
Assessment of the Factors that Cause Pronunciation Difficulties to Learners of English as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

English is widely recognised as a means of communication and is included in the curricula of EFL schools, colleges, and institutions. Language is regularly articulated and conceptualised in multiple systems. If EFL learners need to communicate successfully, then they need to master these systems together. The majority of language programmes in the EFL context consider teaching these aspects of language systematically important and should not neglect them. The study concluded that pronunciation has always been perceived as a difficult area by teachers and learners of foreign languages. Pronunciation is the way in which we make words sound. Pronunciation provides information about the speakers' geographical and social origins. It is a crucial component of the learning of oral skills in a second language. Pronunciation has always been perceived as a difficult area by EFL learners. However, learning a foreign language has contributed to various historical contexts, educational demands, and various considerations. Learning a foreign language is now essential at every level of education. One of the recommendations made was that learners of foreign languages should be given a chance to choose the language they want to learn in order to help alleviate the pronunciation problems they encounter.

KEYWORDS: Pronunciation, English as a Foreign Language and Learners

Introduction

English is taught in EFL schools, colleges, and institutions because it is widely accepted as a language for communication. The acquisition of English as a foreign language is required for learners to practice life skills. Although many Arabs have difficulty learning a foreign language, pronunciation is one of the most challenging parts. For many EFL students, correctly pronouncing words may be an obstacle to effective communication. Additionally, pronunciation is a crucial component of spoken communication (Berry, 2021). Therefore, verbal communication might be useless and substantially limited without accurate pronunciation. Over the past few years, there has been a significant growth in interest in and focus on pronunciation instruction. There have been numerous studies on pronunciation in the context of EFL (Abdul-Abbas, Rashid, & Younus, 2021). Even though these studies on pronunciation are being conducted, additional study in EFL classrooms in the African countries is still needed in

this field. Teaching pronunciation has not always been a favorite among educators and language teaching theories (Roach, 2009). From linguistic, cognitive, and social perspectives, there is a resurgence of interest in phonological perception and production, as well as a resurgence of focus on pronunciation in second languages.

According to Reed and Levis (2019), language is frequently articulated and conceptualized in several systems. Learners must pronounce the sound system's system of speech units clearly and properly. These speech fragments can often be referred to as vocabulary. When speaking, students should use the word appropriately (Syed & Abdelrady, 2021). The way that students use language to convey meaning is known as the grammar system. Both methods must be mastered by learners because they can be used interchangeably. EFL students must grasp these systems collectively if they want to communicate effectively. The majority of language programs in the context of EFL believe that teaching these linguistic facets methodically is crucial and shouldn't be disregarded. The greatest approach to comprehend people is to pay close attention to how they pronounce words. Many EFL students experience hesitation and nervousness when speaking in English. Due to inhibition, they lack the confidence to pronounce words clearly (Nakazawa, 2012). There must be no tension or anxiety in learner-friendly language learning and teaching environments for students to feel less overwhelmed and participate in class discussion (Crystal, 2003). English has replaced other languages as the primary language used for oral communication worldwide, which is another factor in the importance of pronunciation.

Concept of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way of uttering a word in an accepted manner (Otlowski, 2008). Pronunciation is the production of a sound system which doesn't interfere with communication either from the speakers' or the listeners' viewpoint. Pronunciation can provide information about the speakers' geographical and social origins, and in most cases, it is the most salient characteristic of non-native speakers. Ikhsan (2017) noted that pronunciation has always been perceived as a difficult area by teachers and learners. Like listening, pronunciation is sometimes neglected in the process of language teaching in favour of reading and writing, which are rather more likely to lead to success in an examination. Pronunciation refers to the act or result of producing the sounds of speech, including articulation, stress, and intonation, often with reference to some standard of correctness or acceptability (Dictionary, 2022). It is an accepted standard for the sound and stress patterns of a syllable, word, phrase, etc. Pronunciation is the way in which a word or a language is spoken. This may refer to generally agreed-upon sequences of sounds used in speaking a given word or language in a specific dialect (correct pronunciation) or simply the way a particular individual speaks a word or language.

According to Wikipedia (2018), pronunciation is the way in which a word or a language is spoken. This may generally agree-upon sequences of sounds used in speaking a given word or language in a specific dialect (correct pronunciation) or simply the way a particular individual speaks a word or language. Pronunciation is a crucial component of the learning of oral skills in a second language (L2). Pronunciation has an important social value, which means that it should be related to prestige, such as intelligence, professional competence, persuasiveness, diligence, and social privilege. Pollard (2008) Pronunciation is an essential aspect of learning

to speak a foreign language. Pronunciation accuracy is difficult for some students since English is a foreign language to them. Some teachers and learners complain about difficulties in pronunciation since pronunciation is considered one of the most complicated but significant features of second language (L2) teaching and learning (Zhang, 2009). pronunciation refers to words that can be spoken in different ways by various individuals or groups, depending on many factors, such as: the duration of the cultural exposure of their childhood, the location of their current residence, speech or voice disorders, their ethnic group, their social class, or their education (Paulston, & Tucker, 2003). However, pronunciation is the way in which we make words sound. Pronunciation is the act or result of producing the sounds of speech, including articulation, stress, and intonation, often with reference to some standard of correctness or acceptability.

Concept of Foreign Language

A language that is not frequently spoken or used by the citizens of a community, society, or country is considered to be a foreign language. In other words, it describes any language that is not spoken by the locals of a particular location (HASA 2018). For instance, someone who lives in India would find Spanish to be strange. But for someone who lives in India, English is often a second language, not a foreign language. According to Dick (2021), learning a foreign language is all about developing effective communication and interpersonal relationships, two skills that can only be acquired through interacting with the local population. The ability to converse in a second language gives one a competitive edge while choosing a vocation. A language that is not one's native tongue but is commonly or officially spoken in a certain location is referred to as a foreign language. A language that was developed in a nation other than that of its speakers is referred to as a foreign language. Additionally, it is a language that the individual does not know well (STANDS4 2021). When referring to languages other than English taught as academic subjects, the phrases "foreign language" and "language" are interchangeable. A language that is not often spoken and utilized by the citizens of a community, society, or country is considered to be a foreign language.

A language that is spoken in a foreign nation is one that is not frequently heard there. Additionally, it is a language that is neither spoken among community members nor used as a first language. The words in foreign languages are enigmatic and unrelated to one's own language and culture. In addition, languages are unquestionably the greatest achievements of humans, serving a multitude of communicative objectives (Trigos-Gilbert, 2001). The process of learning a language that is different from one's native tongue is known as learning a foreign language (s). In a situation when the target language is not the official language nor used for communication, the language refers to the language that is studied in addition to one's mother tongue (IGI Global, 2021). Additionally, it is a language distinct from one's mother tongue, which is taught intentionally. A language that is native to another nation is referred to as a foreign language. Any language other than the one agreed upon by the parties as the language of the arbitration is referred to as a foreign language (Law Insider 2020). Any language used in a pre-primary educational setting that is not the first language or mother tongue, the language of instruction, or the second language, is said to be a foreign language.

Concept of Pronunciation Difficulties

Students need to know grammar and vocabulary, but they also need to pronounce the words and structures correctly. Additionally, students' primary objective should be to improve their pronunciation. Correct pronunciation is essential for effective speaking. When learning a language, there are numerous topics to cover, including vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking, according to Zhang and Yin (2009). The capacity to speak English embodies proper pronunciation and intonation, which has a direct impact on suitable conversational communication. Learners encounter great difficulties in learning English pronunciation for several reasons. Firstly, the English sound system has several sounds foreign to learners. Secondly, the way English speakers pronounce the ending sounds is completely different from the one deeply rooted in learners, making it more difficult for them to achieve appropriate English pronunciation.

Learners encounter great difficulties in learning English pronunciation for several reasons. Firstly, the English sound system has several sounds foreign to learners. Secondly, the way English speakers pronounce the ending sounds is completely different from the one deeply rooted in learners, making it more difficult for them to achieve appropriate English pronunciation. Consequently, learners have been reported to make phonetic errors leading to incomprehensible speech in English, which, to a large extent, weakens the learner's confidence both in speaking and listening (Zhang & Yin, 2009).

Factors that Determine Pronunciation Difficulties

Several researchers have gone to great lengths to suggest the many factors which affect students' pronunciation. previous studies have repeatedly shown that factors such as native language, age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and language ego, and motivation and concern for good pronunciation ability appear to have an influence on the teaching and learning of pronunciation (Zhang & Yin, 2009). The common determinants of pronunciation difficulties encountered by learners are as follows.

- ❖ **Native Language:** The native language is the most influential factor in accounting for students' pronunciation, especially foreign accents. If the students are familiar with the sound system of their native language, they will be able to effectively diagnose their own difficulties. In this sense, as asserted by (Senel, 2006), it should be noteworthy that interference or negative transfer from the first language is likely to cause errors in aspiration, intonation, rhythm, and melody in the target language. For example, these problems can occur when the rules for combining the sounds in syllable forms are different in two languages.
- ❖ **Prior English Pronunciation Learning:** Prior experiences with pronunciation instruction may influence learners' success with current efforts. Learners at higher language proficiency levels may have developed habitual, systematic pronunciation errors that must be identified. As we know, the first impression is very important in every occasion. Some students failed to pronounce some words correctly from the beginning. As they become accustomed to their own version of pronunciation, they would be more likely to miscomprehend when these words are not correctly pronounced.

- ❖ **Phonetic Ability:** According to Brown (2009), phonetic ability was sometimes called phonetic coding ability. It is a common view that some people have better listening skills for a foreign language than others. For example, they are able to discriminate between two sounds more accurately than others and also to imitate sounds better (Kanoksilapatham, 2008) suggested that some elements of learning are a matter of awareness of the different sounds. Additionally, learners' pronunciation ability can be improved by making a greater effort and concentrating on particular sounds.
- ❖ **Learner's Age:** Children seem to pick up accents very quickly; and the ability to do seems to diminish with age and the knowledge of their native language to a large extent acts as annoying interference while to their second language learning. Meanwhile, Pronunciation is considered to be the most difficult parts of a language for adult learners to master. One important reason is that, younger learners are able to learn the sound system more effectively, while the learning process of adult learners may be more likely to be hindered because of their age.
- ❖ **Learner's Attitude and Psychological Factors:** Attitude towards the target language learning can influence achievement in pronunciation. It is not common to find that quite a few students resist coordination with teachers in phonetics classes. Sometimes some other students pronounced separate phoneme uncorrected, these students laughed at them. That needs a correct attitude to learn English pronunciation. A number of researchers have claimed that work on pronunciation should need to be tied in with on the individual's value set, attitudes and socio-schemata.

Types of Pronunciation Difficulties

In the past, several researchers have gone to great lengths to suggest the many factors which affect students' pronunciation. previous studies have repeatedly shown that factors such as native language, age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and language ego, and motivation and concern for good pronunciation ability appear to have an influence on the teaching and learning of pronunciation. According to Sahatsathatsana (2017), The lack of opportunity to practice English pronunciation is another prominent problem in the improvement of English pronunciation. Several studies compared the accuracy of pronunciation of people living in English-speaking countries and those who did not. They revealed that learners who did not live in an English speaking country faced problems in mastering English pronunciation. These studies suggested that students with poor pronunciation, who are regarded as less experienced, had more language transfer problems than those with good pronunciation.

The types of pronunciation difficulties encountered by learners

- Stressing individual words incorrectly
- Stressing the wrong words in a sentence
- Pronouncing certain consonant sounds incorrectly
- Mixing up short and long vowel sounds
- Forgetting to finish words.

How to Overcome Pronunciation Difficulties

According to Yangklang, (2006) there are many methods and authentic teaching materials to improve students' pronunciation such as textbooks, tape recorders, televisions, exercises, drills, and multimedia. The role of parents is one factor that has an influence on language learning. Although parents do not have a direct role, such as coaching or supporting students' learning, an indirect role, such as providing facilities and paying for an additional English course for their children, helps improve how learners work to learn English. However, students can overcome pronunciation problems via the following ways.

Parental Support: The role of parents is one factor that has an influence on language learning. Although parents do not have a direct role, such as coaching or supporting students' learning, an indirect role, such as providing facilities and paying for an additional English course for their children, helps improve how learners work to learn English.

Virtual Interaction: Technology is able to provide virtual interaction where there are no people around us to talk in English, or when people want to talk in English with people from a different country. Therefore, technology can be used to maintain speaking English in a country where there is no generation who is able to speak English because technology can replace the unavailability of native speaker of English in this setting and technology provides opportunity to interact to other people virtually with the assistance of internet connection (Rintaningrum, 2016).

Teachers Should Keep on Lecturing in English: Students like to negotiate with teachers that they want to be taught in their native language so that they can understand the class easier. Sometimes the teachers compromise and lecture in their native language and keep on lecturing in their native language. We understand this group of teachers and sometimes we did the same. But it is very harmful to English teaching. Students can learn a lot if teachers keep on lecturing in English. At least the teacher's pronunciations can help them check whether their pronunciations are intelligible or not. English teachers should be more serious when they teach their students English, and give their attention to the phonological language interference for the students during their speaking or reading. In addition, test them periodically to check their advance pronunciation (Wei & Zhou, 2002).

Persistence: Learners are likely to improve their skills in English if they are persistent in learning English. The learning involves a desire to learn, putting in effort to learn English and never giving up learning English.

Pronunciation Exercises: Curriculum planners should introduce many exercises focusing on pronunciation and listening. Students should be given many exercises focusing on the English pronunciation, follows with a lot of practice for problems relating to voicing distinctions (Al-Zayed, 2017).

Improving Self-Motivation for Learners: Students should have a self-motivation for improving their English language pronunciation. In addition, look for some sources to acquire the English language from the native speaker of it, what makes them know the accurate pronunciation for the English words (Al-Zayed, 2017).

Students can learn a lot if teachers keep on lecturing in English. At least the teacher's pronunciations can help them check whether their pronunciations are intelligible or not. English teachers should be more serious when they teach their students English, and give their attention to the phonological language interference for the students during their speaking or reading. In addition, test them periodically to check their advance pronunciation. Students can learn a lot if teachers keep on lecturing in English.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that pronunciation has always been perceived as a difficult area by teachers and learners of foreign languages. Pronunciation is the way in which we make words sound. Pronunciation provides information about the speakers' geographical and social origins. It is a crucial component of the learning of oral skills in a second language. Pronunciation has always been perceived as a difficult area by EFL learners. However, learning a foreign language has contributed to various historical contexts, educational demands, and various considerations. Learning a foreign language is now essential at every level of education.

Recommendations

1. Learners of foreign languages should be given a chance to choose the language they want to learn in order to help alleviate the pronunciation problems they encounter.
2. Learners should acquire English as a foreign language in order to engage in life skills.
3. Learners of foreign languages should have an effective relationship with the methods of pronouncing different types of foreign languages they want to learn.
4. Learners of foreign languages should adopt the ability to pronounce the new language and progressively revise the system as they learn more languages.

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