

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teacher-Mediated Pronunciation Instruction in Multilingual Ghanaian Classrooms: An Intelligibility-Oriented Framework for Practice

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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation teaching in Ghanaian secondary schools takes place in multilingual classrooms where English is used alongside numerous Ghanaian languages. Teachers must also work with large classes, limited specialist preparation, uneven access to audio resources and an assessment culture that gives written performance greater visibility. This theory- and concept-based practice article presents the Ghana Teacher-Mediated Pronunciation Instruction (G-TMPI) framework. Grounded in intelligibility-oriented pronunciation research, multilingual pedagogy, and evidence on explicit instruction, the framework treats Ghanaian English as a legitimate variety while prioritizing speech features that cause recurrent communication difficulty. Its seven-component cycle combines diagnosis, concise explanation and modeling, multilingual comparison, linked perception and production, communicative transfer, selective feedback, and learner self-monitoring. The article translates these principles into a flexible 12-week sequence and a worked classroom lesson that can be implemented with a shared speaker, paper materials, and one recording device. It also distinguishes low-stakes classroom evidence from the larger-scale research needed to establish effectiveness. G-TMPI positions teachers as diagnosticians, models, feedback designers, and sociolinguistic guides rather than enforcers of an imported accent norm.

Keywords: Ghanaian English; Intelligibility; Multilingual Classrooms; Pronunciation Pedagogy; Teacher Mediation

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is central to spoken interaction because listeners must recover words, emphasis, and discourse relationships from an unfolding speech signal. In second-language teaching, however, effective pronunciation is no longer equated with eliminating every trace of a learner's linguistic history. More defensible goals are intelligibility—the extent to which an utterance is understood—and comprehensibility, the listener's perception of how easy or difficult the speech is to understand^[1–4].

These goals are particularly appropriate in Ghana, where English coexists with many indigenous languages and Ghanaian English has identifiable, socially meaningful features^[5,6].

English has substantial educational and institutional value in Ghana, but learners do not receive equal opportunities to develop confident spoken English. Ghanaian teachers have reported large classes, limited materials, insufficient specialist preparation, and pressure to prioritize written examinations^[7,8]. These conditions do not

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show that Ghanaian English is deficient. They show that teachers need a practical way to identify and teach speech features that affect communication across local, regional, and international settings.

Recent pronunciation scholarship has moved beyond asking whether instruction can help and toward examining which instructional features work, for whom, and under what conditions^[9,10]. Evidence supports explicit attention to form, linked perception and production, meaningful practice, feedback, and self-regulated learning^[11–13]. Yet these principles must be adapted to the linguistic identities, resources, and constraints of particular classrooms.

This article therefore asks three practice-oriented questions: What principles should organize teacher-mediated pronunciation instruction in multilingual Ghanaian classrooms? How can those principles be translated into a feasible sequence of lessons? What evidence can teachers and researchers collect without treating a metropolitan native accent as the standard of success? The article presents the Ghana Teacher-Mediated Pronunciation Instruction (G-TMPI) framework. It is a conceptual practice feature, not a report of intervention outcomes. Its intended contribution is a usable bridge between pronunciation research and the everyday decisions of teachers working in multilingual and comparatively low-resource Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) settings.

CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

From Accent Reduction to Communicative Intelligibility

Every pronunciation curriculum implies a judgment about which speech matters. The traditional nativeness principle positions a prestige native-speaker accent as the endpoint; the intelligibility principle prioritizes speech that listeners can understand with reasonable effort^[2,14]. In a postcolonial multilingual context, the latter is both pedagogically realistic and sociolinguistically responsible. Ghanaian English should not be erased. At the same time, recognition of a legitimate local variety does not remove the value of instruction when a speech pattern repeatedly causes word-recognition errors or prevents successful repair.

Accentedness, comprehensibility, and intelligibility must therefore be kept distinct. Speech can sound strongly accented and remain fully intelligible; conversely, a mild accent can contain lexical or prosodic cues that mislead a listener^[3,4]. G-TMPI does not use accentedness as its primary criterion. It prioritizes listener understanding, ease of processing, and the learner's ability to notice and repair misunderstanding. Because comprehensibility is

influenced by the speaker, listener, task, and interactional context, teachers should avoid treating any single rating as an objective property of the learner^[15].

Why Explicit Teacher Mediation Matters

Pronunciation does not reliably improve through exposure alone. Research syntheses indicate that instruction can produce meaningful gains, especially when learners receive explicit information, focused practice, and feedback over time^[11,16,17]. More recent work emphasizes the need to optimize instruction rather than assume that one method suits every learner (Nagle & Hiver, 2024). Explicit explanation makes fleeting phonetic and prosodic detail available for attention, but explanation must be linked to perception, production, communicative use, and self-monitoring^[18,19].

Teacher mediation names the work connecting those stages. Teachers diagnose patterns that matter for a particular class, select appropriate models, demonstrate articulatory and acoustic contrasts, design repeated practice, monitor participation, and decide when variation is acceptable and when it risks misunderstanding. Feedback is most useful when it is selective, interpretable, and connected to another opportunity to speak^[20,21]. Teacher mediation is therefore guided participation that gradually transfers control to learners, not continuous correction or teacher domination.

Ghanaian Multilingualism as a Resource

Learners enter the English classroom with phonological knowledge from their Ghanaian languages. These languages provide categories, rhythms, syllable structures, and listening strategies that may support or complicate English perception and production. A contrastive approach can make these resources visible without assuming that every member of a class shares one first language. Teachers can invite learners to compare how a target is realized across familiar languages, test generalizations against classmates' speech, and identify individual rather than ethnic patterns. The first-language background suggests a hypothesis; it does not diagnose an individual.

Sound-spelling relations require similar care. Spelling-pronunciation relations are well documented in Ghanaian English (Ngula, 2011), and learners may reasonably infer pronunciation from the stable visual form of a word. Instruction can connect graphemes, phonemic representations, audio models, and lexical meaning while demonstrating that English orthography is an imperfect guide. Dictation can be used diagnostically, but it should not be presented as a direct measure of oral fluency.

How the Framework Was Developed

G-TMPI is an integrative, evidence-informed framework

Table 1: Components of the Ghana Teacher-Mediated Pronunciation Instruction (G-TMPI) Framework

Component	Teacher mediation	Learner activity	Intended outcome
Diagnose and prioritize	Elicit brief reading, spontaneous speech, and listening samples; identify high-impact patterns.	Record a baseline sample and identify difficult words or stretches.	A class-specific priority map.
Explain and model	Provide concise articulatory, auditory, and prosodic explanations; use varied intelligible models.	Observe, listen, imitate selectively, and ask questions.	Noticing and an accurate target representation.
Compare multilingual resources	Guide non-stereotyped comparisons among English and learners' languages; connect sound and spelling.	Test contrasts across familiar languages and examples.	Metalinguistic awareness without identity shaming.
Cycle perception and production	Alternate identification or discrimination with controlled production in useful words and phrases.	Listen, choose, produce, record, and revise.	Stronger perception-production links.
Build communicative transfer	Use information gaps, interviews, explanations, role plays, and repair tasks.	Communicate for an outcome while monitoring one or two targets.	Transfer beyond drills.
Design selective feedback	Use immediate cues in controlled work and delayed feedback in meaning-focused work.	Interpret feedback, attempt repair, and give criterion-based peer responses.	Revision without unnecessary disruption of fluency.
Develop agency and evidence	Model self-assessment and mediate low-cost recording or speech tools.	Maintain an audio portfolio, set goals, and compare current with earlier performance.	Self-regulation and sustainable practice.

Note: The framework synthesizes the literature reviewed in this article; it does not report empirical findings.

rather than the product of a systematic review. Its components were selected by synthesizing four bodies of work: intelligibility-oriented pronunciation research; classroom studies of explicit instruction and feedback; scholarship on learner agency and self-regulation; and studies of Ghanaian English and oral-English teaching. Barrun and Sia's^[22] teacher-mediated intervention provided an initial classroom model, while the wider literature supplied stronger criteria for communicative outcomes, delayed transfer, multilingual legitimacy, and measurement.

Four design criteria guided the adaptation: communicative relevance, respect for local linguistic identities, feasibility without a language laboratory, and observable learner progress. The resulting framework does not prescribe one national list of errors. It offers a decision cycle through which teachers can identify local priorities and move learners from noticing to increasingly independent communication.

The Ghana Teacher-Mediated Pronunciation Instruction Framework

G-TMPI is organized as a recurring instructional cycle rather than a list of isolated sounds. Table 1 summarizes the seven components. Teachers may revisit any component when learner evidence indicates that a target has not transferred to meaningful speech.

Diagnose Communication Priorities

A brief diagnostic phase prevents the curriculum from becoming a march through the phonemic chart. Each learner can produce a short reading passage and a one-minute response to a familiar prompt. The teacher can also use a brief word-identification or contrastive listening task. Analysis should focus on features associated with wrong word recognition, requests for repetition, or

substantial listener effort. Patterns reported in Ghana—including selected vowel contrasts, consonant clusters, dental fricatives, and stress placement—may be investigated, but they should not be presumed for every learner.

Explain, Model, and Compare

Explanations should be brief, accurate, and usable. A segmental target may be supported with a mouth diagram, a gesture, and a description of voicing, place, and manner, followed by familiar lexical examples. Word stress or prominence can be marked visually and demonstrated in a short dialogue. Models should include intelligible Ghanaian speakers and speakers of other English varieties so that learners notice stable communicative cues without inferring that only one national accent is valid.

Multilingual comparison should remain exploratory. A teacher might ask which class languages permit a consonant at the end of a word, how a borrowed word changes, or whether a similar sound occurs in familiar languages. Learners then test the observation through listening and production. This method develops metalinguistic awareness without turning a language background into a stereotype.

Link Perception, Production, and Lexical Knowledge

Learners may struggle to produce a contrast they do not hear, or hear it in isolation but miss it in connected speech. G-TMPI therefore alternates perception and production. A cycle may move from discrimination, to identification in words, to controlled production, to short meaningful exchanges, and then back to listening. High-frequency curriculum words are preferable because phonological learning then supports access to language that learners use in other lessons.

Table 2: Illustrative 12-Week G-TMPI Sequence

Week(s)	Focus	Core activity
1	Orientation and baseline	Explain intelligibility goals; collect reading, spontaneous-speech, and listening samples; introduce self-assessment.
2-3	High-impact segmentals	Teach two diagnosed contrasts through concise explanation, perception-production cycles, and lexical practice.
4	Clusters and word endings	Use syllable building, slow-to-natural production, diagnostic dictation, and information gaps.
5-6	Word stress and prominence	Mark stress in curriculum vocabulary; practice contrastive prominence in short dialogues.
7	Connected speech and chunking	Use thought groups, pausing, and linking to support listener processing without prescribing one rhythm.
8	Midpoint review	Collect comparable recordings; revise individual goals and class priorities.
9-10	Communicative transfer	Apply targets in stories, explanations, interviews, role plays, and repair tasks.
11	Learner-led practice	Pairs design a brief listening-production activity and justify its communicative value.
12	Post-assessment and reflection	Collect parallel tasks, review portfolios, plan independent practice, and schedule a delayed sample.

Note: The sequence is illustrative and should be adjusted after the initial diagnostic tasks.

Move from Control to Communication

Games, chants, and tongue twisters are retained only when they provide meaningful repetition of a defined target. A fuller progression begins with a restricted contrast, expands to phrases and sentences, and culminates in an information gap, explanation, interview, or role play where the target helps carry meaning. Learners also need repair expressions, including rephrasing, slowing a key word, checking what a listener heard, and adding prominence. Communicative competence includes managing misunderstanding, not merely avoiding it.

Use Selective Feedback and Audio Portfolios

Continuous correction can reduce fluency and increase anxiety. During controlled practice, teachers can use immediate recasts, gestures, articulatory prompts, or requests for another attempt. During meaning-focused work, they can note one or two high-impact patterns and provide delayed feedback followed by a second attempt. Peers should respond to whether they understood the message and which word required effort; they should not judge whether a classmate sounds native.

A low-cost audio portfolio provides longitudinal evidence. Learners can record comparable baseline, midpoint, and final tasks on a school device or available phone, subject to consent and data-protection procedures. Comparing learners with their own earlier performance is more defensible than ranking accents. Automated speech-recognition or pronunciation applications should be framed as fallible prompts rather than objective judges because systems may not be calibrated for Ghanaian English^[23].

A Feasible 12-Week Sequence

The framework can be implemented in two 30- to 40-minute periods per week, embedded in English lessons rather than confined to a language laboratory. A shared speaker, one recording device, paper cards, mirrors, and teacher modeling are sufficient for most activities. Table 2 offers a sequence that teachers should adjust

after diagnosis.

A Worked Classroom Example

Suppose a teacher’s baseline listening and speaking tasks show that some learners simplify final consonant clusters in words such as facts, texts, and asked, and that unfamiliar listeners consequently identify the wrong word or miss a grammatical ending. The teacher first establishes the meaning difference through a short listening choice and asks learners what they heard. The class then observes and feels the sequence of articulatory movements, builds each word from the final sound backward, and compares which final sequences are possible in languages represented in the room.

After controlled production, pairs complete an information-gap task using curriculum sentences that require the target words. The listener records the word understood rather than judging accent quality. During the task, the teacher notes recurrent communication problems without interrupting every utterance. Delayed feedback addresses one shared pattern, and pairs repeat the exchange using a repair strategy when needed. Learners finish by recording a 30-second explanation containing two target words and setting one goal for the next lesson. This sequence realizes all seven G-TMPI components while keeping the communicative outcome visible.

EVALUATING G-TMPI IN PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Classroom-Level Evidence

Teachers do not need a large experiment to make responsible classroom decisions. They can compare baseline and later recordings, track whether listeners identify key words correctly, record requests for repetition, and ask learners to explain which repair strategies they used. A short teacher log can document the target, instructional time, activity, participation, and what trans-

ferred to less controlled speech. Learner reflections can add evidence about confidence and perceived usefulness. These records support formative adjustment; they do not establish population-level effectiveness.

Future Multi-School Evaluation

A stronger test of effectiveness would use a preregistered cluster design with intact classes assigned, where feasible, to G-TMPI or business-as-usual instruction. Primary outcomes should be intelligibility and comprehensibility in controlled and spontaneous speech. Intelligibility can be operationalized as words correctly transcribed; comprehensibility can be rated on a clearly anchored scale. Samples should be randomized, de-identified, and judged by listeners who are blind to condition and time. A balanced listener panel should include Ghanaian English users and listeners with less familiarity with Ghanaian speech.

Parallel tasks should be administered before instruction, immediately afterward, and after a delay. Analyses should account for repeated observations and clustering by learner, class, teacher, item, and listener. Treatment fidelity, missing data, attrition, and deviations from the protocol should be reported. Interviews, focus groups, and audio-portfolio reflections can explain confidence, identity, feedback uptake, and feasibility. Such research requires institutional ethics approval, school permission, parent or guardian consent, learner assent, and secure management of recordings.

Implications for TESOL Practice

First, oral-English curricula should define intelligibility and communicative repair as outcomes. Lists of sounds are insufficient unless teachers can prioritize features by learner need and communicative load, integrate pronunciation with reading, vocabulary, listening, and speaking, and examine transfer to meaningful tasks.

Second, teacher education should combine phonological knowledge with pedagogical decision-making. Professional learning can address diagnosis, articulatory and prosodic explanation, task sequencing, selective feedback, multilingual comparison, low-cost recording, and the ethical use of automated tools. Longitudinal research shows that learning to teach pronunciation requires sustained opportunities to connect knowledge with practice^[24].

Third, assessment should avoid rewarding accent conformity. Rubrics can separate intelligibility, comprehensibility, fluency, control of a current target, and repair strategy. If formal examinations continue to privilege writing, classroom assessment can still make oral progress visible through brief tasks and learner portfolios.

Finally, resource planning should favor scalable essentials. A quiet recording corner, shared speaker, printable task bank, and teacher development time may be more useful than an expensive laboratory that cannot be maintained. Technology should extend attentive human teaching, not replace it.

Limitations and Research Agenda

G-TMPI is a conceptual framework and has not yet been tested as a complete program in Ghana. The synthesis used to construct it was integrative rather than systematic, and the Ghanaian evidence base remains geographically and institutionally limited. Ghana's linguistic diversity also makes a single national sequence inappropriate; local diagnosis and learner consultation are essential.

Future studies should establish feasibility, compare component combinations, examine delayed retention, and test transfer to subject learning and interaction outside the English lesson. Research should also investigate listener adaptation because communication is co-constructed: familiarizing listeners with legitimate Ghanaian patterns may reduce processing difficulty without requiring speakers to abandon local identities. Cost, teacher workload, learner goals, and implementation at scale deserve the same attention as test scores.

CONCLUSION

Teacher-mediated pronunciation instruction offers a practical response to the limited attention given to oral English, but adaptation to Ghana requires more than changing the place names in an imported intervention. G-TMPI connects explicit instruction and repeated practice with Ghanaian multilingualism, intelligibility-oriented goals, meaningful communication, selective feedback, and learner agency. It positions teachers as diagnosticians, models, feedback designers, and sociolinguistic guides, while learners assume increasing control through repair, reflection, and audio portfolios. The framework does not claim proven effectiveness. It offers a feasible, research-informed basis for classroom experimentation and a transparent agenda for evaluating whether pronunciation instruction expands learners' communicative choices without devaluing Ghanaian English.

DECLARATION

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI-Generated Content Declaration

During revision, OpenAI ChatGPT was used for drafting assistance, structural refinement, and language editing. The authors reviewed, revised, and verified the manuscript text and references and accept full responsibility for the submitted content.

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