DIGITAL STORYTELLING LISTENING INFLUENCE ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' PRONUNCIATION

Hassan Bashirnezhad
Associate Professor, Sari based Farhangian University, Iran, Email: haba1350@gmail.com

Arefeh Yousefi
M.A Student, Sari based Islamic Azad University, Iran, Email: arefeh.yousefi68@yahoo.com
Tel. No: 0098 911 663 6030

Abstract. The goal behind this research is to survey digital storytelling listening effect on of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation. Two full classes were randomly chosen from Joybar located Nikan institute, Mazandaran, Iran and split into two diverse experimental and control groups. To enhance pronunciation, the experimental group was given training via listening to audio-stories as a strategy for eight sessions, opposed to the control group students receiving a placebo. As pretest for both groups, a pronunciation test was handed out ahead of taking the treatment and following the treatment to discover if the program was effective in boosting the learners' pronunciation, a post-test was run. In order to find out the mean pronunciation performance in the two groups in the pretest and post-test, T-test was applied. According to the results, a meaningful gap was seen between the experimental and the control groups' means and the learners' general pronunciation proficiency in the post test got promoted. In addition, the finding indicated that the designed digital storytelling program was effective since it boosted the learners' motivation to enhance their pronunciation.

Key words: listening skill, pronunciation, digital storytelling, motivation

1.INTRODUCTION

Listening is known as one of the most significant language skills. Feyten (1991) stated above 45% of communication is on listening. It is vividly seen that children listen and respond to language ahead of learning to talk. As children start to learn reading, they still have to listen in order to acquire knowledge and information in order to observe the directions. Students have to listen to lectures and discussions deeply and watchfully in the classroom setting so that they perceive and retain the information to recall later. So listening is taken as a critical learning pronunciation aspect. Chastain (1988) suggested that listening was once considered as a passive process, while nowadays it is seen as an active one.

Since authentic pronunciation as a foreign language is not much stressed and students aren't equipped with enough knowledge about it in Iran and most instructors do not focus sufficiently on teaching pronunciation. As understood, in Iran one of the potential nuisances might be that applying educational multimedia setting at intermediate levels is infrequent .Of the things which is widespread is book-oriented schools and instructor-oriented universities and not typically using multimodality. In addition, some English instructors with low knowledge may lead their students to diverse confusing pronunciations. And, because in Iran English is taken as a foreign language, the students are no in the habit to use English in an environment outside their classroom and because of a classroom being crowded with a large number of the learners, the instructors lack the ability to control the classroom and individually and attentively check their pronunciation.

EFL learners in Iran study English at home where English is not the ruling native language. The learners from the environments where English is not their native language don't enjoy many opportunities to be exposed to authentic pronunciation; thus, they lack the chance to hear the language produced by native people for native speakers.

According to several researchers, audio stories contribute remarkably to prepare the students to pick up the pronunciation. They can boost the learners' listening, speaking and pronunciation capability development. Today instructing language is technology-based to communicate the ideas and messages through the sounds, images and symbols. Celce -Murcia (2001) stated that in class activities authentic audio-taped materials has to be stressed. This way, the learners will benefit from listening to the audio-taped materials and be supplied with genuine practice in listening to native speaking speech. They are motivated when extracting information from a non-graded passage (Nunan, 1997).

Patterson (2008) suggested to expose the intermediate learner to authentic texts and various voices. Therefore, in order to achieve these goals, we can apply audio-taped materials. As Morley (2001) stated, today it is recognized that listening is a critical language learning dimension and listening was particularly integrated into modern educational framework in the 1980s. And according to Nunan (1998), in language learning listening is fundamental and it will be impossible for the learners to get to effectively communicate without listening skill.

In this study, the researchers targeted surveying the effects of listening audio stories impacts on learners' pronunciation in intermediate classes given the merits and challenges encountered in this respect.

2. BACKGROUND

As a means of communication, language has a critical task on its own (Brown, 1988). As known, communication occurs in spoken or written format. According to Yuzawa (2007), a basic skill for the ones required to use English is comprehending its pronunciation. It is considered absolutely necessary for many second or foreign language learners. In language learning process besides the effectiveness of their English course effectiveness, a learner student often evaluates their success as how well their spoken language skill develops.

Something that obsesses most foreign language learners is speaking and English sounds pronunciation is taken as a barrier to communicate with others. In their mind, decent pronunciation is required for. As Yates (2001) expressed, pronunciation is associated with the production of sounds employed to form meaning. Pronunciation is a procedure behind teaching and learning and an integral language learning element. Being a successful oral production element, pronunciation is important.

Bradley-Bennett (2007) suggested listening as the key to develop learners' pronunciation, but listening should be supplied in a context both understandable to the learners and related to their lives outside the classroom. It is stated that exposing to diverse voices production or communicative competence has to be provided for the learners (Hismanoglu, 2006). A productive style to enhance learners' pronunciation is the audio lingual method extracted techniques including list and repeat. (2006) said that instructing pronunciation is very important in order to dominate oral communication due to being a basic element of communicative competence. Despite pronunciation playing a significant role in speaking, many instructors ignore this part.

The challenge involved in teaching pronunciation has been expressed by some researchers in their studies. For example, we can mention Morley (1991) claiming that instructing English pronunciation in ESL, EFL classroom is necessary ; however, it is seen that this key element of English language is overlooked in many English classrooms and universities worldwide. Gilbert (2008) assumes that there are challenges involved in pronunciation instruction. Several instructors consider that they lack sufficient time to concentrate on this part of language. In addition, lots of research cases indicated little relationship between classroom pronunciation teaching and proficiency accomplishment in pronunciation .And Pour Hussein Gilakjani (2012) stated in this regard that pronunciation can be the most problematic language areas for EFL learners to master and one of the least favorite subjects for instructors to do in EFL classrooms. Moreover, according to Morley, apprehensible pronunciation is a significant part of communication competence. And without fault-free pronunciation skills, the learner will be of limited potential to communicate.

Teaching pronunciation isn't emphasized much in spite of this matter that pronunciation accomplishment is so difficult in many ESL/EFL classrooms. The present study on EFL reading is incorporated in a psycholinguistics framework (Goodman, 1970; Coady, 1979). In this respect, the reader is taken as an active information processor.

Various definitions have been proposed for "Digital Storytelling", while generally speaking they all refer to the combination of the art known as telling stories with diverse digital multimedia including images, audio, and video. Like all digital stories that are combined in the form of mixing digital graphics, recorded audio narration, text, music and video to present most derived printed page information constructive clues about a particular subject. Like what is true about the traditional digital stories that are about a selected theme and often contain special outlook. The stories usually last a few minutes long with different applications, covering personal tales telling, historical events telling or as tool to inform or instruct a special subject. Although here multimedia technology is emphasized , digital storytelling is not a novel concept.

Digital storytelling technique can be used to efficiently help learning process in EFL classrooms, since it can help EFL learners to come up with multimodal communicative competence through promoting a learner-centered setting. .Via this method, the students are given abundant opportunities in order to interact and employ language in authentic and personally meaningful styles (Rance -Roney, 2008: 30). The learners narrate the scripts of their stories and record themselves. Afterwards, it is mixed with diverse sorts of multimedia, such as computer-generated text, computer-based graphics, images, video clips, and music played on a computer. As a result, the learners turn into the "storytellers" with the capability to present the stories made up for the audiences (Kinder, 2006).

In order to combine multimedia technologies into higher education, Li (2007) studied digital storytelling, in which the participants were pre-service and in-service instructors in higher education. The findings talked of technology-based experiences' merits, that these experiences can boost the learners' learning skills during the phase integrating technology implementation in education .

As Sadie (2008) implied in the survey about digital storytelling as an integrated approach for committed student learning. The research derived results indicated that the digital story projects run by Egyptian instructors promoted the learners' understanding of particular content in an academic course. Besides, as the results denoted the teachers are instructors inclined to employ digital storytelling for teaching content and to present more effective instruction.

In Hoe's (2009) pilot study on digital storytelling impacts on pre-service instructors' self-efficacy and professional dispositions, personal technology oriented knowledge and skills can be transferred to

educational technology environment via digital storytelling" (p. 423).

3. METHODOLOGY

The current research targeted to study this matter that if listening to digital storytelling had any effect on Iranian EFL student's pronunciation potential. Thus, to perform this study, a particular research design was required. So the study research design, the participants, the instruments, and the procedure are addressed fully in this chapter.

3.1 Participants

Overall, 40 intermediate learners were chosen from Joybar based Nikan institute, in Mazandaran province in Iran. The mean age of the subjects was in the range of 10 to 15, studying English as a foreign language for three years. Their English proficiency level was scaled based on OPT Test (2012), this test was used as a tool by the researcher to homogenize the research population. And at the end, the results was used to divide the population into two groups, i.e., listening-mid, and listening-high groups. The scoring was this way, half a standard deviation above and half standard deviation below the mean as high and low levels, respectively. Since the researcher aimed to deal with DA impact on the learners with high and low listening potential, the ones in the group with the lowest level and the highest level of proficiency were selected as the sample. Thus, the overall number of the sample as 20 subjects in low and high level groups participated in the research, depicted in Table 3. Totally, 10 learners in middle listening group were removed from the research.

Table 1: EFL Learners No.

Name	EFL
listening-low	15
listening-high	15

3.2 Instruments

The following instruments were used in order to pose the questions:

This study contains a pronunciation test designed and administered by the researcher to measure the two groups' learners' pronunciation skill .The 14-

item test in the form of pre and post-test. The test included two stories from which some words were derived. Then each learner was due to pronounce the words. To record the learners' voices, a digital recorder was employed. The correct pronunciation was defined for the pre-and post-test. The training sessions lasted for eight 60-m sessions twice a week. The experimental group participants were given half an hour instruction on pronunciation activities, including phonetic symbols, sound, and spelling exercises. After that, the experimental group learners were exposed to audio stories listening for the next half an hour. Eight stories extracted from "Intermediate Steps to Understanding" (Hill, 1980). Each session, a pocket dictionary was given to the learners and during which the phonetic symbols were instructed by a CD player. For the learners, some explanation was provided by the researcher about each phonetic symbol and next, some examples were provided for each of them. And after that, they were required to repeat and to look up given words in the story and once more, the learners listened to the audio stories to enhance their pronunciation. Following this stage, the learners were required to pronounce each word so that to understand that they pronounce the words correctly, the control group wasn't supplied with any training. Rather, they merely were due to listen to audio stories.

The passages derived from Steps to Understanding, 2nd edition by L.A. Hill (2007) were applied for the experiment. Four listening passages accompanied with their multiple-choice questions, given the participants' level were picked up for low group pre- and post-test. Next, for high group pre- and post-test, 4 passages with their multiple-choice questions were chosen. As indicated above, having picked up the listening comprehension passages, considering their difficulty level for the high and low groups' pre- and post-tests, the present researcher modified some questions matching the present study intervention program.

Being over with the above mentioned procedures, a 20-item multiple-choice test was designed for the low group learners' pre- and posttest (See Appendix B). Via consulting with a knowledgeable test expert, this test was adapted and pilot test was run with some Iranian learners studying English in the same level as this research subjects.

For the high group learners' pre- and post-test, an identical procedure was observed. Another 20-item multiple-choice test was designed. In the low group

learners' pre-and post-test, the 4 listening passages topics were similar and in the high group learners' pre-and post-test, they were the same, too. Similar to the low group, the high group learners' test was run as pilot with some Iranian learners as the research subjects.

The instructor applied Aleve's regulatory scale made up of 10 meditational strategies (Aleve, 2010, p. 260) for instructing, assessing, and giving feedback to the learners is as it follows:

1. Response acceptance;

2. Structuring the text;

3. Replay of a passage;

4. Asking the words;

5. Identifying a problem domain;

6. Meeting linguistic clues;

7. Offering a choice;

8. Translating;

9. Presenting a correct pattern;

10. Supplying an explicit explanation.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The goal behind the present survey was to deal with listening to digital storytelling impact on intermediate learners' pronunciation. In particular, the following question was posed:

Research Question

1) Does listening to digital storytelling have any impact on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation?

Null Hypotheses

NH1: listening to digital storytelling has no influence on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation.

4.1. decriptive data

First off, in order to study listening to digital storytelling, data screening was performed and the data screening derived results exhibited that the experimental groups and control groups' data didn't run into sample loss. The general English proficiency, Kolmogorov –Smirnoff test was executed for 30 EFL intermediate learners in ten sessions.

Table 2: Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		1st session	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
No.		15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	7.383	7.800	7.433	7.217	7.150	7.033	7.267	7.433	7.033	7.867
	Std. Deviation	1.4295	1.3732	.8633	1.1294	1.2167	1.3819	1.0154	1.1318	1.5637	1.3947
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.138	.225	.203	.156	.118	.225	.196	.190	.170	.192
	Positive	.132	.187	.203	.128	.112	.133	.142	.106	.170	.170
	Negative	-.138	-.225	-.131	-.156	-.118	-.225	-.196	-.190	-.151	-.192
Test Statistic		.138	.225	.203	.156	.118	.225	.196	.190	.170	.192

Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.200[c,d]	.039[c]	.099[c]	.200[c,d]	.200[c,d]	.040[c]	.124[c]	.149[c]	.200[c,d]	.143[c]

To evaluate the 1st null hypothesis expressing that dynamic assessment does not influence the listening potential of the control group among the Iranian EFL students compared to that of the static assessment, one–sample Kolmogorov –Smirnoff Test was implemented on the pre- and post-tests participants' scores on listening comprehension to compare both groups' mean scores. The table below illustrates the Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test result,

implying the low level distribution of the listening comprehension test with the normal mean. As seen, the result is meaningful (sig=.011; X=7.38; SD= 2.23), revealing the listening comprehension scores distribution at low language proficiency level as normal with the above mean and SD. The result does not violate to run an independent-sample t-test.

Table 3: One-Sample Statistics

	No.	Mean	S.D	Standard Error Mean
1st Session	15	7.383	1.4295	.3691
2nd Session	15	7.800	1.3732	.3546
3rd Session	15	7.433	.8633	.2229
4th Session	15	7.217	1.1294	.2916
5th Session	15	7.150	1.2167	.3142
6th Session	15	7.033	1.3819	.3568
7th Session	15	7.267	1.0154	.2622
8th Session	15	7.433	1.1318	.2922
9th Session	15	7.033	1.5637	.4038
10th Session	15	7.867	1.3947	.3601

As observed in Table 3, one-sample statistics in ten sessions with 15 control group learners is consistent with Kolmogorov –Smirnoff Test ten categories. According to the results, pronunciation strategies was the most frequently applied category. No many results were in congruent with O'Malley and Chabot's (1990) observation stating that not all strategies are equivalent. Table 2 shows that the all control groups' mean scores in the present research are within the range 2.4 to 3.4, indicating digital method medium strategy application.

According to table 4, what is understood from the control group's mean scores is that the greatest difference was seen in listening to digital storytelling strategies between the two different classes. To test if the difference was significant, one-sample Kolmogorov Test at significance level 0.05 was applied to see which type of listening to digital storytelling was the most sensitive for the learners not listening to digital storytelling differences. The one-way Kolmogorov- Smirnoff test extracted results are included in Table 3. Because of the subjects being unequally distributed

from divrse experimental and control classes, the t-test for the equality of variance was considered ahead of the one-way Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test to test the variances' homogeneity. The results are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
1st Session	20.004	14	.000	7.3833	6.592	8.175
2nd Session	21.999	14	.000	7.8000	7.040	8.560
3rd Session	33.349	14	.000	7.4333	6.955	7.911
4th Session	24.747	14	.000	7.2167	6.591	7.842
5th Session	22.760	14	.000	7.1500	6.476	7.824
6th Session	19.713	14	.000	7.0333	6.268	7.799
7th Session	27.718	14	.000	7.2667	6.704	7.829
8th Session	25.437	14	.000	7.4333	6.807	8.060
9thSession	17.420	14	.000	7.0333	6.167	7.899
10th Session	21.845	14	.000	7.8667	7.094	8.639

As perceived from Table 4, the control group's p-values among the subjects from different experimental tests were more than .05. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that the two groups' variance was different among the subjects was not confirmed. The current study data collected were homogenous and appropriate for conducting the one-way Kolmogorov - Smirnoff test.

5. DISCUSSION

The present section concentrates on the listening to digital storytelling in order to promote the intermediate learners' pronunciation. Table 4 shows that compensation strategies including to guess the meaning of the unknown words are broadly applied by the learners.

On the other hand, among the present research subjects, listening to digital storytelling and pronunciation strategies was the least favorite. The extracted results matched the findings by Brenner (1999) and Nesbit, Tindal, and Arroyo (2005), stating that learners from identical cultural backgrounds tend to employ similar strategies.

This study subjects' digital storytelling pattern was opposed to the general perception of English pronunciation learning habits of the learners. Rather than employing a pronunciation -based language learning method, the current study subjects preferred a conscious language use when learning English. The pronunciation strategies requiring continuous practice and memorization, were not at all the sole method to acquire the 2nd language for the learners. Nevertheless, the present research

subjects preferred other language strategies to pick up pronunciation strategies.

Wealthier families' students learnt English better than those from poorer families. Such a diversity might have resulted from the difference in the digital storytelling strategies application. Based on Table 4, a critical difference was observed between different experimental groups in terms of applying pronunciation strategies. The higher the subjects' pronunciation condition, the more frequently their inclination to use such skills in learning English pronunciation. Because of the pronunciation strategies being highly correlated with the English proficiency, language learners are recommended to employ digital strategies more frequently in learning English, in particular those from less well-off families.

A meaningful gap was found in digital storytelling method application between the experimental and control groups in this research. The current research experimental subjects applied all two groups of the listening strategies more frequently than the control group. In the two pronunciation strategies groups, a meaningful difference was observed in terms of their digital storytelling method use, except the pronunciation strategies.

According to what illustrated in Table 3, compared with the control group, the experimental group's digital strategies use was much lower. In the prior research cases, the experimental learners dominantly applying digital storytelling strategies was reported. Green and Oxford (1995) and Yang (1992), for instance, stated that in using digital-based strategies, gender differences were the most vivid, in contrast to what expressed by Pulitzer (1983), as saying that compared to their control counterparts, the institutes going experimental English learners applied listening strategies more extensively and dominantly. What perceived from the finding is that control students are not that inclined to listen to story without listening to tape or digital pronunciation and ask other English speakers or learners in order to boost their pronunciation English skills. The control groups being unwilling to seek help from other English speakers or learners can be attributed to the gender-related behavior difference. As Tannin (1990) suggested, men appreciate independence and status more, while the experimental…appreciate connection, cooperation, and intimacy further. Requiring others' help, as a sense of inferiority, declines male subjects' interest in cooperating with others in learning English pronunciation.

According to Table 3, regarding the use of pronunciation strategies, a significant difference was spotted between the two groups. The instructors are obliged to present befitting training on pronunciation strategies in order to control the learners due to its significant correlation with English proficiency. We can propose a potential sort of training as to teach the control learners on how to make up new words in order to convey the visualized idea. As an example, the instructors can motivate their learners to correctly repeat what they hear. Instructing appropriately how to employ body gesture to replace or accompany and reinforce oral expressions can also be taken into account as a great strategy.

6. CONCLUSION

The current research has addressed listening to digital storytelling effect on intermediate learners' pronunciation. The derived findings revealed that the experimental learners used digital storytelling strategies more effectively and frequently than the control ones. Compared with the learners from poorer families, those from well-off families applied digital strategies more successfully, which possibly account for their better performance in English learning.

The presented findings offer some effective information for the instructors in order to present digital storytelling method training to the learners so that they could enhance their English pronunciation learning skills. Therefore, the educators have to be fully aware of this fact that the learners from diverse backgrounds, including pronunciation status behave differently when learning English. These factors have to be considered seriously at the time of designing educational language learning strategies programs so that the learners could achieve their goals behind learning.

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