



# EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Instructional Practice of English Pronunciation at Rural Primary Schools

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**Abstract**— This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate pronunciation teaching beliefs, instructional practices, and their internal mechanism among 131 EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning. Results reveal that teachers hold positive beliefs about the foundational role of pronunciation but demonstrate narrow cognition focusing on segmental features and exam-oriented goals. Their teaching practices are characterized by mechanical drills, fragmented content, and insufficient feedback, showing a clear belief-practice gap. Structural equation analysis indicates that teaching beliefs positively predict practices, with self-efficacy playing a full mediating role. The disconnection is affected by professional competence, dialect interference, resource shortage, and exam pressure. These findings enrich the understanding of rural EFL teachers' pronunciation instruction and provide implications for rural English teacher development.

**Keywords**— rural primary schools; EFL teachers; pronunciation teaching; teachers' beliefs; teaching practice



## I. INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of globalization and the growing demand for cross-cultural communication, the instrumental value of English as a global lingua franca has become increasingly prominent (Hu, 2023; Wang, 2025). Currently, English is not only a compulsory course in primary, secondary, and tertiary education in China but also plays a critical role in the national college entrance examination, postgraduate entrance examination, and various professional and technical title evaluations (Zhang, 2024). As the material form of language, pronunciation serves as the fundamental prerequisite for realizing the communicative function of English.

Despite the growing importance of English for communication, pronunciation teaching has long been marginalized in second and foreign language education worldwide (Baker, 2013; Reid, 2016). In the Chinese context, pronunciation teaching has not received due attention in daily primary and secondary teaching, teacher

professional development systems, textbook compilation, or related research (Tian & Wang, 2025; Xie & Bi, 2024). Based on frontline teaching practice, it can be observed that rural students generally have weak foundations in English pronunciation, are significantly influenced by dialect accents, and lack sufficient opportunities to access and learn standard pronunciation. This has, to a certain extent, restricted their English learning outcomes and oral communicative competence.

As organizers and implementers of teaching activities, teachers' instructional beliefs—defined as teachers' perceptions and judgments about teaching objectives, content, methods, and their own teaching abilities (Borg, 2003)—are the core internal factors driving their teaching practices. As the internal basis for instructional decision-making, teachers' beliefs about pronunciation teaching directly shape the direction of their classroom practices (Mulyah & Aminatun, 2020; Williams & Burden, 1997). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices is not a simple linear correspondence but a

complex system jointly shaped by internal factors such as individual cognition, educational background, and teaching experience, as well as external contextual factors including curriculum requirements, time constraints, and high-stakes examinations (Borg, 2009, 2017; Mora Viveros, 2022; Phipps & Borg, 2009).

However, existing research has mostly focused on Europe, America, or other Asian countries, and empirical studies on pronunciation teaching beliefs of primary school EFL teachers in mainland China, especially in rural areas, remain scarce (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). As a typical representative of southern China's ethnic minority regions, Nanning's rural primary schools are mainly located in the southwestern Guangxi ethnic minority settlements, facing unique dilemmas such as a shortage of educational resources, a prominent exam-oriented orientation, significant interference from Zhuang, Cantonese, and other dialects, and an unbalanced professional structure of teachers. Accordingly, this study takes EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning as research subjects and adopts a mixed-methods approach to systematically explore the current status and internal correlations of their pronunciation teaching beliefs, self-efficacy, and teaching practices.

To achieve this goal, this study is further divided into the following specific objectives: to comprehensively and deeply investigate the existing English pronunciation teaching beliefs of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning; to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth investigation into the English pronunciation teaching practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning; and to analyze the relationship between pronunciation teaching beliefs and teaching practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning.

Centering on the above objectives, this study intends to address three core research questions:

RQ1: What are the pronunciation teaching beliefs of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning?

RQ2: What are the pronunciation teaching practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning?

RQ3: What is the relationship between pronunciation teaching beliefs and teaching practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning?

To address these research questions, this study will conduct an in-depth analysis of the beliefs of rural primary school EFL teachers in China, examine their teaching practices, and explore the relationship between their beliefs and classroom practices in pronunciation teaching.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pajares (1992) pointed out that teachers' core beliefs about teaching, students, and knowledge are the fundamental factors driving teaching behaviors. For rural primary school EFL teachers in China, their pronunciation teaching beliefs profoundly influence their teaching judgments and practical choices. In recent years, teachers' beliefs have gradually become a research hotspot in the field of teacher professional development. The academic community generally recognizes their key role in teaching practice, student learning, and educational reform (Ahmad, Hussain, & Radzuan, 2017; Fojkar & Skubic, 2017; Vartuli, 2005). Relevant studies have not only revealed the correlation between beliefs and teaching effectiveness but also promoted an in-depth exploration of the cognitive mechanisms of the teaching process (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Dignath, Rimm-Kaufman, van Ewijk, & Kunter, 2022; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Hajovsky, Chesnut, & Jensen, 2020).

When beliefs are consistent with practices, teachers often have higher job satisfaction and motivation for professional development (Baker & Burri, 2016; Shah, Othman, & Senom, 2017; Tran & Nguyen, 2020; Yulia & Saukah, 2021); while disconnection between the two may lead to decreased teaching efficacy and even hinder the improvement of teaching quality (Abdul-Abbas et al., 2021; Bai & Yuan, 2019; Mulyah & Aminatun, 2020). Therefore, exploring the relationship between the two should not be limited to a superficial judgment of consistency but requires analyzing the interaction of internal and external factors combined with specific teaching scenarios (Hofer, 2010; Quoc, Thanh, Dang, Mai, & Nguyen, 2021).

However, existing research has not fully paid attention to the group particularity of rural primary school EFL teachers, especially the realistic characteristics such as the high proportion of non-English major teachers, weak professional pronunciation competence, and difficulties in accessing teaching resources (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Burri & Baker, 2019). In terms of research depth, most studies only focus on the simple correlation between beliefs and practices, failing to systematically explore the internal mechanism and moderating factors of their correlation in rural teaching contexts, making it difficult to explain the core causes of the disconnection between beliefs and practices among rural primary school EFL teachers (Jafari, Karimi, & Jafari, 2021; Üstünbaş, 2018). This research gap highlights the necessity and unique value of this study.

The theoretical foundation of this study is built on the integration of three complementary theoretical perspectives: Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), Teacher

Beliefs Theory (TBT), and the MPF (Model – Practice – Feedback) framework by Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (2010). First, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 2001), as the dominant theoretical framework, emphasizes the triadic reciprocal determinism among individual factors, self-efficacy, and behavioral factors. Second, Teacher Beliefs Theory (TBT) (Borg, 2003, 2009), as a supplement to Social Cognitive Theory, focuses on the role of teachers' domain-specific beliefs in their instructional decision-making. Finally, the MPF framework (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010), as the core analytical framework for examining teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs, self-efficacy, and teaching practices, decomposes pronunciation teaching into three interdependent and cyclical core links, which can systematically reflect teachers' teaching beliefs, self-efficacy, and teaching practices.

Based on Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory, this study provides a fundamental theoretical support for analyzing the internal correlations among teachers' beliefs, self-efficacy, teaching practices, and environmental factors. Within this framework, this study selects teachers' beliefs as the independent variable, AI pronunciation teaching practices as the dependent variable, and self-efficacy as the mediating variable. The rationale for selecting and demonstrating the relationships among variables is as follows.

Regarding the direct relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, existing studies have fully confirmed a significant positive correlation between the two (Abdul-Abbas, Rashid, & RasimYounus, 2021; Bai &

Yuan, 2019; Jafari, Karimi, & Jafari, 2021; Mora Viveros, 2022). In the field of language education, Borg (2006) proposed that the teacher belief system acts as a cognitive filter that directly influences classroom teaching decisions, providing a solid basis for the hypothesis of this study that rural primary school EFL teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs positively predict pronunciation teaching practices.

The selection of self-efficacy as a mediating variable is consistent with theoretical logic and fully supported by literature. According to Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, teachers' beliefs influence the formation of self-efficacy by affecting their pursuit of mastery experiences in teaching. Meanwhile, the predictive effect of self-efficacy on teaching practices has been confirmed by many studies (Akman, 2021; Burić, Jakšić, & Balaž, 2024; Priajana & Umaemah, 2025). It can be seen that self-efficacy plays a core transmission role in the transformation of teachers' beliefs into teaching practices, serving as a key mediating mechanism connecting internal cognition and external behavior. The rationality of this mediating effect is also fully supported by Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001).

As shown in Figure 1, based on the above integrated theoretical framework and combined with the unique context of pronunciation teaching of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning, this study constructs a specific conceptual framework to visualize the core variables and their relationships, clarify the core analytical path of the study, ensure a high degree of consistency between the research design and the theoretical framework, and connect the subsequent research methods and findings.

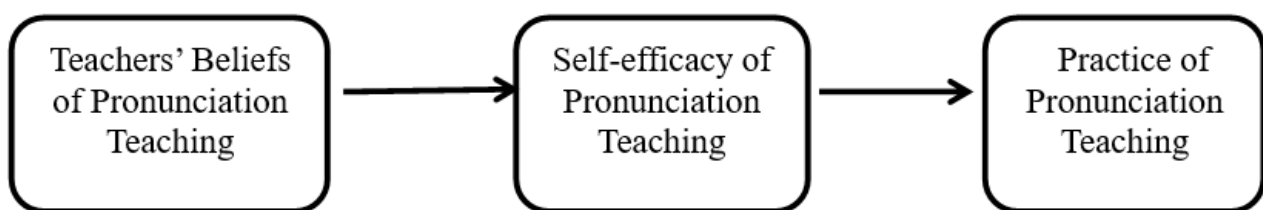


Fig.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

### III. RESEARCH METHODS, SUBJECTS AND INSTRUMENTS

This study adopts a quantitative research method and collects data through three methods: questionnaire survey, semi-structured interview, and non-participatory classroom observation, so as to achieve triangulation and ensure the authenticity, reliability and validity of the research data, and comprehensively and deeply respond to the research questions.

The questionnaire adopts a mixed sampling strategy of

offline targeted sampling and online group recruitment to determine the sample, and the whole process is carried out around the group of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning. A stratified targeted sampling framework is built based on the administrative division of Nanning to clarify the sampling proportion in each district. In this study, GPower 3.1 software was used for a priori sample size estimation. Referring to existing studies in the field of education and pre-experiment results, the medium effect size  $f^2=0.15$ , significance level  $\alpha=0.05$ , statistical power  $1-\beta=0.90$ , and the number of predictive variables is 3. The

calculation results show that the minimum sample size required is 109. Considering that the structural equation model will be used for data analysis later, which has higher requirements for sample size, according to the recommendations of Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), the sample size should be no less than 5 times the number of model parameters. To improve the robustness of the model, this study increases by 20% based on the estimated results, and finally determines the effective sample size to be 131. To further verify the adequacy of the sample size, this study conducted a post-hoc power analysis. With an effective sample size of 131, effect size  $f^2=0.15$ , number of predictive variables 3 and  $\alpha=0.05$ , GPower 3.1 calculated a statistical power of 0.95, higher than the recommended standard of 0.80. Overall, the sample size of this study is sufficient, the statistical test power is ideal, and the results are robust and reliable.

For qualitative research, using the maximum variation sampling method, combined with the candidates obtained through the above mixed sampling channels, after

*Table 1 The Demographic Characteristics of the Research Subjects in the Questionnaire Survey*

Demographic Variable	Category	Number of Participants (n=131)	Percentage (%)
Teaching Experience	2-5 years	25	19.1
	6-10 years	31	23.7
	10-20 years	43	32.8
	More than 20 years	32	24.4
Educational Background	English Education	74	56.5
	Non English Education	57	43.5
Highest Education Attainment	Associate Degree	47	35.9
	Bachelor's Degree	84	64.1

Both questionnaire surveys and interviews obtained informed consent from the subjects. All data were kept strictly confidential and used only for this study, and personal information was anonymized. Classroom observations have been approved by schools and teachers to avoid affecting the normal teaching order.

The questionnaire of this study refers to the EFL Teachers' Pronunciation Teaching Beliefs and Practices Questionnaire by Szyszka (2016), the Language Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Pronunciation Instruction Questionnaire by Zhang and Faez (2024) and Zhang, B. (2018), combined with the study of Candrawati and Purbani (2025) and the rural teaching situation in Guangxi

qualification review, background matching screening and research feasibility assessment, 10 voluntary EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning who participated in the questionnaire survey were finally determined as qualitative research subjects, covering different teaching ages, professional backgrounds and school types, ensuring that qualitative data can fully reflect the current situation and dilemmas of teachers in different groups. Then, multiple rounds of non-participatory classroom observations and multiple rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted on 10 EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning, and in-depth case analysis was carried out combined with observation and interview data, to further explore the internal correlation and influencing factors between teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs and practices, and make up for the limitations of quantitative research.

The demographic characteristics of the research subjects are shown in Table 1.

and the operational indicators of all variables, adopting the Likert 5-point scoring method. After testing, the S-CVI of the questionnaire is 0.92, and each I-CVI exceeds 0.80. To ensure the scientificity and validity of the questionnaire, 50 EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning were selected for a pre-survey before the official distribution, and finally a formal questionnaire containing 39 items was formed.

The reliability test of this questionnaire was tested by Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient. All Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of the questionnaire are greater than 0.8, indicating that the internal consistency and item reliability of the questionnaire meet academic requirements. The validity

test of the questionnaire shows that the average KMO value is greater than 0.75, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is  $p < 0.001$ .

On the basis of the questionnaire survey, in order to further explore the internal logic, practical dilemmas and cognitive deviations of teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs and practices, and make up for the limitations of the questionnaire survey, the researcher designed a semi-structured interview outline for qualitative data collection. The interview outline is designed around the three core research questions of this study. According to the dimensions and operational indicators of each variable, it includes 9 core interview questions, mainly covering teachers' cognition of the importance and teaching objectives of pronunciation teaching, evaluation of their own pronunciation teaching ability and self-efficacy, and the specific implementation and environment of pronunciation teaching practices. After expert review, the S-CVI of the interview outline is 0.93, and each I-CVI exceeds 0.80.

To objectively capture the true behavior of teachers in classroom pronunciation teaching and make up for the limitations of questionnaires and interviews, the researcher designed a non-participatory classroom observation record form to observe the implementation of teachers' pronunciation teaching practices. The observation record form is designed around three dimensions of pronunciation teaching practice, including core modules such as observation items, observation content, implementation frequency and implementation effect, focusing on observing teachers' demonstration and practice of segmental and suprasegmental features, and feedback and personalized guidance on students' pronunciation. After expert review, the S-CVI of the observation record form is 0.92, and each I-CVI exceeds 0.80.

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data are processed separately and then integrated and analyzed to ensure the scientificity, rigor and systematicness of data processing, realize triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, and enhance the persuasiveness of research conclusions. For quantitative data processing, jamovi 2.6 software is used for data processing, in strict accordance with the data processing specifications of quantitative research. For qualitative data processing, thematic analysis is adopted, and Taguette is used for data processing. For the consistency test of coding, Cohen's Kappa coefficient is 0.77. Then, the statistical results of quantitative data and the thematic analysis results of qualitative data are deeply integrated to realize triangulation and ensure the authenticity and reliability of research conclusions.

#### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Centering on the three core research questions, this study systematically presents the research findings from three aspects: the current status of teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs, the current status of pronunciation teaching practices, and the correlation mechanism between beliefs and practices, combined with quantitative and qualitative data through triangulation.

##### 4.1 Current Status and Characteristics of English Pronunciation Teaching Beliefs of EFL Teachers in Rural Primary Schools of Nanning (Based on RQ1)

The English pronunciation teaching beliefs of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning present an overall pattern of positive attitude but one-sided cognition, emphasizing foundation but leaning towards examination-oriented education. From the quantitative results, the overall score of teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs is at the upper-middle level, indicating that the vast majority of teachers cognitively recognize the fundamental position of pronunciation teaching in primary school English curricula, acknowledge the irreplaceable role of pronunciation ability in students' word reading, oral expression and listening comprehension, and are willing to carry out basic pronunciation demonstration and practice activities in class. At the same time, teachers' pronunciation teaching self-efficacy is at a medium level, reflecting that teachers can complete basic pronunciation teaching tasks but lack confidence in carrying out systematic and professional pronunciation teaching. Combined with qualitative data, it can be further found that teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs show distinctive situationality and limitations. On the one hand, teachers generally regard pronunciation as the introductory foundation of English learning, emphasizing the importance of accurate pronunciation in helping rural students overcome the fear of speaking and build learning confidence. On the other hand, most teachers' understanding of pronunciation teaching stays at the segmental level, mainly focusing on vowels, consonants and word pronunciation, lacking awareness of the teaching value of suprasegmental features such as intonation, stress, rhythm and pauses, and even the concept of integrating pronunciation teaching with communicative competence. In terms of teaching objectives, teachers generally hold the belief of basic adequacy and moderate standard, mostly requiring students to read words and textbook sentences correctly, without pursuing pronunciation standardization and communicative naturalness. In addition, influenced by the rural teaching environment, teachers' beliefs show obvious exam-oriented and environmental compromise

tendencies. Most teachers believe that pronunciation has not become a core content in the primary school English evaluation system, so there is no need to invest too much class time. Meanwhile, facing the realistic conditions of significant dialect interference among students, a large number of left-behind children and lack of family tutoring, teachers generally form adaptive beliefs of lowering teaching expectations and simplifying teaching requirements. Overall, the pronunciation teaching beliefs of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning have a positive background, but are characterized by incomplete structure, low target positioning, and vulnerability to external environmental constraints.

#### **4.2 Current Status and Characteristics of English Pronunciation Teaching Practices of EFL Teachers in Rural Primary Schools of Nanning (Based on RQ2)**

The English pronunciation teaching practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning are characterized by single form, fragmented content, teacher-led and mechanical practice, and serious lack of feedback and emotional support. Quantitative results show that the overall score of teachers' pronunciation teaching practices is at a medium level, and the practice frequency is mostly occasional, far from reaching the level of systematization and normalization, with a significant gap from the recognition level of teachers' beliefs. Classroom observation and interview data further show that rural primary school pronunciation teaching practices are highly dependent on teacher demonstration and student repetition, with teacher reading, group reading and repeated imitation as the main classroom forms. There are almost no inquiry-based, game-based or situational pronunciation learning activities, and students are in a passive acceptance state for a long time. In terms of teaching content, practices show obvious structural deficiencies. Teachers generally equate pronunciation teaching with word pronunciation teaching, only carrying out simple demonstration and reading incidentally in vocabulary teaching links, lacking independent, coherent and structured practice time. Suprasegmental contents such as intonation, liaison and stress are almost blank in class, making it difficult to support the development of students' fluent oral competence. Teaching resources and methods are highly single. Most classrooms only rely on textbook supporting audio for pronunciation input, lacking multimodal support such as mouth shape diagrams, pronunciation aids, multimedia materials and interactive exercises, and classroom environments also lack arrangement and immersion related to English pronunciation learning. At the same time, classroom feedback and emotional support are seriously absent. Teachers rarely systematically correct and give specific feedback on students' pronunciation

errors, lack effective intervention on recurring negative dialect transfer phenomena, and seldom help students reduce pronunciation learning anxiety through encouraging evaluation, especially targeted support for left-behind children and ethnic minority students with weak foundations and low willingness to speak. In addition, the exam-oriented tendency in practice is also prominent. Class time is prioritized to vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar training, and pronunciation teaching is compressed into a secondary or even marginal link, showing a typical feature of attaching importance to beliefs but weakening practices. Overall, the pronunciation teaching practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning are characterized by mechanical, fragmented, low-feedback and exam-oriented, with a significant gap from the requirements of systematic, communicative and developmental pronunciation teaching.

#### **4.3 Correlation Mechanism between English Pronunciation Teaching Beliefs and Practices of EFL Teachers in Rural Primary Schools of Nanning (Based on RQ3)**

Quantitative and qualitative results jointly show that there is a significant positive correlation between pronunciation teaching beliefs and practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning, but the transformation efficiency from beliefs to practices is low with obvious blocking factors, and self-efficacy plays a key full mediating role. Quantitative results show that teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs can significantly and positively affect teaching practices, and the indirect path of pronunciation teaching beliefs affecting teaching practices through self-efficacy is also significant, indicating that self-efficacy is the core mediating mechanism connecting beliefs and practices. This means that teachers' recognition and attention to pronunciation teaching cannot be directly transformed into real classroom behaviors; only when teachers have corresponding teaching confidence and ability judgments can positive beliefs promote high-quality practices. In realistic situations, the relationship between beliefs and practices is not a simple linear correspondence, but a universal disconnection state of high recognition and low implementation. Although teachers cognitively recognize the importance of pronunciation teaching, they are restricted by multiple factors such as insufficient professional ability, lack of systematic training, complex dialect interference, shortage of teaching resources, time shortage and exam pressure, making it difficult to translate internal beliefs into sustained, standardized and effective teaching behaviors. Qualitative data further reveal that this disconnection stems from the structural constraints of the rural education ecosystem. Rural EFL teachers have weak professional pronunciation foundations and lack long-term

targeted training, leading to rigid teaching methods and insufficient error correction abilities. Rural students have uneven foundations, significant dialect influences and limited after-class practice conditions, further reducing teachers' willingness to carry out systematic pronunciation teaching. The shortage of school resources and evaluation orientation biased towards written scores strengthen the disconnection between beliefs and practices from the external environment. Overall, teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs have a significant positive predictive effect on teaching practices, but their transformation process highly relies on the support of self-efficacy, and is jointly constrained by multiple factors such as teachers' professional ability, rural teaching environment and exam orientation, finally forming a correlation pattern of positive beliefs, weak practices and obvious gaps between the two.

## V. DISCUSSION

This study finds that EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning generally recognize the fundamental position of pronunciation teaching, and cognitively affirm its promoting effect on word reading, oral expression, listening comprehension and learning interest. This conclusion is consistent with the research results of Buss (2015) and Bai & Yuan (2019), that is, English teachers generally regard pronunciation as a key gateway to language learning and attach importance to its supporting role in communication and academic performance. From the formation mechanism of teachers' beliefs, this consensus stems from the essential attribute of pronunciation as the material form of language, and is also in line with the view put forward by Gimson (1970) that pronunciation occupies a core position in language learning.

However, different from foreign and urban teacher groups, rural teachers' pronunciation teaching beliefs in this study show obvious characteristics of one-sidedness, exam-orientation and low expectations. Most teachers only focus on the segmental level, lacking awareness of the teaching value of suprasegmental contents such as intonation, stress, liaison and rhythm, which is highly consistent with the conclusions of Couper (2017) and Nguyen & Newton (2020). Due to the lack of systematic phonetic training and teaching knowledge, teachers prefer easy-to-operate and observable segmental contents and avoid more difficult suprasegmental teaching. At the same time, this study further reveals the unique goal displacement phenomenon in rural areas: teachers place the instrumental goal of examination scores above the ultimate goal of communicative intelligibility, and weaken teaching

investment even if they recognize the importance of pronunciation because it is not directly tested. This finding expands the hierarchical theory of teachers' beliefs proposed by Phipps & Borg (2009), indicating that in the high-stakes examination environment in rural areas, the influence of exam-oriented beliefs on practices may surpass that of beliefs about the importance of pronunciation.

In addition, rural teachers' pronunciation teaching self-efficacy is generally low, and they tend to attribute difficulties externally to insufficient resources, dialect interference, and weak student foundations, which is mutually confirmed with the studies of Bai & Yuan (2019), Couper (2017), and Marion (2022). Lack of special pronunciation training, insufficient professional ability, and few opportunities for demonstration and feedback directly reduce teachers' teaching confidence and then avoid complex teaching tasks. Combined with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, rural teachers' low efficacy is not simply a matter of ability, but the result of long-term lack of successful experience, professional support and environmental support, which also makes their beliefs more vulnerable to environmental constraints and show passive compromise characteristics.

At the level of teaching practice, this study shows that rural primary school pronunciation teaching is characterized by teacher-led, mechanical repetition, fragmentation, low feedback and single resources, and classroom forms are highly dependent on demonstration and group reading, lacking communicative, situational and multimodal activities. This is in sharp contrast to the explicit pronunciation teaching, communicative pronunciation teaching and multimodal input advocated abroad. The MPF framework and communicative pronunciation teaching concept proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) both emphasize that pronunciation teaching should combine meaning and form, integrate tasks and interactions, and provide systematic corrective feedback, but rural classrooms are almost unable to implement.

This study further confirms that rural pronunciation teaching practices have structural deficiencies: almost no suprasegmental contents, serious lack of corrective feedback, and teaching resources only relying on textbook audio. This is similar to the conclusion of Tiwari (2023) on rural education in Nepal, that is, resource shortage, insufficient training and exam pressure jointly lead to the marginalization of pronunciation teaching. Meanwhile, this study supplements the special influences of Chinese rural dialects and left-behind children: the negative transfer caused by Zhuang, Cantonese and other dialects has not been intervened for a long time, and left-behind children lack family tutoring and after-class practice,

further solidifying pronunciation errors and forming a cycle of insufficient practice, solidified errors and decreased confidence, which echoes Odlin's (1989) language transfer theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem theory.

Quantitative and qualitative results jointly confirm that there is a significant positive correlation between pronunciation teaching beliefs and practices of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning, but with obvious disconnection, and self-efficacy plays a full mediating role. This conclusion not only verifies the triadic interaction between individual-behavior-environment in Social Cognitive Theory, but also is highly consistent with Borg's (2003, 2009) teacher belief system theory: beliefs have a predictive effect on practices, but the transformation process is doubly constrained by internal ability and external context.

The core contribution of this study is to clarify the key mechanism of disconnection between beliefs and practices in the rural context: beliefs cannot directly drive practices, but must be transmitted through self-efficacy. Rural teachers' low efficacy, exam-orientation, resource constraints, dialect interference and weak student foundations together constitute barriers to the transformation of beliefs into practices. This finding expands the explanatory boundary of existing studies: foreign studies mostly focus on the consistency or simple contradiction between beliefs and practices, while this study reveals a unique fault model of high recognition and low implementation in the rural field, that is, teachers recognize in beliefs, weaken in actions, and are blocked in transformation.

Meanwhile, this study is consistent with the conclusions of Shah et al. (2017), Tran & Nguyen (2020), and Yulia & Saukah (2021) that teachers' beliefs and practices are affected by multiple factors such as educational background, training experience, classroom environment, examination policies and school culture. However, this study further points out that the constraints in the rural field are systematic and cyclical: lack of training leads to insufficient ability, low efficacy, conservative practices, and poor effects, finally forming an unbreakable closed loop. This finding goes beyond single-factor explanation and provides a systematic perspective for understanding the dilemma of rural pronunciation teaching.

This study enriches and verifies the applicability of teacher belief theory in the rural foreign language teaching field. The study confirms that there are core-peripheral hierarchical differences in the teacher belief system, and under exam-orientation, the influence of peripheral beliefs may surpass that of core beliefs, supplementing localized

evidence for the hierarchical theory of beliefs. This study deepens the application of Social Cognitive Theory in pronunciation teaching. The study clarifies the full mediating role of self-efficacy, reveals the dynamic interaction among individual beliefs, teaching ability and rural ecosystem, and provides a more complete explanatory framework for the transformation mechanism of beliefs and practices. This study makes up for the research gap of English pronunciation teaching in rural primary schools in China. Existing literature mostly focuses on cities, middle schools or universities, and there is a lack of empirical research on rural primary schools, dialect environments and left-behind children backgrounds. This study provides localized evidence from southern China's rural areas for this field. This study expands the ecosystem view of pronunciation teaching. Integrating teacher development, classroom practice and rural education ecosystem into a unified framework, it reveals that the dilemma of pronunciation teaching is a systematic problem rather than a single teacher attitude or ability problem, providing an integrated analytical perspective for subsequent studies.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that the pronunciation teaching beliefs of EFL teachers in rural primary schools of Nanning are generally positive, recognizing the fundamental role of pronunciation teaching. However, in teaching practices, they are still dominated by mechanical repetition and exam-orientation, with fragmented content, insufficient feedback and unsystematic training, and there is an obvious disconnection between beliefs and practices. Self-efficacy plays a key mediating role, and is simultaneously restricted by structural factors such as professional ability, teaching resources, dialect interference and class time, presenting a typical characteristic of attaching importance to cognition, insufficient action and unsmooth transformation.

Combined with the findings of this study and the development needs of rural English teaching under the background of rural education revitalization, further research can be carried out in the following aspects in the future to improve the research system of pronunciation teaching beliefs and practices of rural primary school EFL teachers, and enhance the practical and theoretical value of the research.

In the future, the scope of samples can be expanded to cover rural primary schools in various parts of Guangxi, and even extended to rural primary schools in other provinces across the country, increasing the sample size and sample diversity. Meanwhile, urban and rural teachers,

and teachers with different teaching ages and educational backgrounds can be included in a comparative study to explore the differences and correlations between beliefs and practices of teachers with different regional and individual characteristics, further verify the universality of the conclusions of this study, and fill the gap in cross-regional research on rural primary school pronunciation teaching. A long-term follow-up study can be adopted to observe teachers' beliefs and practices for a long time and capture the dynamic change process of teachers' beliefs. Combined with classroom observation, students' pronunciation ability test, parent interview and other multi-source data, the current status and correlation of teachers' beliefs and practices can be cross-verified.

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