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## Correct pronunciation as work ethics in teacher education

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### Abstract

This study aims to determine the self-perceptions of the English teachers in Turkey from the aspect of correct pronunciation as work ethics in teacher education. The vast majority of non-natives fail to achieve native speaker competence and performance in pronunciation. Considering that majority of the English teachers in Turkey are non-native speakers of English and the role models of the non-native learners of English, a necessity to analyze the pronunciation from the aspect of work ethics occurred. For this purpose, a questionnaire with 25 items including the aspects of professional requirements, relations with colleagues, international clubs and foundations and the point of students was developed. The collected data were analyzed using independent samples t-test and ANOVA. The participants were 30 Turkish teachers of English, 21 of whom were familiar with the code of ethics. The findings demonstrated that those who were familiar with the code of ethics and had higher education degree outperformed the other participants although the difference between these groups was found out not to be statistically significant. The most and least scored areas were the professional requirements and international clubs and organizations respectively. It is suggested that an institution be established in Turkey to standardize the code of ethics, familiarize the teachers with its components and guide them during the teaching process.

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## 1. Introduction

Teaching pronunciation has been a challenge especially for the non-native speakers of English due to being the primary aspect in which fossilization occurs. Han (2004) argues that the vast majority of the second language learners fail to achieve native speaker competence in pronunciation. Therefore, correct pronunciation requires greater interest and needs to be researched more considering the fact that most of the English teachers in Turkey are non-native speakers of English and they are the role models of the non-native learners of English. The fact that pronunciation is a problematic area for the non-native English teachers requires the pronunciation of English teachers to be analyzed in the aspect of work ethics.

### 1.1. Theoretical background

#### 1.1.1. Work ethics

The term ‘work ethics’ is defined as “a belief in the moral value and importance of work” in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009). Although work ethics have commenced being a trendy topic recently, there are still a few ambiguities regarding it. Hill and Zinsmeister (2012) argue that ethical teaching means engaging behaviors and responsibilities in ways expected by students, affiliated institution and discipline with the purpose of constructing courses and environments which foster learning, evaluating learning fairly, and treating students respectfully. However, what makes it a problem is that unless there is not a definite description of what is ethical or not, it can be problem causing for teachers to shape their teaching based on an ambiguous term. Another problem can stem from the fact that even though there are available descriptions regarding ethical teaching, if English teachers are not familiar with the content of it; it is inevitable that unethical teaching will occur.

Considering the needs of standardization to prevent the previously mentioned ethical concerns, countries or associations decide on and determine these rules to be obeyed by each and every educator in the field. To exemplify, the concerns which guided the New Zealand Teachers Council to determine the content of the code of ethics are as follows:

- “How to ensure teachers have "ownership" of any code and the degree of consultation that should be undertaken in the development of this Code.”
- “What is the balance between the aspirational and prescriptive/regulatory nature of the Code?”
- “What are the resources available for the ongoing development and management of the Code?”
- “How/who is to regulate/enforce the Code?”
- “How would a general Code translate into a working document for individual teachers, schools or centers?”
- “What is the status of the Treaty of Waitangi in relation to the Code?”
- “How to ensure ethical institutions/schools and centers as well as ethical teachers?”

(The New Zealand Teachers Council, n.d.)

In order to eliminate the ethical concerns, there are many variations of the code of ethics published or available for educators. For instance, AAE Advisory Board and the Executive Committee of AAE (n.d.) suggests a code of ethics comprising four categories: Ethical conduct towards students, ethical conduct towards practices and performance, ethical conduct towards professional colleagues and ethical conduct towards professionals and colleagues. The overall purpose underlying the code of ethics is to provide ethical and fair education which is closer to perfect and to standardize the rules that apply for the teaching profession. A statement which best summarizes the main goal of developing the code of ethics for the ideal teachers is as follows: “The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of the democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunities for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.” (National Education Association, 1975). Although there are slight differences among the code of ethics determined by the countries and associations, there are some basic ideas applicable for all of them. These rules include treating the students fairly, not causing any discriminations or any advantages for the

students, being aware of the fact that it is the teachers' responsibility to dedicate themselves to life-long learning and continuing professional development, not causing any offensive situations for the colleagues and accepting to be a representative of a teaching profession and feeling this as a responsibility. Therefore, it is essential for English teachers to devote themselves to teaching profession and continuing development and to be a good role model for the students and that is essential in terms of pronunciation as well.

### *1.1.2. The significance of pronunciation teaching and learning*

Even though it is not regarded as the most crucial aspect of the foreign language learning frequently ignored, pronunciation is vital to get your message across while communicating with others and despite having a great knowledge of vocabulary or being competent at grammatical rules, failure in pronunciation can bring about communication breakdown.

Pronunciation, which is a significant component of language learning and teaching, determines the speaker's identity, community and intelligibility. Individuals' pronunciation abilities are responsible for getting their message across, the way they are judged by other people and these abilities are the indicators of their membership of a particular community. Despite playing such a vital role in communication, pronunciation is troublesome for the non-native learners of English and those who teach non-natives for a number of reasons. For instance, Burns and Sheidlhofer (2002) maintain that the components of pronunciation are subconsciously internalized by the native speakers of a language and they are not accessible to conscious analysis and intervention. Hence, it is troublesome for the language learners to internalize the ambiguous rules of the target language.

Another problem causing area for pronunciation is that although it seems to be enough to comprehend the language teachers for the language learners considering that they learn English as a foreign language, they may encounter the challenge of conveying their messages with their faulty pronunciation in a real context (Tlazalo Tejada and Basurto Santos, 2014).

Given that the language teachers can apply the pronunciation rules of English impeccably, there is another troublesome and ambiguous area awaiting to be defined. It is not clear whether English teachers should correct the students' faulty pronunciation and whether it is an efficient factor to facilitate the correct pronunciation among the students. Dłaska and Krekeler's (2013) research which was carried out with 169 adult learners of German revealed that those who received individual corrective feedback for pronunciation performed better than those who were exposed to listening only interventions.

After deciding on whether to correct the faulty pronunciation of the learners or not, it is essential to focus on 'the extent to which the students' faulty pronunciation should be corrected' and 'how the importance of a pronunciation problem should be determined'. Scheuer (2015) mentions three criteria on which our judgments of whether to correct the students' errors or not are based on, which are foreign accent criterion, intelligibility criterion and aesthetic/ attitudinal considerations. Nevertheless, these criteria also come with their own problems. In her study, she mentions that determining the foreign accent is a challenging issue as no pre-determined target norms are available and the judgments are based upon the listeners' personal and subjective norms. In addition, given that English is accepted as a lingua franca, some people oppose the idea of correcting pronunciation as long as the speech is intelligible. The problem regarding the second criterion is that the intelligibility is attributed to the listener's proficiency level, their familiarity with a particular accent, and even their willingness to understand the speaker. The latest criterion is also highly subjective, considering that some variations from the target norms can be 'cute' or 'charming' for some, whereas they are 'irritating' for others. They all take us to the conclusion that they should be defined well and deeply researched to provide standardization and bridging the gap between the learners' current pronunciation and the ideal pronunciation.

There are also some opposing views about the fact that foreign accent should be avoided in the ESL and EFL classrooms. Murphy (2014) claims that the use of non-native speech can be used for pronunciation teaching as long as the speech is intelligible and comprehensible, adding that this kind of speech models are what the learners are expected to aspire and they lead the teachers to set realistic goals and develop appreciation.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. The statement of the problem

Among all the aspects of foreign language learning and teaching, pronunciation is the most troublesome for students and teachers alike. The main underlying reason is the fact that pronunciation is the leading aspect in which fossilization is observed. Han (2004) argues and most researchers agree with the idea that it is very difficult to improve native accent and pronunciation after a certain age. Considering that English is mainly learned and taught as a foreign language in Turkey, it can be stated that being exposed to a native speaker teacher's speech to take this teacher as a role model is not a very common issue. Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to be a good role model for the language learners. Although there are certain criteria for the language learners' levels in terms of their abilities in reading, writing, listening and speaking in the Common European Framework (The Council of Europe, 2001), and the language teachers can be expected to have C2 level in the Common European Framework, the extent to which they meet the requirements of this framework from the aspect of pronunciation is not obvious due to the problematic nature of pronunciation for non-native language learners.

Apart from the extent to which the teachers in Turkey meet the requirements of the Common European Framework, another concern is that a code of ethics agreed upon is not available, there is not a clear-cut definition of the extent to which pronunciation teaching should be taught and what would be ethical to do in terms of pronunciation teaching or not.

### 2.2. Research questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Do participants' responses differ depending on whether they know the Code of Ethics and Common European Framework?
2. Do the percentage of the participants' scores for professional requirements, relations with colleagues, international clubs and foundations and point of students differ depending on their educational degree?
3. How does the distribution of the participants' overall score percentages vary depending on the four of the subcategories of the questionnaire?

### 2.3. The participants

The participants were chosen depending on purposeful voluntary basis and consist of 30 English teachers. 25 of them had been abroad, 21 of them were familiar with the code of ethics and 28 of them were familiar with the Common European Framework. They were all native speakers of Turkish and had learned English as their foreign language. There were 22 females and 8 males in the sample. 5 of them had bachelor's degree whereas 10 of them had MA degree or ongoing MA studies and 15 of them have PhD degree or ongoing PhD education. The age of the participants ranged from 23 to 54 with a mean of 29.36.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Gender	Age		Degree		Code of Ethics		Common European Framework		
Male	8	Lowest	23	Bachelor's	5	Yes	21	Yes	28
Female	22	Highest	54	MA/ ongoing MA	10	No	9	No	2
		Mean	29.36	PhD/ ongoing PhD	15				

## 2.4. The data collection instrument

The data collection instrument is a questionnaire developed by the researchers and consists of 5 parts and 25 items. After the preparation of the questionnaire, it was viewed by three experts to provide inter-rater reliability. For the initial part, the teachers were asked to fill in their ages, department, whether they had been abroad or not and whether they were familiar with The Code of Ethics and The Common European Framework. As for the latter parts requiring their opinions with Likert scale type items, they were provided with the items regarding professional requirements for teaching pronunciation, professional relations with colleagues about pronunciation, international clubs and organizations and correct pronunciation from the point of students.

## 2.5. Procedures and data analysis

Each response of the participants to each item in the questionnaire was coded and computed. The collected data was analyzed and evaluated by the SPSS 22 by calculating percentages, mean scores and applying descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and one way ANOVA to clearly demonstrate the findings. The findings were also supported and visualized via tables.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1. Research Question 1-Do participants' responses differ depending on whether they know the Code of Ethics and Common European Framework?

Table 2. Independent samples t-test results to illustrate the mean percentages for the four subcategories of the survey depending on the knowledge of the code of ethics.

	Code of ethics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.
Professional requirements	No	9	72.5278	13.64474	4.54825	-2.616	28	.022
	Yes	21	83.0119	8.19431	1.78815	-2.145	10.563	
Relations with colleagues	No	9	65.6250	13.14266	4.38089	-1.949	28	.141
	Yes	21	73.5119	8.67822	1.89374	-1.653	11.114	
International clubs and foundations	No	9	53.6204	8.41737	2.80579	-1.847	28	.115
	Yes	21	62.8671	13.87928	3.02871	-2.240	24.305	
From the point of students	No	9	55.1111	14.70072	4.90024	-2.572	28	.866
	Yes	21	68.3333	12.11335	2.64335	-2.375	12.896	

An independent samples t-test was carried out to figure out whether having a background knowledge of code of ethics has an impact on the responses of the participants in any of the aspects of the questionnaire. There were 9 participants who were not familiar with the code of ethics whereas 21 of them have background knowledge about it. The findings revealed that those who are not familiar with the code of ethics tend to score lower in all the aspects (Professional requirements  $M = 72.5278\%$ ,  $SD = 13.64474$ , Relations with colleagues  $M = 65.6250\%$ ,  $SD = 13.14266$ , International clubs and foundations  $M = 53.6204\%$ ,  $SD = 8.41737$ , From the point of students  $M = 55.1111\%$ ,  $SD = 14.70072$ ) than those who have background knowledge about the code of ethics (Professional requirements  $M = 83.0119\%$ ,  $SD = 8.19431$ , Relations with colleagues  $M = 73.5119\%$ ,  $SD = 8.67822$ , International clubs and foundations  $M = 62.8671\%$ ,  $SD = 13.87928$ , From the point of students  $M = 68.3333\%$ ,  $SD = 12.11335$ ). On the other hand, being lower than 0.05 ( $p = .022$ ), only the difference in professional requirements part was found out to be statistically significant.

Table 3. Independent samples t-test results to illustrate the mean percentages for the four subcategories of the survey depending on the knowledge of Common European Framework.

	Common European framework	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.
Professional requirements	No	2	75.5000	18.03122	12.75000	-.573	28	.571
	Yes	28	80.1786	10.81641	2.04411	-.362	1.052	.776
Relations with colleagues	No	2	61.7188	9.94369	7.03125	-1.314	28	.200
	Yes	28	71.8192	10.52446	1.98894	-1.382	1.166	.374
International clubs and foundations	No	2	57.9792	27.01737	19.10417	-.233	28	.818
	Yes	28	60.2440	12.49985	2.36225	-.118	1.031	.925
From the point of students	No	2	56.0000	11.31371	8.00000	-.865	28	.394
	Yes	28	64.9643	14.25556	2.69405	-1.062	1.239	.452

The findings of the independent samples t-test demonstrated that those who have background knowledge about the Common European Framework outperformed (Professional requirements  $M = 80.17862\%$ ,  $SD = 10.81641$ , Relations with colleagues  $M = 71.8192\%$ ,  $SD = 10.52446$ , International clubs and foundations  $M = 60.2440\%$ ,  $SD = 12.49985$ , From the point of students  $M = 64.9643\%$ ,  $SD = 14.25556$ ) those who are not familiar with the Common European Framework (Professional requirements  $M = 75.5000\%$ ,  $SD = 18.03122$ , Relations with colleagues  $M = 61.7188\%$ ,  $SD = 9.94369$ , International clubs and foundations  $M = 57.9792\%$ ,  $SD = 27.01737$ , From the point of students  $M = 56.0000\%$ ,  $SD = 11.31371$ ). However, significance values indicate that the differences in none of the categories are statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) and bearing the number of participants in each category in mind, (Gr1  $n = 2$ , Gr 2  $n = 28$ ), it can be deduced that the number of participants does not have a normal distribution and it would not be reliable to generalize the findings considering that one of the groups consists of only 2 participants.

### 3.2. Research question 2- Do the percentage of the participants' scores for professional requirements, relations with colleagues, international clubs and foundations and point of students differ depending on their educational degree?

Table 4. One-way ANOVA descriptive statistics results to illustrate the mean percentages for the four subcategories of the survey depending on the educational degree.

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional requirements	Bachelor's Degree	5	73.7000	12.71736
	MA	10	77.7750	13.74240
	PhD	15	83.3167	7.39599
	Total	30	79.8667	11.02480
Relations with colleagues	Bachelor's Degree	5	66.5625	15.53097
	MA	10	69.3750	12.19684
	PhD	15	73.8542	7.22010
	Total	30	71.1458	10.63493
International clubs and foundations	Bachelor's Degree	5	54.3083	19.00506
	MA	10	58.4667	12.27130
	PhD	15	63.1056	11.42753
	Total	30	60.0931	13.07560
From the point of	Bachelor's Degree	5	57.4000	13.74045

students	MA	10	61.6000	13.84999
	PhD	15	68.5333	13.89690
	Total	30	64.3667	14.09936

The results of the One-way ANOVA test indicate that there are slight differences between the participants’ scores who have bachelor’s degree, MA or ongoing MA degree and PhD or ongoing PhD degree for each of the subcategories of the questionnaire. For the professional requirements category, the mean of their score percentages are  $M = 73.7000 \%$ ,  $M = 77.7750 \%$  and  $M = 83.3167 \%$  respectively. As for the relations with colleagues, the mean scores respectively vary from  $M = 66.5625 \%$ ,  $M = 69.3750 \%$  to  $M = 73.8542 \%$  whereas they are  $M = 54.3083 \%$ ,  $M = 58.4667 \%$  and  $M = 63.1056 \%$  for the international clubs and foundations category. The scores for the final category which indicates the correct pronunciation from the point of students, the mean scores range from  $M = 57.4000 \%$ ,  $M = 61.6000 \%$  to  $M = 68.5333 \%$ . As the findings show, the more educated the English teachers are, the better scores they get from each category of the questionnaire.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA results to illustrate the significance levels of the scores for the four subcategories of the survey depending on the educational degree.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Professional requirements	Between Groups	412.427	2	206.214	1.789	.186
	Within Groups	3112.415	27	115.275		
	Total	3524.842	29			
Relations with colleagues	Between Groups	246.419	2	123.210	1.097	.348
	Within Groups	3033.529	27	112.353		
	Total	3279.948	29			
International clubs and foundations	Between Groups	329.894	2	164.947	.962	.395
	Within Groups	4628.272	27	171.417		
	Total	4958.166	29			
From the point of students	Between Groups	579.633	2	289.817	1.509	.239
	Within Groups	5185.333	27	192.049		
	Total	5764.967	29			

Despite the fact that the descriptives for One-way ANOVA test revealed differences among the scores of those who have Bachelor’s degree, MA degree and PhD degree, the ANOVA table demonstrates these differences not to be statistically meaningful. ( $p > 0.05$ )

### 3.3. Research question 3- How does the distribution of the participants’ overall score percentages vary depending on the four of the subcategories of the questionnaire?

Table 6. The distribution of the overall score percentages for the subcategories.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional requirements	30	50.75	91.00	79.8667	11.02480
Relations with colleagues	30	46.88	81.25	71.1458	10.63493
International clubs and foundations	30	38.88	86.13	60.0931	13.07560
From the point of students	30	33.00	84.00	64.3667	14.09936
Valid N (listwise)	30				



The descriptive statistic results demonstrate that of the four categories, the participants got the highest scores from the professional requirements part with a mean of 79.8667 % ( $SD = 11.02480$ ) whereas relations with colleagues follow it with a mean score of 71.1458 % ( $SD = 10.63493$ ). The categories in which the participants got the lowest mean score percentages are international clubs and foundations ( $M = 60.0931$  %,  $SD = 13.07560$ ) and from the point of students ( $M = 64.3667$  %,  $SD = 14.09936$ ).

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of the research revealed that the more educated and the more knowledgeable about the Common European Framework and Code of Ethics the participants are, the more they tend to care about the ethical aspects of pronunciation teaching and their self-perceptions about their performances regarding their knowledge and practices about pronunciation teaching and their responses tend to be more positive.

It must be born in mind that pronunciation is the most difficult aspect of a foreign language to be learned and it is the one which is the most susceptible to be fossilized. Therefore, it is vital that language teacher educators emphasize the significance of pronunciation teaching and be good role models for their students. Making the English Language Teaching students aware of the fact that it is very significant for them to be role models for their students and it is an ethical part of their responsibility to meet the professional requirements of their jobs can facilitate better pronunciation among the language teachers and as a result the language learners.

In order to meet the requirements of the code of ethics in their profession, the language teachers are expected to be aware of their responsibilities such as having up-to-date knowledge, being aware of the latest trends in teaching and applying them, working collaboratively with their colleagues, being role models for their students and sharing correct information with the learners.

Most important of all is the fact that there is neither a certain code of ethics to shape language teaching in Turkey nor an institution working in this issue (except for Head Quarter of Education and Morality, which decides on the convenience of the materials to be used). Therefore, it is vital that an institution be established for this purpose and a code of ethics be created.

#### 5. Limitations

One of the limitations of the study is that the fact that the language teachers' self-perceptions are likely not to reflect the reality about what they can or do. Therefore, the findings of this study are limited to the self-perceptions of the language teachers. The language teachers' actual competence and performance can be a further area of research.

#### 6. Suggestions

Because this study only reflects the perceptions of the participants, it can also reflect the actual competence and performance of the language teachers can lead the researchers to more reliable and noteworthy findings. Therefore, it is essential to carry out the research by using audio-recording and observations.

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