

The effect of teaching listening skills to improve student's pronunciation, A case study of schools in Jordan

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Abstract:

The present study aims the effect of teaching listening skills to improve student's pronunciation in the schools of Jordan. The relationship of teaching listening skills and pronunciation has been addressed in this study. The literature of the study is based on the segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation. The importance of pronunciation during communication is also discussed in this study. The experimental methodology is used in this study by establishing hypothesis. The t-test technique is used to test the hypothesis. The results of the study show that there is a significant influence of teaching listening skills to improvise student's pronunciation.

Keywords: listening skills, student's pronunciation

Introduction:

The spoken version was started numerous centuries ago, before the discovery of the written version of the language. Human beings, as social animals, depend upon language to communicate with each other. Nowadays, in many countries of the world, the language of choice is English. It is supposed that many foreign languages are hard to understand and learning them is also a difficult task. The English language is also one of them which is difficult to learn as well as difficult to teach. EFL (English foreign language learners) have a keen interest in pronunciation as well as phonology (Linguagem & Ensino, 2000). Pronunciation is a vital oral skill in addition to language skills.

Furthermore, they are defining requirements and describing their standards for communication skills (Linguagem & Ensino, 2000). The use of the English language is increasing day by day in the world. For instance, the number of people is rising, who uses the English language to communicate electronically as well as for their academic texts and international business.

The most crucial oral communication skill is Pronunciation (Fraser, 2000). Pronunciation requires to be composed along with communication skills (Miller, 2004). He highlights EFL teachers in classrooms play a vital part in developing skills in students. So, teachers in EFL understand entirely the sound system of the English language as well as the working of the English sound system. They should also understand why the English sound system is different from other sound systems.

According to learners of EFL, the toughest skill to be developed is pronunciation. Besides, Julia claims that pronunciation is a fundamental skill, as well as it is the basis of oral communication learners, whatever their level is (Julia, 2002). He highlights, there would be no oral communication as well as a spoken or verbal language without pronunciation. In Arab countries, it's very significant to focus on educating pronunciation that includes suprasegmentally as well as segmental

characteristics in English foreign language classrooms. The researchers aim to analyze as well as emphasize communication complications. Arabs face these problems due to pronunciation inefficiency

English learners of Arabs face difficulties in pronunciation. (Al-Fakhri, 2003). Arab EFL learners, Al Fakhri, as well as Shaker, discovered that English students of Arabs face difficulties in pronunciation that affect the abilities of students to communicate. These researchers specified that native Arabic EFL teachers often neglect to teach pronunciation in their classes. Zughoul adds the aspects of phonology, for example, non-natural situation; EFL teachers less emphasize suprasegmentally feature in the classroom. (Zughoul, 1997). Fraser pointed out that the most challenging area for teachers and learners is pronunciation. According to Fraser, the skill component is the factor that makes pronunciation difficult to learn (Fraser 1999). Fraser addresses the common agreement between phonologists as well as psycholinguistics about the current complication. He claims that pronunciation complication is not physical rather than it is intellectual and cognitive. A learner thinks about the sounds of the words instead of the pronunciation of words. The researchers of this paper focused on overcoming the problem of pronunciation all over the educational consequences.

Literature review:

Hornby, in Augustinami, stated that the way to speak a language or the way to pronounce a word is pronunciation (2006). The definition of pronunciation by O'connor is the technique to talk about a language (1980). It's the creation of phonemes that are according to standards for specific people. Furthermore, according to O'connor claims that organized sounds that differ from transcribed language are pronunciation. On the basis of these statements, one can determine methods to pronounce the words is pronunciation.

Pronunciation includes organized sounds created through airborne, which develops by the organ of speech. The tissue of articulation determines the sounds of words, either they are clear, understandable, or not. Additionally, pronunciation is defined differently in American College dictionary; consequences of creating sounds of speech that includes inflection, articulation, accent, vowel formation as well as intonation, regarding acceptability and correctness of sounds of speech. In short, the way to pronounce words is pronunciation. That's why, in teaching pronunciation, English teachers have to focus on essential features of the system of sounds; consonants, vowels as well as semivowels.

Teaching English in the Arab world:

Since the 1920s, English is being taught in the Arab world after the rule of British and French in different areas of the region. (Al-Khatib, 2000). Lately, Arab governments have commenced its significance by advancing its school syllabus with the addition of English as a foreign language. Mahmoud (2000) says that after Arab students ace their atypical Arabic 'conversational Arabic', then they start to learn the English language in schools. Waston (2004) claims that English is already being utilized in extensive and significant areas of education in the Arab world. In Arab countries, English is being taught at multiple stages of learning. For instance, in some Arabic

nations like Libya, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, students start to learn English in seventh grade (first introductory class). Other countries like Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt begin in grade 5, though countries like Algeria, Bahrain, and Palestine begin at grade 8, 3 and 1, respectively. This reflects how much significance the English language holds in the Arab world (Rababah, 2003; and Shaker, 2004). E.g. In the United Arab Emirates, inhabitants utilize the English language excessively in their day-to-day state of affairs because of the multilingual diversity of the population. On the other hand, Arabic is used for routine matters in countries such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Yemen, and Egypt (Rababah, 2003; and Shaker, 2004). Watson (2004) and Rababah (2003) guarantee that English can be learned in the best way through proper training and guidance. For instance, when inherent Arabic speakers at school educate English, then the majority of them lack the insight into the objective language and how to teach this language formally. This reality can lead to consider the significance of presenting students to genuine, reliable, and trustworthy sources. Students will never grow excellent pronunciation and articulation abilities without tuning in to credible materials and observing certain circumstances that can show a clear image of how a native orator articulates as well as pronounces the speech. Thus, by considering the two elements of teaching English, whether indoor or outdoor, the scholars settle with the conclusion of Rababah (2003) that only a minute chance is available to comprehend English language from prescribed commands or regular communication.

Teaching pronunciation:

In ESL context, to teach pronunciation prevails as an important skill. After the analysis and revision of English teaching in world of Arabia, teaching pronunciation concentrates on following parts. These points are mentioned below:

What is the meaning of pronunciation?

What is the importance of pronunciation?

What are the roles of teaching segmental and suprasegmentally pronunciation features?

What is the pronunciation?

Dalton & seidholfer specified that the production of sounds to create proper sense is pronunciation. This contains consideration to specific language sounds i.e. Features of language further than level of discrete sound, segments that includes, stress, phrasing, rhythm (suprasegmentally aspects), timing, intonation, voice quality (projection of voice). According to the broadest definition of pronunciation, consideration of expressions as well as gestures that are related to the technique of speaking a language. Dalton & seidholfer's point of view is significant in defining the pronunciation because it is utilized as an essential part of the code of specific language. Distinctive sounds of French, English as well as Thai can be disclosed. We may discourse about pronunciation as creation as well as the response of sounds in language. Sound is essential due to its utilization to acquire meaning in contextual practice. To make communication possible, code usually combines with other essential factors. One can discuss pronunciation along concerning the performance of connection. According to Jenkins precise creation does not ensure signal meaning and clarity.

The scientists agree by the concept of Fraser that pronunciation is also a vital skill as compared to other skills such as pragmatics, grammar, and vocabulary. Fraser (2000) claims that essential oral communication skill is pronunciation. It is considered that proper pronunciation is comprehensible in spite of deprived pronunciation. Due to poor pronunciation, it will be difficult to understand the speaker in spite of other areas' accuracy. Speaker is affected by pronunciation if anyone judges the speaker (Fraser, 2000).

Furthermore, the most difficult skill to be acquired can be considered pronunciation. If people receive adequate training, they can pick up pronunciation easily. Miller stated that pronunciation complications lead to conversation breakdown (Miller, 2004). She mentions that teaching pronunciation is essential, which can be balanced with further language skills.

The importance of segmental and suprasegmentally aspects of pronunciation

Suprasegmentally, as well as segmental features of pronunciation, are opposite to one another if we learn both as an essential part of verbal-linguistic. Roach explains that significant suprasegmental aspects of speech are loudness, voice quality, pitch, and tempo, etc. The study of these aspects is mentioned as the study of prosody. Roach stated that intonation and stress are considered as suprasegmental aspects that form the basis for significant functions. The comprehensive details of these features are mentioned below:

The suprasegmental features

Stress

Adult Migrant English center defines stress (2002, p.1). According to AMEC, stress refers to the distinction provided towards specific syllables in a word or particular words syllables within utterances or sounds. It is indicated by force, volume, and change in pitches, as well as the length of the syllable. Sometimes the place where we notice non-verbal communication such as hand movements or other gestures when we observe conversation of someone. There are different levels of stress. The first level of stress is the word level that contains words with multisyllabic, and one of them is stressed. Sentence level is the second level of stress, where more important words are to be noted. Contrastive stress is the third level in which most significant words carry more stress.

Intonation

Intonation is the harmony of speech and is assessed in terms of changes in pitch (Roach, 2001). According to Roach, intonation could be used by speakers to ask questions or various types of utterances. Adult Migrant English Center puts great emphasis on intonation as well as a change of pitch because it is important to feature signaling the meaning of the speaker, especially interpersonal approaches. Furthermore, Adult Migrant English Center claims that patterns of intonation are particular for language; beginners require to attain modern patterns for English to prevent incorrect transition through native language.

The segmental features

According to Spencer, segment means distinct sounds phonemes (Spencer, 1996). These phonemes have the potential to produce meaning. The phonemes may be vowels, consonants, or diphthongs that contains sounds of two vowels in it, triphthongs that consist of sounds of three vowels. The consonants vary from each other about different attributes such as place of articulation or pattern of articulation, and either these are voiceless or not.

Teaching pronunciation in the EFL Arabic classroom:

Arabs taught English since many years ago, but they don't focus on pronunciation. Different researchers have highlighted this point that includes Zughoul (1977). Al-Fakhri (2003) stated that teachers in EFL Arabic classrooms consider pronunciation less critical as compared to further language skills. Researcher has commented on the assessment process such as teachers only focus on writing or reading in annual exams. Teachers have not focused on pronunciation, and they have not taught their students about pronunciation.

A research was conducted on students of Arabs who learn English, and their backgrounds were different such as Yemen, Iraq as well as Libya. Arab English teachers do not focus on communication and pronunciation in the classroom (Shaker, 2004). Arabs English learners have limited opportunities for learning English because they have traditional method to learn. Teachers in the classrooms are native Arabic, and they lack the target language as well as pronunciation like native English. (Rababah, 2003). Researchers found that ignorance of pronunciation is not only based in EFL classrooms of Arabs, but it is also ignored in ESL classrooms of those countries where English is not the first language. Fraser claims that most of the teachers in EFL classrooms of Arabs do not teach pronunciation effectively and are not confident as well (Fraser, 2000). He has explained the reason of this lack of confidence in EFL teachers. According to Fraser, a lack of confidence in EFL teachers is due to the lack of proper training to teach pronunciation. Moreover, standard methods to teach pronunciation are less effective.

The researcher was one of the EFL teachers who didn't take proper training to teach pronunciation at university. Fraser (2000) claims that teaching the English language is better, and it will have a positive effect on the pronunciation of the learner. According to researchers, not only are teachers responsible for the pronunciation of students, rather than university or schools should be a part to improve the pronunciation of students by providing proper equipment to the teachers to teach pronunciation effectively. These pieces of equipment include videos or cassette recorders. Due to the shortage of equipment, teachers read the material by themselves and didn't realize their mistakes in understanding context. These factors prevent the English learners from being uncovered to target spoken language by speakers who are native English.

The impact of pronunciation in the communication process:

Pronunciation is one of the essential oral communication skill as well as it is the fundamental skill among EFL learners at various levels (Julia, 2002). But the question arises what good pronunciation is? According to Cruttenden, to produce connected speech that is to provide more than one word continuously is a proper pronunciation. Julia (2002) conducted researches that show, proper

pronunciation does not require full functional communication. One can realize the importance of pronunciation in connection as sub-branches of pronunciation prevents the students from successful communication.

Statement of the problem

Hypothesis

The critical step in the research is hypothesis testing, which proves either the hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The hypothesis is given below:

Ho: There is no significant influence of teaching listening skills toward the improvement of students' pronunciation ability at government schools in Jordan.

H1: There is a significant influence of teaching listening skills toward the improvement of students' pronunciation ability at government schools in Jordan.

Methodology

The research method designed for this study was experimental research. The research in which the researcher manipulates the independent variable is known as experimental research. The purpose of this research is to find out the cause as well as affect relationships (Johnson and Christensen, 2000). So the primary aim of this study is to explore the association between cause as well as effect and how far this association retains by giving specific treatment to control class and experimental class. The participants were the students of government schools of Jordan. The sampling technique was used to collect data. Total students were two hundred. All the students were divided into two classes. Pretest and posttest control groups design were applied. The design involved two groups, formed by casual assignments. Both groups have directed a pretest of the dependent variable. One of the groups received special treatment, and scores of the posttest were compared to determine the efficiency of treatment (Gay, 1991).

According to Andianto (2013) experimental group of class which taught listening skills to improve student's pronunciation and the control group which was without teaching listening skills to improve students pronunciation. To prove the hypothesis the result of posttest (experimental group) was compared with result of posttest (control group). Independent sample t-test was used to compare the both tests.

Table 1 Independent sample t-test

Group	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Experiment	69	61	66.32	3.41
Control	64	54	57.84	3.98

Table 2 Summary

Source	t obtained	df	t	P value
	6.458	33	2.186	0.00

The results of independent sample t-test in the above table shows the value of t found (6.458) which was higher than the value of t table (2.186) at the significance level of 0.00. Hence the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected.

In other words, there is a significant influence of teaching listening skills to improve student's pronunciation. The teaching listening skills to improve student pronunciation of experimental group is better than control group. Because the mean (66.32) of experimental group is higher than the mean (57.84) of control group.

Discussion

At the start of the research, the pronunciation ability of the control group and experimental groups were the same. These abilities are concluded by the mean score of pretests of the control group as well as the experimental group. It shows that no significant change in pronunciation ability in both types of groups. By analyzing the results of posttests, it is concluded that there is a massive difference between the ability of pronunciation before teaching listening skills as well as after teaching listening skills. The mean pronunciation score of the experimental group is higher than the score of the control group. The score of the experimental group was 65.588, while the score of the control group was 58.412. It proves that teaching listening skills are very effective in improving the pronunciation ability of the student.

Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendations

The conclusion of this study is based on observation, data analysis, discussion, and results of the research. The conclusion which is drawn through this experimental research are:

Teaching listening skills play an important role in the improvement of student's pronunciation skills. We can analyze this by the result of hypothesis testing. The results obtained are as follows t obtained is 6.236 while t table is 2.04. That's why the null hypothesis Ho is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

Based on these experiences, researchers suggest some valuable suggestion to teachers of EFL classrooms which are as follows:

An English teacher who is teaching pronunciation should have the ability to teach pronunciation creatively, and he should know creative techniques that are used in classroom activities. Don't use boring and monotonous techniques to teach pronunciation; students may lose interest due to tedious methods. Try to use many techniques to make the pronunciation class interesting for students.

An English teacher should also focus on his pronunciation to avoid mistakes in pronunciation class. It is a significant factor; students will copy the teacher and will make some mistakes and errors. Oxford dictionaries as well as digital dictionaries are suitable method to correct the pronunciation mistakes of students. Further researches are also being conducted to develop an effective way to teach pronunciation.

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