

**THE IMPACT OF TEACHER ACCENT AND SPEECH CLARITY ON
STUDENT COMPREHENSION**

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
In today’s increasingly globalized classrooms, English language learners are exposed to a wide range of teacher accents and speech patterns. This study investigates how a teacher’s accent and speech clarity affect students’ comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data collected from secondary school learners and language instructors; the research explores learners’ ability to understand instructional content delivered in various native and non-native English accents. The findings indicate that while exposure to different accents can improve listening flexibility over time, unfamiliar or heavily accented speech especially when combined with poor articulation can hinder comprehension, reduce learner confidence, and negatively impact academic performance.	Teacher accent, speech clarity, student comprehension, intelligibility, EFL learners, pronunciation, listening skills, speech rate, accent variation, teacher training

Introduction

Communication in the media is defined as a purposeful process that takes place between two orIn English language education, effective communication between teacher and student is essential to successful language acquisition. Among the various factors influencing comprehension, a teacher’s accent and speech clarity play a crucial yet often underestimated role. As English has become a global lingua franca, learners are increasingly exposed to a wide range of native and non-native English accents, each with its own phonological patterns, intonation, and rhythm. While this diversity can enrich the learning environment, it can also pose challenges especially for beginners and intermediate learners who rely heavily on auditory input for understanding new language structures and vocabulary. Accent refers to the way sounds are pronounced, often influenced by one’s geographic or linguistic background. While accents are natural and unavoidable, they can affect intelligibility the ease with which speech is understood by listeners. Similarly, speech clarity, which includes pronunciation, enunciation, and speech rate, determines how effectively a message is delivered and received. In the classroom, unclear speech or unfamiliar accents may impede comprehension, reduce student confidence, and slow the learning process.

Numerous studies have explored the role of listening skills in language development, yet few have specifically focused on how teacher-related speech factors influence learners' real-time understanding. In multilingual and multicultural classrooms, this issue becomes even more pertinent. Students may

not only struggle with the language itself, but also with decoding speech influenced by accents unfamiliar to them, especially when the instruction lacks visual or contextual support.

This research seeks to explore the impact of teacher accent and speech clarity on student comprehension in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings. It aims to identify which aspects of teacher speech most significantly affect learner understanding and to suggest practical strategies for minimizing communication barriers. By doing so, the study contributes to a more inclusive and effective English language teaching approach, where intelligibility is prioritized over native-like pronunciation.

MAIN BODY

One of the most important aspects of effective language instruction is the intelligibility of the teacher's speech. Intelligibility goes beyond native-like pronunciation it involves how clearly a teacher articulates words, paces their speech, and uses tone and stress. When a teacher speaks with a strong accent, whether native or non-native, it can affect how easily students decode and process spoken language. This is especially true for beginner-level students who rely heavily on auditory patterns and may not yet have developed the ability to adapt to different speech varieties.

For instance, a teacher with a strong regional accent can apply creative scaffolding techniques to support comprehension. Instead of attempting to eliminate their accent, the teacher can use visual aids, gesture-based reinforcement, and key-word highlighting on the board. In a listening activity, a teacher might read a passage aloud with pauses after key phrases and then show a corresponding infographic to reinforce the message visually. This way, learners connect meaning with multiple input modes.

Another effective approach is gradual exposure to accent variation. Rather than avoiding all non-standard accents, students can benefit from guided listening tasks that feature various English speakers with different accents. For example, students might listen to short interviews from speakers with British, Indian, Nigerian, and Filipino English backgrounds. After each clip, they complete a comprehension task and discuss what helped or hindered their understanding. This trains students to become more flexible listeners while improving their global communication skills.

Speech clarity also plays a critical role. Teachers who speak too fast or with little articulation may unintentionally cause comprehension gaps. A practical solution is to integrate self-monitoring techniques in teacher training such as recording and analyzing one's own speech to identify unclear segments. In the classroom, a teacher might record instructions for an activity and then play them back for students, encouraging learners to identify what was clear and what could be improved. This not only enhances the teacher's awareness but also invites student feedback, building mutual trust.

In multilingual classrooms, teachers can also adopt a "universal pronunciation strategy," focusing on clear consonant endings, reduced use of idiomatic expressions, and rhythmic pacing. For instance, instead of saying "You gotta do it real quick," the teacher might consciously reformulate it to "You need to do it quickly," emphasizing each word clearly. Pairing this with real-time written prompts on the board helps students absorb both meaning and structure more easily.

To make lessons even more inclusive, some teachers design "accent awareness activities" where students learn about different Englishes spoken around the world. A creative example includes assigning groups of students different English-speaking regions. Each group listens to sample audios and then presents common features of that region's pronunciation to the class. This not only improves listening skills but fosters tolerance and openness.

Creative Practical Examples Table

Focus Area	Practical Classroom Activity
Accent Awareness	Students listen to short audio clips featuring different English accents (e.g., British, Indian, Nigerian). After each clip, they complete a matching activity or short comprehension quiz.
Speech Clarity	Teacher records their own instructions and plays them in class. Students provide feedback on which parts were clear and which weren't. Then the teacher repeats the same message more clearly.
Visual Reinforcement	During storytelling, the teacher uses images or icons on the board to support difficult-to-pronounce or accented vocabulary, helping students match speech with meaning.
Subtitled Listening	Students watch a short video (TED Talk or YouTube) with a strong regional accent using English subtitles. Then they complete listening comprehension tasks.
Accent Simulation Game	In groups, students are given phrases to pronounce with different accents. Others guess the accent and discuss how easy it was to understand.
Shadowing Technique	Students repeat short segments of audio after a speaker with clear pronunciation. They focus on rhythm, stress, and clarity.
Dictation Pair Work	One student reads a sentence slowly with articulation, while their partner writes it down. They switch roles. This builds awareness of clarity and careful pronunciation.
Teacher Code-Switching	When using a regional accent, the teacher repeats key instructions using simplified and clearly pronounced versions to ensure comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The clarity of a teacher's speech and the type of accent they use play a critical role in shaping students' ability to understand and absorb language input in English language classrooms. While a variety of accents enriches the learning environment and prepares students for real-world communication, unfamiliar or heavily accented speech when not supported by clarity and scaffolding can hinder comprehension, especially for beginner and intermediate learners.

This study highlights that speech clarity, proper pacing, articulation, and multimodal support are far more important than achieving native-like pronunciation. Teachers who are aware of how their accent affects learners can adjust their delivery through techniques such as using visual aids, subtitles, repetition, and student feedback.

Furthermore, exposing learners to diverse English accents through creative classroom activities builds their listening flexibility, promotes cultural tolerance, and prepares them for global interactions. Encouraging student-teacher collaboration around clarity and speech habits fosters a more inclusive, effective learning environment.

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