility principle shifts the focus to the listener, recognizing the contribution of the listener's background knowledge and processing skills (Jenkins, 2000). In this paradigm, L2 speakers just need to be understandable, communication can be successful when their accents are noticeable or even strong, and there is no clear correlation between accent and understanding (Munro & Derwing, 1995). The most important characteristic of intelligibility is that it is "dynamically negotiable between speaker and listener, rather than statistically inherent in a speaker's linguistic forms" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 79). The outcome of this negotiable intelligibility thus depends on whom the speaker is talking to, their attitudes towards the speaker's accent, and the identity of both the speaker and the listener. Morley (1991) comments that intelligibility may be as much in the mind of the listener as in the mouth of the speaker. As a result, being intelligible can mean different things to different people in different contexts,

and L2 teachers need to be aware of this flexibility in deciding what pronunciation features to teach and how to teach them.

Up until the 1960s, the aim of English pronunciation instruction was to “achieve a native-like mastery of the target sound system” (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015). In fact, this principle still affects pronunciation teaching practices nowadays. Levis (2005) gives several examples of such an influence, ranging from the textbook-writing industry’s promise to learners that it can help eliminate a foreign accent, to the reality in a language classroom where learners commonly express their desire to get rid of their accents or where many teachers still regard the rare learner who can attain a native-like accent as an achievable ideal, not as an exception (p. 370). However, Levis remarks that research findings keep showing that “nativeness in pronunciation appeared to be biologically conditioned to occur before adulthood”, leading to a conclusion that aiming for nativeness is an unrealistic burden for both teachers and learners. Murphy (2014) even claims that it is unfair and unethical for teachers to make their learners believe that they will ever be able to achieve such a goal. Since the 1990s, the emergence of English as an international language has suggested that this goal of pronunciation teaching be reconsidered.

According to Crystal (2012), approximately one-fourth of the world’s population can use English with only a small proportion of them being native speakers. Ketabi (2015), Moghaddam (2012) and Setter (2008) add that in an age when English functions as the basic channel of international communication, native-like pronunciation seems to be unrealistic, unnecessary, and undesirable. Therefore, the current goal in pronunciation instruction should be “intelligibility”, or

“acceptable pronunciation” (Gilakjani, 2012). In other words, a speaker is said to have acceptable pronunciation when he/she can be understood by others and his/her English is pleasant to listen to. Gilakjani argues that this comfortable intelligibility should be the aim of teachers who wish to improve their learners’ pronunciation as well as confidence.

At this point in the discussion, it is worth noting that the recommendation that language teachers aim at intelligibility in teaching pronunciation does not necessarily mean that a native-like accent should never be the goal of learners. In fact, in my exploratory observation and reflection, a few subjects did express a desire to sound like British or American people, and they worked hard towards that goal. Then, how should language teachers address this issue? First, what accent to target should be the choice of the individual learners, not the teachers, the school or the government (Setter, 2008). Second, there is nothing wrong if learners themselves aim to achieve native-like pronunciation, as this goal will lead to learning motivation, which contributes to exceptional success in L2 phonological acquisition (Moyer, 2014). Third, learners’ needs may differ depending on the contexts in which they need to communicate, so teaching goals should also vary accordingly (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). Finally, even if learners do not need to attain any particular accent, they still need to get their own accent close to a native variety of the L2, which is thought to foster understanding in communication (Gilakjani, 2012).

3.3.4 The teaching content

Before discussing what to teach in a pronunciation classroom, I would like to introduce the concepts of teachability and learnability. Features that are easy to describe and practice in a classroom context are teachable (Levis, 2018). In contrast, aspects that are extremely dependent on individual circumstances and difficult to isolate out are normally unteachable, and therefore should be left for learning without teacher intervention (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). Jenkins (2000) adds that the best thing to do in those cases is just to draw learners' attention to those aspects in the hope that with sufficient exposure to the L2, they will acquire them overtime when they are ready to do so (p. 119). For example, in examining a group of Vietnamese learners of English, Cunningham (2013) found that features such as the difference between *sheep* and *ship*, /p/ and /f/ and /j/ and /s/ are both teachable and learnable as they could be easily demonstrated by the teachers and the learners' performances of these features improved after the intervention. In contrast, he found that consonant clusters seem to be resistant to learning among these learners.

However, teachability and learnability do not always go hand in hand (Cunningham, 2013). Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) claim that "there can never be a one-to-one relationship between what is taught and what is learnt" (p. 72). A distinction needs to be made between these two concepts, as a feature which is teachable may not always be willingly and successfully mastered by learners. The learnability of a pronunciation feature seems to vary upon the extent to which it contributes to the intelligibility of L2 speech. Jenkins (2000) argues that in an

instance where a feature is unteachable but may threaten intelligibility, motivation will come into play to help learners overcome the difficulty and acquire the feature. She illustrates her argument using the example of consonant clusters in word-initial position. Due to the interaction of L1 transfer with universal processes, consonant clusters are difficult for most adult learners, but in an initial position, deleting any sound of a cluster threatens intelligibility. L2 learners are aware of the contribution of this feature to effective communication and thus make a great conscious effort to learn it. In this case, she suggests that learners' motivation to be intelligible may override unteachability.

Until recently, there has been a long-standing debate over which should be taught in the pronunciation class, segmentals or suprasegmentals? According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), segmental features were the focus of pronunciation teachers and researchers until the 1970s but then were abandoned during the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching approach in the late 1970s. In contrast, suprasegmental aspects became the norm during the 1990s (Field, 2005; Foote et al., 2011; Levis, 2005). In fact, findings from research on this controversy are divided, with some supporting the teaching of segmentals, while others advocating instruction on suprasegmentals. For example, Avery and Ehrlich (1992), Derwing and Munro (2009), and Field (2005) assume that pronunciation instruction should be devoted to suprasegmental features such as word stress as it would lead to better and quicker speaker intelligibility. However, Jenkins (2000) and Walker (2010) argue for a focus on mainly segmental features such as

consonants and consonant clusters, as they are perceived to greatly affect intelligibility.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, there has been a more balanced view of the issue (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015) when it is acknowledged that both segmental and suprasegmental features can harm intelligibility. The question now is no longer whether to teach segmentals or suprasegmentals, rather, what features to teach so that learners can communicate effectively (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Levis, 2005; Moghaddam et al., 2012).

In an attempt to scale down the phonological task for the learners and thus focus pedagogic attention on the items essential to intelligibility, Jenkins (2000) devised the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), a list of most important features of English pronunciation which will make speakers from different first language backgrounds sound more intelligible to one another. The core items of the LFC is summarized as follows.

1. Consonants: all consonants, with permissible substitutions of δ and θ such as *f* and *v*, rhotic “*r*”, British English “*ɹ*” between vowels, and permissible allophonic variation within phonemes.
2. Additional phonetic requirements: aspiration of word-initial voiceless stops, and shortening of vowels before voiceless consonants.
3. Consonant clusters: no omission of consonants in word-initial clusters, omission in middle and final clusters only permissible according to L1 English rules of syllable structure, and addition preferable to omission.

4. Vowels: maintenance of contrast between long and short vowels, and L2 regional qualities acceptable if consistent
5. Prosody: correct placement and production of nuclear stress and contrastive stress, and division of speech stream into word groups.
(Jenkins, 2002)

Despite its innovativeness, Jenkins' LFC still needs more empirical evidence before it can be widely applied. The fact that it was devised in a study on a small number of motivated non-native speakers whose proficiency ranged from intermediate to advanced levels may have influenced her judgment of whether a particular feature would contribute to intelligible speech. In addition, that many of the participants were from European backgrounds may also have had some impact on her identification of features that should be taught. For example, while she claims that ∂ and θ could be substituted with f and v , many Vietnamese learners of English would still have problems producing these alternative sounds. Another example is the distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants. As the Vietnamese language does not have voicing, and thus learners almost always have to learn these two categories of sound by heart in an attempt to distinguish them, I wonder if core features like aspiration and vowel shortening are readily learnable.

Other researchers have also raised issues against the LFC. Dauer (2005) questions Jenkins' lack of attention to word stress, saying that first, this feature is important to teach as it is the prerequisite for learning other core aspects such as aspiration, vowel length and nuclear stress, and second, it is totally teachable.

Dauer claims that a set of basic rules can account for 85% of polysyllabic words (p. 547). Levis (2005) expresses doubt about Jenkins' conclusion that learners tend to converge towards more internationally intelligible pronunciation, explaining that it normally appears in a context in which learners come from different L1 backgrounds. He argues that the same outcome should not be expected in a classroom where learners share the same L1, as they would converge toward L2 pronunciation that is heavily influenced by the L1, and not necessarily towards a more intelligible accent.

While Jenkins' suggestion is still under debate, it does give rise to important issues. Would it be advisable for teachers, in planning a pronunciation course or lesson, to research what needs to be taught? How can teachers determine such essential features to teach? In response to the previous question, would it be useful to ask learners what they need or want to learn or even what they are able or unable to learn? Even if learners are consulted, are their responses reliable; in other words, do they actually know what they need and what they are able to learn?

3.3.5 Teaching pronunciation in the classroom

Even when L2 teachers are well aware of the importance of integrating pronunciation into the language classroom, they still find it formidable to teach it since "teachers' positive declarations and attitudes to L2 pronunciation are insufficient for implementing pronunciation teaching" (Szyszka, 2016) and "there is no agreed-upon system of deciding what to teach, and when and how to do it" (Darcy, Ewert, & Lidster, 2012). Obviously, it seems too ambitious to attempt, at

least for the time being, to provide teachers with specific guidelines on how to teach a particular phonological feature. However, teachers need to be made cognizant of the following issues:

First of all, either a heavily form-focused instructional method or an exclusively meaning-focused approach without any explicit attention to phonological forms is considered ineffective teaching (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). The former, commonly found in the form of decontextualized instruction, does not involve any integration of pronunciation targets into spontaneous speech and thus does not facilitate the exchange of meaning. The latter, on the other hand, in allocating its sole attention to information exchange, does not provide learners with sufficient opportunities for repetition of the target features and hence fails to foster automatization of L2 phonological processing. Therefore, integrating pronunciation into the communicative classroom requires a dual focus on both form and meaning. In other words, a lesson should be ideally designed in a way that, in order for an activity to be accomplished, certain forms need to be perceived and/or produced accurately (Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993, as cited in Sicola & Darcy, 2015).

It is apparent that this integrative approach imposes high demands on the design of pronunciation syllabi and lessons, which may intimidate the teachers. Celce-Murcia et al.'s (2010) communicative framework for teaching pronunciation is proposed to relieve this tension. In this framework, attention is gradually shifted from an initial focus on form towards incorporating more meaning in a sequence

of activities, with the provision of corrective feedback (Saito & Lyster, 2012). The framework consists of five stages as follows:

1. Description and analysis
2. Listening discrimination
3. Controlled practice
4. Guided practice
5. Communicative practice

(Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, pp. 44–49)

Concerning the learning models discussed in Chapter 2, it seems that PAM and SLM would operate in the early stages while in later stages, Interactive Alignment may come into play when learners need to interact with each other to complete more meaningful tasks.

Sicola and Darcy (2015) identify two ways in which language teachers can apply this framework. They can select target forms and organize a lesson around them. Alternatively, they can address pronunciation issues that arise in students' authentic production while completing a task. Yet, the teachers' job does not become easier at this point, as they still have to design "authentically communicative, interactive activities, in which accuracy of pronunciation-related forms is essential to successful task completion" (Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993, as cited in Sicola & Darcy, 2015). The problem is that not many teachers have access to those tasks and even if they do, it takes time to make them fit in with specific lessons. Let's take my school as an example. Even though we have a bachelor's degree program in the English language, the library does not provide

the lecturers with access to relevant academic journals, nor does it have an adequate collection of English Language Teaching materials. What is available to both teachers and students is IELTS, TOELF, and TOEIC exam preparation textbooks only.

The last issue to discuss in this section is the role of the teacher in a communicative classroom into which pronunciation instruction is incorporated. Morley (1991) claims that in such a class, the teacher is working as a coach who assists learners by supplying information, giving models from time to time, offering suggestions and constructive feedback about performance, providing practice opportunities and supporting learners. The “pronunciation coach” has a challenging task made up of diverse responsibilities as follows.

- Determine which features to teach
- Help learners set goals
- Design the whole program as well as specific activities
- Plan for real-world practice
- Provide models and suggestions for modification
- Monitor and assess learners’ progress
- Encourage learners’ awareness and self-monitoring
- Provide constant support

(Morley, 1991, p. 508)

It is interesting to see that teachers do not actually do any teaching; in fact, they are facilitating learning in a very special learner-centered way. This view conforms to what has been discussed earlier in both Chapter 2 and the current

chapter regarding how effective L2 pronunciation learning can happen and what factors may influence that learning. While the effect of instruction has yet been defined, and success in pronunciation learning seems to depend on learner autonomy, their use of learning strategies, their attitudes towards the target accent as well as their motivation for learning, this learner-centeredness in teaching methodology should help produce better outcomes. However, for many L2 teachers, the transformation from a teacher who teaches to the one who creates the environment for learning to happen is not a smooth one. It requires both a sound understanding of the theory and know-how. Obviously, this change will cost more time, intellectual work and effort than just coming into the classroom and reciting what is prescribed in the textbooks.

3.3.6 Teacher cognition and L2 pronunciation teaching

It has been mentioned earlier in this paper that many L2 teachers tend to avoid teaching pronunciation, that their conceptualization of the learners and the learning context may affect their decision on what to teach and how to teach it, and that their changing role in the classroom is facing great challenges. All of these seem to result from what they know about language teaching and learning as well as what they believe about it. Such knowledge and belief constitute teacher cognition (Baker & Murphy, 2011). To be more specific, teacher cognition involves cognitive processes – from objective cognitions of different types of knowledge to subjective cognitions of beliefs, perceptions and attitudes (Baker, 2011).

It is notable that such cognition, especially beliefs, differs individually as a result of factors like pedagogical training, prior learning of another language, teaching experience, collaboration with colleagues and personal reflection (Baker, 2011). Even more important is the fact that there is more often than not a disparity between teacher cognition of and learner perspective on key issues such as what should be achieved, what should be taught and learnt, and how it should be taught. For example, Cathcart and Olsen (1976, as cited in Baker & Murphy, 2011) and Baker (2011) investigated both teachers' and learners' views on the use of feedback. They found that while teachers were reluctant to give feedback on learners' errors, especially in front of their peers, learners preferred to receive corrective feedback explicitly and more frequently. So, if learner factors such as motivation, identity, and attitudes have been taken into consideration, it is also worth understanding their views of feasible learning goals and workable techniques and activities for a better outcome in L2 phonological acquisition.

3.4 The current teaching of English pronunciation in Vietnam

As mentioned earlier, the intelligibility principle carries a sensitivity to context (Levis, 2005), the nature of which is shaped by the cultural, social, political and economic conditions as well as the relationship between the teacher and learners. Several studies have been conducted on English phonological instruction in specific contexts. For example, Breitzkreutz, Derwing, and Rossiter (2001) and Foote et al. (2011) researched the teaching of English pronunciation in Canada; Murphy (2011) examined EFL pronunciation teaching practices in Ireland; Saito

(2011a, 2014, 2015a) studied different aspects of English pronunciation teaching in Japan; very recently, Buss (2016) investigated 60 Brazilian teachers of English to understand their beliefs about and practices of pronunciation instruction in Brazil.

For the context of Vietnam, not much has been revealed in the literature apart from the project carried out by Walkinshaw and Duong (2012) on 50 Vietnamese learners of English to find out their attitudes towards native and non-native teachers. The researchers asked the participants to evaluate the two groups of teachers in terms of seven qualities: teaching experience, qualifications, friendliness, enthusiasm, the ability to deliver interesting and informative classes, understanding of students' local culture, and advanced English communicative competence. Findings show that in equating language competence with pronunciation, most respondents preferred native teachers to their non-native counterparts because they believed native speaker pronunciation was the ideal model and thus native teachers had a greater English competence. This study, however, does not provide any information on how Vietnamese teachers of English are teaching this foreign language in general and its pronunciation component in particular.

Part of the exploratory observation and reflection that I did prior to this research was on learners' evaluations of and/or their expectations for pronunciation instruction. The summary of relevant findings provided below is expected to highlight the key characteristics of the current teaching of English pronunciation in Vietnam.

For the first group of learners who had not taken the compulsory pronunciation course, the question was: *What do you expect the teachers to teach and how do you expect them to teach it?* They seemed to have quite high expectations of their teachers when looking for their native-like accents, use of a variety of activities and exercises and provision of corrective feedback. They would like to learn about the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the contrast between Vietnamese and English sounds and different accents of English. They also expected their teachers to motivate them to learn and help them get rid of their Vietnamese regional accents.

For the second group of sophomores who had already taken the pronunciation course, the question was: *“What recommendations would you make to the course you have taken?”* Their responses, to some extent, reveal the problems they encountered during the course. First, despite an intensive focus on pronunciation, instruction delivered over a relatively short period of time (nine weeks) and only once a week was not enough for them to make significant improvements. In fact, they reported that there were too many things to learn in such a short course. Second, they suggested that more practice be given outside class. Finally, they expected to be inspired more by the teachers and to have contact with native speakers.

The conversations with the learners in the last group brought even more diverse responses when I encouraged them to talk about what was happening in their classes as regards pronunciation teaching. Some common issues arose from their comments. First, they shared with the other two groups the same concern

about their non-native teachers' accents. Second, pronunciation seemed to receive little attention from the teachers, several of whom were reported to skip the pronunciation activities in the textbook. As a result, some learners claimed that they did not have any activities either in class or at home for practice and many others were even confused between learning speaking and learning pronunciation.

Despite the observation's exploratory purpose, informal nature and time constraint, its findings do show that learners, without any knowledge of language learning or teaching methodology, know quite clearly what problems they are facing and what they need for improvement. Therefore, it is worth involving students in planning, delivering and evaluating pronunciation lessons.

3.5 Efficacy of pronunciation instruction

By "efficacy" and "effectiveness" of pronunciation instruction, I would like to refer to the positive outcomes that instruction could produce. These positive outcomes, in turn, can manifest in different manners. Many intervention studies such as Bradlow et al. (1999), Gordon, Darcy and Ewert (2013), Henrichsen and Stephens (2015), Pagnotta (2016), Sardegna and McGregor (2013) have looked forward to improved scores between pre-and post-tests in which learners' performances in pronunciation tasks are assessed. Upon examining the literature, and especially after talking to the learners in my exploratory observation, I would add to the list some other realizations of efficacy or effectiveness which could be measured statistically through tests and surveys or by other persuasive evidence through observations, self-reports and interviews. These realizations could be

learners' perceived improvement in their pronunciation, improved learning skills and strategies, increased awareness and heightened confidence.

Among the themes of research on pronunciation learning and teaching, the efficacy of pronunciation instruction has received extensive interest as it is "one of several areas in the domain of instructed second language acquisition that carries the significant potential to inform both theory and practice" (J. Lee et al., 2015, p. 345). Yet, studies on this topic have produced mixed results although significant improvements (mostly in scores from pre-test to post-test) have been reported in many cases (Thomson & Derwing, 2015). Certain factors have been identified as possible reasons for the divergent outcomes. These include learner factors, goals of teaching (nativeness vs intelligibility), focus of instruction (segmentals vs suprasegmentals), types of instruction (explicit vs implicit, or focus-on-form vs focus-on-forms), length of intervention, and outcome assessment procedures (controlled vs spontaneous). Because of the aim and scope of the current study, this section will not look at any specific studies; rather, several review works will be discussed as they are believed to provide an overview of the major trends as well as important implications for researchers and teachers due to the great number of studies examined. Four such articles will be presented in the order in which they were conducted and several relevant studies will be highlighted when appropriate for exemplification.

In 2004, Pardo reviewed 25 empirical studies, some of which were dated back to the 1970s, that explore the effects of pronunciation instruction. He first made a comparison between teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the impact

of pronunciation teaching and found out that many pronunciation teachers were unsure of the effectiveness of instruction while learners tended to consider it very beneficial (p. 12). For example, Murphy (1997) and Walker (1999, as cited in Pardo, 2004) found that teachers were unsure of the effectiveness of instruction because of what they perceived to be their inappropriate methodology or their inadequate attention to phonological aspects. In contrast, 94% of the participants in Edwards (1992, as cited in Pardo, 2004)'s study agreed that taking a course in phonology was beneficial to pronunciation learning, and learners in Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999)'s project recognized formal training as having a positive influence on pronunciation learning. At this point, it is worth digging deep into the issue, asking questions like "In what ways do learners find instruction useful?" or "How is the benefit of classroom instruction extended to outside the classroom?"

Upon reviewing the studies, Pardo (2004) not only describes major trends in the body of research but also offers some important implications for teachers. First, he reports that 23 out of 25 studies examined support the claim that teaching improves learners' pronunciation. He remarks that well-planned, quality training is likely to have a positive impact on learning, but teachers need to be aware of the differential effects of instruction, as they do not always manifest in the form of performance; rather, they can be seen through the development of critical skills like self-monitoring. This implication confirms what has been discussed earlier on teacher cognition, being that teachers' and learners' beliefs may differ in terms of learning goals and benefits of instruction.

Second, the focus of instruction is a determining factor as a number of studies suggest that instruction on suprasegmentals and global aspects of communication is more helpful than a segmental focus on individual sounds. My biggest concern here is if instruction on suprasegmentals is useful, then why do many teachers tend to avoid it in their classrooms? Why have researchers shown more interest in segmental aspects, as pointed out by Lee et al. (2015)? Why have authors shared more tips and techniques for teaching segmentals? Is it because suprasegmental features cannot be taught, like what Roads (1999, as cited in Pardo, 2004) found in his study, being that only five percent of the EFL practitioners thought intonation was teachable? Is it because this aspect does not actually affect communication, as found of pitch movement by Jenkins (2000)? Or is it unimportant and undesirable to international intelligibility, as found of tones by Walker (2014)? Whatever the true reason is, it is hard to deny that instruction on suprasegmentals has attained inconsistent results, as has been seen from my observation.

Third, Pardo assumes that learners' perceived needs may be a stronger drive of their efforts towards accuracy in L2 pronunciation than motivation. The evidence that he cites from the research by Bongaerts et al. (1997) and Moyer (1999) shows that learners (college teachers in both cases) placed a high value on native-like pronunciation, and thus worked hard towards it. Personally, I wonder if learners' needs and motivation need to be viewed as two distinct entities. Would it be possible to explain that learners' needs could have operated as instrumental motivation, which encouraged learners to attain high levels of performance?

Fourth, findings from the research under review do not support the idea that “pronunciation is acquired in input-rich environments” (Pardo, 2004, p. 33). In fact, a wide range of techniques were used in the studies reported; however, Pardo does not provide an overview of the techniques, nor does he analyze how and when each was used. This gap, therefore, will be addressed in section 3.4.

Finally, success in pronunciation learning may be closely linked to exposure to the target language (Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken, & Schils, 1997; Kendrick, 1997; Moyer, 1999). The problem is when these researchers concluded that being immersed in the target language could help improve learners’ pronunciation, they had not conducted longitudinal studies which could measure learners’ performance before and after such immersion, nor had they compared learners in different contexts, being an input-rich context versus an environment in which they had little contact with native speakers.

The next review work was conducted by Kazuya Saito (2012) who examined 15 quasi-experimental studies which investigated the effect of instruction on L2 pronunciation development with a pre-and post-test design. All the studies selected were dated after 1990 and targeted such languages as English (9 out of 15 studies), Spanish (4), French (1) and an artificial language (1). Saito analysed the studies according to three variables: focus of instruction (segmental vs supra-segmental focus), type of instruction (focus-on-form, focus-on-forms, and focus-on-meaning), and type of outcome measure (controlled constructed responses vs free constructed responses). His work produced important results as follows.

All intervention studies which I accessed show significant improvement in pronunciation resulting from instruction except two studies. In Macdonald et al. (1994)'s project, the participants received only 15 to 30 minutes of instruction, which may not have been enough for any effect to take place. On the other hand, the learners in Saalfeld's (2011) study had already attained almost-perfect scores at pre-tests, which allowed little room for further improvement.

All studies with segmental focused instruction demonstrate improvement at a controlled level (in such tasks as word-reading, sentence-reading, and paragraph-reading), with one showing improvement at a spontaneous level (in picture description tasks and delivery of short talks on a prepared topic). Similarly, all studies with suprasegmental focused instruction exhibit improvement at a controlled level, also with improvement found in spontaneous speech in one study. Krashen (2013) noticed these two studies (Tracey M. Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998; Saito & Lyster, 2012), which reported a positive impact of instruction on pronunciation development, and took a step further, examining whether or not this positive impact could lead to the acquisition, and not just the learning, of phonological features. He found out that in Derwing et al.'s study, suprasegmental instruction helped to improve fluency and comprehensibility (i.e. how easy it is to understand what they say), but not the accent, while segmental instruction did not bring any improvement. Saito and Lyster's study was the only case providing evidence for the effect of instruction on phonological acquisition, but as the hypothesis is based on a single study involving training on one sound, further research is needed.

All six studies involving focus-on-form instruction show improvement at a controlled level and two of them measure and show improvement at a spontaneous level. The eight studies involving focus-on-forms instruction demonstrate improvement at a controlled level; three of them also include measurement in spontaneous speech but no improvement is reported. In this aspect, focus-on-form instruction tends to lead to achievement at both controlled and spontaneous levels, which seems to be more beneficial than focus-on-forms instruction.

More recently, Lee et al. (2015) conducted a review of 86 research studies on the effectiveness of second language pronunciation instruction. This study is expected to complement Saito's (2012) qualitative research by synthesizing quantitative results via meta-analysis. Most of the studies selected are quite recent, with 59 of them dating from 2006 to 2013. Key findings from the review are summarized below.

In terms of overall effects of pronunciation instruction, both the within-group and between-group results show that learners who received instructional treatments (varied depending on providers, target features, and use of technology and feedback) improved reliably statistically (with standard deviation units of 0.89 for the former and 0.80 for the latter). In other words, these findings represent medium to large effects, indicating that instruction on pronunciation can be just as (or more) effective as vocabulary, grammar and pragmatics (J. Lee et al., 2015, pp. 356–357).

As regards the research context, a couple of issues have been identified. First, learner age (i.e. level of education) seems to be related to the effects of

instruction, with second language contexts experiencing stronger age effects than foreign language contexts. Second, findings suggest that learners at different proficiency levels can all benefit from instruction; however, the pattern of effects is not clear enough for any conclusion to be made.

As far as the type of instruction is concerned, findings from Lee et al. (2015)'s study tend to confirm those from Saito's (2012). The first commonality is that longer interventions seem to produce larger effects. The second similarity is that instruction affects the acquisition of both segmentals (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, and intonation). Lee et al. also added precision to Saito's statement in indicating that effects are relatively strong and stable.

There are three other findings related to the type of instruction that Lee et al. discussed but which Saito did not. Firstly, including corrective feedback in a program of pronunciation instruction can improve its effectiveness (Saito & Lyster, 2012). Secondly, and surprisingly, instruction delivered via technology produced smaller effects than exclusively human-delivered instruction. Therefore, despite the great potential that technology can offer, there is a need for more research on how it can be used to enhance pronunciation instruction. Thirdly, and most importantly, there is a lack of detailed description, in the Methods sections of the studies, of the materials and activities used.

Concerning the assessment of outcomes, Lee et al., like Saito, found that most studies rely on outcome measures of a very controlled nature with the use of reading-aloud tasks. As a result, these studies show effects larger than those

produced by studies employing measures in spontaneous situations, which may better evaluate learners' progress as they involve the production of natural speech.

At the same time, Thomson and Derwing (2015) conducted a narrative review of research on the effectiveness of L2 pronunciation instruction. Their qualitative work is aimed at complementing the quantitative meta-analysis done by Lee et al. (2015), so most of the 75 studies selected for the former were also reviewed in the latter. Only major trends in the data are reported, and there is no statistical analysis. A summary of the key themes is presented below.

As for participant demographics, most of the studies examined learners of English (either ESL or EFL) who came from diverse L1 backgrounds. Moreover, the majority of the studies (78%) involved adult learners, but nearly half of these did not provide the participants' ages. Thomson and Derwing (2015) claim that learner age is rarely a variable of interest in L2 pronunciation research, which is quite unfortunate, as findings from Lee et al. (2015)'s meta-analysis show that it does have some relationship with the efficacy of pronunciation instruction.

When the theoretical paradigm is taken into account, statistics show that 63% of the studies aligned with the nativeness principle while 24% followed the intelligibility principle and the rest had elements of both (i.e. involving both assessing the speech relative to a native-like target and measuring comprehensibility or intelligibility). It is also reported that more than half of the studies focused on segmental instruction, 23% investigated suprasegmental instruction and 24% dealt with both types. However, there was no pattern in the choice of particular features for study.

Thomson and Derwing (2015) also noticed a trend relating to the nature of input and length of intervention. 61% of the studies use human-delivered classroom-based instruction, with interventions lasting from 30 minutes to 70 hours. This is generally longer than the length of interventions in Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT) studies (the remaining 39%), which lasted from 20 minutes to 22 hours. I wonder if this difference in the length of intervention could be one reason why human-delivered instruction produces larger effects than technology-enhanced instruction, as identified by Lee et al. (2015).

Regarding the assessment of outcome, findings reveal that a number of speaking tasks were used; these include reading aloud (in 73% of the studies), elicited imitation (in 12%), picture tasks (in 9%), and spontaneous speaking tasks (in 20%). Production was measured by human listeners in 79% of the studies while acoustic measures were made in the other 21%.

Obviously, the most important finding is that pronunciation instruction appears to be effective in improving the target forms. Thomson and Derwing report that 82% of the studies show significant improvement; however, the extent to which instructional intervention leads to more comprehensible L2 speech remains unclear. In other words, in many studies, "indications of improvement are almost entirely based on discrete pronunciation features" (p. 332) like the English *r* (Saito, 2013; Saito & Lyster, 2012) or *θ* (George, 2012) while it is common sense that numerous features need to be acquired before any significant improvement in the overall L2 performance can manifest.

These studies also lack “ecological validity in some forms of assessment” (p. 338). For example, as has been mentioned above, reading-aloud was used in 73% of the studies while this task type does not involve the production of natural speech, and thus improvements indicated by this measure may not be linked to any meaningful gains in the real world. To be more specific, let’s consider the following issues. It is undeniable from research findings that pronunciation instruction has positive effects on the learning of the L2 sound system, but why are many teachers still so unsure of these effects that they decide to limit the time spent on teaching pronunciation, or even ignore it in their classrooms? Why did research results show that learners scored higher in controlled tests but only a few indicated improvement in spontaneous speech situations? The second issue has been raised by not only the teachers but also the learners, like the participants in my preliminary study.

There are two possible scenarios here, and the first one derives from Krashen's (2013) explanation of the controversial results. Pronunciation instruction may lead to conscious learning, but not subconscious learning, or acquisition. Therefore, learners may have gotten higher scores in controlled tests, which were aimed at the individual features that had been taught, but they did not perform well in spontaneous speech situations, nor did they feel they had made much progress in global aspects and accent. If it is the case, then what is missing in pronunciation instruction? What else is needed to bridge the gap between conscious learning and acquisition? Further research is mandated to help resolve the issue.

For the second reason, it is possible that learners did not have enough time for newly learnt forms to be automatized. Hence, this learning/practice needs to be extended outside the classroom and/or after the program so that improvement in spontaneous speech performance can materialize. If this is the case, then how can instruction facilitate learners' self-study? How can the ZPD be activated so that learners can continue to study independently until automaticity is attained? What's more, at this stage, the responsibility for sustained learning as well as for success in learning is almost entirely in the hand of the learners. So, learners' voices need to be heard about the ways in which instruction can provide useful information and appropriate guidance as well as motivate them to study constantly and effectively, which defines the need for this thesis.

3.6 English pronunciation teaching techniques, tools, technology and materials

3.6.1 Teaching techniques

Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) provide a comprehensive list of techniques which have traditionally been used to teach pronunciation, and which, therefore, are quite common. This list consists of the following ten techniques:

- Listen and imitate
- Phonetic training
- Minimal-pair drills
- Contextualized minimal pairs
- Visual aids
- Tongue twisters

- Developmental approximation drills
- Practice of vowel shifts and stress shifts by affixation
- Reading aloud / recitation
- Recordings of learners' production

It can easily be seen that apart from the last two, the first eight techniques focus on accuracy at the word level. Moreover, even the last two techniques may not guarantee an improvement in spontaneous speech situations as the materials used are often scripted.

Student teachers of English in Vietnam are familiar with some of those techniques through the book "How to teach pronunciation" (Kelly, 2000), which is often used in their training programs. Besides the popular drilling procedures, Kelly introduces a technique called "chaining" (back chaining and front chaining), in which the teacher begins with the last or first sound, which the learners repeat, and then builds up the whole word, phrase, or even sentence by going backward or forward. This technique is thought to help learners deal with difficult sound groups, words and sentences. He also suggests using spelling-related activities such as the use of homophones and homographs in discrimination exercises.

In her book titled "English Phonology and Pronunciation Teaching", Rogerson-Revell (2011) presents activities and techniques for teaching different aspects of pronunciation such as sounds, syllables, rhythm, connected speech, and intonation. Table 3.2 summarizes the suggested techniques and activities, many of which have been mentioned above. What Rogerson-Revell emphasizes about the use of such techniques and activities is that noticing and discriminating

activities are very important as they help raise learners' awareness of and get their attention to the target forms. She also adds that for automaticity to develop, students need "accurate models, time, practice, encouragement, revision and more time" (p. 217).

Table 3.2

Pronunciation teaching techniques and activities - Rogerson-Revell (2010)

Aspect	Suggested techniques and activities
Sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling • Visual aids (facial diagrams, rubber bands, etc.) • Minimal pairs • Games (e.g. Bingo) • Pairs practice • Bilingual minimal pairs
Syllables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the number of syllables in a word • Building possible syllable structures • Identifying mismatches between spelling and pronunciation • Tapping exercises
Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a marking system to write stress patterns down • Clapping, tapping or humming the stress • Using "odd-one-out" exercises
Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar techniques for teaching stress • Using strongly rhythmical material such as songs, poems and limericks
Connected speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deducing rules for linking • Marking potential links on tapescripts of songs or poems

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhymalogues • Mini-dictations • Listening for contractions and weak forms • Changing formal written messages to informal spoken messages • Back chaining
Intonation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening activities • Using transcripts • Production activities • “Chunking” speech • Drama techniques

In the new era of language teaching when pronunciation has become an integral part of not only the whole curriculum but also every single lesson, modern techniques and activities have been devised in the hope to bring more success in teaching L2 pronunciation. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) and Goodwin (2014) divide these techniques into different categories based on either their nature or their purposes.

To help learners build fluency, Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) suggest using effective listening exercises and fluency circles. The former is aimed at raising learners’ awareness of good listening strategies as well as improving their competence in using such strategies. The latter is expected to give learners multiple opportunities to promote fluency by asking them to repeat the same speaking task in progressively less time.

The group of multisensory reinforcement techniques is recommended for the internalization of L2 sounds. These techniques engage learners' awareness by appealing to their different senses. They include visual reinforcement using phoneme cards or sound-colour chart, auditory reinforcement through associations of certain L2 sounds and relevant real-life sounds or set phrases, tactile reinforcement through the sense of touch, and kinesthetic reinforcement via body movement. Goodwin (2014) claims that kinesthetic reinforcement can be used to represent to learners a specific feature (single sounds, stress and intonation), give them practice of that feature as well as provide correction if needed.

Imitation techniques are considered one type of technique that can “provide discourse level practice with stress, rhythm, intonation, and connected speech” (Goodwin, 2014, p. 146). In shadowing, learners speak along with or slightly after a speaker model while in mirroring, they not only repeat simultaneously with a speaker but also imitate his or her body movement, gestures, and facial expressions (Hardison & Sonchaeng, 2005). Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) add to the category a technique called “mouthing”, which is suggested for beginning-level learners to help build their confidence. In this technique, learners memorize a dialogue and then mime it while mouthing the words silently.

The last category involves drama techniques (role-plays, simulations) which are believed to be an effective tool to foster communicative competence through context and emotional involvement. Learners' performances should be video-recorded and the recordings should be made available to learners for their own

reference and self-evaluation. Very recently, Korkut and Çelik (2018) explored the use of creative drama with Turkish learners of English. Results show that only after six sessions, all participants' pronunciation improves, especially at the suprasegmental level.

Besides the above reviews of commonly used pronunciation teaching techniques and activities, other researchers and textbook writers have introduced new techniques for teaching particular features. For example, since 2013, the Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conferences have always allocated some space for the presentation of innovative teaching tips in its annual meetings, such as using ultrasound machines to teach pronunciation. However, there are several concerns regarding the extent to which new ideas can bring changes to the pronunciation classroom. First, it is unfortunate that the new techniques, activities and tips may not be readily accessible to all L2 teachers around the world. Second, and consequently, the new ideas have not been widely implemented and evaluated by either the teachers or the learners, so they may remain lacking grounding in reality. This may help to explain a phenomenon that Szyszka (2016) notices: Many teachers report knowing a variety of techniques but still use reading aloud and repetition more often than the others. Finally, Lear (2011) admits that "there is a significant disparity between learner and teacher beliefs about the use of language learning activities" (p. 131), but while a large body of research has been done from the point of view of the teachers, learners have rarely been asked for their opinions about what they find useful or what they

often use after class for further practice. The present study will be among the first ones to look into this issue.

3.6.2 Tools

Goodwin (2014) claims that L2 teachers make use of a variety of tools to enhance learning. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) identify three reasons for the use of tools in pronunciation instruction: appealing to senses, addressing individual differences in learning styles, and providing a sense of fun in the classroom. The tools may range from inexpensive to more costly ones, and from simple to more sophisticated objects that take more time to prepare.

Different gadgets and props like a feather, a match, a piece of paper, or a rubber band can be used for describing certain features such as aspiration, stressed and unstressed syllables. Other ordinary objects like kazoos and pocket mirrors can help learners monitor their production of L2 features. Cartoons and comic strips could be effective in introducing minimal-pair contrasts or suprasegmental features such as linking, intonation and prominence. Games, which are both fun and competitive, can help engage learners in classroom activities and maintain their attention to target forms. Another excellent tool for motivating learners and practicing pronunciation is songs, which are the major source of authentic input. Songs and jazz chants are believed to be useful for teaching stress, linking, intonation, and reduced forms (S. F. Miller, 2006). Other resources for presenting suprasegmental features are jokes, riddles, poetry and rhymes.

3.6.3 Technology

In modern days, one of the most important tools for teaching pronunciation is instructional technology which includes audio-recordings, video-recordings, software and the Internet. Even though technology should not be considered as a replacement for the L2 teachers, it does bring benefits to pronunciation learning (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Goodwin, 2014).

The audio-recording capability has provided language learners with a number of facilities for learning: accessing various speech models, recording and replaying their speech, comparing their own production with a model, and defining the sequence and pace of individualized materials (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 354). In his research, Walker (2005) used student-produced recordings to promote pronunciation accuracy. He asked his students to record texts, either monologues or dialogues, related to the topics they were working on. The recordings were submitted to the teacher for marking and then returned to the students for reflection. Walker believes that this technique pushes learners to work together, encourages adjustments in pronunciation, allows for peer feedback, and offers a non-threatening environment for the practice of meaningful tasks (p. 557). Aoki (2014) suggests possible ways of using voice recording tools in pronunciation instruction, among which are audio-blogs and audio-journals. She also expresses concerns about both technological issues such as the lack of access to devices and pedagogical aspects such as proficiency levels and learners' attitudes towards the use of technology.

The video-recording function allows the teachers to add a visual dimension to the audio medium, which can help describe how different features are articulated or compare one's production with that of a native speaker. More importantly, teachers can make use of video recordings of learners' performances as a tool for self, peer, and instructor feedback (Goodwin, 2014). However, as this technique is normally time-consuming, teachers need to consider what to record (speeches, conversations, role plays, etc.), where to play it back (in class or outside class), and what to use the recording for (class analysis, self-reflection, or any other purposes).

With the fast development of computer technology, software programmes have become an attractive option among the tools for teaching and learning pronunciation (Martins, Levis, & Borges, 2016). Pennington (1996) and Levis (2007) identify several advantages of CAPT. First, computers can provide individualized instruction, frequent practice, and automatic visual support. Second, computers can give faster and more prominent feedback; in other words, feedback would be given in many forms such as sound, graphics and videos. Third, via computers, phonological features could be presented in many ways, which helps to motivate learners to work on their pronunciation. Finally, learners have the opportunity to take responsibility for choosing what to learn and when to learn it, which is important in developing their autonomy and which, therefore, encourages them to sustain learning in the absence of the teacher.

One type of software that has been commonly used for teaching pronunciation is automatic speech recognition (ASR), which provides learners with

acoustic feedback on their production. Elimat and Abuseileek (2014) claim that CAPT programs based on ASR can contain activities which are realistic, rewarding and fun, and which can help reduce anxiety and promote independent learning (p. 24). McCrocklin (2014, 2016) states that the incorporation of ASR gives learners a clear strategy for practice outside of class and helps develop a greater sense of autonomy. Several ASR technologies that are freely available for pronunciation instruction in a variety of target languages include Siri, Google Voice Search, and Windows Speech Recognition (McCrocklin, 2015). Rosetta Stone, Duolingo, Babbel and Mango Languages are among the CAPT software programs into which ASR technologies are incorporated. Nevertheless, they seem not to support the development of spoken skills and thus may have unrealized potential (Bajorek, 2017).

Researchers are not yet happy with only acoustic feedback as they believe adding a visual element can be more beneficial in providing learners with visual descriptions of how a sound is articulated or how an intonation contour has been made and needs to be modified. This added visual support has been developed by researchers such as Jokisch et al. (2005), Engwall (2012), Ali and Segaran (2013) and Suemitsu (2015). Another issue is ASR is currently used for the practice of segmentals (McCrocklin, Humaidan, & Edalatishams, 2019); its use for suprasegmentals has rarely been mentioned in the literature. For example, in Vietnam, many learners are familiar with ELSA Speak, the ASR-based software specially designed to target problematic segmental features in English.

Last but not least, Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) predict that “the future of pronunciation teaching almost certainly lies with Internet capability, since advances in technology can be much more easily incorporated on a Web site than by making changes to a commercially sold CD-ROM or DVD programme” (p. 360). Internet sources have a lot to offer teachers and learners, from instructional audio and video clips to authentic materials like interviews, songs, movies, speeches; from a place where information can be simply retrieved (e.g. online dictionaries) to an interactive space where learners can post questions about learning pronunciation and receive answers from many others.

An increasing amount of research has been done on exploiting the capabilities of the Internet for pronunciation instruction. Lord (2008) and Ducate and Lomicka (2009) examined the use of podcasting in teaching L2 pronunciation. The participants were required to create podcasts of oral tasks and post them in their blogs or podcast channels. The podcasts created during pre-and post-tests were then assessed by human raters. Findings reveal that participants in both studies reacted positively towards learning pronunciation via podcasting, saying that they highly valued the feedback received from peers and that the tool was useful. However, while Lord could announce an overall improvement in learners’ performance, Ducate and Lomicka admit that there was no significant improvement in accentedness (the extent to which a listener judges L2 speech that differs from the native speaker norm) or comprehensibility (i.e. how easy it is to understand what a speaker says) and explain that the lack of in-class practice and the brevity of intervention may have been the causes of such outcome.

Acknowledging that TED Talks provide various models of effective speakers and serve as a rich, authentic, and contextualized resource for the English language classroom, McGregor et al. (2016) made the first attempt to examine whether the speeches from TED Talks could be used for teaching intonation. Findings show that the samples are suitable for an integrative approach to teaching intonation in which learners do not study the pieces and parts of intonation but aim at meaning-making and communicative success. Nonetheless, since McGregor et al.'s project is the very first of its kind, the pedagogical value of the tool has yet been established. Neither has there been any systematic categorization of pronunciation features available in TED Talks, so it is still difficult for teachers to capitalize on this potential resource for teaching pronunciation.

In general, there is a need for collaboration among researchers, technology developers, and language teachers to determine which aspects of pronunciation should be prioritized for which types of learners, which types of activities are most beneficial for developing pronunciation skills, and how these technologies can best be used to enhance teaching (O'Brien & Levis, 2017). Moreover, when a particular technology is incorporated, both the L2 teachers and learners need to be aware of the purpose of its use as well as receive training on how to operate it so as to avoid either overdependence on it or discomfort in using it.

3.6.4 Materials

In reviewing the history of L2 pronunciation teaching, Baker and Murphy (2015) also define the three genres of professional literature dedicated to

pronunciation instruction. The first genre is classroom textbooks intended to be used in pronunciation courses (e.g. “English Pronunciation in Use” (Hancock, 2003)). The second genre is activity recipe collections which provide English teachers with stand-alone activities that can be tailored to their teaching contexts (e.g. “Pronunciation Games” (Hancock, 1995)). The last genre is teacher preparation texts which focus on not only the different aspects of English pronunciation but also how to teach them. The current thesis has also cited some notable examples of such texts (e.g. Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994; Rogerson-Revell, 2011).

It has been noted earlier that when pronunciation practitioners are uncertain of what to teach and how to teach it, they tend to rely on the coursebook, and hence are influenced by either the current trends in language learning theory and teaching methodology or a specific theory and teaching approach adopted by the writer. Several problems with materials for pronunciation instruction can be identified here. First, there are quite few textbooks dedicated to pronunciation as compared to other aspects such as grammar and writing (Tracey M. Derwing, 2008). Second, and more importantly, many of the existing textbooks address phonetics and phonology without regard to the pedagogical part that pronunciation teachers adhere to (Alghazo, 2015b). In other words, those books provide the teachers with little or no resources and guidance for teaching. The coursebook written by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) is an exception when it not only discusses different aspects of pronunciation but also addresses issues related to L2 pronunciation teaching. Finally, most existing materials are based on writers’

intuition rather than on the results of current research on L2 pronunciation and pronunciation learning (Tracey M. Derwing & Munro, 2015). In another instance, many commercially produced coursebooks do not, or cannot, do what they promise to. For example, “while professing to teach the more communicative aspects of pronunciation, many texts go about it in a decidedly uncommunicative way” (Jones, 1997, p. 104).

Despite the availability of pronunciation textbooks and teacher resources, many students still do not have access to stand-alone courses (Foote et al., 2011). In this case, integrated skills textbooks play an important role in giving explicit instruction and feedback on pronunciation. Derwing, Diepenbroek, and Foote (2012) examined 12 general skills textbook series and 6 teachers’ manuals to identify the aspects of L2 pronunciation they focus on, the extent to which they include pronunciation activities, and the consistency across the series. Findings show that there are disparities both within and across the series in the foci of instruction, the number of task types and the amount of guidance given to the teachers. For example, the *American English File* series has a total of 513 pronunciation activities with 23 foci, among which the most common are word stress (96 tasks), vowels (87), rhythm (63), and sentence stress (51) while the *Passages* series has only 4 activities, all of which are about stress. Additionally, the former presents 48 activities in the teacher’s manual while the latter provides only one general instruction for the teacher to practice new forms with the students.

Similarly, Watts and Huensch (2013) investigated 11 sets of integrated skills textbooks focusing on speaking, pronunciation, and listening to determine their

success (or failure) in maintaining a balance among the skills, providing guidance for inexperienced teachers, and meeting learners' needs. They found that there was a lack of systematic coverage of pronunciation topics at three levels: phrase (e.g. focal stress, linking), word (e.g. compound nouns, word stress) and sound (e.g. θ vs δ , diphthongs). More importantly, 45% of the textbooks examined provide no guidance for teachers, another 45% give limited information while only 10% offer support to novice teachers.

One common finding from both studies is that supra-segmental aspects, for example, stress, rhythm and intonation, have received more attention than segmentals aspects in the syllabi. This, on one hand, may indicate that the textbooks still follow the trend of the Communicative Language Teaching approach, which places a heavier weighting on supra-segmentals. On the other hand, it has once again raised concern about the effectiveness of the teaching of suprasegmentals. If the textbook has reserved more space for suprasegmentals than for segmentals, why has instruction received only small amounts of success, like in the case of the learners in my exploratory observation?

3.7 Feedback and scaffolding

3.7.1 Feedback

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, feedback, in providing learners with error correction and metalinguistic information, may facilitate L2 acquisition (Donesch-Jezo, 2011). Lyster and Saito (2010a, 2010b) classify feedback into three types as follows.

- Recasts: The teacher implicitly reformulates all or part of a learner's utterance.
- Explicit correction: The teacher not only provides the correct form but also indicates what the learner has said is incorrect.
- Prompts: The teacher provides cues for the learner to draw on his or her own resources to self-repair. Prompts include elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetition.

Lyster and Saito's (2010b) meta-analysis of 15 classroom-based studies on the impact of oral feedback on L2 language development reveals that all three types of feedback yielded significant effects. Lyster and Saito's (2010a) synthesis of studies on interactional feedback asserts that it plays a pivotal role in scaffolding individual learners to sustain second language growth through brief negotiations of forms while the communicative flow is maintained.

In the field of pronunciation, research has shown that corrective feedback – feedback that indicates the error and/or provides the correct form – contributes to improvement in L2 phonological acquisition (J. Lee et al., 2015). Couper (2015) remarks that one key factor in determining the effectiveness of corrective feedback is to make sure learners understand that the teacher is making a correction and that they understand precisely where the problem lies (p. 428).

Researchers have also investigated how different types of corrective feedback affect L2 pronunciation learning. For example, Dłaska and Krekeler (2013) examined the immediate effect of explicit corrective feedback on the comprehensibility of L2 speech production via a study on 169 learners of German

divided into two groups. The first group was exposed to only auditory feedback, listening to their own recorded pronunciation and their teacher's model pronunciation, while the second group received individual corrective feedback besides doing the same listening activities. Results show that explicit individual corrective feedback is more effective in the short term for improving comprehensibility and is therefore a significantly more powerful teaching tool than listening-only interventions. This finding could be explained using two theories discussed in Chapter 2: the Salience Theory and the Noticing Hypothesis. First, as a result of explicit feedback, a particular feature becomes a high salience item and is more likely to be attended to. Second, learners may pay conscious attention – noticing – to the highly salient feature, make comparisons, and store the information in their short-term memory, which causes learning to happen.

Unlike Dlaske and Krekeler (2013) who looked at the overall comprehensibility, Saito and Lyster (2012) studied the effect of corrective feedback, in the form of recasts, on the acquisition of a single sound – the English “*J*” by 65 Japanese learners. Findings reveal that teachers' recasts, together with form-focused instruction, can help learners make better production of the sound. The authors conclude that learners need corrective feedback because it is difficult for them alone to make judgments about the extent to which their pronunciation is intelligible (p. 27).

Another study on the acquisition of the English “*J*” was conducted on 22 Korean learners of English (Gooch, Saito, & Lyster, 2016). However, the focus of this quasi-experimental study is on the effectiveness of recasts in comparison with

that of prompts. Results from pre/post-tests show that the former was helpful in the improvement of controlled production of “ʃ”, while the latter was facilitative of not only controlled but also spontaneous production of the feature. Further information from the video-coding analysis demonstrates that learners receiving prompts produced more hybrid forms (combinations of Korean “ʃ” and English “ʃ” - evidence of interlanguage) when attempting to repair their errors.

In reality, many teachers limit or neglect giving feedback on learners’ pronunciation for several reasons: time constraint, a lack of knowledge of how to give feedback effectively, and the uncertainty of what to do and when to do it in giving feedback on learners’ pronunciation (Baker & Burri, 2016). However, teachers who do give feedback believe that it is the key to enhancing learner comprehensibility. Findings from Baker and Burri (2016)’s study, which examined five experienced teachers’ beliefs about the role of feedback, reveal that both instructor and peer feedback is important and that feedback can be given in various ways: written or via voice recordings, individually or the whole class. My concern here, again, is that Baker and Burri interviewed only the teachers and looked at the issue from the perspectives of either researchers or teachers while learners’ opinions were not taken into consideration. It is unknown as to which type of feedback was preferred by the learners, whether teacher-produced audio feedback was useful for them, or how they felt when being corrected in class. All of these concerns should not be taken for granted if we would like to manipulate feedback to facilitate pronunciation learning.

3.7.2 Scaffolding

As an essential part of the ZPD, scaffolding is defined as the supportive dialogue taking place between a learner and a more proficient user of the target language who may help the learner through the step of a problem or a task (Bruner, 1978, as cited in Kayi-Aydar, 2013). In a language classroom, the expert user is normally the teacher who provides scaffolded instruction through questioning, reformulation, repetition or elaboration. Teacher scaffolding involves three pedagogical components: providing a support structure to enable certain activities and skills to develop, carrying out those activities in class, and assisting learners in moment-to-moment interaction (Walqui, 2006).

In their study on the effectiveness of teacher scaffolding in learners' efforts for improving vowel reduction, linking, primary stress and intonation, Sardegna and McGregor (2013) proposed an agenda of pedagogical actions that teachers could take to scaffold learners. Their agenda is summarized below:

1. Raising students' awareness of the features they need to improve and the strategies for improving them.
2. Providing explicit instruction and individualized feedback on specific features.
3. Modelling how available resources and strategies could be used.
4. Organizing guided practice and creating opportunities for learners to utilize pronunciation strategies.
5. Developing self-assessment plans and activities.

6. Guiding learners' reflection in relation to the learning process, the practice, and the outcomes.

Sardegna and McGregor claim that this scaffolding model aims to teach for empowerment, as it equips learners with learning strategies so that they can correct their own pronunciation mistakes and continue learning outside of class, which is one important key to success in L2 phonological acquisition. However, it is still the learners who decide whether to make use of the opportunities, new knowledge, models, resources and feedback to improve their skills. Therefore, it is imperative to understand learners' perceptions of what is beneficial for their learning (Couper, 2011; Tracey M. Derwing & Rossiter, 2002), hence the need for this research.

3.8 Studies on learners' perspectives on L2 pronunciation teaching and learning

Upon reviewing studies on the efficacy of L2 pronunciation instruction, Pardo (2004) reports that there is a contradiction between teachers' and learners' perspectives on pronunciation teaching. Whereas teachers show a tendency to consider pronunciation instruction difficult and to some extent, impossible to teach, students seem to adopt a more positive attitude. Unfortunately, the vast majority of this body of research has been done from the perspectives of researchers or teachers while learners' beliefs about the way teachers of L2 pronunciation should approach this skill have received hardly any attention to date (Alghazo, 2015a, p. 63). In fact, in the course of searching for relevant literature, I came across only six studies which examined different aspects of L2 pronunciation learning and

teaching from the learners' perspective. A closer look at these studies will help consolidate the rationale for the present thesis as well as clarify important issues related to its methodology. The following discussion will cover three topics: learners' view of L2 pronunciation, their perception of pronunciation learning, and their evaluation of pronunciation instruction.

3.8.1 The importance of pronunciation

Çakır and Baytar (2014) surveyed 58 students in a preparatory English class at Kastamonu University in Turkey to find out their attitudes towards the importance of pronunciation in language learning. The researchers used a pronunciation attitude inventory to collect learners' opinions. However, this instrument is quite simple as it consists of only 12 statements, and there is no opportunity for open-ended responses. The findings are quite straightforward and therefore are interpreted simplistically: it is reported that learners acknowledged the important role of pronunciation in achieving mutual intelligibility, were very motivated and hopeful about their pronunciation and felt confident about being able to attain good accents without imitating native speakers (p. 106).

Apart from the superficial interpretation of the data, the authors also made a couple of conclusions which have little or even no justification. First, the claim that pronunciation "needs to be specifically handled by the instructors throughout the teaching process" (p. 99) is neither the answer to any research questions raised by the study nor an implication from any questions in the questionnaire. In fact, only item 5 in the questionnaire, which was positively responded to by 69%

of the participants, is in some way related to instruction (*I believe more emphasis should be given to proper pronunciation in class.*). Second, the fact that nearly 90% of the respondents stated they wanted to improve their skills and about 80% of them believed they could improve their skills does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that learners “have a great tendency to be able to use the target language not only syntactically but also phonetically” (p. 106).

Derwing and Rossiter (2002) studied 100 adult immigrant learners from 19 different native language groups who attended an ESL program at a local college in Canada. One of the research aims is to understand their perceptions of their pronunciation difficulties, which may harm communication. The authors interviewed the participants using both ordinal-scale questions and open-ended questions, with each session lasting from one to one and a half-hour. Findings show that 55 respondents perceived that pronunciation was a contributing factor to their communication problems, while about 70 of them admitted that people often had trouble understanding them or needed to ask them for repetition. Another finding is that the major problems they encountered were segmentals, not suprasegmentals like what many researchers assume. Actually, only 10% of the problems reported were related to prosody.

There are several lessons that I have learnt from the way Derwing and Rossiter (2002) conducted their study. First, a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions should be used to fully explore the responses. Second, it took them quite a long time to carry out each individual structured interview, and a semi-structured interview might take even longer. Therefore, I will need to plan the

length of the data collection in close accordance with the schedule of the course under research. Finally, the open-ended questions need to be carefully devised if I would like to gain insights into how successful learners improve their pronunciation skills. The questions used by these authors worked well in encouraging the respondents to describe their own strategies and activities for learning, which set good examples for me in developing my interview questions.

3.8.2 Pronunciation learning

The study by Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999) investigated two groups of university students from Spain, one speaking Spanish and the other speaking Basque. It aimed to compare their awareness of the difficulty and importance of different features of English pronunciation, their beliefs about factors that may affect its acquisition, and their attitudes towards English accents. 86 participants completed a background questionnaire and a specific questionnaire on awareness, beliefs and attitudes. Findings from the quantitative data reveal interesting issues regarding learners' views of English phonological acquisition.

Despite their different language backgrounds, both groups perceived English segmentals and suprasegmentals as equally important and difficult. They considered contact with native speakers and ear training the most influential factors in the acquisition of English pronunciation. Furthermore, both groups tended to share the same awareness of the difficulty of and attitudes towards different L2 accents independently of their L1, stating that British accents were easier and more favourable than American English. The two groups only differ in

that the Spanish group associated the importance of segmentals with ear training and proficiency whereas the Basque counterpart considered interaction with native speakers more influential.

Though conducted nearly 20 years ago, Cenoz and Lecumberri's (1999) conceptualization of the value of learners' view still works well to substantiate the rationale of the current study. The quantitative research method has helped produce an overview of learners' beliefs about English pronunciation learning. However, the scope of research is limited to an initial stage, just revealing learners' awareness of their difficulty in learning. The quantitative approach could not lead to an understanding of why learners are having problems and how they are handling such problems.

In another study, Chongning (2009) claims to have conducted his research from the learners' perspective to help English teachers better understand their students' struggles, their attitudes towards pronunciation teaching as well their needs (p. 38). One of the conclusions he made is students perceived suprasegmentals to be important to fluency and communication, which did not agree with the findings from Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999). Chongning's study has drawn a lot of my attention as his work and mine address three similar concerns: useful ways for learners to improve English pronunciation, their difficulties in learning, and their views of the available pronunciation instruction. However, a critical examination of his methodology, data collection and analysis and discussion has alerted me to the following issues.

First of all, the research aims seem to be quite ambitious as he wanted to find the answers to the following six questions all at once.

1. What is the learners' attitudes towards learning pronunciation?
2. What are efficient and effective ways to improve pronunciation?
3. What do the L2 learners think of pronunciation teaching at school?
4. What do they think of their pronunciation?
5. What problems do they have in their learning of pronunciation?
6. How do they improve their pronunciation?

As can be seen, these questions pertain to a number of aspects such as attitudinal factors, learning activities and strategies, the efficacy of instruction, and self-assessment. With his selection and development of research instruments, which will be discussed shortly, these broad questions might not have been satisfactorily addressed.

Besides the concern regarding the research questions, there is also confusion about the author's selection of participants. He interviewed eleven ESL students from eleven different L1 backgrounds who were studying in California and one Chinese student studying in Shanghai. He then surveyed 100 EFL students from a university in China. There is virtually no explanation for such a diverse group of participants. In fact, either the scope of his study is too broad, involving learners of English all around the world, or he is not aware of the fact that the different L1 backgrounds, as well as research contexts, may seriously affect the outcomes.

One of the biggest problems with Chongning's (2009) research is the instruments he used. The interviews were very short since the students were

asked only three questions, two of which were just a paraphrase of research questions 5 and 6. No elaboration was made to further explore the responses. As a result, a look at the transcripts shows that the twelve participants gave very similar general responses, which means that the study did not achieve what it aimed to achieve. In addition, the list of learning activities given in the questionnaire is quite superficial as it mentions only a few common ideas such as doing drills, reading aloud, listening to music, and watching movies and TV. The reactions to these options may not inform us how students are actually learning pronunciation.

Last but not least, most of the recommendations were not drawn from the findings; they may have been made from just the author's experience and intuition.

3.8.3 Role of instruction

Alghazo (2015a) claims that the literature has mainly focused on exploring teacher beliefs about pronunciation teaching and relating their beliefs to teaching practices in the classroom. Therefore, he conducted his study on 71 EFL students at a university college in Saudi Arabia to examine their perspectives on the role of curriculum design and teaching materials in the development of their English pronunciation. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire which consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

Findings from the data reveal several interesting points. First, students reported their dissatisfaction with both the amount of instruction given and the balance of features covered. About 86% of them preferred to learn only aspects

that cause communication problems. Moreover, a great majority of the learners would like their teachers not only to use a mix of both L1 and L2 in giving instruction but also to provide immediate corrective feedback. Finally, results were divided when students were asked about their preference for the nativeness of the teacher: 52% preferred non-native teachers for their ability to better explain the lessons and an understanding of learners' problems while 45% favored native speakers for their originality and assumingly standard accents.

Alghazo (2015a) offers researchers and L2 teachers two important implications. On one hand, statistics from the study indicate that very low numbers of participants were unsure of their answers or did not respond to the questions. This shows that learners are willing to voice their opinions and provide solutions to existing problems. On the other hand, although these students were at a low proficiency level (under the intermediate level, as mentioned by the author, p. 65), they seemed to know clearly what worked and what did not work for them in terms of course design, teaching styles and language of instruction. Hence, their perspectives on these issues are indeed helpful in determining the teaching approach.

Henrichsen and Stephens (2015)'s study is one in which different types of data produced contradictory results. The authors investigated 12 adult learners from different L1 backgrounds who were enrolled in an ESL pronunciation course. Two instruments were utilized to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. First, the participants' degrees of accentedness and comprehensibility were assessed based on their pre-and post-course speech samples. The quantitative analysis

shows that there was no significant improvement in these aspects. Then, learners were asked to respond to ten open-ended questions in an end-of-semester written exam. The qualitative analysis reveals that even though there was a lack of progress in their performance, learners still found the course beneficial in terms of the increased awareness, heightened confidence, improved listening skills, and gains in pronunciation learning strategies (p. 197).

According to Morley (1991), many teachers would have given up on pronunciation instruction had they seen such disappointing outcomes in learners' performance a few decades ago. However, Henrichsen and Stephens (2015)'s findings have delivered quite an encouraging message. They explained that the length of the course (over a single semester of 15 weeks) may not have been enough for any statistically significant change to be made. What matters is students appreciated the benefits of instruction that are likely to extend beyond the end of the course: their confidence, self-awareness, motivation, and strategies for continuing improvement. These are the key to success in L2 pronunciation learning in the long term.

Another lesson I have learnt from Henrichsen and Stephens (2015) is the method they chose to analyse the qualitative data. Two levels of analysis were done: one for the identification of the overall trends and the other for the specification of responses to each of the ten open-ended questions. In this way, key themes can easily be recognized and discussed thoroughly.

3.9 Conclusion

The previous chapter has provided insights into L2 pronunciation learning as well as identified gaps in research on learners' view of this aspect through a review of key theories of learning and factors that may influence success in L2 phonological acquisition. The current chapter extends the theoretical framework to the field of pronunciation teaching, establishing the grounds for the exploration of the last issue related to teachers' impact on L2 learners' success in pronunciation learning. Also, several previous studies have been examined to confirm the need for my research. Important points are summarized below for reference.

First and foremost, it has been largely agreed that “pronunciation instruction should be based on learners' needs, directed by an understanding of the purposes for which and the context in which the language is likely to be used” (Gilner, 2008, p. 94). The question is, if learners' views are so important, why “studies into learner beliefs about L2 pronunciation teaching are missing from mainstream literature on pronunciation teaching and learning” (Baker & Murphy, 2011). To fill this gap in the literature, my thesis attempts to listen to learners' voices. Current trends in teaching approach, techniques, and activities are being scrutinized by the learners to determine the extent to which they hinder or facilitate L2 pronunciation learning.

Second, if success in L2 pronunciation learning requires time and efforts outside of class to be attained, it is the right and responsibility of the learners to select the techniques and activities for their self-study. Teachers' presentation and implementation of certain techniques and activities in class do not necessarily lead to their use after class. Moreover, learners' awareness of a technique or activity

and willingness to use it does not guarantee its effectiveness in the learning process. What is worth our consideration is to understand why learners choose a technique or an activity, how they apply the technique, or what they actually do during the activity. So, by embracing such understanding, teachers can encourage learners to do what they feel comfortable with and what they think can help them move forward, even without teachers' presence. This is how motivation comes into play for sustained learning to happen.

Third, even though measured improvement (e.g. pre-and post-test scores) may not be immediately apparent, pronunciation instruction may bring other benefits such as knowledge of learning strategies, confidence, motivation, just to name a few (Henrichsen & Stephens, 2015). These are all important factors contributing to potential success in the long term. This helps to justify my study's approach to examining the impact of pronunciation instruction – an approach in which learners' performances would not be measured but their opinions would be asked for.

Finally, as could be seen in some previous studies, the selection of a certain research method may determine whether or not the study can achieve what it claims to achieve. While a quantitative approach could help identify overall trends or its data could act as stimuli, a qualitative approach should be used to collect insightful information, exploring the issues further. However, developing instruments for the qualitative method, here being the in-depth interviews, is going to be a huge challenge. Such developments will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

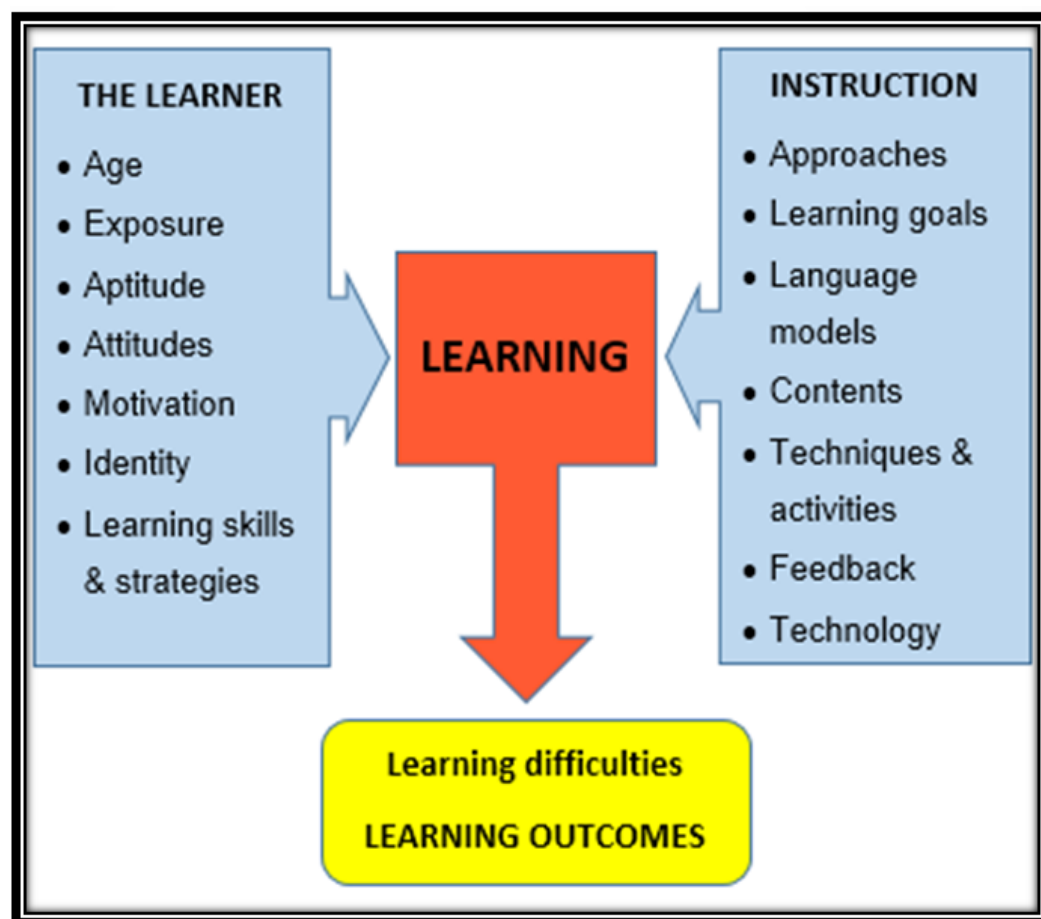
3.10 The theoretical framework

As has been discussed in the previous two chapters, this thesis taps into the concepts, models, and theories related to what can affect the L2 pronunciation learning process, thereby impacting the learning outcome. Figure 4.1 below provides a visual summary of the different factors that operate. This theoretical framework helps to define the methodology as well as guide the discussions of the research results.

In general, the L2 learner's qualities such as his or her age, exposure to the target language, learning aptitude, attitude toward L2 pronunciation learning, learning motivation, identity in the context of L2 learning, and learning skills and strategies will contribute to how successful he or she can be in developing the L2 pronunciation. The learner is also influenced by the teacher and his or her instruction, involving the teaching approach, learning goal, language model, teaching content and focus as well as teaching techniques and activities and the use of feedback and technology in the classroom. The learner-related factors and teacher-related factors will operate simultaneously in the learning process and how well the learner can make use of the resources available to overcome certain learning difficulties will determine the level of achievement.

Figure 4.1.

The theoretical framework



CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to address three research questions mentioned in the Introduction, which will be cited below for ease of reference.

1. What difficulties do Vietnamese learners encounter in learning English pronunciation?
2. To what extent do teachers facilitate or hinder the process of learning pronunciation?
3. What do successful Vietnamese learners do to improve their English pronunciation?

This mixed-methods study consists of a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. In the former, a survey was administered to first-year students at a university in Vietnam to partially address the first two research questions as well as to gain input for developing the instrument used in the qualitative strand, which was an interview. In the latter, semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants purposefully selected from the same population as the survey to further explain the survey data and especially to address the last research question.

The current chapter describes the research methodology employed to address the questions raised by the study. The first section provides rationales for the adoption of a pragmatic paradigm, which entails the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The application of a mixed-methods approach

and the sequential explanatory design will then be justified. There will be a comprehensive account of the research design, including the instruments and sampling strategies, and the research procedures will be explained with the aid of a diagram. The last two sections will focus on the assessment of validity and reliability and ethical considerations.

4.2 Pragmatism as a research paradigm of the current study

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) and Creswell (2014) identify four worldviews which are used in research: postpositivism, constructivism, transformative/participatory worldviews and pragmatism. The postpositivist world view is made up of determinism, reductionism, detailed observations, and measures of variables, and theory verification. This paradigm is often associated with quantitative approaches. The constructivist worldview is built on the understanding of phenomena by different participants who subjectively speak from meanings shaped by social interaction with others or from their own personal histories. This form of inquiry, often used for theory generation, is typically associated with qualitative approaches. Another paradigm that is also often associated with qualitative approaches is the transformative or participatory worldview. Political concerns, empowerment, the collaboration between the researcher and other individuals, and the improvement of society are the essential elements of this worldview.

The final paradigm – pragmatism – focuses on the consequence of actions. It is problem-centered, pluralistic and oriented toward real-world practice (Creswell

& Plano Clark, 2011). Since it is not committed to any single system of philosophy and reality, researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures that best suit their studies. In other words, “pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis” (Creswell, 2014, p11).

In terms of research paradigm, this research was conducted from a pragmatic perspective as ‘designs and methods are selected based on ‘what works’ and answering the stated research questions” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 279). All elements of a pragmatic worldview regarding ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology could be identified in the study. First of all, there exist both singular and multiple realities (ontology). As a researcher and a teacher of English, I hold my personal view of what problems my students may encounter in learning pronunciation and what can be done to help them improve their skills. The hypotheses were tested quantitatively in the survey. However, the main objective of my research is for me to listen to individual students sharing their views of what may affect the learning process and how effective learning can take place, and thereby, to see if there are any clashes and discontinuities between their views and the teachers’ views.

The above discussion on ontological elements of this study suggests that multiple worldviews be adopted due to the research design employed. In carrying out the survey, I was making attempts to identify trends regarding learner factors (motivation, identity, attitudes, as discussed in Chapter 2) and role of instruction (teaching approaches, techniques, feedback, as reviewed in Chapter 3) in L2

pronunciation learning. As such, a post-positivist world view was employed at this stage. However, in the second stage where I interviewed the subjects to further explain the survey results and to address research question three, the research paradigm changed. In attempting to elicit multiple meanings from the students, to gain a deeper understanding of how they learnt pronunciation, and to possibly generate a theory of successful learning, I had shifted from a post-positivist worldview into a constructivist worldview.

Secondly, there is an aim at practicality in data collection (epistemology) when I had to consider important issues such as how to obtain a reliable sample for the quantitative study, how to get the opportunity to deliver a lesson to that group of learners, the recording of which would be used as a stimulus in the interviews, what type of participants to be selected for the interviews to effectively address the research questions and how to accurately identify those participants. The decisions, thus, were made on the condition that the plans were feasible and the participants were accessible. Yet, this is not to say that the strategy used was all convenience sampling. It will be clarified later that multiple sampling strategies were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

Thirdly, multiple stances are included in the study (axiology). In carrying out the survey, I was independent of what was being studied as the participants answered the questions on their own. However, I was immersed in the issue under study during the interviews and also actively discussed my biased perspectives through my interpretation of the responses of the interviewees. Therefore, careful actions such as member checking, peer-debriefing, and descriptive adequacy,

were taken to reduce the influence of my biases on conducting the studies and analyzing the data. These actions will be described in more detail later.

Finally, data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively in my study (methodology). In the first phase, a questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended questions was employed to collect survey data (now referred to as “quantitative data”). The results from its analysis would be fed into the questions used in the interviews conducted in the second phase (data from this phase referred to as “qualitative data”). The integration of the two methods, or “mixing”, took place at both the qualitative data collection and overall interpretations.

4.3 The use of mixed methods

The previous discussion on pragmatism has laid the foundations for the application of mixed methods, which Hesse-Biber (2010) defines as an approach to research in which both quantitative and qualitative data are used to answer a particular question or set of questions. This general definition, however, does not substantially spell out the core characteristics of mixed methods research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) provide another definition which, in combining methods, a philosophy, and a research design orientation, is aimed at highlighting the key components of this approach. According to this definition, mixed-method researchers

- collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data persuasively and rigorously

- mix the two forms of data concurrently or sequentially or embed one within the other
- give priority to one or both forms of data
- use these procedures in a single or multiple phases of a program of study
- combine the procedures into specific designs

In light of this understanding of mixed methods research, a working definition which applies to this study could be devised as follows.

- Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed persuasively and rigorously based on the three research questions.
- The two forms of data are mixed sequentially.
- Priority is given to qualitative data.
- These procedures are used in a single study and are combined into an explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

Researchers need to be mindful that not all situations justify the use of mixed methods and thus they need to identify the purpose(s) for employing this approach. Greene et al. (1989) identify five broad reasons for using mixed methods while Bryman (2006) provides a detailed list of sixteen reasons based on researchers' practices. Besides, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) describe the types of research problems that fit mixed methods. It is also noted that mixed methods studies may make use of multiple reasons for combining methods (Bryman, 2006). In consideration of those prominent works, I would like to provide justifications for the use of mixed methods in my research.

First of all, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 8), a mixed-methods approach needs to be employed because one data source may be insufficient. This reason is termed “complementary” by Greene et al. (1989) and “completeness/illustration” by Bryman (2006). In the case of my study, quantitative data alone may result in the lack of understanding of the individual learners’ views of how learning happens while qualitative data alone might reduce the ability to generalize the results. Findings from the survey helped to sketch an overview of the factors, namely attitudes, motivation, identity, learning difficulties, and instruction that may affect the outcome of pronunciation learning. However, it has been pointed out in the previous two chapters that teachers and learners often differently perceive the role of such factors in pronunciation learning, and little research has been done from the learner perspective. Therefore, to gain insights into how those factors influence the learning process, how effective learning actually happens, and what successful learners do to achieve such results, individual views needed to be listened to. Hence, the combined data would work better to tell the complete story of how Vietnamese people can learn English pronunciation more effectively.

Second, the results of the quantitative study may provide an incomplete understanding of the research problems and there is a need for further explanation, which is a reason identified by both Bryman (2006) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). In my research, a survey was conducted to identify common problems encountered by Vietnamese learners in learning English pronunciation and the extent to which certain teaching activities and techniques may influence the

learning outcomes. Yet, I realized that I needed to find out why they had such problems, what they suggested for overcoming those problems, why they perceived the role of instruction in the way they did, and what else they expected from the teacher. All of these concerns could be best addressed through qualitative interviews.

Finally, instrument development is another reason for the use of mixed methods in my study. Although part of the set of questions used in the interviews was scripted even before the survey was conducted, the remaining had to wait until a general analysis of the quantitative data had been done. At this stage, common learning difficulties, shared beliefs regarding the role of instruction as well as discrepancies (if any) in the responses were identified and then fed into the questions, which would be raised to the interviewees. In addition, according to Greene et al. (1989), the development purpose also encompasses the task of sampling. While the quantitative study targeted a large population of learners who were taking the pronunciation course at the time, the interviewees were purposefully selected from the same group of learners, which was intended to increase the validity of the study through the consistent nature of the researched population, on one hand, and the follow-up of their prior thinking, on the other hand. It is also worth mentioning here that although Bryman (2006) considers instrument development a reason for mixing methods, he actually refers to contexts in which qualitative research is employed to develop a questionnaire and scale items. Therefore, his development purpose is not listed in this paper as a relevant rationale.

To sum up, a mixed-methods approach offered me advantages such as offsetting the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research, providing more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone, and encouraging the use of multiple worldviews and tools of data collection. Nevertheless, the selection of such a methodology also posed a number of challenges including the required skills for collecting and analyzing both forms of data as well as the time and resources needed to do those tasks.

4.4 The use of the explanatory sequential design

Recently, a number of sequential mixed methods studies have been done in the field of L2 pronunciation teaching and learning. Among those, Chongning (2009), Yunus, Salehi, and Amini (2016), and Lee (2016) employed an exploratory design in which the qualitative strand preceded the quantitative strand, and thus quantitative findings were used to generalize qualitative findings. In contrast, other studies adopted an explanatory design in which the researcher first conducts a quantitative phase and follows up with a qualitative phase. This is also the design that I implemented in my project. However, before discussing the rationales for my decision on research design, I would like to briefly review some previous studies in which a similar approach was utilized.

In three recent projects, the researchers began their work with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. First of all, seven learners from an ESL writing course participated in McCrocklin's (2014) study in which the changes in

their beliefs of autonomy and empowerment over time were measured via a survey, and then further explanations of such beliefs were gained through interviews. In their research on learners' perspectives on the benefits of pronunciation instruction, Henrichsen and Stephens (2015) first quantitatively measured 12 participants' comprehensibility and accentedness before and after they took a pronunciation course. Then qualitative data were collected via students' responses to ten open-ended questions regarding the benefits of taking the course. In Crabtree's (2016) study, 17 international student language learners filled out a survey about their perception of enjoyment and improvement in using voiceovers of TED Talks as a pronunciation-improvement tool. They also underwent exit interviews that were a follow-up to the information provided in the survey.

My research is similar to the above studies to the extent that the quantitative strand was conducted prior to the qualitative strand. Nevertheless, a closer look at these studies reveals that two of them (Crabtree, 2016; McCrocklin, 2014) gave priority to quantitative data; qualitative data were employed for a better understanding of findings from the surveys. The other (Henrichsen & Stephens, 2015) emphasized both forms of data. My study, however, adopted a different approach, prioritising qualitative data over quantitative data, which Hesse-Biber (2010) defines as a qualitative approach to mixed methods. In her definition, "a qualitative approach privileges qualitative methods, with the quantitative methods component playing an auxiliary role in a mixed methods framework" (p. 64).

Hesse-Biber (2010) identifies a number of reasons for mixing methods from a qualitative approach, two of which could be used to justify my research design. Firstly, results from the quantitative study can be examined to generate new research questions that can be addressed in a follow-up qualitative study. In my case, I supposed there would be shared beliefs among the respondents regarding their problems in learning pronunciation and their perceptions of the teacher's role. However, detecting the similarities in their views was not enough to help find solutions to their difficulties or inform teachers of what needs to be done for improvement in their teaching. There was a high demand for gaining a deeper understanding of those issues. Additionally, since the most important research objective is to find out critical success factors in learning English pronunciation (as stated in research question 3), I would like to see if there were different trends between strong and weak learners in how they were affected by learner factors, how they identified their difficulties, and how they evaluated the instruction provided. The differences would be singled out and discussed in the qualitative interviews.

Secondly, "conducting a quantitative study first can provide options for enhancing the validity and reliability of qualitative findings" (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 66). In my study, I drew the sample for my interviews directly from the survey sample and also asked several similar questions in both the survey and interviews. These acts were intended to address issues of reliability and validity, which will be discussed in more detail later.

Although Creswell (2014; 2011) very often attributes priority to the quantitative strand when it precedes the qualitative strand in a mixed-methods study, the example – Ivankova and Stick (2007) - he quotes to illustrate the explanatory sequential design is one that emphasizes the follow-up qualitative study. Ivankova and Stick provide important rationales for employing such an approach, which I can also capitalize on as justifications for my choice of research design. These researchers studied the issue of students' persistence in a doctoral program in educational leadership. They aimed to identify factors contributing to the participants' persistence in the program as well as explore their views about those factors. They first administered an online survey to measure the nine variables, five of which were identified as significant predictors of the levels of persistence. Qualitative data were then collected from multiple sources including in-depth semi-structured interviews, electronic follow-up interviews, written responses, and documents to gain insights into those five factors' influence on students' persistence in the program.

In explaining their choice of a mixed-methods approach, Ivankova and Stick (2007) give reasons similar to mine: neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient to capture the trends and details of situations, but when combined, they complement each other and provide a more complete picture of the research problem. Upon justifying the use of the explanatory sequential design, they state that the quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem while the qualitative data and its analysis refined and explained the statistical results by exploring the participants' views in more depth. Finally, they

also stress that the priority in the study was given to the qualitative strand because it focused on in-depth explanations of the results obtained in the quantitative strand and involved extensive data collection.

My study has employed the explanatory sequential mixed methods for exactly the same reasons, which have been discussed earlier, but which will be summarized again here for ease of understanding. To start with, the quantitative strand needed to be conducted first so that general trends concerning learning problems and learners' perceptions of the role of instruction could be recognized, major issues in need of further explanation could be singled out, and most importantly, shared beliefs among strong learners versus weak learners could be identified. The qualitative strand was then conducted, on the one hand, to yield a deeper understanding of the problems and students' perceptions as well as their causes. On the other hand, this phase focused on finding out the differences between successful learners and less successful ones regarding their learning motivation and attitudes, learning strategies, techniques and activities used to learn and overcome difficulties, and views of instruction, thereby pointing towards factors critical to the success in learning English pronunciation. Although the instrument only involved semi-structured interviews, the volume of data collected was extensive due to the number of issues discussed, and thus the length of each conversation. This research intent commanded the use of an explanatory sequential mixed methods design in which priority was given to the qualitative phase.

The quantitative and qualitative phases were connected when the eight participants in the interviews were selected from the survey respondents and then a substantial part of the interview protocol was developed based on the results from the statistical data from the first phase. Mixing, or the integration of two methods, also took place during the discussion of the outcomes of the whole study. The entire procedure will be defined and a diagram given in section 4.7 after the subsequent descriptions of the two research components.

4.5 The quantitative study: The survey

There are several reasons why a survey was employed in the quantitative strand of my project. Firstly, according to Cohen et al. (2007), “surveys can be exploratory, in which no assumptions or models are postulated, and in which relationships and patterns are explored” (p. 207). Besides, descriptive surveys can be used to describe data on variables of interest, which suits the aim of the quantitative research in the current study. Secondly, surveys usually combine nominal data on participants’ backgrounds and relevant personal details with other scales and thus are useful for collecting factual information, data on attitudes and preferences, behavior, and experiences (Cohen et al., 2007), which is exactly the instrument that my study needs. Thirdly, surveys can appeal to generalizability and make statements which are supported by large data banks (ibid.). In light of such rationales, the survey was conducted for the following purposes:

- collecting data economically and efficiently
- generating numerical data, which can be processed statistically

- providing descriptive information
- gathering standardized information through the same instruments for all participants
- making generalizations about, and observing patterns of responses in, the target population

4.5.1 The participants

The participants in the quantitative study were first-year English majors at a multi-disciplinary university based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. At the time of the study, they were all enrolled in the compulsory Pronunciation Practice course delivered in the second semester starting in late February 2018. In this nine-week course, the classes met once a week and each session lasted about four hours and the students were supposed to be at an Intermediate or B1 High (according to the CEFR) level of proficiency. There are two main reasons why these students were recruited for my project. First, as they were receiving intensive instruction on pronunciation, they would have a better understanding of the issues related to pronunciation learning (e.g. terminology, learning activities, teaching techniques, and so on). As a result, it would be more convenient for them to answer the questionnaire, and their responses would also be more relevant. Second, with a focus on and an aim at improving their pronunciation, these students were expected to be more interested in the research and thus give more reliable responses, which helped to collect insightful data. This group of participants can represent Vietnamese adults who are taking English courses at either a university

or a language center since the majority of them completed high school with similar levels of proficiency, as required by the Ministry of Education and Training.

It should be clarified here that I was not examining a sample; I was studying the whole population, which was the 2017-2018 intake of the bachelor's degree program in English to investigate how they learnt pronunciation. According to the figures released by the University's Office of Academic Affairs, a total of 167 students registered for the course. However, seven of them did not attend the class while three others refused to take part, so I ended up with 157 respondents.

4.5.2 The instrument: Questionnaire

As surveys typically rely on large-scale data, a questionnaire was developed to gather the required data. This instrument was selected because it is widely used and useful for collecting information and then producing structured data. It can also be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often comparatively straightforward to analyse (Wilson & McLean, 1994, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007).

The development of the questionnaire was driven by the first two research questions

1. What difficulties do Vietnamese learners encounter in learning English pronunciation?
2. To what extent do teachers facilitate or hinder the process of learning pronunciation?

and the review of the literature presented in the previous two chapters. There are three parts in the questionnaire: the first one addresses the difficulties that the surveyed students may encounter in learning English pronunciation, the second aims to investigate their perceptions of the role of the teacher in their learning, and the last one helps to collect demographic information on the participants.

First of all, the key concepts were identified. For the first part, they were pronunciation learning skills and strategies, learner autonomy, attitudes, identity, motivation, and the areas of learning difficulty, all of which I discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For the second part, the concepts included teaching approaches, learning goals and models, teacher's role, teaching content, techniques, tools, technologies, materials, and feedback, which were discussed in Chapter 3. After the variables were identified, an item pool was created and the questions were either newly developed, or adapted from established questionnaires, which had been used and thus validated (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010; Oppenheim, 1992). It should also be noted here that the scales used were varied across different sections because I wanted to get the best responses from the participants. Specific reasons for such variation will be provided in the following sections.

Part 1

The first section, which is about learner factors, consists of three sub-sections, the first of which measures learning motivation using a semantic differential scale. Participants are asked to rate the importance of six motivational factors in learning English pronunciation. Items 1, 2, and 5 were borrowed from

Smit (2002) and the remaining were adapted from Sardegna et al. (2014). Moreover, items 1, 2, and 6 were classified as intrinsic motivation while the others were categorized as extrinsic motivation.

Learner attitudes towards pronunciation learning and identity-related issues are investigated in sub-section B. According to Oppenheim (1992), attitudes should be measured in three dimensions: beliefs, feelings and intents. Among the six items aimed at pronunciation learning attitudes, the first two (7 and 8) are about beliefs, the next two (9 and 10) about feelings, and the last two (11 and 12) about intents. I developed four of the statements (9-12) and adapted the others from Elliot (1995a). As regards identity, the focus is placed on whether learners would feel comfortable if they had a new identity through speaking a native accent. Items 13 and 14 are used to address this issue. A four-point Likert scale is employed here, and in some other sections, for two reasons: to vary the scales used for different questions and to discourage the participants from opting for the middle score instead of spending time determining a more accurate response. Moreover, Bradburn et al. (2004) also argue that “for attitude-related work, four to five scale points may be quite sufficient to stimulate a reasonably reliable indication of response direction” (p. 331).

The last sub-section looks into the aspects in which learners may find it difficult to learn. To create a list of areas relevant to my participants’ knowledge to prevent their confusion in understanding the questions, I examined their course outline to see what would be taught in the course. Besides, findings from previous studies on common pronunciation mistakes made by Vietnamese learners (Ha,

2005; N. Nguyen, 2002; Thi Ha Nguyen, 1998; Thi Hoa Nguyen, 2002) were also taken into consideration to ensure all problematic areas would be included. As a result of this review, six aspects were identified; they include vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, final sounds, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, and linking. A semantic differential scale is used in this question. Moreover, an open question is also given at the end of the section to allow the participants to share with the researcher which features they think are particularly hard for them to acquire and why they believe that to be the case.

The second section of Part 1 deals with learning skills, strategies and learner autonomy. Sub-section A asks the participants to evaluate their own abilities in learning pronunciation using a semantic differential scale. As discussed in Chapter 2, motor skills, critical listening, cognitive and metacognitive skills are needed for L2 pronunciation learning. There are six items, with item 24 dealing with motor skills, items 25 and 26 with cognitive skills, and the remaining with metacognitive skills. It should be noted that items 25-28 also target critical listening as this skill does involve the ability to recognize contrasts between sounds, to evaluate one's own performance and to identify potential problems.

In sub-section B, the participants are asked for their responses to issues related to learner autonomy. There are four items, two of which are rephrased for internal consistency check, making a total of six items (30-35). A four-point Likert scale is used and all the questions were developed based on the definition of learner autonomy by Holec (1981), which was reviewed in Chapter 2.

Sub-section C concerns the strategies that students use for learning pronunciation, specifically what is common or missing in their strategy inventory. As I have previously mentioned in the first review chapter, Oxford (1990) divides these strategies into six different categories: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. In my set of statements, there are two (36 and 37) for memory strategies, five (38-41 and 44) for cognitive, one (42) for compensation, one (47) for social and three (43, 45 and 46) for metacognitive strategies. I decided to leave out affective items (for example “I try to pay more attention to my pronunciation if my pronunciation is appreciated by others.” (Akyol, 2013, p. 1461)) as I thought they should be categorized under motivational factor. Among the 12 items, three of them (40, 42, and 44) were borrowed from Eckstein (2007) while the others were adapted from Peterson (2000). A three-point Likert scale is employed to ask the participants about the frequency with which they utilise the strategies and the descriptive terms used are *Never*, *Sometimes*, and *Regularly*. I opted for the term *Regularly* instead of *Always* because the latter is too extreme and does not make sense in some situations, for example, items 40 or 47.

Part 2

The second part of the questionnaire, which addresses students’ perceptions of issues related to English pronunciation instruction, also consists of two sections; one section deals with teaching approaches, learning goals, models, and the teacher’s role and the other focuses on the use of techniques, tools, technologies, materials and feedback.

In section I, the first sub-section aims to find out what teaching approach is used in the pronunciation course. There are six items divided into three pairs, each of which is dedicated to one of the three approaches reviewed in Chapter 3: the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach and the integrative approach. The participants are asked to simply choose an answer *Yes* or *No*.

In designing the second sub-section, I aimed to find out whether nativeness or intelligibility is more preferable as a learning goal for this group of learners. Moreover, I also hoped to understand whether the teacher influences the students in setting a goal for learning pronunciation. The participants are required to state if the six statements are true for them by selecting *Yes* or *No*. However, anticipating that some participants may not remember exactly, or even do not know whether their teacher has done the activity for reasons such as absence from class or lack of concentration, I included the third option: *D/K* (Don't Know).

In developing the third sub-section, I wanted to find out how the participants value the existence of the non-native speaker teacher in their class. Questions 60, 62 and 63 were created based on the arguments presented in Chapter 3 regarding why non-native models should be included for pronunciation instruction. A four-point Likert scale is also used in this question.

Sub-section D seeks information on the role of the teacher in the pronunciation class. The five items were devised based on Morley's (1991) definition of the teacher as a "pronunciation coach". In responding to these items, the participants are asked to tell the researcher how often their teacher does

certain activities in class. A three-point Likert scale is employed and the term *Regularly* is used instead of *Always* for the same reason discussed earlier.

The teaching content is attended to in sub-section E when information on the amount of instruction dedicated to different aspects of pronunciation is probed using a semantic differential scale. It is explained clearly to the respondents that the amount of instruction in this case means the amount of time and practice the teacher provides in each aspect. I used the same eight items as in the question regarding the areas of learning difficulty, being vowels, consonants, consonants clusters, final sounds, word stress, sentence stress, intonation and linking.

In section II, the first sub-section, which consists of 21 items, asks the participants to evaluate the use of different techniques, tools, technologies, and feedback in their classes. Among items 77 to 90, there are three about tools (78, 82 and 88), two about technologies (89 and 90) and the remaining about techniques and activities used in the classroom. These items were identified from the review of the papers by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), Goodwin (2014) and Rogerson-Revell (2011). The last seven items in this question (91-97) are devoted to the availability of teacher's feedback, specifically when, to whom, and how it is given. A semantic differential scale is employed, but the *N/A* (Not Applicable) option is also included in case a certain activity is not used in the surveyed classes.

In sub-section B, the participants are asked first to give information on the materials taught in class and then to evaluate the pronunciation course. There are four items for the first task and three items for the second and a four-point Likert scale is used. In addition, an open question is given at the end to allow the students

to specify any benefits they have gained from as well as any other expectations they had of taking the pronunciation course.

Part 3

The last part of the questionnaire is intended to collect demographic information on the respondents. First of all, they are asked to provide their names, as the survey will be conducted on the test date and I will need to match the completed questionnaires with the test scores when they are available later. Then, information on their age and hometown is collected. Besides, the participants are also asked about their learning experience and exposure to English. This information will be useful in identifying any participants with irregularities (for example a different type of exposure to the L1 such as living overseas, or a different amount of instruction received such as attending other pronunciation courses). The identification of such special cases may lead to either more careful interpretation of the data or exclusion of their responses out of the database.

4.5.3 The initial pilot test

In the next stage, I conducted an initial pilot test for two purposes: first to try out the questions to get them right (Gillham, 2007, p. 35), and second to gain objective feedback on issues related to the layout of the questionnaire. I arranged a meeting with six colleagues of mine, one of whom is a lecturer at the university under study, two others are English instructors with at least five years of experience and the remaining three are very young teachers who just started their careers. A check-list adapted from Cohen et al. (2007) was used to guide the

conversation I had with my colleagues. The agenda included discussions on items in which they do not like the wording, items whose meanings are not 100% clear, items that are unnecessary, other things they think should be added, and their general comments on the presentation, the need for translation or glossary and the length of time needed to complete the questionnaire.

At the beginning of our meeting, I summarized the goals and stages of my research project and explained the role of the survey in that project. I then informed them what they were expected to do as well as what I would do with the outcomes of the meeting. I also explained how I would like them to work, being a think-aloud session. They were asked to talk aloud while completing the questionnaire. I also had a copy of the questionnaire and wrote down what they said next to the related questions. It was a bit quiet at first, but after a few minutes, they started to speak out not only what they thought about certain questions but also their comments on how relevant the issues were to their current teaching. They sometimes stopped and asked me for clarification. The think-aloud session took a total of 52 minutes and was followed by a fruitful discussion on both every single section and the overall presentation of the questionnaire.

This initial pilot test produced useful ideas for me to revise the instrument. There were several comments on the survey items which, according to my colleagues, might cause problems due to their wording or their lack of clarity in meaning. For instance, my colleagues suggested making it clear in item 13 that a person might like being mistaken for a native speaker due to his or her accent. For item 60, I was advised to clarify that it was their pronunciation teacher that I wanted

them to think about. There were also suggestions about making the presentation of the scales consistent, including an open question regarding what else the students expected to gain from the pronunciation course, and adding glosses for potentially difficult terms such as “drills, phonetic symbols, and consonant clusters”.

I considered all the feedback concerning my rationale for asking the questions, the language proficiency of the participants, and the existing literature on research methodology before deciding what changes to make to the questionnaire. All the items containing an understanding problem such as numbers 13 and 60 mentioned above were revised. The scales, however, were kept unchanged because I wanted to prevent the participants from getting used to them and thus giving careless responses. The result of this revision was a set of 105 items which would be piloted in the next two weeks. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire used in the initial pilot study.)

4.5.4 The final pilot study

At the end of December 2017, the final pilot study was conducted on 20 second-year English majors at the same university. These students had just taken the compulsory Pronunciation Practice course in the previous semester, so they were expected not only to easily understand the content of the questionnaire but also to remember what happened in the course, thereby providing relevant responses. The completed questionnaires were returned and some basic statistical analyses were done using SPSS to facilitate the revision of the

questionnaire as well as to envisage the direction of the qualitative interviews. Several issues were identified and actions were taken accordingly to solve the problems.

The reliability analysis

Since multi-item scales were used in many sections of the questionnaire, an internal consistency analysis was considered to examine the reliability of the items as a construct even though the actual analysis was done item by item. Several tests can be used to measure reliability in quantitative analysis, but one widely used coefficient is the Cronbach alpha, named after Lee Cronbach, who developed it in 1951. This coefficient can lie between 0 and 1, and the higher it is, the more reliable the scale is thought to be.

However, several issues should be clarified before the results can be reported here. First of all, this reliability test measures the homogeneity of a multi-item scale (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010; Saris & Gallhofer, 2014), meaning whether all the items within a scale measure the same target area. In my questionnaire, there are some sections in which several concepts are examined and each is gauged using only one or two items. This heterogeneity is not unusual, as Dörnyei (2007) explains that “because of the complexity of the second language acquisition process, L2 researchers typically want to measure many different areas in one questionnaire and therefore cannot use very long scales” (p. 207). Saris and Gallhofer (2014) also agree that “survey researchers are frequently using single questions as indicators for the concepts they want to measure” (p. 10). Besides, Cronbach's alpha depends not

only on the correlations of the items but also on the number of items within the scale (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 206). In other words, this coefficient can be increased by adding more items and thereby lengthening the questionnaire, which is inadvisable for my study. Therefore, I decided not to run this reliability test on such sections, namely I-A, I-B, II-C in Part 1, and I-A, I-B, I-C, I-D, and II-B in Part 2 of the questionnaire.

Secondly, my survey was conducted for an exploratory purpose. In the questionnaire, even though a number of items were borrowed or adapted from previous research, no complete set of questions was taken from established studies. Moreover, I developed the remaining items from the theoretical framework discussed in the two literature review chapters. Therefore, the questionnaire should be considered a newly-developed one, and the value of the internal consistency coefficient that I looked forward to is ≥ 0.60 , which is justified by many researchers. For instance, Dörnyei (2007) and Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) claim that if the Cronbach alpha of a scale does not reach 0.60, this should sound warning bells. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) also suggest a guideline in which an alpha lower than 0.60 represents unacceptably low reliability. In addition, Berthoud (2000, as cited in Bryman, 2012) writes that a minimum level of 0.60 is “good”.

Table 4.1 describes the values of Cronbach alpha calculated on the sections in which unidimensional scales were employed. However, arising issues and their solutions will be presented later in the revision of each section.

Table 4.1

Cronbach alpha value of unidimensional scales

Part	Section	Target concept	Number of items	Cronbach α
1	I-C	Potential learning difficulties	8	0.59
1	II-A	Pronunciation learning skills	6	0.56
1	II-B	Autonomy	6	0.57
2	I-E	Learning contents	8	0.72
2	II-A	Teaching techniques	14	0.88
2	II-A	Feedback	7	0.67

The descriptive statistical analysis

I also attempted to examine some descriptive statistics to see if there were any issues in the responses so that modifications could be done for improvement. Frequency, mean, and median were calculated for each section. This trial analysis did reveal some important problems related to the inclusion of certain items and the wording of some others, which I will discuss in the next section.

The revision of the questionnaire content

In section I-A, item 1 was left blank by two respondents. As it is the very first item on the list, it is very unlikely that the respondents forgot to answer it. I tended to think that they might have thought pronunciation is not fun, and thus did not want to give a response. I then decided to change “fun” into “interesting” and rewrite the item as “Pronunciation learning is interesting.”

In section I-C, two examples of consonants clusters were added. The reason for this addition is one respondent left it blank. I supposed that a gloss was

not enough for him or her to understand the item and that some examples would help. Another issue of this section is a Cronbach alpha of 0.59, which required further investigation into which item might be irrelevant and thus should be removed from the scale. The “Cronbach Alpha if Item Deleted” statistics was computed, showing that the removal of item 22 would increase the scale’s reliability coefficient to 0.62. However, this omission could not be done easily in my study; in fact, I decided to keep the item on the scale. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010)’s word of caution serves well as a justification for my decision:

Before we discard an item on the basis of the item analysis, we should first consider how the particular item fits in with the overall content area of the whole scale. Automatic exclusion of an item suggested by the computer may lead to narrowing down the scope of the content area too much... If a problem item represents an important dimension of the targeted domain, we should try and alter its wording or replace it with an alternative item rather than simply delete it. (p. 57)

What I did was to add two examples of linking to item 22 in the hope that they would facilitate understanding of the item, and thus increase the internal consistency.

For item 23 – an open-ended question, very few of the respondents answered it in the way that I had expected them to. Instead of pointing out a specific segment or a suprasegmental feature that was hard to learn, they repeated one among the items 15 to 22, which are general aspects of pronunciation.

Additionally, in attempting to explain in English why they had difficulty learning a certain point, some of them gave vague and confusing answers. My solutions were first, to add an explanation of “some particular features” and second, to indicate that the respondents could write their answers in either English or Vietnamese. This flexibility in language use was also applied to other open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

Both sections II-A and II-B had a Cronbach alpha lower than 0.60 ($\alpha = 0.56$), as has been listed in Table 4.1 above. I examined which item(s) in the section reduced the internal consistency of the scales by computing the “Cronbach Alpha if Item Deleted” statistics. For section II-A, it was item 29 (Planning how to improve your pronunciation). The most possible reason for its poor correlation with the other items in the scale is Vietnamese learners’ lack of planning skill, which might have led to their poor understanding of the meaning of the question and then inconsistent responses. Eventually, I decided to remove this item, which helped to increase its coefficient alpha to 0.63.

For section II-B, the internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.57$) was reduced by two items: 30 (I need my teacher to tell me what is important in learning English pronunciation.) and 32 (I need my teacher to show me what to do to improve my accent.). Moreover, a quick look at the frequency counts also showed that the participants could have felt confused when responding to these items. This section was aimed at finding out how much autonomous the learners are in learning English pronunciation through four items (31, 33, 34 and 35). I also included items 30 and 32 as restatements of items 31 (I find out by myself what aspects I need to

focus on.) and 33 (I have my own plan for improving my pronunciation.) to “build some redundancy into the instrument” (Ary et al., 2014). Unfortunately, it was these two items that might have distracted the respondents. While 18 students selected Agree / Strongly Agree for item 30, 16 of them also chose Agree / Strongly Agree for item 31. A very similar situation happened to items 32 and 33, which showed that learners did not clearly understand the questions. Consequently, I decided to omit these two items and re-calculated the statistics. The new Cronbach alpha was 0.74.

Section II-B of Part 2 also had a problem with the wording. In writing items 54 and 58, I wanted to know how many learners would choose nativeness as their goal in learning English pronunciation. In contrast, items 55 and 59 were expected to inform me of learners’ preference for intelligibility as a distinct learning goal. In reality, because of my wording, the students did not seem to be aware of the two different goals and many of them decided to choose both. For example, 15 respondents selected Yes for item 54 (nativeness) and 16 of them selected Yes for item 58 (intelligibility). To solve the problem, I rewrote items 58 and 59 with an emphasis on the fact that “achieving a native-like accent” and “being understood by others” are two different goals, implying that the respondents should go for only one of them.

There are two groups of items in section II-A of Part 2 focusing on teaching techniques and feedback. When I did a frequency count on the first group (items 77-90), I realized that the students responded to many items in an unexpectedly inconsistent manner. Specifically, some of them selected N/A to indicate that a

certain activity was not used by their instructor while their classmates still acknowledged the availability of that activity in class by giving their evaluation of its usefulness. For items 78, 81, and 89, one-fifth of the participants went for the N/A option.

There are several possible reasons for such a choice. First, a student might have been absent from class in the session when the activity was used. Second, a student might have forgotten what happened in the previous semester if he or she was not very much impressed by it. This issue can be handled easily in the main study as the respondents will be giving their answers while they are taking the course. Finally, it could have been the case that the instructor actually did not use the technique in class. In order to avoid asking unnecessary questions, I decided to consult the pronunciation instructors about the techniques they were going to use in their classes in the next semester. The result of our talks was that item 89 could be omitted, as they said they never used any software for teaching pronunciation. It should be noted that the new Cronbach alpha after the removal of item 89 is 0.87 (while the old one is 0.88).

For the group of items on feedback, although the internal consistency coefficient is acceptable ($\alpha = 0.67$), the “Cronbach Alpha if Item Deleted” statistics shows that this figure can be increased to 0.72 by removing item 92 (Teacher’s delaying giving feedback until students have completed the tasks). However, the wording of this item may have been the cause of the problem, as the structure “delay....until...” made the item unnecessarily long and complicated. Therefore, I

decided to keep the item and rephrase it as “Teacher’s giving feedback after students have completed the tasks”.

The revision of the questionnaire layout

Several changes as well as decisions have been made to improve the layout of the questionnaire. First of all, some funny images related to pronunciation learning were added to make the questionnaire look more lively and interesting. Second, different colors were used to highlight important information. For example, the font color of the descriptors of the scales was red while that of the directions was blue. The boxes where the respondents would write or circle their answers were also filled with a light blue color. Last but not least, the final questionnaires used in the official survey would be color-printed in a book format. Table 4.2 summarises the changes that have been made to the pilot version. (For a copy of the final questionnaire, see Appendix 2.)

Table 4.2

Modifications of survey questionnaire after the final pilot study

Area of change	Pilot version	Final version	Notes
Use of color	Black text in instructions Black text in scales Gray columns for the options	Blue text in instructions Red text in scales Blue columns for the options	
Printing format	A4 size	Book format	
Items	1. Pronunciation is fun	1. Pronunciation is <i>interesting</i>	
	14. no gloss for “sound native”	14. Vietnamese gloss added	
	17. no examples given	17. 2 examples given	

	22. no examples given	22. 2 examples given	
	23. no instruction about which language to use	23. instruction added (either language can be used)	
	29 & 30 included	Items omitted	Different numbers for the same items due to item omissions
	31. ...focus on.	29. ...focus on <i>in learning English pronunciation.</i>	
	56. Achieving a native-like accent is unrealistic for me,	55. <i>I think that</i> achieving a native-like accent is unrealistic.	
	57. My teacher tells me that achieving a native-like accent is impossible	56. My teacher tells me that achieving a native-like accent is <i>unrealistic.</i>	
	58. I aim to be understood by a variety of speakers of English.	53. I am to be understood by <i>other people rather than to have a native-like accent.</i>	
	59. My teacher tells me that focus should be placed on being understood by other people.	54. My teacher <i>advises me to aim to be understood by others rather than to have a native-like accent.</i>	
	71. no examples given	68. 2 examples given	
	76. no examples given	73. 2 examples given	
	89. included	Item omitted	
	91. no gloss for "immediate"	87. Vietnamese gloss provided	
	92. Teacher's delay giving feedback until students have completed the tasks.	88. Teacher's <i>giving</i> feedback <i>after</i> students have completed the tasks.	
	93. Teacher's correcting individual students in class.	89. Teacher's correcting <i>students' pronunciation individually.</i>	
	96. no gloss for "privately"	92. Vietnamese gloss given	

	101. included	Item omitted	
	105. no instruction about which language to use	100. instruction added (either language can be used)	

4.6 The qualitative study: The interview

“The interview is one of the most widely used and basic methods for obtaining qualitative data” (Ary et al., 2014). They can be used to collect data about people’s opinions, beliefs and feelings, thus facilitating understanding of their experiences and the meaning they make of such experiences. Interviews can bring a lot of benefits to researchers. Cohen et al. (2007) claim that interviews are a flexible tool for data collection which can enable multi-sensory channels to be used, give space for spontaneity, and elicit not only complete answers but also responses about complex issues. Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2014) add that this instrument helps to gather large volumes of in-depth data rather quickly, provides insight on participants’ perspectives, the meaning of events they are involved in, and even information on unanticipated issues. Importantly, it also allows immediate follow-up and clarification of participants’ responses.

4.6.1 The participants

As the priority of the current study was given to qualitative data, the sampling for the second phase played an indispensable role in helping to identify the appropriate participants so that the research problem could be addressed satisfactorily. Among the surveyed population mentioned above, several more successful learners and some other less successful ones needed to be identified

for the qualitative interviews. The rationale for selecting these two groups of learners is to detect any differences in the ways the individuals in each group dealt with the L2 pronunciation. The fact that these students were at the same age, spoke the same L1, possessed a relatively similar L2 proficiency and received the same instruction, but that some of them achieved better than the others triggered the idea of probing the two extremes – the most successful versus the least successful individuals. Multiple purposive sampling techniques thus were employed in this phase to identify strong and weak students.

The first technique used was intensity sampling (Ary et al., 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) which “involves selecting participants who exhibit different levels of the phenomenon of interest to the researcher”, in this case being the different levels of achievement in learning English pronunciation. Based on the results of the Pronunciation course’s mid-term test supplied by the classes’ instructors, 22 students with the highest scores ($\geq 8.0/10$) and 26 others with the lowest scores ($< 5.0/10$) were selected. Then, criterion sampling was employed when these learners were invited to record their voices while working on some pronunciation tasks, which was henceforward referred to as the reassessment, and their recordings would be evaluated by both a computer-aided system and human raters. Although invitations were sent to 48 students, only 24 of them agreed to do the reassessment. Some of those who refused to continue their participation in the project said that their English was not very good so they did not want to do the pronunciation tasks. Some others explained that they did not like being interviewed, while the others never replied to my invitations.

This reassessment was conducted for a couple of reasons. First of all, because the midterm-test was an oral test in which students' pronunciation was judged by their instructors, subjectivity was unavoidable. The reassessment tasks were aimed to reduce this effect. Secondly, as has been discussed in Chapter 3, the mid-term tests consisted of several reading-aloud tasks, which would not accurately measure learners' production. In this case, the reassessment tools were employed to determine their real competences, and the study on the shortlisted participants was expected to reveal more relevant data, thereby increasing the validity of the current research.

On the one hand, the participants' pronunciation was assessed through a computer-aided rating system using both ASR technology, which was reviewed in Chapter 3 and acoustic analysis. They were asked to read aloud a diagnostic passage (Prator & Robinett, 1985) and 12 sentences while being recorded (See Appendix 3 for the diagnostic passage and the 12 sentences used). The diagnostic passage was used mainly for the assessment of segmental features, namely vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters. The sentences were investigated for stress placement and intonation (in the form of pitch contour). The target features were stressed and unstressed words, the pronunciation of auxiliary verbs, pronouns and contractions, the emphasis on important information, contrasts and added details, and the use of tone in asking for information and checking. These sentences were taken from the coursebook – *English Pronunciation in Use - Intermediate* (Hancock, 2003) to ensure that all the participants were familiar with

the stress and intonation patterns. British English is used as the language model in this coursebook.

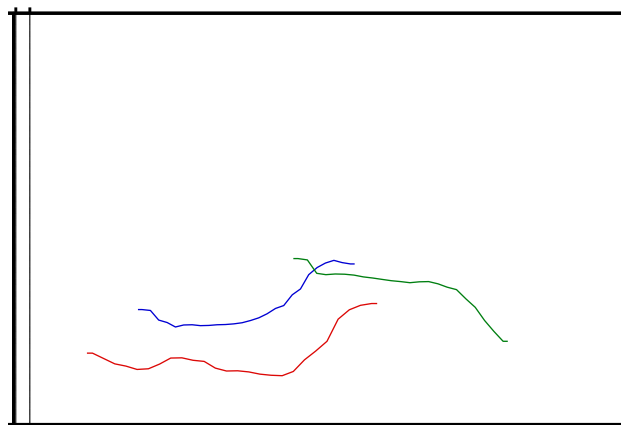
To evaluate the students' performances on segmentals, the recordings of the diagnostic passage were filtered to remove the noise and then played to Dictation – Online Speech Recognition (<https://dictation.io/>), a computer application that internally uses the built-in speech recognition engine of Google Chrome to transform one's voice into digital text. The option of British English was used to specify the language model that the tool would use to detect the phonological features. This helped to ensure the consistency between learning and assessment. After that, the transcripts were checked against the original passage and the percentages of correct words pronounced (out of the total 165 words) were calculated. In addition, recordings of a native speaker and myself reading the passage were also played to the application for a reliability check.

To assess the students' performances on supra-segmentals, the pitch contours of the recorded 12 sentences were analysed using PRAAT, a free computer software package for the scientific analysis of speech in phonetics developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink from the University of Amsterdam. These pitch contours were then compared to those of native models. It should be noted here that the native forms which were used as models and to which the participants' performances were compared were also taken from the audio recordings accompanying the coursebook. This removed the burden of creating native models, which might have brought unnecessary work as well as taken more time.

Let's take the first sentence "Eat it with some cheese!" as an example of how the participants were marked in this part. Figure 4.2 below shows the pitch contours of the speech samples made by three speakers. The red line represents the pitch contour of the original speech taken from the audio of the coursebook. The blue one represents a good production made by a strong learner while the green line is a poor production made by a weak learner from the sample. It can be seen from the figure that the red and blue lines have similar shapes while the green one has a totally different form. Therefore, if an item's pitch contour has a similar shape to that of the original sample, it would be awarded one point. The total number of points was counted and then converted to a percentage. Moreover, to ensure the reliability of the scores given, this part was marked by two raters – one colleague of mine and myself – and then the results were discussed before the final scores could be decided.

Figure 4.1.

Sample pitch contour analysis by PRAAT



On the other hand, the participants were asked to respond to some questions about themselves (See Appendix 4 for a list of the questions used.).

After that, their recordings were evaluated by two native speaker (NS) and 1 non-native speaker (NNS) teachers of English, whose teaching experience and qualifications are summarized in Table 4.3. Inter-rater consistency was measured using Cohen's Kappa coefficient, but as there were three raters, an average pairwise index was calculated. The average pairwise percent agreement for the 24 participants' performance was 83.3% while the average pairwise Cohen's Kappa was .61, which is considered to be substantial (Landis & Koch, 1977).

This spontaneous speech task was employed for two reasons. First, reading aloud, which was used for the purpose of acoustic analysis, is not always an effective assessment tool, as has been discussed in Chapter 3, so each participant's performance was also observed in a spontaneous situation when communicating with the researcher. Second, intelligibility has been defined earlier as a more reasonable, desirable, and achievable goal in L2 pronunciation teaching and learning; therefore, it would be relevant to ask other listeners, both native and non-native speakers, to determine how intelligible the participants were.

Table 4.3

Information on the raters for reassessment tasks

	Nationality	Age range	Qualifications	ELT qualifications	ELT experience
1.	English	31-40	Bachelor of Arts	TESOL	10 years
2.	Filipino	31-40	Bachelor of Arts	TESOL	6 years
3.	Vietnamese	31-40	Master of Arts	TESOL	16 years

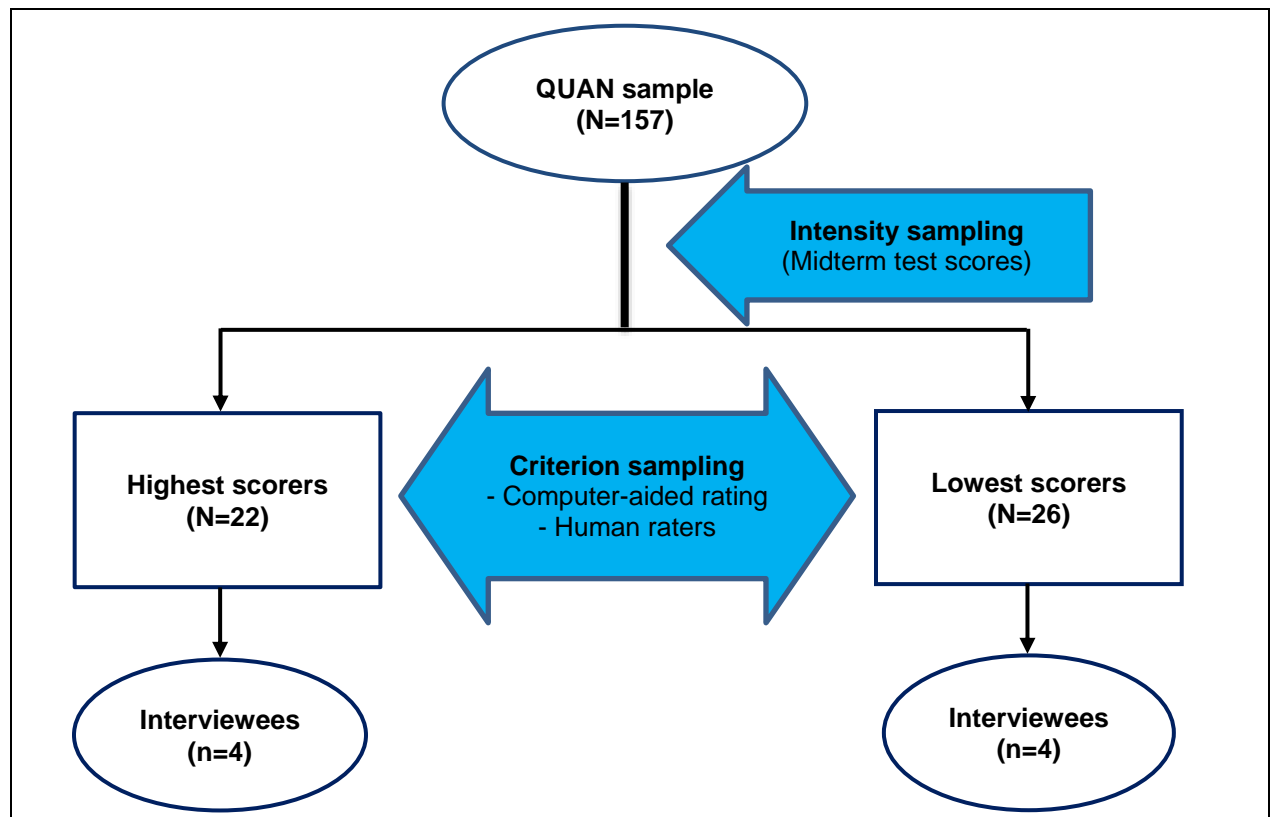
The TOEFL iBT was then eliminated because there are two different sets of rubrics for the speaking tasks, one for the independent tasks and the other for the integrated ones, which leads to different criteria for marking pronunciation. Moreover, the nature of this test is computer-mediated, so the candidates are evaluated in an environment which is artificial and time-constrained, which is definitely not what I was looking for.

In the end, the scoring guide of IELTS was selected because it is used for evaluating students' performance in a human to human conversation - a spontaneous speech situation. In other words, this scoring guide aims to measure pronunciation in an uncontrolled environment, which, as I discussed in Chapter 3, is expected to yield more accurate judgment. Another reason for my decision is its scale is wide (ranging from 1 to 9), which will help to clearly define the two groups of strong and weak learners. (See Appendix 4 for the scoring guide.)

The human raters' opinions and the results produced by the computer-aided rating system, which helped to satisfy both intelligibility and objectivity criteria, were compared and then combined. The weights of the segmental, supra-segmental, and conversation tasks were 20%, 30%, and 50% respectively. In the final step, the students in each group were ranked according to their reassessment total scores, and the interviewees were selected based on that order, starting from the highest for the strong learners' group and the lowest for the weak learners' group. Eventually, the number of interviews stopped at eight, with four strong and four weak learners. The procedure for qualitative sampling is summarized in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.2.

Qualitative sampling procedure



4.6.2 The instrument: Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as an instrument for the collection of qualitative data. In this type of interview, the issues of interest are chosen and questions are formulated but the researcher can modify the order or wording of the questions during the course of study. According to Barbour (2008), the one-to-one semi-structured interviewing technique is the “gold standard” approach which allows for “the ordering of questions to be employed flexibly to take account of the priority accorded each topic by the interviewee” (p. 17). Moreover, as the aim of the research has been clearly established early on – to identify critical factors for

success in learning pronunciation – the interviews needed to be semi-structured “so that the more specific issues [could] be addressed” (Bryman, 2012, p. 472). Last but not least, since I was going to compare and contrast the responses given by students in each group and between the two groups, there should be the same framework to ensure cross-case comparability.

Some of the questions in the interview protocol were developed a priori, and others emerged as a result of the quantitative analysis. There are three main parts in the protocol, with the first one further exploring the causes of L2 pronunciation learning difficulties, the second one devoted to gaining better insights into the impact of pronunciation instruction on the learning process, and the last one centering around how learning happens. In addition, in order to address the last research question as to what makes some individuals more successful in learning English pronunciation than others, apart from the issues raised to all the interviewees, two different sets of prompt were used to target the two groups (strong vs weak learners) in some sections of the protocol.

In the first part, general trends identified from the survey data regarding motivational, attitudinal, and identity factors are described to the interviewees before they are asked for their possible explanations of the trends as well as the potential impact of such patterns on their learning. The interviewees are also encouraged to talk about the reasons for their lack of certain skills, qualities, and learning strategies as well as about how that deficiency may have held them back.

The second part has a similar format to the first one, with general trends identified in the quantitative phase being provided as stimuli for open

conversations on the teachers' roles and their teaching in the pronunciation classroom. The participants are given the opportunity to elaborate on their expectations of the teachers and their pedagogy as well as their contentment and dissatisfaction with the current practices used in the classrooms.

The last part of the protocol, which comprises three sub-sections, is different from the previous two as it was developed independently of the quantitative phase and is entirely aimed at determining the potentially different ways in which strong and weak learners study English pronunciation. The first sub-section explores issues related to key learning theories which have been reviewed in Chapter 2, namely interaction, learnability, Natural Order Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, the role of the L1, comprehensible input, and comprehensible output. The participants are asked to listen to seven statements and tell the researcher whether they are true for them. They also need to explain their answers, and, wherever possible, give examples to illustrate their points.

In the second sub-section, the interviewees are invited to watch five short video clips extracted from the recorded lesson that the researcher delivered in week seven of their pronunciation course. The part is intended to investigate the potentially different learning activities that the two groups of learners have done in class. The first one shows a situation when the students were listening to a recording. The second one shows the teacher modelling some stress patterns in front of the class. Extract three draws the interviewee's attention to the teacher's mouth movements and body language. The fourth clip is about an activity in which the students worked in pairs while in the last video recording, one student was

receiving some feedback from the teacher. Probing questions are then used to obtain in-depth information about the activities that each individual learner did in certain events in the lessons, during which the researcher believes effective learning took place for some learners but not for the others.

Finally, the last sub-section wraps up the conversation by getting the learners to talk about their self-study, specifically how they arrange the time for learning and what they do outside class to improve their pronunciation. The rationale for this is that learning can happen both inside and outside class, without the presence of the teacher, since successful learners with necessary skills and strategies can “practice their pronunciation on their own, so that they will not be reliant on a teacher or school for pronunciation training” (McCrocklin, 2016, p. 25). For a complete copy of the interview protocol, please see Appendix 5.

4.6.3 The pilot interviews

In order to assess the feasibility of the protocol, I tried it out with two students, one from the strong learners’ group and the other from the weak one. The pilot interviews had three purposes. First of all, if there were any questions or prompts that were difficult for the learners to understand, I would need to rephrase them. Second, I would like to see if there was any instance in which more questions or prompts should be added so that I could reach deeper insights. Last but not least, I needed to know how much time a conversation would last so that the length of the protocol could be adjusted if necessary.

The two conversations went smoothly and no particular problems came up. However, they did give me useful information for improving both the protocol and the conduct of the interview. The first modification I would need to make is adding to the prompts some examples of consonant clusters, pronunciation learning strategies, and teaching content and focus. The fact that the participants had already seen and understood these aspects through doing the survey did not guarantee that they remembered what the concepts meant at the time of the conversations. Giving some examples thus would help with their understanding of the prompts and thus lead to more accurate responses.

Another change made to the protocol was an addition of a clarifying question as to whether a native-like accent and a standard accent were the same entity. This resulted from my observation that the two interviewees appeared to be confused when defining the former and even got mixed up between the two concepts. The request for clarification was expected to help me find out whether or not these learners were aware of the fact that there are native accents that are not standard and get a deeper insight into why they wanted to achieve their goal in learning L2 pronunciation.

Finally, in conducting the first sub-section in Part 3, I noticed that the participants might have had some difficulty understanding the meaning of the statements through their short silences and frowns. This was probably because they had never thought about the topics before and thus needed more time to think as well as some hints about the focus of the issues. To aid their understanding, I decided that I would need to read the statements more slowly and even repeat

them several times, emphasizing some keywords such as “similar, easier to produce” in item 5 and “challenge” in item 6.

The pilot interviews relieved my worry about the length of the conversations, which may cause tiredness to the participants if it exceeds one hour. The first interview, conducted with the strong learner lasted 59 minutes while the second one, involving the weak learner, was about 51 minutes long. Therefore, the length of the protocol was kept intact.

4.7 Research procedure

First of all, the survey was administered on the dates the students had to sit for the midterm-test of the pronunciation course to secure the largest possible number of participants. With permission from the class instructors, I had ten minutes at the end of the class meetings before the test dates to brief the students on the objectives of my research project and what they would do to complete the questionnaires. Information on compensation for their time (shopping vouchers) was also given. On the test dates, after leaving the exam room, the students were led to another room. After having a short break, each of them was given a copy of the questionnaire, which took them from 30 to 45 minutes to finish. I was always around the area to offer help or answer queries when needed. The participants received their vouchers upon returning the completed questionnaires to the researcher. The data were then fed into SPSS for analysis, from which statistical results were retrieved. Qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions were also recorded and classified.

After that, several important tasks were done to connect the QUAN research with the QUAL research. Firstly, I determined the themes to be included in the interviews to further address the first two research questions. Specifically, there were questions regarding the possible causes of the major learning difficulties mentioned by the participants and the reasons for their perceptions of the teacher's role. Secondly, I incorporated the learners' midterm-test scores into the quantitative analysis. Permission to access these grades was given by both the instructors and the students. The responses of those participants with the highest scores as well as those with the lowest scores were examined carefully. Any disparate findings were converted into interview questions to address research question three regarding what successful Vietnamese learners do to improve their English pronunciation. Thirdly, with approvals from the Department Head, the class instructors, and the students, in week seven of the course, I delivered a one-hour lesson to the participants within the time of their regular meetings. The session was video-recorded and the recording was then used as a stimulus for the conversation in the interviews. Fourthly, the interviewees were identified using multiple purposive sampling techniques, which have been described in the previous section.

Next, in the QUAL research, the two groups of participants underwent semi-structured interviews in which the Vietnamese language was used for ease of comprehension and expression. Appointments were set up with individual interviewees. The conversations all started with an introduction to the objectives of the project as well as the interview. I then gave the participants instructions

about how they should answer the questions and what they should do if a question was found to be unclear. They were also informed that the conversations would be recorded and that they would be kept anonymous, as specified in the consent forms. The main interviews began when the students were asked for their opinions about learning pronunciation in comparison to learning other skills.

In part 1 and part 2 of the interviews, I first told the interviewees the topic of the section before sharing with them selected findings from the survey. Then the prompts prescribed in the protocol were used to invite the learners to speak their views. During the conversations, there were times when I probed for more information. At the end of these two parts, I also asked the learners if there was anything related to the topic that I had not mentioned and that they would like to share with me. Part 3 started with the learners' responses to the seven statements about L2 pronunciation learning theories. Next, I played the video extracts one by one, briefly introducing the situations before asking them to describe their activities during those times. This part ended with the participants talking about their learning outside the classroom. With some caution about unexpected factors that might have affected the learning outcome, I concluded the interviews by asking them if there was any experience or individual that they thought might have inspired their learning.

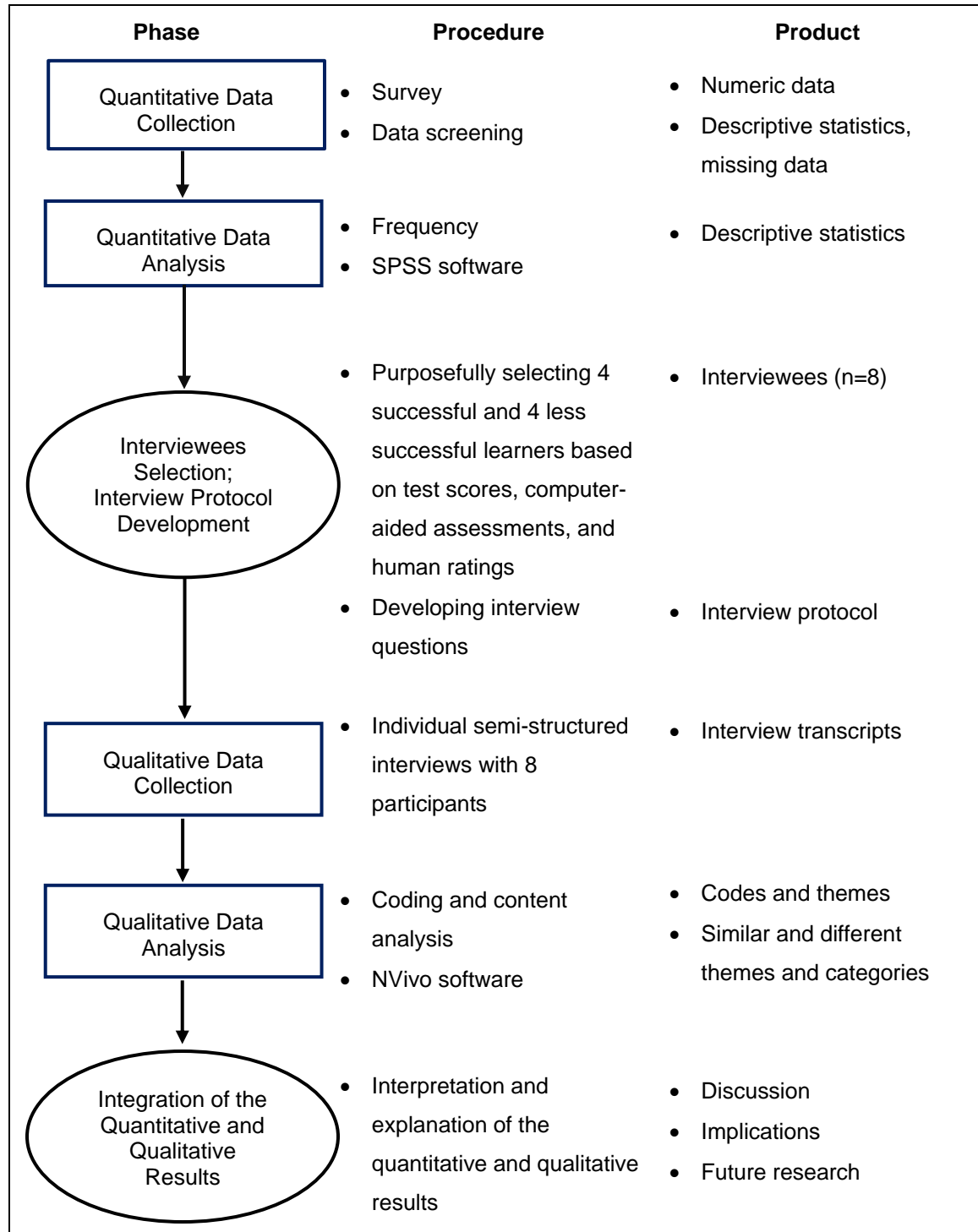
Data collected from the interviews were transcribed, then translated into English, and cross-checked by a colleague of mine, who had experience of teaching English pronunciation, phonetics and phonology. Some randomly selected translated transcripts were emailed to the corresponding interviewees to

check for any mistranscriptions or misunderstanding. The colleague mentioned above was also asked to give comments on the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of the codes and themes.

Finally, overall interpretations were made as regards how quantitative results addressed research questions one and two, how qualitative results explained quantitative outcomes, and how qualitative addressed research question three. The whole procedure is summarized in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.3.

Research procedure



4.8 Validity and reliability

4.8.1 My position as the researcher

It is undeniable that the researcher and his or her own biases can have certain effects on every stage of the study, be it the administration of a survey, the conduct of an interview, or the analysis of the data collected. Clarifying the position of the researcher and identifying his or her biases would help to provide evidence to support the dependability of the data and thus to aid the reader's understanding of the interpretations and conclusions made by the researcher (Perry, 2017). In this section, I am going to define my positions and biased assumptions in both the survey and interview studies, explaining the influences such positions and biases may have had on the ways the data were collected and analysed and describing the actions I took to overcome those biases.

Being quite invisible in the process of collecting the survey data, I anticipated that the students might be unclear of the research goals and thus might become indifferent and give irrelevant responses. I decided to make it clear to them that I was a faculty member and that what I was doing could help improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Furthermore, I paid some visits to their classes and spent time talking to them about their learning to build rapport with them. In so doing, I hoped to establish trust with them and interest them in my study. In designing the questionnaire, I was aware of the fact that my experience in teaching English for more than 15 years and especially teaching pronunciation for nearly ten years as well as my knowledge gained from reviewing the existing literature might have affected the inclusion of concepts and their weights in the

questionnaire or the wording of the questions. To deal with such biases, I asked some teachers who are either my colleagues at work or my former students to read and give feedback on both the content and organization of the questionnaire. Any issues discovered were brought into discussion with my supervisors for improvement before the pilot study was conducted.

It is in the qualitative study that my presence and biases could have more impact on data collection and analysis. I have mentioned earlier that I spent time with the students to build good relationships with them, which not only facilitated the quantitative data collection but also helped to elicit more insightful data from the participants as they would be more open in talking to me and thus share more opinions. However, this technique was also used with care, as Perry (2017) warns that in spending too much time with the people being researched, the researcher may “go native by no longer being able to keep their own thinking separate from that of the respondents” (p. 128). I was cognizant of the fact that I might “have the tendency to ask too many questions, interrupt, guide the direction of talk or take sides” (Barbour, 2008, p. 43). What I did was to control the number of site visits and made use of peers to critique my work. Specifically, I had a colleague to observe the first two interviews and make notes of the instances where she thought I had forgotten my role as a data gatherer and thus was discussing my views with the respondents, which would influence their thinking. The colleague then discussed her remarks with me so that I could avoid the mistake in the remaining six conversations.

Last but not least, I have to admit that my long-standing experience, either as a language learner or a language teacher, may have shaped certain prejudices towards the two groups of respondents. For example, I may tend to attribute particular characteristics such as a lack of learning motivation or more exposure to the L2 to one group but not the other. Another example is, from the teacher's perspective, I may assume that a teaching technique is useful and may ask the students misleading questions as to how they perceive that technique. To overcome these biases, I had to keep in mind that "the aim as a qualitative researcher is not to attempt to control variability, but to invite complexity" (Holliday, 2010, p. 106) and that "I am a positioned subject who is prepared to know certain things and not others" (Perry, 2017, p. 128). In addition, to enhance the rigour of the qualitative study, I pretested the interview questions with two students from the same population, consulted the interview protocol frequently, and listened to the recordings of the first two conversations to control any inclusion of biases.

4.8.2 Validity and reliability of the quantitative study

Validity in quantitative research can be assessed from a number of aspects; however, only the major relevant issues will be discussed in this thesis. First of all, one objective of the study is to identify learners' beliefs about and attitudes towards pronunciation learning as well as the role of pronunciation instruction. To obtain valid data, the whole population was investigated to prevent selecting participants that had certain characteristics that predisposed them to have certain outcomes. For example, the population consisted of both strong and weak learners, and

learners from both big cities and other provinces, so their responses were supposed to be varied and comprehensive. In this way, the internal validity of the study was enhanced.

Content validity was addressed in the study as well. Since all the participants were taking the compulsory pronunciation course, they were expected to be more concerned about issues related to pronunciation learning. Besides, I had the opportunity to talk to them about the objectives of my project as well as its potential benefits in helping them to learn better. Therefore, they would be more willing to spend time doing the questionnaire carefully. Moreover, the constant exposure to pronunciation content and the immersion in a variety of learning activities would help them give more relevant responses. In this way, there would be greater content validity.

Finally, the questionnaire was given to six colleagues of mine who helped “judge whether they are appropriate for measuring what they are supposed to measure and whether they are a representative sample of the behavior domain under investigation” (Ary et al., 2014). As described earlier, in the pilot study, twenty second-year English major students were also requested to complete the questionnaire and then give feedback on any difficult or ambiguous items. These acts were aimed at improving the construct validity of the research.

The issue of reliability was dealt with carefully in the design and delivery of the questionnaire, and the responses from the pilot study were used to measure reliability as well as handle problems that arose. On one hand, as I have already discussed in great detail in section 4.5.4 since Likert-type scales were used in

many sections of the questionnaire, I calculated Cronbach alpha coefficients of the homogenous multi-item scales to measure their internal consistency. Any group with a coefficient of lower than 0.60 was investigated and modifications were made for a new alpha of at least 0.60 to be achieved. On the other hand, I also spent time briefing the participants on the objectives and the regulations for completing the questionnaires to standardize and control the conditions under which the data collection takes place (Cohen et al., 2007).

4.8.3 Validity and reliability of the qualitative study

In general, support for validity and reliability of qualitative studies requires well-documented research and rich description (Ary et al., 2014). However, these two terms carry different connotations in qualitative research from what they do in quantitative research. Qualitative validity aims at the accuracy of the findings while qualitative reliability seeks consistency across different researchers and different projects (Creswell, 2014). It is also worth noting that in qualitative research, there is more of a focus on validity than reliability (Ary et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and different terms are commonly used to discuss these rigours: credibility, transferability, and dependability instead of internal validity, external validity, and reliability respectively.

Firstly, to enhance credibility, several validity strategies were incorporated. I used member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by emailing the transcripts together with their English translations to some of the interviewees to ask them whether they were accurate or not. Peer debriefing was

also employed to check the accuracy of the findings. A faculty member whose interests are pronunciation, phonetics, and phonology was asked to examine the database and the qualitative results and discuss her understanding against my interpretations of the qualitative data.

Secondly, to address transferability, I adopted descriptive adequacy. In other words, I made efforts to provide accurate, detailed, and complete descriptions of the context and participants so that readers could make comparisons and judgments about the similarity between their context and mine and thus can determine transferability.

Finally, two strategies were used to investigate the dependability of the qualitative study. The first one was an intra-rater or code-recode strategy. I manually coded the data at the beginning of December 2018 and left the analysis there for two weeks. In February 2019, I conducted the recoding using NVivo – a qualitative data analysis computer software program - and compared the two sets of coded materials. At the same time, I also asked a colleague to code a sample of the transcripts (English versions) and then compared her coding with mine. Again, the two sets of coded materials were checked to determine whether my colleague had added any new codes and whether we had assigned the same codes to the components of the transcripts. This procedure is called inter-coder or inter-rater agreement. In addition, the coding consistency in both procedures was assessed using Cohen's Kappa coefficient, a statistical measurement of the degree of concordance between two independent coders that takes into account the possibility that agreement could occur by chance alone. Both the intra-coder

and inter-coder indexes were found to be acceptable ($\kappa = .83$ and $.92$ respectively) while the intra-coder agreement was 89% and the inter-coder agreement was 94%, which showed good qualitative reliability (Creswell, 2014).

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were handled with great care to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. First of all, to obtain informed consent for the current research, I provided the students with the following information:

- An explanation of the procedures to be followed and their purposes
- A description of the benefits expected to be gained from the research
- An offer to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures
- An instruction that the students are free to terminate their participation in the project at any stage
- An assurance that non-participation would not affect their grades

(Source: Adapted from Cohen et al. (2007))

Several safeguards were also employed to get access and acceptance from the authority and the participants:

- Permission was obtained from the Department of Foreign Languages to conduct the survey and the interviews and to deliver and video-record a lesson in the Pronunciation course.
- Approvals were sought from the instructors and the students so that I could teach and record the lesson at an agreed time in the middle of the course.

- Permission was obtained from the Department of Foreign Languages to access the course grades and from the instructors as well as the students to use the course grades in the quantitative data analysis.
- The objectives, formats, and procedures of the project were discussed with the students.

Finally, privacy and anonymity considerations were seriously attended to in the current study. As I needed to re-access some of the survey participants for the in-depth interviews, their names and classes were requested to be made available on the last pages of the questionnaires. However, they were explicitly informed and assured that their personal information would not be revealed to anyone else under any circumstances. In this way, I was making a promise of confidentiality, not anonymity. Additionally, I announced to all the participants in both the quantitative and qualitative studies that in reporting the data, I would use pseudonyms instead of their real names to ensure their privacy.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the methodology employed in the current study in the hope that the research stages and the ways in which data were handled and conclusions reached are made clear to the reader. The chapter started with justifications for the use of a pragmatic worldview, followed by rationales for the application of mixed methods and the explanatory sequential design. In the description of each research phase, I discussed the instrument and the sample before giving a detailed account of the research procedures. Ethical

issues were also reviewed and strategies for enhancing validity as well as reliability were explained. The last section gave an overview of the methods used for data analysis, the results of which will be provided in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 5 – KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to show the key findings from the survey of the current study. It begins with a brief description of how the data collected was analysed. It then goes on to provide important results from the survey conducted with the 152 respondents. The last section of the chapter summarises major results for ease of reference in later discussion.

5.2 Method of analysing the quantitative data

Throughout the analysis process, the data collected was examined on two levels for both research methods. On the first level, responses by the whole sample, the 152 survey participants, were analysed to address the common difficulties Vietnamese learners face in learning English pronunciation and the impacts their teachers might have on their learning. On the second level, to address the third research question regarding the success factors in learning English pronunciation, responses by two groups of participants – strong versus weak learners - were examined separately so that major dissimilarities could be detected for later discussion.

Prior to the analysis, data screening was carried out on the 157 questionnaires that were returned to verify the appropriateness of the numerical codes and values of the variables under study. In five of them, several sections were left blank or the responses to questions in many or all sections were the same. These five were removed and I was left with 152 respondents. The data

were then fed into SPSS for analysis with missing data identified and dealt with appropriately. Responses to the open-ended questions were also recorded and classified according to how they are related to each other. To be more specific, responses to Q23 (What are some particular features of English pronunciation that you find really difficult to learn?) were grouped into segmental or supra-segmental features. Similarly, answers to Q105 (What benefits, if any, do you think the pronunciation course has offered you? Is there anything you think the course could have done to help you learn?) were categorised into “benefits of learning” and “suggestions for improvement”.

On the first level of analysis using SPSS, the responses to individual items on each survey category were explored using frequency counts, and means. On the second level of analysis, the responses by the 22 strongest learners (those with a test score of 8.0/10 and above) and the 26 weakest ones (those with a test score of lower than 5.0/10) were investigated and compared to see if there were dissimilarities. A detailed description of the analysis will be provided in each section below.

5.3 The reliability check

The internal consistency of the unidimensional scales in the questionnaire was then measured again using the Cronbach alpha statistical tool. As I have discussed earlier in Chapter 4, a value of 0.60 was considered the acceptable coefficient of reliability for the current study due to its exploratory nature and the novelty of its instrument – the questionnaire. Table 5.1 provides the values

calculated for both the final pilot and the official studies, which show that, except for section 1-II-B on Autonomy, all the scales in the official study exceeded the desired level of internal consistency.

Table 5.1

Cronbach alpha values – Pilot study versus Official study

<i>Part</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Target concept</i>	<i>Pilot study</i>		<i>Official study</i>	
			<i>No of items</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>No of items</i>	<i>α</i>
1	I-C	Potential learning difficulties	8	0.59	8	0.70
1	II-A	Pronunciation learning skills	6	0.56	5	0.61
1	II-B	Autonomy	6	0.57	4	0.58
2	I-E	Learning contents	8	0.72	8	0.89
2	II-A	Teaching techniques	14	0.88	13	0.82
2	II-A	Feedback	7	0.67	7	0.63

A closer look at the unsatisfactory coefficient in section 1-II-B (0.58) shows that, in comparison with the pilot study, it did increase slightly. However, following the analysis of the pilot study, 2 items on learners' dependence on the teacher's guidance had been removed from the scale, reducing its number of items to only 4, which may have contributed to a decline in internal consistency, as warned by Taber (2017). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, autonomous learning is one of the factors that determine whether students will continue to practice their pronunciation on their own without reliance on the teacher (McCrocklin, 2016, p. 25), which may contribute to success or failure in acquiring an L2 pronunciation.

Therefore, I decided to retain this section on autonomy in the questionnaire, and analyse the data as they were.

5.4 The demographic data

5.4.1 Age, gender and origin

As can be seen from Table 5.2 below, this group of participants are of very similar ages. 148 of them are aged 18-19 years old while only four have just reached the age of 20 years old. The majority of them are female, at 84.2%, while male students account for only 15.8%. This inequality is commonly found among degree programs in foreign languages at universities in Vietnam.

Table 5.2

Participants' age and gender

	AGE				GENDER		
	18	19	20	Total	Male	Female	Total
No of students	48	100	4	152	24	128	152
Percentage	31.6	65.8	2.6	100	15.8	84.2	100

Apart from 11 participants who did not specify their hometowns, the remaining 141 come from 33 different provinces of Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh City is home to the highest number of students, with 28 individuals while Binh Thuan and Dong Nai occupy the second and third places, with 13 and 12 respondents respectively. Gia Lai and Phu Yen both show eight young people attending the school while the other areas only have a few freshmen this year (2018).

5.4.2 L2 exposure and pronunciation learning experience

This group of students has been learning English for quite a long period of time. Only seven of them reported having studied the language for one to four years, starting from grade 10 through their first year at university. 78 of them have received English instruction since the beginning of secondary school, i.e. for eight years, while the remaining 67 started having English lessons even before secondary school. This reflects the current situation of English learning and teaching in Vietnam, where huge amounts of money have been and are being spent by both authorities and families in an attempt to create a younger generation with better L2 proficiency. Disappointingly, their investments have not paid off, as the National Foreign Language Project 2020, which was mentioned in Chapter 1, was admitted a failure by the Minister of Education and Training (Vo & Hoai, 2016). More specifically, in the field of pronunciation, Vietnamese accented English is still considered unintelligible for native speakers and even for Vietnamese listeners (Cunningham, 2009, 2013). Findings presented in the subsequent sections will help, to a certain extent, clarify the reason for this failure.

When asked if they have been in an English-speaking country, only four of the respondents gave a positive answer and of these four learners, only three specified the lengths of stay, which were 2 years, 6 months, and 3 months. To see if there may be any possible link between this factor and their L2 pronunciation development, I took a look at their midterm-test scores, which were 5.0, 8.0, and 7.0 (out of 10.0) respectively. Meanwhile, the other 21 members in the strong learners' group, whose scores ranged from 8.0 to 9.6, all said that they had never

been to an English speaking country before. So, this factor, i.e. whether students have stayed in an English-speaking country, seems to be irrelevant in my study.

When direct contact with native speakers was taken into account, 47 out of 152 students claimed to have the opportunity to meet with them, and 38 out of these 47 respondents also indicated how often they meet. Yet, I wondered whether this type of contact had any effect on the outcome of learning as the frequency of meeting was reported to be very low. To be more specific, 29 indicated very little contact, such as “3 times a year”, “rarely”, “seldom” and “sometimes”. The highest rates, which were “every day”, “4 times a week” and “regularly”, were reported by only one student each. To find an answer to my question above, I examined the midterm-test scores of these 47 participants. Findings, however, do not reveal any clear trends.

On the one hand, there is no strong evidence that more direct contact has led to better learning outcomes. For example, while the two students who reported meeting native speakers “every day” and “4 times a week” got 9.2 and 8.0 marks, the one who reported having “regular contact” with them received only a 6.2. In addition, the student who got the highest score (9.6) admitted seeing the native speakers only occasionally, while some others, despite reporting higher frequencies (once a week, once a month, and one hour a week, respectively), received very low scores (5.7, 5.2 and even 3.6). Finally, 15 out of 22 participants (68.2%) who got 8.0 or higher said they had no direct contact with the L1 speakers.

On the other hand, it may seem hard to deny the impact of direct contact on pronunciation learning. In fact, some statistics suggest a possible link between

them. To be more specific, more students who did not have any contact received a “fail” score (lower than 4.0, according to the school’s policy) than their counterparts who did: 10 out of 105 (9.5%) in comparison to 1 out of 47 (2.1%).

Then, what do all the points discussed above mean? Firstly, there is a need to examine the responses to the survey by the four strongest students, who were interviewed, to find out if they had a significant amount of direct contact with native speakers of English, which might have contributed to their success in learning pronunciation. Secondly, for future research, there should be more studies, ideally longitudinal ones, on the effect of direct contact on learning outcomes, but this factor should be, in one way or another, separate from all other factors so that its impact can be seen clearly. Until the time when a good approach is found in order to identify its effect, L2 exposure, including direct contact, should be paid attention to in an attempt to enhance pronunciation learning.

The final piece of demographic information to be looked at is prior learning. Only 13 participants revealed they had received formal instruction in English pronunciation prior to the compulsory course at university. Among them, five attended a course within one year while the gaps of two, three, and four years were mentioned by two respondents each. One student reported taking a pronunciation course seven years ago.

5.5 Survey results – Part I – Learner factors and learning skills and strategies

The first part of the questionnaire contains two main topics: learner factors and the skills and strategies they use for learning English pronunciation. Key

findings will be presented in this section, which includes subsections on learner motivation, attitudes, identity, potential learning problems as well as the learning skills and strategies. In each subsection, statistical results for the whole group of participants will be given before a comparison between the strong learner and weak learner groups is made.

5.5.1 Learning motivation

Among the six items in this subsection, three are about intrinsic motivational factors (I), including interest, preference, and eagerness to study while the rest refer to extrinsic factors (E), i.e. compulsory subject at school, future job requirements, and concern about others' opinions. As can be seen from Table 5.3 below, for the whole population, all the intrinsic factors receive lower scores (4.18, 4.23, and 4.13 out of 5) than the extrinsic ones (4.32, 4.74, and 4.31).

When strong learners and weak learners are compared, findings indicate that the former group gave higher scores for all three intrinsic items than the latter group, and more of them chose the highest score - 5 out of 5 - for these factors. Regarding external motivation, however, item 5 (*I want to impress other people with my pronunciation.*) received a score of 4.05 from the former but a 4.64 from the latter. Results also show that the difference found in item 5 is the biggest (by nearly 30%), which means that what other people think about their pronunciation is more important to weak learners than to strong learners.

Table 5.3

Learning motivation – Mean scores and percentages of the highest score

Item	Content	Mean scores			% of highest score (5)	
		<i>Whole</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	Strong	Weak
1	Interest (I)	4.18	4.27	3.92	59.1	42.3
2	Preference (I)	4.23	4.32	4.12	54.5	46.2
3	Compulsory subject (E)	4.32	4.23	4.23	59.1	69.2
4	Future job requirements (E)	4.74	4.68	4.62	72.7	76.9
5	Concern about others' opinion (E)	4.31	4.05	4.64	40.9	69.2
6	Eagerness to study (I)	4.13	4.23	4.00	45.5	38.5

(**Whole**: Whole population; **Strong**: Strong learners; **Weak**: Weak learners; Means in **bold** and **black**: Substantially higher means between the two groups; Percentages in **bold** and **red**: Substantially higher percentages)

5.5.2 Learning attitudes

As described in Chapter 4, there are six questions devoted to exploring the respondents' attitudes towards pronunciation learning, two for each of the three categories: belief, feeling, and intent. Table 5.4 shows the mean scores for these items. (As question 8 (*I will never be able to speak English with a good accent*) is a negative item, its responses were inverted before analysis.)

Results indicate that learners, in general, are quite positive about learning English pronunciation. Especially, they highly value its learning (M=3.69 out of 4.0) and feel very happy if they have good pronunciation (M=3.86). However, when it comes to "intent" – the action tendency component (Oppenheim, 1992) – statistics

show that it is not as strong as what they believe and feel. The lowest mean (M=3.03) can also be seen when they were asked about their willingness to arrange the time to learn this skill. In other words, despite the existence of strong beliefs in and positive attitudes towards English pronunciation learning, not much actual action is taken for learning to happen.

Table 5.4

Learning attitudes - Mean scores and percentages of Strongly Agree

		Belief		Feeling		Intent	
		Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
Mean scores	Whole	3.69	3.18	3.19	3.86	3.03	3.33
	Strong	3.64	3.23	3.45	3.91	2.95	3.32
	Weak	3.69	3.08	3.15	3.85	3.04	3.12
% of Strongly Agree	Strong	63.6	31.8	50.0	90.9	13.6	40.9
	Weak	69.2	19.2	30.8	84.6	19.2	26.9

When the two groups (strong vs weak learners) are compared, statistics reveal that the strong learners are more positive about the potential of success in learning as a higher mean score was found (Q8: M=3.23 vs M=3.08) and more of them express the highest level of agreement (31.8% vs 19.2%). They also demonstrate stronger disappointment if they are misunderstood due to their pronunciation (Q9: M=3.45 vs M=3.15, and 50.0% vs 30.8% for Strongly Agree). In contrast, the weak learners seem to be less optimistic about the learning outcomes, yet they are less willing to take further study even if there is an

opportunity to do so (Q12: M=3.32 vs M=3.12, and 40.9% vs 26.9% for Strongly Agree).

5.5.3 Identity

Two items were dedicated to the issue of learning identity and the responses show that this factor seems not to matter much with Vietnamese learners of English. Figures of the whole population indicate that they are generally willing to take on the L2 identity: when asked if they like being mistaken for a native speaker, 78% either strongly agree or agree (M=2.98/4). Moreover, they tend to feel comfortable trying to sound native, with 73% of them showing their disapproval of the statement in item 14 (*I feel uncomfortable trying to sound native*) (M=2.14).

Table 5.5

Identity – Frequency counts and mean scores

			Whole	Strong	Weak
Q13: I like being mistaken for a native speaker due to my accent.	Frequency (%)	Strongly agree	24%	36%	15%
		Agree	54%	50%	58%
		Disagree	18%	14%	27%
		Strongly disagree	4%	0%	0%
	Mean		2.98	3.23	2.88
Q14: I feel uncomfortable trying to sound native.	Frequency (%)	Strongly agree	4%	0%	8%
		Agree	23%	23%	11%
		Disagree	56%	50%	58%
		Strongly disagree	17%	27%	23%
	Mean		2.14	1.95	2.04

A look at the statistics of the two groups – strong vs weak learners – reveals that the former group tends to have a stronger desire to speak like native people (M=3.23, with 86% choosing Agree or Strong Agree) and less discomfort trying to do so (M=1.95). In contrast, the latter group shows a weaker desire (M=2.88, with 73% showing agreement) but slightly more discomfort about having to try to sound native-like (M=2.04). All the statistics can be found in Table 5.5 above.

5.5.4 Potential learning problems

There are eight items in this subsection, with four related to segmentals and the other four concerning suprasegmentals. The participants were asked to rate the difficulty level in learning these features on a scale from 1 (Easy) to 5 (Difficult). Results show that these learners appear to encounter more problems in coping with suprasegmentals than with segmentals. Intonation and sentence stress are among the hardest for them to learn (M=3.74 and 3.68, and 59.9% and 58.5% for scores 4 and 5 combined respectively) while vowels and consonants are among the easiest ones (M=2.95 and 2.98, and 30.9% and 24.5% for scores 4 and 5 combined respectively). Moreover, both strong and weak learners appear to encounter the same problems in learning. See Table 5.6 for more detailed statistics.

In response to question 23, which asks about particular features that they find really difficult to learn, many participants repeated the features given in the questionnaire; however, some specific sounds were also identified. The most common problematic sounds are the fricatives *s*, *z*, *ʃ*, *ʒ*, *ð*, and *θ* and the affricates

dʒ and tʃ. The most common reasons given for such difficulty are the non-existence of the sounds ð, θ, dʒ, and tʃ in the Vietnamese language and the perceived similarity between s and z and between ʃ and ʒ.

Table 5.6

Learning problems – Mean scores and percentages of scores 4 and 5 combined

		Segmentals				Suprasegmentals			
		<i>Vowels</i>	<i>Cons.</i>	<i>Cons. clusters</i>	<i>Final sounds</i>	<i>Word stress</i>	<i>Sent. stress</i>	<i>Inton.</i>	<i>Linking</i>
Whole	%	30.9%	24.5%	46.7%	39.4%	30.3	58.5%	59.9%	36.8%
	Mean	2.95	2.98	3.40	3.11	2.89	3.68	3.74	3.04
Strong		2.64	2.68	3.23	2.95	2.77	3.64	3.64	2.68
Weak		2.58	3.08	3.65	3.23	2.69	3.50	3.92	3.23

5.5.5 Learning skills

As can be seen from Table 5.7 below, there are five skills covering three aspects: cognitive (*Cog.*), metacognitive (*Meta.*), and critical listening (*CL*). The participants were asked to assess themselves on a scale from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). Findings indicate that these learners considered themselves best at identifying differences between the L1 and L2 (Q26, M=3.48/5), which is a cognitive skill. In contrast, they thought they were worst at recognizing different speech sounds (Q25, M=2.92) and comparing their own pronunciation to that of native speakers (Q28, M=2.96), both of which refer to critical listening.

It is understandable to see the strong learners giving themselves higher scores than their counterparts, probably because they were more confident about their own skills. Moreover, the biggest gaps can be seen when the percentages of

the participants rating their skills at 4 and 5 are combined. Results show that the two groups are remarkably different in two skills: imitating (Q24, by 58%) and identifying the differences between Vietnamese and English pronunciation (Q26, by 45.9%). In other words, it can be said that strong learners are better at imitating and identifying the differences between the L1 and L2, which might help them learn pronunciation more effectively.

Table 5.7

Skills – Mean scores and percentages of scores 4 and 5 combined

		Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28
		<i>Cog.</i>	<i>Cog., CL</i>	<i>Cog.</i>	<i>Meta., CL</i>	<i>Meta., CL</i>
Mean scores	Whole	3.20	2.92	3.48	2.96	3.33
	Strong	3.82	3.05	3.91	3.27	3.0
	Weak	3.0	2.62	3.12	2.81	3.08
% of 4 and 5	Strong	77.2	40.9	72.8	45.4	31.8
	Weak	19.2	15.3	26.9	19.2	26.9

5.5.6 Autonomy

The participants were asked to express their agreement or disagreement about four statements which were focused on autonomous pronunciation learning. The aspects of autonomy in question are finding out their own problems (Q29), planning for improvement (Q30), selecting appropriate learning methods (Q31), and evaluating their own progress (Q32). Results reveal that learners are generally autonomous in identifying their own problems in learning English pronunciation

(M=3.19/4) but do not pay much attention to evaluating how much progress they have made in learning (M=2.68).

The level of autonomy of strong learners was also measured against that of weak learners by comparing the mean scores given by each group as well as the percentages of the group members expressing their agreement towards the statements. According to the figures in Table 5.8, weak learners seem to pay more attention to evaluating their progress in learning and planning for improvement. However, the biggest difference is that strong learners tend to know more clearly about what they need to do to fix the problems they are facing (Q31: M=3.05 vs M=2.69, and 81.8% vs 55.4%), which may be one of the keys to success in L2 pronunciation learning.

Table 5.8

Autonomy – Mean scores and percentages of agreement

		Q29	Q30	Q31	Q32
Mean scores	Whole	3.19	2.95	2.89	2.68
	Strong	3.09	2.73	3.05	2.45
	Weak	3.00	3.04	2.69	2.77
% of agreement	Strong	81.8	59.1	81.8	45.4
	Weak	84.6	88.5	55.4	61.6

5.5.7 Learning strategies

Twelve strategies were mentioned in the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to tell the researcher how often they used each of them: regularly (3), sometimes (2), or never (1). The strategies pertain to five categories, namely

memory (*Mem*), cognitive (*Cog.*), social (*Soci.*), compensation (*Com.*), and metacognitive (*Meta.*). Findings point out that the students under research do not use pronunciation learning strategies very often, as except for the use of English media (Q41), which receives a mean score of 2.72 and 73.7% of the responses for ‘*Regularly*’, other strategies get mean scores around 2.0 and from 11.2% to 50.7% of the responses for ‘*Regularly*’, meaning they are used “sometimes” only. Besides, learners tend to make more use of cognitive strategies like using English media (Q41, M=2.72, 73.7% for ‘*Regularly*’), noticing and imitating mouth movements (Q35, M=2.41, 50.7% for ‘*Regularly*’), and talking aloud to oneself (Q36, M=2.32, 43.4% for ‘*Regularly*’). Table 5.9 below gives all the statistics of this subsection.

Table 5.9

Learning strategies – Mean scores and percentages of ‘Regularly’

		Q33	Q34	Q35	Q36	Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40	Q41	Q42	Q43	Q44
		<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Cog.</i>	<i>Cog.</i>	<i>Soci.</i>	<i>Cog.</i>	<i>Com.</i>	<i>Meta.</i>	<i>Cog.</i>	<i>Meta.</i>	<i>Meta.</i>	<i>Soci.</i>
Mean scores	Whole	2.04	2.30	2.41	2.32	2.01	2.26	2.17	1.96	2.72	1.85	2.43	2.27
	Strong	1.91	2.32	2.55	2.55	1.91	2.36	2.14	2.05	2.95	1.68	2.36	2.32
	Weak	1.92	2.38	2.38	2.15	2.15	2.35	2.15	1.88	2.62	1.85	2.23	2.23
% of Regularly	Whole	11.2	41.4	50.7	43.4	20.4	36.2	32.2	18.4	73.7	17.8	46.1	38.8
	Strong	13.6	50.0	63.6	63.6	18.2	45.5	40.9	22.7	95.5	18.2	40.9	36.4
	Weak	4.2	46.2	53.8	26.9	23.1	46.2	30.8	19.2	61.5	15.4	30.8	34.6

Findings also indicate that there are several dissimilarities in the way strong and weak learners use strategies, two of which reveal substantial gaps in the percentages of respondents stating they used the strategy regularly. For one thing,

strong learners talk aloud to themselves to practice their pronunciation substantially more than the weak ones (difference by 36.7%). For another thing, they much more regularly use English media like television and the Internet when learning English pronunciation (difference by 34.0%).

5.6 Survey results – Part 2 – Teacher-related factors

The second part of the questionnaire focuses on the impacts that different teacher-related factors have on an English pronunciation classroom: their teaching approaches, learning goals, themselves as a language model, their roles, the amounts of instruction allotted to different learning aspects, as well as the techniques and tools they employ. Only key findings will be presented, with statistical results of all the participants provided before a comparison between the two groups of strong versus weak learners is made.

5.6.1 Teaching approaches

Six Yes-No questions were included in the questionnaire to find out which of the three general approaches to pronunciation teaching (the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytical-linguistic approach, and the integrative approach) is commonly used by the teachers in the school under research. Results, listed in Table 5.10, show that learners are almost always asked to listen and imitate what they hear (Q45: 93.4% and Q46: 90.8%). They also very frequently receive explanations of sound production and do minimal pair drills in class (Q47: 92.1% and Q48: 91.4%). In other words, intuitive-imitative and analytical-linguistic approaches seem to be the norms in this context.

Table 5.10

Teaching approaches – Frequency counts

	<i>Intuitive-imitative</i>		<i>Analytical-linguistic</i>		<i>Integrative</i>	
	Q45	Q46	Q47	Q48	Q49	Q50
Yes (%)	93.4	90.8	92.1	91.4	63.2	58.6
No (%)	6.6	9.2	7.9	8.6	36.8	41.4

5.6.2 Learning goals

The six items in this subsection were aimed at determining which of the two goals in learning English pronunciation – nativeness versus intelligibility – was more common among these learners (Q51, Q53, & Q55) and the effect of the teacher on such a goal (Q52, Q54, & Q56). If a participant is uncertain about any item, he or she can opt for *Don't Know (D/K)* instead of **Yes** or **No**. Correspondingly, in SPSS, a **Yes** answer received 2 points, a **No** got 1 point while a **D/K** was given 0 point so that mean scores could be calculated.

For the whole population, findings, which are presented in Table 5.11, reveal that a majority of the respondents aim at nativeness in learning English pronunciation. More specifically, 75.7% of them stated that their goal is to have a native-like accent (Q51) and 70.4% disagreed that this goal is unrealistic (Q55). These learners also appear to be influenced by their teachers in targeting such a goal when 67.8% reported being told that the goal is not unrealistic and 66.4% of them were encouraged to go for it.

Table 5.11

Learning goals – Whole population - Frequency counts

		Nativeness		Intelligibility			
		Q51	Q52	Q53	Q54	Q55	Q56
Frequency counts	Yes (%)	75.7	66.4	42.1	29.6	17.1	10.5
	No (%)	14.5	16.4	39.5	36.2	70.4	67.8
	D/K (%)	9.8	17.2	18.4	34.2	12.5	21.7

A comparison between the results of the strong and weak learners groups has led to two remarkable differences, as shown in Table 5.12. First, more learners in the former group than in the latter group aim at nativeness in learning pronunciation (Q51: 77.3% vs 61.5% and Q55: 77.3% vs 69.2%). Second, the weak learners tend to be more heavily affected by their teachers than their counterparts in aiming to sound native-like (Q52: 69.2% vs 54.5%).

Table 5.12

Learning goals – Strong vs Weak learners – Frequency counts

	Nativeness				Intelligibility							
	Q51		Q52		Q53		Q54		Q55		Q56	
	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W
Yes (%)	77.3	61.5	54.5	69.2	45.5	46.2	45.5	46.2	22.7	23.1	9.1	15.4
No (%)	22.7	15.4	31.8	23.1	36.4	42.3	45.5	30.8	77.3	69.2	68.2	69.2
D/K (%)	0.0	23.1	13.7	7.7	18.2	11.5	9.1	23.1	0.0	7.7	22.7	15.4

5.6.3 Language models

The participants were asked to state how much they agreed or disagreed with four statements concerning the language model in a pronunciation class. The first two items in the subsection were intended to find out whether they would like to study with a native (Q57) or non-native model (Q58) while the last two looked into their attitudes towards the non-native pronunciation teachers' knowledge of both the L1 and L2 (Q59) as well as their shared learning experience (Q60). Table 5.13 shows the response percentages.

Table 5.13

Language models – Whole population – Frequency counts

	Q57	Q58	Q59	Q60
Strongly agree (%)	6.0	69.7	15.8	28.3
Agree (%)	31.1	28.3	59.2	63.8
Disagree (%)	47.7	1.3	23.7	6.6
Strongly disagree (%)	15.2	0.7	1.3	1.3

On the one hand, responses to the first two items reveal that all learners still value native speaker teachers over non-native ones. To be specific, 63% of the participants reacted negatively (either Strongly Disagree or Disagree) when asked if it was acceptable for their pronunciation teacher to speak English with a non-native accent (Q57). More extremely, 98% of them said that they would like to study pronunciation with a native teacher if possible, with 69.7% choosing “Strongly Agree”.

On the other hand, findings show that learners do acknowledge the benefits of studying with a non-native teacher. 75% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that one of the strengths of non-native teachers is their knowledge of both English and Vietnamese while even a higher percentage – 92%– admitted that non-native teachers can be good models because they can share their learning experience with the students.

There is hardly any difference in the responses provided by the two groups of participants (strong versus weak learners).

5.6.4 Roles of the teacher

The participants were asked to describe how often (*Regularly, Sometimes, or Never*) their pronunciation teachers played the following five roles in the classroom: discussing with them about the teaching focus (Q61), helping them to solve their own problems (Q62), encouraging them to apply learnt lessons (Q63), providing models of sound production (Q64), and encouraging them to monitor their own learning (Q65). As can be seen in Table 5.14, the most common role of the teacher is giving models (Q64: M=2.64, 65.1% for 'Regularly') followed by encouragement of language use (Q63: M=2.53, 58.6% for 'Regularly') and encouragement of self-monitoring (Q65: M=2.51, 56.6% for 'Regularly').

However, it is the teacher's act of discussing with individual students what they need to do to solve their pronunciation problems that has revealed one major difference between the strong and weak learner groups (Q62: 22.7% vs 57.5% of them choosing 'Regularly'). It can be concluded from the figures that the weak

learners received more attention from their teachers for problem-solving than their strong counterparts.

Table 5.14

Roles of the teacher – Mean scores and percentages of ‘Regularly’

		Q61	Q62	Q63	Q64	Q65
Mean scores	Whole	2.38	2.31	2.53	2.64	2.51
	Strong	2.27	2.09	2.36	2.68	2.50
	Weak	2.42	2.50	2.42	2.38	2.65
% of Regularly	Whole	44.1	42.1	58.6	65.1	56.6
	Strong	31.8	22.7	40.9	72.2	54.5
	Weak	46.2	57.5	50.0	38.5	69.2

5.6.5 Amounts of instruction

In this subsection of the questionnaire, the respondents were requested to indicate the amounts of instruction that their teachers provided for the eight pronunciations aspects (Q66 – Q73): vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, final sounds, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, and linking. They rated the amounts based on a scale from 1 (*Little*) to 5 (*A lot*). Table 5.15 below provides the mean scores and the percentages of scores 4 and 5 combined.

Findings show that the teachers seem to give quite equal amounts of time and practice in all aspects, among which the greatest is for word stress (Q70: M=3.97, 73% for scores 4 and 5 combined) and the smallest is for consonant clusters (Q68: M=3.38, 44.7% for scores 4 and 5 combined). Interestingly, results

also reveal that the two groups of strong and weak learners largely agreed with each other in responding to all the items in this subsection.

Table 5.15

Amounts of instruction – Mean scores and percentages of scores 4 and 5 combined

		Q66	Q67	Q68	Q69	Q70	Q71	Q72	Q73
Whole	%	61.2	60.5	44.7	62.5	73.0	64.5	56.0	50.7
	Mean	3.74	3.74	3.38	3.70	3.97	3.81	3.61	3.45
Strong		3.82	3.82	3.14	3.64	4.00	3.77	3.32	3.27
Weak		3.62	3.54	3.27	3.62	4.00	3.73	3.69	3.35

5.6.6 Teaching techniques and activities

The respondents were asked to rank the techniques, tools, and activities that their teachers used in the classroom according to their usefulness in helping them improve their pronunciation. They were also reminded that if a certain activity/tool was not used in their class, they should choose **N/A** (Not Applicable). Table 5.16 shows the mean scores for all items. The percentages of those who rated the techniques at 4 or 5 and those who selected **N/A** are also listed in the table since they do raise some issues.

First, findings show that the most useful technique is minimal pair drills (Q77: M=4.42/5, 88.2% for scores 4 and 5 combined), followed by IPA practice (Q80: M=4.36, 84.9%) and repeating after models (Q76: M=4.17, 76.3%). In contrast, the three least useful ones are using clapping and tapping (Q78: M=2.48, 27.6% for scores 4 and 5 combined), visual aids (Q75: M=2.89, 48.7%), and teacher's explanation of theoretical concepts (Q74: M=3.14, 41.4%).

Table 5.16

Teaching techniques and activities – Mean scores, percentages of N/A, and percentages of scores 4 and 5 combined

Teaching technique/tool	Whole population			Strong		Weak	
	Mean	% of N/A	% of 4 and 5	Mean	% of 4 and 5	Mean	% of 4 and 5
Q74: Teacher's explanation of concepts	3.14	6.6	41.4	2.59	27.2	3.35	57.7
Q75: Teacher's use of visual aids	2.89	18.4	48.7	2.73	45.5	2.96	42.3
Q76: Repeating after models	4.17	0.7	76.3	4.18	68.1	3.85	57.7
Q77: Minimal pair drills	4.42	2.6	88.2	4.64	100	4.12	73.1
Q78: Use of clapping and tapping	2.48	21.1	27.6	2.36	22.7	2.54	23
Q79: Teacher's use of songs, poems, etc.	3.22	13.8	54.6	2.82	50.0	3.12	53.9
Q80: Doing IPA transcription practice	4.36	3.3	84.9	4.36	77.2	4.42	88.4
Q81: Role-playing	3.59	6.6	59.9	3.45	54.6	4.00	73.1
Q82: Pair/group work	3.96	2.6	73.7	3.77	63.6	4.04	76.9
Q83: Watching films/video recordings	3.24	14.5	55.9	2.95	63.7	3.35	53.9
Q84: Dictation exercises	3.39	7.9	55.9	3.05	63.6	3.58	57.7
Q85: Playing pronunciation games	3.30	13.2	60.5	3.50	68.2	3.12	57.7
Q86: Teacher's use of Internet materials	3.66	7.2	65.1	3.45	68.2	3.50	57.7

Second, it can be seen that the proportions of respondents who reported that activities such as watching films and video recordings (Q83), learning through songs, poems, jokes, etc. (Q79), and playing games (Q85) were not used in their classes are quite high in comparison with the figures for the other classroom activities. 14.5% chose **N/A** for watching films/video recordings, 13.8% did so for learning through songs and poems, and 13.2% for playing games. The same situation happens to the use of clapping and tapping and visual aids – the two least

useful techniques in the view of the learners. In fact, this figure is the highest for these two items, at 21.1% and 18.4% respectively.

There are several differences in the mean scores of the two groups of strong and weak learners. Yet, the biggest differences can be found in two items: Q74 and Q77, when the percentages of respondents rating the techniques at 4 and 5 are combined. For one thing, weak learners find the teacher's explanation of theoretical concepts more valuable than strong learners (57.7% vs 27.2%). For another thing, doing minimal pair drills seems to be less useful for them than for their strong counterparts (73.1% vs 100%).

5.6.7 Use of feedback

In this part, the participants also rated the seven types of feedback they received from their teachers according to the usefulness for their learning. If a particular activity was not used by their teacher, they would choose **N/A**. Results show that in general, learners highly value immediate feedback (Q87), individual feedback (Q89), and delayed feedback (Q88); mean scores are 4.31, 4.26, and 4.12 and the percentages of those rating each type of feedback at 4 or 5 are 86.8%, 80.9%, and 77% respectively. However, they consider private feedback (Q92) the least useful, giving it only 2.78, with only 37.5 % rating it at 4 or 5. Table 5.17 shows the mean score and the percentage of the respondents selecting **N/A** as well as scores 4 or 5 for each item.

A comparison of the mean scores of the contrasting types of feedback leads to interesting findings. First, learners seem to not care about being interrupted, as

they prefer immediate feedback to delayed one. Second, individual feedback is far more useful for them than group feedback, with a mean score of 4.26 for the former in comparison to 3.34 for the latter. Similarly, feedback given in front of the class is much more highly valued than one given privately, their mean scores are 3.86 and 2.78 respectively. However, when the number of N/A responses is taken into account, the same phenomenon as in the previous section on teaching techniques and activities happens. Specifically, 14.5% of the students stated that their teachers did not provide any private feedback by selecting **N/A** as their answer to the question.

Table 5.17

*Feedback – Mean scores, percentages of **N/A**, and percentages of scores 4 and 5 combined*

Type of feedback	Whole population			Strong		Weak	
	Mean	% of N/A	% of 4 and 5	Mean	% of 4 and 5	Mean	% of 4 and 5
Q87: Immediate feedback	4.31	1.3	86.8	4.23	86.4	4.23	80.8
Q88: Delayed feedback	4.12	0.7	77.0	4.36	81.8	3.96	69.3
Q89: Individual feedback	4.26	1.3	80.9	4.18	81.8	4.04	65.4
Q90: Group feedback	3.34	6.6	53.9	3.18	50	3.35	61.6
Q91: Feedback given in front of the class	3.86	2.0	69.1	3.86	68.2	3.69	61.6
Q92: Private feedback	2.78	14.5	37.5	2.14	31.8	3.27	50
Q93: Teacher's encouragement of peer feedback	3.35	9.9	55.9	2.50	36.3	3.65	65.4

When the results of the strong learners' group were compared against those of the weak one, several differences were found. However, when the percentages

of participants rating the types of feedback at 4 and 5 were combined, two major differences should be noticed: teacher's use of private feedback (Q92: 31.8% of the strong learners vs 50% of the weak learners) and teacher's encouragement of peer feedback (Q93: 36.3% of the strong learners vs 65.4% of the weak learners). In other words, the weak learners seem to benefit more than the strong ones when their teachers correct students' pronunciation privately or when they create the opportunity for the students to correct each other.

5.6.8 Other issues

Near the end of the survey, the respondents were requested to assess the teaching materials being used during the course. In general, findings indicate that they were quite satisfied with the coursebook, as it did help to improve their pronunciation (Q94: M=3.19/4, 93.4% showing agreement) by providing a variety of exercises (Q95: M=3.22, 93.4% showing agreement) as well as allowing for self-study (Q96: M=3.05, 80.9% showing agreement). Similarly, when asked to give an overall evaluation of the pronunciation course itself, these learners were very positive about taking it. They stated that it was necessary (Q97: M=3.63/4, 98% showing agreement) as they could apply what they have learnt (Q98: M=3.38, 95.4% showing agreement) and have made some improvement (Q99: M=3.48, 93.4% showing agreement).

In response to the last question (Q100) regarding the specific benefits that the course has offered them, many of them mentioned improved pronunciation, speaking and listening skills, heightened confidence, and better future job

opportunities. Finally, a few of them suggested more contact with authentic speech through video clips and interaction with native speakers as well as a heavier focus on intonation and linking as ways to improve the course.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has presented key results from the survey which are drawn from the whole population to identify the general trends and from a comparison of two groups – strong versus weak learners – to detect any differences between them. This last section of the chapter is intended to provide a summary of important findings which have been presented earlier to create easy reference for the discussion in Chapter 7.

First of all, findings indicate that Vietnamese learners of English are affected more by extrinsic motivational factors, feel very positive about learning pronunciation but do not take much action to learn. They have big problems dealing with suprasegmental features, possess poor critical listening skills, can identify their own problems but do not use learning strategies very often to improve their production. A majority of them aim to have a native-like accent and think that this goal is achievable. Most want to study with a native speaker teacher despite their acknowledgement of the benefits of working with a non-native one. The non-native teachers in the pronunciation classes under research mainly provide models. They tend to focus on teaching word stress, which is considered by the learners the easiest feature to acquire. The respondents seem to value traditional teaching techniques over modern ones, which are mostly unavailable in class.

Private feedback given by the teacher is considered the least useful by the students while immediate and individual feedback is their favorite.

Survey findings also reveal that strong and weak learners are statistically different in a number of aspects. Intrinsic motivation is more important to strong learners while external factors, especially other people's views, have a greater impact on weak learners. Strong learners also possess some qualities, use pronunciation learning strategies that cannot be seen among their weak counterparts, and more often consider nativeness a learning goal to achieve. In contrast, weak learners are more heavily affected by the teacher in determining their goals and find private feedback as well as peer feedback more useful for their own learning.

CHAPTER 6 – KEY FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present key findings from the qualitative phase of the current study. It begins with a brief description of how the data collected will be analysed. It then goes on to provide important results from the eight semi-structured interviews with four strong and four weak learners recruited among the survey participants. The last section of the chapter summarises major points for ease of reference in the following discussion chapter.

6.2 Method of analysing the qualitative data

Regarding the qualitative study, data were analysed using content analysis – “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). First of all, audio-recordings from the interviews were transcribed and then translated into English. What the interviewees said was transcribed literally and then the transcripts were read over several times so that impressions could be formed and noted as these initial impressions have an impact on how the data would be coded later (Dörnyei, 2007).

In the next step, themes of analysis were identified and categories were developed using a deductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) in which inferences were derived from existing theories and prior research, which have been discussed thoroughly in the two literature review chapters. For example, for the first part of the interview, which addresses the factors that may affect learners and their

learning outcomes, the themes are learning motivation, attitudes, identity, skills, and strategies. For the theme of motivation, the categories used are “intrinsic factors”, “extrinsic factors” and their “effects on pronunciation learning”. Categories were also defined based on the key findings from the survey. For instance, for the theme of learning skills, the categories employed are “causes of poor critical listening”, “effects of poor critical listening”, “benefits of imitation”, and “strategies for improvement”, which are intended to further explain the survey results.

The coding scheme was generated using an inductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Firstly, after all the identification information was removed, both the transcripts and their translations were printed out. The Vietnamese versions of the responses were always displayed alongside the translations for immediate reference whenever there was a need to clarify or confirm understanding of a certain response. Secondly, open coding was done manually, with codes written on the right margin of the pages and analytic memos (Saldanã, 2013) kept in a notebook. The open coding task was carried out on four sets of transcripts – two strong and two weak learners (the weakest and the strongest in each group were chosen to allow for a variety in responses), from which stage a list of codes was generated. Then, the codes were grouped into the existing categories; however, several new categories were added as there were codes that could not be classified into any category and thus required new ones. The result of this categorization was the formation of a codebook, which was used to code all the remaining data. Nevertheless, new codes were also added if any piece of text

which seemed significant could not be labeled using the existing codes. The codebook was updated accordingly. (For a copy of the codebook, see Appendix 6)

After the manual coding was completed, the original (uncoded) data and the codebook were entered into NVivo – a qualitative data analysis computer software program, with which I did the recoding both to enhance the quality of the analytical task and to calculate the intra-coder index. At the same time, a sample of uncoded data and the relevant part of the codebook was given to a colleague of mine. She was asked to not only code the sample using the codebook but also suggest new codes if necessary. The coding consistency in both procedures was measured using Cohen's Kappa coefficient (<http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/recal2/>). Both the intra-coder consistency (0.83) and the inter-coder index (0.83) show good qualitative reliability (Creswell, 2014; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). Finally, coding queries in NVivo (finding all content labelled with selected codes) were made to identify patterns in the data. Based on those patterns, meanings and interpretations were drawn to address the research questions.

6.3 Profiles of the interviewees

The questionnaires completed by the eight interviewees were retrieved so that attributive information could be collected again and entered into NVivo for further analysis. For each of the participants, a profile was created by the software, which is exported and presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

Interviewees' profiles

Interviewee	Group	Gender	Age	Hometown	Length of study	Direct contact with NS
S1	Strong	Female	18	Ho Chi Minh City	5-8 years	No contact
S2	Strong	Male	18	Another province	≥ 8 years	No contact
S3	Strong	Female	19	Ho Chi Minh City	≥ 8 years	No contact
S4	Strong	Female	19	Another province	5-8 years	No contact
W1	Weak	Female	19	Another province	≥ 8 years	Little contact
W2	Weak	Female	19	Another province	5-8 years	No contact
W3	Weak	Female	19	Another province	≥ 8 years	No contact
W4	Weak	Female	18	Another province	5-8 years	No contact

6.4 Interview results – Part I – Learner factors and learning skills and strategies

The first part of each interview addressed learner factors and the skills and strategies that are employed for learning L2 pronunciation. This section aims to present key findings from the eight interviews, with subsections focusing on learner motivation, attitudes, identity, potential learning problems as well as the learning skills and strategies. In each subsection, responses from all the participants will be analysed before a comparison between the strong learner and weak learner groups is made.

6.4.1 Learning motivation

All eight interviewees were prompted to talk about the reason(s) why survey findings show that learners seem to be affected more by extrinsic rather than by

intrinsic motivational factors as well as how this trend influences their pronunciation learning. Three categories - EXTRINSIC, INTRINSIC, and EFFECTS – were developed based on these prompts while the codes were identified from the keywords in the responses. Data from the interviews show a corresponding trend to the survey findings. Five extrinsic factors, namely compulsory subject at school, the desire to impress others, influence from others, the usefulness of the subject, and a lack of choice for their college study (either to enter the school with the current major or wait for the next year's entrance exam) were brought up 16 times in total by the interviewees. Whereas, only one intrinsic factor – interest - was mentioned and only four times throughout all the responses.

Further probing into the effects of such a view of pronunciation learning reveals that although four learners feel that extrinsic motivation does help to generate more learning, it is intrinsic motivation that appears to lead to learning that is carried out by the learners themselves: (Note: S1 = Strong Learner 1, W3 = Weak Learner 3, and so on.)

... if I have difficulty, I can, for example, if I do not know a word, then I can look it up myself and then find out more information about it. (S1)

Or learning that happens more regularly and for a longer time:

... If I want to learn pronunciation well, I have to practice it every day. But I have no practice at all, so it is only because of the exam, only to pass the exams. (W4)

Or learning that is done more purposefully:

... I find that if I do not have passion, I do not learn enthusiastically, so everything is learned carelessly, without much attention. (W3)

So, learning that is generated by intrinsic motivation seems to be easier, more sustainable, and with more noticing. In contrast, almost none of the respondents identified such benefits from extrinsic factors.

The four strong learners were then asked to comment on the fact that according to survey results, all intrinsic factors received higher scores than extrinsic factors from the participants in the strong learner group. In response, they all downgraded or even rejected the influence of external motivation, saying that the most important issue in learning English pronunciation is interest, or to be more specific, the love for the language. They also pointed out that with interest, or passion, learning turns out to be easier (S1 and S4), enjoyable (S4), and interesting and long-lasting (S3).

Meanwhile, the four weak learners were prompted to explain why the item “I want to impress other people with my pronunciation” was considered the most important statement concerning extrinsic motivation by the weak learner group in the survey. The reasons given are better understanding in communication and more respect or affection from the listeners. Weak Learner 4 explained in detail as follows:

If you have good pronunciation, when Vietnamese people hear you, they like it, kind of admiring you. As for foreigners, when you have accurate pronunciation, they can understand you more easily; they feel more interested in talking to you. (W4)

If survey findings conclude that the desire to impress other people is a major difference between the two groups of learners, interview results seem to reinforce the conclusion, showing that for weak learners, this source of motivation can create

more learning by making them “try harder” (W1), “learn more” (W3), “practice a lot” (W2) both in class and at home (W4).

6.4.2 Learning attitudes

In this section, all eight interviewees were asked about the same issue: Survey respondents all have very positive attitudes about learning pronunciation but do now show strong intent to learn. The codes were grouped under two categories: CAUSES and EFFECTS. The interviews reveal a number of reasons why these students are reluctant to take action to learn. The first reason given is they are discouraged from learning. One student attempted to explain why the whole group had such an attitude, saying:

Some of them (my friends) are discouraged because they cannot pronounce a sound and then feel dispirited. For example, some of them with a local accent, or a problem with the tongue or something, will not be able to produce some difficult sounds of English. As a result, they may get discouraged. (S1)

This explanation seems to be echoed by other interviewees as well:

I do learn but ... I'm always wrong, so I start to feel bored, and want to get something else to do, and then forget about it. (W2)

... because there are many points that I practice a lot but still can't do them. (W3)

Besides, not being able to study with a preferred teacher was also listed as one factor that has led to the discouragement of learning.

The second cause of learners' weak intent is they get distracted from learning by a lot of factors, for instance:

Because now there are so many things that affect our lives like social networking, going out with friends... I can plan many things but there are many things that affect the plan and I cannot follow my plan. (S3)

... in general, there are times I try to study too but there is inconvenience of space. At the dorm, it's hard. Others look at me and then there is noise. (W3)

Then, half of the interviewees criticised themselves for being too lazy to learn while three of them identified insufficient motivation as a cause of weak intent, saying:

From thinking to action, it's far away. (laughing) Actually, there must be a lot of motivation to take actions (S1)

... really very often I sit down, open the book to study the sounds, how different they are, record my voice. In general, I have the motivation, but only in about a week, then the motivation starts to decrease ... (W2)

An interesting and also very important difference between the strong and weak learners is that while the majority of the former (three out of four) recognized laziness as a cause of their lack of intent to learn, all the members in the latter group tried to put the blame on others, either for demotivating (W1, W2, and W3) or distracting (W2, W3, and W4) them from taking actions to learn.

Two common effects of the attitude – being positive about learning but having weak intent to learn - were identified by the interviewees. Four of them said that they did not study enough and seven of them admitted that little improvement had been made in their learning, clearly identifying the consequences.

There must be determination in whatever we do. Theory must go with practice. If you like something, but take no action, then you will not get what you want. (S2)

Without actual practice, (or) training, it's (learning) impossible. (S1)

6.4.3 Identity

Survey findings reveal that identity loss is not an important issue for Vietnamese learners; therefore, this topic was not brought into discussion in the interviews. However, although there is no big difference between the responses to the identity-related questions by the strong and weak learners, I did ask the two groups of interviewees to talk about the difference in their desire to speak like native people for two reasons. First, I wanted to see if the eight participants shared the same views as the others in their groups regarding how much they wanted to have a native accent. Second, I would like to see if such views could affect the learning outcome. Accordingly, the codes used were those indicating the levels of desire (STRONG DESIRE, RESENTMENT, NO DESIRE, and so on), reasons for such levels of desire (PROFESSIONALISM, INSPIRATION, LOW ABILITY) and their effects on pronunciation learning (MORE LEARNING, NO GOAL LEADING TO NO MOTIVATION, NOT MUCH LEARNING).

The four strong learners were informed that the survey results show their group have a stronger desire to speak English like native people and feel more comfortable trying to do so and then were prompted to give comments on the findings. Unsurprisingly, all of them confirmed the view while Strong Learner 2 even expressed some resentment against people having a strong accent, saying:

So often when I hear a lot of friends speak (English) with a strong local accent, like those in the central areas, I do feel a bit uncomfortable. (S2)

The reason they gave for such a desire is a native accent can make them sound professional (S1), inspire them to learn (S2), or make them feel more like

foreigners (S4). More importantly, all four of them reported that this desire helps generate more learning as they will try harder (S2) and practice more (S1, S3, S4). Only one weak learner mentioned this effect in the response.

The prompt given to the four weak learners was that their group have a weaker desire to achieve a native-like accent and feel more uncomfortable trying to do so. All of them insisted that they were happy with an accent that was just adequate for them to be understood by others. What is more interesting is the explanations they gave for such contentment:

I feel like I do not want to speak like a native speaker. I feel that my pronunciation is fine. (W1)

I think I would not be able to do it (achieve a native accent). (W2)

I am a person who only learns to pass the course, or just to be understood by others. (W3)

Now I see my friends – and I do too - just want to pass the subject, because often during the revision for tests, in the process of study, we had some learning, but then, there was no more. (W4)

This does not mean that these weak learners are not aware of the impact of such a view on their learning. In fact, they did point out the negative effects that it had, saying that without an aim at nativeness, they found it very difficult to learn (W2) and just left their pronunciation as it was (W1). Moreover, Weak Learner 3 asserted that only a desire to speak like native people could create sustained efforts in learning.

6.4.4 Potential learning difficulties

According to the survey results, intonation, sentence stress, and consonant clusters seem to be the most problematic aspects for Vietnamese learners.

Therefore, in the interviews, I intended to get a deeper insight into this issue by asking the interviewees to explain why they found these features difficult to learn as well as how they were dealing with them. The codes used were grouped under two categories: CAUSES of learning difficulty and STRATEGIES for improving the problems.

A total of six causes were identified, but the three most common ones are the way English pronunciation was taught at high school (mentioned by five learners: S3, S4, W1, W2, and W4), the influence of the L1, especially the presence of tones in Vietnamese, (three learners: S1, S2, and W4) and the complex nature of the features (three learners: S3, W1, and W3). Remarkably, both strong and weak learners complained about pronunciation instruction at high school, saying that it was either hardly taught or taught in ineffective ways. For example, Weak Learner 2 gave some detailed description of how she was taught to produce intonation and consonant clusters at high school:

The teacher did not give much practice. If there was some, then she did not correct our intonation. She said just to say it correctly, just repeat it, just say it, as long as it is clear enough to hear, then that's it.

As for the word "play" ... in the old days, the teacher taught me like this: she divided the word into small chunks and asked us to read quickly.

In the past, I ... in general, I just listened to however the teacher said. She did not analyze this, like there are 3 sounds, for example. She just said "scream", then I just repeated after her. (W2)

To improve their problems, the eight interviewees reported using two types of strategies: six cognitive strategies (using English media, imitation, listening and critical listening, noticing, talking to oneself, and using computer software) and two

metacognitive ones (reading dictionaries and books and recording one's voice). No single strategy is used more frequently than the others. However, when the two groups of strong and weak learners are compared, it seems that strong learners tend to use more strategies than their weak counterparts. Findings show that four strong learners named the strategies 12 times, 10 of which belong to the cognitive category. In contrast, four weak learners mentioned them only seven times, three for cognitive and two for metacognitive strategies.

6.4.5 Learning skills

Survey results reveal that all learners are not very good at listening for contrast between acceptable and unacceptable production, i.e. critical listening; they are also found to have poor reflection and self-evaluation skills. This issue was revisited in the interviews when the participants were prompted to talk about why their skills were not good and how they were improving them.

Regarding poor reflection and self-evaluation skills, six interviewees admitted that these skills are hard to use. Strong Learner 2 and Weak Learner 4 went on to elaborate that they did not know how to assess themselves. Interestingly, Strong Learners 1 and 3 admitted that they were not very good at reflection and self-evaluation because of the fear of embarrassment. Strong Learner 3 said:

... I do not like to see my weaknesses to be pointed out, especially when I have to do it myself. It is quite shameful, so I also avoid being assessed either by myself or by others. (S3)

Not many learners can figure out a way to improve this weakness, according to findings. In fact, only four of them could describe what they were doing or would

do to train these skills. Strong Learner 2 said that he usually records his voice and then evaluates his pronunciation during playback. Comparing their own production with a model, either a human speaker or a machine, was the approach used by Strong Learner 4 and Weak Learners 1 and 3.

Critical listening seems to be the toughest issue for these learners to deal with when very little suggestion was given for its improvement. Only Strong Learner 1 said she would listen more to practice the skill. In addition, only three of them, all being strong learners, could explain why their skill was so poor. The reasons are the sounds are very close to each other (S2 and S4) and the Vietnamese language affects their ability to listen for contrasts (S1).

Survey results also indicate two major differences in the skills possessed by the two groups of learners: imitation and the ability to identify the differences between English and Vietnamese pronunciations. The eight interviewees were therefore asked to describe how such strengths or weaknesses affect their learning. Specifically, four strong learners were asked about the benefits of a good imitation skill. Two of them claimed that imitation means EFFECTIVE LEARNING (S2 and S3). Remarkably, all of them mentioned the natural acquisition of new forms, which I coded as the “INTERNALISATION” of the forms. For example,

(It is) very useful, because when I hear people say a word, I can imitate it and do exactly the same although I do not know how to shape the mouth or where to put the tongue. I can just do exactly the same. (S1)

For pronunciation, in a book, I can see a sound. I can even know how it should be produced, but when I actually make it, it's still wrong. Instead, I can listen to others say it and then imitate them. It is more effective. (S2)

The most common effect the four weak learners could attribute to their poor ability to identify the differences between the L1 and L2 is the acquisition of the wrong forms. In other words, instead of producing an English sound, they will make a Vietnamese sound, which they think is the same.

6.4.6 Autonomy

I wanted to get an insightful understanding of the possible causes of an important difference in the degree of autonomy each group has demonstrated: the selection of a method to study. Two different prompts were given to the two groups; both of which asked about the reasons behind the level of autonomy survey results have revealed for their groups and its effect on their learning. The codes were identified based on the keywords in the responses, for example, MOTIVATION, PREFERENCE, and PASSIVENESS for the reasons and SUITABLE LEARNING METHOD and SUSTAINABLE LEARNING for the effects.

On the one hand, the four strong learners were requested to explain why they were very autonomous in choosing how to study. Two of them (S2 and S4) responded that they took the initiative because they wanted to do what they liked, in this case being studying in the ways they preferred. Strong Learner 3 added that because of her passion for learning English, she was motivated to be autonomous in making decisions about her own study. All of them asserted that as a result, they could greatly benefit from the most suitable method for them, as individuals, to improve their pronunciation. Strong Learner 3 elaborated:

There are people who learn pronunciation more effectively when they hear other people say things, but there are people who will learn

more effectively when reading things. So when you are autonomous, you will find the best way to learn to develop skills in the best way. (S3)

Ultimately, the participants think that this level of autonomy can lead to sustainable learning (S3) and of course, better outcome (S1, S2, and S3). They also said that they did not do much self-evaluation because they might be either satisfied with their performance (S1) or embarrassed to point out their own weaknesses (S3).

On the other hand, the four weak learners were asked why they did not take initiative in choosing how to learn. Weak Learner 3 replied that she just did whatever she was taught to do and spent little time finding out more outside class, which was coded as PASSIVENESS. Two other respondents (W2 and W4) admitted that even if they wanted to do some further study, they did not know what they should do apart from “listening and reading along” (W4), which was coded as a “LACK OF KNOW-HOW”. Regarding the high level of attention paid to self-evaluation, the explanation given was the constant awareness of their own problems, as Weak Learner 4 described:

Because it's sort of like...I pay attention, I speak poorly, so I am afraid, so I always think I am not good at this, I am bad at that. (W4)

Then, the effects are predictable: they realised that they did not have a suitable approach to studying (W3), which led to unsustainable learning (W2 and W4) and finally a poor outcome (W1, W3, and W4). Weak Learner 3 concluded:

We do not actively find one (method) that is good for ourselves, that suits us better, then we will not make progress. No matter how much self-assessment we make, it will not change the situation. (W3)

6.4.7 Learning strategies

First of all, the eight interviewees were asked to explain why they do not use pronunciation learning strategies very often, according to the survey results. Four codes were retrieved from the responses: INSUFFICIENT EFFORT / MOTIVATION, INSUFFICIENT TIME, LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, and LAZINESS. Three of them (S2, S3, and W3) said that they did not have much passion for learning the language, so they did not spend time applying any strategies to their study. Even when they did make use of some at the beginning, they were not motivated to employ them long enough to see any progress, and thus became discouraged and stopped using them (S2). The short length of the pronunciation course (S4 and W4), a lack of knowledge about pronunciation learning strategies (S1 and W2), and their laziness (S2 and W1) are the other reasons they mentioned for the infrequent use of learning strategies.

Then, the two groups of interviewees were asked about the major differences in the survey results: Strong learners use English media and talk aloud to themselves more than weak learners to practice their skills. Strong Learners 1, 2 and 3 all mentioned two keywords, which became two codes: INTEREST and MOTIVATION. They explained that using English media to learn pronunciation was more interesting than working with textbooks; Strong Learner 2 added that it was like a hobby. Then because they were doing what they liked, they were motivated to learn better. In contrast, the four weak learners said that talking aloud to themselves did not help much to improve their pronunciation. Instead, they chose

to communicate with others to learn in order to get feedback on their performance (all four of them) and to avoid boredom (W2).

6.4.8 Other difficulties

At the end of the first part, the interviewees were given the opportunity to talk about any other difficulties that they have encountered in their learning. The responses were categorised into two groups. The first group, which is recognized as “learner-related problems” consists of issues that are personal such as their inferiority complex and their physical or psychological conditions. The other group, which is termed “subject-related problems” refers to issues that pertain to the academic subject itself, in this case being English pronunciation, and its teaching or learning, such as its complex nature, the course length, or the learning context. It is both interesting and important to see that while all four weak learners have learner-related problems and three of them have subject-related problems, the four strong learners only reported the difficulties concerning the subject itself. To be more specific, the weak learners found it difficult to learn pronunciation because of an inborn problem with their voice (W1), a fear of talking to other people, which affects their production (W3), a lack of goal in study (W2) or an inferiority complex about her pronunciation (W4). Meanwhile, findings also reveal that English pronunciation is considered to be a hard subject to learn due to the complexity of phonetic transcription (S2), the insufficient length of the course (S3 and W1), some specific features (final sounds for W3 and /ʊ/ for S1) and especially the problem

with spontaneous speech (S3, S4, W3, and W4). This is what Strong Learner 3 said about her pronunciation problems in spontaneous conversations:

Maybe at that moment, I can look at a word and I can remember it, but later, when I say the whole sentence, or in a conversation with others, then I will forget it. I forgot how to pronounce the word. I can learn and remember that, for example, in this sentence, it is important to stress this word, but at the time I use that same sentence in a conversation, then I forget everything. I have had that problem many times already. (S3)

6.5 Interview results – Part 2 – Teacher-related factors

The second part of each interview is intended to seek an insightful understanding of key results from the survey regarding the impact the L2 pronunciation teacher and his or her instruction has on learners and their learning. This section of the chapter presents key findings from the eight interviews, with subsections focusing on learning goals, language models, teaching content and focus, teaching techniques and activities as well as the use of feedback. Similar to Part 1, responses from all the interviewees will be examined before a comparison between the strong learner and weak learner groups is made.

6.5.1 Learning goals

All the participants were asked to discuss an important trend in the survey results: The majority of learners still want to speak like native people. They were prompted to confirm their learning goal again and give an explanation for such a goal. Findings echo what is indicated by the survey results: seven of them reported aiming for a native accent in learning English pronunciation. Several reasons were provided, among which the two most popular ones are what was coded

PROFESSIONAL / CONFIDENT and PERCEIVED BETTER ENGLISH. To be more specific, three interviewees said they would like to have a native accent as it could make them sound professional and feel more confident in communicating with others. Three others stated that being able to speak like native people was considered to be speaking better English, for example:

When I hear two people talk, although both are good at English, but with the one speaking English like a native, I will feel that person is better. (S1)

When the two groups of interviewees are compared, two differences, though not very obvious, should be taken into account. First, while all the strong learners insisted on nativeness as their goal, Weak Learner 4 admitted that despite a preference for a native accent, she knew it was impossible to achieve it, and so was only aiming at being understood by other people. Second, the strong learners gave a variety of reasons for their answers, which are quite personal and unique, such as having a good feeling when speaking like native people (S3), or wanting to be like their idols, who speak English with a native-like accent (S4). Whereas, the weak learners mentioned two common reasons, which seem to represent what they lack: better proficiency (W1, W2) and confidence in communication (W1, W3).

One student explained:

I want to be more confident in communication. Back then, I was in middle school trying to communicate with foreigners. I was very afraid (shy), partly because my pronunciation was not good. (W3)

The eight learners were then requested to define a native-like accent, as I noticed that they might have got confused between a native accent and an accurate pronunciation. Unsurprisingly, four of them mentioned “correct, fast,

fluent, or skillful” speech as qualities of nativeness, but seven of them could not give a clear definition, or even confuse it with intelligible speech. This is how some of them replied:

I think that speaking a native accent means making the sounds in their ways, rather than ... (He didn't finish it.) (S2)

A native accent is when I say uhm...I also do not know how to describe it. (S3)

A native accent is when you say something, people will sort of like understand it immediately. They do not have to ask what you are saying, what you are talking about. (W4)

This question is a bit difficult. (Silence...laughing...) (W3)

6.5.2 Language models

According to the survey results, the majority of learners are not happy with the teacher's non-native accent and almost all of them would like to study pronunciation with a native speaker. The fact is they all worked with Vietnamese teachers of English in their course, so I would like to find out what happened. The eight interviewees were first encouraged to share what they thought about having a pronunciation teacher with a non-native accent. Findings show that for three of them (S1, S3, and W3), it does not matter what accent the teacher has, as long as it is accurate. However, the remaining five students appeared to be quite critical about the issue. For one thing, the presence of a native speaker in the classroom is a source of interest or even inspiration for them to learn (S2, S4, and W4). They said:

I am the kind of person who likes foreign things. I think a foreigner will be able to create more inspiration for me. (S2)

There is nothing wrong, but when I study, I mainly think that if I study with a native speaker, I will sort of like enjoy learning more than studying with a Vietnamese. (W4)

More seriously, a lack of trust in the teacher's ability was mentioned as a reason for their view. Weak Learner 4 made a comparison as follows:

Because they are foreign teachers, they are Americans, English people teaching English. We are taught by foreigners; when we listen to them, we believe they speak correctly. In contrast, non-native teachers... sometimes I have the feeling that ... each of them speaks a different way, so I do not know who has correct pronunciation. (W4)

The teacher with a non-native accent was even blamed for the learner's inability to achieve nativeness in learning:

When I learn pronunciation, I want to speak like foreigners, but because my teacher does not speak that accent, I cannot imitate them. (S4)

The participants were also asked about any benefits they had from learning pronunciation with a Vietnamese teacher. The two most common benefits acknowledged by them are the teacher's knowledge of L2 learning and potential problems (S1, S2, S4, and W3) and the ability to pass on useful learning methods and experience (S1, S2, and W3).

When the two groups of learners were compared, two differences were identified. First, it is only the weak learners that expressed doubts about the accuracy of the non-native teacher's pronunciation; the strong learners just reported feeling bored. Second, while most strong learners named a benefit of working with a non-native teacher, two weak ones (W1 and W2) did not and another (W4) only appreciated the possibility of using the L1, which seems to be irrelevant in an L2 pronunciation classroom.

6.5.3 Teaching content and focus

The survey findings show that while the teacher spends a lot of time teaching word stress, it is considered the easiest feature to learn by the students. In the interviews, the eight participants were asked to give comments on such a focus and its effects on their learning. In response, they attempted to explain the teacher's action. The most common reason, mentioned by four learners (S1, S3, S4, and W4), is a lack of understanding of students' needs, for example:

I think the teacher did not understand which the students are weak at, which students need to practice more, so that's why they went in the wrong direction. (S1)

Another reason given by three learners (S2, W2, and W3) is that the decision on what to teach was made based on students' performance in class. For example, according to these learners, teachers tend to do this:

I think ... as the outsiders looking inward, when teachers see we are making mistakes, they will correct us and pay more attention to that issue. Meanwhile, for the consonant clusters, for example, the teachers listen to us speak and they think it seems to be okay, then they do not pay much attention. (S2)

Or, this:

I feel it is partly due to the performance of students ... generally not all of us can learn, so teachers often pay attention to teaching the things that most students can learn. (W3)

As a result, a couple of effects were recognised, being not learning what is needed (reported by six interviewees) and unwilling self-study (S3 and S4).

A comparison of the two groups of learners reveals two differences. Firstly, while most strong learners attributed the teacher's focus on word stress to a lack of understanding of students' needs, the four weak learners were inconsistent,

giving a variety of explanations ranging from the teacher's not understanding what the students need (W4), or making a decision based on students' performance (W2 and W3) to teaching what is tested (W1). Secondly, while all the strong learners complained about not receiving the instruction they need, which led to unwilling self-study outside class, only two weak learners shared the same criticism. The other two (W3, and W4) found it acceptable for the teacher to so do, saying that it did not harm their learning.

6.5.4 Teaching techniques and activities

Only one prompt was used in this part of the interviews to seek an understanding of the learners' preference for traditional teaching methods, as indicated by the survey results. Three reasons were given, coded as EASIER/SAFER TO LEARN, TEACHER'S SOLE USE, and LESS TIME-CONSUMING. Findings show that traditional methods are considered more useful to most participants (6 out of 8) because they think it is easier or safer to learn pronunciation in those ways. Let's see how they explained their opinions.

First, it is easier to learn because:

... when I just started learning, I did not know much, did not understand much. So ... if I watch a movie, then I have to ... too many words, too many sentences, as a result, I do not study carefully. But when she uses the traditional style, it is shorter, there is less (material), so it is easier to learn. (S4)

They will create a better foundation, compared to singing a song when you are not yet ready for it. (S2)

And it is safer to learn:

In my case, I prefer traditional methods because I'm not confident about them. I still want to do repetition. It's like a safe solution. (W2)

Many responses echo survey findings, pointing out that students do not find modern techniques useful because they are not available. This is what happened in their classrooms:

I think it's not that students like the traditional methods; it's just that the teacher used only such methods. She did not use any modern ones at all, no songs, games, role play or any movies. Students do not know the modern ways of learning. (S1)

Two respondents (S4, and W1) also attempted to explain why their teachers did not use modern techniques in class, saying that playing games or watching a movie was very time consuming while they had too much to study.

6.5.5 Use of feedback

This sub-section of the interviews has two purposes: to find out why private feedback seems to be the least useful to learners, according to the survey results, and to explain the two major differences between strong and weak learners: the latter find private feedback and peer feedback more useful than the former.

Regarding the first issue, five out of eight respondents stated that they did not receive any private feedback from the teacher; therefore, they could not say if it was useful or not. The other three explained why this type of feedback did not work for them. Strong Learner 1 referred to a situation in which the teacher gives feedback privately to prevent the student from feeling ashamed, but the student does not feel that way and just wants public feedback. In a different situation, Weak Learner 4 admitted:

Though it's good, it feels like being criticized, so it's ...For example, I feel afraid of the teacher's attention, so in class, I do not want to see the teacher privately. (W4)

Not less interestingly, Weak Learner 1 reported that she did get some private feedback from her teacher, but still thought that it was not useful because:

... I mean she just gives me the method, but when I go home and practice it myself, that's a different story. (W1)

One difference between the two groups of learners is discovered here. As has been discussed so far in this section, the strong learners did not value private feedback because they did not get any of it, whereas the weak learners did get some, but they did not find it of much use due to several reasons given above. Another difference between the two groups is the use of peer feedback. Survey results indicate that the weak learners gave higher scores for this type of feedback than their stronger counterparts. A closer look at the responses has provided some explanation. This is what the strong learners said about peer feedback:

Depending on who my partner is. When I have a partner who is not very good, then I will show her how to speak. If my partner and I are both good, we talk to each other. (S1)

And here is what the weak learners got from interacting with others:

There was a sentence I did not understand ... I asked her how to make it. She corrected me and then I repeated it. (W3)

... when I communicate with others, for example, if I say something wrong, they will point out the mistake, which helps me correct my pronunciation. (W4)

The important point here is that in class, the weak learners tend to take the role of the recipients, getting from their peers' feedback which is helpful for them, while the strong learners often take the role of the givers, thus receiving less feedback for themselves.

6.5.6 Likes or dislikes about the L2 pronunciation teacher

At the end of this second part, the interviewees were encouraged to tell the researcher what they liked or disliked about their pronunciation teacher. The two groups of learners are quite different in responding to the prompts. Regarding the positive evaluation, only Strong Learner 2 had something to say about the teacher, which is her “very good pronunciation”. In contrast, all four weak learners could name a quality that the teacher possesses: good pronunciation (W1) and careful guidance (W2, W3, and W4).

When the negative points are examined, the difference is not very apparent. Although almost every one of them has a dislike about the teacher, the nature of the complaints might be different. The strong learners are not happy about a traditional teaching style (S2), a fast pace of teaching (S4), and a lack of practice provided (S1), which all seem to pertain to the teacher’s pedagogical skills. For the weak learners, it is what affects them personally and individually that matters: the insufficient briefing about the tests, which was blamed for her low scores (W4) and the teacher’s insistence that the learner repeat a single sound until it is done correctly, which made her embarrassed.

6.6 Interview results – Part 3 – How learning happens

The last part of the interviews was not built on survey findings; rather, it was exclusively generated from the review of the literature on second language pronunciation learning theories, which helps to seek an insight into how Vietnamese learners are learning English pronunciation in class and outside class.

There are three subsections, with the first one aiming at identifying which learning theories, identified in table 6.2 in sub-section 6.6.1 below, apply to the context under research, the second one examining the learning activities taking place in an L2 pronunciation classroom, and the last one investigating the outside class activities that might contribute to success in learning. Unlike the previous two parts, data in this part was analysed only to detect the differences between the two groups: strong and weak learners.

6.6.1 Second language pronunciation learning theories

Seven statements representing seven L2 learning theories were read to the interviewees. They would listen, say whether they were true for them or not and, if possible, give some explanation or examples. Table 6.2 reports how many participants in each group found the statements true for them.

Table 6.2

L2 learning theories – Number of TRUE responses

THEORY	Number of TRUE responses	
	STRONG LEARNERS	WEAK LEARNERS
Interaction	4	4
Learnability	1	1
Natural order	4	4
Monitor hypothesis	3	2
Role of L1	2	2
Comprehensible Input	4	1
Comprehensible Output	4	1

On the one hand, learners of the two groups reacted similarly with regard to four learning theories: interaction hypothesis, learnability, natural order hypothesis, and the role of L1. First of all, they all acknowledge the benefit of talking to others in learning English pronunciation, saying that by interacting with others, they can get feedback on their production (S1, S2, S4, and W2), have more practice (S1, W2, and W4), learn new features by listening to others (W1 and W3) and ask questions in order to correct themselves (S3).

Second, for most of them, all pronunciation aspects can be learned with sufficient effort. They asserted that:

... if I try my best, making great efforts, then I can get it all. (S1)

It is not that I will never be successful. It just takes a long time. (S2)

Third, they all agreed that certain features should be taught prior to the others. More specifically, pronunciation learning should take place in an order described below:

Learning should begin with basic vowels, consonants, and then stress, then sentence stress, and then intonation. (S1)

I think we should start from the basic then move on to the advanced. For example, I learned to put stress in a word first, then learned to place stress in a sentence, then moved on to a paragraph. (W4)

Finally, it is not clear whether an interlanguage phonology has come into existence in the learning process experienced by these learners. Only half of them admitted making a similar sound which is easier to produce when a certain sound is too difficult to make. The other four students insisted that there was no need to do so:

... it may be hard initially, but after a while, I can do it if I practice a lot. I do not necessarily make a similar sound. (S1)

No, I do not feel right about this. If I meet such a sound, I will first turn on my tablet, I turn on the speaker to listen to its pronunciation, or I will ask the teacher how to say it. The teacher will guide me to make it. (W3)

On the other hand, the remaining three theories manifest differently between the two groups of learners. A slight difference can be found with the monitor hypothesis, which applies to three strong learners, who reported constantly paying attention to what they say so that they can immediately correct their mispronunciation. This is true for only two weak learners; the other two said they either were unaware of their mistakes (W4) or did not pay attention to their pronunciation unless other people pointed out their errors. (W2)

It is with the last two learning theories – comprehensible input and comprehensible output - that more pronounced differences can be observed. They both apply to all the strong learners but to only one weak learner. The strong students explained that challenging materials motivated them to try harder and thus make more progress while the weak ones said that this type of material just put them in a bad mood and discouraged them from learning. Similarly, the strong learners reported consistently noticing the differences between their speech and the others', which subsequently led to self-correction. In contrast, most of their weak counterparts could not make use of this type of output as they needed other people to tell them their mistakes and even how to correct those mistakes.

6.6.2 Pronunciation learning activities taking place in the classroom

The interviewees were asked to watch five short video clips taken during the session they studied with the researcher. To be more specific, they depict the students listening to some model extracts, working in pairs or receiving feedback from the teacher, or the teacher modelling a stress pattern or emphasizing her mouth movement in producing a feature. Then the participants were encouraged to recall and described the activities they did during those moments. The codes used are the names of the learning activities listed in Table 6.3, which presents the number of learners who reported doing such activities.

As can be seen from Table 6.3, both groups of learners did many similar activities in learning pronunciation such as repetition, noticing, or observation. However, there are several different activities which may have contributed to the different learning outcomes. First of all, while listening to audios, during the teacher's modelling of a certain feature or even when working with a partner, if the weak learners reported just paying attention and then repeating or imitating the model forms, the strong learners said that they also made a comparison between their production and the model – either the audio or the teacher's production – to assess their own performance.

Table 6.3.

Pronunciation learning in-class activities – Number of responses

	ACTIVITY	Number of responses	
		STRONG LEARNERS	WEAK LEARNERS
While listening to audios	Repetition/Imitation	4	3
	Noticing	3	2
	Comparing with model	2	0
During T's modelling	Repetition/Imitation	4	4
	Noticing	3	2
	Comparing with model	1	0
	Visualisation of production	2	0
Upon seeing T's mouth movement	Imitation	4	4
	Observation	3	3
During pair work	Getting/Giving feedback	4	4
	Learning from giving feedback	1	0
	Comparing with model	1	0
When receiving feedback	Noticing	3	4
	Fixing mistakes	4	3
	Applying	2	0

6.6.3 Self-study activities

Regarding self-study of L2 pronunciation, the eight interviewees were prompted to talk about how they arrange the time outside class to improve their

skills, what learning activities they do for practice, and whether they use any technology for learning. Table 6.4 summarises their responses to these prompts, from which three important differences can be identified. The most important difference seems to be whether they have a schedule or at least some time allocation for pronunciation practice outside class. While only two weak learners mentioned some arrangement, all four strong learners reported allotting some time exclusively for pronunciation training. For example:

I study in the evening, mostly watch the foreign programs ... Or, sometimes, before, I often played the pronunciation training clips made by a foreigner named Rachel ... Not very often, 2-3 times a week. (S1)

I practice pronunciation 3 times a week, for 0.5 hour each time. If I'm free, I can do the activities for 45 minutes or 1 hour. (S3)

The second difference is in the use of technology for self-study. The four strong learners listed a number of multimedia technologies such as the radio, TV, the Internet, audio and video recordings while the two weak learners mentioned only “Protalk” (W2) (which is actually a computer application for English communication training) and “easy animation movies” (W3).

Finally, it is quite surprising to see that while only one strong learner listens to music or watches movies to practice English pronunciation, all four weak learners stated that they did these activities. The concern here is why this activity has not helped them much in improving their accent, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

I sometimes also listen to music. I look at the lyrics and I sing along... Of course, I notice the meaning first, and then I listen to the song many times. I will listen to the whole song once, then I notice people's pronunciation to see how different it is in singing and speaking. (W1)

I watch short video clips, then if some words are difficult to pronounce, I pay attention, then I look them up in a dictionary and listen to them again. (W3)

Table 6.4

Self-study – Number of responses

	ACTIVITY	Number of responses	
		STRONG LEARNERS	WEAK LEARNERS
Time arrangement for pronunciation learning	Regular practice	4	2
	Taking extra classes	1	1
Outside class learning activities	Practice with friends	3	2
	Listening to music/Watching movies	1	4
	Joining clubs	2	1
	IPA practice	0	1
	Self-recording	0	1
Use of technology for learning	Multi-media tools	4	2
	e-dictionary	1	1

6.6.4 Other influential factors

At the end of the interviews, the eight participants were asked if any experiences influenced the learning outcome or any people that motivated them to study. The responses were categorised into two types: people-related factors and non-people related ones. There is a big difference between the two groups of learners. For the first type of factors, only Weak Learner 2 mentioned her brother and a senior at university as her idols, who inspired her to make efforts in learning.

In contrast, all four strong learners named an idol, from Taylor Swift, a teacher at college, a friend, and a senior student at school. Strong Learner 3 even had her sister as a guide whom she practiced with at home. More importantly, the second type of factors can only be found among strong learners, who said that the interest in doing and learning what they like as well as the evidence of progress in learning motivated them to sustain their study and achieve success.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has presented key results from the eight semi-structured interviews. This last section is intended to provide a summary of important findings which have been presented earlier to create easy reference for the discussion in the next chapter.

First of all, findings from the interviews either provide reinforcement of or insights into survey results. Data show that although more extrinsic factors are mentioned by the interviewees, it is intrinsic motivation that leads to more learning. Learners' weak intent to study may be caused by demotivators, distractors, laziness, or insufficient learning motivation. The pronunciation instruction they received at high school has had a serious negative impact on their current learning. According to these learners, reflection is a hard skill to acquire whereas critical listening is difficult to employ because of the closeness between the sounds. In addition, issues related to motivation, availability of time, and knowledge of know-how have given rise to the infrequent use of learning strategies. They prefer having a native language model in class, complaining that a non-native teacher may

cause boredom or a lack of trust in them. They also attribute the teacher's focus on teaching word stress to a lack of understanding of students' needs. Additionally, they explain that traditional teaching techniques are easier or safer for them to learn and that private feedback is not useful as it is not available in the classroom.

Second, data from the eight interviews also help to identify other differences between weak and strong learners. The latter blame themselves for being too lazy to take action to learn while the former put the blame on others. With a greater desire to speak a native accent, strong learners are more highly motivated to learn. To improve their skills, they use more strategies to deal with their problems and the good qualities and skills they possess have helped them achieve better outcomes. In contrast, weak learners express doubts about the ability of the non-native teachers and see very few benefits from learning with them. They tend to learn more by talking to others and find private as well as peer feedback more useful as they receive more of it than their strong counterparts.

Last but not least, results from the interviews show that learning might take place differently between strong and weak learners. These two groups react differently regarding the three learning theories: the monitor hypothesis, comprehensible input, and comprehensible output. In class, strong learners do more cognitive and metacognitive activities. Outside class, they differ from the weak learners in the way they arrange the time for practice and the use of technology for self-study. Finally, their learning experiences, including their interest, the existence of an idol, and feeling of improvement seem to have contributed to their success in learning.

CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings from both the survey and interviews in light of the three research questions, which are restated below for ease of reference.

1. What difficulties do Vietnamese learners encounter in learning English pronunciation?
2. To what extent do teachers facilitate or hinder the process of learning pronunciation?
3. What do successful Vietnamese learners do to improve their English pronunciation?

There are three main sections in this chapter, with each focusing on one research question. In each section, the discussion draws on the integration of results from both the survey and the semi-structured interviews, which have already been presented in the previous two chapters.

7.2 RQ1 - What difficulties do Vietnamese learners encounter in learning English pronunciation?

7.2.1 Learning motivation as a potential problem

Several issues can be raised from the findings identified in Chapter 5. Firstly, the survey respondents gave motivational factors very high scores, and the interviewees actually used the term “motivation” 49 times throughout all the conversations, which might imply that learners do find motivation essential in

learning L2 pronunciation. In fact, previous studies have lent support to this view. Dewaele (2013) puts it at the heart of language learning, and Jenkins (2000) insists that learner motivation is crucial in dealing with unteachable phonological features. The question is if Vietnamese learners are quite motivated to learn English pronunciation, then can it be concluded that this factor has helped them to learn it more successfully? This does not seem to be what is happening in Vietnam, since although learners are highly motivated, many of them are still unintelligible to others, as has been described in Chapter 1.

In fact, another issue demands our attention here. Dörnyei (2005) claims that motivation “provides the impetus to initiate L2 learning and ...sustain the long and tedious learning process” (p. 65). However, what should be noted here is that while Dörnyei discusses motivation in general, findings from the current research indicate that only intrinsic factors like interest, preference, and eagerness to study can bring these benefits – independent, regular, and focused learning, as pointed out by the interviewees - despite the abundance of extrinsic factors that are named by the same group of respondents. This may reveal one problem Vietnamese learners are facing in learning English pronunciation: while intrinsic motivation is more useful for successful learning (Smit, 2002), they seem to be more externally motivated. This type of motivation could cause them to not retain or sustain their learning, especially outside the classroom, where there are few opportunities to use the language for real-life purposes, or after the compulsory course, when there is little pressure to continue practice.

Sardegna et al. (2014) have admitted that “researchers have only begun to address domain-specific motivations in relation to intrinsic and extrinsic motives” (p. 164). Studies like Smit (2002) and Smit and Dalton (2000) have attempted to establish the constructs of the two types of motivation and briefly mentioned the need for the existence of intrinsic motivation in learning L2 pronunciation. Then, the different effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors on pronunciation learning are one research aspect that my thesis has contributed to. Its findings may help to bring this issue to the attention of other experts in the field.

7.2.2 Learning attitudes as a potential problem

Results from both the survey and the interviews have, to some extent, supported Mitchell et al.’s (2013) conclusion about the role of attitudes in L2 pronunciation learning: positive attitudes alone are not a strong predictor of success in learning. For one thing, the subjects in the current study all acknowledge the importance of learning English pronunciation, similar to what Seyedabadi et al. (2015) found in their research. However, while Moyer (2007) and Smit (2002) advocate the usefulness of positive attitudes in successful pronunciation learning, my findings are not in line with their claim. I would like to quote Weak Learner 3’s response here to define the problem that many Vietnamese learners may be facing: the absence of a willingness to take actions to learn.

No matter how positive my thoughts are, if I do not have practice, the outcome will remain unchanged. I will not be able to make any progress.

Last but not least, learning attitudes are linked to motivation. In other words, a lack of motivation may lead to little actual learning despite a positive attitude and hence undesirable outcomes. In this research, it can be seen that although learners are aware of the importance of having good English pronunciation in their study as well as future career, many of them are not sufficiently motivated to carry out enough learning for their skills to be improved. As a consequence, a failure to reinforce a positive learning attitude with adequate and appropriate motivation may create another problem for learners, since without motivation, learners will possibly not take action, and thus little learning will take place, as has just been explained above by Weak Learner 3.

7.2.3 Potential difficulties in learning different L2 pronunciation features

The results from the survey show that Vietnamese learners find it more difficult to deal with supra-segmental features, especially intonation and sentence stress. This contradicts what Derwing and Rossiter (2002) found in their study with 100 students speaking 19 different first languages, the majority of whom reported more problems with segmentals than with supra-segmentals. Yet, no conclusion can be made from this comparison for two reasons. First, the teachers in my research might have focused more on teaching supra-segmental features, especially word stress, so their students might have encountered more difficulties learning them due to greater amounts of exposure to the features. Derwing and Rossiter, however, provided no information about the focus of instruction that their subjects received. Therefore, their subjects may have spent more time learning

segmentals and thus may have had more problems dealing with them. Second, as already pointed out in Chapter 2, the fact that little research has been done on determining which of these two components of the phonological system is perceived to cause more trouble to learners, and the divided findings from the only two studies – Derwing and Rossiter (2002) and mine – cannot form any definitive conclusion and thus demand more research be done on the topic.

In addition, the findings from the interviews reveal three major reasons why the respondents find intonation, sentences stress and consonant clusters difficult to learn: the complex nature of these features, the influence of the L1 and, the most important of all, the pronunciation instruction that they received at high school. First of all, it seems to be true that some features are really difficult for Vietnamese learners to acquire, for example, the fricatives *s*, *z*, *ʃ*, *ʒ*, *ð*, and *θ* and the affricates *dʒ* and *tʃ*, listed most by the survey respondents. This finding is echoed by Ha's (2005) study, which claims that the absence of the features *ʒ*, *ð*, *θ*, *dʒ*, and *tʃ* in the Vietnamese sound inventory, the misperception of sound aspiration, and the inability to distinguish between aspiration and friction are the causes of their difficulty in learning these sounds.

For the second cause given by the interviewees, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) provide a useful explanation in saying that L2 learners have to reconceptualise the patterns they have internalized for the L1 system. In this case, Vietnamese learners of English need to realise that English is a polysyllabic, stress-timed language which has different intonation patterns, unlike Vietnamese, a monosyllabic language with six tones. In addition, they might even have to form

new categories for the English sounds ð, θ, dʒ, and tʃ, which do not exist in the Vietnamese phonological system. This reconceptualisation is obviously not an easy task for them to perform.

Last but not least, the majority of the interviewees considered the way English pronunciation was taught in high school as a main cause of their current learning difficulties. What can be recognized from their narratives is a lack of practice and feedback, the use of inappropriate methods, or even the absence of pedagogy (when the teacher was reported to just tell the students “*just to say it correctly, just repeat it, just say it*” while teaching intonation). This is, however, not surprising in the context of Vietnam at the moment, when there is less than one year to the conclusion of the National Foreign Language Project 2020, the Ministry of Education and Training reports that only 69% of English teachers nationwide are linguistically qualified (H. Nguyen, 2019), with many of them struggling with speaking skills in general and pronunciation in particular. In other words, if even the teachers themselves do not have good L2 pronunciation, should they be expected to know how to teach pronunciation features and actually teach them effectively?

7.2.4 Poor critical listening as a potential problem

The survey respondents admitted they were very poor at distinguishing between different sounds and comparing their own production to that of a native speaker, which fits in with Couper (2015) and Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011)’s definitions of critical listening: the ability to listen for the contrast between

acceptable and unacceptable phonetic realisations and to identify features that may harm comprehension while comparing their own production to that of native speakers. To add to this problem, responses from the interviews reveal that most learners do not understand why they have such difficulty, and, unsurprisingly, they hardly know what to do to improve it. I tend to believe that learners' poor critical listening skill may be related to or even result from a poor ability to reflect on and assess their own pronunciation, which is, according to the survey results, their second worst skill. Not being able to judge their own production, comparing it against a model, and then identifying their own problems might make them too dependent on the presence of the teacher, whose feedback is often inadequate or even unavailable. This might lead to limited learning taking place outside the classroom, which is essential for successful outcomes.

7.2.5 Lack of autonomy in assessing learning progress as a potential problem

Monitoring and assessing one's learning progress is part of the quality of an independent learner (Holec, 1981; McCrocklin, 2016). The fact that the group of Vietnamese learners of English in this research does not show a high level of autonomy in evaluating their own acquisition of the L2 phonology might contribute to their current modest success in learning. The reasons for the lack of autonomy in self-assessment might become a hindrance in their learning. For instance, the satisfaction with their own performance can stop them from getting even better while the embarrassment about looking at their own mistakes may prevent them from improving existing problems. In addition, not knowing where they are on the

learning path may make them lose some other traits of autonomous learners: setting new learning goals and defining what contents to study in the next steps, which, in turn, will reduce sustainability in learning and thus negatively affect the learning outcome.

7.2.6 Infrequent use of learning strategies as a potential problem

The survey results reveal that the most popular frequency at which the group of learners in this research use pronunciation learning strategies is only “sometimes”. This can be considered a major problem for them, as many researchers emphasize that using learning strategies actually contributes to improvement in L2 pronunciation learning (Akyol, 2013; Mirza, 2015; Sardegna, 2011, 2012; Smemoe & Haslam, 2013). A look at the four reasons given by the interviewees for their infrequent use of strategies – insufficient motivation, insufficient time, lack of knowledge, and laziness - has given rise to several other questions. First, when learners admit that they are not highly motivated enough or even too lazy to use learning strategies more often, are they aware of the benefit of their use in learning L2 pronunciation? Pawlak and Szyszka (2018) insist that better learning outcomes can only be achieved if learners recognise the need to improve strategy use. The subsequent question is whether learners know what strategies are available for use in learning the target language phonology and how and when they should be used. The concern does not stop at this point; in fact, we can even ask if teachers are knowledgeable enough about this domain to teach their students about it. The discussion so far has led to an important conclusion:

the use of pronunciation learning strategies may be considered one of the biggest problems Vietnamese learners of English are facing.

7.2.7 Other potential problems

While a number of other potential difficulties were named by this group of learners, two other problems might be worth more consideration: the insufficient length of the course and, first and foremost, the problem with the performance of spontaneous speech. With regard to the lack of study time, it seems that a short course of 45 instructional hours is barely enough for students, especially those weak ones, to be confident with all aspects of English pronunciation. A related issue is when an intensive course like this is not available and pronunciation instruction is integrated into the syllabus in the form of a section in each lesson or unit, then the problem may become even worse when teachers, who tend to focus more on other parts of the lesson such as grammar or vocabulary, might spend little time teaching the pronunciation, or even ignore it, which I found happening to the learners in my preliminary study described in Chapter 1.

Last but not least, the failure to make accurate production in spontaneous speech situations seems to be quite a frequent issue with my informants as many of them mentioned this in their responses. To be more specific, section 3.3.5 of Chapter 3 of the current thesis provides a detailed review of the literature, showing that in many previous studies, pronunciation instruction may lead to learners' improvement at a controlled level but not a spontaneous level. One possible explanation is related to the problem just discussed above: the lack of study time.

In other words, there is not enough time for the newly learnt forms to be automatized, which demands that learning and practice be sustained outside and/or after the course so that production in spontaneous speech can be made. This, in turn, requires sufficient motivation and appropriate learning strategies of learners, which have been identified as other two potential problems as well. In addition, Krashen (2013) claims that pronunciation instruction might lead to conscious learning, but not acquisition of the new phonological system, which hinders successful performance in spontaneous situations. Then the questions are: What is needed to generate acquisition? What is lacking in the current instruction? There is definitely a lot of work for L2 pronunciation researchers to do until some reasonable answers can be found.

7.3 RQ2 - To what extent do teachers facilitate or hinder the process of learning pronunciation?

7.3.1 The choice of teaching approaches and its effects

The survey results show that these learners are being taught mainly in the intuitive-imitative and analytical approaches. In other words, they are almost always asked to listen and repeat after the models as well as encouraged to try to understand meta-linguistic aspects such as the structure of the forms (sounds, stress patterns, and intonation patterns), their distinctive features, and their functions. It is unclear which of the two approaches is used more frequently because the questions in this section are closed-ended. However, several important issues can be raised here. Firstly, is it enough for learners just to listen and repeat in order to acquire the accurate pronunciation of the L2? Secondly, is

it possible to ask learners to analyse the L2 phonological forms without teaching them the necessary relevant meta-linguistic knowledge and hence terminology? If there were still a need to teach them such knowledge and terminology, would there be enough time for the teacher to do so while the participants already complained that there was not enough time and practice in class?

Thirdly, and most importantly, the fact that the integrative approach, in which pronunciation is incorporated into each lesson of other skills, is not employed by the teachers in this study gives rise to several concerns. On the one hand, it is still unclear why those Vietnamese teachers of English do not use the integrative approach in class. The answer is most likely a lack of time, which has been mentioned throughout the interviews by most participants who said that they had to study too much in each session and that their teacher had to teach so many lessons to each class that they did not have time to do anything else other than the exercises in the book. However, another possible explanation is the teacher's lack of pedagogical knowledge of and guidance for the integration of L2 pronunciation into their language classroom. This weakness may have made the teachers resort to more traditional approaches for L2 pronunciation teaching.

On the other hand, many researchers believe that L2 pronunciation and practice should involve the exchange of meaningful information via communicative activities (Pennington & Richards, 1986) in context and in conjunction with other language skills such as speaking and listening (Hinkel, 2006; Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Moghaddam et al., 2012). However, the lack of such activities in the classrooms under study could explain why many learners reported not being able to remember

and then produce certain features accurately in their talks or conversations despite their hard work on such features in class. As such, the teaching approaches being used in those classes may not have facilitated more successful learning.

7.3.2 The teacher's effects on the learning goals

It is worth noticing that the results in the current section correspond to those in section 5.5.3 on identity. First, the majority of the respondents aim at nativeness in learning English pronunciation while it was reported earlier that these respondents would like to be identified as having a native-like accent. Also, the survey results show the learners found it comfortable trying to achieve such a goal in learning, probably because, they consider it a realistic target to aim for as well as an indication of their professionalism, confidence, and achievement in learning English, as revealed by the interviews.

The focus of this section is the teacher's impact on how these learners determine their learning goals. The survey results show that their teachers did tell them a native-like accent is achievable and even encourage them to aim for it. While a great deal of recent research (Gilakjani, 2012; Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Moghaddam et al., 2012; J. M. Murphy, 2014) claims that this goal is unrealistic, irrelevant, and unfair, it is still quite popular in Vietnam. I have a personal experience related to this choice of learning goal when I presented a talk on intelligibility as a new goal in learning L2 pronunciation at a conference and was confronted by a Vietnamese teacher of English who said that the ultimate goal of learning English pronunciation is to speak with either a British accent or American

accent and that being merely intelligible is not adequate evidence of mastery of the language.

This personal experience, together with the finding that most interviewees, either strong or weak learners, do not seem to be clear about what a native accent is like and how different it is from an intelligible accent has made me ponder upon several issues. If many of these learners cannot define a native accent, then can their teachers do so? Taking into account the current proficiency levels of the majority of the teachers in the country, if they do not understand what a native accent is, but still claim they have one, then what kind of pronunciation do they have and what are they trying to teach their students? In terms of identifying a learning goal, if these learners are affected by their teachers to such an extent, would it be more beneficial for them if the goal were intelligibility, not nativeness, as they might be more motivated to learn when dealing with possibly easier tasks and feel more accomplished? To sum up, the point made here is that the teacher's guidance on setting an unrealistic learning goal might have hindered their students from getting better results.

7.3.3 The non-native teacher as an L2 language model

There seems to be a conflict in the learners' responses to the questionnaire. Why do they still find it unacceptable for pronunciation teachers to speak English with a non-native accent despite their acknowledgement that those teachers can be good models? Why do they still want to study from native teachers despite the distinctive benefits given by the non-native ones? The results from the interviews

may provide possible answers to the questions, thereby raising several interesting issues.

On the one hand, the competence of the non-native teacher might become one of the biggest concerns once pronunciation is under discussion. The lack of trust in the non-native speaker teacher's accent may be caused by the learner's subjective belief that only the so-called native accent is correct pronunciation and thus should be the language model in the classroom. Alternatively, learners may have high expectations of their teacher, who, as a language model, should have a native-like accent, and if he or she does not, then their ability could be doubted, or even blamed for any low achievement in the students' studies, as revealed by the findings from the interviews.

On the other hand, the preference for native speaker teachers may have nothing to do with their competence in comparison with that of their non-native counterparts. As just presented in the previous section, most of these students are aiming at achieving a native-like accent, and this target might have caused them to have a prejudice towards any non-native accent, especially the one spoken by their pronunciation teacher, who is supposed to speak the L2 natively. In addition, and once again, learning motivation may come into play. Native speaker teachers, carrying with them unfamiliar, supposedly interesting looks, characters, and stories, may become a source of motivation for learners to study better.

Another possible explanation for learners' negative reaction towards their non-native teachers is that they may have mixed up a non-native accent and a non-standard accent. In other words, they may not understand that a native accent

can be unintelligible while a non-native one can still be accurate. As a result, for learners, a non-native language model is undesirable and considered unbeneficial for their study.

7.3.4 Roles of the teacher in the pronunciation classroom

In comparison to a number of tasks that the teacher, as a coach (Morley, 1991), should play in a communicative classroom into which pronunciation instruction is integrated, the teachers in the classes under research mainly focused on giving models and encouraging language use as well as self-monitoring, as revealed by the survey results. The other acts such as helping learners set goals and solve their problems, planning for real-world practice, and providing constant support, which are more learner-centered and thus may contribute to a better learning outcome, received less attention. It is quite obvious that a lot of L2 pronunciation learning takes place outside the classroom and demands high levels of learner autonomy, motivation, and use of learning strategies. However, by mainly giving models and encouraging learners to use what they have learnt without helping them to plan for improvement and providing them with the know-how, the teacher does not seem to be playing a beneficial role in the L2 pronunciation learning process.

7.3.5 The teaching contents and focus and their effects on the learning outcome

The first issue to consider is the fact that while the participants reported having more difficulties learning some features than others, according to the

results presented in section 5.5.4, in the current section, the survey findings indicate that the teachers provided mostly equal amounts of instruction in all aspects of L2 pronunciation. This gives rise to a concern as to whether they are aware of their students' learning problems. To be more specific, the teachers focused most on word stress while the students found it the easiest aspect to learn; in contrast, whereas the students considered consonant clusters the third hardest feature, the teachers gave this aspect the least attention in class. In fact, the findings from the interviews seem to give a conclusion, made by half of the participants, that the teachers did not understand or were not aware of the students' needs.

A look back at the literature discussed in Chapter 3 discloses an interesting situation: the learners' perception of what is easy or difficult to learn seems to be in line with Jenkins' (2000) *Lingua Franca Core (LFC)* as well as Walker's (2010) suggestion of what should be taught. According to these two researchers, word stress is not important for international intelligibility and does not need to be learnt; however, consonant clusters may harm intelligibility and thus requires explicit instruction. In contrast, the teachers' focus on word stress is supported by other researchers such as Dauer (2005), who claimed that this feature, which is the prerequisite for learning other core aspects such as aspiration, vowel length, and nuclear stress, is too important to be excluded from the *Lingua Franca Core*.

Though it is still inconclusive as to which features are more important to teach, what is of concern here is a disparity between the teacher's and the learner's views of what to teach and learn. This lack of understanding has led to some

negative effects on the learning outcome, as indicated by the interviewees. Until more thorough knowledge of what should be taught in a pronunciation class is available, a needs analysis may be an action the teacher should take in order to produce a better outcome.

7.3.6 The teaching techniques and activities and their effects

The most important point drawn from the findings from both the survey and the interviews is that the learners tend to value conventional techniques and tools (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010) over more innovative ones. Activities such as watching films and video recordings, playing games, and using materials from the Internet are not favored by these students. The question is whether the participants do not highly appreciate such techniques and tools because they are simply not very useful for learning English pronunciation, or because the learners do not have much experience learning with them due to the teacher's ineffective use or even non-use of them in the classroom.

Findings from the interviews actually reveal that the problem lies in the way these techniques are used by the teachers. Although some of them did attempt to use the techniques and tools in their classrooms, they may not have the necessary pedagogical knowledge and so do not know which technique to use for which purpose and in which situation, causing the students to feel unconfident or even insecure while learning in the new ways and eventually they did not benefit much from them. Moreover, the lack of sound pedagogy and practical guidance could also be the reason why the teachers even did not use these more innovative

techniques and activities in class, despite their awareness of their availability and benefits. This phenomenon is not unusual, as Szyszka (2016) has described: many teachers report knowing a variety of techniques but still use reading aloud and repetition more often than other methods.

7.3.7 The use of feedback and its effects on the learning outcome

Based on the survey findings, it can be argued that these students love to have their (mis)pronunciation corrected by the teacher, and they want to be corrected immediately and individually. While it is not unusual for teachers to limit giving feedback on learners' pronunciation due to reasons such as time constraint, a lack of know-how, and the doubt about the effectiveness of its use (Baker & Burri, 2016), these results, which show the learners' appreciation of receiving feedback from their teachers, have reinforced Lee, Jang, and Plonsky (2015)'s finding that corrective feedback does contribute to improvement in L2 phonological acquisition. In so doing, the quantitative study of the current thesis, to some extent, has made a successful attempt to fill in the gap, which was identified in Chapter 3 regarding learners' perspective on the type of feedback they prefer to get while learning L2 pronunciation.

Going even further, the interviews have encouraged the learners to elaborate on their preference, in this case being the unexpected low value attributed to private feedback. Two possible explanations can be considered here. First, echoing the high number of N/A responses given to the question related to private feedback in the questionnaire, a majority of the interviewees insisted that

they did not receive any of this type of feedback from their teachers, so they could not say whether or not it was useful for their learning. Second, the difference between the teacher's cognition and the learner's perception of what is useful for learning can be called on once again here. Similar to what Cathcart and Olsen (1976, as cited in Baker & Murphy, 2011) and Baker (2011) found out in their investigation of both teachers and learners' views on the use of feedback, while teachers are reluctant to give feedback on learners' errors, especially in front of their peers, thinking that doing it privately can be more beneficial, learners appear to prefer to receive corrective feedback explicitly and more frequently. With these students, being corrected in front of others could mean they can get immediate feedback on their performance, and the classroom might also be a safe environment where they find it comfortable to receive feedback from their teachers.

7.4 RQ3 - What do successful Vietnamese learners do to improve their English pronunciation?

7.4.1 Successful learners possess certain qualities, skills, and strategies that may help achieve better outcomes

Firstly, though several researchers like Brown (2008), Moyer (2014), Tominaga (2009), and Young (2009) name motivation as one of the effective factors on L2 pronunciation learning, it is not always mentioned by them what type of motivation is working in their contexts. The current study has briefly addressed the gap. It can be seen from the survey results that the two groups of participants are motivated by different factors. The interview results confirm the finding that intrinsic motivation is more important to the strong learners, who explicitly rejected

the value of extrinsic motivational factors. These learners seem to study mainly because of their passion and interest in learning, which could contribute to sustainable learning outside the classroom and after the course. For the weak learners, although the desire to impress others may lead to more learning, it is uncertain whether this learning will last long, as admitted by the participants themselves. This is the first difference between more successful learners and less successful ones.

Secondly, Young (2009) lists attitude as one variable that can determine success in language learning. The split in the interviewees' explanations for their weak intent to study can be considered another difference between successful and unsuccessful learners. While the weak learners usually blame others, the strong learners seem to take responsibility for their learning, which is similar to what Tominaga (2009) found among the successful pronunciation learner subjects selected in his study.

Thirdly, successful learners are found to be better at imitation than the unsuccessful ones, which, consequently, may lead to the internalization of new forms. This is an interesting finding as there are contrasting views of the role of language aptitude, which includes imitation, in L2 pronunciation learning. Hence, more research is needed on this aspect. Besides imitation, these two groups of learners also differ in their ability to tell the differences between the L1 and L2. As it is believed that learners need to conceptualize, discriminate and categorize sounds before being able to reproduce them (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Kissling,

2014; Rogerson-Revell, 2011), the weak learners' poor ability to discriminate L1 against L2 sounds has probably hindered their learning.

Fourthly, the interview results have provided clear explanations for the achievement of the strong learners. They have done part of what Holec (1981) expects to see in autonomous learners: taking the responsibility for selecting methods and techniques. Thanks to this incorporation of choice in learning, their interest, and eventually, their motivation is heightened, which may facilitate better outcomes, similar to what Tominaga (2009) found in his study. One important point to make here is one reason the weak learners gave for their lack of initiative in choosing how to learn: "not knowing what to do". So, autonomy as a success factor needs to be thought of with caution, since learners may not be aware of what methods and techniques are available as well as which of them will work for them and thus are unable to make a decision.

Finally, the differences in the employment of learning strategies by the two groups of participants may have created a discrepancy in their achievements. On one hand, the use of English media seems to play a key role in determining the learning outcome, as it is believed to heighten learning motivation, especially in this case being intrinsic motivation: the participants mentioned "interest" and "hobby" in their responses. On the other hand, while the strong learners usually talk aloud to themselves to practice their pronunciation, the weak learners find it useless and boring to do so and then resort to getting feedback from others through communication. In other words, the strong learners appear to be more independent

than the weak ones and thus can study alone, which makes learning more convenient and sustainable for themselves.

7.4.2 Successful learners perceive the influence of the teacher differently

It is undeniable that L2 teachers themselves and the instruction they deliver have certain impacts on learners and their learning. The current study finds that these influences are dissimilar for strong and weak learners, which may contribute to the different levels of achievement. First of all, the survey results show that a native-like accent seems to be a personal goal of more strong learners than weak ones while the latter group appears to be more affected by their teacher. In other words, the successful learners seem to know what they want, set it as their goal, plan for it, and are motivated enough to work hard towards it. In contrast, the unsuccessful ones may only try to work towards what the teacher sets out for them without knowing whether it is achievable or not and thus can be demotivated once little progress can be seen.

Secondly, and interestingly, the weak learners show a lack of trust in their non-native speaker teacher's pronunciation, neither do they recognise any benefits from learning with such a teacher. Their stronger counterparts, in contrast, still find it beneficial, in one way or another, to study with a non-native teacher. This might indicate a heavy dependence on the native language model among the less unsuccessful learners. This could result from the belief in nativeness as a proper learning goal and a lack of guidance from the L2 teacher regarding the legitimacy of intelligibility as an alternative goal in learning pronunciation. The successful

learners seem to be less reliant on the teacher as a language model, probably because they have other resources such as English media where they can access as well as make use of native models, which has been mentioned in the previous part of the thesis.

Thirdly, the interview results show that the weak learners perceive what the teacher focuses on teaching in the classroom as appropriate and reasonable while the strong ones are more critical of what is taught. They actively reflect on their own learning and then expect the teacher to respond more closely to their needs. In other words, for the successful learners, there is an element of choice and relevance (Tominaga, 2009) regarding what should be taught and learnt. In contrast, the less successful learners, once again, appear to be more reliant on the teacher, accepting what is provided without much questioning.

7.4.3 Successful learners learn differently

In terms of learning theories, three differences can be identified between the two groups of learners. First, as regards the Monitor hypothesis, the interview results show that more successful learners than unsuccessful ones consciously monitor their pronunciation. The fact that they regularly pay attention to their own production so as to correct themselves may allow them to improve their skills without depending much on others such as the teacher or friends for help - in the form of feedback. However, this difference might not be a determining factor as two weak learners also reported monitoring their speech without making much

improvement in their accents. This goes in line with Krashen's (1982) remark that conscious learning only has a humble role in second language performance.

It is with the theories of comprehensible input and comprehensible output that more prominent differences can be witnessed. On one hand, working with challenging materials – one form of comprehensible input – is said by the strong learners to enhance their motivation, which has been proved to be essential to success in learning. On the other hand, upon paying attention to the dissimilarities between their own production as well as others' – a form of comprehensible output (Swain, 1985, 1993, 2000) – these strong learners have gotten aware of the gaps in their performance and then take actions to fill those gaps to improve their skills. The weak learners seem unable to do so as they cannot detect their own problems and fix them accordingly but, once again, depend on others for feedback and help.

It can be seen from the survey results that both strong and weak learners use quite similar learning strategies and prefer the same teaching techniques and classroom activities used by the teacher. However, the interview results may help to explain why there is a difference in their achievement levels. The activities reported to be done by only the strong learners – comparing with models, visualization of production, learning from giving feedback, and applying - could facilitate learning. While making a comparison between their pronunciation and that of a model, learners are actually listening to the forms critically as well as analyzing any discrepancy between the two voices. Upon visualizing their production, the learners seem to be editing their production even before it is made. Giving feedback actually can help the learners improve their skills through having

to pay attention to others, analyzing their production, identifying errors, and most importantly, knowing how to fix those errors. Finally, applying what they have learnt in class in other situations may give them the opportunity to revise the newly learnt form, practice it, and eventually internalise it. All of these might explain why weak students may sit in the same class, study the same lesson, do the same activities such as “listen and repeat”, but cannot make as much progress as the strong learners can.

Another aspect where differences between the two groups can be found is self-study activities. Probably the most important difference that is believed to have led to dissimilar learning outcomes is all strong learners have regular practice outside the classroom while not all weak learners do so. When learning is sustained after class, and maybe even after the course, more success can be expected. Besides, it is interesting to see that the strong learners use multimedia tools such as audios, videos, and the Internet whereas their weak counterparts choose to listen to music or watch movies for learning. There are two questions I would like to ask, both of which, unfortunately, might not be answered satisfactorily in this thesis, and thus demands further research. First, are multimedia tools more useful for learning L2 pronunciation? If so, what makes them better? Second, just as the strong students are exposed to the native accent via the multimedia tools they use, the weak students do get access to native language models while listening to music or watching movies, then why can't much progress be seen for them? One possible explanation is by looking at what they actually do during those activities, so the same situation can be seen when the weak students do not use

the techniques employed by their strong counterparts, as has been discussed in the previous section.

7.4.4 Successful learners are inspired to learn

It could be a little repetitive yet still important enough to elaborate on what motivates successful learners to learn, which cannot be found among unsuccessful ones. The interview results show that all four strong learners have an idol who they look up to while learning. If a friend, a sister, and a senior student can be seen as role models for learning, the singer and the teacher's accents could be regarded as a specific learning goal they are working towards. This is what is lacking among most weak learners, some of whom actually admitted that they did not know why they had chosen to major in English for college study. Finally, the interview results reinforce the finding that intrinsic motivation such as interest seems to be more useful in helping learners achieve better outcomes. It may also look quite obvious that the strong learners can easily see their progress and thus are motivated to study even better while the weak learners, with their problems, can hardly see any improvements in their performance and get demotivated. However, the issue is the role of the teacher, who should help the weak learners set more achievable goals so that they can experience their progress and get motivated to learn better. I will discuss more about how teachers could do this in the next chapter.

7.4.5 Summary: a profile of the good pronunciation learner

The current thesis is attempting to sketch a profile of the good L2 pronunciation learner, specifically Vietnamese learners of English. This job has

been done by a few researchers whose studies focus either on the “whole learner” or just a specific aspect. Table 7.1 provides a comparison of the profile suggested by this thesis against those proposed by four other researchers: Brown (2008), Moyer (2014), Szyszka (2015), and Tominaga (2009). My profile is believed to be more detailed, describing the successful learner from many perspectives including their skills and qualities, their perception of the L2 teacher, and the way they study the L2 phonological system.

Table 7.1

Profile of a good pronunciation learner

	Moyer (2014)	Szyszka (2015)	Brown (2008)	Tominaga (2009)	My profile
Qualities, skills and use of strategies	- A high level of motivation		- Internal motivation	- Motivation	- Intrinsic motivation (interest, evidence of progress)
				- Responsibility	- Responsibility
					- Autonomy in selecting learning methods
	- Greater cognitive flexibility		- Sound imitation		- Imitation - Ability to distinguish between L1 and L2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A conscious and selective approach to strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forming and using hypotheses - Reading reference materials - Doing listening-based activities, repetition, imitation, and singing songs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of English media - Talking aloud
Perception of the teacher					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less reliance on the teacher for language models and learning contents
How they learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a target 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a personal goal
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having role models
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to authentic input and interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living in an English speaking country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to use the language 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular practice

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conscious monitoring of performance - Use of comprehensible input and output - Use of cognitive activities: comparing, visualizing, applying, etc.
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First, in terms of qualities, skills, and use of learning strategies, my profile of successful pronunciation learners is similar to that of Brown (2008), Moyer (2014), Szyszka (2015), and Tominaga (2009) in that they are motivated to study, take responsibility for their learning, are good at imitation and some cognitive skills, and use several strategies to learn. However, my profile differs from the others in that the learner displays autonomy in selecting appropriate methods of study.

Second, while the other four researchers do not mention the influence of the teacher on successful learners, my profile shows that they are more independent. In fact, they do not consider the teacher the only L2 model available, nor do they readily accept what is taught by the teacher, instead expecting the teacher to respond to their needs.

Last but not least, it is in the way successful learners learn that my profile has remarkable differences from the others. While Brown (2008), Moyer (2014), and Szyszka (2015) emphasize the importance of the abundant availability of authentic input and opportunity to use the L2 in real life, which is obviously absent in my context, my profile stresses the role of regular practice in successful learning. In addition, my profile also identifies the learning activities that successful learners often do during their study.

CHAPTER 8 – IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This last chapter of the thesis aims to provide implications corresponding to the findings discussed in the previous chapter. These implications are intended not only for L2 pronunciation teachers but also for teacher trainers, program/syllabus designers, and policy makers. However, the ultimate goal of such implications is for the empowerment of L2 pronunciation learners, facilitating their learning and helping them achieve better outcomes. Towards the end of the chapter, the limitations of the study will be identified and suggestions for future research will be made accordingly.

8.2 Implications

8.2.1 Intelligibility: a more achievable learning goal

Findings from my research show that most Vietnamese learners aim to speak English with a native-like accent, which is also found to cause the weak learners to become demotivated as it is unrealistic and thus unreachable. Therefore, learners need to be informed that a native-like accent is not the only target to reach. Teachers need to explain to them that an intelligible accent is more practical, reasonable, and achievable and that this accent is now widely accepted all over the world as English has become an international language of science, business, education, and so on. Once learners have selected intelligibility as their

goal in learning English pronunciation, they may see more progress in learning and thus become motivated enough to continue learning.

As seen in my findings, the L2 pronunciation teachers in Vietnam do not seem to have helped the students set an appropriate goal for better learning to take place. Actually, to be able to positively and constructively impact learners' goal setting, especially the weak ones, the teachers themselves need to believe in the validity of intelligibility as a learning goal. They need to change their mindsets about teaching English as an international language used by different people for different purposes, which calls for the acceptance of intelligibility as a more practical and desirable learning goal. At this time, when this thesis is on the verge of completion, the whole world has been affected by a pandemic for more than three months and in many places, classes, including English classes, have been conducted online. In this context, it is just undeniable to teachers, and also to others, that in a conversation, it is more important to be comfortably intelligible than to be able to speak like native people. Only after teachers understand this new principle in communication will they take appropriate actions to inform learners of and guide them towards setting a suitable goal for themselves, which is expected to contribute to higher motivation and thus more learning.

8.2.2 The independent learner

My profile of successful Vietnamese learners of English pronunciation shows that they tend to be more independent of their teachers. In turn, teachers can generate and facilitate such independent learning in several ways. To start

with, teachers need to enhance learner motivation, which has been mentioned in the results as an important factor for learning to happen and be sustained both inside and outside the classroom, during and even after the course. It would be unfair to ask teachers alone to do this job, as learners may be motivated or demotivated by different factors; however, as one integral part of the learning process, teachers can make a considerable contribution to heighten learner motivation. According to the results, giving more feedback, using innovative techniques such as games and movies or video clips for teaching, incorporating English media and technology into classroom activities are some examples of what teachers can do to inspire their learners.

Second, my profile shows that success factors include autonomy in choosing how to learn, the use of interaction for study, and the presence of regular and sustainable practice. Therefore, teachers should make students aware of the benefits of actively selecting appropriate learning methods, the importance of dynamically engaging in solitary as well as interactive learning activities, and the necessity of continuing study outside the classroom and after the course. This awareness-raising task can be done in some creative ways, not necessarily in the form of teacher-talk. For example, teachers may organize a class discussion in which students are asked to suggest different ways they have used or think they can use to learn certain features more effectively. Also, teachers may purposefully use both solitary and interactive activities in class during a period of time while asking students to keep a diary in which they reflect on how each activity has worked for them.

Last but not least, for the development of independent learners, and for sustainable learning to take place, Vietnamese learners need a lot of know-how, as my findings show that many of them do not know what strategies and techniques or tools are available, nor do they know how to use them. To be more specific, they need to know how to plan their study based on their own needs, carry out their learning using appropriate strategies, techniques, and tools, monitor their progress, and assess their performance. All of this requires sufficient information and thorough training, which should be delivered by teachers. The following suggestions can help teachers do this job more easily.

First of all, teachers can inform their students of the potential of using an ASR dictation program such as Google Voice Typing for assessing their own production, especially segmentals, for getting feedback and for practice outside the classroom as this program “may now rival human listeners particularly for free speech” (McCrocklin et al., 2019, p. 197).

Next, several apps and websites can be introduced to students for their self-study, but teachers need to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each of them. The following list provides the names of some of the latest technologies reviewed at the 10th Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching conference held at Iowa State University in September 2018.

- ELSA Speak – an application for reducing non-native English accents (Becker & Edalatshams, 2019)

- English Pronunciation – a mobile application using multimodal features and voice recording function to facilitate the development of learners' pronunciation (Goodale & Yang, 2019)
- ImmerseMe – an online language learning platform offering language instruction in a variety of virtual reality-based settings (He & Smith, 2019)
- RachelEnglish.com – a combined website, podcast, and online course (Silva dos Santos, 2019)
- Sounds of Speech 3.0 – a free online website providing a thorough introduction to the segmental features of American English (Fattany & Elnegahy, 2019)
- Sounds: The Pronunciation App – a mobile application that helps strengthen students' ability to match English phonemes with their IPA symbols (T. Elliott & Baghestani, 2019)

Besides, a dictionary is a handy and economical tool for learning pronunciation yet it seems to be underused. Teachers should explain to students which information in a dictionary is about pronunciation and how this information can be used for self-study. Teachers should also remind students to make use of the digital tools accompanying the most recent versions of dictionaries. These can be a CD-ROM, an online website as well as an application, which always include resources for pronunciation practice, but which are often ignored by learners.

8.2.3 The resourceful teacher

If learners need to be motivated to learn better, teachers do need to be motivated to teach more effectively, thereby helping learners achieve better outcomes. Vietnamese teachers of English need to be inspired first to integrate pronunciation into their classroom, then to apply new methods and techniques to their teaching. This inspiration can come from the confidence about having the right pedagogical knowledge and skills for teaching English pronunciation. One way to enhance their confidence is to provide them with easier access to pronunciation teaching course books, which will allow them to teach themselves and develop their skills. For example, English Phonology and Pronunciation Teaching (Rogerson-Revell, 2011), Teaching Pronunciation: A course book and reference guide (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010), and Tips for Teaching Pronunciation: A practical approach (Lane, 2010) are some examples of such course books. In addition, the website Pronunciation for Teachers (<https://www.pronunciationforteachers.com/>) administered by John Levis is a useful resource which offers teachers academic support ranging from theoretical materials such as journal articles, books, and conference papers to more practical ideas like teaching tips techniques and teaching tips.

One issue raised by this thesis about pronunciation instruction is the teacher's underuse of tools, techniques, and technologies, partly because they do not know what is there, or because they do not know how to use them. Therefore, teachers need to be provided with updated information about available teaching materials, methods, and techniques as well as practical guidelines so that they can

use these effectively in their classrooms. This type of training should be conducted regularly, either face-to-face or via an e-learning system, in the form of physical workshops, conferences or webinars, and online courses, which can be provided by the schools themselves, the provincial departments of education, and prestigious publishers. For instance, schools can send their key teachers to the Pronunciation in Second Language Learning & Teaching Annual Conference, where they can approach the latest trends in L2 pronunciation research, teaching, and learning, and practical teaching tips that they can bring home to apply to their classrooms as well as share with their colleagues. More economically, teachers can attend the Vietnam Association of English Language Teaching and Research (VietTESOL)'s annual convention where there are usually talks on pronunciation topics. Additionally, the Teach English website (<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/>) hosted by the British Council provides plenty of webinars and tips for teaching English pronunciation. Cambridge Teacher Development Online Courses (<https://www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish/teacher-development/online-courses>) include a 20-hour course on teaching vocabulary and pronunciation and a 5-hour course on teaching pronunciation. These are relevant resources for their professional development.

Furthermore, as shown in this thesis, Vietnamese students may not trust their English pronunciation teachers because of their non-native accents. So, teachers need to be reminded to constantly improve their own pronunciation in order to win their learners' trust. In an age when learners have easier access to

native accents, it is necessary that the non-native teachers of English have accurate production of both segmental and suprasegmental features and be comfortably intelligible. As a result, they can be confident when talking to their students and their students can also feel confident about learning L2 pronunciation with a non-native speaker teacher.

However, this is not an easy task to carry out, as it demands time and effort from the teachers. I would like to make two suggestions with regards to the specific situation in Vietnam. For one thing, the Ministry of Education and Training can make use of the National Foreign Language Project 2020 to improve teachers' English pronunciation. In this project, a great number of teachers are being asked to take courses so as to get ready for a proficiency test. So, more emphasis should be placed on their oral skills in general and pronunciation in particular, urging them to practice their production. For another thing, Vietnamese teachers, especially those in small provinces, still do not often have direct contact with native speakers of English, let alone practicing with them. An alternative to this type of contact is joining a forum or a chatroom where teachers have a conversation in English. In this way, they can have the opportunity to listen to their own production as well as get feedback on their performance. For example, VietTESOL regularly holds online seminars where teachers can meet and discuss a variety of topics in English.

One remarkable complaint learners made in my findings of the teachers is the lack of understanding of their needs and difficulties. This leads to the issues of how teachers should prioritise what they teach and how they can teach them. First of all, Vietnamese teachers of English should carry out a needs analysis before

conducting any teaching. Second, they have to observe learners' progress as well as listen to their comments on what is happening in the classroom in order to respond promptly and appropriately to their needs. Then, such a diverse response can be done via differentiated instruction in which learners of dissimilar levels of proficiency can be assigned different materials and tasks, engage in different processes, use different ways to complete a task, and enjoy a supportive learning environment.

8.2.4 A supportive system

In this section, I would like to talk about the roles of policy makers, school managers, and program/syllabus designers in facilitating the English pronunciation teachers' job. To start with, the suggestion of aiming at intelligibility in teaching and learning English pronunciation may not be easily put into practice without the approval of policy makers. If these people keep emphasizing a native-like accent as a learning outcome and determine the assessment criteria based on this learning outcome, then it will be unlikely for the teachers to think and act differently. Therefore, policy makers themselves need to acknowledge the importance of intelligibility in communication and consider it the new learning target so that they can make appropriate decisions, enabling the teachers to work towards this new goal.

Regarding L2 pronunciation assessment, policy makers as well as program designers need to reconsider the evaluation of the pronunciation component in spoken language, placing it within a communicative approach. Trofimovich and

Isaacs (2017) elaborate on this reconceptualisation as broadening the scope of evaluation beyond the focus on a single aspect like accurate production of segmentals, placing assessment tasks in interactive settings with various interlocutors, and developing innovative assessment instruments and procedures.

Next, to facilitate differentiated learning in the L2 classroom, there should be flexibility in many aspects, among which is the syllabus. Teachers should be permitted to modify the syllabus to cater to the diverse needs of the learners. This does not necessarily mean allowing them to skip lessons prescribed in the teaching program. In fact, this flexibility is intended for them to deliver lessons in different ways such as teaching some in class and assigning some others as self-study tasks, or to spend more time on some lessons, for example on suprasegmentals, and cut some others short.

Also, program/syllabus designers should consider employing a process-oriented syllabus in which the focus is placed on the processes and activities that the students engage in to acquire the L2 phonology, for example comparing and contrasting Vietnamese sounds against English sounds. This syllabus can be built around task-based learning, in which students practice their pronunciation while working on tasks. For instance, students may find themselves in a conversation, asking for and giving directions, which involves the use of some intonation patterns. Another example is students being asked to produce a speech like a commercial ad or a weather forecast and use podcasts or YouTube to share it with their friends for feedback on their pronunciation.

As has been said earlier, teachers need to be motivated to do their jobs well, and school/program managers can be one important source of their motivation. Managers can provide teachers with access to relevant reference materials to help them approach new pedagogical knowledge and skills for teaching L2 pronunciation. They can send teachers to workshops and training courses to improve their teaching. To support the teacher's job, managers should equip them with necessary materials, tools, and technologies as well as encourage their use in the classroom.

8.3 Limitations

A reflection on the whole study has made me realise several limitations, from which I can gain experience for myself as an early career researcher, and which also suggest ideas for future studies. First, this thesis aims to explore the factors that may have an impact on the L2 pronunciation learning process and the learning outcome, so the questionnaire includes a number of aspects. Due to the length of the questionnaire, some aspects do not cover all the related issues but discuss only those that are relevant to the research context or, from my personal reflection and observation, seem to stand out from the others. For example, only two questions are used to explore the topic of identity, which focuses on how the learners would feel about adopting a new identity through learning L2 pronunciation. This might have affected the scope of the study by not providing a complete understanding of how learner identity operates in the learning process.

Secondly, when the survey participants' pronunciation was assessed for the selection of interviewees, they were invited to come to the school campus on different dates, at different times at their own convenience. The problem is the quality of the Internet connection in Vietnam may vary during the day due to the number of users, so when Dictation - Online Speech Recognition was used to evaluate the participants' production in one of the assessment tasks, the software might have had more difficulty recognising the sounds made by a certain student than those produced by the others due to the inconsistency of the network connection, which might have slightly affected the results. If this study was repeated, the researcher should gather all the participants in one place, or use an offline software program to increase the reliability of the results.

Thirdly, upon analysing the interview data, I realised there could be some ambiguity in the participants' responses. My concern is whether what they said was what they actually did in learning English pronunciation. For example, when the students were asked to comment on the teachers, especially about their accents, did they tell the truth, or just give a diplomatic response in order to not hurt anybody? As another example, at times, some interviewees happened to use the pronoun "we" to answer my questions and I did have to remind them to refer to themselves. However, I am not always sure whether they were thinking about themselves when giving their responses. Therefore, if this study was to be repeated, it would be better if another method of data collection like observation or reflective journals could also be used for triangulation in order to achieve a better understanding of the responses from different perspectives.

Fourthly, there are some possible issues with the participants in both the survey and the interviews. To be specific, this group of students might not be representatives for all adult English learners in Vietnam for some reasons. First, they were enrolled in a compulsory pronunciation course, so they may all have been motivated to learn. Second, they major in English; otherwise, would motivation still be an important factor for success in learning pronunciation? Third, if it was a different course in which pronunciation is just part of each lesson or even an optional component, would there be a clear difference concerning learning motivation between strong and weak students? Finally, if they were not English majors, could there be other learning difficulties that they would have to deal with in learning L2 pronunciation? Therefore, similar studies can be conducted on different groups of learners taking different courses to address these two questions.

Finally, the data of the research were drawn from one single institution in an area of Vietnam and the participants were at the same age, and studying the same major. This homogeneity might make it challenging to generalise my findings to other contexts. Thus, it is suggested that this research be expanded to other groups of participants, for example, young learners or working people, to other types of institutions like high schools and language centres, and to several other provinces of the country to see if similar findings can be reported.

8.4 Suggestions for further research

In this section, I would like to propose suggestions for future research on L2 pronunciation learning and teaching so that more knowledge about how L2 pronunciation can be learnt successfully could be gained. First of all, it has been pointed out in the review of literature that learner perspectives, especially those related to L2 pronunciation, are still an under-researched area. Meanwhile, this thesis has shown that Vietnamese learners of English may have different views from their teachers' on what can help them study English pronunciation more effectively, for example, what they think about their teachers' accent, what features should be focused on, or what type of feedback they prefer to receive, to name just a few areas. Therefore, more research should be done on L2 learners' points of view so that a better understanding of what they need in order to study better could be gained. Specifically, what learners find difficult about learning suprasegmentals, what roles they expect the teachers to play in the classroom to facilitate their learning, what support they need outside the classroom so that self-study can take place more effectively, or what they think about pronunciation assessment being used in their classes are some examples of topics that can be explored.

Secondly, it has been stated earlier that success in L2 learning in general and L2 pronunciation learning, in particular, is determined by a variety of factors such as motivation, attitude, identity, and so on. Nevertheless, not much has been known about how every single factor works and how several factors interact to impact the learning process. The findings from my thesis have indicated that motivation is an important factor determining whether learning can take place

outside the classroom or be sustained after the course. It is also one of the causes of a poor attitudinal aspect – the weak intent to take action to learn. Future research can focus on how different types of motivation (intrinsic vs extrinsic and instrumental vs integrative) affect the learning outcome. More studies can also be done on how learning motivation can be enhanced so that more positive attitudes toward pronunciation learning can be adopted.

Thirdly, this research has confirmed the findings of previous studies that L2 learners' perception and teachers' cognition are often dissimilar. There should be a follow-up study of the current project in which L2 pronunciation teachers are asked to talk about the same issues – the focus of instruction, use of techniques and activities, use of feedback, and so on, and to explain why they do what they are doing. In so doing, the discrepancy between learners' and teachers' views of what to teach and how to teach it may be narrowed or erased, which will help improve the learning outcome. Moreover, the limitation regarding the scope of this study in addressing the second research question may also be improved.

Fourthly, it has been found in this thesis that intelligibility is still an unfamiliar concept to both Vietnamese teachers and learners of English. As I have mentioned some implications regarding adopting intelligibility as the new goal of pronunciation learning, more research should be done on how it could be applied to the reality in Vietnam. To start with, an investigation can be conducted to establish the extent to which Vietnamese speakers of English are intelligible to international listeners and the difficulty, if any, the listeners may have understood them. Then, as a follow-up of Walker's suggestions (2010), research should be done to determine which

pronunciation aspects of English Vietnamese learners should pay more attention to so that they can be intelligible to listeners since there are features that many Vietnamese learners find difficult to produce or often mispronounce. Also, empirical studies can be conducted on weak learners to see if the adoption of this new goal can enhance their motivation and thus improve the learning outcome.

Finally, my research was carried out in Vietnam where English is a foreign language. In an EFL context where direct contact with native speakers is still not always available, and where there are few opportunities and little urge to communicate in English, it is expected that the factors contributing to the success in learning English pronunciation will be different from those in an ESL context. For example, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, Moyer (2014) and Szyszka (2015) identify an English speaking environment available in an ESL context as one condition for success in learning the L2 pronunciation while this factor is irrelevant in my study. Also, the findings have shown that in my institution, and possibly in the country, learner identity has little or no impact on the learning process whereas according to Majidi (2012), this factor may promote the process when learners subscribe to the opportunity or even pressure to use the L2 given to them by the community in which they have no choice but interact with others in that language. So, if this study is repeated in an ESL context and then the findings of the two studies are compared, a better understanding of good L2 pronunciation learners can be gained. In turn, this thorough understanding can help L2 teachers to provide appropriate support to their students so that they can achieve better outcomes in learning the L2 pronunciation.

8.5 Conclusion

This thesis has addressed three research questions regarding the difficulties Vietnamese learners often encounter in learning English pronunciation, the impact of the teachers together with their instruction, and the factors that may determine success in pronunciation learning. A profile of the successful pronunciation learner has been created, showing that intrinsic motivation, autonomy, responsibility, goal orientation, and active use of certain learning strategies and skills may help a learner achieve better than others.

However, this is not to say that the findings from my thesis are easy to implement. The question is how we teach the weak learners to become better students. It is undeniable that teachers cannot show them the profile of successful learners identified in this thesis or any profile and ask them to do the same, as learners are all different, and what works for one individual might not work for another. Instead, this study has helped to identify learners' problems in learning, so teachers can be better prepared to support them when they are in need. It has also revealed to teachers what the learners think about their teaching, so they can improve and vary their methods and lessons to facilitate learning. Finally, it has uncovered to teachers what successful learners often do in their study, so they can make it known to the weak learners and encourage them to try using the strategies that they think might work for them.

All in all, this thesis hopes to have provided L2 teachers and researchers with useful information on how a specific group of learners is learning an L2 phonological system and what some of them have done to study better than the

others. More importantly, it has, in one way or another, listened to learners' voices, exposing their views to teachers, making them reconsider what they are doing in their classes. It might also have brought research work closer to the real classroom, providing more practical ideas for teachers. In a nutshell, it is expected that this research has contributed to the empowerment of L2 learners, helping them to achieve more success in learning L2 pronunciation.

In 2016, when this study was first started, the Cinderella metaphor was still used in many papers to describe the research status of L2 pronunciation teaching and learning. After just a couple of years, in her presentation at the 10th annual PSLLT conference, Derwing claims that “pronunciation is no longer the Cinderella of applied linguistics research; in fact, it is the Belle of the Ball” (2019, p. 27). This is actually what is happening in Europe and America, where L2 teachers can be seen using ultrasound machines to teach pronunciation. In Vietnam, however, more attention has just been paid to English teachers' oral skills in general and pronunciation in particular thanks to the National Foreign Language Project. This thesis is believed to have contributed to helping our Cinderella find her way to the ball.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION LEARNING: DIFFICULTIES AND THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER (Pilot version)

PART 1



I- Learner factors

A – How important are these factors in pronunciation learning? Write a number from 1 to 5 in the boxes on the right.

Unimportant

Important

1

2

3

4

5

1. Pronunciation is fun.	
2. I like native accents.	
3. Pronunciation is a compulsory subject (<i>môn học bắt buộc</i>) in my program.	
4. I need good pronunciation for my future job.	
5. I want to impress (<i>gây ấn tượng với</i>) other people with my pronunciation.	
6. When I have difficulty pronouncing a word, I am eager to find out how to pronounce it correctly.	

B – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4.

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

7. Having good pronunciation in English is important to me.	4	3	2	1
8. I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.	4	3	2	1
9. I feel bad if I am misunderstood by others because of my pronunciation.	4	3	2	1

II- Learning skills and strategies

A – Please say how good you think you are in the following areas. Write a number from 1 to 5 in the boxes on the right.

Poor *Excellent*

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

24. Imitating (<i>bắt chước</i>)	
25. Recognizing (<i>nhận ra được, nhận dạng được</i>) different speech sounds	
26. Identifying the differences between Vietnamese and English pronunciations	
27. Comparing your pronunciation to that of native speakers	
28. Identifying the problems in your own pronunciation	
29. Planning how to improve your pronunciation	

B – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

30. I need my teacher to tell me what is important in learning English pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
31. I find out by myself what aspects I need to focus on.	4	3	2	1
32. I need my teacher to show me what to do to improve my accent.	4	3	2	1
33. I have my own plan for improving my pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
34. I select the methods and techniques that work for me.	4	3	2	1
35. I take steps (<i>có biện pháp</i>) to evaluate (<i>đánh giá</i>) my progress (<i>tiến bộ</i>) in learning pronunciation.	4	3	2	1

C – Please tell me how often you do the following activities by circling a number from 1 to 3.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
3	2	1

36. I summarize the rules of English pronunciation by myself.	3	2	1
37. I use phonetic symbols (<i>phiên âm</i>) or my own codes (<i>ký hiệu</i>) to remember how to pronounce something.	3	2	1
38. I pay attention to the mouth movements of native speakers or teachers and imitate them.	3	2	1
39. I talk aloud to myself to practice pronunciation.	3	2	1
40. When working on my pronunciation, I try to take part in conversations with others.	3	2	1
41. I notice the differences between Vietnamese and English pronunciations.	3	2	1
42. When I don't know how to pronounce a word, I compare it to similar-looking words that I do know.	3	2	1
43. I read reference materials about English pronunciation.	3	2	1
44. When I learn pronunciation, I use English media such as television and the Internet.	3	2	1
45. I record my voice and compare it with native speakers.	3	2	1
46. I think about the problems in my pronunciation and try to correct them.	3	2	1
47. I ask for help from teachers and friends who have good pronunciation.	3	2	1

PART 2



I- Teaching approaches, learning goals and models, and roles of the teacher

A – Please tell me whether your teacher does the following activities in class by circling Yes or No.

48. I am asked to listen to recorded materials.	Yes	No
49. I am asked to imitate what I hear.	Yes	No
50. My teacher explains how to produce sounds using phonetic symbols, charts, or body language.	Yes	No
51. I am asked to do exercises such as minimal pair drills (<i>Examples: bat – bad, tree – <u>th</u>ree</i>).	Yes	No
52. I am asked to role play a situation using the features I have learnt.	Yes	No
53. I am asked to discuss a topic using the features (e.g. vowels, consonants) I have learnt.	Yes	No

B – Please tell me whether the following statements are true for you. If you are uncertain, circle D/K (Don't Know).

54. My personal goal in learning pronunciation is to have a native-like accent.	Yes	No	D/K
55. My pronunciation teacher encourages me to aim for a native-like accent.	Yes	No	D/K
56. Achieving a native-like accent is unrealistic for me.	Yes	No	D/K
57. My teacher tells me that achieving a native-like accent is impossible.	Yes	No	D/K
58. I aim to be understood by a variety of speakers of English.	Yes	No	D/K
59. My teacher tells me that focus should be placed on being understood by other people.	Yes	No	D/K

C – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4.

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

60. It's fine when my pronunciation teacher speaks English with a non-native accent.	4	3	2	1
61. I'd like to study pronunciation with a native speaker teacher if possible.	4	3	2	1
62. Non-native teachers can be good models because they have knowledge of both the English and Vietnamese languages.	4	3	2	1
63. Non-native teachers can be good models because they have learning experience that can be shared with learners.	4	3	2	1

D – Please tell me how often your teacher does the following activities by circling a number from 1 to 3.



<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
3	2	1

64. Discussing with students which lessons in the course to focus on and why	3	2	1
65. Discussing with individual students what they need to do to solve their pronunciation problems	3	2	1
66. Encouraging students to use what they have learnt in discussions / conversations	3	2	1
67. Providing models and suggestions of how to produce sounds	3	2	1
68. Encouraging students to keep track of (<i>theo dõi</i>) their learning	3	2	1

E – Please indicate the amount of instruction (time and practice) that your teacher provides in the following areas.

	<i>Little</i>				<i>A lot</i>
	1	2	3	4	5
69. Vowels					
70. Consonants					
71. Consonant clusters					
72. Final sounds					
73. Word stress					
74. Sentence stress					
75. Intonation					
76. Linking					

II- Techniques, tools, technologies, materials and feedback

A – Please rate the following classroom activities according to their usefulness in improving your pronunciation. If a certain item is not used in your class, circle N/A (Not Applicable).

Useless *Useful*

1 2 3 4 5



77. Teacher's explanation of theoretical concepts (<i>khái niệm lý thuyết</i>)	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
78. Teacher's use of visual aids (<i>dụng cụ trực quan</i>) (e.g. diagrams, charts, cartoons)	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
79. Repeating after the teacher or recorded materials	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
80. Doing minimal pair drills (<i>luyện tập</i>) (Examples: <i>bat</i> – <i>bad</i> , <i>tree</i> – <i>three</i>)	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
81. Using clapping (<i>vỗ tay</i>) or tapping (<i>gõ</i>) to learn syllables, stress and rhythm	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
82. Teacher's use of songs, poems, jokes, rhymes, and tongue twisters	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
83. Doing IPA (<i>phiên âm quốc tế</i>) transcription practice	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
84. Role-playing	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

85. Working in pairs or groups	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
86. Watching films or video recordings	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
87. Working on dictation (<i>chính tả</i>) exercises	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
88. Playing pronunciation games	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
89. Teacher's use of pronunciation practice software	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
90. Teacher's use of materials from the Internet	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
91. Teacher's giving immediate feedback (<i>nhận xét góp ý</i>)	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
92. Teacher's delaying giving feedback until students have completed the tasks.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
93. Teacher's correcting individual students in class	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
94. Teacher's correcting students' pronunciation as a group	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
95. Teacher's correcting students' pronunciation in front of the class	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
96. Teacher's correcting students' pronunciation privately	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
97. Teacher's encouraging students to give feedback to their classmates	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

B – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4.

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

98. The course book is helpful for improving pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
99. The course book provides a variety of exercises.	4	3	2	1
100. The course book can be used for self-study.	4	3	2	1
101. The teacher provides materials outside the course book.	4	3	2	1

In general,

102. This pronunciation course is necessary.	4	3	2	1
103. I use what I have learnt from this class when I speak English.	4	3	2	1
104. This pronunciation course has helped me improve my pronunciation.	4	3	2	1

105. Please tell me what benefits, if any, you think the pronunciation course has offered you. Are there anything you think the course could have done to help you learn?

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PART 3

Please provide the following information by ticking (✓) in the box or writing your response in the space.

Name:

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Age:

Hometown:

How long have you been studying English? 1-4 yrs ☐ 5-8 yrs ☐ > 8 yrs ☐

Have you been in an English speaking country before? Yes ☐ No ☐

For how long?

Do you have direct contact with native speakers? Yes ☐ No ☐

How often?

Had you taken a pronunciation course before this course? Yes ☐ No ☐

How long ago?

What grade did you get on your midterm test of the pronunciation course?

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix 2

ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION LEARNING: DIFFICULTIES AND THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTION (Final version)

PART 1

I- Learner factors

A – How important are these factors for you in learning English pronunciation?

Write a number from 1 to 5 in the boxes on the right.



Unimportant

Important

5

1. Pronunciation learning is interesting.	
2. I like native accents.	
3. Pronunciation is a compulsory subject (<i>môn học bắt buộc</i>) in my program.	
4. I need good pronunciation for my future job.	
5. I want to impress (<i>gây ấn tượng với</i>) other people with my pronunciation.	
6. When I have difficulty pronouncing a word, I am eager to find out how to pronounce it correctly.	

B – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4.

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

7. Having good pronunciation in English is important to me.	4	3	2	1
8. I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.	4	3	2	1
9. I feel bad if I am misunderstood by others because of my pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
10. I feel happy when speaking English with a good pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
11. I arrange my time to practice pronunciation.	4	3	2	1

12. If there were an elective (<i>tự chọn</i>) pronunciation course in my study program, I would take it.	4	3	2	1
13. I like being mistaken for (<i>bị nhận lầm</i>) a native speaker due to my accent.	4	3	2	1
14. I feel uncomfortable trying to sound native (<i>nghe giống người bản xứ</i>).	4	3	2	1

C – Rate the following areas according to their difficulty by writing a number from 1 to 5 in the boxes on the right.

Easy

1

2

3

4

5

Difficult

15. Vowels	
16. Consonants	
17. Consonant clusters (<i>nhóm phụ âm, for example, <u>s</u>cream, <u>tx</u>ts</i>)	
18. Final sounds	
19. Word stress	
20. Sentence stress	
21. Intonation	
22. Linking (<i>nối âm, for example, fill _ in, most _ of _ all</i>)	

23. What are some particular features (for example a sound, an intonation pattern, etc.) of English pronunciation that you find really difficult to learn? Please explain why (in either English or Vietnamese).



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II- Learning skills and strategies

A – Please say how good you think you are in the following areas. Write a number from 1 to 5 in the boxes on the right.

Poor *Excellent*
1 2 3 4 5

24. Imitating (<i>bắt chước</i>)	
25. Recognizing (<i>nhận ra được, nhận dạng được</i>) different speech sounds	
26. Identifying the differences between Vietnamese and English pronunciations	
27. Comparing your pronunciation to that of native speakers	
28. Identifying the problems in your own pronunciation	

B – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4.

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

29. I find out by myself what aspects I need to focus on in learning English pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
30. I have my own plan for improving my pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
31. I select the methods and techniques that work for me.	4	3	2	1
32. I take steps (<i>có biện pháp</i>) to evaluate (<i>đánh giá</i>) my progress (<i>tiến bộ</i>) in learning pronunciation.	4	3	2	1

C – Please tell me how often you do the following activities by circling a number from 1 to 3.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
3	2	1

33. I summarize the rules of English pronunciation by myself.	3	2	1
34. I use phonetic symbols (<i>phiên âm</i>) or my own codes (<i>ký hiệu</i>) to remember how to pronounce something.	3	2	1
35. I pay attention to the mouth movements of native speakers or teachers and imitate them.	3	2	1
36. I talk aloud to myself to practice pronunciation.	3	2	1

37. When working on my pronunciation, I try to take part in conversations with others.	3	2	1
38. I notice the differences between Vietnamese and English pronunciations.	3	2	1
39. When I don't know how to pronounce a word, I compare it to similar-looking words that I do know.	3	2	1
40. I read reference materials about English pronunciation.	3	2	1
41. When I learn pronunciation, I use English media such as television and the Internet.	3	2	1
42. I record my voice and compare it with native speakers.	3	2	1
43. I think about the problems in my pronunciation and try to correct them.	3	2	1
44. I ask for help from teachers and friends who have good pronunciation.	3	2	1

PART 2

I- Teaching approaches, learning goals and models, and roles of the teacher

A – Please tell me whether your teacher does the following activities in class by circling Yes or No.



45. I am asked to listen to recorded materials.	Yes	No
46. I am asked to imitate what I hear.	Yes	No
47. My teacher explains how to produce sounds using phonetic symbols, charts, or body language.	Yes	No
48. I am asked to do exercises such as minimal pair drills (<i>Examples: bat – bad, tree – three</i>).	Yes	No
49. I am asked to role play a situation using the features I have learnt.	Yes	No
50. I am asked to discuss a topic using the features (e.g. vowels, consonants) I have learnt.	Yes	No

B – Please tell me whether the following statements are true for you. If you are uncertain, circle D/K (Don't Know).

51. My personal goal in learning pronunciation is to have a native-like accent.	Yes	No	D/K
52. My pronunciation teacher encourages me to aim for a native-like accent.	Yes	No	D/K
53. I aim to be understood by other people rather than to have a native-like accent.	Yes	No	D/K
54. My teacher advises me to aim to be understood by others rather than have a native-like accent.	Yes	No	D/K
55. I think that achieving a native-like accent is unrealistic.	Yes	No	D/K
56. My teacher tells me that achieving a native-like accent is unrealistic.	Yes	No	D/K

C – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4.

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

57. It's fine when my pronunciation teacher speaks English with a non-native accent.	4	3	2	1
58. I'd like to study pronunciation with a native speaker teacher if possible.	4	3	2	1
59. Non-native teachers can be good models because they have knowledge of both the English and Vietnamese languages.	4	3	2	1
60. Non-native teachers can be good models because they have learning experience that can be shared with learners.	4	3	2	1

D – Please tell me how often your teacher does the following activities in class by circling a number from 1 to 3.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
3	2	1



61. Discussing with students which lessons in the course to focus on and why	3	2	1
62. Discussing with individual students what they need to do to solve their pronunciation problems	3	2	1
63. Encouraging students to use what they have learnt in discussions / conversations	3	2	1
64. Providing models and suggestions of how to produce sounds	3	2	1
65. Encouraging students to keep track of <i>(theo dõi)</i> their learning	3	2	1

E – Please indicate the amount of instruction (time and practice) that your teacher provides in the following areas. Write a number from 1 to 5 in the boxes on the right.

Little **1** **2** **3** **4** *A lot* **5**

66. Vowels	
67. Consonants	
68. Consonant clusters (<i>nhóm phụ âm, for example, <u>s</u>cream, <u>text</u>s</i>)	
69. Final sounds	
70. Word stress	
71. Sentence stress	
72. Intonation	
73. Linking (<i>nối âm, for example, fill <u> </u> in, most <u> </u> of <u> </u> all</i>)	

II- Techniques, tools, technologies, materials and feedback

A – Please rate the following classroom activities according to their usefulness in improving your pronunciation by writing a number from 1 to 5 in the first boxes on the right. If a certain item is not used in your class, circle N/A (Not Applicable) in the second boxes.

Useless

1

2

3

4

5

Useful



74. Teacher's explanation of theoretical concepts (<i>khái niệm lý thuyết</i>)		N/A
75. Teacher's use of visual aids (<i>dụng cụ trực quan</i>) (e.g. diagrams, charts, cartoons)		N/A
76. Repeating after the teacher or recorded materials		N/A
77. Doing minimal pair drills (<i>luyện tập</i>) (<i>Examples: bat – bad, tree – three</i>)		N/A
78. Using clapping (<i>vỗ tay</i>) or tapping (<i>gõ</i>) to learn syllables, stress and rhythm		N/A
79. Teacher's use of songs, poems, jokes, rhymes, and tongue twisters		N/A
80. Doing IPA (<i>phiên âm quốc tế</i>) transcription practice		N/A
81. Role-playing		N/A
82. Working in pairs or groups		N/A
83. Watching films or video recordings		N/A

84. Working on dictation (<i>chính tả</i>) exercises		N/A
85. Playing pronunciation games		N/A
86. Teacher's use of materials from the Internet		N/A
87. Teacher's giving immediate (<i>ngay lập tức</i>) feedback (<i>nhận xét góp ý</i>)		N/A
88. Teacher's giving feedback after students have completed the tasks.		N/A
89. Teacher's correcting students' pronunciation individually		N/A
90. Teacher's correcting students' pronunciation as a group		N/A
91. Teacher's correcting students' pronunciation in front of the class		N/A
92. Teacher's correcting students' pronunciation privately (<i>riêng tư, kín đáo</i>)		N/A
93. Teacher's encouraging students to give feedback to their classmates		N/A

B – Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 4

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
4	3	2	1

94. The course book is helpful for improving pronunciation.	4	3	2	1
95. The course book provides a variety of exercises.	4	3	2	1
96. The course book can be used for self-study.	4	3	2	1

In general,

97. This pronunciation course is necessary.	4	3	2	1
98. I use what I have learnt from this course when I speak English.	4	3	2	1
99. This pronunciation course has helped me improve my pronunciation.	4	3	2	1

100. Please tell me (either in English or Vietnamese) what benefits, if any, you think the pronunciation course has offered you. Are there anything you think the course could have done to help you learn?

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PART 3

Please provide the following information by ticking (✓) in the box or writing your response in the space.

Name:

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Age:

Hometown:.....

How long have you been studying English? 1-4 yrs ☐ 5-8 yrs ☐ > 8 yrs ☐

Have you been in an English speaking country before? Yes ☐ No ☐

For how long?

Do you have direct contact with native speakers? Yes ☐ No ☐

How often?

Have you ever taken a pronunciation course before? Yes ☐ No ☐

How long ago?



Appendix 3

MATERIALS FOR RECORDINGS

PART 1 – SEGMENTALS

A diagnostic passage

When a student from another country comes to study in the United States, he has to find out for himself the answers to many questions, and he has many problems to think about. Where should he live? Would it be better if he looked for a private room off campus, or if he stayed in a dormitory? Should he spend all of his time just studying? Shouldn't he try to take advantage of the many social and cultural activities which are offered? At first it is not easy for him to be casual in dress, informal in manner, and confident in speech. Little by little he learns what kind of clothing is usually worn here to be casually dressed for classes. He also learns to choose the language and customs that are appropriate for informal situations. Finally he begins to feel sure of himself. But let me tell you, my friend, this long-awaited feeling doesn't develop suddenly, does it? All of this takes will power. (Prator & Robinett, 1985)

PART 2 – SUPRASEGMENTALS (In 2-line dialogues, students will read B's lines only.)

1. Eat it with some cheese!
2. What do you think?
3. She's given him some money.
4. Excuse me, I think you're in my seat.
5. Do you want a super burger or a regular burger?
6. I know your parents live here, but were they born here?
7. A: We've won a holiday for two in Jamaica!
B: Brilliant!
8. A: I've crashed the car again!
B: Well done!
9. They took his computer, television, video, CD player and all his CDs.
10. A: Do you have a nice flat?
B: Yes, a very nice flat.
11. A: Excuse me, can you help us?
B: Yes?
12. A: OK, well go across the bridge and turn right.
B: Turn right?

Appendix 4

STIMULI FOR CONVERSATIONS – HUMAN RATERS

Prompts:

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Tell me about your family.
3. Tell me about something you love doing in your free time.
4. What did you do on your last holiday?

Guidelines for marking:

Score	Score Descriptors	Notes
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety• sustains flexible use of features throughout• is effortless to understand	<p>Pronunciation features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sound recognition• Sound articulation• Prosodic features (stress, rhythm and intonation)
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses a wide range of pronunciation features• sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses• is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control• shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained• can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times	

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech is often unintelligible 	
1		

(Source: Scores and their descriptors were adapted from IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors, Public version, UCLES)

Appendix 5

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (Strong learners version)

1. Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in the interview phase of my project. As you may have known from the survey, I am examining how Vietnamese learners study English pronunciation. The purpose of the interview is to understand why they have certain problems in learning English pronunciation as well as why they perceive the role of instruction the way they do. The interview also helps to identify if there are any differences between the ways strong and weak learners acquire English phonology.

Our interview today will last approximately 60 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers, or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel. As you have read in the consent form, which you have completed, I will be recording our conversation today. Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning that only I myself will be aware of your answers so that I know whom to contact should I have further follow-up questions after this interview.

Before we begin our conversation, do you have any questions?

If any questions arise at any point in this study, please feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

2. Warm-up

- 1. How long have you been learning English?*

2. What do you think about learning pronunciation in comparison to learning other skills?

3. Causes of learning difficulty

The survey conducted in your class has resulted in some interesting findings. Let's first talk about them.

Stimulus	Prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivational factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning motivation seems to come from things outside such as course grades or future job requirements rather than from things inside like interest or curiosity. • In comparison to all the students, a group similar to you give the highest scores to all internal motivational factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it so? • Does this way of thinking influence how you learn pronunciation? How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudinal factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You feel very positive about learning pronunciation, but do not show very strong intents to learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it so? • Does this way of thinking influence how you learn pronunciation? How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your group have a stronger desire to speak like native people and feel more comfortable in trying to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this way of thinking and feeling influence how you learn?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential learning difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suprasegmental features (intonation, sentences stress) and consonant clusters cause more problems in learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it difficult for you to learn those features? • How are you dealing with those problems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners are not very good at listening for contrast between acceptable and unacceptable production and certain skills such as reflection and evaluation. Your group are very good at imitating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it so? What do you think you will/can do to improve these skills? How useful is this skill to you in learning pronunciation?
<p>- Autonomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your group are very autonomous in deciding how to study, but pay the least attention to self-evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it so? How may this degree of autonomy may affect the learning outcome?
<p>- Pronunciation learning strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners do not use pronunciation learning strategies very often. 96% of people in your group use English media regularly for pronunciation learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it so? Why do you use this strategy for learning? How do you use it?

Are there any other difficulties that you have encountered in learning English pronunciation?

4. Perceptions of instruction

Findings from the survey also reveal what learners think about the teachers and their teaching, but I'd like to know more about the reasons for such thinking.

Stimuli	Prompts
<p>- Learning goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of learners still want to speak like native people and think it is possible to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you want speak English with a native accent? Why / Why not? How could you define a native like accent? Could you give an example of it?
<p>- Learning models</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The majority of learners are not happy with the teacher's non-native accent and almost all of them would like to study pronunciation with a native speaker.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>What's wrong if your pronunciation teacher speaks English with a non-native accent?</i> <i>Would you like to learn from a Vietnamese teacher with a standard accent or an American teacher with a strong accent, e.g. Texan?</i> <i>What can be learnt from non-native teachers teaching English pronunciation?</i>
<p>- Teaching content and focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Your teacher teaches a lot about word stress, which you consider the easiest to learn while one of the most difficult features – consonant clusters – receives the least attention.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>What do you think about this? How does this focus affect your learning?</i> <i>Which aspects should receive more attention and why?</i>
<p>- Teaching techniques and activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Learners tend to prefer traditional techniques and activities (e.g. minimal pair drills, phonetic training, repetition) than modern ones (e.g. songs and games, role-playing, watching films).</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Why is it so?</i>
<p>- Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Private feedback seems to be least useful to learners.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Why is it so?</i>

What do you like most about your teacher's teaching approach?

5. How learning happens

We have talked about the problems in learning English pronunciation and the influence of the teacher as well as their teaching on learning. Now could you tell me more about what you do in order to learn and improve your pronunciation?

First of all, I'm going to read some statements to you. Please tell me whether each of them is true for you, the reasons why you think so and wherever possible, give an example to illustrate your point.

Topic	Statement	Notes
1. Interaction	<i>Pronunciation can be learn better through talking with other people.</i>	
2. Learnability	<i>There are certain features that I might never be able to learn successfully.</i>	Ask for examples.
3. Natural Order	<i>There are certain features that should be taught prior to the others.</i>	Ask for examples.
4. Monitor Hypothesis	<i>I pay attention to what I have just said and correct any mispronunciation.</i>	
5. Role of L1	<i>When it is difficult to make a sound, I make a similar one which is easier to produce.</i>	Ask for examples.
6. Comprehensible Input	<i>I prefer activities and learning materials that challenge me so that I can learn more.</i>	
7. Comprehensible Output	<i>When talking to other people, I notice the difference between my mispronounced forms and the other's feedback and then make effort to fix my problems.</i>	

In week 7 I delivered a lesson in your class and that lesson was video-recorded. Let's watch what happened in your class and then you can describe to me what you did during that session.

Prompt	Stimulus (Video clip)
1. What exactly did you do while listening to the recording? (e.g. noticing, discrimination, imitation)	LISTENING

2. <i>Tell me what you did during the teacher's modelling of the stress patterns (e.g. noticing, imitation, asking for clarification).</i>	MODELLING
3. <i>What did you think and do when you saw the teacher's mouth movements and body language?</i>	MOUTH MOVEMENT
4. <i>What did you do while working with your friend on the task? (e.g. noticing, self-assessment, modified output)</i>	PAIR WORK
5. <i>What would you do if you were the student in the clip, who was receiving feedback from the teacher?</i>	FEEDBACK

My last set of questions focuses on self-study. Besides learning in class, please tell me what you do outside class to improve your pronunciation.

Prompts:

- *Time arrangement for pronunciation learning*
- *Learning activities outside class*
- *Use of technology for learning*

Before we conclude this interview, is there something about your experience in learning English pronunciation that you think influences the learning outcome that we have not yet had a chance to discuss? Or is there somebody that has motivated you to study pronunciation?

6. Conclusion

I have no more questions to ask. Once again, thank you very much for taking the time to join the interview. I would also like to ask for the permission to get back to you later in case I need further clarification. If you would like to review the content of our conversation today, a copy of the transcript will be sent to you once it is ready.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (Weak learners version)

1. Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in the interview phase of my project. As you may have known from the survey, I am examining how Vietnamese learners study English pronunciation. The purpose of the interview is to understand why they have certain problems in learning English pronunciation as well as why they perceive the role of instruction the way they do. The interview also helps to identify if there are any differences between the ways strong and weak learners acquire English phonology.

Our interview today will last approximately 60 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers, or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel. As you have read in the consent form, which you have completed, I will be recording our conversation today. Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning that only I myself will be aware of your answers so that I know whom to contact should I have further follow-up questions after this interview.

Before we begin our conversation, do you have any questions?

If any questions arise at any point in this study, please feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

2. Warm-up

1. *How long have you been learning English?*

2. What do you think about learning pronunciation in comparison to learning other skills?

3. Causes of learning difficulty

The survey conducted in your class has resulted in some interesting findings. Let's first talk about them.

Stimulus	Prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivational factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning motivation seems to come from things outside such as course grades or future job requirements rather than from things inside like interest or curiosity. • In comparison to all the students, a group similar to you consider this factor "I want to impress other people with my pronunciation" the most important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it so? • Does this way of thinking influence how you learn pronunciation? How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudinal factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You feel very positive about learning pronunciation, but do not show very strong intents to learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it so? • Does this way of thinking influence how you learn pronunciation? How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your group have a weaker desire to speak like native people and feel more uncomfortable in trying to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this way of thinking and feeling influence how you learn?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential learning difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suprasegmental features (intonation, sentences stress) and consonant clusters cause more problems in learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it difficult for you to learn those features? • How are you dealing with those problems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learners are not very good at certain skills such as reflection and evaluation.</i> • <i>Your group are worst at listening for contrast between acceptable and unacceptable production.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why is it so?</i> • <i>What do you think you will/can do to improve these skills?</i> • <i>How does this problem affect your learning?</i>
<p>- Autonomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Your group are not very autonomous in deciding how to study, but pay the most attention to self-evaluation.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why is it so?</i> • <i>How do you think this degree of autonomy may affect the learning outcome?</i>
<p>- Pronunciation learning strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learners do not use pronunciation learning strategies very often.</i> • <i>Your group tend to talk to or ask for help from others more?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why is it so?</i> • <i>Why do you choose to talk to or ask for help from others in learning pronunciation?</i>

Are there any other difficulties that you have encountered in learning English pronunciation?

4. Perceptions of instruction

Findings from the survey also reveal what learners think about the teachers and their teaching, but I'd like to know more about the reasons for such thinking.

<i>Stimuli</i>	<i>Prompts</i>
<p>- Learning goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The majority of learners still want to speak like native people and think it is possible to do so.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do you want speak English with a native accent? Why / Why not?</i> • <i>How could you define a native like accent? Could you give an example of it?</i>

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Prompts:

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Before we conclude this interview, is there something about your experience in learning English pronunciation that you think influences the learning outcome that we have not yet had a chance to discuss? Or is there somebody that has motivated you to study pronunciation?

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I have no more questions to ask. Once again, thank you very much for taking the time to join the interview. I would also like to ask for the permission to get back to you later in case I need further clarification. If you would like to review the content of our conversation today, a copy of the transcript will be sent to you once it is ready.

Appendix 6

CODE BOOK Part 1 – Learner-related factors

THEME	CATEGORY	CODE	DESCRIPTION
MOTIVATION	INTRINSIC	INTEREST	Having enjoyment in learning pronunciation. Like of, passion about native accents
	EXTRINSIC	COMPULSORY SUBJECT	Learning because it is mandatory in the program, in order to get a passing grade
		INSTRUMENTALITY	Learning for a purpose, such as future job requirement or study abroad
		IMPRESSION ON OTHERS	Desire to look good in others' eyes; wanting others' admiration, interest or respect
		INFLUENCE FROM OTHERS	Affected by what many others are doing or what others want them to do
		NO CHOICE OR GOAL FOR MAJOR	Having no choice / Not knowing what to choose for major
	EFFECTS	NOTICING	Paying attention to instruction, as well as own mistakes for correction
		EASE IN LEARNING	Feeling easier to learn pronunciation
		MORE LEARNING	Gaining more knowledge
		SUSTAINABLE LEARNING	Learning is maintained every day or over a long time
		GOOD GRADE AS HINDRANCE	Satisfaction leading to no more learning
ATTITUDE	BELIEF	IMPORTANCE OF PRON.	Understanding of the importance of pronunciation and its learning

		SELFF-ASSESSMENT	How they evaluate their pronunciation and pronunciation learning
	WEAK INTENT-CAUSE	LAZINESS	Not wanting to study, sleep, doing nothing
		DISTRACTION	Play, socialization, lack of privacy
		DEMOTIVATORS	Factors discouraging from taking actions, e.g. inability to make accurate sounds, not being able to study with teacher of choice, little concern due to lack of formal learning
		INSUFFICIENT MOTIVATION	A lack of motivation leading to no action taken
	EFFECTS	INSUFFICIENT LEARNING	Little learning is done, maybe just enough to passing tests, may involve no learning at all
		LITTLE IMPROVEMENT	Low scores, not much improvement in pronunciation
IDENTITY	DESIRE FOR NATIVENESS	ABSOLUTE DESIRE	Highest degree of desire
		ACHIEVABLE GOAL	More reasonable goal
		JUST ENOUGH TO USE	Low degree of desire
		RESENTMENT AGAINST ACCENTEDNESS	Discomfort with heavy accents
	DISCOMFORT IN AIMING AT NATIVENESS	INFERIORITY	Feeling embarrassed about unsuccessful attempts
	EFFECTS	MORE NOTICING	Paying attention to others in order to learn

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES		NO GOAL LEADING TO NO MOTIVATION TO LEARN	Not aiming at nativeness leading to low motivation to learn
		MORE LEARNING	Gaining more knowledge
	CAUSES	COMPLEXITY	The complex nature of the pronunciation feature
		INFLUENCE OF L1	Difference between L1 and L2 phonological systems; effects of regional L1 accents
		LEARNING AT HIGHSCHOOL	How pronunciation was taught at high school
		LACK OF PRACTICE OR ATTENTION	Not having enough practice for pronunciation; making careless production
		MOTOR SKILLS	Manipulation of articulators to make production
		CARELESS PRODUCTION	Careless making sounds / wanting to speak fast
	STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT	ENGLISH MEDIA	Youtube, films, TV programs
		IMITATION	Taking after others, esp. a role model
		TALKING TO SELF	Speaking alone to practice pronunciation
		NOTICING	Paying attention to others in order to learn
		LISTENING & CRITICAL LISTENING	Listening and/or paying attention to contrast between sounds made correctly and incorrectly
		USE OF DICTIONARY/BOOKS	Check the pronunciation in dictionary/ Learn from books
		USE OF ASR / OTHER SOFTWARE	Using apps like Google Speech
		VOICE RECORDING	Recording one's speech to listen and check for errors
SKILLS	POOR CRITICAL	CLOSENESS BETWEEN SOUNDS	Two sounds are too similar to each other, confusing

	LISTENING_CAUSES	EFFECT OF L1	L1 affects how students listen and distinguish between sounds.
	POOR CRITICAL LISTENING_EFFECTS	POOR INTELLIGIBILITY	Not being understood by others
		INTERNALISATION OF WRONG FORMS	Acquisition of inaccurate forms as a result of poor listening skills
		CONFUSION IN PRODUCTION	Not being able to distinguish sounds leading to confusion in production
	POOR REFLECTION & EVALUATION_CAUSES	LACK OF KNOW-HOW	Not knowing how to evaluate one's self
		HARD TO REFLECT/EVALUATE	Hard to evaluate self; easier to evaluate others
		EMBARRASSEMENT	Feeling embarrassed when facing own poor skills
		LAZINESS / PASSIVENESS	Being passive / lazy to carry out the activity
	IMITATION_BENEFITS	IMITATION=LEARNING	Learning while imitating others
		IMITATION=INTERNALISATION	Subconsciously acquiring new forms while imitating others
	STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT	VOICE RECORDING	Recording one's speech to listen and check for errors
		USE OF DICTIONARY	Using a dictionary to check for pronunciation of new words
		MAKING COMPARISON	Learning from assessments made by others, or by comparing own performance with others
		LISTENING PRACTICE	Doing listening practice to improve
		WORKING WITH OTHERS	Working with other people, such as joining study groups, asking for help, taking courses, in order to improve skills

AUTONOMY	SELF-ASSESSMENT	SELF SATISFACTION LEADING TO LESS SEFL-ASSESSMENT	Feeling satisfied about oneself makes one evaluate themselves less
		AWARENESS OF OWN PROBLEMS LEADING TO MORE ASSESSMENT	Being aware of own ability makes one constantly evaluate themselves
		EMBARRASSEMENT LEADING TO NO INITIATIVE FOR SELF-EVALUATION	Feeling embarrassed / uncomfortable in evaluating oneself leading to no initiative
		LACK OF KNOW HOW LEADING TO LESS SELF ASSESSMENT	Not knowing how to evaluate oneself leading to no initiative
	INITIATIVE IN CHOOSING LEARNING METHOD	MOTIVATION TO TAKE INITIATIVE	Having passion / motivation to be autonomous in choosing how to study
		LEARNING FROM COURSE	Taking the course making me know what method to use
		PREFERENCE	Choosing to do what one likes
		NO INITIATIVE DUE TO LACK OF KNOW HOW	Not knowing how to actively select how to study
		NO INITIATIVE DUE TO PASSIVENESS / LAZINESS	Being passive / lazy in learning results in lack of autonomy in selecting learning methods
	EFFECTS	SUITABILITY OF METHODS	Employing a suitable / unsuitable method for learning
		SUSTAINABLE LEARNING	Learning is maintained every day or over a long time
		INFLUENCE ON OUTCOME	How learning outcome is influenced by choice of method

LEARNING STRATEGIES	REASONS FOR INFREQUENT USE	LACK OF KNOWLEDGE	Not knowing what strategies are and how to use them
		LAZINESS	Too lazy to use strategies
		INSUFFICIENT TIME	Not having enough time to use a strategy for learning
		INSUFFICIENT EFFORT/MOTIVATION	Not having enough effort / motivation to use till getting improved
	REASONS FOR USE OF MEDIA	INTEREST	Interest in using English media for learning
		MOTIVATION TO LEARN	Being able to understand the content motivates learning
		EASE IN LEARNING	Easier to learn this way
	HOW TO USE MEDIA	IMITATION	Imitating how people speak in media
		MAKING COMPARISON	Comparing subtitles and what they hear
		NOTICING	Paying attention to pronunciation features while using media
	REASONS FOR USE OF COMMUNICATION	FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS	Getting feedback from others can help with learning
		AVOIDING BOREDOM	Learning with others is more fun
OTHER DIFFICULTIES	SUBJECT RELATED FACTORS	SPECIFIC SOUNDS	Some specific sounds cause difficulty in learning
		USE OF PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION	Having difficulty in using phonetic transcription
		SPONTANEOUS SPEECH	Not being able to make accurate production in conversations
		LACK OF TIME	Not having enough time for revision and practice outside class
		FEELING INFERIOR HINDERS PRACTICE	Lack of confidence about pronunciation prevents practice and production

	LEARNER RELATED FACTORS	INBORN VOICE	Being born with a voice that may help with learning pronunciation
		PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM	The psychological state that causes difficulty in production
		HAVING NO GOAL IN STUDY	Not knowing the purpose of learning, not knowing what one likes to do

Part 2 – Teacher-related factors

THEME	CATEGORY	CODE	DESCRIPTION
LEARNING GOALS	GOALS	NATIVE	A desire to speak English with a native like accent
		INTELLIGIBLE	A aim at being understood by others while speaking English
	REASONS FOR NATIVENESS	PROFESSIONAL/CONFIDENT	Sounding more professional/confident to others
		PERCEIVED BETTER ENGLISH	A native accent creates a feeling of better quality of English
		BETTER UNDERSTANDING	A native accent can aid understanding
		ADMIRATION FOR THOSE WITH NATIVE ACCENTS	Admiring people who can speak with a native accent and wanting to do the same
		HAVING GOOD FEELING	Feeling good about being able to speak a native accent
	REASONS FOR INTELLIGIBILITY	BETTER UNDERSTANDING	Being easily understood by others
	DEFINITIONS OF A NATIVE LIKE ACCENT	AME / BRIT ACCENT	Sounding like Americans / British people
		CORRECT, FAST, FLUENT, SKILLFUL SPEECH	Being able to speak fast, smoothly and skillfully

		NO CLEAR DEFINITION / MISCONCEPTION	Not knowing exactly what it is / Misconception
LEARNING MODELS	PROBLEMS WITH A NNS TEACHER	NONE IF ACCURATE	There is no problem if the teacher has an accurate pronunciation.
		UNINTERESTING	Not very interesting to study with a teacher speaking a non-native accent
		LACK OF TRUST	No trust in the NNS teacher's pronunciation
		UNABLE TO IMITATE NATIVE ACCENT	Difficult to imitate a native accent if listening to a non-native one
	CHOICE OF MODEL	NNS + STANDARD	Selection of a non-native teacher with a standard accent
		NS + HEAVY ACCENT	Selection of a native teacher with a heavy accent
	BENEFITS FROM NNS TEACHERS	SHARED LEARNING EXPERIENCE	The teacher may share with students their experience in how to learn how to produce sounds.
		POSSIBLE USE OF L1	Students can use L1 to talk about problems.
		MORE SYMPATHY	The teacher may be more understanding.
		KNOWELDGE OF L2 LEARNING & PROBLEMS	The teacher knows the rules by learning, the common mistakes and how to fix them, so they can help.
TEACHING CONTENT & FOCUS	COMMENTS ON A FOCUS ON WORD STRESS	TEACHER'S LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENTS' NEEDS	The teacher does not understand the students' problems and their needs.
		TEACHER'S DECISION BASED ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE	The teacher teaches what he thinks many students can't learn.
		POPULARLY SEEN (TESTED) FEATURE	This feature has appeared widely in lessons and tests.

		TEACHER'S STICKING TO SYLLABUS	The teacher is required to stick to the syllabus.
	EFFECTS OF SUCH FOCUS	NOT LEARNING WHAT IS NEEDED	Students are not taught what they need to learn.
		UNEXPECTED/UNWILLING SELF-STUDY	Students have to study what they don't understand in class at home, on their own.
		NO BIG EFFECT	This does not matter much with learning as students can always ask or study on their own.
	ASPECTS TO BE FOCUSED ON	A BIT OF EVERYTHING/EQUALLY	No special focus on any feature
		INTONATION	A focus should be placed on intonation.
		SENTENCE STRESS	A focus should be placed on sentence stress.
		LINKING	A focus should be placed on linking.
		SEGMENTALS	A focus should be placed on single sounds
TEACHING TECHNIQUES & ACTIVITIES	REASONS FOR PREFERENCE FOR TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES	TEACHER'S SOLE USE	The teacher only or frequently used traditional methods, so students do not know about the modern ones.
		EASIER/SAFER TO LEARN	It's easier/safer (no embarrassment) to learn (as there is less information/ interaction integrated in traditional methods when compared with modern ones like watching movies.)
		LESS TIME-CONSUMING	It's less time-consuming, esp. with big classes
FEEDBACK	REASONS FOR LIMITED USEFULNESS OF PRIVATE FEEDBACK	DIFFERENCE IN TEACHER & STUDENT'S VIEWS	The teacher thinks students prefer private feedback while they don't think so.
		LACK OF HELP WITH CORRECTION	There's no help to improve the mistakes outside class.
		FEAR OF T'S ATTENTION	Afraid to get private attention from the teacher
		FEEDBACK UNAVAILABLE	Students hardly ever receive private feedback.

OVERALL OPINIONS	LIKES	TEACHER'S PRONUNCIATION	The teacher has good pronunciation.
		TEACHER'S CAREFUL GUIDANCE	The teacher carefully plans the lesson and provides guidance to individuals.
	DISLIKES	LACK OF PRACTICE	The teacher does not provide students with enough practice in class.
		T'S INSISTENCE ON CORRECTING MISTAKES	The teacher asks the student to keep correcting mistakes in front of class.
		TRADITIONAL TEACHING STYLE	The teacher has a traditional style of teaching.
		BRIEFING ABOUT TESTS	The teacher gives inadequate briefing about tests.
		FAST PACE/HEAVY WORK LOAD	The teacher teaches too fast due to a lack of time.

Part 3 – How learning happens

THEME	CATEGORY	CODE	DESCRIPTION
HOW LEARNING HAPPENS	LEARNING THROUGH INTERACTION	MORE PRACTICE / COMFORT IN STUDY	Talking to others is a way to practice / more comfort to learn.
		LEARNING NEW ITEMS FROM LISTENING TO OTHERS	Listening to other people's saying new words can help remember and learn pronunciation
		GETTING FEEDBACK	Other people can give feedback on performance.
		ASKING QUESTIONS FOR SELF-CORRECTION	Asking other people about own problems and correct them
	LEARNABILITY	ALL IS LEARNABLE WITH EFFORTS.	Everything can be learnt with great efforts.
		INTONATION	Intonation can't be learnt despite lots of practice.

		FINAL SOUNDS	Final sounds can't be learnt despite lots of practice.
	NATURAL ORDER	FROM EASY TO MORE DIFFICULT FEATURES	Basic features should be learnt first, then more complex ones.
		AGREEMENT WITH TEACHER	Students agree with the teacher's order of teaching and rationale for that order.
	MONITOR HYPOTHESIS	IMMEDIATE SEFL-CORRECTION	Students always pay attention to what's been said and make immediate correction.
		NO ATTENTION PAID	No attention to pronunciation while communication as it's not natural.
		UNAWARE OF MISTAKES	Not being able to detect mistakes while talking
	ROLE OF L1	NO NEED	There is no need to use a middle sound as lots of practice can help.
		θ / dark l / dz	Replaced by "th", etc.
	COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT	CHALLENGES LEAD TO PROGRESS	Challenging activities and materials can motivate students to learn better.
		MOTIVATION TO KEEP TRYING	Challenging activities make students constantly make greater efforts to learn.
		DEMOTIVATOR	Working with challenging material leads to bad mood.
	COMPREHENSIBLE OUTPUT	SELF-CORRECTION	Paying attention to the differences helps correct own mistakes.
		NEED FOR HELP	Being able to recognize the differences but asking for help from others to fix problems
		AFRAID OF LOSING FACE	Paying attention to correct own mistakes so as to avoid losing face
		REPETITION / IMITATION	Automatically repeating / imitating what they hear

LEARNING ACTIVITIES TAKEN	ACTIVITIES WHILE LISTENING	NOTICING	Paying attention to / taking notes of what is being said
		INQUIRING/COMPARING	Comparing / asking questions in order to learn
	ACTIVITIES DURING TEACHER MODELLING	NOTICING	Paying attention to what the teacher says
		REPETITION / IMITATION	Repeating / imitating what they hear
		COMPARING	Comparing own production with models
		VISUALIZATION OF PRODUCTION	Imagining how the feature is made before actually saying it
	ACTIVITIES WHILE OBSERVING TEACHER'S MOUTH MOVEMENT	OBSERVATION	Observing the teacher's movement
		IMITATION	Imitating the movement
	ACTIVITIES DURING PAIR WORK	GIVING/GETTING FEEDBACK	Pointing out mistakes for friends or getting feedback from them
		LEARNING FROM GIVING FEEDBACK	Reminding self not to make those mistakes
		COMPARING WITH MODEL	Comparing what friend says with what the teacher said
	RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK	NOTICING	Paying attention to / noting down important points
		FIXING MISTAKES	Listening to feedback and correcting mistakes
		APPLYING	Paying attention so as to correct own mistakes in other situations as well
SELF-STUDY	TIME ARRANGEMENT	REGULAR PRACTICE	Having regular practice of pronunciation
		TAKING EXTRA CLASSES	Attending classes to have more practice

	OUTSIDE CLASS ACTIVITIES	PRACTICE WITH FRIENDS	Practicing with friends outside class
		SELF-RECORDING	Recording own voice to practice
		IPA PRACTICE	Practicing using phonetic transcription
		LISTENING TO MUSIC/ MOVIES	Noticing how people produce sounds in songs or movies
		JOINING CLUBS	Joining some clubs to practice pronunciation
	USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING	MULTI-MEDIA	Using technologies like the Internet, Videos, the radio
		E-DICTIONARY	Using an e-dictionary to learn
OTHER FACTORS	PEOPLE-RELATED	HAVING AN IDOL	Admiring and imitating the accent of a person
		HAVING A GUIDE	Having sb to study with, who can help fix problems
	NON-PEOPLE RELATED	INTEREST	Doing what they like in order to learn
		SEEING THE BENEFIT/PROGRESS	Being able to realize the benefit from / effectiveness in learning