



The Comparative Effect of Kinesthetic Reinforcement and Drama on Pronunciation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of kinesthetic reinforcement and drama on pronunciation of Iranian EFL learners. Administrators and educators are constantly looking for ways to increase student pronunciation achievement, especially since the development of EFL learning. A comparative literature review was conducted as the basis of this study. It showed that regardless of the content area, pronunciation is a tool that can be used in a variety of ways to avoid students from understanding and learning of subject matter. Experiments conducted indicated that both kinesthetic reinforcement and drama culminated in increases in pronunciation of the words they uttered. It was found that the students who were subjected to the kinesthetic reinforcement and drama class scored higher on pronunciation standardized test (OPT) than those students who were taught in the traditional way.

Keywords: kinesthetic reinforcement, drama, pronunciation



Introduction

Language is primarily speech, and knowing a language is often defined as the ability to understand and speak the language. It has also been noted that the development of other skills, namely reading and writing would be comparatively easy if they are based on oral foundation. Speaking is a crucial part of second language and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teachers teach speaking just a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. Nation and Newton (2009) stated that the goal of pronunciation instruction is to increase the intelligibility of second language speakers although factors such as age, L1, perspectives, and attitudes of the learner can affect the learning of second language phonological system. “There is clear evidence that there is a relationship between the age at which a language is learned and the degree of foreign accent” (Nation & Newton, 2009.). However, pronunciation has been identified as one of the important aspects of second language acquisition as it plays a crucial role in spoken conversational interactions and intelligibility.

The idea of teaching pronunciation in the classroom has not always been unanimously agreed upon. However, over the last few years many different studies have shown the importance of including explicit pronunciation lessons in the classroom. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010) make the claim that non-native speakers of English need to acquire a “threshold level of pronunciation” in order to be understood and lessen oral communication problems. Based on Farmand and Pourgharib (2013), pronunciation is the way we pronounce a word, especially in a way that is accepted or generally understood. The way we speak also conveys something about ourselves to the people around us. Learners with good pronunciation are more likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas. Pronunciation also includes attention to the particular sounds of language and aspects of speech beyond the individual sounds, such as; intonation, stress, rhythm, vowel and consonants, voiced and voiceless sounds. According to Gilakjani and Pourhosein (2012), pronunciation is a set of habits of producing sounds. The habit of producing a sound is acquired by repeating it over and over again and by being corrected when it is pronounced wrongly. Learning to pronounce a second language means building up new pronunciation habits and overcoming the bias of the first language. Pronunciation refers to the production of sounds that we use to make meaning. It includes attention to the particular sounds of a language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects), how the voice is projected (voice quality) and, in its broadest definition, attention to gestures and expressions that are closely related to the way we speak a language. A broad definition of pronunciation includes both suprasegmental and segmental features. Although these different aspects of pronunciation are treated in isolation here, it is important to remember that they all work in combination when we speak, and are therefore usually best learned as an integral part of spoken language. Pronunciation instruction is a prominent factor in foreign language teaching. Since sounds play an important role in communication, foreign language teachers must attribute proper importance to teaching pronunciation in their classes. It is evident that communication is a mutual relationship between the speaker and the hearer. This means that one must comprehend what he/she hears in the target



language and must produce the sounds of the language he/she is trying to learn accurately. Unless he has sufficient knowledge of the sound patterns of the target language, he can neither encode a message to anybody nor decode the message sent by another person by learning the sounds of the target language within his mother tongue. Therefore, pronunciation instruction is of great importance for successful oral communication to take place since it is an important ingredient of the communicative competence (Hismanoglu, 2006). According to Gilakjani and Pourhosein (2012), learners with good English pronunciation are likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners with bad pronunciation will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect. Such learners may avoid speaking in English, and experience social isolation, employment difficulties and limited opportunities for further study. We judge people by the way they speak, and so learners with poor pronunciation may be judged as incompetent, uneducated or lacking in knowledge. Yet many learners find pronunciation one of the most difficult aspects of English to acquire, and need explicit help from the teacher. Therefore, some sort of pronunciation instruction in class is necessary. Kinesthetic learners, or more accurately, students who show a strong affinity with kinesthetic learning, like to learn by doing, by moving around and through hands on learning. Research from neuroscience seems to suggest that movement encourages the brain to process information more effectively so even for those students who are not predominantly 'hands on' learners, learning activities that involve some movement may enhance the learning experience of all learners. It may well be true that using their particular strengths enables students with a preference for learning in a kinesthetic way to process any information more effectively and then use specific strategies to understand and memorize that information that will allow them to recreate the meaning from that information in different formats.

According to Rew and Moon (2013), the idea of using drama as a way to improve learners' English ability has been popular for many years. In Korea, many teachers at primary school integrate English drama into class, and some schools set up English drama clubs as a part of their after-school extracurricular program. Some eager parents send their children to private English drama class after school. They all hope and believe that these drama classes will help improve their children's English ability, especially in speaking or pronunciation. Drama helps learners gain the confidence and self-esteem needed to use English. The experience of learning English by doing and the enjoyment as reward from performing all contribute to boosting these affects. Here, learning by doing means that students are engaged in drama to learn language in a natural way, using body language and facial expressions, making pauses and interruptions, and showing emotions in their interpretations of the play (Lenka Krivkova, 2011).

When this process is rewarded on stage, the sense of accomplishment and the confidence that students feel will have positive effects on English learning in general. In Gardner's study (as cited in Fuentes, 2010) it is found that the increased motivation to learn language often leads to greater success in language proficiency.



Methodology

Participants

Sample population in this study was selected of 30 Iranian male and female students studying in grade 2 in an English language institution. The average age of students was 20. The participants were randomly divided into two experimental and control groups. Each group was consisted of 15 students and their mother tongue was Persian. Both experimental and control group classes were held 2 sessions (one hour and a half) per week lasting for 5 weeks. Both groups had no experience in drama and kinesthetic learning, and no distinction was made between them. The teacher was the same for the control and experimental groups. The experimental group accessed to the drama and kinesthetic relationship and the control group never resorted these in their learning process.

Instrument

In order to address the research question the researcher utilizes the following instruments: A test consisting 30 words from *English Pronunciation in use* book (Jonathan Mark, 2007) was given to the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the course as the pretest. Each individual learner was required to read the words loudly, and the teacher recorded their voices. This test was considered to measure the subjects' pronunciation skills before and after implementation of the treatment.

But after experiencing the trends by the experimental group, a similar post test was given to the experimental and control groups at the end of the course as the pretest.

Procedure

The process of data collection started in (2019) and continued until one month. At the first step, the researcher assigned the participants into experimental and control groups. The pronunciation test as a pretest was administered and all the participants were interviewed individually to ensure that there was no significant difference between two groups in terms of pronunciation skills.

During one-month course, participants in the experimental group took part in eight sessions in which they practice pronunciation of English vocabularies through drama and kinesthetic. Simultaneously, the participants in the control group applied the traditional method for learning the pronunciation of the words and never resorted to such trends. Each instructional session lasted for 90 minutes from 7:30 to 9 for the experimental group and for the control group from 9:15 to 10:45 in the morning on Saturdays and Mondays. At the end of the course, both groups were interviewed again and their pronunciation skill was assessed through pronunciation test as a posttest.

Conclusions and Results

Pourhussein Gilakjani (2012) claimed that pronunciation instruction is an important element in foreign language teaching. Since sounds play a significant role in communication, foreign language teachers must pay attention to teaching pronunciation in their classes. Most foreign language teachers try to teach the necessary grammar, vocabulary, culture, and four skills practice into their classes without noticing integrating pronunciation into their teaching (Hismanoglu&



Hismanoglu, 2011). Prior to the treatment, the independent-sample t-test was administered to find out any significant difference in pre-test mean scores between students in experimental and control group. The findings revealed that both groups were equal ($p > 0.05$) in their performances at the beginning of the course. After the treatment, the independent sample t-test was done to find out any significant difference in pronunciation post-test mean scores between students in both groups. The findings indicated that students in experimental group showed significant ($p < 0.05$) improvement in their pronunciation compared with the students in control group. This study came to a conclusion that kinesthetic and drama can contribute to the improvement of the students' pronunciation skills. The findings of this study will be highly invaluable for teacher, material developers and instructors to consider the usefulness of on line instructional materials, and invest more in designing and applying such materials.



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