

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices towards Teaching English  
Pronunciation among EFL Senior High School Teachers in  
Yunnan Province, China



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign  
Language

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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ความเชื่อและแนวการปฏิบัติของครูที่มีต่อการสอนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของครูระดับ  
มัธยมศึกษาตอนปลายที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศในมณฑลยูนนาน สาธารณรัฐ

ประชาชนจีน



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Pronunciation among EFL Senior High School Teachers  
in Yunnan Province, China

By                                      Mr. Hua Liu

Field of Study                      Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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ชื่อ หัว : ความเชื่อและแนวการปฏิบัติของครูที่มีต่อการสอนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของครูระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลายที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศในมณฑลยูนนาน สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน. ( Teachers' Beliefs and Practices towards Teaching English Pronunciation among EFL Senior High School Teachers in Yunnan Province, China) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : ผศ. ดร. จันทร์ทรงกลด กษเสนี

การศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาความเชื่อของครูระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลายในมณฑลยูนนานที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศที่มีต่อการสอนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ 2) เพื่อศึกษาการสอนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษของครูระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลายในมณฑลยูนนานที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ กลุ่มตัวอย่างคือครู 59 คน โดยใช้การสุ่มแบบเจาะจง เครื่องมือวิจัย ได้แก่ 1) แบบสอบถามออนไลน์ 2) การสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง และ 3) การสังเกตการสอนในห้องเรียน ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณวิเคราะห์โดยสถิติเชิงบรรยาย ประกอบด้วยค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพวิเคราะห์โดยใช้การวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) ความเชื่อของครูที่มีต่อการสอนการออกเสียงเป็นไปในเชิงบวกอย่างมากและการสอนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษมีความจำเป็นอย่างยิ่ง เป้าหมายในการสอนการออกเสียงผสมผสานระหว่างการออกเสียงให้เหมือนเจ้าของภาษากับการสื่อสารเพื่อความเข้าใจและความขากง่ายในการสื่อสาร ครูยังมีความเชื่อผสมผสานระหว่างการสอนด้วยวิธีปกติกับการสอนเพื่อการสื่อสาร และครูเชื่อว่าควรได้รับการฝึกอบรมด้านการสอนการออกเสียง 2) ครูสอนการออกเสียงสระและพยัญชนะ จังหวะและทำนองเสียง แต่ความถี่ในการสอนไม่สูงเนื่องจากระบบการสอนที่เน้นการสอบ เวลาที่จำกัดและขาดการฝึกอบรม ครูใช้วิธีสอนแบบปกติและใช้การฝึกแบบควบคุม หลักสูตรระดับชาติควรใส่ใจการสอนการออกเสียงภาษาอังกฤษ เป้าหมายของการสอนควรเป็นการสื่อสารเพื่อความเข้าใจและความขากง่ายในการสื่อสาร และควรจัดการฝึกอบรมวิธีการสอนการออกเสียงเพื่อการสื่อสารให้กับครูระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลายในมณฑลยูนนานที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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สาขาวิชา การสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็น  
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ลายมือชื่อนิสิต .....

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Hua Liu : Teachers' Beliefs and Practices towards Teaching English Pronunciation among EFL Senior High School Teachers in Yunnan Province, China. Advisor: Asst. Prof. CHANSONGKLOD GAJASENI, Ph.D.

The objectives of this study were 1) to examine EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching English pronunciation in Yunnan province and 2) to investigate the English pronunciation practices used by Yunnan EFL teachers. The participants were 59 EFL senior high school teachers in Yunnan province who were purposively sampled. There were 3 research instruments which were 1) online questionnaire; 2) semi-structured interview and 3) classroom observation. Quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, which were the means and standard deviation, and qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis. The findings revealed that 1) Yunnan EFL teachers' beliefs towards pronunciation teaching were highly positive and they believed that teaching English pronunciation was really necessary. The goals of pronunciation teaching were mixed among native-like fluency, intelligibility and comprehensibility. They also have mixed beliefs in using traditional methods and communicative practices, and they believed that they needed training in pronunciation teaching. 2) In terms of practices, they taught both segmental and supra-segmental features, but the frequencies were not high due to the examination-oriented system, time limitation and lack of pronunciation teaching training. Also, they used traditional methods and controlled practices. English pronunciation teaching should be drawn to attention in national English curriculum. Pronunciation teaching goals should be intelligibility and comprehensibility. The training on how to use communicative methods and practices to teach pronunciation should be provided for Yunnan EFL teachers.

Field of Study: Teaching English as a  
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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the study

English education in China starts from kindergarten to primary school, secondary school and university. Xu (2017) stated that a large number of middle school students have studied English for more than ten years; however, they could neither speak English nor understand English. In other words, students cannot communicate in English; the concept of being “deaf-mute English”(聋哑英语) is very common. The reason why students cannot speak accurate and fluent English is that pronunciation is always underrated by most Chinese teachers in their classes. Gilakjani (2016) mentioned that the importance of pronunciation teaching has not attracted the attention of many English teachers because “the teachers pay enough attention to grammar and vocabulary in teaching a foreign language and they help learners become skillful in listening and reading” (p.3). Many teachers held the same opinion that pronunciation was not important and unnecessary to teach and not much time was needed to spend on the pronunciation part (Gilakjani, 2011). Ma (2013) analyzed the pronunciation teaching situation in Yunnan province and found that senior high school EFL teachers often paid more attention to teaching grammar, vocabulary and composition. Pronunciation practice was relatively rare or completely neglected. In the exam for senior high school students, English pronunciation took a small proportion.

Macdonald (2002) stated that pronunciation was a major part of learning spoken language expression in L2. Good English expression and pronunciation can help English learners to build self-confidence and to facilitate communication for both speakers and listeners. Pronunciation played an essential role in English language teaching and learning as learners communicative competence would be largely shaped by it (Gilakjani, 2012). Good English pronunciation is good for improving listening and speaking. Inaccurate pronunciation may lead to misunderstanding for listeners or even negative impact on a normal communication. Over time, it would affect English learners' self-confidence to speak English. On the contrary, good pronunciation and intonation could prompt learners to be more willing to communicate in English. The more the learners speak English, the more they can improve their oral communication.

Clear and easy understanding pronunciation was considered to be the main role for a foreign language oral communication and spoken interaction (Fernandez & Hughes, 2010). Obviously, pronunciation is an absolutely necessary element for English speaking skills and it can promote communication between speakers and listeners. Morley (1991) also stated that “intelligible pronunciation is seen as an essential component of communicative competence”, as effective communication could be facilitated by good pronunciation skills (p.513).

Yunnan is located in the inland of China. Compared with other coastal cities, there are not many opportunities for students to use English in daily life (Zhao, 2017).



Zhao (2017) conducted a study on the comparison of speaking skills among the university students of Yunnan, Singapore, Thailand and Laos. She found that Yunnan students' speaking skills were much weaker than those of Singapore and Thailand. In conclusion, Yunnan senior high school students' English pronunciation is not really good. Therefore, it is very important to incorporate pronunciation in the teaching and learning of English.

Alsofyani and Algethami (2017) stated that exploring teachers' beliefs on English pronunciation instruction could help to understand teachers' practices in the EFL classrooms. As Yagiz (2018) mentioned that "foreign language education has overwhelmingly ignored the pronunciation aspect of language instruction due to the belief that pronunciation instruction would be ineffective and difficult to teach" (p.188). The researcher found only one study on teaching English pronunciation of university students among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Yunnan Province by Ao and Low (2012). They explored pronunciation features of Yunnan English and it revealed that some pronunciation features were shared by Yunnan English and Chinese English, while some other features were more specific to Yunnan English than to Chinese English. However, the supra-segmental features were not included in this study and there were no studies on teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching English pronunciation in Yunnan. In addition, senior high school level is important because the students who are going to choose English or English-related subjects as their college

major in Yunnan province must take English oral examination and pass it before entering university. Therefore, English pronunciation teaching becomes even more important in Yunnan province.

Because of the current EFL situation described above, there should be more studies on Chinese EFL teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation at senior high school level in Yunnan province. This study, therefore, was conducted to explore this issue.

## **1.2 Objectives and research questions**

### **1.2.1 The objectives**

- (1) To examine the EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching English pronunciation;
- (2) To investigate the English pronunciation practices of EFL senior high school teachers use in Yunnan province.

### **1.2.2 The research questions**

- (1) What were the EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching pronunciation?
- (2) What English pronunciation practices did EFL senior high school teachers use in Yunnan province?

## **1.3 Definition of terms**

- (1) Pronunciation refers to the way of producing the sounds that are used to make

meaning when speakers speak. It involves segmental (vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental (stress, rhythm and intonation) features.

(2) Teachers' beliefs refer to a set of subjective judgments, attitudes and cognitions about the teaching of English segmental and supra-segmental features that Yunnan EFL teachers gradually set up and apply in the classroom based on their teaching experiences and professional development.

(3) Practices refer to the teaching of English segmental features, which are vowel and consonant sounds and supra-segmental features, which are stress, rhythm and intonation in English language in grade 10-11-12 of Yunnan province.

(4) EFL senior high school teacher refers to Chinese English teachers who teach at grade 10-11-12 in Yunnan province, Southwestern Region of China.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This chapter reviewed the relevant theories and previous research studies about teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation. Eight themes about teaching pronunciation were reviewed. They were the importance, the definition of teachers' beliefs, the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices, the goals, the contents, the methods, the current instructions and the related studies of teaching English pronunciation.

#### 2.1 The importance of teaching English pronunciation

Pronunciation plays an extremely important role in English communication. In spoken English, pronunciation is the most important part of English language skill. In the paper *Rethinking the Teaching of Pronunciation in the ESL Classroom*, Nair et al. (2017) argued that speakers with bad pronunciation would be unintelligible even though they had a clear command of the English language's vocabulary and grammatical principles. Many studies have concluded that English pronunciation was an important factor in English speakers' ability to present personal information, thoughts, or feelings in an English communicative context. As Richards (2015) stated in his book *Key Issues in Language Teaching* that, pronunciation was the first thing others would pay attention to when someone started to speak English. Gilakjani (2016) also stated that learners would not be understood without good English pronunciation,

even though they used perfect English grammar and vocabulary. That is to say, good pronunciation could greatly enhance the efficiency of oral communication. Moreover, pronunciation is also considered as “one of the key elements in the speaking component of major international English language proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEFL and TOEIC” (Henderson et al., 2012, p.23). Khamkhien (2010) also stated that pronunciation should be integrated as one of the aspects to evaluate learners’ speaking skills and oral communication efficiency in the speaking test.

Pronunciation also plays an important role in English listening comprehension. Ahangari et al. (2015) conducted a study by using pre-test and post-test between an experiment group and a control group to prove that the pronunciation practices could be effective for improving EFL learners’ listening comprehension ability. Therefore, pronunciation and listening comprehension are closely connected.

Regarding the policy for teaching and learning English pronunciation, the *National English Curriculum Standards for General High School* issued by Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2017) clearly points out every senior high school student has to master the basic knowledge of pronunciation, which includes individual sounds (vowels and consonants), stress, rhythm and intonation. The learning of pronunciation in high school should focus on meaningful contexts. By learning and using language, students can perceive the communicative function of pronunciation and gradually learn proper use of pronunciation to achieve the purpose of effective

communication. In detail, after taking the required courses, students should be able to (1) perceive speakers' intentions and attitudes based on the changes in stress, rhythm and intonation of the pronunciation; (2) Express their own meaning, intention and attitudes based on changes in stress, rhythm and intonation of the pronunciation; (3) Use phonetic knowledge to learn the pronunciation of multi-syllable words when looking up the dictionary. In addition, teachers should design various forms of speech practice activities to guide students to experience, perceive and improve the pronunciation of English, and to help students cultivate good English pronunciation and English language intuition. At the same time, teachers should also provide a large number of pronunciation practice activities to help students learn to effectively understand the English native and non-native speakers' attitude, intention and emotion. Yunnan province also adopts the National English Curriculum Standards for General High School of English Education. That is to say, students in Yunnan also need to reach the pronunciation requirements of National English Curriculum. In conclusion, the National English Curriculum Standards for General High School focuses on teaching English pronunciation within the meaningful contexts and reaching the purpose of effective communication. That means teachers need to teach students to understand the speeches of the English native and non-native speakers in different contexts and to communicate with them effectively. However, the National English Curriculum Standards for General High School does not specify the goals of teaching English

pronunciation to be native-like, intelligibility or comprehensibility. Yunnan EFL teachers create their own goals of teaching English pronunciation based on Yunnan senior high school students' contexts and National English Curriculum Standards for General High School.

Pronunciation is also important in some international standardized English speaking proficiency tests. For example, IELTS Official (2019) calculation on the mean overall and individual band scores achieved by 2019 Academic test takers from the top 40 nationalities showed that Chinese IELTS academic mean score on speaking part was 5.4 points which was ranked at the second lowest from the bottom among 40 countries. The results were probably caused by the low level of pronunciation. Therefore, in order to improve English speaking proficiency, pronunciation is an absolutely necessary part for English language teaching and learning.

## **2.2 Teachers' beliefs in teaching English pronunciation**

### ***2.2.1 The definition of "belief"***

In order to investigate teachers' beliefs, the term 'belief' must be defined. Different researchers have different views on the meaning of belief. In psychology, Zheng (2009) defined belief as "psychologically held understanding, premises or propositions felt to be true" (p.74). The understanding, premises and proposition are from one's own knowledge and experiences. The proposition may stand for their opinions or judgments toward something true or false, even influence one's action.

In philosophy, Pajares (1992) defined belief as “an individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do” (p.316). Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) also contended that “beliefs are judgments and evaluations that we make about ourselves, others, and the world around us” (p.79). An important element in the identity is the beliefs people hold. The beliefs could be religious, cultural or moral.

In education, beliefs are also a kind of cognition that has been studied in relevance to teaching and education (Richardson, 2003). Here, cognition refers to “the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching –what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p.81). Cognition for teachers could be defined as the range of teachers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Couper, 2016).

Many other terms were also used to define ‘belief’, such as values and attitudes (Rokeach, 1968), propositions (Klein, 2008), perception (Szyszka, 2016), cognitions and knowledge (Couper, 2016). A series of beliefs and intentions, which were used to provide directions and justifications for one’s behavior, could be defined as perspective (Pratt, 2002). Beliefs were the result of real experiences, but the experiences were governed by beliefs (Hale, 2014). “Belief is a subject of legitimate inquiry in fields as diverse as medicine, law, anthropology, sociology, political science, and business, as well as psychology, where attitudes and values have long been a focus



of social and personality research” (Pajares, 1992, p.308). In the field of psychology and personality, beliefs were often regarded nearly the same as attitudes (Strakova et al., 2014 as cited in Kutalkova, 2017). Kutalkova (2017) also defined beliefs as attitudes, which were used to judge whether some information about opinions were true or not.

In summary, beliefs can be defined through many aspects such as psychology, philosophy and education. A group of terms, such as judgement, attitude, values and cognition are often used to define beliefs. In the field of education and language teaching, teachers’ judgments, attitudes, and cognitions could greatly influence their teaching approaches, strategies and practices adapted to the classrooms, so investigating teachers’ beliefs could help to improve or adjust teaching practices to optimize the teaching processes.

### **2.2.2 Teachers’ beliefs**

Regarding teachers’ beliefs, many researchers defined teachers’ beliefs with different perspectives in the past decades. Uddin (2014) defined teachers’ belief as a thought process which played an important role in their teaching approaches and innovation for teaching practices (p.62). In education, it could be argued that teachers’ beliefs and instructional concepts are connected; teachers could teach effectively and efficiently depended on the guidance of their beliefs (Kutalkova, 2017). According to Richard (1998), teachers’ beliefs were “the information, attitudes, values, expectation, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning that teachers built up over time

and brought with them to the classroom” (p.66). Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) concluded that teachers’ beliefs referred to the cognitive procedure regarding how teachers developed their teaching methods and how they made decisions during teaching. Teachers’ beliefs guided teachers to design appropriate teaching activities to meet the complex teaching challenges and to create a good learning environment for students to stimulate their learning motivation and improve their learning ability (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Shah et al. (2017) claimed that, every teacher created and constructed their own beliefs on the instructional goals, teaching approaches, methods and techniques according to their previous experiences. In addition, “teachers' attitudes about education, schooling, teaching, learning and students, have generally been referred to as teachers' beliefs” (Pajares, 1992, p.316). Ulug et al. (2011) stated that teachers’ positive and negative attitude could highly affect their teaching effects, especially the teaching strategies they applied for teaching practices, because “teachers’ attitudes could help or hurt student motivation, achievement and well-being” (Marroquin, 2018). Therefore, teachers’ beliefs could be expressed through teachers’ teaching attitudes.

In summary, in this study, teachers’ beliefs are defined as a set of subjective judgments, attitudes and cognitions about the teaching practice that teachers gradually set up and apply in the classroom based on their teaching experiences and professional development. The beliefs reflect teachers’ pedagogical theory and instructional

practices they adopt in their classes. Teachers show their attitudes and judgements of what they need to teach and how to teach it, and also the cognition of what goals they should set for their class. Therefore, teachers' beliefs are their subjective consciousness about teaching practices from the judgements, attitudes and cognitions, which have been concluded and formed through teachers' experiences.

### **2.3 The relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices**

According to literature review, teachers' beliefs could greatly influence one's actions and decision-making. The relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices regarding teaching grammar, reading, writing and vocabulary has been investigated by many studies. However, studies on teachers' beliefs and practices about pronunciation teaching were relatively limited (Shah et al., 2017). Therefore, the current research aimed at exploring the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching pronunciation.

Buehl and Beck (2014) stated that the relationship between beliefs and practices should also be discussed together and there were potential factors that may enhance or inhibit this connection. Teachers' beliefs helped to understand their teaching plans and teaching processes, which included their teaching practices and resolutions they built up in the classrooms (Mansour, 2009). In order to understand the pronunciation teaching practices, the relationship between beliefs and practices must be drawn an attention and the factors which could facilitate or hinder the relations also

needed to be explored. The study of Buss (2016) investigated Brazilian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices on teaching pronunciation showed that Brazilian EFL teachers believed that teaching English pronunciation at school was important and their attitudes towards pronunciation and pronunciation teaching were very positive. Therefore, they did spend time on teaching English pronunciation. However, the study of Silveira (2002) showed that pronunciation instruction was absent from Brazilian second/foreign language (L2) classroom for a long time due to the conventional beliefs that pronunciation was not important. It could not be taught and learnt by learners.

Many research studies indicated that teacher' practices were not always consistent with their beliefs (Mansour, 2009). For example, Szyszka (2016) showed that the results of the Polish EFL teachers' beliefs were contradictory with their pronunciation teaching practices: teachers' positive attitudes to L2 pronunciation were insufficient to implement pronunciation teaching and the frequency of the pronunciation teaching was relatively too low in Polish schools. The study of Shah et al. (2017) showed that the Malaysian ESL teachers have contradictory beliefs on teaching pronunciation. That is, most teachers ignored pronunciation teaching because the curriculum focused on other language areas and skills for examination purposes and time constraints, or teachers themselves lacked the training in teaching pronunciation.

Mansour (2009) stated that, "the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices were complex and context dependent and it was far from straightforward"

(p.25). In the book of *Research on Teachers' Belief*, Fives and Gill (2015) stated that teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices may have three kinds of relationships:

First, teachers' beliefs influenced the teaching practices. Investigating teachers' beliefs was important to explore what practices used in the teaching. Teachers' beliefs were the key in determining the scope of knowledge and related materials to be included in educational tasks, because their beliefs were the core that guided the teaching practices (Mansour, 2009). For example, there was a case which showed that teachers' beliefs influenced the teaching practices. Song and Looi (2012) conducted a study between two teachers who have different teaching beliefs and practices in the classroom by interviews and classroom observation. They found that teachers who have established a set of beliefs with inquiry principles have also design inquiry-based teaching practices to help their students generate knowledge.

Second, teachers' teaching practices influenced their beliefs. Integrating teaching practices could help teachers adjust their beliefs for improving the effectiveness of the teaching. For example, Yilmaz and Cavas (2008) conducted an experimental study by using pretest and posttest among 185 pre-service elementary teachers to investigate the effect of their teaching practices on teaching efficacy and classroom management beliefs. The results showed that the classroom management beliefs of pre-service elementary teachers had changed with the teaching practices. That is to say, the pre-service teachers' beliefs related to instructional management

decreased with teaching practices, while their beliefs in people management increased with teaching practices.

Third, teachers' beliefs were not related or disconnected with their practices. For example, Liu (2011) found that although 79% of teachers held learner-centered beliefs, but the majority of them reported lecturing instead of using more communicative practices with technology.

In this study, the author wanted to investigate whether Yunnan EFL teachers' beliefs could influence their teaching practices. However, many factors, such as school curriculum, teachers' knowledge and teaching experiences could influence the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. Therefore, the current study tried to find the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching pronunciation.

#### **2.4 The goals of teaching English pronunciation**

Pronunciation is an important component of communicative competence. Therefore, establishing proper goals of teaching pronunciation could help to improve learners' communicative competence. In the 1970s, a desire to acquire native like pronunciation was commonly thought to be the goal of teaching a foreign language pronunciation (Chen, 2016). There was evidence which showed that both children and adults could achieve native-like pronunciation through their learning (Li, 2015). They believed that native-like pronunciation could facilitate communication. Traditional

English pronunciation instruction aimed at eliminating learners' first language accent, that is to say, those teachers dedicated to teach English pronunciation as standard as native speakers to learners (Gilakjani, 2017). According to Zahoor and Kausar (2018), some learners chose native-like English accent or closer native English accent as their goal of pronunciation learning. The reasons why they preferred native like accent than Pakistani English speech could be concluded as some of them wanted to settle abroad for good surviving in future and some others set native like pronunciation as an ideal goal for pronunciation learning even in the local Pakistan setting. Wang (2017) stated that an excellent way to learn English pronunciation was to have native English sources input so that to attain good learning effects.

However, Yakout and Amel (2019) argued that “perfect pronunciation or native-like pronunciation should not be the ultimate goal for English learning, because some learners want to maintain their foreign accent as a part of their identity” (p.220). In contrast, achieving an understandable pronunciation should be the main concern for pronunciation teaching and learning. Richards (2015) also stated that teaching English pronunciation as the native-like targets was inaccessible and also unnecessary. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) was suggesting for teaching English pronunciation in places such as China, Asia, Africa and native-like speech was no need to be required for learners (Deterding & Lewis, 2019; see also Jenkins, 2007; Tomlinson, 2006). ELF referred to the English which was used by speakers of different native languages as a

means of communication among one another (Nordquist, 2020). Teaching English as ELF aimed at teaching English pronunciation which was intelligible among non-native speakers. In order to make sure students communicate with non-native speakers effectively, making others understand them and being understood in return, ELF should be considered as a flexible and practical way to teach pronunciation.

Nowadays, in perception process, English pronunciation teaching often sets intelligibility and comprehensibility as the goals for promoting effective communication (Atli & Bergil, 2012). Intelligibility referred to “the degree to which a listener understands a speaker or a measure of how comprehensible speech is” (Derwing, 2010, p.29). Jung (2010) stated that some factors, such as stress, intonation, vowel and consonant sounds of English must be conquered to attain intelligibility. The intelligible pronunciation was a more realistic goal than native-like accent in teaching the second language pronunciation (Chen, 2016). Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) also claimed that the aim of teaching pronunciation was no longer needed to require learners to speak English as standard as native speakers, because “EFL learners could not completely pronounce English words exactly like native speakers” (p.968). Therefore, intelligibility was an ideal goal for most EFL learners because the learners wanted to be understood in conversations although some learners preferred to pronounce native-like accent in order to communicate with native speakers (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Comprehensibility was another dimension for measuring the quality of



pronunciation. As Derwing (2010) defined it as “a judgment of how easy or difficult an individual’s pronunciation is to understand” (p.29). It was unnecessary for teachers to teach learners to pronounce exactly American or British accent, but to encourage learners to speak English clearly and understandably. Although intelligibility was greatly used for assessing and evaluating the second language oral proficiency in the rating band descriptors (e.g., TOEFL iBT, IELTS), comprehensibility was also a practical way for evaluating oral competence in many bilingual evaluation settings (Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2012). So, for perception process, the experts seem to agree that intelligibility and comprehensibility are more achievable than standard native-like competence because they are effective in global communication.

In production process, teaching pronunciation is an important part in oral communication. Pronunciation accuracy and fluency were considered to be key components and important goals in speech (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). Accuracy referred to learners’ ability to pronounce English correctly without making mistakes (Belkheir, 2017). Fluency referred to the ability to pronounce English easily without repetitions, pauses and hesitations (Hedge, 2000). Foxwell (2021) stated that pronunciation accuracy was important for English language learning and low competence in pronunciation could lead to poor fluency, which could influence speaking proficiency. Accuracy in pronunciation was the foundation skill for people to understand the spoken communication. So, the goal was to use correct pronunciation

to express clear spoken English. However, Monteiro (2015) stated that the ultimate goal of the curriculum should not be the accuracy in English pronunciation, but should be the ability to communicate so that other speakers could understand. Understandable pronunciation could facilitate successful conversations even with grammatical mistakes. Therefore, it appears that accuracy in pronunciation and fluency can both be emphasized in teaching oral communication.

In conclusion, there was no evidence to show what the pronunciation teaching goals were among Yunnan EFL teachers. Therefore, the current study explored the beliefs and practices on the goals of Yunnan EFL teachers in teaching English pronunciation.

## **2.5 The contents in teaching English pronunciation**

Regarding the contents of teaching English pronunciation, many scholars and linguists have been concluded a system of instructions. Richards (2015) stated in his book *Key Issues in Language Teaching* that three major features of sounds should be included: 1) segmental features (discrete sounds: e.g. vowels and consonants), 2) supra-segmental features (a phonological property of more than one sound segment: e.g. stress, rhythm and intonation) and 3) voice quality setting (a component of speech which gives primary distinction to a given speaker's voice when pitch and loudness are excluded). Hewings (2004) summarized 'top five' important features of pronunciation which need to be taught in his book *Pronunciation Practices Activities* (p.15). They

were: 1) consonants; 2) consonant clusters; 3) vowel length; 4) word stress; 5) tonic words. The reason why he chose those 'top five' features to teach was that those features were more likely to cause communication breakdown because of those errors and social problems occurred from the different cultural contexts. According to Kenworthy (1987), in the book of *Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers Teaching English Pronunciation*, the content of teaching English pronunciation should include sounds (vowels and consonants), word stress, rhythm (weak forms and sentence stress), and intonation.

In recent studies, many researchers expressed their opinions about English pronunciation teaching contents. Zhang (2018), Breitzkreutz et al. (2001) and Foote et al. (2011) stated that segmental features and supra-segmental features were most frequently taught by ESL teachers. Buss (2016) stated that Brazilian teachers focused their pronunciation teaching on word-level features and problematic sounds. They spent more time on teaching segmental features than on supra-segmental features. The same result had been revealed in recent researches in different contexts, such as in Saudi Arabia (Alsofyani & Algethami, 2017), in Taiwan (Chiu, 2008) and in Australia (Burns, 2006). However, some studies showed that teachers preferred teaching supra-segmental features (Baker, 2011; Burgess & Spencer, 2000). Another research with 400-hour classroom observations of teaching pronunciation from three experienced teachers' instructions in Quebec, Canada showed that only 10% of

English teaching time spent on teaching pronunciation. Nearly all instructions focused on segmental features (individual sounds: vowels and consonants) teaching by correcting students' pronunciation errors, without supra-segmental features (stress, rhythm and intonation) integrated into the classroom. Those findings were inconsistent with the previous survey results regarding the quantity and quality of pronunciation teaching (Foote et al., 2016).

Ao and Low (2012) conducted a study to explore pronunciation features of Yunnan English among English learners with different ethnic backgrounds from several different regions of Yunnan. The results showed that there were some specific pronunciation features in Yunnan English, which were not shared by Chinese English. For example, Yunnan English salient consonantal feature of /l/ and salient vocalic feature of /ʌ/ realized as /ɑ/ were found among all participants. While some other features were identified in Chinese English in previous research, such as /r/ pronounced as /l/ and /v/ pronounced as /w/ were not found in the pronunciation of Yunnan English speakers. Table 1 showed some main pronunciation features of Yunnan English from this study.

**Table 1**

*Pronunciation Features of Yunnan English*

Consonants	Vowels
1. Omission and vocalization of /l/	1. /ʌ/ pronounced as /ɑ/
2. Omission of final /n/ and insertion of schwa before /n/	2. Absence of reduced vowels

Consonants	Vowels
3. /ʒ/ pronounced as /j/	3. Confused pronunciation of /i:/, /ɪ/ and /e/
4. /θ/ pronounced as /s/	4. Extra final vowel or schwa (/ə/) insertion
5. /ð/ pronounced as /z/	5. Diphthongs: /eɪ/ as /aɪ/, /i:/; /εə/ as /ɜ:/
6. /ʃ/ pronounced as /ç/	

In summary, a lot of studies generalized English pronunciation teaching contents with two main features: segmental features (e.g. vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental features (e.g. stress, rhythm and intonation). This is the main stream of teaching English pronunciation. However, the study of Ao and Low (2012) didn't include supra-segmental features research on Yunnan English pronunciation teaching. Therefore, the current study aimed at investigating both segmental features and supra-segmental features in Chinese context.

## 2.6 Methods of teaching English pronunciation

There are many approaches with certain methods adopted to teach pronunciation in different stages. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), the research on investigating pronunciation instructions mainly based on three different approaches: the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach, and the integrative approach. Different techniques and methods were used to teach pronunciation according to these three approaches. First of all, the intuitive-imitative approach was adapted to improve students' pronunciation ability by listening and imitating the sounds and rhythm of the target language without any explicit

information involved. Secondly, the analytic-linguistic approach mainly focused on teaching pronunciation by explicit pedagogical aids, such as using of the chart of phonetic alphabets, descriptions of tongue position and explanations of the manner of articulation etc. Thirdly, the integrative approach often used a lot of activities to integrate pronunciation in the classroom for learners' communication. The integrative approach focused more on supra-segmental features learning. Aydin and Akyüz (2017) stated that the intuitive approach was more effective and less burdensome when teaching young learners, especially for teaching diphthongs because the explicit instruction could not work well. However, the analytic-linguistic approach was better for teaching pure vowels to older learners, because phonetic alphabet and descriptive charts could be fully utilized by teachers.

Regarding pronunciation teaching practices, Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) proposed a five-stage of teaching pronunciation with using different practices, which included controlled practices, guided practices and free practices in the book *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference and Course Text*. The detail of the five-stages are as follow:

- 1) Description and analysis: Videos or animations could be effectively describe the position of the tongue and mouth when speaking occurred;
- 2) Listening discrimination: focused on listening practice, with feedback on learners' ability to correctly discriminate the features;
- 3) Controlled practice: Using minimal-pairs and short dialogues for learners to practice pronunciation;
- 4) Guided practice: Using structured

communication exercises (e.g. information gap activities or cued dialogues) to guide learners for practicing pronunciation; 5) Communicative practice: To allow learners to practice pronunciation in a free style with attending the less structured and fluency building activities, such as role play, problem solving, tasks and games.

Activities could help to teach pronunciation effectively. Hewings (2004) provided a lot of activities for teaching English pronunciation in the book of *Pronunciation Practices Activities*. 1) Activities for developing awareness of English pronunciation, such as using handouts to introduce concepts, different sounds comparison and drawing pictures of different intonations. 2) Activities for correcting pronunciation features, such as using repetition, minimal pairs and games to differentiate the pronunciation features. 3) Activities with using different resources, such as dictionary, phonetic symbols, authentic materials (e.g. 'knock, knock' jokes, tongue twisters, poems).

Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010) proposed different techniques to teach pronunciation based on the language teaching methods and approaches. For example, in audio-lingual method, learners imitated and repeated after teacher along with using a visual transcription system or articulation chart. Minimal pair drillings were the main technique for teaching pronunciation. In communicative approach, listening and imitating, phonetic training, minimal pair drills, visual aids, tongue twisters and reading aloud were used to teach pronunciation. The goal of teaching focused on

intelligible pronunciation for communication. Nowadays, a lot of techniques, such as the use of fluency-building activities, accuracy-oriented exercises, adaptation of authentic materials and instructional technology were used in teaching pronunciation.

Jarosz (2019) stated in the book *English Pronunciation in L2 Instruction* that the current recommended pronunciation practices focused on communicative approach, which targeted on teaching communicative and intelligible pronunciation by using a variety of techniques and tasks, such as authentic listening and speaking, contextualized minimal pairs, developmental approximation drills, phonological training, and visual aids. However, in today's typical classroom, EFL or ESL teachers still employ the well-known audio-lingual method, which using the activities from the general course books to teach pronunciation such as listen and repeat, listen and discriminate, find the odd one out, observe the movement of mouth and tongue, and try and follow the patterns. The shift from traditional methods (e.g. audio-lingual) to communicative ones (e.g. role-play, games, task activities) is on the rising trend.

Boumova (2008) stated that traditional methods focused on teacher-centered instructions with skills and areas of knowledge in isolation. The traditional pronunciation teaching methods often used controlled practices or techniques, such as reading minimal pairs, mispronunciation correction, imitation and repetition. However, modern teaching methods would be learner-centered with integrating flexible communicative activities, such as the role-play, task-based activities and games. In the



study of Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010), a survey was used to investigate what techniques used for teaching pronunciation. The results showed that all of teachers preferred using traditional techniques, such as dictation, reading aloud and dialogues to teach pronunciation and they would not like to use modern techniques, such as computers, instructional software, and the internet to teach pronunciation.

In Chinese context, some other studies about pronunciation teaching methods were conducted. The study of Hu (2017) showed that during traditional English pronunciation teaching process, listening and imitating were regarded as two important links. Many other methods also used to teach English pronunciation, such as mispronunciation correction, imitation and comparison based on audio-lingual method. Mispronunciation correction was highly used to teach pronunciation by Chinese EFL teachers, because they thought mispronunciation correction was essential to help learners improve English pronunciation (Luo, 2014). Khansir and Pakdel (2018) believed that mispronunciation correction was a feedback by teachers to help students improve their pronunciation. The common “mute English” caused by traditional teaching methods could not satisfy pronunciation learning among Chinese English learners (Wang, 2017). A new and valid way, such as communicative practices is needed to help improve Chinese students’ pronunciation.

In summary, there are many different approaches from traditional audio-lingual methods to contemporary approaches with using different techniques,

such as controlled practices (e.g. minimal pairs, imitation and repetition), structuring guided practices (e.g. information gap activities, interviews or group discussions) and communicative practices (e.g. role play, tasks, games) are proposed to teach pronunciation by researchers. The communicative practices and modern methods are highly recommended to teach pronunciation, because it focuses on being communicative and intelligible. However, most of teachers still used controlled practices and traditional methods on teaching pronunciation. Therefore, the current study aimed at exploring what practices and methods Yunnan EFL teachers used to teach pronunciation in their classes.

### **2.7 The current EFL instructions on English pronunciation in China**

With the development of English education, pronunciation teaching attracts many researchers' attention in China. Gao and Hanna (2016) conducted an experimental research on instructional software for teaching pronunciation in China. The results showed that the instructional software could help improve students' pronunciation. In addition, a built-in dictionary, a scoring system, colors, animations, and games were also recommended to be used on teaching pronunciation to young learners. Reading aloud was one of the most effective methods to teach and learn English pronunciation (Huang, 2010). In the study of Zhang and Lin (2017), a 16-week course adopting flipped classroom teaching model was designed to teach pronunciation. They assessed students' pronunciation with a pre-test and a post-test.

The results showed that students' pronunciation proficiency was highly improved after the 16-week course with the flipped classroom teaching model. It also facilitated students' motivation and interests of learning pronunciation through flipped class teaching model. Therefore, they concluded that the flipped classroom teaching model of English pronunciation was mainly adopting 'student-centered' model with group activities for teaching pronunciation. The flipped classroom teaching model could provide more opportunities for group members to communicate and collaborate. Yang (2015) stated that today's EFL teachers liked to apply traditional teaching methods with using a variety of teaching aids and skillful teaching techniques to teach English pronunciation. He provided some classroom activities EFL teachers used in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*The Frequent Activities Chinese Teachers Used to Teach English Pronunciation*

Activities	Descriptions
1. Missing card	After teaching phonetic symbols with flashcards, teacher takes out one of cards to ask students which card is missing.
2. game: looking for friends	Students try to find pair phonetic symbols according to teachers' instruction. (e.g. /p/ and /b/, /k/ and /g/, /t/ and /d/, /i/ and /i:/, /ʌ/ and /a:/, /u/ and /u:/).
3. Face to face pronunciation practice or mirror practice	Practice pronunciation with pair work or with using a mirror.
4. English tongue twisters	Students practice pronunciation with tongue twisters. (e.g: Can you can a can like a caner cans a can?)
5. Role-play	Practice sentence structure with role-play in communication.
6. Other activities	Sing English songs, watch English movies, drilling.

Some pronunciation teaching methods were investigated by Yunnan EFL teachers. For example, Yan (2008) conducted a study about the present situation of teaching English pronunciation in Yunnan province. The study showed that the quality of teaching English pronunciation and students' speech were relatively lower than the other parts of China. The present situation of teaching English pronunciation in Yunnan province could be described as follows: 1) English pronunciation teaching methods were mainly taught by oral instruction from English teachers, that is students listened to teachers' pronunciation and imitated it. There was no theoretical guidance or the use of instructional media, such as tapes, videos and computer to help those students in remote areas. 2) Among minority groups, teachers needed to teach English by using bilingual instructions, which were the minority languages and Mandarin Chinese. Therefore, students had to conquer difficulties of three different languages' pronunciation systems so that they could learn English pronunciation well. 3) Many English teachers didn't pay attention to English pronunciation teaching because of examination-oriented education and the lack of suitable pronunciation textbooks. Yan and Zhang (2013) stated that English proverbs were helpful for teaching pronunciation because they had a strong rhythm with figures of speech, such as simile, metaphor and exaggeration. Proverbs not only could improve teachers' teaching efficiency, but also students' comprehension. In this paper, the authors reported that teachers in Yunnan province used proverbs to teach single vowels, double vowels and consonants. They also stated

that teachers also needed to collect more English cultural knowledge and background of English native speakers to facilitate teaching pronunciation with English proverbs.

From above studies, it could be concluded that Chinese EFL teachers and researchers have made a lot of efforts on English pronunciation teaching. However, some pronunciation teaching issues, such as inappropriate methods, uninteresting activities and ignorance of pronunciation still existed. Some teachers didn't pay much attention to teaching pronunciation because of the limitation of the curriculum or lack of confidence to teach pronunciation. More efforts needed to be made on teaching pronunciation. New teaching approaches and modern techniques should be learned and applied to improve pronunciation teaching skills. Teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation also needed to be explored and researched.

## **2.8 Related studies**

Breitkreutz et al. (2001) were one of the earliest groups to do research on teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching English pronunciation. In 2001, they conducted a survey among 67 ESL instructors in Canada to explore what extent pronunciation was taught and what teaching resources were most frequently used. The survey also examined the ESL teachers' teaching methods and their attitudes towards English pronunciation. The findings from the survey showed that the majority of teachers believed it was important to teach pronunciation at all levels and they integrated both segmental and supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation into their

classroom. From the survey, speaking more slowly was reported to be the best strategy for L2 learners when pronunciation problems occurred. Troublesome sounds, repetition and paraphrase were also considered to be good strategies to solve pronunciation problems. This survey was conducted 10 years later again by Foote et al. (2011). They found that Canadian teachers' beliefs and practices had not changed a lot in general. There were few differences in teachers' responses over the past 10 years.

A similar study was also conducted by Buss (2016) in Brazil. She adapted and modified the questionnaire from Burgess and Spencer (2000) and Foote et al. (2011) to investigate Brazilian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding teaching pronunciation by collecting data with four main topics: 1) demographic information, 2) pronunciation teaching practices, 3) beliefs and opinions about teaching pronunciation, and 4) level of training and confidence to teach pronunciation. Most teachers worked at private language schools and/or universities, while very few taught in elementary or high schools. Most teachers had taught English from beginners to advanced learners. The results showed that the Brazilian instructors' attitudes toward the teaching pronunciation were generally positive and they believed that it was very important to teach pronunciation. The study also showed that the majority of teachers considered intelligibility and comprehensibility as better goals for teaching pronunciation. The Brazilian instructors also stated that a heavy accent was not a cause of discrimination and Brazilian EFL teachers were confident on teaching pronunciation. Regarding

pronunciation teaching activities, their teaching practices tended to be traditional with using of repetition and phonetic symbols to deal with word-level features, especially problematic sounds. Although repetition was the most frequent strategy used to teach pronunciation, only a few teachers believed it was the most effective activity for teaching pronunciation.

Baker (2014) explored teachers' beliefs and pronunciation instruction in Australia. Three instruments of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews were used to collect data from teachers and questionnaire was used with students. The results showed that the controlled practices were mainly used to teach pronunciation among Australian teachers. Three main beliefs were found in this study: 1) Listening perception was essential for producing comprehensible speech. 2) Kinesthetic or tactile practice was integral to phonological improvement. 3) Pronunciation instruction was boring. The reason was because the same techniques were used to teach pronunciation from one unit to the next. The pronunciation teaching training was also insufficient in Australian context.

Alsofyani and Algethami (2017) designed an online survey to examine the university teachers' beliefs and practices regarding teaching English pronunciation in Saudi Arabia. From the survey, they found that the EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia placed a high value on teaching pronunciation and most teachers considered it as important as other language skills. The results also showed that the teachers preferred to teach more

segmental features than supra-segmental features by using activities presented in the textbooks. In addition, phonetic symbols, individual sound exercises and minimal pairs were highly used to teach pronunciation because they considered these methods as the most effective activities to improve students' pronunciation.

In summary, the related studies showed that the studies of teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation have been conducted in many different contexts abroad. Different research instruments such as questionnaire, interview and classroom observation were used for collecting data. Most studies showed teachers' beliefs about the importance, the content and the goals of pronunciation teaching. Different types of pronunciation teaching activities and techniques were also investigated. Activities explored in different contexts were used to guide the development of teaching pronunciation. However, in Chinese context, not many studies about this topic have been done. The current study could fill the gap of the absence of research on teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation in Yunnan, China.



## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

This chapter presented the description of the research methodology, which included the research design, population and participants, instruments, research procedure, data collection and data analysis.

#### 3.1 Research design

The study was a non-experimental study with mixed methods to collect quantitative and qualitative data to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation in Yunnan, China. An online questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data to examine teachers' beliefs and practices. A semi-structured interview and classroom observation were used to collect qualitative data to gain deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices.

#### 3.2 Population and participants

The population was EFL senior public high school teachers in Yunnan province. All teachers were Chinese who were from different regions of Yunnan province.

EFL teachers from 10 public senior high schools in Yunnan province were selected by purposive sampling. There were 59 teachers to complete the online questionnaires. 5 EFL teachers were randomly selected for interviews and 3 teachers' instructions of the 5 interviewees were observed.

### **3.3 School context**

According to Yunnan Statistics Bureau of Education Development (2020), there were 547 public senior high schools in Yunnan province. Every school has established foundation English courses, which included the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation and culture. The foundation English courses are compulsory and are taught 5-7 periods per week. Each period lasts 40-45 minutes. There are about 40-60 students in a class. English is one of the most important courses in Yunnan education.

### **3.4 Research instruments**

#### ***3.4.1 The questionnaire***

The questionnaire was an online questionnaire hosted on SurveyMonkey application used for collecting quantitative data. The questionnaire items were adapted and modified from Buss (2016) study to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation in Brazil. However, some items were omitted and modified to suit the context of the English pronunciation teaching in Yunnan. Zhang (2018) also adapted the instrument in Buss (2016) for the research about teaching English pronunciation in Canada.

The questionnaire in this study consisted of three sections with a total of 43 questions as shown below:

1. Demographic information (13 questions, see Appendix A), including

Yunnan EFL teachers' gender, age, teaching experience, etc. It was closed-ended questions with the form of multiple choices. All of the questions were translated into Chinese to make sure the EFL teachers provide correct information.

2. Beliefs and opinions on pronunciation teaching (22 items, see Appendix B)

which were grouped into themes as follows:

- A. the beliefs on the importance of teaching pronunciation (items 1, 2, 3);
- B. the beliefs on the goals of teaching pronunciation (items 4, 6, 7, 11, 15, 18);
- C. the beliefs on the contents of teaching pronunciation (items 19, 20);
- D. the beliefs on how to teach pronunciation (items 8, 14, 16, 17, 21);
- E. the other beliefs on teaching pronunciation, which included the difficulty, age limitation, motivation, training of teaching pronunciation (items 5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 22)

The details were shown in Appendix B. These 22 items were used to investigate what beliefs and opinions Yunnan EFL teachers held for teaching English pronunciation. This section was closed statements with a Likert scale of five points to capture the extent the teachers agreed with. All of the items were translated into Chinese to help Yunnan EFL teachers clearly express their beliefs and opinions on teaching pronunciation. The technical term “intelligible” was translated as “可懂的” which meant the speech was clear enough to be understood.

3. Pronunciation teaching practices (8 questions, see Appendix C) were used to check how Chinese EFL teachers taught pronunciation. It focused on teachers'

practices including the content of teaching pronunciation, teaching approaches and teaching activities. The questions in this section were closed-ended questions with the form of multiple choices. All of the questions were translated into Chinese to help Yunnan EFL teachers clearly express how they taught English pronunciation.

### ***3.4.2 The semi-structured interview***

The interview questions consisted of 6 questions. They were used to explore Yunnan EFL teachers' attitudes and opinions of teaching pronunciation, which included the importance of teaching pronunciation, the frequency of teaching pronunciation, the activities used for teaching pronunciation, the contents of teaching pronunciation, the goals for teaching pronunciation and the difficult parts for teaching pronunciation (see Appendix D). In order to make sure that Yunnan EFL teachers could clearly express their beliefs and opinions on teaching pronunciation, the interviews were conducted in Chinese. The technical terms "intelligibility" was translated as "可懂度" which means to pronounce English clearly to get a high degree of understanding for the listeners, and "comprehensibility" was translated as "易于理解性" which means to pronounce English to be easy to understand in communication.

### ***3.4.3 The classroom observation***

Checklists on teachers' instructions towards teaching pronunciation were used for classroom observation, which included the teaching of segmental features and supra-segmental features, the activities in pairs, in groups and individual, the

error correction, encouragement on practicing pronunciation and teaching pronunciation in English without the use of Chinese in class (see Appendix E).

### 3.5 Research procedure

The study consists of three stages of research procedure. The first stage was the design of research instruments and the validation. Then there was the pilot study and revision. The second stage was the main study. During this stage, questionnaire, interview and classroom observation were implemented successively. The third stage was the data collection and data analysis. The research procedure is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*The Research Procedure*

Stages	Descriptions
Stage 1: Research instrument design	
Stage 1.1	Design the instruments: questionnaire, interview questions and checklist for classroom observation. Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was analyzed.
Stage 1.2	Pilot the instruments
Stage 1.3	Revise instruments
Stage 2: Implementation of the study	
Stage 2.1	Implemented the questionnaire
Stage 2.2	Implemented the semi-structured interview
Stage 2.3	Implemented the classroom observation
Stage 3: Data collection and data analysis	
Stage 3.1	Collected data of questionnaire, semi-structured interview and classroom observation.
Stage 3.2	Analyzed data of questionnaire, semi-structured interview and classroom observation.
Stage 3.3	Concluded the findings and answered the research questions.

### 3.6 The validity of instruments

After designing the instruments, two experts in TEFL Chulalongkorn University and one expert from Yuxi Normal University were invited to validate all of three instruments. An Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) Evaluation Form with score ranging from -1 to 1 and additional comments were designed and sent to the three experts to check the validity of each item of the instruments. The evaluation form used a three rating scale to judge each item of the instruments as follow:

+1	means	congruent
0	means	questionable
-1	means	incongruent

Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to evaluate the instrument items.

$$IOC = \frac{R}{N}$$

IOC means the index of congruence

R means total score of experts' opinion

N means the number of experts

If the IOC was higher than 0.50, it meant the item of instrument was congruence and should be reserved. But if the IOC was lower than 0.50, the item must be revised. The IOC results for each item of all instruments were shown in details (see Appendix F).

1. For the questionnaire, 37 out of 43 items were acceptable, because the IOC

was higher than 0.50. However, two items (items 19, 20) from Part 2 and four items (items 2, 4, 5 and 9) from Part 3 needed to be revised, because the IOC was 0.33, which was lower than 0.50. Moreover, three experts gave some suggestions in detail to revise questionnaire items. They said many technical terms were difficult to be understood by participants. The technical terms such as “controlled practices”, “communicative practices” and “guided practices” should be specified with some examples or explanations. Some words of frequency such as “rarely”, “sometimes” and “always” should be specified with how many times a week/month.

2. For the interview questions, the IOC of item 7 was 0.33, which was lower than 0.50. And one of the experts added additional comments that item 7 was not related to teaching pronunciation. So the item 7 was deleted.

3. For the classroom observation checklist, the IOC of all items was higher than 0.50, which meant all of items were acceptable. However, there were some comments from the experts suggesting to do some revisions, such as item 1, 2, 3 needed to be separated into small items; item 4, 5 needed to add how did the teachers do and item 7 needed to be deleted.

#### 4. The validity of translation

The translation from English to Chinese of all items was also validated by a Chinese expert. Comments and suggestions for the revision of the translation were provided. In order to avoid misunderstanding and wrong explanation for participants,

back translation was used for checking the validity of the translation of all instruments. There were four steps as follow: (1) The researcher translated all of questions and items into Chinese; (2) Then a professional translator from a translating company was invited to do a back translation to English; (3) Two raters (one was a professional translator from a university in China; another one was a doctoral student of EIL program in Chulalongkorn University) were invited to do a comparison between the back translation and the original English texts to check the consistency. They checked the validity of the back translation and gave comments to revise the translation of the instruments. (4) The researcher revised the translation according to the two raters' comments and suggestions. The results of the evaluation of the translation from the two experts were shown in Appendix G and the comments from the two experts were shown in Appendix H.

### **3.7 Pilot study**

#### ***3.7.1 Pilot the questionnaire***

After revising the items of questionnaire, 10 senior high school EFL teachers who had the similar teaching background and school context as the participants were purposively selected to take part in the pilot study of the questionnaire. Defects and problems were found through the 10 pilot study participants' reaction and comments.

Since part two of the questionnaire was a 5-point scale with 22 items to investigate Yunnan EFL teachers' beliefs towards teaching English pronunciation.



Cronbach's Alpha was conducted to measure the scale reliability, namely, how closely related a set of 22 items were as a group. The reliability was tested by using SPSS. In order to make sure the questionnaire were reliable; the Cronbach's Alpha must be more than 0.70. The results showed the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.729 in this pilot study. It meant that the questionnaire in this study was reliable and acceptable. The reliability of questionnaire was shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.729	22

**3.7.2 Pilot the interview**

After piloting the questionnaire, 3 of the 10 teachers were randomly selected to be interviewed. Revised questions after the IOC evaluation were asked to check the teachers' beliefs and practices on teaching pronunciation. The interview lasted for about 10-15 minutes to test the appropriateness of the questions. The interviews were audio recorded for transcribing and coding to analyze the teachers' opinions and to check whether it answered the research questions. All three participants were interviewed in Chinese. All of questions were acceptable; the teachers could understand and answer clearly.

### 3.7.3 Pilot the classroom observation

One of the interviewees was purposively selected to demonstrate teaching. The whole teaching process was video recorded for coding. At the same time, the researcher was observing the teaching via a live video call rather than went to observe the class himself because of Covid-19 pandemic. The classroom observation checklist was used to check whether the teacher taught pronunciation in the class and what practices the teacher used to teach it. Inter-rater reliability was used to check the degree of agreement between two raters/observers. One observer was the researcher; the other one was an experienced Chinese EFL teacher invited to watch the video clip and check “Yes” or “No” according to the checklist items. Field notes also added to see how the teacher taught pronunciation. Then, the results of the checklist from the two observers were calculated by using Cohen’s Kappa. The result of Cohen’s Kappa value was 0.814 with  $p < 0.006$ , which was considered as good agreement. The detail of inter-rater reliability was shown in Appendix I. The calculation of Kappa was shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Inter-Rater Reliability Statistics*

		Value	Asymptotic Standardized Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.814	.175	2.746	.006
	N of Valid Cases	11			

### ***3.7.4 Revision of the instruments after the pilot study***

For the questionnaire, in Question 2 of Part 1, the answer of “e. over 60” needed changing to be “e. 60 years or above”. In Question 5 of Part 1, many participants forgot to specify their college degree during the pilot study. So specifying college degree in Question 5 was separated into another new question.

For interview questions and classroom observation checklist, there were no items needed to be revised, which meant all of the questions and items were acceptable for the main study.

### **3.8 Data collection:**

The questionnaire on teachers’ beliefs and practices towards teaching pronunciation was posted on SurveyMonkey application. Participants completed the questionnaire online in order to collect their demographic information and their beliefs and teaching practices about teaching pronunciation.

The semi-structured interview data was collected by audio-recording and note-taking. The semi-structured interviews were conducted via WeChat calls. 5 teachers were randomly selected from the questionnaire participants to participate in the interview. Each teacher was interviewed for 10-15 minutes. Then the data from the audio-recordings and notes were transcribed into texts. Because the interviews were in Chinese, so the data were translated into English.

The classroom observation was collected by video recording and classroom

observation checklist. 3 teachers among the 5 interviewees were purposively selected to demonstrate how they taught English pronunciation in class. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher was unable to travel to China. Therefore, the class observations were conducted via live video calls and also recorded. Each of the three teachers was observed for 1 class period (40 minutes) and their instructions were video-recorded and the checklists were filled. A Chinese EFL teacher was asked to be an inter-rater to validate the reliability of the classroom observation checklist.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

#### ***3.9.1 Data analysis of questionnaire***

The quantitative data from the questionnaire on SurveyMonkey were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Figures, diagrams and tables were the tool to present the results of the data collected from questionnaire.

#### ***3.9.2 Data analysis of interviews***

The qualitative data recorded from the interviews were analyzed by content analysis through transcribing and categorizing. Then, the data were organized into themes.

#### ***3.9.3 Data analysis of classroom observation***

The data collected from the video recordings were analyzed by content analysis. And the data from checklists on the classroom observation were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. The summary of data analysis was shown in Table 6.

**Table 6***Data Analysis Summary*

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. What were the EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching pronunciation?	Questionnaire	Descriptive statistics
2. What English pronunciation practices did EFL senior high school teachers use in Yunnan province?	1. Interview: audio clips 2. Classroom observation: videotape 3. Classroom observation: checklists	Content analysis Content analysis Descriptive statistics

## Chapter 4

### Results

This chapter presented the results from the quantitative data of the questionnaire and the qualitative data of semi-structured interview and classroom observation according to the following two research questions:

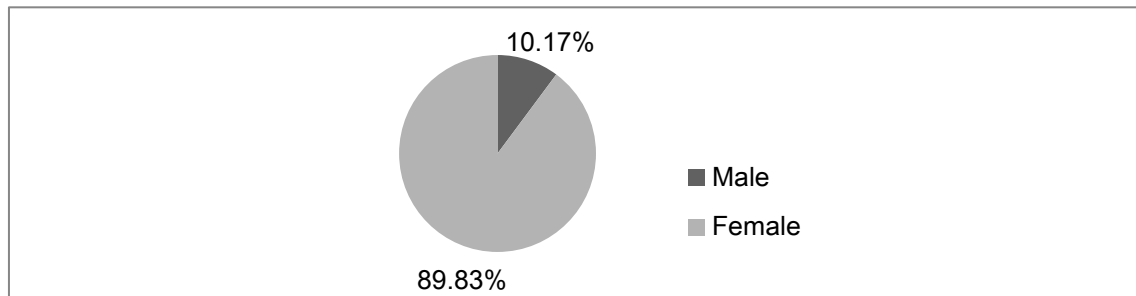
- (1) What were the EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching pronunciation?
- (2) What English pronunciation practices did EFL senior high school teachers use in Yunnan province?

#### 4.1 The results of questionnaire

The results were reported in the following three parts: (1) Participants' demographic information; (2) Teachers' beliefs on pronunciation teaching; (3) Pronunciation teaching practices.

##### 4.1.1 Participants' demographic information

The participants were Chinese-speaking EFL teachers from 10 senior public high schools in different regions of Yunnan province. The participants from 10 schools were selected by purposive sampling. 59 teachers responded to the questionnaire.

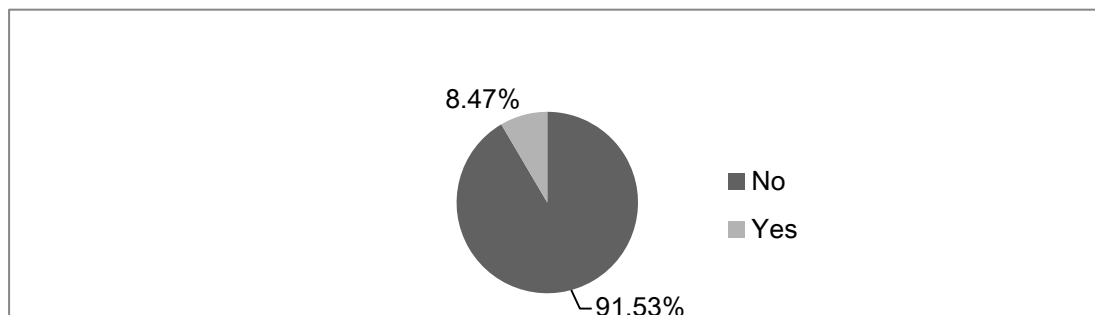
**Figure 1***Gender*

In Figure 1, 89.83% (N=53) of the participants were female, while 10.17% (N=6) of them were male.

**Table 7***Participants' Age*

Age	Number	Percentage
20-29 years old	25	42.37%
30-39 years old	27	45.76%
40-49 years old	7	11.87%
Total	59	100%

In Table 7, 45.76% (N=27) of the participants were in their 30's, with 42.37% (N=25) in their 20's and 11.87% (N=7) in their 40's.

**Figure 2***Studying or Teaching Experience Abroad*

In Figure 2, 91.53% (N=54) had no teaching or studying experience abroad, while 8.47% (N=5) specified that they had studied for three to six months in other countries, such as Thailand, Singapore, England and Canada.

**Table 8**

*Participants' Majors*

Majors	Number	Percentage
English Language Teaching	48	81.36%
English Language & Literature	7	11.87%
English Linguistics	1	1.69%
English or American Culture & Literature	1	1.69%
Others	2	3.39%
Total	59	100%

In Table 8, 81.36% (N=48) of the participants majored in English language teaching, 11.87% (N=7) majored in English Language and Literature, 1.69% (N=1) majored in English Linguistics and 1.69% (N=1) majored in English or American Culture and Literature. 3.39% (N=2) of them specified their major as Economy and Trade English.

**Table 9**

*Level of Education*

Education	Number	Percentage
College graduated	1	1.69%
Bachelor's degree	51	86.44%
Master's degree	7	11.87%
Total	59	100%



In Table 9, 86.44% (N=51) had a Bachelor's degree, 11.87% (N=7) had a Master's degree. Only 1.69% (N=1) had a College degree (A three-year program).

**Table 10**

*College Degree*

Degree	Number	Percentage
Education	52	88.14%
Humanity	5	8.47%
Others	2	3.39%
Total	59	100%

In Table 10, 88.14% (N=52) of the participants specified their college degree as Education, 8.47% (N=5) as Humanity and 3.39% (N=2) as Economy and Trade.

**Table 11**

*Level of Pronunciation*

Pronunciation	Number	Percentage
Heavily accented and sometimes difficult to understand	1	1.69%
Heavily accented but intelligible	5	8.47%
Moderately accented	24	40.69%
Slightly accented	25	42.37%
Native-like	4	6.78%
Total	59	100%

In Table 11, 42.37% (N=25) of the participants described their own pronunciation as slightly accented, 40.69% (N=24) moderately accented, 8.47% (N=5) thought they had a heavily accented but intelligible pronunciation, 1.69% (N=1)

thought she had a heavily accented and sometimes difficult to understand pronunciation and 6.78% (N=4) reported they had a native-like pronunciation.

**Table 12**

*Speaking Fluency*

Fluency	Number	Percentage
You can speak as fluently as native English speakers at the natural speed and continuity.	4	6.78%
You can speak continuously most of the time with no apparent effort, but hesitate occasionally when searching for a word or the correct way to express yourself.	23	38.98%
You can usually keep talking, but frequently repeats your sentences or phrases, self-corrects or speaks unnaturally slowly.	28	47.46%
You speak with noticeable pauses almost every sentence or phrases.	4	6.78%
Total	59	100%

In Table 12, 47.46% (N=28) of the participants thought they could keep talking, but frequently repeated the sentences or phrases and self-corrected or spoke unnaturally slowly. 38.98% (N=23) thought they could speak continuously most of the time with no apparent effort, but hesitated occasionally when searching for a word or the correct way to express themselves. 6.78% (N=4) could speak as fluently as native English speakers at the natural speed and continuity. 6.78% (N=4) spoke with noticeable pauses almost every sentence or phrase.

**Table 13***Teaching Experience*

Years of teaching	Number	Percentage
2 years or less	12	20.34%
3-5 years	12	20.34%
6-10 years	18	30.51%
11-15 years	10	16.95%
16-20 years	2	3.39%
More than 20 years	5	8.47%
Total	59	100%

In Table 13, 20.34% (N=12) had been teaching English for two years or less, 20.34% (N=12) for 3-5 years, 30.51% (N=18) for 6-10 years, 16.95% (N=10) for 11-15 years, 3.39% (N=2) for 16-20 years and 8.47% (N=5) for more than 20 years.

**Table 14***Teaching Area*

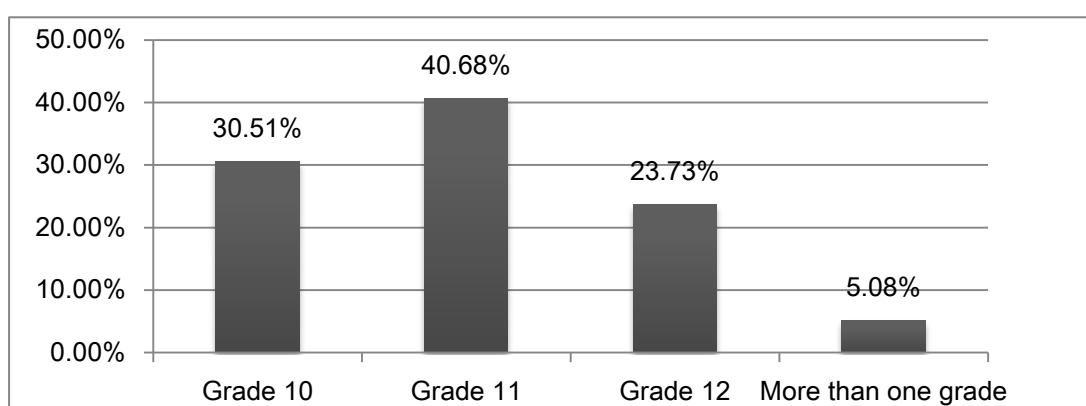
Areas	Number	Percentage
Eastern part (e.g. Wenshan, Qujing)	6	10.17%
Western part (e.g. Lincang, Dali, Baoshan, Dehong, Nujiang)	18	30.51%
Southern part (e.g. Xishuangbanna, Pu'er, Honghe)	11	18.64%
Northern part (e.g. Zhaotong, Diqing, Lijiang)	12	20.34%
Middle part (e.g. Kunming, Yuxi, Chuxiong)	12	20.34%
Total	59	100%

In Table 14, 30.51% (N=18) of the participants were teaching English in the

western part of Yunnan province. 20.34% (N=12) were teaching in the northern part, 20.34% of them (N=12) were teaching in the middle part. 18.64% (N=11) were teaching in the southern part. Only 10.17% (N=6) were teaching in the eastern part.

**Figure 3**

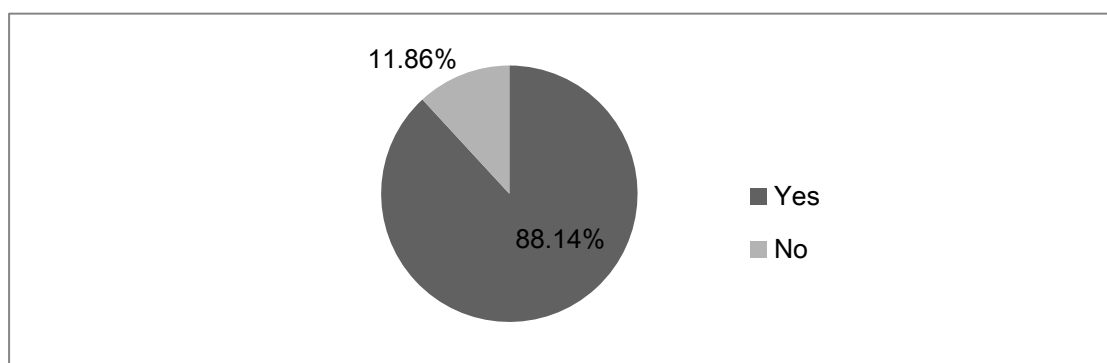
*Grade of Teaching*



In Figure 3, 40.68% (N=24) of the participants were teaching grade 11, 30.51% (N=18) were teaching grade 10 and 23.73% (N=14) were teaching grade 12. However, 5.08% (N=3) were teaching more than one grade (e.g. grade 11& grade 12 and grade 8 & grade 11).

**Figure 4**

*Phonetics/Phonology Education Background*



In Figure 4, 88.14% (N=52) of the participants had taken English phonetics or phonology classes as part of their education, but 11.86% (N=7) of them didn't take any English phonetics/phonology classes.

**Table 15**

*Pronunciation Training*

Training	Number	Percentage
None	25	42.37%
Sporadic workshops at conferences	13	22.04%
A course/section as part of in-service training/education at the workplace	19	32.20%
Others	2	3.39%
Total	59	100%

In Table 15, 42.37% (N=25) of the participants reported that they never received any pronunciation training as an English teacher. 32.20% (N=19) of them took a course or section as a part of in-service training or education at the workplace and 22.04% (N=13) took sporadic workshops at conferences as their pronunciation training experiences. 3.39% (N=2) of them specified that they ever took pronunciation training relevant courses at university.

**4.1.2 Teachers' beliefs towards teaching English pronunciation**

In order to examine EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching pronunciation, the participants were asked to evaluate what extent they agreed with the 22 statements on a five-point scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree,

3-undecided, 4-agree, and 5-strongly agree).

In Table 16, there were 13 items which were positive statements (items 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22). There were 9 items which were negative statements (items 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17, 18). The negative ones were marked with the symbol \*. The reversed scores for negative statements were presented.

**Table 16**

*Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching English Pronunciation (N=59)*

Statements	Number (Percentage)					M ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1. Teaching pronunciation is an essential part of teaching English.	2 (3.39)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	20 (33.90)	37 (62.71)	4.53	0.81
2. Teaching pronunciation does not usually result in permanent changes in the speech of EFL students.*	2 (3.39)	5 (8.47)	14 (23.73)	34 (57.63)	4 (6.78)	3.56	0.87
3. Teaching pronunciation is often unnecessary, as most learners are able to pick up on pronunciation when frequently exposed to good input.*	0 (0.00)	4 (6.78)	3 (5.08)	27 (45.76)	25 (42.37)	4.24	0.83
4. Heavy accent affects learners' attitude towards English teachers.	3 (5.08)	1 (1.69)	6 (10.17)	33 (55.93)	16 (27.12)	3.98	0.95
5. Teaching pronunciation is difficult.*	3 (5.08)	24 (40.68)	15 (25.42)	17 (28.81)	0 (0.00)	2.78	0.92
6. The goal of pronunciation teaching should be to eliminate foreign accent as much as possible.	6 (10.17)	30 (50.85)	10 (16.95)	12 (20.34)	1 (1.69)	2.53	0.98

Statements	Number (Percentage)					M ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
7. The best person to teach pronunciation is a native speaker.	1 (1.69)	23 (38.98)	9 (15.25)	21 (35.59)	5 (8.47)	3.10	1.07
8. It is not possible to teach pronunciation communicatively.*	0 (0.00)	4 (6.78)	11 (18.64)	34 (57.63)	10 (16.95)	3.85	0.78
9. There is an age-related limitation on the acquisition of native like pronunciation.	8 (13.56)	27 (45.76)	10 (16.95)	13 (22.03)	1 (1.69)	2.53	1.04
10. Pronunciation instruction is only effective for highly motivated learners.*	3 (5.08)	10 (16.95)	9 (15.25)	30 (50.85)	7 (11.86)	3.47	1.07
11. Native speakers should be the model for pronunciation teaching.	0 (0.00)	18 (30.51)	18 (30.51)	21 (35.59)	2 (3.39)	3.12	0.89
12. Some individuals resist changing their pronunciation in order to maintain their L1 identity.	6 (10.17)	29 (49.15)	17 (28.81)	7 (11.86)	0 (0.00)	2.42	0.83
13. I don't like teaching pronunciation.*	0 (0.00)	5 (8.47)	8 (13.56)	36 (61.02)	10 (16.95)	3.86	0.79
14. When teaching pronunciation, the teacher should avoid comparing English with Chinese as much as possible.	1 (1.69)	20 (33.90)	7 (11.86)	25 (42.37)	6 (10.17)	3.25	1.09
15. Teaching pronunciation should help make students comfortably intelligible to their listeners.	0 (0.00)	2 (3.39)	3 (5.08)	42 (71.19)	12 (20.34)	4.08	0.62
16. Pronunciation is best learned through language immersion, without the need for rules or theoretical explanations.*	1 (1.69)	13 (22.03)	8 (13.56)	32 (54.24)	5 (8.47)	3.46	0.98

Statements	Number (Percentage)					M ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
17. Most learners don't like teachers to correct their pronunciation.*	0 (0.00)	9 (15.25)	13 (22.03)	31 (52.54)	6 (10.17)	3.58	0.87
18. Pronunciation instruction improves language accuracy rather than communication.*	1 (1.69)	9 (15.25)	5 (8.47)	34 (57.63)	10 (16.95)	3.73	0.97
19. I think English sounds (e.g. vowels and consonants) are highly important in pronunciation teaching.	1 (1.69)	2 (3.39)	0 (0.00)	40 (67.80)	16 (27.12)	4.15	0.73
20. I think stress, rhythm and intonation are highly important in pronunciation teaching.	1 (1.69)	0 (0.00)	3 (5.08)	35 (59.32)	20 (33.90)	4.24	0.70
21. Communicative practice is the best way to teach pronunciation.	0 (0.00)	9 (15.25)	17 (28.81)	29 (49.15)	4 (6.78)	3.47	0.83
22. I wish I had more training in teaching pronunciation.	1 (1.69)	2 (3.39)	2 (3.39)	33 (55.93)	21 (35.59)	4.20	0.80

From Table 16, the 3 statements with the highest mean scores were

Statement 1: *Teaching pronunciation is an essential part of teaching English* ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.53),

followed by Statement 3: *Teaching pronunciation is often unnecessary, as most*

*learners are able to pick up on pronunciation when frequently exposed to good input*

( $\bar{x}$ =4.24) and Statement 20: *I think stress, rhythm and intonation are highly important*

*in pronunciation teaching* ( $\bar{x}$ =4.24). The 3 statements with the lowest mean scores

were Statement 12: *Some individuals resist changing their pronunciation in order to*



*maintain their L1 identity* ( $\bar{x}=2.42$ ), followed by Statement 6: *The goal of pronunciation teaching should be to eliminate foreign accent as much as possible* ( $\bar{x}=2.53$ ) and Statement 9: *There is an age-related limitation on the acquisition of native like pronunciation* ( $\bar{x}=2.53$ ).

#### **4.1.3 Pronunciation Teaching Practices**

**Table 17**

*Frequency of Pronunciation Teaching*

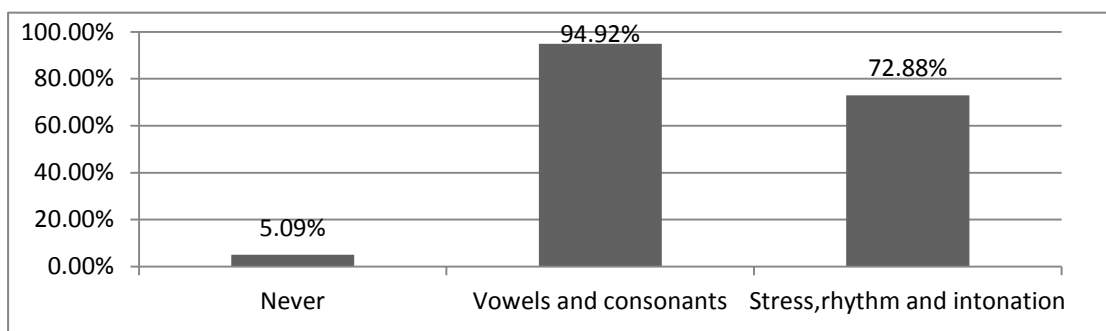
Frequency	Number	Percentage
Never	3	5.09%
1-2 times per month	38	64.41%
3-4 times per month	5	8.47%
5-6 times per month	5	8.47%
7 or more times per month	8	13.56%
Total	59	100%

When asked about how often did teachers teach pronunciation, Table 17 showed that 64.41% (N=38) of the participants indicated that they taught pronunciation only 1-2 times per month. 8.47% (N=5) of them taught pronunciation 3-4 times per month, 8.47% (N=5) taught 5-6 times per month and 13.56% (N=8) of them taught 7 or more times per month. 5.08% (N=3) of the participants stated that they never taught pronunciation.

**Table 18***The Methods of Pronunciation Teaching*

Methods of teaching pronunciation	Number	Percentage
Never	3	5.09%
I correct mispronunciation.	42	71.19%
I teach specific pronunciation features when the need arises.	41	69.49%
I work on the pronunciation activities presented in the textbook.	15	25.42%
I use extra resources to work on common problematic features for learners.	6	10.17%
I try to integrate pronunciation instruction into my general English teaching.	31	52.54%
Total	59	100%

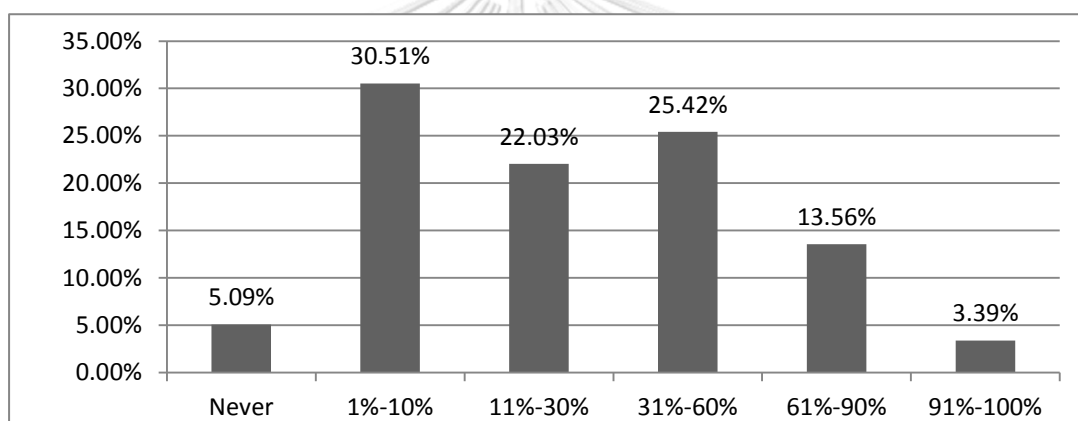
Table 18 showed that 71.19% (N=42) of the teachers taught pronunciation by correcting mispronunciation and 69.49% (N=41) of them taught specific pronunciation features when it needed. And 52.54% (N=31) chose integrating pronunciation instruction into the general English teaching as the third popular way for teaching pronunciation. 25.42% (N=15) of the teachers chose working on the pronunciation activities presented in the textbook. Only 10.17% (N=6) of the teachers used extra resources to work on common problematic features for learners to teach pronunciation.

**Figure 5***The Contents of Pronunciation Teaching*

In terms of the contents of pronunciation teaching, Yunnan EFL teachers tended to teach both segmental features and supra-segmental features. However, they focused more on segmental features than supra-segmental features. As shown in Figure 5, 94.92% (N=56) of the teachers taught segmental features and 72.88% (N=43) taught supra-segmental features.

**Figure 6**

*Percentage of Pronunciation Instruction on Segmental Features*



Regarding the time spent on pronunciation, Yunnan EFL teachers were asked to choose the percentage of pronunciation instruction was dedicated to segmental features. Figure 6 showed that 30.51% (N=18) of the participants spent about 1%-10% of the time on teaching segmental features. 22.03% (N=13) of the teachers spent 11%-30% of their time and 25.42% (N=15) of them spent 31%-60% of their time on segmental features. About 13.56% (N=8) teachers spent 61%-90% time and only 3.39% (N=2) teachers spent 91%-100% time on teaching segmental features.

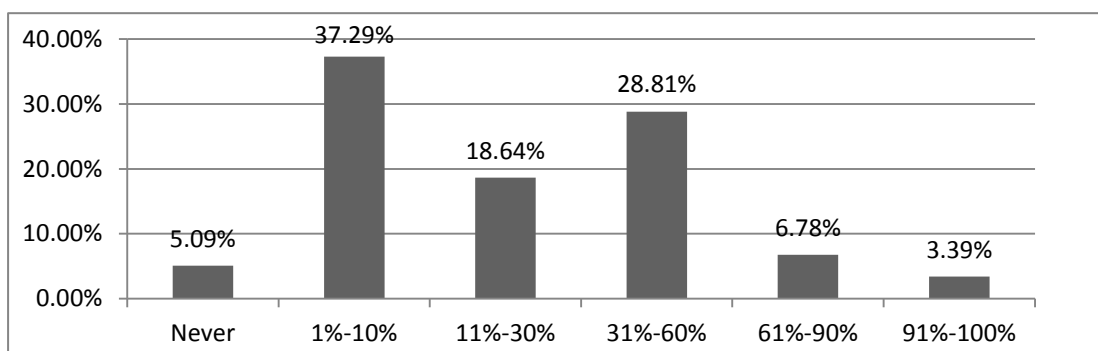
**Figure 7***Percentage of Pronunciation Instruction on Supra-Segmental Features*

Figure 7 revealed that 37.29% (N=22) of the participants spent 1%-10% of the time on teaching supra-segmental features. 18.64% (N=11) of the teachers spent 11%-30% of their time and 28.81% (N=17) of them spent 31%-60% of their time on supra-segmental features. Only 6.78% (N=4) of the teachers spent 61%-90% of the time and 3.39% (N=2) of them spent 91%-100% of their time on teaching supra-segmental features.

**Table 19***Activities for Teaching Pronunciation*

Activities	Number	Percentage
Never	3	5.09%
Use videos or animations to show students how to move their tongue and mouth.	31	52.54%
Listen and discriminate different sounds such as vowels and consonants.	43	72.88%
Read minimal pairs.	33	55.93%
Use information gap activities or cued dialogues to practice pronunciation.	11	18.64%
Use role play, problem solving, tasks and games to practice stress, rhythm and intonation.	26	44.07%
Others	1	1.69%
Total	59	100%

Concerning the activities were used to teach pronunciation, Table 19 showed that 72.88% (N=43) of the teachers often taught pronunciation by the activity of Listening and discriminating different sounds such as vowels and consonants (e.g. listen and discriminate to see whether they are the same or different: /ship/ /sheep/; /pig/ /big/; /weary/ /very/). 55.93% (N=33) of the teachers taught pronunciation through reading minimal pairs such as “pin/bin”, “zeal/seal” and “rot/lot” and 52.54% (N=31) of them chose to use videos or animations to show students how to move their tongue and mouth. 44.07% (N=26) of the teachers liked to use activities such as role play, problem solving, tasks and games to practice stress, rhythm and intonation. 18.64% (N=11) of the teachers used the information gap activities or cued dialogues to practice pronunciation. And only 1.69% (N=1) of teachers specified the activity used to teach pronunciation was spelling and read the new words of every unit.

**Table 20**

*Techniques for Teaching Segmental Features (e.g. Vowels and Consonants)*

Techniques	Number	Percentage
Never	3	5.09%
Using phonetic symbols	54	91.53%
Individual sound exercises	43	72.88%
Minimal pairs	33	55.93%
Other methods	4	6.78%
Total	59	100%

Talking about the strategies or techniques used for teaching segmental

features, Table 20 showed 91.53% (N=54) of the teachers chose using phonetic symbols (e.g. “cut” read as [kʌt], “card” read as [kɑ:d], “thanks” read as /θæŋks/) as their favorite strategy. 72.88% (N=43) of the teachers use individual sound exercises (e.g. [b] bird, rubbing, rub; [p] pan, tapping, tap.) to teach segmental features. 55.93% (N=33) of the teachers preferred using minimal pairs (e.g. desk/disk, buy/pie, fan/van) for teaching segmental features. Besides, 6.78% (N=4) specified they taught segmental features by listening to tapes (3 teachers) and using mirror to observe tongue (1 teacher).

**Table 21**

*Techniques for Teaching Supra-segmental Features (e.g. Stress, Rhythm and Intonation)*

Techniques	Number	Percentage
Never	3	5.09%
Using stress placement activities.	43	72.88%
Using syllable structure activities.	40	67.80%
Imitation & repetition	38	64.41%
Other methods	10	16.95%
Total	59	100%

The teachers were also asked to present what strategies or techniques used for teaching supra-segmental features. As shown in Table 21, 72.88% (N=43) of the teachers chose stress placement activities as the most prevalent activities to teach supra-segmental features. 67.80% (N=40) of the teachers preferred the syllable

structure activities. 64.41% (N=38) of the teachers chose imitation & repetition as one of their favorite strategies. Interestingly, 16.95% (N=10) of the teachers specified other methods to teach supra-segmental features, such as reading aloud, which was mentioned as the strategy by 7 times, singing songs was mentioned 3 times and tongue twisters were also mentioned 3 times.

In summary, this part presented the pronunciation teaching practices used by the Yunnan EFL teachers. As the data showed, most of the participants (64.41%, N=38) taught pronunciation only 1-2 times per month. Most of the teachers taught pronunciation by correcting mispronunciation (71.19%, N=42), taught specific pronunciation features when it needed (69.49%, N=41) and integrated pronunciation instruction into the general English teaching (52.54%, N=31).

Yunnan EFL teachers taught both segmental features and supra-segmental features. Most of the teachers spent about 1%-10% of the time (30.51%, N=18) on teaching segmental features and 37.29% (N=22) of the teachers spent 1%-10% of the time on teaching supra-segmental features. The activity of listening and discriminating different sounds such as vowels and consonants (72.88%, N=43), reading minimal pairs (55.93%, N=33) and using videos or animations to show students how to move their tongue and mouth (52.54%, N=31) were the top three activities frequently used to teach pronunciation by teachers.

Most of the teachers liked to use phonetic symbols (91.53%, N=54),

individual sound exercises (72.88%, N=43) and minimal pairs (55.93%, N=33) to teach segmental features. Stress placement activities (72.88%, N=43), syllable structure activities (67.80%, N=40) and imitation and repetition (64.41%, N=38) were the most prevalent activities used for teaching supra-segmental features.

#### 4.2 The results of the interview

5 EFL teachers were randomly selected from the 59 participants for interviews. The researcher randomly selected 5 schools from the 10 senior high schools in Yunnan province and then randomly selected 1 teacher from each of the 5 schools.

The 5 interviewees' information was shown as the following table:

**Table 22**

*Interviewees' Information*

Interviewees	Age	Years of teaching experience	Level of education	Grade of teaching	Major
Interviewee 1	41	17	Bachelor's degree	10	English language teaching
Interviewee 2	34	10	Master's degree	11	English language teaching
Interviewee 3	23	1	Bachelor's degree	10	English language teaching
Interviewee 4	28	5	Bachelor's degree	10	English language teaching
Interviewee 5	33	10	Bachelor's degree	12	English language teaching

Based on the interview, the teachers' responses were divided into 6 themes: 1. the importance of teaching pronunciation; 2. the goals of teaching pronunciation; 3. the



contents of teaching pronunciation. 4. the frequency of teaching pronunciation; 5. the activities for teaching pronunciation; 6. the difficult parts of teaching pronunciation.

The details were as follows:

### **1. The importance of teaching pronunciation**

All of the 5 teachers believed that pronunciation was very important in English language teaching. The reasons shared by the 5 participants were as follows:

1.1 Pronunciation was the basis of learning English, which could affect the listening and speaking skills a lot as English was a tool for communication.

1.2 Pronunciation could not only help learning vocabulary, but also listening.

1.3 Pronunciation could improve students' self-confidence and learning motivation, even the self-study skills.

1.4 Pronunciation could also affect the results of oral examination of those students who needed the scores to apply for language majors such as French, Spanish and Japanese, or other majors such as international economy and trade and translation, etc. If teachers taught pronunciation to students in their class, those students could get high scores in the oral examination.

### **2. The goals of teaching pronunciation**

Three teachers preferred to set native-like competence as the goal of teaching pronunciation. But actually, the students could not reach the level of native-like pronunciation. Two teachers would like to teach pronunciation for students to

understand others and to be understood by others even though they have an accent.

### **3. The contents of teaching pronunciation**

Four teachers taught both segmental features (e.g. vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental features (e.g. stress, rhythm and intonation). However, the focus of their instruction was not the same. That is, three of the teachers taught more segmental features, while the other one taught more supra-segmental features. Only one teacher stated he rarely taught segmental features and supra-segmental features.

### **4. The frequency of teaching pronunciation**

Four participants often taught pronunciation. The reason was because pronunciation could improve students' basic knowledge, could cultivate students' self-directed learning ability and help with learning vocabulary.

Only one teacher rarely taught pronunciation. That was because he taught Grade 12 students who had to prepare for college entrance examination for the whole year and the teacher didn't have enough time to focus on pronunciation.

### **5. The activities for teaching pronunciation**

Some activities, such as watching videos, playing games and singing songs were used for teaching pronunciation. Listening to tapes and pronunciation drills by reading aloud were the most frequent activities used for teaching pronunciation. For example, the teachers used role-play for students to practice pronunciation by asking students to imitate the movie actors after watching a piece of movie clips. Some

teachers taught pronunciation by students' peer-observing the mouth and tongue movement and correct each other's wrong pronunciation.

One teacher didn't use a lot of activities because he didn't have enough time to focus on pronunciation.

## **6. The difficult parts of teaching pronunciation**

Supra-segmental features were the most difficult part to teach for four of the teachers, because the students' English pronunciation was always influenced by Chinese pronunciation, which was really different from English. Vowels and intonation were the most difficult parts to teach for one of the teachers, because students were not interested in pronunciation.

### **4.3 The results of the classroom observation**

Three teachers were selected for class observation from the five interviewees by purposive sampling. The instructions were observed and video recorded. Each teacher was observed once and each class lasted for 40 minutes. The researcher was unable to travel to China to conduct the class observation himself due to the Covid-19 pandemic. So the classes were observed via a live video calls from China and recorded for data analysis.

The three teachers were named to be Teacher 1, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3. The classroom observation checklist was used to collect data and the data were presented in tables below. The instructions by Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 were conducted

in June, 2020, while Teacher 1 was conducted in August, 2020. The inter-rater reliability was used to check the degree of agreement between two raters. One rater was the researcher; the other one was a Chinese EFL teacher who watched the video clips and checked the items on the observation checklist. Field notes were also added to see how the teacher taught pronunciation. Then, the results of the checklist from the two raters were calculated by using Cohen's Kappa.

**Table 23**

*Results of Inter-Rater Reliability*

Teacher	Cohen's Kappa	Approximate Significance	Interpretation
Teacher 1	0.814	0.006	Good agreement
Teacher 2	0.814	0.006	Good agreement
Teacher 3	1.000	0.001	Very good agreement

Table 23 showed the inter-rater reliability between the researcher and another rater. The result of Cohen's Kappa value of Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 was 0.814 with  $p < 0.006$ , which was considered as good agreement. Cohen's Kappa value of Teacher 3 was 1.000 with  $p < 0.001$ , which meant a very good agreement.

**Table 24**

*The Classroom Observation Checklist of Teacher 1*

Items	Yes	No	Field notes (related comments)
1. Teachers teach vowel sounds.	Yes		The teacher used phonetic symbols to teach a lot of vowels (e.g. /i/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/)
2. Teachers teach consonant sounds.		No	

Items	Yes	No	Field notes (related comments)
3. Teachers teach stress.		No	
4. Teachers teach rhythm.		No	
5. Teachers teach intonation.	Yes		The teacher taught rising intonation (e.g. Is Lily in?).
6. Teachers provide students with activities in pairs.		No	
7. Teachers provide students with activities in groups.		No	
8. Teachers provide students with activities individually.		No	
9. Teachers correct students' pronunciation errors.	Yes		The teacher corrected students' mispronunciation when they pronounce the words wrong. (e.g. meat, street, hill, happy, pictures, parachute etc.).
10. Students are encouraged to practice pronunciation.		No	
11. Teachers teach pronunciation in English without using Chinese.		No	

Teacher 1 taught some individual sounds with using phonetic symbols and taught intonation in example sentences. Table 24 showed that the teacher taught both segmental features (e.g. vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental features (stress, rhythm and intonation). During this class, the teacher mainly taught single vowel sounds (e.g. /ɪ/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/) by using phonetic symbols. She used the pictures to show the mouth shape and the tongue placement to students and demonstrated how to pronounce those single vowels, and then asked students to practice by repeating the words (e.g. sea, tree, ship, pen, head, apple, cup etc.), phrases (e.g. green leaves, a big ship, very well, mad man, hurry up etc.) and sentences (Would you like coffee or tea?

How did you spend your holiday?). The teacher also taught “rising intonation” by using a question example (e.g. Is Lily in?). As for the stress and rhythm, the teacher didn’t teach it.

For the activities, there were no individual, pair or group activities provided for students to practice pronunciation in this class. The teacher only taught some single vowel sounds (e.g. /ɪ/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/) by practicing with words, phrases and sentences. The main strategy Teacher 1 used in this class was repetition. She demonstrated how to pronounce those single vowel sounds (e.g. /ɪ/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/), and then asked students pronounce every single vowel, words and phrases three times with the whole class or small groups. Later the teacher asked students to stand up to pronounce the words and phrases one by one and tried to correct students’ mispronunciation when the students pronounced them wrong (e.g. meat, street, hill, happy, pictures, parachute etc.). Teacher 1 used Chinese to explain the correct pronunciation for students.

In summary, Teacher 1 mainly taught segmental features with the strategy of repetition. There were no any activities involved in teaching pronunciation. The teacher demonstrated the pronunciation and then the students were required to practice with words, phrases and sentences. Students were not encouraged to practice pronunciation with activities. The teacher did try to correct students’ pronunciation errors when they pronounced wrongly.

**Table 25***The Classroom Observation Checklist of Teacher 2*

Items	Yes	No	Field notes (related comments)
1. Teachers teach vowel sounds.	Yes		The teacher used hand gestures to demonstrate how to pronounce long vowel [ɔ:] and short vowel [ɒ]. And he used the phonetic symbols to teach pronunciation of words, such as “ <u>com</u> prehension”, “ <u>au</u> tomatic”.
2. Teachers teach consonant sounds.	Yes		The teacher taught plosive /d/ in the phrase “accu <u>st</u> omed to”.
3. Teachers teach stress.	Yes		The teacher guided students to read words with stress and explain where the stress is and how to pronounce the words with stress (e.g. awkward /'ɔ:kwəd/, desperate /'despəɾət/, and smoking/'smu:kɪŋ/).
4. Teachers teach rhythm.		No	
5. Teachers teach intonation.		No	
6. Teachers provide students with activities in pairs.		No	
7. Teachers provide students with activities in groups.		No	
8. Teachers provide students with activities individually.		No	
9. Teachers correct students' pronunciation errors.	Yes		The teacher corrected students' mispronunciation during checking reading answers.
10. Students are encouraged to practice pronunciation.		No	
11. Teachers teach pronunciation in English without using Chinese.		No	

Teacher 2 taught a reading class. He integrated pronunciation teaching into his class. Table 25 showed that the teacher taught both segmental features and supra-segmental features. During this class, the teacher taught long vowel /ɔ:/ and short

vowel /ɔ/ by using phonetic symbols. He also used hand gestures to show how to pronounce vowels (e.g. /ɔ:/ and /ɔ/). Teacher 2 opened his palm until the thumb and index finger turned to be a 90-degree arc to show the correct pronunciation of the short vowel /ɔ/ and then used his palm to make a semicircle round to stretch from left to right to show the correct pronunciation of the long vowel /ɔ:/. Students repeated reading words aloud with the teacher's help to practice the long vowels and short vowels (e.g. comprehension, automatic). The teacher also taught plosive /d/ in the phrase “accustomeded to”. The teacher taught “stress” by guiding students to read words with stress and explained where the stress was and how to pronounce the words with stress (e.g. awkward /'ɔ:kwəd/, desperate /'despəret/, and smoking/'smoukɪŋ/). As for the rhythm and intonation, the teacher didn't teach them. But he repeated the sentences with rhythms and intonations to demonstrate the correct pronunciation of those sentences, which was considered to be a way of imparting the rhythms and intonations of sentences.

Regarding the activities, the teacher didn't design any individual, pair or group activities for students to practice pronunciation. The teacher just taught some words by demonstrating how to pronounce long vowel /ɔ: /, short vowel /ɔ/ and the stress in the words. Then the teacher asked students to stand up to answer questions one by one in English and tried to correct students' mispronunciation when the students pronounced the words wrong. However, the teacher gave five minutes for students to



review words and sentences by reading aloud at the beginning of the class. The teacher didn't teach in English all the time. He tried to use Chinese to explain the correct pronunciation. But he used as much English as possible to show the pronunciation to students.

In summary, Teacher 2 taught both segmental features and supra-segmental features. The strategy of reading aloud and phonetic symbols were used to teach pronunciation. Teacher 2 didn't design any activities for teaching pronunciation. The students repeated the new words and some sentences after the teacher. Students were not encouraged to practice pronunciation with activities. The teacher did try to correct students' pronunciation errors when they pronounced wrongly. He used Chinese to explain the pronunciation while a lot English was used in the instruction.

**Table 26**

*The Classroom Observation Checklist of Teacher 3*

Items	Yes	No	Field notes (related comments)
1. Teachers teach vowel sounds.	Yes		The teacher used phonetic symbols to taught a lot of vowels (e.g. /u:/, /ju:/, /a:/, /i:/)
2. Teachers teach consonant sounds.	Yes		The teacher taught a lot of consonants (e.g. /s/, /k/, /θ/, /ð/, /f/) by minimal pairs, observing tongue placement and showing the movement of vocal cords.
3. Teachers teach stress.	Yes		The teacher taught words with stress (e.g. /'insens/ & /ɪn'sens/)
4. Teachers teach rhythm.		No	
5. Teachers teach intonation.		No	
6. Teachers provide students with activities in pairs.		No	

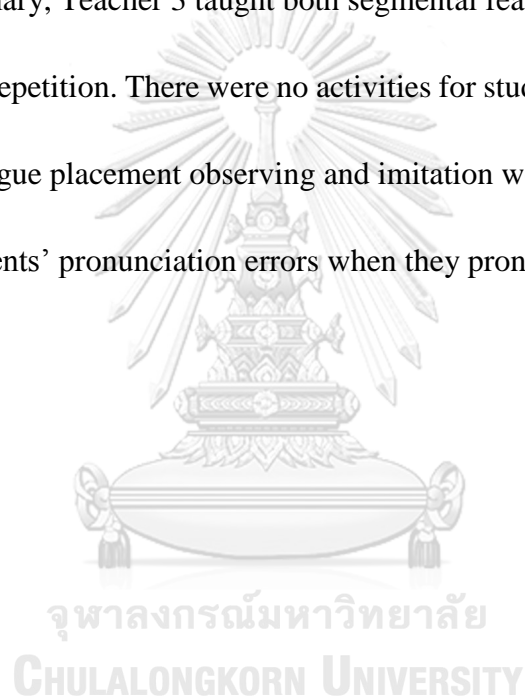
Items	Yes	No	Field notes (related comments)
7. Teachers provide students with activities in groups.		No	
8. Teachers provide students with activities individually.		No	
9. Teachers correct students' pronunciation errors.	Yes		The teacher corrected students' mispronunciation when they pronounce the words wrong. The teacher repeated the words' pronunciation by many times to corrected students' mispronunciation (e.g. harvest, starve, religious, seasonal, ancestor etc.).
10. Students are encouraged to practice pronunciation.		No	
11. Teachers teach pronunciation in English without using Chinese.		No	

Teacher 3 was teaching vocabulary in her class. She integrated a lot of pronunciation into her vocabulary lesson. Table 26 showed that both segmental features (e.g. vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental features (stress, rhythm and intonation) were taught in her class. During the class, Teacher 3 taught a lot of vowels (e.g. /u:/, /ju:/, /a:/, /i:/) by using phonetic symbols. The teacher taught a lot of consonants (e.g. /s/, /k/, /θ/, /ð/, /f/) by using minimal pairs, peer observing tongue placement and showing the movement of vocal cords. The teacher taught “stress” with example words (e.g. incense: /'ɪnsens/ and /ɪn'sens/). The rhythm and intonation were not taught.

The teacher didn't provide any individual, pair or group activities for students to practice pronunciation. However, the teacher taught pronunciation by using

phonetic symbols. She also asked students to stand up one by one to pronounce the words and show their tongue placement for their peers to observe. In this way, students could imitate and practice the pronunciation. The teacher repeated the words' pronunciation by many times to correct students' mispronunciation. The students did a lot pronunciation practice with the teacher's help.

In summary, Teacher 3 taught both segmental features and supra-segmental features by using repetition. There were no activities for students to practice. However, minimal pairs, tongue placement observing and imitation were used. The teacher did try to correct students' pronunciation errors when they pronounced wrongly.



## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter presented a summary of the study first, and then the findings from the three instruments were discussed and concluded. At last, the implications and recommendations for further study and limitations were also presented.

#### 5.1 Summary of the study

The study is a non-experimental study with mixed methods to collect quantitative and qualitative data to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices towards teaching English pronunciation in Yunnan, China according to the research questions: (1) What were the EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching pronunciation? (2) What English pronunciation practices did EFL senior high school teachers use in Yunnan province?

The objectives of this study were: (1) To examine the EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching English pronunciation; (2) To investigate the English pronunciation practices of EFL senior high school teachers in Yunnan province.

Three instruments: online questionnaire, semi-structure interview and classroom observation were designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data. All of the instruments were validated, piloted and revised before the main study.

Back-translation was also used to validate the translation of the instruments.

During the main study, 59 senior high school EFL teachers from 10 schools

of Yunnan province were invited to fill the questionnaire according to their own teaching experiences. Then a semi-structured interview was conducted to collect qualitative data. 5 of the 59 teachers were randomly selected to participate in the interview. The interview was recorded and transcribed. After that, 3 teachers of the 5 interviewees were purposively selected to demonstrate one class teaching and their instructions were observed and video recorded for data collection and analysis. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive statistics: mean scores and standard deviation. The qualitative data from interview were analyzed by using content analysis. The quantitative data from classroom observation checklist were analyzed by using frequency and percentages.

The findings of the study were divided into two parts: (1) teachers' beliefs on teaching English pronunciation; and (2) English pronunciation practices according to the research questions. Based on the research question 1, the results showed that most of the teachers' beliefs toward teaching pronunciation were highly positive. They believed that teaching English pronunciation was really necessary. The pronunciation teaching goals were mixed among native-like fluency, intelligibility and comprehensibility. Regarding research question 2, the results showed that the majority of teachers did spend some time on teaching pronunciation in their classes. Both segmental features (e.g. vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental features (e.g. stress, rhythm and intonation) were taught by Yunnan EFL teachers. The activities such

as listening to tapes, watching videos and reading minimal pairs and the strategies of reading aloud together with phonetic symbols were used for teaching pronunciation.

## **5.2 Discussion**

This part aimed at discussing the two research questions: (1) What were the EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching pronunciation? (2) What English pronunciation practices did EFL senior high school teachers use in Yunnan province?

### ***5.2.1 EFL senior high school teachers' beliefs towards teaching pronunciation***

Overall, most Yunnan EFL teachers in this study believed that teaching English pronunciation was essential. Students needed to receive good input from teachers and supra-segmental features were highly important. They also believed that students were willing to learn English pronunciation and there was not an age limit in achieving good English pronunciation. However, some teachers believed that the goal of teaching was to achieve native-like pronunciation while others thought the goal was to enable students to communicate effectively.

Yunnan EFL teachers' beliefs can be discussed further in five aspects which are the importance, the goals, the contents, the methods of teaching pronunciation and other beliefs as follow:

#### **A. The beliefs on the importance of teaching pronunciation**

There was a very high agreement on the importance of teaching

pronunciation and the teachers' beliefs toward teaching pronunciation were positive. They believed that teaching English pronunciation to senior high school students was really necessary. Yunnan EFL teachers believed that teaching pronunciation could result in changes in the speech of EFL students. It means learners' pronunciation could improve as long as teachers integrated the pronunciation instructions into their classes. The same answer was also confirmed from the five teachers in the interview. All of them stated that pronunciation was very important in English language teaching and pronunciation teaching could help listening and speaking skills, vocabulary learning and improve students' self-confidence and learning motivation. These similar findings were congruent with studies by Breitzkreutz et al. (2001), Buss (2016) and Alsofyani and Algethami (2017).

### **B. The beliefs on the goals of teaching pronunciation**

There were mixed beliefs among native-like fluency, intelligibility and comprehensibility. Some teachers chose native-like fluency as the goal of teaching pronunciation. Many teachers believed that heavy accent affected learners' attitude towards English teachers. That indicates that Yunnan EFL teachers wanted to demonstrate near-native pronunciation which could cultivate students' interest in pronunciation. However, some teachers chose intelligibility and comprehensibility as the goal of teaching pronunciation. They believed that students' pronunciation should be clear and easy to understand rather than eliminating the foreign accent. Besides,

Yunnan teachers held different opinions on the best person to teach pronunciation. Some agreed that native speaker was the best person to teach pronunciation, while others disagreed. The reason why teachers held different opinions might be because English native speaking teachers and non-English native speaking teachers had different advantages on teaching pronunciation. Some students might want to learn English through language immersion with native speakers. Some other students needed Chinese teachers to give explicit explanation to help them understand the rules so that they could attain good English pronunciation. As Wang (2017) stated in her study that English native teachers had perfect pronunciation. They had flexible and creative teaching methods or activities to make the class more interesting than non-native teachers. However, non-native teachers had the English learning experience and effective English learning strategies before they were teachers. So, those teachers could detect students' pronunciation problems and apply the effective strategies to help students. Furthermore, they can use Chinese to explain the pronunciation rules and principles clearly for students.

In conclusion, Yunnan EFL teachers have different opinions on the goals of teaching pronunciation: some chose native-like fluency as the goal, while some of them chose intelligibility and comprehensibility as the goal. This was consistent with the findings in the interview, which were two teachers set intelligibility and comprehensibility as the goal of teaching pronunciation which could improve learners'



confidence and communicative competence, while the other three teachers set the native-like fluency as the goal of teaching pronunciation because they wanted students to reach high pronunciation proficiency.

The reason why the pronunciation teaching goal was mixed among native-like fluency, intelligibility and comprehensibility is probably because the National English Curriculum didn't specify it and the teachers could set the goals according to their beliefs, teaching experiences and their own school contexts. For example, some teachers believed that pronunciation teaching goal should aim at being native-like fluency rather than "Chinglish" pronunciation which could confuse the listeners. Some teachers believed that there was no need to set native-like pronunciation as the goal of teaching pronunciation, because the students who were from the mountain areas didn't have good English pronunciation basis during the elementary school and junior high school. Those students would lack confidence to speak English if the teacher required them to pronounce English based on native-like standard.

Therefore, intelligibility and comprehensibility would be better for them. However, many previous studies from other countries such as Atli and Bergil (2012) in Turkey, Buss (2016) in Brazil and Alsofyani and Algethami (2017) in Saudi Arabia showed that their teaching goal was intelligibility and comprehensibility, which was different from the current study.

### **C. The beliefs on the contents of teaching pronunciation**

Most Yunnan EFL teachers believed that both segmental and supra-segmental features were highly important in teaching pronunciation. The finding was confirmed by the 4 teachers in the interview: both segmental and supra-segmental features were taught in their classes. The belief was consistent with the teaching practices in the classroom observation as all three teachers taught both segmental and supra-segmental features by using the strategy of repetition, minimal pairs and reading aloud. The vowel sounds (e.g. /ɪ/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/), consonant sounds (e.g. /s/, /k/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/) and stress, intonation were taught in their classes. The same findings in the study of Zhang (2018), Breitzkreutz et al. (2001) and Foote et al. (2011) were also showed that both segmental and supra-segmental features were frequently taught by the ESL teachers.

### **D. The beliefs on how to teach pronunciation**

Yunnan EFL teachers held mixed beliefs about how to teach pronunciation. On the one hand, some teachers agreed that English pronunciation could be taught communicatively and they thought that communicative practice was the best way to teach pronunciation. In the interview, four teachers believed that a variety of communicative activities could make the pronunciation class more interesting and students' confidence and motivation could improve. They liked to use communicative activities, such as playing games, role-playing and making conversations to teach

pronunciation. As Monteiro (2015) stated that teaching pronunciation communicatively could improve students' oral communication. On the other hand, some Yunnan EFL teachers also held the belief that pronunciation was better learned by explicit theoretical explanations of pronunciation rules and they believed that comparing English with Chinese pronunciation features could help learners identifying the differences between English and Chinese so that students could understand well and learn pronunciation well. Moreover, they also believed that mispronunciation correction was a good way to teach pronunciation because they thought that learners like teachers to correct their pronunciation. As shown in the classroom observation all three teachers used mispronunciation correction to teach pronunciation. Luo (2014) stated that it was an essential part of teachers' job to help learners correct their pronunciation and students could benefit from spoken error corrections by the teachers in the ELT classrooms (Khansir & Pakdel, 2018).

It can be concluded that Yunnan EFL teachers believed there was not only one way to teach pronunciation. Both traditional methods, such as explicit theoretical explanations, mispronunciation correction and communicative practices could be effective for teaching pronunciation. Traditional methods could help students to fully understand the main points and concepts by teachers' explicit explanation, while communicative practices could help to cultivate students' communicative competence (Boumova, 2008).

However, in the actual classroom instructions, the three teachers didn't provide communicative activities for students to practice pronunciation in the classroom observation. This is contradictory with the beliefs in the questionnaire and interviews. The possible reason might be Yunnan EFL teachers have limited time to design communicative activities to teach pronunciation because of too many contents, such as vocabulary, grammar and composition are required by the curriculum. Another reason might be the lack of communicative practices training. Without training, Yunnan EFL teachers have limited experiences to teach pronunciation with communication activities.

**E. The other beliefs on teaching pronunciation, which included the difficulty, age limitation, motivation, training of teaching pronunciation**

Most teachers disagreed that there was an age-related limitation on the acquisition of native-like pronunciation and they didn't believe that pronunciation instruction was only effective for highly motivated learners. The beliefs from the teachers might be based on their experiences, as Li's (2015) study showed that it was uncertain whether age was a factor that influences the native-like pronunciation. Other factors such as learning environment, motivation, aptitude, and learning strategy also influenced the acquisition of native-like pronunciation. The teachers thought that as long as good pronunciation instruction was integrated in the lessons, both highly motivated learners and lowly motivated learners could improve their pronunciation.

Most of the teachers contended that they liked to teach pronunciation, even though they thought teaching pronunciation was difficult. The reason might be because Yunnan EFL teachers thought good pronunciation could help to motivate students to communicate confidently and teaching pronunciation well could help for improving students' listening and speaking.

Nearly all of the teachers showed a high wishes to have more training in teaching pronunciation. This is probably because most of the teachers stated that they didn't have a training of teaching pronunciation. English teachers in Yunnan had some sporadic English teaching training, but not much pronunciation was provided. Most of them had only enrolled in some pronunciation courses at university. Pronunciation teaching training could provide a lot of teaching approaches, strategies and activities for teachers. Then teachers would benefit from the training in both pronunciation knowledge and teaching practices, especially the modern communicative methods. Their teaching theory would be updated and practically used in their classes after training. The similar findings were also discussed in the studies of Buss (2016) and Alsofyani and Algethami (2017), which showed that the teachers were not satisfied with the pronunciation teaching training and they hoped to gain more training to improve their pronunciation teaching skills.

### ***5.2.2 EFL senior high school teachers' pronunciation teaching practices***

The pronunciation teaching practices are about the teaching of English

segmental and supra-segmental features. The discussion is categorized into five themes, which are the frequency, the methods, the contents, the activities and the techniques of teaching pronunciation.

### **A. The frequency of teaching pronunciation**

Most Yunnan EFL teachers reported that they did not frequently teach pronunciation. When three classes were observed, it showed that pronunciation was not taught separately, but was integrated into vocabulary and reading classes. The possible reason may be because of the school curriculum and national policy, which is examination-oriented. It requires Yunnan EFL teachers to focus more on teaching grammar, vocabulary and test-taking skills. As a result, teachers have limited time to spend on teaching pronunciation. The findings were different from the studies by Buss (2016) in Brazil and Alsofyani and Algethami (2017) in Saudi Arabia, which showed that most of the teachers often or always taught pronunciation in the classroom.

In summary, the frequency of teaching pronunciation in Yunnan was not high and not much time was spent on teaching pronunciation.

### **B. The methods of teaching pronunciation**

Most Yunnan EFL teachers taught pronunciation by correcting mispronunciation and teaching specific pronunciation features, such as /ɪ/, /i:/, /θ/, /ð/. The teachers gave an explanation of how to pronounce words, phrases and sentences in Chinese and demonstrated the pronunciation, then asked students to repeat

mechanically two or three times. Correcting mispronunciation was the most frequent practices for teaching pronunciation. This is probably because correcting mispronunciation was the direct and effective way to solve students' pronunciation problems. The same results were found in the studies of Foote et al. (2011) and Alsofyani and Algethami (2017), which showed that most of the Canadian and Saudi Arabian teachers chose to correct students' mispronunciation and integrated pronunciation instruction into their general English class and using extra resources to teach pronunciation was the least frequently used practice by the Saudi Arabian teachers. However, Buss (2016) study showed that Brazilian teachers considered correcting mispronounced words as the least frequent approach to teach pronunciation.

The least frequent practices for teaching pronunciation were using extra resources to correct common problematic features. The reason might be because the instruction is based on the textbooks of integrated English skills and they have shortage of equipment and access to multimedia to find the extra resources to teach pronunciation.

In summary, Yunnan EFL teachers tended to use lectures to explain how to pronounce certain sounds and used controlled practices rather than modern teaching methods and free practices. This might be due to the fact they do not have the knowledge on how to teach pronunciation. This practice reflected their belief that they needed training in this area.

### **C. The contents of teaching pronunciation**

Yunnan EFL teachers taught both segmental features and supra-segmental features in their class. However, they tended to teach more segmental features than supra-segmental features. The finding agrees with the actual classroom teaching, which showed that teachers spent more time on teaching segmental features. The reason why segmental features are taught more than supra-segmental features might be because segmental features, such as /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/, /ɪ/ and /i:/ and /θ/ and /ð/ are important for students and they could help with vocabulary teaching. For example, identifying the long vowels and short vowels could help students remember words, such as ship and sheep, bill and green. In the study of Breitzkreutz et al. (2001), the teachers also focused on both segmental features and supra-segmental features. The studies of Buss (2016) and Alsofyani and Algethami (2017) showed that the teachers taught segmental features more than supra-segmental features.

In summary, both segmental features and supra-segmental features were taught by Yunnan EFL teachers but segmental features got more emphasized.

### **D. The activities of teaching pronunciation**

The most prevalent activity used by Yunnan EFL teachers were listening and discriminating different sounds such as vowels and consonants. Reading minimal pairs and using videos or animations to show students how to move their tongue and mouth were also preferred by Yunnan EFL teachers. The reason might be because Yunnan



EFL teachers learned those activities from their college education training and they believed those activities were efficient for teaching pronunciation. Not many teachers chose to use role play, problem solving, tasks and games to practice pronunciation. Using information gap activities or cued dialogues to practice pronunciation was the least prevalent activity for teaching pronunciation. It may be because those activities require a lot of time to prepare and implement in the classroom.

The practices were congruent with four teachers' beliefs in the interview, which showed that listening and pronunciation drills by reading aloud were the most frequent activities they used for teaching pronunciation. It is because they believed that reading aloud could help students to open their mouth to speak and teachers could correct their pronunciation effectively (Huang, 2010). The activities of watching videos, playing games and singing songs were sometimes used to teach pronunciation. This is probably because the teachers believed those activities could get students' attention and raise their interest. But they may lack of time to design those activities because teaching grammar, vocabulary and writing are demanding from the curriculum. So, they sometimes used those activities to teach pronunciation. However, during the classroom observation, all three teachers didn't apply any individual, pair and group activities to teach pronunciation despite their beliefs that activities could help improving students' pronunciation proficiency. There are several reasons on the contradiction between the actual classroom instructions and teaching practice claims.

That is, Yunnan EFL teachers face the challenge of balancing the teaching contents among grammar, vocabulary, writing and other English skills under the examination requirement. Moreover, most teachers do not have pronunciation teaching experiences due to the lack of training.

In conclusion, Yunnan EFL teachers preferred using traditional activities, such as audio-lingual practice activities, reading minimal pairs and the drills of reading aloud to teach pronunciation.

#### **E. The techniques of teaching segmental features and supra-segmental features**

Using the phonetic symbols were the most frequent technique used by Yunnan EFL teachers. Individual sound exercises and minimal pairs were also frequently used to teach segmental features. Besides, listening to tapes and using a mirror to observe tongue movement were sometimes used by teachers. The answer was confirmed by the actual classroom teaching, which showed all three teachers used phonetic symbols and individual sound exercises to teach pronunciation. The same result was also found in the study of Alsofyani and Algethami (2017), which showed that phonetic symbols, individual sound exercises and minimal pairs were the most effective techniques used for teaching segmental features.

Most teachers chose stress placement activities as the most prevalent activities to teach supra-segmental features. The syllable structure activities and imitation and repetition were also used to teach supra-segmental features by many

teachers. Reading aloud, singing songs and tongue twisters were also used to teach supra-segmental features by few teachers. In the classroom observation, imitation and repetition was the most frequent strategy used by all three Yunnan EFL teachers. The syllable structure activities and imitation and repetition were also frequently used for teaching supra-segmental features by Brazilian teachers in the study of Buss (2016).

In conclusion, Yunnan EFL teachers frequently used phonetic symbols, individual sound exercises and minimal pairs to teach segmental features. Stress placement activities, syllable structure activities and imitation and repetition were mostly used to teach supra-segmental features.

### ***5.2.3 The relationship between Yunnan teachers' beliefs and teaching practices***

As Zhang (2018) stated that teachers' beliefs played an important role on English language teaching and learning. The current study showed that teachers' beliefs influenced their teaching practices in four aspects. First of all, most teachers believed that teaching pronunciation was important, so they integrated pronunciation teaching into their classes, but they rarely used games, videos or any other communicative activities to teach pronunciation. Second, Yunnan EFL teachers believed that both segmental features and supra-segmental features were highly important in teaching pronunciation, so both features were taught in classes. Third, Yunnan EFL teachers believed that pronunciation was better learned by explicit theoretical explanations of pronunciation rules, so they preferred to use the traditional methods and controlled

practices, such as using phonetic symbols, imitation, repetition and individual sounds exercises to teach pronunciation. Finally, most teachers believed that mispronunciation correction was a good way to teach pronunciation, so it was highly used in the classrooms.

The relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices may be complex as many factors could affect teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. For example, some teachers believed pronunciation was important in language teaching, but they may not teach pronunciation in their teaching practices because of the exam-oriented curriculum and time limitation. Some teachers believed that English pronunciation could be taught communicatively and communicative practice was the best way to teach pronunciation, but they didn't used any communicative activities in the actual classroom teaching because of time constraints and lack of training.

Despite the relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in the current study, the researcher realized that only three classes were observed and so, they could not be representatives of all English classes in Yunnan province. Besides, the teachers were fully aware of being observed for teaching English pronunciation, so the data might not be fully natural.

### **5.3 The Pedagogical Implications**

The findings from the current study provide some following practical suggestions for teaching English pronunciation.

First, Yunnan EFL teachers should be encouraged to spend more time to teach English pronunciation, with a balance on segmental and supra-segmental features, even though pronunciation is not emphasized by the school curriculum and the examination requirements. The higher frequency of teaching English pronunciation, the more pronunciation practicing opportunities can be provided for students. Then, they can improve their pronunciation so that they can communicate effectively with both English native and non-native speakers. Moreover, students can improve their speaking ability in order to gain higher speaking scores in the college entrance examination through the pronunciation practice. Regarding the goals of teaching pronunciation, intelligibility and comprehensibility should be the goals as they can help to improve learners' confidence and communicative competence. As long as students can express their ideas and feelings clearly, intelligibility and comprehensibility are effective for teaching pronunciation.

Second, compared with traditional teaching methods, the modern teaching methods which are learner-centered and activity-based can motivate learners to be fully engaged in the lessons. Free practices like role-plays and communicative activities, such as talk show interview, news reporting and story-telling are recommended. Teachers can incorporate other teaching methods such as problem-based teaching (PBT), communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) which can engage students in the classroom activities. These teaching methods

can help to fill the current teaching gap, which mainly focuses on traditional teaching practices, such as mispronunciation correction, imitation and repetition.

Third, more pronunciation teaching training should be provided for Yunnan EFL teachers. The training should cover pronunciation contents, instructional methods and teaching techniques. The knowledge should be shared among schools so that teachers can learn from one another.

Fourth, the pronunciation teaching should be more emphasized in the curriculum. Intelligibility and comprehensibility as the teaching goal should also be specified in the curriculum and communicative activities should be recommended for teachers.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

Firstly, the current study only focused on senior high school EFL teachers. Other levels of teachers, such as junior high school, primary school and elementary school should be involved in the research. Also, a larger sample size which includes different levels of the schools and different groups of participants should be included. It can help to generalize the findings.

Secondly, the participants in this study were EFL teachers. However, there are other stakeholders such as curriculum developers, school administrators and students. Therefore, it will be highly beneficial to include those stakeholders in order to investigate their beliefs and practices on pronunciation teaching and learning.

Thirdly, the researcher could not observe the teaching in actual classrooms because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, the instructions were observed via a live video calls from China. In the future research, it is necessary to conduct classroom observation in an authentic school setting.



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