



## Perceptions of University-Level ESL Teachers about English as an International Language

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### ABSTRACT

This study used a quantitative, descriptive research design to explore ESL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding pronunciation, accent, and comprehensibility in teaching English as an International Language (EIL). A sample of 50 ESL teachers from public and private universities was selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected via a structured survey comprising 12 close-ended questions addressing teachers' attitudes toward pronunciation instruction, accent preferences, exposure to English varieties, and teaching materials. Findings show that teachers prioritize comprehensibility over native-like pronunciation, aligning with the global emphasis on intelligibility in EIL. Teachers favored native accents like British and American but also showed regional preferences. Teachers acknowledged the importance of exposing students to diverse accents. However, traditional native-speaker norms persist, with only 50% supporting teaching non-native varieties of English. Bilingual educators were preferred for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps. These findings reflect the ongoing shift toward EIL principles emphasizing diversity and intelligibility.

**Key Words:** English as an International Language (EIL), ESL teachers , pronunciation instruction, comprehensibility, native-like pronunciation, accent preferences, non-native varieties of English, bilingual educators, intelligibility.

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## 1. Introduction

Pakistan is a country characterized by multilingualism because of its rich linguistic landscape comprised of over 70 languages spoken in the geographical areas of Pakistan (Farid & Iftikhar, 2023). However, English which is not a local language, has acquired a privileged position in elite as well as mainstream educational institutions as the medium of instruction and a prerequisite for access to opportunities at the global level. Despite of its privileged status English language remains a challenge for many Pakistani learners. In most of the situations, the Pakistani learners encounter pedagogical models that align native-speaker norms in pronunciation, vocabulary, and cultural references, etc. These models not only alienate students but also fail to recognize the global nature of English as a lingua franca. According to (Jenkins, 2000) , research suggests that the learners are benefitted more if they are exposed to diverse varieties of English language and pedagogical approaches especially those which value communicative competence over native-like accuracy.

English is a symbol of socio-economic opportunity as well as a means of global communication in Pakistan. In this regard, pronunciation often determines the effectiveness of communication practices because it is a critical component of language learning. Usually the native-speaker models, for example, Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) are considered as the standards for English language teaching (ELT) and Pakistani context is not an exception in this regard. On the other hand, however, with the acceptance of English as a global lingua franca, the legitimacy and acceptance of non-native pronunciation norms has gained a considerable traction which emphasize intelligibility over native-like accuracy. In ELT, pronunciation instruction has evolved from aiming for native-like proficiency to prioritizing intelligibility and comprehensibility (Gilakjani, 2017; Takidze, 2024). In this regard (Takidze, 2024) maintains that the goal of pronunciation instruction is to enable the learners to communicate effectively with both native and non-native speakers of a language without undue difficulty.

In this connection, the teachers play an important role in selecting and modeling pronunciation norms in the classroom. These choices not only shape classroom practices but also learners' perceptions and preferences of English language pronunciation norms. This study aims to examine ESL university teachers' preferences for pronunciation norms in Pakistani classrooms, exploring how these preferences reflect broader pedagogical and sociolinguistic trends.

### 1.1.Statement of the Problem

The spread of English globally has sparked debates and discussions on whether native or non-native pronunciation norms should guide English language communication and ESL instruction, particularly in multilingual contexts. While traditional pedagogy emphasized native norms, alternative models like "world Englishes" (Kachru, 1985, 1990) and "English as a lingua franca" (Jenkins, 2000, 2006) advocate for greater inclusivity. This debate is also relevant in Pakistani ESL setting, as English language holds a prominent position in educational and official domains and still attitudes towards English language pronunciation norms remain ambivalent. This study investigates the perceptions of private and public sectors university ESL teachers from a densely populated and multicultural city of Pakistan toward native and non-native English pronunciation norms.

### 1.2. Significance

This study contributes to the growing body of literature that critiques dominance of native-speakers' models in English language teaching contexts especially in pronunciation instruction. In





addition, it supports the theoretical shift of scholars and researchers toward intelligibility and communicative competence as the primary goals of ELT. This research examines applicability of Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (2000) as a framework, in the Pakistani context, adding to the theoretical understanding of how ELF principles work in multilingual settings. In relation to practical significance, this study provides insights into the effectiveness and usefulness of non-native pronunciation models advocating contextualized instruction for Pakistani teachers. Secondly, it also emphasizes on prioritizing intelligibility over unattainable native-like standards for learners. The findings of the study can be used to design inclusive training programs and align the curricula with global trends in English as a lingua franca or English as an international language EIL. In addition, the study supports the recognition of non-native English varieties and offers practical recommendations for balanced pronunciation instruction in multilingual contexts like Pakistan.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on university-level attitudes towards English teachers reveals a shift from native-speaker preference to a focus on teaching skills. In China, native-speakerism is challenged as no significant differences were found between native and non-native teachers (Wang & Fang, 2020). Turkish teachers prioritize teaching effectiveness over nativeness (Oğuzhan & Kürüm, 2024). Jordanian students value native speakers for pronunciation and oral skills but prefer non-native teachers for grammar and writing (Dweik & Al-Barghouthi, 2014). In Hong Kong, students generally favor non-native teachers, with final-year students being more positive (Cheung & Braine, 2007). These findings suggest increasing recognition of non-native teachers' strengths.

In relation to research on attitudes toward native and non-native English varieties, research reveals complex dynamics. It suggests that native varieties are preferred for status and competence (Chien, 2018; Prakaianurat & Kangkun, 2018) and non-native varieties are valued for social attractiveness (Chien, 2018). This further suggests that generally Inner and Outer Circle varieties are favored over Expanding Circle ones (Chien, 2018). In addition to this, non-native varieties are increasingly accepted and preferred as new norms in various countries (Lowenberg, 1986). These varieties are, in fact, shaped by sociocultural contexts and language contact and they do not impact listening comprehension tests performance negatively (Abeywickrama, 2013). These research insights suggest the need for greater awareness and tolerance of diverse varieties of English language in the context of English as an international language (EIL) (Prakaianurat & Kangkun, 2018).

In relation to significance and objectives of pronunciation instruction in English language teaching, the findings indicate a shift of focus from native-like accuracy to focusing on comprehensibility and intelligibility (Gilakjani, 2017). Research indicates that both native and non-native ESL teachers can be equally effective in improving learners' pronunciation, suggesting that instruction quality is more important than native status of the teachers (Levis et al., 2016). The goal should be to make learners' speech easily understandable by both native and non-native speakers without unnecessary tension (Takidze, 2024). In addition to this, current teaching practices do not rely on research findings but on teachers' opinions, however, a strong theoretical background can help in enhancing students' awareness and pronunciation performance (Vančová, 2019). Wang et al (2024) examines 22 peer-reviewed papers published between 2014 and 2023 thoroughly and explored non-native English-speaking teachers' beliefs about pronunciation teaching and suggest that they emphasize intelligibility over native-like pronunciation. Pronunciation instruction should adopt a balanced approach seeking a balance of standard





pronunciation with learners' identity preservation and consider the influence of their native language (Takidze, 2024). The prevalent research indicates the increasing preference for the intelligibility, however, some researches demand for a balance of standard pronunciation, considering learners' identity preservation and influence of their native language.

The trend about goal of pronunciation and the relative choice native-likeness and intelligibility in second language teaching has shifted towards prioritizing intelligibility as a more practical and effective goal (Levis, 2020). Research indicates that foreign accents have minimal impact on comprehensibility instead it improves intelligibility and enhances clarity. In China, curriculum standards of English language teaching are gradually transitioning from the nativeness principle to intelligibility, promoting personalized instruction (Wang & Wen, 2023). This shift from nativeness to intelligibility reflects the growing recognition of intelligibility as more suitable goal in relation to ESL teaching, learning contexts, and the social implications of pronunciation differences (Levis, 2020). Research literature, in this regard, indicates the increasing preference for the intelligibility as a more practical and effective goal.

Research emphasizes exposing learners to native and non-native English models, valuing non-native varieties for global communication and real-world preparedness (Cunningham, 2009; van den Doel, 2010). This challenges native-speaker-centric approaches, advocating for inclusive practices reflecting English's global role (van den Doel, 2010). In this regard, Monfared & Khatib (2018) reveal that teachers in the Expanding Circle favor native-speaker and American English pronunciation, while Outer Circle teachers value their local forms of English. These research findings again highlight the importance of more non-native varieties for global communication and real-world preparedness, however, it also highlights the tension between inner and outer circle teachers' preferences.

Research on English language teaching preferences highlights the prevalence of complex attitudes of both teachers and learners towards native and non-native models. Wong (2018) reveals that pre-service EFL teachers in Hong Kong prefer native English model particularly British English. However, Jin (2005) revealed that Chinese students favor Chinese teachers and Chinese English due to their positive attitudes towards English as an International Language. Similarly, Thi Trang Loan (2023) reveals that teachers and students generally support using non-native English materials in ESL teaching and learning at the university level. These findings highlight the complexity of accent preferences about native versus non-native varieties in language education.

In relation to the idea of an ideal ESL teachers, recent research reveals that university students show mixed preferences for native (NESTs) and non-native (NNESTs) English teachers. They favor NESTs for pronunciation and cultural knowledge, on the other hand, they appreciate NNESTs for grammar instruction and sensitiveness to learners' difficulties whereas many students recognize the complementary strengths of both teachers' types, suggesting learning from both based on the skill and learner proficiency (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014; Echiverri et al., 2021). In addition, (Tajeddin et al., 2017) reveal a preference of non-native English teachers for native-speaker linguistic and at the same time they accept flexibility in EIL pragmatic norms by supporting the use of L1 norms for culturally responsive and appropriate communication. The findings link the preferences to the kind of targeted language skills and recognize the complementary strengths of both native and non-native teachers.

Recent research on English as an International Language (EIL) highlights challenges in its implementation. Pre-service ESL teachers have positive beliefs about English as an international language (EIL) but face struggle to apply it (Christou et al., 2022) whereas experienced ESL





teachers often depend upon native speaker models (Lai, 2008; Zacharias, 2014). They believe that by integrating EIL in teacher education can improve perceptions but hold an opinion that transition from theory to practice is difficult (Christou et al., 2022; Zacharias, 2014). (Zacharias, 2014) points out that a shift towards EIL is needed in Malaysia, but this transition is hampered due to the ESL teachers' limited understanding of EIL pedagogy. These research findings emphasize the need for better training opportunities and teacher preparation in World Englishes, especially in countries which fall in the Expanding Circle.

In addition, research in English language teaching (ELT) also highlights the need for ELT material to reflect diverse cultural contexts into English language teaching material to reflect English as an International language in a better way. Current books often incorporate and emphasize inner-circle cultural content which lack deeper cultural reflection (Shin et al., 2011). In this regard, scholars and ELT experts advocate for the need of culturally responsive materials with "local" content which demands the blending of local and international perspectives (Monfared et al., 2016). Moreover, courses for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education can support EIL learning even in the homogeneous groups of students if EIL usage is modeled by the instructors (Hino, 2017). Moving beyond traditional native-speaker norms, these insights highlight the need for language teaching practices that foster intercultural awareness and communication skills.

### 3. Research Questions

- How do ESL teachers at university level perceive the role of pronunciation, accent, and comprehensibility in teaching English as an International Language (EIL)?
- What are the preferences of university level ESL teachers regarding the selection of accents, exposure to varieties of English, and teaching materials in EIL pronunciation instruction?

### 4. Methodology

This section presents the overall methodology of the research process employed in this research.

#### 4.1. Research Design

This study examines attitudes toward English pronunciation as a lingua franca or English as an international language. Attitude is a construct used to explain human behavior which is influenced by factors like age, gender, community, and media, (Baker, 1992). This study used a quantitative, descriptive research design to explore ESL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding pronunciation, accent, and comprehensibility in teaching English as an International Language (EIL). A sample of 50 ESL teachers from public and private universities was selected through convenience sampling. There are two main methods for assessing these attitudes: direct methods which employ questionnaires and interviews and indirect methods such as using or evaluating speakers of different accents to infer their attitudes through their preferences. The direct method involves gathering responses through structured questions, while the indirect method assesses reactions to various speakers with different accents. Data were collected via a structured survey comprising 12 close-ended questions addressing teachers' attitudes toward pronunciation instruction, accent preferences, exposure to English varieties, and teaching materials. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize participants' responses to closed-ended questions with the help 22<sup>nd</sup> version of SPSS.

#### 4.2. Participants





The study involved 50 ESL university teachers from public and private institutions across Lahore. The sample was selected through convenient sampling technique. In the first place, considering the limitations of time and resources, convenient sampling enables the researcher to collect valuable data efficiently. Secondly, university ESL teachers are more readily available for participation in research process through institutional networks and personal contacts. This makes it feasible to collect data within a limited time frame. In short, the practicality of convenient sampling justifies this approach.

Furthermore, since the university ESL teachers come from various provinces and regions, they represent a diverse population of Pakistani ESL teachers. With their diverse backgrounds, they all bring with them their unique linguistic and cultural influences to their teaching practices. Overall, this sampling strategy ensures addressing the logistical constraints of the research and that the findings are relevant to the broader Pakistani ESL teaching context.

### **4.3. Instrument**

The research instrument used in this study was adapted from a questionnaire initially developed by Knollmayr (2004), as cited in Coskun (2011) and Khan & Ali (2023). The questionnaire aimed to assess the attitudes and perceptions of ESL teachers, with a particular focus on their understanding of English as an International Language (EIL) and its significance.

This questionnaire was divided into two sections. The items in the first section were related to participants' background information such as gender, qualifications (education), and current occupation rank. The second section consisted of 12 close-ended items. In the first place, items 1 and 2 were related to the participants' general preferences for specific varieties of English language and the reasons for their preferences. Secondly, items 3, 4, and 5 were linked with the importance of pronunciation instruction in the classroom setting, eliciting whether achieving native-like pronunciation or clear, intelligible pronunciation is more important for them. In the third place, items 6 and 7 were related to the perceived goals of pronunciation teaching. Fourthly, the items 8 and 9 used assess whether the participants favored teaching a native variety of English or they preferred exposing learners to multiple varieties of English. Fifthly, item 10 was developed to assess participants' views on the characteristics of an ideal pronunciation teacher and the item 11 was used to assess their familiarity with the concept of EIL. Lastly, the item 12 focused on the content of pronunciation instruction.

### **4.4. Theoretical Framework**

This study draws on Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (2000). It highlights and advocates the importance of pronunciation features that enhance intelligibility in international communication and advocates an emphasis on core pronunciation features rather than native-like perfection. This framework provides a lens for analyzing teachers' preferences and their implications for pronunciation pedagogy.

### **4.5. Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire was adapted to assess teachers' preferences about the aspect of ESL pronunciation instruction at university level. The questionnaires were distributed electronically to the participants through an online survey platform called Google Form. In this regard, the survey link was shared in various WhatsApp groups linked to university teachers and ELT professionals' networks. This facilitated easy access to a diverse sample of participants. In addition, it provided them a space to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. Additionally, networking within professional circles helped to reach more educators outside the group, ensuring a broad and diverse sample reflective of various experiences in English language teaching.





**5. Results and Interpretation**

This section presents the results and interpretation of the data collected by the respondents

**5.1.Individuals' Accent Preferences and the Rationales behind these Inclinations**

**Table 1**

*Preferred Accent While Speaking*

Statement	Pakistani		British		American	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
The accent typically adopt while speaking	29	58	12	24	9	18

The results of the table 1 indicate that 58% of respondents adopt a Pakistani accent followed by 24% with a British accent and 18% with an American accent. The preference for Pakistani accent by Pakistani respondents indicates a sense of identity and comfort. The choice of British and American accents may reflect the traditional norms in English education in Pakistan and influence of media or societal prestige attached to native models. These findings highlight the preference of practicality of intelligibility over strict adherence to native accents.

Most of the respondent teachers emphasize accents that are understandable globally indicating alignment with EIL goals.

**Table 2**

*Reason for Preferring a Particular Accent Choice*

Statement	Identification		It Sounds Best		Learned at School	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Main reason for selecting a specific English accent	13	26	27	54	10	20

The table 2 shows that the most dominant reason for accent choice is "It sounds best" which is selected by 54% of respondents, followed by identification at 26% and school exposure at 20%.The results suggest that teachers' preferences for English accents are influenced by all the three factors with varying degree. The dominant reason indicated by 54% of teachers is that the chosen accent sounds best and this reason highlights the significant role of cultural and subjective preferences. This aspect is linked with societal norms and media exposure which suggests that societal norms and media exposure play a crucial role in shaping what learners find appealing or prestigious in an accent. In the second place, 26% of respondent teachers selected an accent based on identification factor.

It indicates the use and role of accents in establishing social identity and the aspiration to connect with specific English-speaking communities or global networks. Accents, in this context, become a means of self-expression and cultural affiliation. Finally, 20% of the respondents' preferences stem from school exposure which indicates the role and influence of educational institutions developing learners' perceptions of accents.

**5.2.The significance and objectives of pronunciation instruction**

**Table 3**

*Pronunciation Instruction Objectives*





Statement	Important		Not Important	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Importance of pronunciation instruction is at your university	42	84	8	16
Importance of Having native like pronunciation	22	44	28	56
Importance of having clear and intelligible pronunciation	49	98	1	2

A substantial majority of 84 % teachers consider pronunciation teaching to be important, whereas only 16% believe it is not important. It suggests the teachers perceive and recognize pronunciation instruction as a vital component of English language education. Secondly, in connection to the necessity of achieving native-like pronunciation, only 44% teachers considered it as important and 56% of the teachers which is a larger proportion disagreed that it is important. This indicates a declining emphasis on native speaker pronunciation norms reflecting the practicality of English as an International Language (EIL), where the focus is more on functionality than perfection. Lastly , in relation to clear and intelligible pronunciation, a big majority of 98% respondents agreed that clear and intelligible pronunciation is highly important, with only 2% downplaying the significance of clear and intelligible pronunciations and the significant agreement in this regard reflects a shift in attitudes from traditional native-speaker pronunciation norms towards non-native pronunciations.

### 5.3.Goal of Pronunciation Instruction

**Table 4**

#### *Goal of Pronunciation Instruction*

Statement	Agree		Disagree	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Goal of pronunciation instruction is to help learners become as native like as possible	35	70	15	30
Goal pronunciation instruction is developing intelligibility and comprehensibility	44	88	6	12

Table 4 examines attitudes toward two distinct goals of pronunciation teaching: achieving native-like pronunciation and focusing on intelligibility and comprehensibility. The dominant majority of 70% of respondents agree with the goal of helping learners become as native-like as possible, whereas 30% disagree in this regard. In relation to question seven, an overwhelming majority of the respondents with 88% agree that pronunciation teaching should focus on intelligibility and comprehensibility whereas only 12% of the respondents disagreed with this idea.

This strong consensus underscores the central goal of EIL teaching. It suggests the idea of enabling learners to communicate effectively and be understood in diverse international contexts, maintaining the native-like pronunciation as much as possible.

### 5.4.Importance of Exposure to Varieties of English





**Table 5**  
*Importance of Exposure to Varieties of English*

Statement	Important		Not Important		May be	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Students should be exposed to different varieties in pronunciation classes	31	62	4	8	15	30

The table 5 reveals perceptions about exposing students to different varieties of English pronunciation in classes. The results indicate that 62% of the respondents consider this exposure important, 30% are uncertain, reflecting some ambivalence, likely influenced by traditional teaching norms or limited understanding of the benefits of exposure to multiple varieties. Only 8% consider it as not important.

Overall, it indicates that the majority recognize the relevance of such exposure. The findings indicate that most respondents ESL teachers value exposure to different varieties in pronunciation classes, aligning with the goals of English as an International Language (EIL) to equip learners for effective communication across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. The ambivalence among a minority could be addressed through awareness of the practical benefits of this approach.

**5.5. Preference for Teaching a Non-Native Variety**

**Table 6**  
*Preference for Teaching a Non-Native Variety*

Statement	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Students should be exposed to different non-native varieties in pronunciation classes	25	50	25	50

The table 6 examines opinions on whether a preference should be given to teaching non-native varieties of English. The results indicate that 50% of the respondents believe that preference should be given to teaching a non-native variety of English, reflecting a recognition of the growing role of non-native English models in global communication and its practicality in diverse contexts. Similarly, 50% of the respondents disagree with the idea indicating that an almost an equal proportion still holds on to the traditional emphasis on native varieties, possibly due to societal perceptions or long-standing teaching norms in the educational system.

**5.6. Ideal Pronunciation Teacher**

**Table 7**  
*Ideal Pronunciation Teacher*

Statement	Native Teacher		Bilingual Teacher	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
An ideal pronunciation instructor should be	21	42	29	58

This table explores preferences for the ideal pronunciation teacher. According to the table 7, 42% university ESL teachers prefer a native English teacher. It suggests that native speakers are still seen by some as the standard for authentic pronunciation and language expertise. However, a larger proportion of 58% of the university ESL teachers favor bilingual teachers. This indicates a





preference for teachers who can relate to learners’ challenges, offer explanations in a familiar context, and bridge the gap between native and learners’ speech patterns.

**5.7. Understanding of EIL**

**Table 8**

*Understanding of EIL*

Statement	English with a Specific Accent		English Easily Understood by Everyone		English Spoken by Natives	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Your understanding of the term English as an international language (EIL)	6	12	39	78	5	10

Table 8 captures respondents' understanding of English as an International Language (EIL). It indicates that 78% of the ESL university teachers believe that EIL is a variety of English that is easily understood by everyone. It highlights the practical emphasis on mutual comprehensibility and global communication over strict adherence to specific norms or accents. In addition, only 12% associate EIL with "English with a specific accent" indicating that most respondents do not view a single accent as definitive for international communication. Furthermore, 10 % respondents define EIL as English spoken by natives reflecting a minimal belief in native-centric models for international use. Finally, the overwhelming recognition and preference for EIL as English easily understood by everyone aligns with its core objective which fosters global understanding and communication. This perspective once again reinforces the practicality of intelligibility and clarity of expression over native-like proficiency or specific accents, emphasizing inclusivity and adaptability in teaching and learning English in diverse international contexts.

**5.8. Content Used in Language Instruction Books**

**Table 9**

*Resources for Teaching EIL*

Statement	Multimedia Resources for Different Accents		Exercises Tailored to EIL Context		Recordings of Native Speakers	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Resources and materials most helpful for teaching EIL pronunciation?	29	58	10	20	11	22

This table highlights the preferences for resources and materials deemed most helpful for teaching EIL pronunciation. The results of the table 9 indicate that 58% of respondents favor multimedia resources for different accents, indicating a preference for tools that expose learners to diverse pronunciation styles and promote adaptability in global communication. In addition, 18% prefer exercises tailored to the EIL context, suggesting a smaller but important emphasis on specialized activities that focus on intelligibility and cross-cultural communication skills. Moreover, 22% value recordings of native speakers, reflecting a recognition of native models as a supplementary but not primary resource for teaching EIL.





## 6. Discussion

The literature review indicates a nuanced perspective on native vs. non-native English-speaking teachers. Findings from various studies (e.g., Li Wang & Fang, 2020; Cheung & Braine, 2007) show growing acceptance of non-native teachers, emphasizing their unique strengths. This is reflected in the data showing teachers' preferences for different accents. While a slight inclination toward native accents for pronunciation persists, the responses challenge traditional biases, highlighting a broader shift towards valuing teaching effectiveness over nativeness.

The results in Table 2, show 54% respondents preferred Pakistani accent based on subjective appeal "It Sounds Best" which contrast with the emphasis in prior studies on native English accents like British and American linked with prestige and clarity (Wong, 2018; Kelch & Santana-Williamson, 2002). While studies highlight the influence of formal education on accent preference (Wong, 2018), only 20% of respondents in Table 2 cited "Learned it at School." Additionally, the 26% citing "Identification" reflects a cultural dimension absent in studies like Abu Guba et al. (2021). These findings suggest a shift toward localized preferences and challenges traditional views on native accent dominance.

The literature emphasizes comprehensibility and intelligibility over native-like pronunciation (Levis et al., 2016; Takidze, 2024). The survey results align with this, with 98% teachers considering clear and intelligible pronunciation highly important as compared to 42% who value native-like pronunciation. These findings highlight the growing importance on practicality and communicative competence in ESL pronunciation instruction.

Literature review of the prior studies highlights the increasing recognition of intelligibility as a practical goal (Levis, 2020; Wang & Wen, 2023). Table 4 response to question 7 reflects this shift, with 88% of the respondent ESL University teachers favoring pronunciation teaching aimed at intelligibility. This contrasts with the 70% of them supporting native-like pronunciation in response question six. It reveals that although native norms remain influential, practical intelligibility is prioritized in teaching contexts.

The literature (Cunningham, 2009; Jindapitak & Teo, 2013) advocates for exposure to diverse accents to prepare learners for global communication. Table 5 supports this, with 62% considering such exposure important. The data also suggests increasing acknowledgment of non-native varieties' relevance and growing challenges for native-speaker-centric approaches.

Studies (Jin, 2005; Wong, 2018) highlight mixed attitudes towards teaching non-native varieties. Table 6 also reflects the similar complexity, with equal support for and against prioritizing non-native varieties as 50% of the respondents favor native and 50% of them favor non-native varieties. This indicates a gradual, albeit contested, acceptance of non-native varieties in ESL education.

The literature (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014; Echiverri et al., 2021) illustrates the complementary strengths of NESTs and NNESTs. Table 7 reveals a preference for 58% teachers for bilingual teachers, aligning with research suggesting their ability to bridge language and cultural gaps effectively, especially in multilingual learning environments like the Pakistani one. Research (Christou et al., 2022; Zacharias, 2014) reveals challenges in adopting EIL principles. However, table 8 highlights a clear preference of 78% respondent ESL university teachers for English easily understood by everyone, reflecting a practical understanding of EIL that prioritizes mutual intelligibility over adherence to specific native norms.

The literature (Shin et al., 2011; Monfared et al., 2016) emphasizes the need for culturally responsive and diverse materials. Table 9 reflects this, with 58% of the respondents favoring





multimedia resources for different accents. This supports the growing emphasis on incorporating varied linguistic and cultural perspectives in ELT materials.

In summary, the results of this study both support and challenge the findings of previous research. While they confirm the growing prioritization of intelligibility and the continued favorability of native accents, they reveal persistent divisions regarding non-native varieties and exposure to diverse pronunciation models. These discrepancies highlight the need for further efforts to promote inclusive practices in English language teaching, aligning with the globalized and multicultural realities of English usage today.

## 7. Conclusion

ESL teachers prioritize comprehensibility over native-like pronunciation in teaching English as an International Language (EIL). Majority of the respondent's i-e 98% valued clear and intelligible pronunciation, while only 44% emphasized native-like pronunciation. Although native accents like British and American are preferred, regional and cultural familiarity also influences accent preferences, as seen in the favorability of 58% respondents for the Pakistani accent. The results suggest that ESL teachers view pronunciation as crucial in EIL instruction, aligning with the growing focus on mutual intelligibility rather than linguistic uniformity.

ESL teachers exhibit a preference for native English accents but show increasing openness to exposing learners to diverse English varieties, with 62% supporting such exposure. In relation to the use of multimedia resources 58 % respondents favor multimedia resources for pronunciation teaching, though traditional native-speaker materials still play a significant role. The divided preference for teaching non-native varieties (50% in favor, 50% opposed) reflects ongoing debates in EIL instruction. Again, 58% teachers showed prefer bilingual educators for pronunciation teaching, recognizing their ability to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps. Overall, teachers balance traditional norms with inclusive practices, though the full adoption of EIL principles remains in progress.

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