USING EXPLICIT PRONUNCIATION INSTRUCTIONS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING COMPETENCIES: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Nasser Omer M. Al-Tamimi[1] and Rais Ahmed Attamimi[2]

[1]Dept. of English- College of Education- Seiyun, Hadhramout University, Yemen

[2]Dept. of English- Salalah College of Technology, Sultanate of Oman

ABSTRACT: *This article aims to find out the effect of explicit pronunciation instructions of English on developing students' speaking skills and attitudes towards the offered pronunciation training. A quasi-experimental design was employed to conduct the current study with pre and post-tests. Sixty university students were involved in the study and those participants were subjected to a treatment for 14 weeks of instruction on English pronunciation. Data were collected using speaking tests, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analysed and mean values, standard deviations and paired sample t-tests results were obtained to answer the pertinent questions of the research. The findings reveal that the method of explicit pronunciation instruction is an effective one in improving the students' speaking skill as well as their attitudes towards the pronunciation training in particular and the learning of the target language as a whole. Finally, some pedagogical implications are presented to address a few crucial issues for teachers to be taken into their considerations for better teaching practices within the Yemeni EFL context.*

KEYWORDS*: Pronunciation, Explicit Instruction, Speaking Competence, Attitudes*

INTRODUCTION

As spoken communication continues to rank at the top of the myriad of ways to secure optimal employment, the sometimes nebulous skill of mastering the correctly perceived pronunciation of any language has remained an important, if elusive, goal for many language learners to master. Taking the case of the English language in particular, this is a particularly slippery language within which to consistently master pronunciation, with all of the different nationalities of the world who have come to the world stage to present their various written works only, and have learned English as a second language, a circumstance which too often admits the essential ambiguity of the derivation of many conventional English words. About pronunciation itself, prominent editor and newspaperman William Feather (1889-1981) noted that:

> …command of English, spoken or written, ranks at the top inbusiness. Our main product is words, so a knowledge of theirmeaning and spelling and pronunciation is imperative. If theman knows the language well, he can find out about all else…

Noted author of many books on the English language, Bill Bryson (1990:98), also captures some of the dualities and frustrations that students of the English language undoubtedly experience:

> …language is more fashion than science, and matters of usage, spelling and pronunciation tend to wander around like hemlines…

Dictionary.com defines pronunciation first as "the act or result of producing sounds of speech, including articulation, stress, and intonation, often with some standard of reference to correctness or acceptability". The second listed definition goes on to state that pronunciation is "the accepted standard of the sound and stress patterns of a syllable, word, or phrase".

As far as second language learning is concerned, pronunciation, according to Macdonald (2002:3), "is a key element of the learning of oral skills in a second language". As instructors in the field of education, it has been observed that a very large cross-section of English students have very significant issues with the basic production and pronunciation of elemental English words and sounds in the geographical region of the Middle East. These issues are rendered even more acute when also taking into consideration the historical circumstance that oral and listening capabilities for L1 users of the Arabic language are ones that are valued the most highly, which, in turn, would logically increase the amount of personal anguish and frustration on the part of these speakers when they attempt to speak in English as an L2.

In examining the broader field of pronunciation, and language learning, the social and communal tendencies, as well as differences of language learners, must also be taken into account. Many previous studies done in the fields of motivation in general, and the Middle East region in particular, have shown that female students appear to have many built-in advantages that both enhance their willingness to engage in speaking a second language in the first place, as well as the absolute amount of words they are able to produce, and produce with reasonably correct pronunciation.

With regard to the regional context, there have been many previous studies done that have concentrated on broader questions dealing with students' motivation levels in general, and how motivation can make a positive difference in the knowledge and tangible outcomes sought by both educators and students alike.

Our research focuses on a much more locally based question: the observation that many EFL students in Yemen are in the habit of making countless and repeated errors in the pronunciation of basic English words and sounds, and what we, as committed educators, dedicated to improving the future lives of these students, can do to overcome the production of these errors, as well as the inevitable reluctance to continue studying or trying to correct their errors in the future.

Statement of the Problem

English is a significant language for Yemeni EFL learners. It is taught from grade seven up to the end of the secondary stage. Universities also have decided to include a general English course in the first level to improve students' communicative competence. The role of teachers is to make learners proficient and competent in the use of English as a tool for communication. As pointed by Khanbeiki & Abdolmanafi-Rokni, (2015) improving students' pronunciation is

an integral part of achieving the need of developing students' communicative competence. Successful speaking involves the sending of the information in such a way that the other person or persons understand it. In other words, our pronunciation, stress, intonation, pause, voice quality should be proper and problem in any of these aspects will impede the clarity of our speech, which may cause misunderstanding to our listeners. However, teachers of English in Yemeni schools pay almost no attention to the teaching of pronunciation and accordingly, most of the Yemeni students have got problems with proper pronunciation of words (Kharma and Hajjaj, 1997; Bin-Hadi, 2016). Therefore, the working hypothesis of the current study is that the pronunciation of basic English vocabulary, most notably the total amount of quality, and total number in quantity, of words and associated sounds, is unacceptably low. To solve this problem, we proposed several measures of treatment, to be applied to a group of students pretested and selected for the purpose of tangibly increasing the number of words they can correctly pronounce, as well as the number of sounds they can correctly assign on a spontaneous basis to given words that they will most likely encounter in their future personal and professional lives.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to find out the effect of pronunciation instruction on developing speaking skills. A further aim of the study is to confirm the suspicion, on the part of the researchers, that the pronunciation instruction has a snowballing effect on the attitude of the students.Finally, the ultimate aim of our research is to discover methods of teaching, as well as affective factors on the part of students, that may increase their receptivity to producing oral content absolutely, as well as to increase their intuitive knowledge of how to pronounce given vocabulary items in given contexts.

Questions of the Study

1- To what extent does the explicit pronunciation instruction affect the improvement of speaking skill among university students?

2- To what extent does the explicit pronunciation instruction affect students' attitudes towards pronunciation training?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several themes and concepts related to the theme of the explicit pronunciation instruction as an intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approach have been found in the existing literature. Based on the idea that pronouncing and speaking a language are two basic skills in the overall process of teaching and learning a foreign language, these two skills are considered to be teachable through training and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1962), and many researchers (cf. Fraser and Perth 1999; Murphy, 2003, Saito & Lyster, 2012a, 2012b) have supported and recommended the use of different sets of explicit pronunciation instructions in language classes as a way to improve the collective pronunciations of the students. Following this current trend, the researchers of the present study confidently believe that explicit training of English pronunciation to a group of Yemeni EFL learners is of a paramount degree of importance and that offering it would ultimately improve their pronunciations as a basic language skill as well as enhance their learning of the English language as a whole. Therefore, building up a greater awareness of pronouncing sounds in students will enable them to be more aware of what they

are saying on the future occasions that they will be expected to speak English. Hence, explicit teaching of pronunciation should be adopted as a possible teaching method in the Yemeni EFL classrooms to instruct students on how to pronounce words effectively and efficiently. The following sub section provides an overview on the nature and implementation of the explicit instruction of English pronunciation in language classrooms.

Explicit Training of English Pronunciation

The nature of explicit pronunciation instructions is explained based on two different existing yet related educational paradigms. Firstly, Celce-Murcia, et al. (1996) stated that one of these trends is regarded an intuitive-imitative approach, whereas the other trend is called analytic-linguistic approach. The first orientation depends solely on listening and imitating the sounds and rhythms of the target language without having any sort of explicit teaching. It also recommends the use of good models that enable learners to pick up the right pronunciation of the language. However, in the analytic-linguistic orientation, the learners are provided with explicit instructions on pronunciation (e.g. the phonetic alphabet and its description). In this approach, learners receive several explicit instructions on the sounds and rhythms of the target language. Generally, the two approaches work simultaneously and interactively to complement each other.

Explicit training is a form of clear instruction that teachers could use to enable students to understand what they learn as well as what they have learned (Villaume and Beabham, 2002). The explicit instruction model illustrates the transition of the responsibility for the learning process from teachers to students. In the early stages of language lessons, teachers are usually in control. Teachers should provide students with help and assistance to make them feel responsible for their own learning. While in a guided practice circumstance, the responsibility gradually shifts from teachers to students. During individual practice, the students are basically responsible for their learning (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983). In other words, explicit instruction assigns a central role to the teacher in explaining, modelling, and providing opportunities for practice with feedback. The first phase is the introduction. The primary focus in this phase is for students to learn about the sounds of the language. The teacher verbalises the sounds. The second phase is the explanation and modelling. The mechanics and subcomponents of the sounds are explained. The teacher models the sounds and explains how it is pronounced. The third phase is the teacher-guided- practice. The students try the sounds out under the teachers' supervision. The teacher leads guided practice to further explain the sounds and the pronunciation of words and ensure high success rates. Effective feedback increases student motivation by making the process of sound acquisition more efficient. The feedback is immediate and specific, which provides corrective information for the learners, and carries a positive emotional tone. The fourth phase is independent practice. The primary focus is on the students practicing the sounds and the pronunciation of different words on their own. The teacher monitors practice to identify problematic areas. Finally the fifth stage is extended practice as well.

The teaching of pronunciation has been the focal subject of theoretical inquiry from various angles. Traditionally, from the point of view of grammar translation method advocates, it has been thought that pronunciation is not important as grammar and vocabulary. Based on this misconception, the teaching of grammar and vocabulary was dominant at that time. In the period of the audio-lingual method, learners spent a great deal of their time listening and repeating sounds (i.e. drills). Pronunciation instruction as a good language teaching method was given much attention through repeating sounds in the language laboratories. When the

communicative approach emerged in the 1980s as one of the effective approaches in teaching second languages, pronunciation instruction was given less importance. Intelligibility and comprehensibility were given much more attention at that time than accurate pronunciation of the target language.

Previous studies

In reviewing some of the previous studies, Behzadi & Fahimniya (2014) explored the effect of two approaches used for teaching pronunciation, vis-à-vis the intuitive-imitative and the analytic linguistic, on students' speaking fluency. An experimental research design was employed to conduct and collect data for their research. Sixty intermediate Iranian EFL learners participated in the study. Two groups were randomly chosen for the study from the targeted college population. Data were collected using a paired set of pre- and post- pronunciation tests. The results were analyzed using a paired t-test, and indicated a significant increase mean score in the post-test of the pronunciation test in favour of the analytic linguistic approach.

Another study Atli & Bergilb (2012) conducted a study to find out the effect of pronunciation instruction on developing overall speaking ability. Twenty Turkish students were randomly selected to participate in the study. The range of ages of the participants was 18-24 years. The sample was homogenous with regard to nationality (Turkish), as well as the same number of years that they had been studying English. The data were collected using a picture strip story. It is worth-mentioning that a picture strip story, according to Damayanti (2017), is:

> A story which has been separated into
> smaller segments from beginning to end.
> These story segments do not have tocontain
> much or many text at all in fact, a strip story
> could consistentirely of pictures similar to
> what one would find in a comic book.

In Atli'& Bergilb's study, a questionnaire on pronunciation skills was also administered to the students to assess their perceptions of pronunciation skills. The findings of the study indicated that the pronunciation instruction has improved student's speaking skills. The study recommends that explicit pronunciation instruction should be introduced to the students in pre-service teacher training.

Varasarin (2007) investigated as well the effect of pronunciation training on developing students' pronunciation and spoken intelligibility. His study was comprised of two consecutive cycles. The first one was used to train five teachers on pronunciation and language strategies. By the end of the first cycle, teachers were evaluated and the results indicated evidently that the teachers' pronunciations and their speaking confidence and correctness of speech have been enhanced as well. In the second cycle, those teachers who received the training were asked to teach four students. Interestingly, similar results were obtained by the students. The implication of the results shows the importance of pronunciation training in the Thai language learning context.

Altamimi (2015) conducted a similar study to investigate the effect of minimal pairs' strategy on improving English pronunciation of unfamiliar consonant sounds phonemes (/p/, /ʒ/, /v/, /tʃ/ and /ŋ/) for native Arab students who were studying English in the Saudi language learning context. Experimental design was used in his study with thirteen Saudi students who were

involved in the study. They were all males studying English in the 2nd intermediate class as a foreign language. The researcher's intervention study lasted for one month. One hour was given to the selected sample in each week of the experiment. Data were collected through a series of pre-, post-tests and oral assessments (i.e. observations). The results indicated a positive effect of the minimal pairs in improving Saudi students' pronunciation.

Khaghaninejad (2015) examined the effect of two methods of pronunciation instruction on enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension. An experimental research design with pre- and post-tests was employed in his study. Three classes were utilized to form the sample of the study. The intermediate English learners in two classes were used as experimental groups and the other class was used as a control group. A listening test of 25 items was constructed by Cambridge Key English Test Listening materials to measure the learners' listening comprehension. The same test was used as a pre- and post-test. In effect, the experimental group received the treatment regarding the phonetic symbols and phonemic transcription. The findings revealed that the experimental groups outperformed the control group and the results showed that their listening comprehension was boostedwhen compared tothe results obtained from the sample in the control group.

Ali (2015) investigated the impact of a designed language course of pronunciation among Saudi students who had problems when pronouncing some English vowels. That material course was prepared to improve the students' awareness of the letter-sound relationship of English vowels. The course comprised of three lists of English, namely mono-syllabic, disyllabic and multi-syllabic words. These words were used as pre- and post-test to measure the students' progress before and after the experiment. Students from AlBaha University in Saudi Arabia were selected for the study. They have had no exposure whatsoever to any kind of native English utterances. Students were asked to pronounce words according to what they have been given and taught in the course introduced to them. Results revealed that the students' joint pronunciations of the English vowel in mono-syllabic and disyllabic words improved. However, students faced some difficulties in pronouncing and deciphering vowel sounds in multi-syllabic words. Although the results of this study were positive and promising to a certain extent, it is more advisable to use a greater amount of listening practice and input as good strategies to develop students' awareness of pronunciation.

METHODOLOGY

ResearchDesign

A quasi experimental design study was chosen for the purpose of achieving the objectives of this research. The study is a time-series study, with students being tested at two different intervals of time, and eventually in two similar learning environments within the same region.

Participants

A total of 60 university students who were studying English in the third level of the English Departmentof the College of Education at Seiyun in the Hadhramout Province, were involved in the study. They were all Yemenis and were homogenous with regard to age, culture, and mother tongue. All of the participants were at ages ranging from 18 to 22 years. A total of 40 participants were males, while females formed only a 20% share of the sample. This roughly reflects the gender distribution at the Hadhramout University- English Department.

Instrumentation

Considering the purpose and limitations of the study, three research instruments were used to collect the data. The first instrument was a speaking test which was given to the students before and after the experiment for both the control group as well as the experimental group. The test was adopted from Altamimi & Attamimi's (2014) research. The test contains three activities: talking about two pictures' differences, reading aloud, and adebatable topic. The scoring rubric of the test provided a measure of quality of performance on the basis of five criteria: pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, fluency and interactive communication on a five-rating scale ranging from 90- 100 meaning "excellent" to 0-49 meaning "fail" based on the scales followed at the Hadhramout University- Yemen (Ministry of Higher Education, 2008). The test is reliable and valid and could be considered as a research tool for measuring the sample's speaking proficiencies. The second instrument was an altitudinal questionnaire. It was developed by Atli & Bergilb (2012) with six items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 "strongly agree to 1 "strongly disagree", was used to measure the students' attitudes towards the pronunciation training program. The validity and

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I think pronunciation classes will help me improve my pronunciation significantly.					
2	I think pronunciation teaching should be a part of preparation programs at universities.					
3	I like studying pronunciation in class.					
4	I like doing repetition exercises in class.					
5	Pronunciation classes are helping me to become more confident in speaking classes.					
6	I think pronunciation classes are easy.					
7	I think pronunciation classes are necessary.					
8	When I speak English, I use what I learn in pronunciation classes.					

reliability of the questionnaire were initially determined by its originator and therefore it is considered valid to be used in the current study. The adopted questionnaire can be seen below:

The third research method was the employment of semi structured interviews conducted with the students to identify their opinions and perceptions regarding their pronunciation and speaking skills. The interviews were used as a complementary tool to cross-validate the students' perceptions regarding their speaking and pronunciation skills.

Treatments offered

Following the pre-test, twenty four sessions of classroom instruction for the experimental group in pronunciation instruction were conducted over a period of 14 weeks, accompanied by a regular teaching content of pronunciation provided to the control group. During this period, the

experimental group received instruction and training on pronunciation. The basic aim was to examine the effect of the experimental treatment (explicit pronunciation instructions) on developing the speaking skills of the experimental group. The dependent variables in the study were the differential scores between the pre-test and post-test of the speaking test. In addition, the questionnaire was used to measure the students' attitudes towards pronunciation classes for both the experimental group and the control group.

The experimental treatment was introduced to the students in the experimental group into three classroom teaching cycles. **The first cycle** dealt with the segmental aspects of consonant sounds. The importance of pronunciation training articulation of consonant sounds was provided to the participants. They also learnt how to use English-English dictionaries.

As one of the prevailing hypotheses for learners studying English as a foreign language in Middle Eastern classrooms, it is a given assumption that a significant variable in the degree of pronunciation problems encountered by those students is the absolute limited number of English words that those students are familiar with. One possible treatment to mitigate such a linguistic problem is to use the Oxford List of Vocabulary, which totals up to 3,000 words. Some of the defining characteristics of the words to be studied are the number of syllables that each word contains, namely, whether they are monosyllabic, bi-syllabic or polysyllabic.Students selected in the two groups of the study practiced some sounds adjudged by the researchers to be produced by Western speakers which are physically and phonetically impossible for Arabic speakers to produce in their L1, and therefore cannot theoretically produce. On a related issue, students were also exposed to individual phonetic sounds, or paired sounds, occurring in English, that are very commonly and easily mistaken by Arabic learners of English. Some examples of these include: /p/ vs. /b/ and /f/ vs. /v/.

In the **second cycle**, students are taught some segmental aspects of the vowel sounds and supra-segmental aspects of stress. They have been given ample practice on the articulation of vowel sounds and word stress patterns**.** They were allowed to look up words/sound symbols in a dictionary and pronounce each word together (consonant + vowel sounds) / in pair works. They also differentiate mouth shape /listen to tape and practice word stress. Students were also provided with the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) system of universal sounds and accented marks, and familiarized with it.

 In the **third cycle,** participants were given supra-segmental aspects of intonations. Firstly, teachers reviewed the descriptions of sounds and word stress and sentence stress patterns given to them in the first two cycles. Then they taught them intonation: pitch, rhythm, linking, pausing. Students practiced all of these activities with tape, pair works or role play of short sentences. Students were also asked to transcribe words with different levels of stress, such as primary stress, which refers to the syllable of any given word that receives the highest level of stress, or tertiary stress, which refers to the syllable of any given word that receives a secondary level of stress.

Statistical methods

Data of the study were anlaysed using mean values, standard deviation, and paired-sample t-test. SPSS version 16 was used in analyzing the data of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current section is to report the results of the study as a means of determining the impact of the explicit pronunciation instructions on enhancing the Yemeni university students' pronunciations and attitudes towards English speaking classes. This section is divided into three parts; each part addresses one of the research questions. The first part examines the effect of explicit pronunciation instruction on students' speaking skill. The second part reports the effect of explicit pronunciation instruction on students' attitudes towards pronunciation classes. The third part answers the second research question based on the collected qualitative data from the semi structured interviews. The findings of each research question comprise a set of descriptive statistics and inferential analyses of the independent variable, along with its effect on each dependent variable included in the conceptual framework of the research.

Speaking Competence

This section presents and interpretsthe students' responses based on the scores obtained from the pre- and post- speakingtestsfor both of the experimental and control groups.

Results of the Pre-test of the Experimental and Control Groups

The scores of the two groups with regard to the two speaking tests were analysed to investigate the initial English speaking competence of the students before being given the pronunciation training. Table 1 below shows the mean scores and the standard deviations of the experimental and control groups after analysing the results of the pre-test.

Table 1: Mean scores and Standard Deviations of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre-test

Group	n	mean	SD
Experimental	30	66.90	12.9395
Control	30	66.50	12.4964

The results as shown in Table 1 indicate an overall mean scoreof 66.90 for the experimental group with a standard deviation of 12.9395, while the mean score for the control group is 66.50 with a standard deviation of 12.4964. Such results clearly show that the mean scores obtained for the two groups in the pre-tests were almost the same.

To investigate if there is a significant statistical difference between the two groups with regard to the results of the pre-test, a paired sample t-test was used. Table 2 displays the results of the test, which indicate that the t-value -1.119 shows no significant difference between the scores of the two groups in the pre-test. The scores of the control group as well as the scores of the experimental group reveal no significant difference (i.e. $t = -1.119-$, $p. = .272 > 0.05$), indicating that the English speaking competencies of the students in the two groups were similar before conducting the experiment.

Table 2: Paired Sample t-test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups in the pre-test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test	-.40000-	1.95818	.35751	-1.13120-	.33120	-1.119-	29	.272

Results of the Post-test ofthe Experimental and Control Groups

The two groups' scores in the speaking test were analysed to further identify if there was an improvement in the speaking competence of the students after conducting this experiment. Table 3 below shows the mean scores and the standard deviations of the experimental and the control groups in the post-tests.

Table 3: Mean scores and Standard Deviations of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-Test

Group	n	mean	SD
Experimental	30	74.53	11.47932
Control	30	67.50	12.63752

The results, in Table 3, illustrate that the mean score for the experimental group is 74.53 with a standard deviation of 11.4793, and the mean score of the control group is 67.50 with a standard deviation of 12.6375. Such results showed that the mean scores obtained for the two groups in the post-test, were significantly different after conducting the experiment.

To investigate if there are any significant statistical differences between the two groups with regard to the results of the post-tests, a paired sample t-test was used. Table 4 presents a t-value of-15.774 that reveals a significant difference between the scores of the two groups in the post-test in favour of the experimental group. The scores of the control group and the scores of the experimental group show a remarkable significant difference with at-value of 15.774-, p. = 000> 0.05, indicating that the scores of the two groups are not equivalent in their speaking competencies after receiving the treatment in the pronunciation training.

Table 4 Paired Sample t-test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups in the post-test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	post - test	-7.03333E0	2.44221	.44588	-7.94527-	-6.12140	-15.774-	29	.000

Attitudes towards Pronunciation Training

The results of the pre- and post-attitudinal questionnaire for the experimental group and the control group are presented and analysed. The presentation of the results begins with a preliminary statistical description of the students' responses in the pre-attitudinal questionnaire for the experimental group as well as the control group. Then, the post- attitudinal questionnaire results for both groups are given. Finally, the inferential statistical analyses for the results of the post-attitudinal questionnaire are provided and discussed.

Results of the Pre-attitudinal questionnaire

The students' responses on the overall pre-attitudinal questionnaire were examined. As can be seen in Table 5, the overall mean score of the experimental group in the pre-attitudinal questionnaire is 2.04with a standard deviation of 0.2716. Whereas, for the control group, the overall mean score is 2.17 with a standard deviation of 0.2716, which indicates relatively low attitudinal levels towards the pronunciation training.

Table 1: Mean scores and Standard Deviations of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre-Test

Group	n	mean	SD
Experimental	30	2.04	0.2716
Control	30	2.17	0.2716

To examine if there were significant statistical differences between the pre-attitudinal questionnaire of the experimental and the control group, a paired sample t-test was carried out. As shown in Table 6, the test'soutput is statistically insignificant in terms of the students' overall attitudinal mean score differences between the two groups with t- value of (416), p = .000,<.05., indicating that attitudes of students towards the pronunciation training were low.

Table 4 Paired Sample t-test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups in the pre-test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre - test	.20000	2.63138	.48042	-.78257-	1.18257	.416	29	.680

Results of the Post-test of the Experimental and Control Groups

The students' responses in the experimental group and the control group in terms of the overall post-attitudinal questionnaire were examined. As Table 7 shows, the overall mean score for the experimental group in the post-attitudinal questionnaire is 2.85 with a standard deviation of 0.2391, and as for the control group, the overall mean scoreis 2.04 with a standard deviation of 0.2716, signifying a moderate increase in the overall attitudinal levels towards the pronunciation training in favour of the experimental group.

Table 3: Mean scores and Standard Deviations of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-Test

Group	n	mean	SD
Experimental	30	2.85	0.2391
Control	30	2.04	0.2716

To examine if there were any significant statistical differences between the post-attitudinal questionnaire score for the experimental and the control group, a paired sample t-test was used. Table 8, which illustrates the results generated by the test, show a significant degree of post-test mean score differences between the two groups on the measure of the students' attitudes in favour of the experimental group with a t- value of -11.707-, p = .000, <.05., showing that the the students' attitudes in the experimental group towards the English pronunciation training are considerably more positive.

Table 4 Paired Sample T-Test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups in the post-test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	post - test	-6.46667E0	3.02556	.55239	-7.59643-	-5.33690-	-11.707-	29	.000

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Pronunciation Instruction on Speaking Skill

Based on the results of the experimental group presented earlier, it is evident that the training programme given to students has enabled them to use the rules and guidelines on how to pronounce English words properly. The results of the study imply that students' speaking skill is strongly linked to the pronunciation mastery. For this reason, the results highlight the impact of pronunciation on developing the overall English speaking skill. Prior to the treatment, the students in the experimental group were unaware of the strategies and the rules of pronouncing words correctly in English. However, after they had attended the training programme, they became able to carefully differentiate between the sounds of English and how to pronounce them correctly while speaking the target language.

Knowing the grammatical structure of the second language, as well as having a good vocabulary repertoire, are insufficient for FL learners to speak the language and interact spontaneously with others and be understood by them. Pronouncing words correctly in this regard is very essential for an optimal level of mutual understanding and successful delivery of the intended messages between speakers and listeners. Mispronunciation would evidently constitute an obstacle to convey the actual meaning of the message. Thus, successful speakers should also have a good command of pronunciation and ultimately complete sentences. The findings of the present study are in line with the results reported in some of the previous studies (cf. Atli & Bergilb, 2012; Varasarin, 2007; Behzadi& Fahimniya 2014).

The Effect of Pronunciation Instruction on Students' Attitudes

This study confirms the fact that the level of success the students have accomplished in developing their speaking skill through the training session appeared to improve the students' attitudes towards the pronunciation training programme as well as towards the learning of English as a whole. Such results would encourage L2 teachers to use different effective approaches and techniques in teaching pronunciation to facilitate the English speaking skill in their students.

Generally, the findings of both the experimental and the control group before the treatment indicated a set of generally negative attitudes towards the pronunciation training. However, the students' attitudes in the experimental group who were later given the pronunciation training exhibited more positive attitudes towards the programme. Students have become fully aware of pronouncing the correct sounds in English and familiarized themselves with the established rules and symbols of the pronunciations of the words and sentences in English. Such knowledge has increased their level of confidence in speaking the language. All the results obtained at this stage are in congruence with the findings reported in Atli' & Bergilb's (2012) study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE INTERVIEW

As mentioned earlier, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen students from the experimental group and the control group. The sampling technique that was used to select those students was a "double-sampling" technique. The purpose of using this method is to triangulate the questionnaire data gathered before and after the treatment (the pronunciation instructions).

Four questions were constructed based on the main research questions, the data collected from the questionnaires, and the observations made during the offered treatment. The posed questions are as follows:

(1. How did you feel when you pronounced English words outside the classroom, before the treatment was introduced to you?

(2. During the treatment, some words were given to you, as well as the use of the dictionary. Did this make you feel confident, and able to deal with new words based upon the phonemic transcriptions provided by the given dictionary?

(3. A different group of English words from classical or traditional lists of words was provided during the treatment. Those words ranged from monosyllabic to disyllabic to polysyllabic words. Which of these three groups of words is the easiest to be dealt with, in the spoken discourse, or the listening discourse?

(4. Could you specify some of your own personal difficulties that you have encountered during this phase of the research? What suggestions or solutions might you offer to best solve or at least mitigate these perceived issues?

All of the semi-structured interviews were carried out in one of the classrooms on the college premises. The time that was predetermined for each individual interview was a duration of ten minutes. A tape recorder was employed, with a button microphone additionally affixed to the researchers, as well as each of the individual interviewees. All extraneous factors were controlled in order to ensure a neutral and conducive environment to run all of the interviews and collect all of the required data to cross-validate the information collected from the students based upon their answers to the questionnaires.

Collectively, the students felt a negative attitude, as well as experienced a great deal of reluctance, when encountering pronunciation aspects inside or outside the classrooms, before the treatment given to them. During all of the ten interviews, it was noted that a lack of positive attitude and motivation existed before the treatment, and the students, in general, agreed that the teaching methods and styles used to deal with this curriculum segment in pronunciation were not effective enough to enhance their understanding as well as their attitudes.

On the second question, three students out of the ten students selected to participate in the interviews firmly believed that the treatment offered in this research project initiated radical changes in their psychological domain, as well as their educational outlook. The other seven students have confirmed the identical circumstances, and further added an interesting piece of advice to other students who wished to improve their speaking competencies. Their advice, in this particular instance, was for the other students to procure handheld or online dictionaries that would give them additional inputs for how to pronounce seemingly impossible words. They also expressed their pleasure and satisfaction with the new pronunciation teaching method, which has led to an improvement in their attitudinal behavior and orientation towards learning English in general, and pronunciation in particular.

All of the ten participants declared their full involvement in the new pronunciation course, and concluded that the different groups of words (monosyllabic, disyllabic, and polysyllabic) that were provided during the treatment offered solutions to most of the problems they experienced in pronouncing their words before this learning experience. There was a gradual difficulty in dealing with the progression of simple to more difficult words (from monosyllabic to

polysyllabic) at the outset, but as the course progressed, such difficulties became less serious as their skills in dealing with the dictionary improved, and their familiarity with the sound symbols and the pronunciation of words increased, and finally, the positive influence and input of the teachers who were assigned to teach these students enhanced their entire spectrum of learning and attitudes.

As most of the students have mentioned, the negative linguistic transfer, from their mother tongues (Arabic) into the English language, affected their confidence levels and pronunciation. A case in point that was given is the pair of English sounds /b/ and /p/. The voiced sound, /b/, is the one that is predominant in the Arabic language, and so the students responded instinctively with the use of the /b/ sound no matter whether the correct representation was /b/ or /p/. Another difficulty which was cited was the prevailing monotone that was used towards the beginning of the treatment. As the students received more information about how stress and intonation can affect the meaning of individual words or sentences, the monotone reduced and a more natural and native-like pronunciation emerged. Further suggestions and recommendations given were to adopt segments of pronunciation instructions in the existing textbooks that were used in the curriculum at hand. These instructions appeared to be very effective at two different levels: the level of achievement that was observed by the teachers and researchers during the treatment, as well as the motivation towards learning English and the efforts exerted to achieve an optimal outcome in this learning process.

Pedagogical Implications

The most important component in the English speaking skill is to pronounce the words according to the known rules and symbols of pronunciation. In any EFL context, English language teachers should be provided with some pre-service training and in-service training awareness programmes regarding the pronunciation skill so that they can pass their skills down to their students. Any training programme would surely help English teachers improve to the point of having a good command in the English pronunciation and set themselves as good examples for the students. Pronunciation is considered as an important aspect in the language learning process and should be treated with a level of importance equal to the level of importance accorded to the learning structures of the language and other essential components for communication.

The results of the control group in the current study showed that students had not even a basic level of instruction in pronunciationin the early stages of their learning. This is clear from the results obtained by the control group, both in the pre- and post-test. This implies that much more attention should be devoted to include pronunciation in teaching programmes in the early stages of learning English in schools and universities as well. Before closing, there are some important issues to be taken into consideration by teachers:

1- Students' pronunciation in the present study has improved as a result of explicit instruction.

2- There are many methods which can be used by each candidate on their own to improve their pronunciation; among these ways are listening to authentic texts, contacting with native speakers and reading aloud to themselves.

3- Students can improve their pronunciation through imitating and repeating after listening to some models.

71

4- Consulting some dictionaries to get the right pronunciation of difficult words.

5- Listening to some audio, video materials and English language programmes also improve the accuracy of pronunciation.

Limitations of the Study

There are potentially several limitations of the research we are proposing to conduct. The most prominent limitation is that the instruments we are using could be greatly improved and revamped. Also, our decision to make the study a quasi-experimental design study, where it will take place in one college of intact classes, as well as the overall sample size of participants in the department, may result in some limitations in the degree of reliability, validity, and generalisations of the findings of the study.

CONCLUSION

Explicit pronunciation instruction is one of the most interesting and effective methods that can be used to improve students' speaking skill. The results of the current study indicate that explicit pronunciation instruction is an effective and promising method for developing students' speaking skills as well as instilling their positive attitudes to this type of training. Given the lack and complete absence of any sort of pronunciation instructions in schools, there may be a dire need for in-service and pre-service training in pronunciation. Although the researchers of the current study have tried their best in using an explicit mode of teaching pronunciation to develop speaking skills in their students, the results of this study might not be applied to other settings; therefore, the researchers hope that the prospective researchers should conduct further investigations to fill the existing perceived number of gaps of the current study. Future studies should incorporate a larger sample and investigate the impact of pronunciation instruction in elementary and secondary schools with various and additional types of data collection instruments such as interviews with teachers and observation on pronunciation instruction classes.

REFERENCES

Ali, E. M. T.(2015) The Elimination of Pronunciation Problems of English Vowels of Saudi Students of English Resulting from Complex Letter-Sound Relationship, International Journal of Language and Literature, 3, (1), pp. 35-41

Altamimi, A. K. (2015). Improving English pronunciation among Arabic EFL school-age students using minimal pairs.Master thesis of Science in Education.State University of New York at Fredonia, Fredonia, New York.

Altamimi, N. O.M. & Attamimi, R. A. (2014).Effectiveness of cooperative learning in enhancing speaking skills and attitudes towards learning English. International Journal of Linguistics, 6, (4) pp. 27-45.

Atli, I & Bergilb, A. S. (2012). The effect of pronunciation instruction on students' overall speaking skills, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 4 (6), pp. 3665 – 3671*

Behzadi A. & Fahimniya, F. (2014). The effect of using two approaches of teaching pronunciation (intuitive-imitative and analytic linguistic) on speaking fluency among

Iranian EFL learners *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences*, *4 (1)*, pp. *263-270.*

Bin-Hadi, W. R. (2016). Teaching Pronunciation for Arab learners of English: Using Gilberts' Prosody Pyramid, South -Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (SAJMS) 3, (3), pp. 139-151.

Bryson, B. (1990). *The Mother Tongue: English and How It Got That Way*. New York; William Morrow.

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (1996).*Teaching pronunciation*: *A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Damayanti,S. E.(2017). *The Use of Picture Strip Story to Improve Students*.Unpublished MA Thesis.Islamic Education and Teacher Training Faculty, the State Islamic Institute of Surakarta, Indonesia.

Khaghaninejad M. S. (2015). The Effect of Explicit Pronunciation Instruction on Listening Comprehension: Evidence from Iranian English Learners*,* Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 5, (6), pp. 1249-1256.

Khanbeiki, R., & Abdolmanafi-Rokni, S. J. (2015). A Study of Consonant Clusters in an EFL Context. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, *10* (4), pp. 1–14.

Kharma, N. and Hajjaj, A. (1997). Errors in English among Arabic Speakers: Analysis and Remedy. Beirute: Longman Group UK Limited.

Macdonald, S. (2002) Pronunciation – Viewsand Practices of Reluctant Teachers. P. 3.

Ministry of Higher Education (2008).*Laws and regulation and rules of higher education and scientific research- Republic of Yemen.*

Murphy, G. E. (1997). *Constructivism: From philosophy to practice*. [Online]. [Accessed Jan 11th 2018]. Available at: http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/~elmurphy/emurphy/cle.html

Pearson, P. David & Margaret Gallagher (1983).The instruction of reading comprehension.*Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8 (3), pp. 317-344.

Saito, K., & Lyster, R. (2012a). Effects of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback on L2 pronunciation development of /r/ by Japanese learners of English.*Language Learning, 62*, 595-633.

Saito, K., & Lyster, R. (2012b). Investigating pedagogical potential of recasts for L2 vowel acquisition.*TESOL Quarterly, 46*, 387-398.

Varasarin, P. (2007) An Action Research Study of Pronunciation Training, Language Learning Strategies and Speaking Confidence*, unpublished PhD thesis,* School of Education Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development Victoria University.

Villaume, S. K., & Brabham, E. G. (2002). Comprehension instruction: Beyond strategies. *The Reading Teacher*, 55 (7), pp. 672-675.

Vygotsky, L. (1962).Thought and language .Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.