# EXTRACURRICULAR PRONUNCIATION TRAINING EXAMINED: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION

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### Abstract

This study presents the design and implementation procedures of an extracurricular pronunciation training program conducted for EFL learners and investigates its effectiveness through the eyes of participating students and trainers. Course design, instructional methodology, resources, and the syllabus are examined through students' reflections (N=25). Their views on content, tasks, and evolving pronunciation learning goals post-completion of the training were analyzed via content analysis. Post-program written reflections from the researcher trainer (RT) and observer trainer (OT) were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings reveal cognitive and affective gains among student participants, attributing strength to course content, tasks, and the trainer. The RT and OT deemed the training successful, highlighting duration and assignment submission as areas for further attention.

**Keywords:** Extracurricular pronunciation training; segmentals; suprasegmentals; course design.

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## 1. Introduction

Pronunciation plays a vital role in facilitating effective oral communication. Pronunciation instruction, therefore, should focus on helping students become intelligible, communicative, confident users of spoken English, as it greatly impacts speech intelligibility and overall communication abilities (Goodwin, 2013; Levis, 2018; Morley, 1991). To reach this goal, teachers need to actively incorporate pronunciation into their instructional efforts.

An important aspect in pronunciation instruction is to understand and address learners' linguistic needs. According to Jarosz (2023), the three aspects that learners need to produce speech in a second language (L2) are adjusting the articulatory apparatus to the challenges of the new L2 sound system, familiarizing the target language phonological inventory, and gaining mastery over the suprasegmental speech features. Levis and Grant (2011) mainly focused on suprasegmentals and underlined the importance of training learners for word recognition, chunking, intonation, and syllable structures in English rhythm. The quality of pronunciation instruction can also be influenced by a multitude of factors, and among these are the methods and techniques employed. Schaetzel and Low (2009) recommends teachers to utilize several pronunciation instruction strategies including fostering positive attitudes towards accuracy, identifying features that are problematic for learners, creating awareness on suprasegmental speech features, and supporting the development of communicative competence.

These linguistic and pedagogical considerations necessitate systematic efforts for teaching and learning L2 pronunciation. In this sense, effective curriculum integration has been an area of concern for researchers and practitioners with a need for taking several variables into account. For instance, according to Brinton (2018), "a one-size-fits-all pronunciation curriculum is a thing of the past" and variables like the learners' first language (L1) need to be considered for effective implementation (p.457). Variables related to teachers as the implementers of curricula in real life settings should also be taken into consideration. Darcy et al. (2012) remind us of the significance of ongoing support for teachers, including relevant materials and teaching practices aligned with curriculum goals and compatible with teachers' existing beliefs and practices. In this regard, a comprehensive framework for integrating pronunciation into curriculum was offered by McGregor and Reed (2018). This framework involves considering institutional and learner-related factors, conducting a needs assessment, providing targeted information and feedback, and fostering skill development and learner autonomy.

Teaching pronunciation through extracurricular training programs is an alternative perspective to address learners' needs. Sicola and Darcy (2015) underscore the potential of extracurricular training as a valuable supplement to regular classroom instruction, provided it is carefully planned and implemented. Yet, there is a critical scarcity of research in the relevant literature regarding the effectiveness and practicality of such a training program.

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1 The Effectiveness of Explicit Pronunciation Instruction*

Pronunciation instruction is an essential element of language pedagogy, considerably shaping learners' ability to communicate and comprehend. However, it is commonly reported that teachers tend to avoid teaching pronunciation for various reasons including lacking the necessary confidence and training (Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Henderson et al., 2012; Murphy, 2017; Nguyen, & Newton, 2020). In addition, Darcy (2018) relates this lack of interest in teaching pronunciation to three main factors which are limited time availability, methodological concerns, and prioritization of other aspects of the curriculum or pedagogy. In the same vein, Levis (2022) argues against the view that "teachers cannot teach pronunciation" and underlines that "there is always a way to teach pronunciation" (pp. 53-54). Levis emphasizes the role of incorporating the teaching of pronunciation into other skills and prioritizing the target features in instruction to overcome issues of time constraints.

Empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction and its influence on the learning of certain speech features. For instance, in a study with Japanese learners of English, Saito (2011) investigated the impact of explicit phonetic instruction on learners, using both accentedness and comprehensibility as outcome measures. Having undergone a total of four-hour explicit instruction on certain English segmentals (i.e., vowels and consonants), Japanese learners of English demonstrated notable comprehensibility improvements without a significant reduction in perceived foreign accent. In a separate study, Derwing and Rossiter (2003) found that explicit instruction targeting segmental errors led to enhanced accuracy in learners' pronunciation.

Instruction on suprasegmentals or prosodic speech features also comes with certain reported gains and benefits. According to Gilbert (2008), prosodic training in English language instruction enables students to better understand speech in media sources and face-to-face interactions by teaching them to recognize and interpret rhythmic and melodic cues. Prosody also matters for L2 learners because of its contributions to learners' nonnative or foreign accent and their fluency in L2 (Chun & Levis, 2020). In a different study, Anderson-Hsieh et al. (1992) investigated the link between experienced test raters' evaluations and actual deviations in segmentals, prosody, and syllable structure, finding that prosody exhibited the strongest correlation with the speaking performance of nonnative speakers among the other phonological factors studied.

Gordon and Darcy (2016) reported that explicit phonetic instruction on suprasegmental elements contributed to increased comprehensibility among learners. Their research revealed that training focusing solely on specific vowel sounds did not yield the same level of improvement. Gokgoz Kurt et al. (2014) investigated the impact of explicit pronunciation instruction on the perception of prosodically ambiguous intonation patterns, and the group receiving treatment

demonstrated higher scores on perception tests over time compared to those who did not undergo any form of treatment. In another study by Derwing et al. (1998), it was found that learners who received global instruction (e.g., speaking rate, rhythm, word stress and sentence stress) showed improvement in comprehensibility and fluency. Yet, the authors still emphasize that a combination of both segmental and global training is beneficial for learners in different ways to enhance their spoken performance.

## 2.2. Learners' Pronunciation Goals

The goal of pronunciation instruction and learning warrants careful consideration. In his influential paper, Levis (2005) discussed *the nativeness principle* and *the intelligibility principle* as two competing ideologies. The nativeness principle emphasizes the desirability and possibility of attaining native-like L2 pronunciation, while the intelligibility principle underscores learners' need for being understood. In his later revisiting paper, Levis (2020) further elaborated on these terms, particularly referring to the superiority of the intelligibility principle. In his words, this principle values the teaching skills of qualified language instructors, including nonnative teachers, and emphasizes the importance of prioritizing pronunciation features along with several benefits for learners at the same time.

Instructors, learners, and language teaching institutions may align with either of these principles and target native-like pronunciation or aim for intelligibility. Their preference will influence instructional objectives, as they will either target all the possible speech features for a native-like L2 pronunciation or prioritize teaching or learning targets for intelligibility (see Gilbert, 2001; Jenkins, 2000; Levis, 2018; Munro & Derwing, 2015). Prioritizing teaching targets can effectively address challenges associated with pronunciation instruction, including time constraints and seamless integration into existing curricula or in-class activities.

## 2.3. Learners' Perspectives on Pronunciation

Empirical studies examining learners' perspectives provide additional insights that can inform instructional practices. In their study, Çakır and Baytar (2014) showed that Turkish learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) regarded pronunciation as a highly significant aspect of language learning also expressing a keen interest in studying and improving their pronunciation skills. According to Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999), Spanish first-year university students commonly perceive English pronunciation as a challenge, but they typically hold the view that dedicated phonetic training plays a vital role in acquiring pronunciation skills. In another study, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) investigated learners' perceptions of their own pronunciation needs and strategies in Canadian context. The researchers found that learners do not seem to get sufficient training on suprasegmental speech features, or even if they do so, they may not effectively

benefit from it. In a study by Pawlak et al. (2015), advanced-level English major Polish students recognized the importance of pronunciation for effective communication and the acquisition of language skills, and exhibited a clear preference for a structural syllabus that presented pronunciation features one by one starting with segmentals and moving on to suprasegmentals afterwards.

Several studies have also found that learners tend to consider out-of-class learning more beneficial for improving their pronunciation. For instance, Szyszka (2015) analyzed the learning strategies of proficient English pronunciation learners and found that out-of-class exposure had a more substantial impact on L2 pronunciation than exposure within the classroom. Likewise, Tominaga's results (2009) showed that formal classroom instruction had a limited impact on their pronunciation acquisition, while learners utilized opportunities outside of the classroom to enhance their learning motivation.

Drawing on this background, the current study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and practicality of extracurricular pronunciation training through learner perspectives and trainer reflections, informing decision-making processes and future implementations for practitioners in different contexts. This study offers practical and empirical contributions to the field of second language pronunciation, particularly through the exploration of extracurricular training as an alternative approach. Additionally, it addresses tailoring content to specific contexts by considering participants' L1 backgrounds and emphasizing intelligible pronunciation, aligning with research-informed perspectives.

## 3. Implementation

The following subsections will explore the background details, design, implementation, and evaluation processes of the extracurricular pronunciation training program outlined in this paper.

### 3.1. Context

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University is a state university in Türkiye offering English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in most programs (e.g., Computer Engineering, Medicine, Business Administration), with some exceptions (e.g., Nursing, History, Turkish Language and Literature which offer %100 Turkish medium instruction). Students admitted to a bachelor's program based on their high school grades and university entrance exam scores are first enrolled in the School of Foreign Languages (SFL). If their program offers EMI, they must complete a mandatory one-year English course to improve their language skills before beginning their academic studies.

Students in the SFL are placed in classes based on their proficiency levels and attend around 20 hours of in-class English instruction aligned with the Common European Framework (CEFR), focusing on developing all four language skills.

These students must reach B2 level and pass the four-skill English proficiency exam administered by the SFL.

### 3.2. Introducing the English Pronunciation Class

*The English Pronunciation Class* (EPC) was launched as an extracurricular and free training program conducted face-to-face at the Learning and Teaching Centre (LTC) during the 2022-2023 academic year. Targeted at students with proficiency levels at B1 and above, the program spanned four weeks with sessions scheduled for two hours per week. Participants could choose between morning and afternoon sessions, accommodating up to 20 students per group. The program's organization included planning, promotion through posters with QR codes and Google Forms for registration. The first week saw the enrollment of 29 students split into two groups, with 25 successfully completing the program and earning certificates by its conclusion.

### 3.3. Course Design Considerations and Instructional Approaches

*The EPC* was specifically designed for BA students, including those in the preparatory program or faculties. To cater to this audience, the instruction and resources were intentionally streamlined, minimizing the use of extensive metalanguage. The overall pedagogical approach that guided the instruction was Gagne's (1992) *Nine Events of Instruction*. Every event in this model was matched with a corresponding part or aspect of the program (see Table 1):

**Table 1** - *Gagne's (1992) framework and its corresponding parts to the program*

| EVENT | CORRESPONDING PART OF THE PROGRAM |
|---|---|
| Gaining attention | *Publicity, Instruction* |
| Explaining objectives | *Syllabus, Instruction* |
| Stimulating recall | *Instruction* |
| Presenting content | *Instruction* |
| Providing guidance (and model) | *Instruction* |
| Eliciting performance | *Instruction* |
| Providing feedback | *Instruction, Assignments* |

The overall teaching approach was *form-focused instruction* which could be briefly defined as "any language teaching activity that is intended to draw learners' attention to a given linguistic form" (Derwing & Munro, 2015, p. 177). To this end, *segmentals* (vowels and consonants) and *suprasegmentals* (word stress, thought groups, final intonation patterns) were specifically targeted through explicit teaching. The program regarded phonological awareness as an important aspect, recognizing that improved phonological awareness through form-focused instruction has the potential to enhance the comprehensibility of EFL learners,

as also discussed by Venkatagiri and Levis (2007). The value and importance of pronunciation in successful communication as well as how mispronunciations or suprasegmental errors might lead to misunderstandings/confusions in spoken interactions were frequently demonstrated and reminded to the participants.

### 3.4. Syllabus Design and Resources

The pronunciation teaching objectives in this training were customized according to the findings from Uzun's (2022a) research, prioritizing pronunciation errors identified in reduced intelligibility error sites. The program focused on segmentals, specifically addressing tense-lax vowel substitutions (e.g., /i/ - /ɪ /, /u/ - /ʊ/), diphthongs (e.g., /oʊ/ as in 'note'), and consonant clusters, including schwa insertion and deletion (e.g., 'sport' and 'support'). The training program included perception tasks for sound discrimination, focusing on minimal pair exercises. The course also covered silent letters and addressed specific pronunciation targets, like the fricative and devoiced final /r/ by Turkish speakers, potentially impacting their intelligibility in English.

In terms of suprasegmentals, the program focused on word stress, thought groups and pausing, and basic final intonation patterns for *statements* as well as *Wh-* and *Yes/No questions*. Table 2 demonstrates the syllabus used in this course.

**Table 2** - *Course syllabus*

| DATE | IN CLASS | HOMEWORK |
|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | Diagnostic Test<br>Basics of English Pronunciation<br>Sounds in English<br>Vowels | Pose Test - Vowels (https://posetest.com) |
| Week 2 | Vowels (continued)<br>Consonants<br>Pronouncing Grammatical Endings | Pose Test – Consonants |
| Week 3 | Syllable Structure in English<br>Word Stress | Pose Test - Word Stress<br>Pronpack Puzzles - Word Stress<br>Handout 1 |
| Week 4 | Thought Groups in English<br>Final Intonation Patterns | Pose Test – Intonation 1<br>Recording Assignments<br>(Thought Groups & Intonation)<br>Handout 2 |

Course content, largely sourced from Well-Said (4th Ed.) (Grant, 2016), PronPack 2 (Hancock, 2017), Pose Test (Shewell, 2024) website for self-study assignments, along with separate handouts, was presented using PowerPoint Presentations (PPT). Participants engaged in in-class activities, guided/semi-guided practice, and individual/pair work. Out-of-class assignments included

pronunciation puzzles, perception tasks, and recording assignments (read-aloud tasks), with results and recordings submitted via e-mail to the trainers.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Participants

The first data source in this study was student participants. Out of the 25 participants who successfully completed the program, 19 were female, and 6 were male. Their average age was 19. All the participants were students at the SFL when they took part in the training. Participants were enrolled in various programs, including medicine, psychology, and business administration, and none of them were majoring in languages. Regarding nationalities, the majority (22 out of 25 participants) were Turkish nationals with Turkish as their L1. The remaining two participants were from Sudan, and one was from Egypt. All the non-Turkish students spoke Arabic as their L1. The Egyptian student reported that she was at B1 level in Turkish, while the others were at a beginner level.

The Researcher Trainer (RT) and Observer Trainer (OT), both EFL instructors, participated in this study as key participants. The RT, who served as both the trainer of the pronunciation training program and the author of this paper, provided reflections on its effectiveness upon its completion. To avoid conflicts of interest, the RT ensured that the OT independently conducted classroom observations and collected data. Prior to the training, the trainers convened to clearly delineate their responsibilities and prevent potential conflicts. Throughout the study, the RT focused on in-class teaching, while the OT observed, took detailed notes, and responded to written reflection questions. The OT's observations were analyzed independently, free from RT influence, ensuring an objective evaluation. This collaborative approach allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the program's effectiveness from both instructional and observational perspectives.

### 4.2. Data Collection

This study adopts an action research approach, emphasizing a self-reflective, critical, and systematic exploration of teaching contexts (Burns, 2010). In conjunction with Gagne's (1992) *Nine Events of Instruction*, which primarily informed the pedagogical aspects of the training, the research procedures in this intervention were guided by Norton's (2009) five-step course of action (p. 70) along with the corresponding situations or actions as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** - *Norton's (2009) five steps for action research*

| STEPS | ACTION | CORRESPONDING SITUATION / ACTION |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Identifying a problem / paradox / issue / difficulty | *Recognition of the necessity to provide additional pronunciation training for EFL learners* |
| 2 | Thinking of ways to tackle the problem | *Offering extracurricular pronunciation, designing the training* |
| 3 | Doing it | *Conducting the training* |
| 4 | Evaluating it (actual research findings) | *Analyzing the effectiveness of the training through participant reflections* |
| 5 | Modifying future practice | *Making necessary revisions based on the reflections of participants for future implementation* |

To investigate the effectiveness of this extracurricular pronunciation training program critically and systematically, data were collected through reflective papers with open-ended questions from the course participants (see Appendix A), the RT (see Appendix B), and the OT (see Appendix C). On the first day of the course, all the participants filled out a consent form and declared their voluntary participation in the training program along with the associated data collection procedures. At the end of the training in Week 4, course participants were provided with a reflection paper with three open-ended questions to provide their views about the effectiveness of the program, course content, as well as their own post-program learning goals. The RT and OT also reflected on open-ended questions regarding the effectiveness of the training program, course content and tasks, areas of observed challenges and pitfalls of the implementation.

### 4.3. Data Analysis

Data collected from course participants' reflections were analyzed via basic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns in their responses. In addition, to identify the categories that emerged from the data, posteriori codes were used. The analysis utilized inductive coding, entailing the exploration of data without predefined categories, ultimately leading to the identification of general codes and themes (Cresswell, 2012). To ensure the reliability of coding, a second external researcher experienced in qualitative data analysis independently coded the same data. The simple agreement method was followed to check the reliability of coding. Simple agreement is the percentage of decisions that represent complete concurrence between two coders in coding a dataset, calculated as the number of agreements divided by the total number of coding decisions, with a maximum value of 100% when both coders entirely concur (Geisler & Swarts, 2019). The analyses demonstrated a 96% agreement rate between the two coders.

Reflections collected from the RT and OT were subjected to thematic analysis by two external coders with experience in analyzing qualitative data. Given their

prior research expertise, extensive training was not required; however, they were briefed on the coding expectations, emphasizing an inductive approach which involved analyzing the reflections without preconceived themes. The coders followed systematic procedures to identify patterns and code segments of text. The two sets of reflections from the trainers were coded separately by the coders, and then compared to refine themes through consensus-building discussions.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Course Participants' Reflections

The first reflective question was aimed at investigating participants' overall perspectives about the course and its potential influence over their awareness and skills in pronunciation. Participant reflections revealed *improved pronunciation*, *positive feedback*, *increased awareness*, and *improved confidence* as recurring themes. Table 4 presents these themes with an example quote for each.

**Table 4** - *Participants' reflections on the overall effectiveness of the course*

| PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM | RECURRING THEMES | SAMPLE QUOTATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| | Improved pronunciation | *"I am better at stress, intonation, discriminating sounds, and my speech is clear and comprehensible."* (15) |
| | Positive feedback | *"The course was short but effective."* (6) |
| | Increased awareness | *"The course helped me become aware of my weaknesses and how to improve them in a variety of ways."* (12) |
| | Improved confidence | *"I learned how to pronounce and where to pause, this makes me feel confident."* (4) |

Participants commonly acknowledged that the course had a positive impact on their pronunciation. Additionally, several participants expressed their satisfaction with adjectives such as *good*, *beneficial*, and *meaningful*. As illustrated in the sample quote above, Student 6 found the course short, yet effective. Some participants indicated an increased awareness of pronunciation by demonstrating that they were now more attentive and careful about miscommunication. Another important theme involved a confidence boost in some participants as they frequently linked their improved confidence to a better control over

their speech and a clearer and more intelligible speech. Furthermore, some participants pinpointed specific aspects of pronunciation, including word stress, intonation, and sound discrimination, indicating that the course facilitated a better understanding of areas requiring improvement.

The second question in the reflective paper asked if the tasks/training were tailored to their individual needs and if specific emotions arose during the course. Participants' reflections revealed the following recurring themes, *positive emotions and engagement*, *effectiveness of the tasks*, *trainer's competence in instruction*, *appropriacy*, and *need for additional practice* (see Table 5).

**Table 5** - *Participants' reflections on content, tasks, and their emotions*

| PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTENT, TASKS, AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH EMOTIONS | RECURRING THEMES | SAMPLE QUOTATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| | Positive emotions and engagement | *"I felt engaged, interested, and comfortable." (1)* |
| | Effectiveness of the tasks | *"Tasks were interesting." (13)* |
| | Trainer's competence in instruction | *"Our teacher was inclusive and involved us all in the activities." (9)* |
| | Appropriacy | *"Appropriate for our needs and enjoyable." (17)* |
| | Need for additional practice | *"I wish we had more time to practice more with you." (6)* |

Participants expressed positive emotions and engagement regarding the course, which was observed in their references to adjectives like *engaged*, *interested*, *energized*, and *encouraged*. In addition, the course content and tasks were found effective, and commonly appreciated by the participants for being *interactive*, *interesting*, and *very good*. Some participants referred to the course trainer for being effective in involving and energizing them in the course activities. Participants also found the course to be appropriate for their needs and expressed their desire for additional practice opportunities to further improve their skills.

The final question aimed to explore participants' current goals and their plans to achieve them upon the completion of the course. In response to these questions, the following goals were identified within participants' reflections: *intelligible pronunciation*, *desire to achieve mastery in a given variety*, *minimizing pronunciation errors*, *building on course knowledge*, and *taking follow-up courses* (see Table 6).

**Table 6** - *Participants' learning goals and plans after the course*

| PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM GOALS IN PRONUNCIATION | RECURRING THEMES | SAMPLE QUOTATIONS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Intelligible pronunciation | *"I want to be more comprehensible with while talking…."* (2) |
| | Desire to achieve a NS-level pronunciation | *"I would like to speak like a native speaker."* (17) |
| | Minimizing pronunciation errors | *"I don't want to have pronunciation mistakes when I talk, as much as possible."* (4) |
| | Building on course knowledge | *"I learned a lot during the course so I want to build on this."* (14) |
| | Taking follow-up courses | *"I want to take the next course too."* (18) |

Several participants expressed their desire to be more intelligible or comprehensible with their English pronunciation, which demonstrated that they adopted the intelligibility principle within the course. On the other hand, some other students still aimed to attain native-like pronunciation even mentioning a certain variety (i.e., American English). Without declaring a choice between nativeness or intelligibility as a goal, some participants referred to their desires to make fewer errors in the future.

Participants seemed to recognize the importance of the knowledge gained in the course and declared their intentions to keep practicing through listening activities, websites, podcasts, and TV series. It was worth noting that *series* were mentioned by four students, and *web resources* were suggested by three. Many participants requested follow-up courses and declared their interest in continuing their learning with additional training. This finding showed an ongoing interest after the completion of the course, yet follow-up courses could not be offered afterwards within the same academic year.

### 4.2. Researcher Trainer's Reflections

A thematic analysis into the RT's responses to the reflective questions revealed three main themes: *the effectiveness of the course, administrative considerations,* and *challenges faced during implementation*, which will be discussed in the following subsections.

### 4.2.1. Effectiveness of the course

The RT shared his insights about the success of the program by mainly touching on its *overall effectiveness*, *his initial concerns and how they were resolved*, and *course duration*. One important area that the RT's reflections focused on was that he perceived it as an effective initiative in helping students improve their

pronunciation skills. This observation was mainly associated with active in-class participation, and low absenteeism rates, as seen in the following quote:

*"I believe that the course was mostly effective in helping students improve their pronunciation skills. Our participants were generally eager to engage in class activities, and absenteeism wasn't a major issue."*

The RT also raised his initial concerns regarding the suitability of the course and the appropriacy of explicit instruction, which were ultimately overcome through the simplification of metalanguage and emphases on the more practical aspects of pronunciation:

*"… I had concerns about whether [the training] would resonate with our target group … we were supposed to work with non-language major university students who needed pronunciation primarily for practical purposes… As the course progressed, my initial concerns began to fade. This was due to the deliberate choice to limit the use of complex technical language and free the content from overly technical aspects, I mean."*

Another issue questioned by the RT was the duration of the course. He underlines that, despite his initial concerns, an informed decision was made based on earlier experiences with longer term programs in such activities over time:

*"… Our decision to keep it at four weeks was primarily due to our past experience with longer-term programs. We had observed high dropout rates in these longer programs. In the end, I still believe that four weeks was adequate. We explored the possibility of offering a follow-up course for those interested, which we considered a better option than extending the duration of the current course."*

### 4.2.2. Administrative considerations

The RT's reflections highlighted administrative considerations as a noteworthy theme in the context of extracurricular pronunciation training. Two crucial aspects of administration were identified. One involves the entities responsible for organizing such programs, with the RT suggesting that self-access centers (SACs) and extracurricular activity units within language teaching institutions could play a role in this regard.

*"SACs, learning and teaching units, or extracurricular activity units could consider organizing such courses. Even if longer-term activities are challenging to implement, why not offer one-off sessions on different aspects of pronunciation? For instance, I've conducted one-off workshop sessions on thought groups, and they have been quite successful."*

Allocation of physical activity spaces and assigning teachers to these programs emerged as potential administrative challenges in RT's reflections:

*"… if the physical conditions allow it and there's enough human resource to offer such programs, why not give it a try? It can be challenging to find suitable physical venues or classrooms for extracurricular training programs, as well as allocate teachers and their working hours for out-of-class activities".*

### 4.2.3. Challenges faced during implementation

RT's reflections indicated two areas of challenges experienced: *implementation challenges* and *managing assignment submissions*. While initially deeming four weeks as an adequate duration for extracurricular training programs, the RT acknowledged the constraints of limited in-class exposure and practice opportunities, suggesting the potential need for an extension. The desire for more practice and opportunities for communicative activities was also highlighted:

*"… the limited exposure and practice opportunities due to the four-week duration. … There were moments when I wished we had more time for additional activities, increased communicative practice, or fun games to help participants internalize the practical aspects of pronunciation."*

Another problem area turned out to be assignment submission. The RT expressed his surprise regarding the limited assignment submissions and potential factors contributing to this situation:

*"One issue that took me by surprise was the low turn-in rates of out-of-class assignments… Given that it was an extracurricular program without official grading, their active participation in class indicated motivation and readiness to learn. However, this motivation didn't translate into a strong commitment to completing their assignments."*

### 4.3. Observer Trainer's Reflections

The analyses into OT's responses to the reflective questions provided uncovered four main themes: *the overall effectiveness of the course*, *materials and instruction*, *engagement*, and *challenges observed*.

### 4.3.1. Effectiveness of the course

Similar to the RT, the OT found the training effective by mainly underlining the appropriacy of the content to the needs and expectations of the participants. She also found the course structure systematic and well-planned, as is clear in her quote below:

*"The course was effective in serving the purposes of the training, providing the essential content and further practice for new learning to stick more deeply. Participants were exposed to a systematic, scaffolded training content, which also offered multiple recycling points and they were appropriately guided with clear and concrete examples."*

Another theme that emerged in the reflections of the OT was the competence of the trainer in the teaching of pronunciation:

*"The trainer was highly competent in the subject he was teaching and could offer really effective real-life examples or anecdotes that would attract their attention as well as effortlessly making things clear for them."*

Emphasizing the trainer's competence in pronunciation instruction, she conveyed her observations on learners' progress, primarily noting heightened awareness and knowledge. However, there is identified potential for improvement in the creative application of the instructed pronunciation targets:

*"So, performance-wise, although the participants needed more time to perform in more creative ways, they showed significant progress regarding their pronunciation awareness, understanding, and knowledge."*

Another area that was linked with the success of the program was the ways course goals, expectations, and objectives were communicated to the participants. The OT particularly mentioned the effective promotion of the training through various channels before the training. She particularly highlighted the importance of detailed explanations and discussions of the syllabus on the first day ensuring participants' understanding:

*"The participants were informed about the overall course goal of 'enhancing students' awareness of the importance of pronunciation in effective communication' on the first day …"*

### 4.3.2. Materials and instruction

The OT noted the course's emphasis on practical pronunciation training, incorporating engaging hooks, well-structured content, and diverse materials. Participants were actively involved through various perception and production tasks and self-study opportunities as presented in the following quote:

*"The training content was well-structured and organized/sequenced to allow a natural, incremental learning [of the content] presented using PowerPoint Presentations (PPT) …"*

Regarding the instructional approaches held, the OT first emphasized on the recognition and welcoming attitude of diverse perspectives and goals of participants during the training (i.e., desire to speak like native speakers or focusing on producing intelligible speech):

*"Students' expectations from the course varied, as some students said they want to speak like native speakers, some cared only about being able to produce intelligible and comprehensible speech."*

### 4.3.3. Engagement

Another theme that emerged in the reflections of the OT was frequent references to the participants' high levels of engagement. It was frequently noted that participants were generally eager to engage in class activities, with most showing interest and curiosity from the beginning. The OT also stated the changing tendencies over time and their ultimate interest to keep taking additional courses on pronunciation, as illustrated below:

*"Toward the end, they seemed to feel more confident about their understanding of English pronunciation and more willing to perform in speaking activities although most were aware they needed to carry on such pron-specific studies to improve further, and actually they wanted to have a follow-up course, offering the chance to practice more and keep in touch as a group."*

### 4.3.4. Observed challenges

The OT also addressed implementation challenges, and similar to the RT, primarily related to the restricted exposure and practice time within the four-week duration, the adequacy of eight hours of in-class input, and unexpected participant reluctance toward out-of-class assignments. Furthermore, her reflections underscore the necessity for additional time for activities, enhanced communicative practice, and the inclusion of games to improve participant understanding, as seen in the quote below:

*"Time allowing, it might be advisable to include more varied, authentic tasks such as through role-plays and dialogues as well so that the participants can produce more lengthy and natural linguistic pieces, helping the trainer to observe their development further. So the duration was the major constraint."*

## 5. Discussion

This study outlines the design and implementation procedures of an extracurricular pronunciation training program tailored for EFL learners in the Turkish higher education context. Having examined the written reflections from student participants, as well as those of the RT and OT, predominantly positive reception of the training emerged. All the participants agreed on the opinion that

the EPC was an effective initiative in pronunciation learning and instruction. Key contributing factors included the engaging nature of the tasks, the competence of the trainer, and high levels of student participation.

Students' reflections highlighted the program's effectiveness in developing pronunciation skills, increasing awareness, boosting confidence, and fostering positive emotions towards pronunciation. Sardegna et al. (2018) propose a connection between cognitive attitudes and affective attitudes towards pronunciation learning, which predicts learners' intended behaviors (conative attitudes). This aligns with Saito et al. (2018) who suggest that motivation and engagement are crucial for long-term language development. Students' positive reflections on the program's components are facilitators for their positive emotions, increased motivation and engagement. Swain's (2013) notion that emotions significantly impact past, present, and future experiences can be linked with successful program participants' continued willingness to learn and taking future steps towards pronunciation development. Students' desire for further practice and attending similar courses underlines the importance of continued learning. Overall, it is crucial to recognize that emotions play a key role in students' language learning, performance, and overall wellbeing (Shao et al., 2019).

A notable aspect of the program was its ability to cater to diverse learning goals and expectations. This diversity in goals suggests that future programs should offer tailored options to better meet individual needs. While intelligibility as a learning goal was promoted throughout the training, post-program participants' goals exhibited variation, with some aspiring towards achieving native-like pronunciation, while others prioritized intelligible pronunciation in their learning objectives. This mixed set of results and the continued interest in pursuing native-like pronunciation for some participants was consistent with the findings of some other studies (McCrocklin & Link, 2016; Richter, 2022; Uchida & Sugimoto, 2020; Uzun & Ay, 2018; Uzun, 2022b).

Similar to the participating students, the RT and OT concurred on the overall effectiveness of the course as well, with the RT associating this effectiveness with active in-class participation and low absenteeism rates. The OT highlighted the roles of the trainer's competence in pronunciation instruction, participants' progress, and the successful communication of the course aims. Additionally, the OT underscored the importance of course materials being engaging, appropriate, and well-organized. A shared observation by both trainers emphasized the role of limited use of metalanguage in the success of this training. The use or non-use of metalanguage in pronunciation instruction has not been extensively studied in second language pronunciation literature. In a study, Couper (2011) observed immediate enhancements in learners' speech production associated with the implementation of socially constructed metalanguage, a language jointly developed by learners and teachers who employ familiar L1 concepts to facilitate the formation of target language phonological concepts. This aligns with the trainers' insights indicating the effectiveness of restraining metalanguage use

of phonetics and phonology to more common grounds rather than employing complex terminology, which may not be as beneficial for EFL learners.

The RT highlighted the crucial role of administrative considerations, identifying potential organizing entities for such programs, and pinpointed critical success factors, including the allocation of physical spaces and teacher workloads. Specific challenges faced by the RT during implementation, noted by the OT as well, included students' limited exposure to target speech features due to program duration and limited assignment submissions. The OT mentioned compromises in task diversity as a natural outcome of the program's constrained duration. Addressing these challenges in future iterations by extending the program duration and increasing task variety could provide students with more comprehensive exposure and practice opportunities, leading to even better outcomes.

## 6. Conclusion

In many language teaching settings, pronunciation often receives minimal attention or is entirely excluded from the curriculum. Levis and Echelberger (2022) recommend an effective integration of pronunciation into language curricula. They argue that integrating pronunciation into the teaching of other language skills ensures comprehensive instruction from the outset. This perspective holds relevance in the realm of extracurricular pronunciation training as well. Dedicated pronunciation instruction within extracurricular programs should extend beyond standalone lessons and instead be seamlessly integrated into broader language skills, namely *listening* for perception, and *speaking* for production. Such integration should comprehensively address both segmental and suprasegmental speech features, emphasizing their communicative significance in particular.

Furthermore, the success of dedicated pronunciation training programs hinges on motivated and proficient teachers skilled in pronunciation instruction. As previous studies also found (i.e. Bai & Yuan, 2018; Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Macdonald, 2002), not all teachers may be equally prepared or willing to teach pronunciation. However, it is useful to remember that, as Levis et al. (2016) also suggest, effective pronunciation teaching is more dependent on pedagogical skill than on teachers' native-speaker status. Similarly, in the present study, participating students' observations regarding the effectiveness of the trainer, who was also a nonnative speaker of English, further support Levis et al.'s (2016) findings on this matter.

The design, implementation procedures, in-class instruction, and participants' reflections collectively demonstrate that extracurricular pronunciation training can serve as an effective component in EFL settings. Skillfully approached, dedicated extracurricular pronunciation courses have the potential not only to engage EFL learners but also to fulfill their expectations for spoken language.

The limitations of the study include a limited sample size, challenges in generalizing findings, and a narrow focus on short-term learning outcomes. To

gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of extracurricular pronunciation training, further investigation is required. This should involve exploring new interventions and considering a broader range of learner development in diverse contexts.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A. Reflective Questions for Student Participants

**Please provide reflections.**

1.  What do you think about this course overall? Do you think it has helped you improve your awareness and skills in pronunciation? If 'yes', in what ways? If 'no', do you have any suggestions?

2.  Did you feel the tasks/training was structured in a way to fit your needs? Did you experience any specific emotions throughout the course?

3.  What are your current goals for improving your pronunciation in English and how do you plan to achieve these?

## Appendix B. Reflective Questions for the Researcher Trainer

**Please provide reflections.**

1.  What do you think about the effectiveness of the course? Have the course objectives been met?

2.  Do you think the course content, tasks, and assignments were useful for participants?

3.  Did you experience any challenges during the implementation of the program? If yes, can you name them?

## Appendix C. Reflective Questions for the Observer Trainer

**Please provide reflections.**

1.  What do you think about the effectiveness of the course? Have the course objectives been met?

2.  Do you think the course content, tasks, and assignments were useful for participants?

3.  Did you observe any challenging areas during implementation? If so, could you specify what they are?