A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AND THE EVALUATION OF THEIR PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS, PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions toward English pronunciation and pronunciation teaching, their phonological awareness, difficulties and problems regarding English pronunciation. The study was conducted using qualitative research design and a semi-structured interview format. 6 EFL pre-service teachers participated in the study. The participants received pronunciation training before conducting semi-structured interviews. This allowed them to develop certain ideas regarding English pronunciation and its teaching. The syllabus of the instruction included the teaching of segmental and suprasegmental features of English. After pronunciation teaching procedure was completed, the qualitative data were collected through interviewing the participants. The results revealed that EFL pre-service teachers had generally positive attitudes toward pronunciation. Also, it was found that they had certain difficulties and problems in English pronunciation at the segmental level and suprasegmental level such as intonation, stress and rhythm which are different phonological patterns from Turkish pronunciation.

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İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE TELAFFUZUNA KARŞI TUTUMLARI İLE FONOLOJİK FARKINDALIKLARININ, SORUNLARININ VE ZORLUKLARININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ ÜZERİNE NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Öz

Bu çalışma İngilizce Öğretmenliği adaylarının İngilizce telaffuzu ve telaffuz eğitimine karşı tutumlarını, fonolojik farkındalıklarını, İngilizce telaffuzu ile ilgili zorluk ve problemlerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi ve yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat formu kullanılmıştır. 6 İngilizce öğretmenliği adayı katılımcı olarak çalışmada yer almıştır. Veri analizi sonuçları katılımcıların genel olarak telaffuza karşı olumlu tutum sergilediğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, öğretmen adaylarının İngilizce telaffuzunu öğrenme sürecinde Türkçe telaffuzundan farklı olan parçasal ve vurgu, tonlama ve ritim gibi parçaüstü birimlerde ilgili birtakım zorluk ve problemleri olduğu da çalışmanın bulguları arasındadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İngilizce Telaffuzu, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Öğrencileri, Tutumlar, Fonolojik Farkindalik, Zorluklar.*

Introduction

Within a phenomenon in which mutual intelligibility and effective communication are primary considerations, pronunciation can be regarded as one of the most significant aspects of spoken language (Hişmanoğlu & Hişmanoğlu, 2010; Mehrabi & Mousavinia, 2013; Tlazalo Tejeda & Basurto Santos, 2014). There is a general consensus among pronunciation researchers that pronunciation is worth mentioning within the language teaching field (Derwing, 2010) because a sufficient amount of research dedicated to pronunciation can provide some implications for the status of pronunciation in language teaching settings. Also, instructors can benefit from practical research in terms of deciding what to focus on in their own classrooms. Due to this fact, pronunciation, somewhat has been the subject of several investigations. Fraser (2000), for example, has put invaluable effort to emphasize the importance of pronunciation in successful communication stating that pronunciation can be considered to be of vital importance to be able to speak English rather than other skills such as vocabulary, grammar and pragmatics. Similarly, Yates and Zielinski (2009, p. 11) explains the superiority of pronunciation over other language skills such as vocabulary and

grammar in effective communication uttering that pronunciation matters because speakers should have a mastery of sounds and prosodic aspects of English to be able to communicate efficiently.

In this regard, pronunciation is a prerequisite for effective speaking and fluency even though it is deemphasized in language teaching and applied linguistics to a great extent as stated by many researchers (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Fraser, 2000; Gilakjani, 2011; Saran, Seferoğlu & Çağıltay, 2009) as well as in teacher preparation programs (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001; Derwing & Munro, 2005). In one of the most frequently cited studies, Hebert (2002) asserts that pronunciation is generally neglected by teachers who at most, focus on the articulation of single sounds despite its more important and global aspects at the suprasegmental level. This neglected component of English language requires a continuous process of teaching and practice in order to attain desired levels of pronunciation skills for effective and intelligible communication although language learners are mostly deprived of such education (González-Bueno, 1994).

Pronunciation is a difficult aspect of language to acquire, therefore it requires special training for an effective use of language (Fraser, 2000). The difficulty in learning pronunciation is attributed to the fact that pronunciation is both an academic and analytic skill and requires a certain amount of physiological control since language users need to use their vocal tract for the articulation of phonological forms (Smakman, 2016). On the other hand, Gilner (2006, p.93) emphasizes the importance of pronunciation in successful communication and describes the role of pronunciation as *"In the context of English language teaching (ELT), pronunciation is an integral aspect of communicative competence that can influence the desire to use the language as well as the quantity and quality of input received and output produced"*. In a similar vein, according to Madden and Moore (1997), pronunciation can be regarded as the most undeniable and necessary component of language proficiency. This means that high level of language proficiency can be achieved through the acquisition of pronunciation.

Method

Six students participated in the study. The participants ranging in age from 18 to 20 were in the first year of their four-year degree program in English language teaching department at Atatürk University. The reason behind choosing these students as the participants of the present study was that they may have had many pronunciation problems since they were EFL students and most of the students did not receive pronunciation instruction in their past educational life.

Therefore, this situation represented an opportunity to collect a considerable number of data to examine their experiences and perceptions about pronunciation in general and pronunciation instruction they received as well as the difficulties and problems they have throughout pronunciation learning.

Semi-structured interview

Among the different types of interview, a semi-structured interview format including 6 basic questions and their sub-questions was used in this study for the reason that researcher could introduce the topic and then guide the discussion asking additional questions based on the main questions. The questions were about their perceptions toward pronunciation and its teaching, the aim and focus of pronunciation instruction from the perspectives of them and their phonological problems and difficulties in English Language.

Procedure

Before data collection could proceed, permission was sought from the English Language Teaching Department of Atatürk University. The administration of the department accepted this request and allowed the researcher to work with the first-year classes of the department for both giving pronunciation instruction and collecting data through interviews**.** The researcher began to give pronunciation instruction during 14 weeks in the fall term of 2016-2017 academic year. The teaching syllabus included the teaching of segmental and suprasegmental features of English.

After pronunciation teaching procedure was completed, the qualitative data were collected through interviewing the participants. The reason behind interviewing the participants after providing pronunciation instruction was to enable them to develop certain ideas regarding English pronunciation learning. One to one interviews were decided to be more appropriate for the nature of the study. Therefore, the interviews were conducted with only one participant at a time. During the interviews, the same questions within a flexible framework were asked to all participants. All participants were encouraged to explain their experiences and perceptions about pronunciation through open ended questions.

Data Analysis Procedure

The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. First of all, the researcher got familiar with the data by transcribing the recorded interviews verbatim. The transcripts were read carefully for many times by the researcher to get a sense of the whole. Compatible with the steps of content analysis offered by

Creswell (2005), the codes in the data were identified. After determining broader categories based on these codes, the categories were assembled together under 4 themes. The themes were presented in a narrative passage including the quotations from the transcripts such that the issues that were described and discussed could be illustrated.

Results

Theme 1: Perceptions of pre-service teachers of English toward L2 Pronunciation.

The first theme consists of the pre-service teachers' perceptions toward their own pronunciation of English and pronunciation instruction considered to be influential in their pronunciation improvement. This theme was presented in the table below with its categories and codes.

Table 1. *Theme for Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers of English toward L2 Pronunciation*

Theme # 1 Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers of English toward L2 Pronunciation

Category # 1 pronunciation	Past experiences regarding
L2 Pronunciation Background pronunciation	Teachers' attitudes toward
of EFL pre-service teachers language classrooms	Place of pronunciation in
practices	Teachers' pronunciation
Category # 2	Communicative concerns
The Value of Pronunciation	Linguistic concerns
	Social concerns
Category # 3	Age

Learner Characteristics   Language level

                                                     Native language

Category # 4

Pronunciation from the   Perceptions

Perspectives of EFL pre-service   Future applications and practices

teachers

The first category of the theme explains participants' past experiences regarding L2 pronunciation and the effects of their previous teachers' attitudes on their pronunciation progress as well as the importance given to pronunciation education in their educational background. The data showed that language teachers in participants' educational background generally neglected pronunciation in language teaching and teachers' negative attitudes influence the participants' approaches toward pronunciation component of target language. Regarding teachers' attitudes toward students' phonological mistakes, most of the participants stated that when teachers display aggressive behaviors toward their students in language learning process, feelings of stress and anxiety arise in the learning setting. As an example to this situation, Interviewer-2 (I-2) expressed her thoughts with the following statements: "*Strict behaviors that are displayed by teachers increase the level of stress in the classroom and we have some teachers who demoralize us due to our pronunciation mistakes, which creates a tension among the students*". Reflecting the view that past practices regarding pronunciation are essential parts of the educational background, Interviewer-1 (I-1) also mentioned this issue emphasizing phonological awareness in her speech:

During my educational background, to tell the truth, pronunciation teaching was not included in English syllabus. Therefore, we didn't have any opportunities to learn English pronunciation. What is more, teachers regarded pronunciation as something trivial. However, explicit instruction that I received at university education increased my pronunciation awareness and I realized that pronunciation component is very significant and should not be neglected.

The second category of this theme addresses how the participants perceive pronunciation in language teaching and through the analysis of the data, there appeared many concerns regarding the value of pronunciation in language

teaching. One of them is communicative concern that most of the participants dealt with. The effects of pronunciation on communication had been the subject of considerable debate and the participants focused on fluency rather than accuracy for the development of speaking skills. They found the components of pronunciation useful and important for communicative concerns. I-4 emphasized the importance of being intelligible as following:

Pronunciation is important in language teaching and learning. Because learners want to learn a new language in order to be able to speak in that language. Pronunciation is crucial for both listeners and speakers since they should understand each other correctly when they speak. Also, people who are aware of the fact that they know accurate pronunciation have more self-confidence. On the other hand, those who have the lack of pronunciation knowledge may avoid speaking with other language users.

Only one participant out of six stated that pronunciation is not indispensable for communicative concerns and also claimed that the existence of different dialects of English language all around the world paves the way for considering that there is not only one accurate and applicable way to use English. Therefore, she presented her ideas as following:

I think pronunciation is more significant for beginner learners. Though, I do not think it is significant in terms of communicative concerns as there are many Englishes around the world and we still understand each other. However, of course, it is important in terms of linguistic knowledge. The more we know, as pre-service teachers, the more confident we are to teach.

Similarly, the relationship between language and society was emphasized by one of the participants. He pointed out that accent is an important marker of social belonging since speakers of a language want to belong to a social group. I-5 expressed his thought in following sentences:

Good pronunciation provides intelligibility, which means that even if students have good speaking skills, they may not be intelligible due to their inaccurate pronunciation. These students might have difficulties in their social and professional lives. Among the problems they will encounter are social isolation, deprivation of good jobs and educational opportunities. Also, they are judged according to their speaking styles in society. Therefore, they are regarded as uneducated and unskillful.

The third category is pertaining to the learner characteristics and their relationship with pronunciation learning and teaching. Generally, the participants

regarded learner characteristics as major, if not the primary, factors determining success in pronunciation learning. Age, language level, and learners' native language were some of them mentioned by the participants. Regarding the relationship between age and pronunciation attainment, some of the participants considered that the period roughly between 2 and puberty is critical for the acquisition of pronunciation. That is why learners who are over the age of puberty can no longer successfully and completely acquire L2 pronunciation. As an example, I-2 referred that:

Some people are natural when it comes to pronunciation. They are simply better imitators. Also, the age factor is also very important as children are better learners than adults. Therefore, a pronunciation class should take all these factors into consideration.

Referring to the loss of neural plasticity at the onset of puberty, I-5 also said that such a kind of loss may be the reason for incomplete pronunciation attainment of late second or foreign language learners. Some students, on the other hand, claimed that adult learner can attain native-like accuracy in L2 pronunciation. In contrast to those who believed young learners are better learners of pronunciation than adults, they considered young learners may have some difficulties in articulation of certain words or patterns.

The data revealed that L1 factor is influential for the development of nativelike accuracy of foreign language pronunciation. I-4 exemplified this point comparing the sound systems of Turkish and English languages. He addressed this point stating that:

For example, it might be difficult to articulate 'th'sounds in English language for Turkish students. Because 'th' sounds do not exist in Turkish language. Therefore, students may have difficulty in learning the articulation of some English sounds absent in Turkish language and this situation lead to the extension of the time spent for pronunciation learning. A Spanish learner, on the other hand, can learn these sounds easily because these sounds are also used in his/her first language.

As to the fourth category, pronunciation was investigated from the perspectives of pre-service teachers. Generally, the participants have positive attitudes toward pronunciation teaching and expressed that they would include pronunciation instruction in their language education practices in the future. I-6 mentioned the importance of pronunciation referring to her past experiences in the following sentences:

Perhaps, the most important aspect… Because, when I began to attend teacher education at graduate level, I had a lot of problems, in fact this stemmed from my previous teachers. I used to mispronounce several words. When I learned correct use of those words at university, I got shocked since I realized that my old teachers taught me completely inaccurate pronunciation. That is why, I think pronunciation is very significant since I had many problems with it.

The data revealed that segmental and suprasegmental aspects of English language are among the most salient linguistic dimensions utilized by speakers to interact effectively. Another issue that adds more value to pronunciation component is associated with psychological development of students. This means that pronunciation can reflect self-confidence and lack of pronunciation can disrupt communication, which leads to annoyance and anxiety. For all these reasons, pronunciation is worthy of serious consideration according to the remarks of I-4:

Extensive grammatical and vocabulary knowledge is not enough to communicate efficiently because mispronunciation may cause distraction and miscommunication. When we learn correct pronunciation of target language, our self-confidence increases and we can speak fluently in real life. Therefore, I will pay great attention to pronunciation in my language classrooms.

Only I-2 did not attribute a top-line meaning to explicit pronunciation teaching in her future practices as a pre-service language teacher although she found pronunciation fundamental. She pointed out her preferences with respect to pronunciation teaching practices in the following short comment:

pronunciation is important, but not vital. I would try to teach it implicitly rather than as a separate class. I would try to expose my students to native dialogues so that they could learn by listening not by reading phonetic alphabets.

As mentioned above, this category briefly discusses that as pre-service teachers, participants' perspectives about pronunciation address the same points in language teaching. They, in general, considered pronunciation teaching as a necessity for intelligibility and improved speaking skills.

Theme 2: Affective issues regarding pronunciation instruction.

In the second theme, participants' feelings and affective dimension of pronunciation teaching process were examined. The related codes, categories and theme were presented in the table below:

Table 2. *Theme for Teaching Aspects of Pronunciation Instruction*

Theme # Affective Issues Regarding Pronunciation	
	Self-confidence
Category # 1	Enthusiasm
Positive Feelings	Enjoyable
	Relaxing
Category #2	Anxiety
Negative Feelings	Worried
	Stress
	Fear of negative evaluation
	Embarrassment

The first category is related to the participants' positive feelings about pronunciation classes, which can affect language learners' pronunciation development positively. One of the most frequently discussed positive feeling is self-confidence. The participants regarded self-confidence as vital for pronunciation accuracy and fluent communication. Learners' self-confidence also seemed to be influenced by teachers' attitudes toward their mistakes. I-3 referred that if teachers are intolerant about students' mistakes, they may reflect these feelings onto the class and decrease learner's self-confidence. In her own words:

To be honest with you, at first, I was nervous, shy and unwilling to speak. Because I didn't know anything about pronunciation of English. But now, I feel more relax and speak more fluently in front of the class. If language instructors encourage students to study pronunciation more, students' self-confidence increases and they want to attend pronunciation classes more enthusiastically.

The second category was related to negative feelings about pronunciation teaching. Almost all participants mentioned feeling worried and stressed, especially before receiving pronunciation instruction, referring directly to being evaluated negatively due to their mistakes by their teachers. I-6, for instance,

stated that her anxiety seemed to arise from mispronunciations at the word-level rather than other aspects of pronunciation teaching. Her comment was as follows:

I was anxious about mispronouncing words while speaking in English. I had a fear of expressing something different from what I meant. As I learnt correct pronunciation at the segmental level, I began to gain more self-confidence. I can speak fluently feeling self-confident and relaxed.

Another concern that the participants, almost all, referred to was impacts of teachers' attitudes on students' feelings toward speaking and pronunciation courses. The participants who feel anxiety when they speak in English language stated that their teachers discourage them if they make pronunciation mistakes in the classroom by laughing at them or criticizing severely. This leads them to have the feeling of fear of negative evaluation and abstain from participating speaking or communicative activities in the classroom. Those who have positive feelings, on the other hand, suggested that their self-confidence increased thanks to their pronunciation skills. Since they were supported by their teachers, they improved their pronunciation and speaking skills.

Theme 3: Teaching aspects of pronunciation instruction.

In the third theme, teaching aspects of pronunciation issue were described. Below is presented the table of the theme with its categories and relevant codes.

Table 3. *Theme for Teaching Aspects of Pronunciation Instruction*

Theme # Teaching Aspects of Pronunciation Instruction	
Category # 1	Intelligibility
Goals of Pronunciation Instruction	Nativeness
Category #2	Segmentals
Features of Pronunciation Instruction	Suprasegmentals

	Explicit instruction
Category # 3	Listening activities
Suggestions for Pronunciation	Imitation / Repetition
Instruction	Native speaker
	Practicing

The first category of this theme includes the goals of pronunciation instruction from the participants' perspectives. The participants considered goals of pronunciation instruction to be of great importance in their language education. Some of the pre-service teachers emphasized that it is essential to sound like a native speaker for language teachers while others suggested that intelligibility is more significant than nativeness for effective communication. I-1, for example, referred to the necessity of attaining native-like accent for language teachers as the following:

Intelligibility is not enough for pre-service teachers. They should learn pronunciation with its all aspects and have correct pronunciation of English, which enable listeners to understand their thoughts, feelings and the message intended by the speakers.

In terms of the attainability of native-like accent, two participants can be considered to be faced with a dilemma between their pedagogic goal and attainability of a native-like accent Regarding this issue, a participant commented that English language teachers desire to have native-like accent which is not a utopic dream and is attainable with extra effort and practice. However, she continued her explanations with her beliefs regarding intelligibility and referred to the need for the goal toward being intelligible in pronunciation teaching. The same concern about the necessity of intelligibility in speaking is also explained by I-3 with the following phrases:

Attaining native accent in English language is very difficult whereas intelligibility is essential for interaction with other speakers. We do not need to learn pronunciation thoroughly as long as we are intelligible when we communicate with others. In the future, when I become an English teacher and my students do not pronounce words correctly, I will correct their pronunciation mistakes but will never be very severe in the way that I deal with those students or such problems.

The second category in this theme involves the descriptions of features of pronunciation instructions from the points of views of participants. In general, a suprasegmental-focused pronunciation instruction has received growing attention by participants who claimed that intelligibility of utterances relies more on stress, intonation and rhythm than on segmental features of pronunciation. In this respect, I-2 stated the significance of prosodic instruction in the following phrases:

To me, suprasegmental features are more important than segmentals. For example, even if we make mistake in articulation of a word, we can still be intelligible and can be understood by listeners. Yet, when we make a mistake related to intonation of a sentence, we might be unintelligible.

I-4 considered that it is important to decide whether word-level pronunciation or sentence/discourse level pronunciation should be aimed in pronunciation teaching. Regarding this issue, he stated that *"First of all, how the articulation is made is crucial in pronunciation teaching, but stress and intonation should be emphasized at the level of sentence or discourse."* The need for including such features as stress, intonation or rhythm depends on the choices made about at which level pronunciation would be taught. Teaching segmentals, on the contrary, is beneficial for the approach appealing to improve word-level accuracy.

Addressing the significance of segmental features of pronunciation, just 1 out of 6 participants focused on the practice of segmental features of English in pronunciation teaching classes. I-5 asserted that segmental features have an important role in intelligibility and it would seem to be worse to make segmental mistakes even if suprasegmental features such as stress and intonation were used accurately at the sentence level. The participant explained his opinions as follows:

My desire is to teach correct articulation of sounds and words at the word-level at first while in the next phases I pay more attention to teach stress and intonation of English language. Yet, segmental features should be placed more emphasis on than prosodic features for providing intelligibility. Being able to pronounce prosodic elements correctly will not provide intelligibility if we are not able to pronounce segmental sounds correctly.

In the third category, the suggestions for successful pronunciation education were offered by the participants to overcome language learners' phonological difficulties and problems. Regarding this issue, the most frequently mentioned method to teach pronunciation is explicit instruction which was considered an essential way of developing pronunciation skill. I-1 referred that

"*Pronunciation cannot be learned without explicit instruction. It should certainly be taught in a language classroom explicitly.*". Similarly, I-6 expressed her views in this point that "I *think, it should absolutely be taught by a pronunciation instructor for the reason that it cannot be learnt on one's own without explicit instruction*."

In the light of the data obtained from the participants, several different ways can be presented such as listening and speaking activities, interacting with native speakers, and going abroad to practice all aspects of pronunciation features well. I-5 explained as regards to this issue as follows:

Pronunciation can be attained implicitly by speaking to native speakers of English. However, it is easier to learn phonological aspect of English language through pronunciation-based classroom activities. This can be reinforced with some practices outside classroom.

Referring to the necessity of correct pronunciation for intelligibility, I-2 also put emphasis on listening activities as the best way to teach pronunciation. The participants' comment was as given below:

Listening, listening, listening! I attended an English course where they made students watch American series all day long, and after 3 months, they were very good speakers. What else can be done explicitly is just memorizing I think, and it never really works in a permanent way.

Given the general outline of the last category, participants suggested explicit pronunciation instruction accompanied by audiovisual teaching practices such as listening, repeating and imitation activities. Exposure to native speakers was also suggested for an effective teaching process while segmental features were given priority by some of the participants.

Theme 4: The outcomes of the pronunciation intervention: improved versus insistent aspects.

The outcomes of the pronunciation instruction given to the participants were evaluated in this theme. The table displaying the relevant theme along with its categories and codes will shed further light on the evaluation of this theme as a visual representation before providing explanations.

Table 1. Theme for the Outcomes of the Pronunciation Intervention: Improved versus Insistent Aspects

Theme # 4 The Outcomes of the Pronunciation Intervention: Improved versus Insistent Aspects

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Category # 1	Linguistic outcomes
Improved Aspects of L2	Psychological outcomes
Pronunciation	Pedagogical outcomes

Category # 2	English sounds non-existent in Turkish
Problems and Difficulties of	Stress
Students Regarding L2	Intonation
Pronunciation	Stereotyped mistakes

The data on the pre-service teachers' improvements regarding L2 pronunciation showed that the participants generally stated the positive effects of pronunciation instruction that they received. The most frequently mentioned effects of instruction were linguistic, psychological and pedagogic ones. Also, they are highly aware of the contributory nature of pronunciation instruction for their speaking skills. As regards the positive outcomes of pronunciation instruction linguistically, I-3 mentioned listening comprehension. Evaluating her own performance, she could have the chance of developing their listening comprehension. Her improvement, in turn, increased her self-confidence. This process was explained by the participant in the way that "*I improved my skills of listening comprehension. I can understand words better and as I understand better, my self-confidence increases*".

Another participant sharing these viewpoints uttered the following sentences:

In fact, I was very insufficient about pronunciation when I first started to attend pronunciation courses. I couldn't pronounce some words correctly although I wasn't aware of this fact. After pronunciation instruction, I believe I

can speak fluently and efficiently. The instruction I received influenced my development positively.

I-3 emphasized that her awareness raised with explicit pronunciation instruction and made the following comment:

I first received pronunciation instruction at university. I learned some basic points of pronunciation at the first class of university. Now, I am at the second class of university and there are many things about pronunciation I will learn. But, up to now, what I learned about pronunciation is on the point of phonological awareness.

I-3 made similar comments stating that "*I didn't know such phonological issues as suprasegmental features and therefore I had speaking problems, but with the instruction I received, my awareness of suprasegmental features raised*".

Based on their perceived phonological improvements, examples regarding their views about psychological changes they had can be presented in this category. I-3 for instance, stated that she was feeling anxiety when she read a reading passage and spoke in English language before receiving pronunciation instruction. After she received instruction her anxiety decreased. The more her pronunciation skills improved the more her self-confidence increased. I-1 referred that she showed a dramatic change in her pronunciation and speaking skills. She commented on effects of instruction on her feelings with the following words:

I became aware of the fact that I always avoided speaking during my high school education. I didn't trust myself to speak in English language, articulate sounds and pronounce words. Therefore, I had high level of anxiety. However, my feelings changed a lot positively after pronunciation treatment. I made progress to a large extend. After taking pronunciation courses, I feel more self-confident and relaxed. This influence me positively. I believe I can speak more fluently.

The second category of the fourth theme is associated with the participants' difficulties and problematic areas regarding English pronunciation. Phonological distance between Turkish and English language cause many difficulties that Turkish language learners have to overcome. Participants generally stated that they had difficulties in English sounds which are not found in the participants' native language. For example, some consonants /ð/ and /θ/, and some vowels such as /æ/ and /ɑ/ do not exist in Turkish language and thereby Turkish students encounter phonological problems with these sounds and the words including these sounds, which leads to foreign accent. I-2 provided an example that: "*The sounds that do not exist in our native language are difficult to articulate such as "th"*

sounds. Even if it is not very difficult to articulate these sounds alone, using them in words and to articulate with other sounds are very challenging."

Suprasegmental features pose a problem for Turkish language since they cannot understand which syllables are stressed in a word or which parts of a sentence should be stressed. For some learners, speech rhythm leads to fossilized pronunciation errors. Those who cannot acquire these features accurately are exposed to have foreign accent, which may reduce the intelligibility and comprehensibility in communication. I-6 referred that she found suprasegmental features more difficult than segmental ones and why she thought in this way. For the reason that suprasegmental features should be learnt in a context, it might be difficult to learn them in isolated words and sentences. In this respect, he stated that

I have difficulty in articulating some sounds like "th" sounds even if they can be learnt and produced like a native speaker practicing as much as possible. Also, I got more confused when I learned word stress. I couldn't understand at first and I could not answer some questions including word stress in pronunciation exams.

Taking the second category into account of, the data showed that pre-service participants had common problems that they had to overcome in order to have better pronunciation skills. While at the segmental level, the sounds that do not exist in their native language were regarded as difficult sounds to produce, at the suprasegmental level, they generally found several features problematic such as word stress, intonation and rhythm.

Discussion and Conclusion

The discussion of the qualitative data exhibited significant points concerning pronunciation in English language teaching field. Given the perceptions of the participants of this study regarding the importance of pronunciation and its teaching, it can be seen that almost all of the pre-service teachers considered pronunciation a key element in language teaching as in the study of Counselman (2010) who referred that the participants of his study are concerned about their pronunciation, which leads to pronounce target language better. Based on the results of the present study, it can be claimed that students' positive attitudes toward pronunciation and its teaching can lead to successful learning since they reflect their desire to learn pronunciation during language classes and appropriate classroom practices can be developed by language teachers.

It was attempted to explore the participants' preferences in pronunciation instruction in language learning and teaching in terms of goals, and features of pronunciation instruction in the present study. The examination of the responses has revealed that the participants have different types of preferences regarding pronunciation instruction. Some of the participants expressed an interest in intelligibility as the goal of pronunciation instruction whereas other participants emphasized that native-like accuracy in pronunciation education should be the primary goal especially for pre-service language teachers.

By the investigation of the qualitative data of the present study, some general tendencies emerged, including reflections about the focus of pronunciation instruction. Pre-service teachers' preferences regarding the priority of the features of pronunciation in phonological training can lead to a guiding principle for incorporating pronunciation into language teaching classes. The participants stated that efficient communication and intelligibility rely on stress, intonation and rhythm rather than the correct articulation of vowels and consonants.

Regarding problems and difficulties that language learners encounter in pronunciation learning process, it can be concluded that language learners somehow, acquire target language in different ways. These differences may result from their difficulties in learning some aspects of pronunciation. The most frequently mentioned reason for the difficulties of language learners in pronunciation learning process is learners' native language that interferes with their pronunciation acquisition. This is particularly noteworthy since language is a component of culture and thereby mother tongue interferences appear to be seen very natural. In this regard, it is inevitable that language learners may encounter some problems in pronunciation learning, especially with the sounds that do not exist in their native language. Even, for some students, these problems can never be overcome and cause them to have foreign accent. The present study revealed that even when some students receive pronunciation instruction, it cannot be warranted that they can overcome all of their phonological difficulties and problems they have had before pronunciation instruction.

On the basis of the findings of the study and the relevant literature, it can be concluded that pre-service EFL teachers have positive attitudes toward pronunciation and pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms. Providing explicit pronunciation instruction is crucial for better phonological skills. Positive attitudes of students and teachers toward pronunciation teaching, appropriate choices of content, aim and teaching practices in pronunciation courses, in-class

and out-of-class exposure to target language pronunciation, additional teacher training programs for the improvement of pronunciation instructors' phonological proficiency can increase the efficacy of pronunciation instruction and the general language skills of language learners, particularly pre-service EFL teachers.

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