

A Study on Pronunciation Anxiety of Pre-service ELT teachers

Hüseyin KAFES^(*)

Abstract: Interest in pronunciation, one of the most frequently neglected aspects of language in language teaching and pedagogy, seems to have been heightened because of its role in speech perception and recognition. Another stimulus behind this revival is the observation that (mis)pronunciation is highly likely to cause embarrassment and apprehension. Despite these observations, little research has been devoted to pronunciation anxiety, especially in Turkey. Motivated by this need, this quantitative study aims to investigate pre-service EFL teachers' English pronunciation anxiety. This study was conducted with the participation of 75 freshmen enrolled in an EFL program at a Turkish state university. The data were collected through the Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety (FLPA) at the beginning of the fall semester of 2017-2018 academic year. Parametric and on-parametric tests-independent sample t-test, Mann Whitney U test, One way ANOVA, Kruskall-Wallis H test-were run to answer the research questions. All of the participants had moderate pronunciation anxiety, which varied according to participants' gender, prior English education, perceived level of pronunciation skills, and perceived level of pronunciation anxiety. The results of this study have implications for policy makers, materials designers, language instructors, and students as well.

Keywords: Anxiety, self-confidence, teacher trainee, freshmen

İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Sesletim Kaygı Düzeyleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Öz: Uygulamalı Dilbilim ve dil eğitiminde dilin en çok ihmal edilen yönlerinden biri olan sesletime olan ilgi, sesletimin konuşucunun doğru algılanmasındaki öneminin farkına varılmasına paralel olarak giderek artmış gibi görünmektedir. Bu yeniden canlanmanın ardındaki diğer bir neden de yanlış sesletimin konuşucuda endişeye ve utanmaya neden olma ihtimalinin yüksek olması durumudur. Bu gözlemlere rağmen, ulaşabilen alan yazında özellikle Türkiye'de yabancı dil öğretimi boyutunda sesletim kaygısına yönelik çok az araştırma yapıldığı görülmektedir. Söz konusu bu ihtiyaçtan yola çıkarak bu açılımlı durum çalışması ile İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümü öğrencilerinin İngilizce sesletim kaygısını araştırmayı amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışma, Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim dalında İngilizce eğitimi alan (75) 1. Sınıf öğrencisinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri 2017-2018 akademik yılı güz yarıyılı başında Yabancı Dil Sesletim Kaygı (FLPA) ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Parametrik ve parametrik olmayan testlerden bağımsız örneklem t-testi, Mann Whitney U testi, One way ANOVA, Kruskall-Wallis H testleri kullanılmıştır. Çalışmaya katılan öğrencilerin Lise eğitimleri sürecinde dil sınıfında bulunmalarının, üniversitede İngilizce hazırlık sınıfında İngilizce öğrenim görmelerinin, sesletim becerileri öz alguları ve sesletim öz algılarının sesletim kaygı düzeyleri üzerinde etkileri olduğu saptanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarının,

^(*) Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Akdeniz Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü (e-posta: hkafes@akdeniz.edu.tr)

öğretmen yetiştirme program geliştiricileri, materyal tasarımcıları, yabancı dil öğretmeni yetiştiricileri ve yabancı dil öğretmen adayları için sesletim kaygı düzeylerini belirleyerek bu kaygıları ortadan kaldıracak önlemler almalarında yardımcı olması umulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen adayı, sesletim, özgüven, Kaygı.

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I. Introduction

No skill or sub-skill for that matter, not even a language feature in the history of English language teaching has witnessed such extreme ups and downs, but for pronunciation instruction. It has been flown from one extreme to another. At one time, it was exalted to the pinnacle of importance, yet debased at another time. It was the blue-eyed boy of foreign language teaching in the heydays of the Reform Method and Audiolingualism (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Jones, 1997; Celce-Murcia, 2010). Then it came to be viewed as the orphan of second language research and teaching (Derwing & Munro, 2005), the Cinderella area of foreign language teaching (See, Cognitive Movement and early Communicative Language Teaching) (Kelly, 1969 cited in Celce-Murcia, 2010, p. 2). Pronunciation deserves neither fate, states Levis (2005), underlying that neither considering it as the main skill nor seeing it as irrelevant is fair and reasonable.

What caused pronunciation instruction to go from one extreme to the other? It is what determined the teaching of pronunciation: Ideology and intuition; not research (Levis, 2005). Acknowledging the role of intuition in teaching pronunciation, Celce-Murcia (2010) stresses that two approaches – ‘Intuitive-Imitative Approaches’ and ‘Analytic-Linguistic Approaches’– have shaped the teaching of pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, 2010).

Up until the late nineteenth century, Intuitive-Imitative Approaches reigned pronunciation teaching. Teachers’ and textbook writers’ understanding of and observations about sounds- sometimes inaccurate- shaped it (Kelly, 1969 cited in Celce-Murcia, 2010). In addition to depending on teachers’ and textbook writers’ intuition, Intuitive-Imitative Approach hinges on learners’ ability to listen to and imitate the rhythm and sounds of the target language with no explicit instruction. As listening to and imitating make up the core of this approach, it requires good models to imitate. Phonographs, tape recorders, language labs, audio and videocassettes, and the more recent compact discs and video discs were used as a model.

Analytic-Linguistic Approach, which was developed to complement the Intuitive-Imitative Approach rather than to replace it, is based on the explicit teaching of the sounds and rhythms of the language, through phonetic alphabet, articulatory descriptions, charts of the vocal apparatus, and contrastive information (Celce-Murcia, 2010).

A broad overview of the place of pronunciation in language teaching approaches and methods prevalent since the 19th century helps portray how the fortunes of pronunciation have waxed and waned. Irrelevant in Grammar Translation and Reading-Based Approaches, pronunciation achieved prominence with the rise of Direct Method and Naturalistic Methods, and especially with the ascendancy of the Reform Movement. Pronunciation reached a new peak in the 1940s and 1950s during Audiolingualism in the United States and Oral Approach in Britain, with the help of the Reform Movement. In the 1960s, it lost its popularity when the Cognitive Approach was at its peak. After a short-lived disgrace, it regained its importance during Silent Way, in the 1970s, to be flung into the backstage again with Community Language Learning. Then again in 1980s, it experienced a new resurgence, fueled by the increasing awareness of the communicative functions of the suprasegmental features in spoken language (Brazil et al., 1980; Brown & Yule, 1983), triggered by Communicative Approach. Communicative Approach, with its primary purpose of language – communication – revived the teaching of pronunciation, seeing it from a different perspective. Influenced by discourse-based approaches, new ways were sought to teach the suprasegmental features of language (i.e., rhythm, stress, and intonation – the broader, more meaningful aspects of phonology in connected speech), partly or wholly rejecting the techniques used to teach segmental features of language, such as the isolated sounds (Pennington & Richards, 1986; Celce-Murcia, 2010).

In addition to intuition, ideology – competing ideologies – largely determined teaching pronunciation. Two contradictory principles – the nativeness and the intelligibility – have influenced teaching pronunciation much more than intuition. The nativeness principle, which was dominant in the 1950s, is based on the premise that native-like foreign language pronunciation is both possible and desirable (Levis, 2005). However, upon the findings of Lenneberg's (1967) and Scovel's study (1995) on pronunciation, which showed that nativeness in pronunciation was biologically conditioned, this principle lost its charm, implying that aiming for nativeness was an unrealistic burden. A great deal of research has supported the widely-held conception that children have more advantages than adults when it comes to learning pronunciation (Asher & Garcia, 1969; Scovel, 1969; Siegler et. al.,) and that acquiring a nativelike accent after puberty for most people is extremely difficult, if not impossible (Flege, Frieda, & Nozawa, 1997; Flege, Munro, & MacKay, 1995; Scovel, 1988). However, none of the similar studies have shown that adults cannot acquire native-like pronunciation. Apart from this, some see that the age related hypothesis is itself problematic, underlining the impossibility of isolating speech learning from age-related factors, since socio-cultural and general maturational factors may impact age related differences (Flege, 1987; Leather & James, 1991).

A number of factors ranging from age to exposure to the target language, from prior second language instruction to aptitude, attitude, and motivation, to the role of the learner's first language, all influence learning pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, 2010). Although factors such as motivation, amount of first language (L1) use, and training may

help attain more native-like pronunciation, none helps overcome the influence of age (Flege & Frieda, 1995; Moyer, 1999).

The intelligibility principle, on the other hand, suggests that different features – segmental and suprasegmental – have different impact on intelligibility and understanding. Studies by Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, and Koehler (1992), Elliott (1997), and Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe (1998) showed that segmental instruction may not transfer to spontaneous speech, whereas suprasegmental instruction did have a significant effect on listeners' impressions of the comprehensibility of spontaneously produced speech. Pronunciation instruction should, therefore, focus on features – suprasegmental – believed to aid comprehension (See Avery & Ehrlich, 1992), since intelligibility is a precondition for understanding and communication. The intelligibility principle also holds that accent does not impair understanding and that communication can be successful even in the case of strong foreign accent (Munro, 1995).

Another factor helped the Intelligibility principle become popular; the status of English as the lingua franca of the world. As is widely-known, for the last decade or so English has become the lingua franca – global language – which favors intelligibility over native-like accentedness. This trend emphasizes the importance of intelligibility over the mastery of native accent (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2000, 2006). Besides, given the fact that a lot more people use English in Expanding and Outer Circle countries than in Inner Circle countries (Brumfit, 2001; Modiano, 2001; Yano, 2001; Crystal, 2003), striving to master a particular native accent of English sounds a utopian, unnecessary, and unrealistic burden for the learner (Alptekin, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2005).

Faced with these contradictory propositions on pronunciation, scholars have strived to unearth its complexities and sought ways to teach it in the best way possible. Such studies have focused mainly on learner-driven factors and teaching- driven aspects of pronunciation. Putting the learner in the center, studies in the former group aim to understand the learner's anxiety about and stance towards pronunciation (see Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Şenel, 2006; Jun & Li, 2010; Ingels, 2011; Ishihara, Tsurutani, & Tsukada; 2010; Kang, 2010; Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2010; Coşkun, 2011; Peperkamp & Bouchon, 2011; Kartushina & Frauenfelder; 2014; Hişmaoğlu, 2012; Baran-Lucarz, 2013, 2014; 2014; Borges, 2014; Kissling, 2015; Zoss, 2015; Gürsoy & Hüseyinoğlu, 2017; Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova, & Markechova, 2017). Those studies constituting the latter group have aimed to teach pronunciation in the best way possible, preferring to look at the issue from a learning/ teaching perspective (see Dalby & Kewley-Port, 1999; Breitzkreutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2001; Neri, Gucciarini, Strik & Boves, 2002; Seferoğlu, 2003; Levis, 2005, 2007; Munro & Derwing, 2006; Şenel, 2006; Demirezen, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009; 2010; Ducate & Lomicka, 2009; Tanner & London, 2009; Foote, Holtby & Derwing, 2011; Hişmaoğlu, 2009, 2011; Baker, 2014; Derwing, 2015; Fouz-Gonzales, 2017).

In addition to being seen as one of the most important aspects of the language ego (Guiora, Beit-Hallahmi, Brannon, Dull & Scovel, 1972 cited in Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova, & Markechova, 2017), pronunciation is viewed as closely related to learner

identity and level of self-confidence. It also influences how communication partners view one another (Levi-Ari & Keysar, 2010). Taken together, these aspects of pronunciation make the language learner vulnerable and susceptible to foreign language anxiety. These psychological dimensions of pronunciation have led Alrabai (2015) to claim that it is more of a psychological construct than a linguistic one.

Overall, very few studies so far have looked at pronunciation anxiety. Among these rare research, Baran-Łucarz's (2013, 2014) and Kralova et al.'s (2017) stand out. Baran-Łucarz (2014) investigated Phonetics learning and pronunciation anxiety and found a link between anxiety, L2 self-confidence and willingness to communicate in a foreign-language learning environment. She has shown that factors such as fear of negative evaluation and beliefs about the nature of FL pronunciation learning are significant sources of phonetics learning anxiety. Similarly, Kralova et al., (2017) investigated how student teachers' pronunciation anxiety could be reduced through psycho-social training. To test the participants' pronunciation anxiety, they designed the Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety (FLPA) questionnaire.

Very little research has been done on pronunciation in Turkey, too. One of these studies, carried in a Turkish university setting with the participation of 47 senior students, investigated pre-service English teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation in English (Çoşkun, 2011). What stand out amidst his findings are learners' preference for having native-speaker English teacher, wishing to have native-like pronunciation, having clear and intelligible pronunciation, seeing the teaching of pronunciation important, and taking the goal of teaching pronunciation to help students become native-like speakers. In another Turkey-based study, which was carried out with the participation of 111 undergraduate students -55 seniors and 56 freshmen, Gürsoy and Hüseyioğlu (2017) examined ELT teacher trainees' self-perceptions and awareness of pronunciation skill and their attitudes towards its instruction. Although teacher trainees in general had high self-perceptions of pronunciation, freshmen had a higher level of self-perception than the seniors. Both groups had positive attitudes towards pronunciation, its instruction as a skill, and were aware of the importance of suprasegmental features as well as segmental features of pronunciation. Gürsoy and Hüseyioğlu (2017) also found a significant correlation between participants' attitudes towards pronunciation skill and their awareness of the importance of the segmental features of pronunciation.

Although language learning anxiety has been investigated from various angles in Turkey, no study to date has shown direct interest to EFL learners' pronunciation anxiety. Motivated by this need, this study aims to explore pre-service ELT teachers' pronunciation anxiety from various aspects. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions; that is, whether there is a significant relationship between pre-service ELT teachers' pronunciation anxiety level and their

1. Gender,
2. Having had prep school education in high school,

3. Having had prep school at university
4. Perceived pronunciation skill, and
5. Perceived pronunciation anxiety level.

II. Methodology

Adopting a descriptive approach, this exploratory study, which was conducted at a state university in Turkey with the participation of 75 freshmen in the fall semester of 2017-2018 academic year, investigated pre-service ELT teachers' pronunciation anxiety. Specifically, it explored the impact of the above-mentioned variables on pronunciation anxiety of participants.

A. Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 75 freshmen enrolled in an ELT program in a state university in Turkey. The participants had B2 level of English proficiency and started learning English at the same age. 63 of the participants had intensive English training in high school; 12 of them did not. However, only 26 of them had enrolled in prep class at university, while the rest did not. All of them enrolled in a three-credit Listening and Pronunciation course. Non-random convenience sampling technique was employed in the selection of the participants for practical causes, such as ease of access and geographical closeness (Dörnyei, 2011).

B. Instruments

The data for the study was gathered through a questionnaire - Foreign Language Pronunciation Anxiety (FLPA) questionnaire - developed by Kralova et al., (2017). FLPA was designed to assess specifically pre-service ELT teachers' pronunciation anxiety. It consists of two parts: The first section, which originally included three questions, seeks to gather demographic information about participants' perceived pronunciation skills, perceived pronunciation anxiety, and their interest towards pronunciation. Three more demographic information seeking questions – questions about gender, prior enrollment in intensive language programs in high school, and enrollment in intensive language programs at university- were added. The question about interest towards pronunciation was taken out. The second part of FLPA consists of 20 items -declarative statements which seek information about participants' perceptions of and attitudes towards pronunciation, and their level of pronunciation anxiety. In this part, students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' (6) to 'strongly disagree' (1). The original version of the questionnaire was preferred as it was designed specifically for freshmen enrolled in a TEFL course and its validity and reliability had already been established.

The data for the study was collected at the beginning of the fall semester of 2017-2018 academic year. The participants completed the Foreign Language Pronunciation

Anxiety (FLPA) questionnaire in a classroom environment. They were informed about the study and data gathering instrument.

C.Data Analysis

Prior to analyzing the data, all the data gathered were examined in terms of suitability for the statistical tests. For instance, Normality - Central tendency, skewness, kurtosis, Shapiro-Wilk, and/or Kolmogorov-Smirnov – were run in order to be able to decide on the hypotheses. Thus, non-parametric tests were run in cases when the results of the analyses were not within the normal distribution; parametric tests were used in cases when the results yielded values close to normal distribution. As such, independent t-test, Mann-Whitney U test, One-Way ANOVA, and Kruskal-Wallis H tests were run in order to find answers to the research questions.

III.Findings

One of the aims of the present study was to examine the relationship between pre-service ELT teachers' pronunciation anxiety levels and their genders. Thus, to find answer to this question, that is, to examine the existence of connection between the participants' pronunciation anxiety levels and their gender, an independent sample t-test was run. The results of the independent t-test indicated that there was not a significant relationship between participants' level of pronunciation anxiety and their gender $t(73) = 1.83, p = .071$. In other words, gender was found not to be one of the determinants of pronunciation anxiety.

Another concern of the present study was figuring out the relationship between the pronunciation anxiety levels of the participants and their educational backgrounds. Since some of the participants declared that they had had intensive English courses during their high school education, it was hypothesized that such an educational background might have an effect on their pronunciation anxiety levels. Thus, to test this hypothesis, a Mann-Whitney U test was run to identify whether there was a significant relationship between the participants' level of pronunciation anxiety and their English education in high school. The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between the variables. That is, the findings showed that the participants' pronunciation anxiety levels differed, depending on their enrollment in intensive English education courses in high school, $U = 225, p = .027$. In other words, this finding indicated that the participants who had intensive English education in high school had higher pronunciation anxiety mean rank (2547) than those that did not (303).

The third research question of the present study sought answer to whether the participants' pronunciation anxiety levels differed, concerning their enrollment in prep school at university. To figure out the answer, an independent sample t-test was run. The result of the analysis indicated that the participants' pronunciation anxiety levels differed according to whether they had prep school education at university or not, $t(73) = 2.209, p = .030, \eta^2 = .063$. This showed that the participants who had prep school education at university had higher pronunciation anxiety mean scores ($\bar{X} = 68.52$) than those who

had no prep school education at university, ($\bar{X} = 60.3$). This effect quantity can be said to be moderately wide when the eta-square of this difference was taken into consideration (Büyüköztürk, 2003). This finding indicates a positive relationship between awareness and pronunciation anxiety.

The relationship between perceived pronunciation anxiety levels of the participants and their perceived pronunciation level was another concern of the present study. In order to be able to pin down whether the participants' pronunciation anxiety level differed depending on their perceived pronunciation skills, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was run. The results of the analysis indicated that pronunciation anxiety levels differed in accordance with the participants' perceived pronunciation skills ($p=.001$). The findings showed that the mean rank of pronunciation anxiety of the participants who perceived that they had low pronunciation skills (59.72) was higher than those who perceived their pronunciation skills as moderate (39.78) and those who perceived their pronunciation skills as high (27.75). In other words, the participants seems to be unaware of their pronunciation anxiety levels.

The final research question of the present study inquired the relationship between perceived pronunciation anxiety and the actual pronunciation anxiety levels of the participants. The analysis of One-way ANOVA showed that the participants' mean score of actual pronunciation anxiety differed according to their perceived pronunciation anxiety, $F(2,72)=15.303$, $p=.000$, $\eta^2=.298$. That is, the mean score of pronunciation anxiety of the participants who perceived that they had low pronunciation skills (51.3) was higher than those participants with moderate perceived pronunciation skills (63.23) and those with high perceived pronunciation skills (74.45). Likewise, it was also found that the mean score of actual pronunciation anxiety of the participants who perceived that they had moderate level of pronunciation skills was lower than those participants who perceived that they had high level pronunciation skills. This effect quantity can be said to be wide when eta-square of this difference was considered. The findings of the present study support BaranŁucarz's (2013) Phonetic Learning Anxiety (PLA). This model implies an interplay between pronunciation learning achievements with L2 learners' apprehension levels.

A. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this paper was to throw some light on pre-service ELT teachers' level of pronunciation anxiety and to examine whether it correlates positively with some features, such as gender, enrollment in intensive English program in high school, enrollment in intensive English program at university, perceived pronunciation skills, and perceived pronunciation anxiety level. The results in general indicate that all of the participants have moderate level of pronunciation anxiety. This finding indicates that pre-service English teachers who are in the beginning of their path to becoming ELT teachers have pronunciation anxiety. This finding show similarities with the findings of the previous studies in the literature (see Kralova et al., 2017).

The findings also showed that there is a positive correlation between participants' level of pronunciation anxiety and some other variables such as having prep school education in high school, having prep school at university, perceived pronunciation skills, and perceived pronunciation anxiety level. On the other hand, the findings indicated that the gender variable have no significant impact on the participants' level of pronunciation anxiety.

Given the findings of this study, it seems that pre-service ELT teachers have moderate level pronunciation anxiety which might stem from fear of making mistakes in pronunciation. Therefore, examining the possible causes of pronunciation anxiety and informing pre-service ELT teachers about them should be a crucial concern of all foreign language teachers/instructors. More importantly, the analysis of the findings indicate that the more proficient the learners are, the more anxious they are about their pronunciation in English. That is, as their awareness of having proper English pronunciation increases, their level of anxiety levels also grow. The increase in the level of pronunciation anxiety of the participants who will teach English as a foreign language in the future will hopefully contribute to their professional development as English teachers. It is highly likely that fear of making pronunciation mistakes might hinder their active use of the target language. Thus, during their pre-service education, pre-service teachers should be informed about the fact that making mistakes in language learning, for that matter pronunciation mistakes, is an inevitable part of this process and a vital indicator of progress.

B.Implications for further research and pedagogy

Notwithstanding the limitations of this study, the findings have implications for language policy makers, program developers, materials designers, language instructors, and learners. First and foremost, policy makers should make informed decisions by making use of the findings of this and similar studies when making policies about pronunciation teaching for pre-service ELT programs. Similarly, materials designers, especially on listening and pronunciation, should take into consideration these findings to be able to consider these students' pronunciation anxiety. Most importantly, language instructors-those in teacher education environments should be aware of the existence of pronunciation anxiety of their students to tailor their courses to suit their students' needs, to create a comfortable learning atmosphere, prefer activities with a low anxiety-load, and to encourage and guide them to overcome their pronunciation anxiety. Additionally, discovering the sources of pronunciation anxiety of learners is of significant importance, not only for teacher educators but also for pre-service ELT teachers. Finally, the language learner, as an autonomous individual, should also be aware of their own pronunciation anxiety level to be able to successfully deal with it.

This exploratory study investigated pre-service ELT teachers' level of pronunciation anxiety. Therefore, its findings reflect only pronunciation anxiety level of the participants and its relationship with some variables. Hence, conducting comprehensive research with more participants from various universities, both state and private, is needed to fully grasp the breadth and depth of this issue and to make broad

generalizations. One avenue for further research might be to investigate the possible sources of pronunciation anxiety, which will certainly contribute our understanding and overcoming pronunciation anxiety.

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