

## The Treatment of EFL Pronunciation Features: A Case of High-School Freshmen in Algeria

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### Abstract:

*This study aims to inquire into the treatment of pronunciation features within EFL classroom contexts. It is based on the premise that the English pronunciation is one of the pivotal aspects of language necessary for communication. A survey has been conducted using a questionnaire to unveil the teachers' basic attitudes towards the overall teaching of pronunciation. This research tool is meant to target some issues including how teachers view pronunciation, the degree of their satisfaction with the teaching/learning material as presented in the textbook, how they teach its different features, how well -or how poorly- they have been prepared to that specific aspect of their duties. The results show that the informants hold different assumptions about the importance of teaching pronunciation. An overwhelming majority question the teachability of the English pronunciation features, especially the suprasegmental ones. Even when it is taught, minimal concern is given to communication since structure prevails and intonation and rhythm aspects are hardly ever taught.*

**Key words:** ELT – Communication – Pronunciation – Pronunciation instruction – Speaking – Segments – Suprasegments

### INTRODUCTION

English in Algeria is considered as a foreign language. EFL has been part of the Algerian educational system since early independence in the early 1970s. There has been a growing

demand on the part of Algerians to learn English in order to use for communicative purposes. This need has pushed policy makers include English instruction from middle school education through tertiary education. Moreover, private schools which teach foreign languages have witnessed a boom in registration, especially for learning English.

There is however an observed weakness linked to the learners' communicative ability due to great extent to difficulties encountered with pronunciation mastery. There is an urgent need to identify the reasons behind this state so that measures will be suggested to improve on those weaknesses. This can be linked to whether pronunciation is taught at all, the way it is taught, and what elements are emphasised.

It is noteworthy that pronunciation has received different treatment with varying degrees of importance. Approaches to pronunciation teaching have changed through time resulting in designing curricula and syllabi whereby pronunciation consideration has been influenced by different assumptions and perspectives. This varies from complete exclusion of pronunciation teaching with the Grammar Translation Method to inclusion to certain extent with the Communicative Approach (Jones, 2002; Richards and Rodgers, 1992; Sharma, 2008).

The bulk of literature emphasises the considerable importance pronunciation plays in communication (Brazil, 1997; Dauer, 2005; Field, 2005; Grant, 2010; Morley, 1991). The communicative value of pronunciation can be realised through the segmental features and more importantly through the suprasegmental features (Brazil, 1997). Despite minor mistakes in grammar and vocabulary, learners are more likely to communicate effectively when competent in pronunciation and intonation (Burns & Claire, 2003).

However, some scholars and practitioners question the teachability and learnability of pronunciation skills. Szpyra (2015) draws attention on the fact that "*the*

*teachability/learnability argument should be approached with due caution, as what is teachable to some learners may be unteachable to others*" (p. 15). Purcell and Suter (1980, p. 286) state that pronunciation instruction has little effect on learner's pronunciation. Stern (1992, p. 112) posits that *"there is no convincing empirical evidence which could help us sort out the various positions on the merits of pronunciation training"*. In contrast, Pennington (1989) questions the validity of Purcell and Suter's findings, and states that there is no firm basis for asserting categorically that pronunciation is not teachable or it is not worth spending time on teaching pronunciation.

A common assumption is shared by practitioners. This is based on their belief that pronunciation difficulty and demanding technicality make EFL pronunciation teaching and learning almost impossible. Brown (2014: 196) summarises other arguments put forward by teachers to explain their reluctance in including pronunciation teaching their syllabus:

[m]any teachers treat pronunciation as if it were not important, by sweeping under the carpet. Common remarks from teachers are that they are not good at teaching it, they do not like teaching it, they do not teach it often, and, as a result, the pronunciation work they do carry out is probably not enough to meet the learners' needs.

It has become a truism that EFL learners are unlikely to achieve native-likeness, but their communicative ability and intelligibility can be highly improved by effective pronunciation instruction. This position is supported by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) stating that

This focus on language as communication brings renewed urgency to the teaching of pronunciation for nonnative speakers of English; if they fall below this threshold level, they will have oral communication problems no matter how excellent and extensive their control of English grammar and vocabulary might be. (p. 9)

The issue, therefore, should not focus on whether to teach pronunciation or not to teach pronunciation, but how to teach pronunciation and what constituting elements to include. It is worth mentioning that there is no agreement upon a common framework for establishing what elements of pronunciation to teach and how to teach them. Attention should be given to a careful implementation of both segmental features -particular sounds- and suprasegmental features -aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound, such as, stress, rhythm, intonation, and juncture. In fact a large number of scholars acknowledge that suprasegments should be granted more importance than segments as far as pronunciation instruction is concerned (Gilbert, 2005; Morley, 1991).

Teachers are generally required to use the textbook with respect to the syllabus, but they are left free as to what features of pronunciation to teach and how to teach them. Thanks to a questionnaire, Burgess and Spencer (2000) found that EFL/ESL teachers very often see suprasegmental features as difficult to teach and learn, even if they are aware of their paramount importance. We, therefore, think it can be very interesting and informative to inquire into the Algerian context and try and draw a picture of the status of pronunciation instruction.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study opts for a quantitative research where a survey questionnaire (See Appendix A) is constructed and administered to sixty (60) teachers. The questionnaire is deemed to be a most convenient tool to work out the issues of our concern for this research. It aims to explore critically how practitioners implement pronunciation to high-school freshmen in the Algerian context with close link to the Official textbook, *At The Crossroad (ATC)*.

The survey questionnaire is made up of items numbered from 1 to 23, including a few subentries in item 5 (5a and 5b),

item 13 (13a and 13b), item 14 (14a, 14b and 14c), item 17 (17a and 17b) and item 18 (18a and 18b). These items are worded through three different types of questions, where each type is selected for its characteristics to best meet the specified objectives. The questionnaire includes multiple choice questions, rating and ranking questions where informants are asked to rank options offered to them, in addition to open-ended questions awarding the informants the opportunity to comment and expand on some of the issues.

Before administering the questionnaire, a pilot study is conducted with eight (8) teachers –five females and three males- to get feedback, which contributes considerably to improving the design of the questionnaire.

Needless to say, the sample of informants has to be truly representative of the English teaching population of the Wilaya of Oran in terms of number, gender and seniority. We tried thence to reach at least one fifth of the overall population. The sample of informants for this research represents over 27% of the English teaching population in the Wilaya<sup>1</sup>. A sample of this size gives as fair a picture as possible of the teaching population in Oran, not only in terms of size, but also in terms of gender and seniority.

- **gender**: we have 13 male and 47 female teachers of English as informants,
- **seniority**: we have 18 junior<sup>2</sup> teachers and 42 senior teachers in terms of years of teaching,
- **level taught**: all the teachers are teaching or have taught High-school freshman English, and are using or have used *ATC*.

## **DATA PROCESSING, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

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<sup>1</sup> According to Mr Louznadji, current Inspector of English in Oran, there are 221 teachers of English in the area.

<sup>2</sup> We arbitrary divided the teaching population into two classes. ‘Junior’ teachers have less than ten years’ seniority. ‘Experienced’ teachers have more than ten years’ seniority.

The responses of the informants have been conveniently grouped under nine headings, bringing together related items to make processing and analysis more focused. Each of the nine headings are presented below from 3.1 through 3.9 indicating their declared objectives, the results first globally and then distributed by seniority and by gender when they are felt to be pertinent. As far as this computation is concerned, percentages are calculated out of the total number of informants, that is sixty. With reference to seniority, because there are forty-two experienced teachers and eighteen junior teachers, percentages are calculated out of 18 for the junior teachers and out of 42 for the experienced teachers. Concerning gender, percentages are calculated out of 13 for the male teachers and 47 for the female teachers.

### **Formal Teaching of Pronunciation before and after ATC**

This section considers *At the Crossroads* as a point of reference or a dividing line. Before the introduction of *ATC*, there was no required formal teaching of pronunciation, except for the specific examination oriented final 'ed' or final 's'. In other words, when we look into the responses to the relevant items of the questionnaire, our aim is to see whether or not informants taught pronunciation on their own initiative before it was implemented in the syllabus and illustrated in the textbook.

Responses to items 5a and 15 show an important disparity in the number of informants who claim to teach pronunciation. It is comforting to see that as many as 18 teachers (30%) did actually teach pronunciation formally even before *ATC*. Surprisingly enough though, as many as 13 'outlaws' (or 21.67%) still do not teach pronunciation formally although the syllabus prescribes it and the book presents it. Only 47 teachers (78.33%) -when 60 (or 100%) were expected- do teach pronunciation formally.

If we refer to the same data according to seniority, the vast majority of junior teachers with 17 responses (or 94.44%)

declare that they teach pronunciation formally while as many as 30 (or 71.42%) of experienced teachers do not. Not more than 4 (or 22.22%) of the junior teachers and 14 (or 33.33%) the experienced teachers say they taught pronunciation before *ATC*.

The teaching of pronunciation according to sex shows balanced results between male and female teachers claiming they teach it with 10 (or 76.92%) and 37 (or 78.72%) of the responses respectively. Disparity however is clear between the male teachers with 7 (or 53.84%) and the female teachers with 11 (or 23.04%) who declare they taught pronunciation before *ATC*.

Some tentative conclusions can be drawn from the results above. There are still 13 (or 21.67%) teachers, including 1 junior teacher (or 05.55%) and 12 experienced teachers (or 28.57%), who do not teach pronunciation despite the fact that it is part of the syllabus and included in the textbook. The rationale behind their discarding the formal teaching of pronunciation is dealt with in the next section. It might be worth investigating if the change in favour of teaching pronunciation (from 18 to 47) is motivated by a real shift in teachers' attitude, or is simply due to some loyalty to the textbook and the syllabus.

### **Rationale behind teaching or not teaching pronunciation**

The part in the questionnaire that deals with the reasons behind teaching pronunciation is identified in item 5b. Forty-five subjects have responded to this item. Findings in this part of the questionnaire give some insight into the underlying reasons for teaching or not teaching pronunciation formally.

The answers are derived from item 5b, an open-ended question where the respondents were asked to justify their respective positions. Some did not feel the need to justify their

responses, which explains why there are only 45 responses in total. The table below summarises the different motives.

**Table 1. Reasons for teaching or not teaching pronunciation**

Reasons	Response Count	Response Percent
<b>I teach pronunciation because</b>		
1. it is part of the syllabus.	8	13.33%
2. it is an important skill that helps to understand and be understood.	7	11.66%
3. it is in the textbook.	5	08.33%
4. it is an obligation.	4	06.66%
5. it provides pupils with different pronunciation rules.	4	06.66%
6. I want to improve pupils' pronunciation.	4	06.66%
7. it is part of the learning process.	2	03.33%
8. pupils like it.	2	03.33%
Total:	36 out of 47	
<b>I don't teach pronunciation because</b>		
1. I too need some training	4	06.66%
2. it is very difficult	2	03.33%
3. time is too short	1	01.66%
4. pupils are not native speakers of English and never speak it outside the classroom	1	01.66%
5. it is not important for pupils	1	01.66%
Total:	9 out of 13	

It is clear from the table above that different assumptions influence the informants in their approach to pronunciation. Eight reasons in favour of teaching pronunciation and five against this practice are listed. First, the reasons behind the teaching of pronunciation are discussed. For 13.33% of the subjects, pronunciation needs to be taught because it is in the syllabus. 08.33% teach pronunciation because it is in the textbook and 06.66% feel obliged to do so. Although reasons 1, 3 and 4, provided by informants who teach pronunciation, are expressed differently, they appear to describe a common motive prompted by a prescribed –compulsory– teaching of pronunciation.

A number of informants, 11.66%, believe that improvement in their pupils' pronunciation of English can increase effective



mutual intelligibility in EFL. The need to help learners improve their pronunciation with no reason given is considered by 06.66% of the informants as important enough to justify the teaching of pronunciation.

Four respondents representing 06.66% of the informants assert that they teach phonology to provide learners with rules concerning pronunciation. When learners are provided with learnable reusable phonological rules, they can derive immense advantages. Attention must be drawn however as to the difference between teaching English pronunciation vs. teaching about English pronunciation. The best, we believe, is the prevalence of the former over the latter.

We move now to the reasons put forward against the formal teaching of pronunciation which are presented critically below. The most striking point appears to be the teachers' own deficit in the skill under consideration. Four out of nine admit their own poor mastery of the phonology of English and feel the need for personal training in the field. In the same vein, two more informants do not teach pronunciation formally because they find it difficult to do so. They believe that pronunciation is one of the most problematic aspects of English for both teachers and learners. Such attitudes feed, to a certain extent, the marginalisation of pronunciation and its teaching. For one respondent, it is difficult to find the time to teach phonology when there are so many other 'priorities'.

For the two answers left, one respondent expressly puts forward and one respondent seems to imply the moot point that because the pupils are not native speakers of English and will hardly ever have the opportunity to use that language outside the classroom, spending time teaching phonology is time wasted for too much ado about nothing.

All this nurses a feeling of discomfort and uneasiness when teaching pronunciation among 36.7% of the population under study as shown in answer to item 6. It is refreshing

however to discover that 63.3% of the subjects feel comfortable dealing with the instruction of pronunciation.

### **Aspects of pronunciation taught**

Responses to item 9 make clear what aspects of pronunciation the teachers focus on. They reveal that the lion's share is taken by the teaching of sounds for 93.3% of the informants. Another 83.3% of the subjects focus on the teaching of word stress in their classes while just over half the population concerned or 56.7% of the respondents declare they train their learners in the area of intonation. As far as rhythm is concerned, 28.3% of the population say they include this element in their instruction. The teaching of sentence stress and that of juncture get the lowest scores with 08.3% and 05% respectively.

In terms of seniority, the following table presents the responses by junior teachers.

**Table 2. Priorities in teaching aspects of pronunciation by junior teachers**

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Sound	94.4%	17
Rhythm	55.6%	10
Word Stress	72.2%	13
Intonation	94.4%	17
Sentence Stress	11.2%	02
Juncture	05.6%	01

The above table shows that the teaching of sounds and intonation is practised by 17 out of 18, or 94.4% of the junior teaching population. More than half the junior teachers train their learners in word stress and rhythm, reaching 72.2% and 55.6% of the population respectively. The results also indicate that 2 junior teachers or 11.2% of the junior population and 1 junior teacher or 05.6% of the same population teach sentence stress and juncture respectively.

Concerning responses attributed to the population of experienced teachers, they are shown in the following table.

**Table 3. Priorities in teaching aspects of pronunciation by senior teachers**

Aspects	Response Percent	Response Count
Sound	92.9%	39
Rhythm	16.7%	07
Word Stress	88.1%	37
Intonation	40.5%	17
Sentence Stress	07.1%	03
Juncture	04.8%	02

The results presented in the table above show that the overwhelming majority of the experienced teachers under investigation focus on sounds with 92.9% of the population concerned. Another huge number -37 respondents out of 42 or 88.89%- emphasise the instruction of word stress in their teaching practises. Less than half this population (40.5%) train their learners in intonation. The aspects that have scored the least are rhythm, sentence stress and juncture with 16.7%, 07.1% and 04.8% respectively.

When we compare the two groups, we realise that the teaching of sentence stress and juncture is disregarded by both groups. Apart from this observation, the group of junior teachers is more homogeneous than the group of experienced teachers with the treatment of the other aspects of pronunciation, that is, the teaching of sound, rhythm, word stress and intonation is balanced.

The group of experienced teachers shows reluctance to teach intonation whereas the group of junior teachers demonstrates more interest. This observation is worth mentioning, especially with the communicative value conveyed by intonation. This interesting finding is worth exploring further.

### **Problematic aspects of pronunciation**

The responses collected for item 10 provide us with information concerning the aspects of pronunciation that teachers find difficult to teach. Four informants left the question unanswered.

The following table presents the informants' problematic areas in teaching pronunciation.

**Table 4. Problematic areas in teaching pronunciation**

Aspects of Pronunciation	Response Percent	Response Count
Sound	00,00%	00
Juncture	06.66%	04
Rhythm	13.33%	08
Word stress	26.66%	16
Intonation	43.33%	26
Sentence stress	46.66%	28

The above table shows that the teaching of sounds does not represent any problem to the targeted population. However, almost half the informants admit that they encounter difficulties as far as the teaching of sentence stress and intonation is concerned. The former scores 46.66% and the latter scores 43.33% of the respondents. Rhythm and Juncture are perceived as difficult to apprehend as evidenced by the low scores 06.66% and 13.33% respectively, and more specifically for rhythm, by its total absence from *ATC*.

When we examine the results obtained in this section and compare them to those in Section 3.3, the findings seem to tally showing that, to varied extents, prosodic features of pronunciation represent a problem area. Concerning the teaching of rhythm and juncture, the low scores represented in both sections can be best explained by the fact that the teaching of rhythm is not included in *At the Crossroads* and juncture to a lesser degree.

## **Contextual teaching of pronunciation and its bearing on communication**

When asked about the frequency with which pronunciation is introduced to the learners in context, 33 out of 60 or 55% of the informants claim to do so 'sometimes'. The informants who 'always' deal with pronunciation in context represent 23.3% or 14 out of 60. The results also indicate that 12 out of 60 or 20% of the population 'rarely' teach pronunciation in context. Only one informant declares that s/he 'never' teaches pronunciation in context.

The computation of the results according to seniority shows that there are 2 junior teachers (or 11.11%) and 12 senior teachers (or 28.57%) who declare that they 'always' teach pronunciation in context. Pronunciation is 'sometimes' taught in context by 11 junior teachers (or 61.11%) and 22 experienced teachers (or 52.38%). Not more than 5 (or 27.77%) junior teachers and 7 (or 16.66%) experienced teachers declare that they 'rarely' present the aspects of pronunciation in context. The remaining informant who never teaches pronunciation in context belongs to the group of experienced teachers.

Concerning gender, the results show that pronunciation is 'always' taught in context by 2 male teachers (or 15.38%) and 12 female teachers (or 25.53). As many as 6 male teachers (or 46.15%) and 27 female teachers (or 57.44%) say they 'sometimes' teach pronunciation in context. Pronunciation is 'rarely' taught in context by 3 male teachers (or 23.07%) and 9 female teachers (or 19.14%). Pronunciation is 'never' taught in context by one male teacher.

The results shown above are encouraging to a certain extent since contextualisation is important in fostering the learners' awareness of the communicative value features of pronunciation help to convey. This is corroborated by item number 12 regarding the view the informants hold about the impact that the teaching of pronunciation can have on communication. 53 out of 60 (or 88.3%) of the population under study support the position stating the role of teaching pronunciation in enhancing communication. The 7 teachers (or

11.66%) who do not share this view are all female teachers, including 2 (or 11.11%) junior and 5 (or 11.19%) experienced teachers.

### **How pronunciation is approached**

The results collected in item 13a show a variety of ways informants have recourse to when approaching pronunciation. These results are presented in the following table.

**Table 5. Approaching aspects of pronunciation**

<b>Ways</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Class tasks/activities with pronunciation as the main focus	66.70%	40
Class tasks/activities with pronunciation as a component	36.70%	22
Through imitation of a model	46.70%	28
Through listening aids	35.00%	21

The first notable fact is that a considerable number of the population with 66.7% devotes some teaching practices to pronunciation as the main objective of the lesson. Even if pronunciation is not the main focus, 22 informants out of 60 (or 36.7%) assert that it is a component of their teaching practices. 28 (or 46.7%) of the population declare that they approach pronunciation through listening to models to provide some fairly accurate examples for learners to imitate. The use of listening aids is adopted by 21 out of 60 (or 35%) of the population under study.

It is refreshing to find out that the improvement of pronunciation constitutes an objective the majority of the informants aim at. It has become part and parcel of the teaching practises in our schools. Nevertheless, the use of imitation can be effective only if the model is accurate enough, that is, the model has good pronunciation and demonstrates native-like proficiency. Moreover, we deplore an insufficient use

of listening aids. Audio and video material can provide more accurate models to follow.

### **Pre-service and in-service education**

Item 14, including items 14a, 14b and 14c, shed some light on the nature of training teachers have received at the level of university or pre-service training, and the experiences they have gone through in their teaching careers and which form part of their continued professional development, in-service training.

At university, the informants state that no specific training in the teaching of pronunciation has been given to them. They claim that courses of phonetics and phonology have been the only training they have received as far as pronunciation is concerned, emphasising the fact that learning about the speech sounds of a language and being trained in the ways in which formal teaching and learning of these speech sounds in institutional settings are two distinct areas of concern.

Throughout their teaching experiences, 42 respondents out of 60 (or 70%) deplore the fact that no in-service training concerning the teaching of pronunciation has been offered. Of the 18 remaining, 12 have attended two seminars while 6 participated in only one. In all these seminars, the respondents were trained in the teaching of final 'ed', final 's' and syllable counting in connection with formal exams in which such questions occur.

It sounds as though the syllabus and its illustration through *At the Crossroads* are too demanding in terms of teaching pronunciation. It is suggested therefore that more training be offered to cover the other features of pronunciation which teachers are expected to teach.

### **Use of *At the Crossroads***

As far as the informants' degree of satisfaction with the treatment of pronunciation in *At the Crossroads* is concerned, only 3 out of 60 (or 5%) of the respondents declare that the material in the textbook meets their expectations 'completely'. No more than 6 (or 10%) declare that *ATC* meets their expectation 'to a great extent'. A great majority representing 38 informants (or 63.33%) assert that, 'to a certain extent', *At the Crossroads* is in line with their expectations concerning the teaching of pronunciation. Nevertheless, 13 out of 60 (or 21.7%) of the informants are not satisfied with the material used in *At the Crossroads* to approach pronunciation.

The main conclusion we can draw is that a great majority of the informants agree with the fact that there is still room for improvement in the treatment of the elements of pronunciation in *At the Crossroads*. This is confirmed with the results recorded in item 21. Most respondents show a low degree of satisfaction with the textbook as far as the teaching of pronunciation is concerned.

In this context, the responses concerning the weaknesses diagnosed in *At the Crossroads* have been analysed. The analysis has yielded the following list of the most recurrent reasons, perceived as shortcomings by the informants.

- Absence of some aspects of pronunciation (4 or 06.66%);
- Lack of audio-visual aids, especially recordings of English native speakers (5 or 08.33%);
- Decontextualised language (4 or 06.66%);
- Insufficient material and practice dealing with pronunciation (9 or 15 %);
- Absence of explicit rules (3 or 05%);
- Inadequation with the learners' levels of proficiency (4 or 06.66%).

We can add another shortcoming identified in item 22, which investigates the informants' opinion about the impact *At the Crossroads* has in fostering an awareness of the prosodic skills.



Forty respondents (or 66.7%) think that *At the Crossroads* does not fulfil its role as an enhancing tool to promote prosodic skills either receptively nor productively. It can be deduced that the majority of the informants have doubts as to the effectiveness of the textbook as a tool capable of improving the learners' mastery of the elements of pronunciation productively and receptively.

### **Use of additional material**

An important number of informants scoring 39 responses (or 65%) declare that they do not use any material other than *At the Crossroads* to teach pronunciation. These 39 teachers represent, in terms of seniority, 14 junior teachers (or 77.77%) and 27 experienced teachers (or 59.52%) and, in terms of sex, 8 (or 61.53%) male and 31 (or 65.95%) female teachers.

Although findings in 3.8 indicate that a considerable number of informants (38 responses for 'to a certain extent' and 13 responses for 'no') express dissatisfaction with the treatment of the elements of pronunciation in *At the Crossroads*, there is still nevertheless an unwavering loyalty to the book, at the expense of outside material that might be of great help.

The reasons that discourage the informants from making use of extra teaching material to their paraphernalia appear in the responses to item 18b. From the results obtained therein, we can list the most important reasons that hinder the use of additional material, as stated by the respondents.

- Absence of the necessary material, including hardware<sup>3</sup> and software (15 or 25%)
- Low level of mastery of technology (5 or 08.33%)
- Lack of time (4 or 06.66%)
- Too long syllabus (3 or 05%)

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<sup>3</sup> Hardware is meant to describe equipment such as cassette players, data show projectors and even plugs in walls whereas software describes content such as scripts, audio and video material.

The reasons shown above and the informants' reliance on the material provided in *At the Crossroads* lead us to think that most respondents do not want to shackle off routine. They may feel unsure as to what material is most appropriate. They may merely think that the textbook is the product of professionals and they cannot do better. They may simply be apprehensive because it is time consuming and they may not be willing to devote much of their time to searching for additional material. Moreover, little effort is made to catch up with high-tech equipment.

Moreover, in answer to the question about the use of audio recordings by native speakers, 51 informants out of 60 (or 85%) assert they do not use them in their teaching. An overwhelming majority with 98.3% of the respondents regret the absence of such aids. It is obvious that most informants are aware of the benefits they can gain from the use of additional material, especially recordings by native speakers, in enhancing learners' proficiency in pronunciation. However, there is much to be done to remedy. Nowadays, with the advance of technology, any teacher worth their salt can have access to a variety of resources through the Internet and satellite channels, and thus select invaluable material and inputs to expose to the learners.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the questionnaire helps delve further into the informants' assumptions and beliefs concerning pronunciation, its treatment in *At the Crossroads* and the way it is approached by the various practitioners in the classroom context.

At the two ends of the pendulum, we have those who taught pronunciation before it was officially introduced in the syllabus and the textbook and who keep teaching it now it is prescribed, and those at the other end who did not teach it then and do not teach it now. The overwhelming majority of teachers

limit their teaching to strings of isolated, unrelated, decontextualised utterances. The teaching is more in the form of *Listen and Repeat* or *Listen and Substitute*, light years away from spontaneous communication. Attention is paid exclusively to the form, disregarding meaning, attitudes and emotions.

Many teachers feel they are penalised, especially the old hands, since they lack both pre-service and in-service training in this particular area. It looks as though Littlejohn's (1992: 84) observation about the dependency textbooks generate among teachers is applicable to the population concerned. Although they voice some criticism about *At the Crossroads* for its inadequacy in meeting the needs and the levels of ability of the learners as regards the teaching of pronunciation, they persist in a teaching methodology deprived of any use of additional material, especially technology that can provide invaluable input.

The prosodic features for levels beyond the word unquestionably present a problem area for the practitioners. The tallied results show that even for the parts presented in *ATC* –sentence stress, intonation, connected speech– teachers limit themselves to the exclusive presentation and manipulation of the form alone, leaving questions of usage and meaning outside the scope of their teaching.

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## APPENDICES:

### A) Survey Questionnaire

Name (Optional):

Sex:

Age:

#### 1. Degrees held

Country	Degree	Year Obtained

#### 2. Learning experience

Institution	Middle School	Secondary School	College	Elsewhere
Duration (in years)				

#### 3. If elsewhere, please indicate

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#### 4. Teaching experience

Institution	Middle School	Secondary School	College	Elsewhere
Duration (in years)				

#### 5a. Do you teach pronunciation formally?

Yes

No

- **Formally:** Explicit and direct teaching of pronunciation (lessons) as opposed to occasional corrections of mispronounced elements.

**5b. Why or why not?**

**6. Do you feel comfortable when teaching pronunciation?**

Yes  No

**7. How much time within a unit do you devote to the teaching of pronunciation?**

**8. Is that amount of time covered in one session (1)**   
**or spread throughout the unit  (2) ?**

**9. When you teach pronunciation, which aspects do you focus on? (More than one tick is possible)**

Sound  Rhythm  Word Stress   
Intonation   
Sentence Stress  Juncture

**10. Which aspect/s of pronunciation do you find more difficult to teach?**

**11. Do you teach pronunciation in a context?**

Never  Rarely  Sometimes   
Always

**12. Does the teaching of pronunciation have an impact on communication?**

Yes  No

**13a. There are different ways to approach pronunciation. Which of these do you use? (Tick wherever applicable)**

Class tasks/activities with pronunciation as the main focus

Class tasks/activities with pronunciation as a component

Through imitation of a model

Through listening to some aids

Other ways

**13b. If “other ways” is ticked, please describe:**

**14. Have you had any formal training in the teaching of pronunciation? (Courses, workshops, etc)**

**14a. As a student:**

Yes  No

**14b. As a teacher:**

Yes  No

**14c. Please describe:**

**15. Did you teach pronunciation formally before (when it was not in the textbook)?**

Yes  No

**16. Do you use the first year textbook to teach pronunciation?**

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Always

**17a. Does the material in the textbook meet your expectations of the teaching of pronunciation?**

Completely  To a great extent

To a certain extent

No

**17b. If your answer to the question above is different from 'completely', give examples of shortcomings:**

**18a. Do you use additional pronunciation teaching materials?**

Yes

No

**18b. Why or why not?**

**19. Do you use audio recordings by native speakers?**

Yes

No

**20. Do you regret the absence of such aids?**

Yes

No

**21. What is your degree of satisfaction with the textbook as far as the teaching of pronunciation is concerned?**

Not satisfied 1                      2                      3                      4                      5 very satisfied

**22. Does the book foster an awareness of prosodic skills both receptively and productively?**

Yes

No

- Prosodic: A characteristic which extends over more than one sound in an utterance, e.g. stress and intonation.

**23. Did you notice any progress in the learners' pronunciation since you started teaching it explicitly?**

Yes

No