

The Effect of Using Lingoes Software on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Pronunciation

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study aimed to investigate the effect of Lingoes software on vocabulary pronunciation of Iranian EFL students. The participants consisted of 42 second grade students. Control group was taught by traditional instruction while the experimental group received Lingoes instruction and practiced pronunciation of vocabulary for twenty minutes two times a week over the period of eight weeks. The achievement test on pronunciation of vocabulary was used to collect data. Pre-test was used at the outset of the study to find out whether the levels of the two groups are equivalent in terms of their achievement and then post-test was administered. The results revealed that using lingoes as instructional tool improved the students' pronunciation skill in the experimental group.

Keywords: Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Computer Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT), Vocational School, Computing, Accounting

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is important for communicating ideas and understanding other speakers well. It is particularly important to use pronunciation in beginner classes because it can help students to keep away the risks of fossilization and stabilization of pronunciation habits (Detya, 2001; Ritchie & Bhatia, 2008). According to Derwing (2005) pronunciation is an element of language which is granted little weight, if not completely discounted, by the teacher in the classroom and it seems that "L2 teachers are somewhat intimidated by the idea of teaching pronunciation" (p. 24).

One current subject in today's pronunciation teaching and research is how to teach pronunciation by modern technological tools. Computer-assisted pronunciation teaching, or CAPT, is interesting for teachers and researchers for several decades (Molholt, 1988). Researchers have been interested in knowing the effects of the

computer-based instruction. Computer-based instruction enables the children to progress at their own pace and provides them with appropriate alternative ways of learning by individualizing the learning process (Senemoğlu, 2003).

The use of technology, particularly software instruction, in education also creates interest, and helps increase the students' motivation. What computers can do seems quite inspiring for pronunciation teaching: computers are able to "provide learners individualized instruction, frequent practice through listening discrimination and focused repetition exercises, automatic visual support that demonstrates to learners how closely their own pronunciation approximates model utterances" (Levis, 2007, p. 184).

One aspect of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT), which is based on the use of technology for learning and teaching the segmental and suprasegmental features of the sound system, and is described by Rostron and Kinsell (1995) as the use of digitized speech for improving language pronunciation. Computers are used in teaching pronunciation to achieve two purposes: a) determining the student's deviation in pronunciation; and b) helping students in correcting such deviations (Machovikov, Stolyarov, Chernov, Sinclair, & Machovikova, 2002).

Approaches to Pronunciation Instruction

There are three approaches to pronunciation instruction, namely the Intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach, and the integrative approach (Celce-Murcia, 1996; Chen, 2007). These approaches are combination of traditional methods and modern techniques. In the intuitive-imitative approach, learners listen and repeat the rhythms and sounds of the target language without any explicit instruction. Particular technologies are used today, such as audiotapes, videos, computer-based programs and websites. In the analytic-linguistic approach, the learners are provided with explicit information on pronunciation such as the phonetic alphabet, articulatory descriptions and vocal charts. This explicit information can be used again in various interactive speech software and websites.

Today, pronunciation is practiced within meaningful task-based activities. Learners use pronunciation-focused listening activities to improve the learning of pronunciation. There is more focus on the suprasegmentals of stress, rhythm, and intonation as practiced in extended discourse beyond the phoneme and word level. Pronunciation is taught to provide the learners' particular needs. There is a dual-focus oral communication program where the micro level instruction is focused on linguistic (i.e., phonetic-phonological) competence through practice of segmentals and the suprasegmentals, and the macro level is focused on global elements of instruction, that its purpose is developing discourse, sociolinguistics, and strategic competence by using language for communicative purposes (Morley, 1994).

In this approach the main purposes of pronunciation teaching are for the learner to develop intelligible speech and to be able to communicate in the target language (Miller, as cited in Chen, 2007). In this context, Morley (1991) recognized the four basic pronunciation goals of functional intelligibility, functional communicability, increased self-confidence, speech monitoring ability and speech modification strategies (as cited in Chen, 2007). The new approaches that emphasize on communicative approaches to EFL pronunciation learning and the concern for building communication skills are revising interest in the role of the pronunciation in EFL learners' overall communicative competence.

Both teachers and learners must change their roles and methodologies of teaching must change reasonably. Teachers must act as pronunciation coaches and learners must be active learners taking the originative role to learn. The methodologies of teaching must change from stressing on segmental elements of pronunciation to supra-segmental elements of pronunciation and from linguistic competence to communicative competence (Morley, 1991).

One of the primary goals of teaching pronunciation in any course is intelligible pronunciation not perfect pronunciation. Intelligible pronunciation is a necessary part of communicative competence (Morley, 1991). Abercrombie (1991:93) defined comfortably intelligible pronunciation as pronunciation which can be understood with little or no cautious effort on the part of the listener. Learning of full pronunciation should no longer be the goal. Instead, Morley (1991) calls for setting more realistic goals that are sensible reasonable, utilizable and suitable for the learner's communication needs. The learner needs to expand functional intelligibility (ability of oneself to know easily), functional communicability (ability to understand the communication needs one encounters), help increase self-confidence, and the speech monitoring abilities and speech adjustment strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two Models of Instructional Design

The instructional design process must connect learning theories and instructional systems (Moallem, 2001). Two commonly used instructional design models and principles are objectivist, (traditional) instructional design models and constructivist or interpretive instructional design models (Moallem, 2001). The traditional models are related with behaviorism and cognitive science, while the interpretive or constructivist models are associated with cognitive science and constructivism. In spite of some differences among objectivist, traditional design models, all of these models need designers and developers to identify learners' prior knowledge, goals or general expected learning results, specific learning outcomes or performance objectives, instructional strategies, evaluation strategies and techniques, and assessment procedures (Moallem, 2001).

Roblyer (2000) also planned two different views on teaching and learning. One is directed instruction and it is related primarily to behaviorist learning theory, and the information-processing branch of the cognitive learning theories. The other is constructivist and it resulted from other branches of thinking in cognitive theory. "Some technology applications such as drill and practice and tutorials are associated only with directed instruction; most others (problem solving, multimedia production, web-based learning) can increase either directed instruction or constructivist learning, depending on how they are used" (Roblyer, 2000, p.49).

The Difficulties of Learning Pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation involves a variety of challenges. Teachers often find that they do not have enough time in class to give much attention and practice this area of English instruction. When they do find the time to teach pronunciation, the instruction is often devoted to the presenting and practicing of some unrelated topics and repeating sounds that often bring incorrect results, and discourages students. There are also psychological factors that affect pronunciation learning such as getting bored, lack of interest and motivation to repeat sound and mimic them as in traditional approach (Pennington, 1999).

Due to hopeless, problems, and boredom that are often associated with pronunciation, teachers should consider emerging technologies of their time to improve the delivery of instruction in the classroom and to help students at schools in order to be able to overcome those difficulties (Levis, 2007). So, in order to increase student's motivation and interest, instructional software has important role because students can learn pronunciation of words through the software by their own efforts (Anderson-Hsieh et al., 1994).

English pronunciation is a difficult skill to learn and has vital role for language learners. As mentioned earlier, both teachers and learners seem to notice no benefit to it because there is simply no time for such things especially crowded classes makes the situation less desirable. Some teachers have serious problems in English pronunciation teaching, and some students also have problems in English pronunciation learning. They are always challenging with the critical problems they face with English pronunciation in the classrooms (Hayati, 2010). Learning vocabulary in isolation, in a non-meaningful way, without any pronunciation skills, as it is usual among Iranian students, will lead to short term memory storage, repeated mispronunciations and a total lack of correct usage. Students are unfamiliar with phonetic alphabet, on the one hand, and the teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The design of the current research was quasi experimental and the participants were from two intact classes (One class as control group and the other class as experimental group). Pre-test and posttest were employed to identify the effect of Lingoes practicing

on vocabulary pronunciation of the students. In order to determine the effectiveness of the intervention process, the variation between two groups was significantly different and was tested by means of t-test.

Materials

First of all the researcher chose 60 vocabularies from English book 2 and divided the vocabularies into 20 sections in slides, in every section 3 words were included and the researcher produced pedagogical electronic content of these vocabularies using Power Point software to be used by computers that were equipped with microphone and speakers.

Data Collection procedure

The study was conducted to investigate the effect and benefits of using speech analysis software as an aid in a pronunciation teaching class. The study was conducted during an English course for students of foreign language learning. Computer-based technology teaching program was applied to the experimental group and not to the control group. In this case, it could be assumed that the levels of achievements of the control and experimental groups were equivalent before the experiment had begun. At first pre-test was used at the outset of the study to find out whether the levels of the two groups were equivalent in terms of their achievement sample test. At the end of the instruction the researcher used post- test in order to know the effect of the software.

Data Analysis

The researcher applied an independent sample T- test as a parameter to discover the difference between the performances of the two groups and to make clear if any of the groups had outperformed the other.

RESULTS

The results of table 1 represent a summary of descriptive statistics from pretest for both experimental and control groups. As the obtained data represents the two groups gained an almost common statistical characteristic to be called a homogeneous sample.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of participants' scores on pre-test

	class	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Control	20	6	12	10.1000	1.71372	.38320
	Experimental	22	5	12	10.9455	1.46311	.31194

Table 1 displays that the participants' pre-test mean score in control group is 10.1000 with the standard deviation of 1.71372 and pre-test mean score in experimental group is 10.9455 with the standard deviation of 1.46311 , which indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of participants' scores on post-test

	Class	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	Control	20	26	46	39000	5.68470	1.27114
	Experimental	22	36	47	42500	3.73847	.79705

According to the mean scores of the two groups in post-test in Tables 2 the experimental group who was taught through software instruction outperformed the control group and the second null hypothesis of the study is rejected. Table 2 shows that the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group, with the mean score of 42500 as compared to the mean of the control group which was 39000.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between the post test scores of the experimental and control groups. It was found that the use of lingo software makes it possible to have an interactive lesson. These different analyses which carried out in this study have provided us with information on the effectiveness of the CAPT in general. The ratings of global pronunciation quality indicated that the participants receiving CAPT made larger improvements in segmental quality.

As CAPT system is designed to be useful for learners with different mother tongues, it is thus possible that the results obtained on global segmental quality in this study can overcome the limitations of traditional approach. CAPT seems to be effective in improving pronunciation skill. According to the current research, based on the first and second hypothesis, there is significant difference on the effect of lingo software and traditional method on students' pronunciation skill, the mean scores of pretest and posttest in control and experimental group were compared with each other. To specify the difference, independent sample t-test was run.

Possible reasons for improvement in experimental group are that, CAPT instruction increases the interaction of group members. There were some changes with regard to pronunciation for experimental group. Students of experimental group had higher score and group activities provide learners with more time to speak the target language than traditional activities.

CONCLUSION

This research introduced a pedagogical example of EFL students actively using lingo software to learn pronunciation. The results of the study revealed that the use of lingo software is an effective technique in improving pronunciation for EFL students. It also showed that the use of lingo software leads to successful growth in students' pronunciation skill over time. Computer software for learning English pronunciation allows students to listen to what they want again and again, and help them to learn at anytime and anywhere. These characteristics, confirmed in this study, have been demonstrated by other scholars (Beatty, 2003). In conclusion, the students stated some advantages of learning with software, such as practicing, listening and consulting repeatedly. They did

not need to worry about being blamed or feeling embarrassed when errors were indicated by the software. The computer-assisted programs for learning English pronunciation could provide availability and repeated practice for learners to improve their learning. However, in using the software the students missed some of the features of a real teacher, such as knowing their needs, having a sense of life, speaking actively, giving them extra information, and having a sense of interaction.

For language instructors who do not feel comfortable teaching pronunciation or who cannot fit it into their curriculum, lingo software can provide an effective way to help students improve their ability to perceive, predict, and pronounce sounds outside of class. A second implication is that as in other areas of language acquisition, for many learners, the ability to perceive suprasegmental features may precede the ability to correctly produce them. The findings from this study provide further empirical evidence strengthening claims about the pedagogical use of oral reading techniques for pronunciation improvement.

As this study is limited to 60 vocabularies of English book 2 in vocational school so, similar research can be carried out on different topics in different classes. The duration of this research was limited to eight weeks, in another study, more time should be spent to find out the effectiveness of the experiment. Qualitative studies can be carried out with the students who have weak and strong problem. Teachers can be asked to take part in workshops and can be taught how to use the programs such as Captivate, Adobe Flash and Adobe Photoshop. They can be encouraged to develop computer-based software technology.

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