GAZİ EĞİTİM FAKÜLTESİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ PROGRAMI ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ GENEL OLARAK YANLIŞ TELAFFUZ ETTİKLERİ KELİMELER ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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ÖZET

YDİ (Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce) öğrenenlerin yaptıkları hataları etkileyen başlıca iki neden vardır. Birinci neden öğrencilerin ana dilidir; öğrenci kendi ana dilini edinmiş olduğu için, sesletim, sözcük, cümle, anlam, edim düzeylerinde ana dili tarafından etkilenir. Eğer öğrenci ana dili ile öğrenmekte olduğu dilin belirtilen bu düzeylerde birbirinden farklı olduğunun bilincinde değilse, hata riski daha yüksek olur. İkinci neden ise, hedef dil yani öğrenilmekte olan dildir; öğrenilen dil içinde yapılan yanlış genellemeler ve bilgi eksikliği öğrencilerin hata yapmalarına neden olur. Bu makalede, Gazi Üniversitesi Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümü öğrencilerinin çok yaygın olarak yanlış telaffuz ettikleri kelimeler üzerine yapılan bir araştırma sunulmaktadır. Bu hatalar sadece bu çalışmanın yapıldığı yerdeki öğrencilerin hataları olarak görülmemekte, hataların nedenleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda İngilizce öğrenen bütün Türk öğrencilerin aynı hataları yapabilecekleri düşünülmektedir. Bu çalışmada incelenen telaffuz hatalarının nedenleri de deneklere verilen anketle araştırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hata, telaffuz, telaffuz hataları, yanlış genelleme

ABSTRACT

There are two main factors, which are influential on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' errors. The first is the learner's native language, and the second is the target language, namely the language being learnt. Because the learner has already acquired his/her own native language, she/he will be influenced by his/her native language at various levels such as phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels. If the learner is not aware of the fact that languages differ from each other at these levels, the risk of errors will be higher. On the other hand, overgeneralisations in the target language and lack of knowledge cause EFL learners to make errors. In this article, a research based on a list of very commonly mispronounced words by EFL teacher trainees at the ELT (English Language Teaching) Department of Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University is introduced. These errors should not be considered as the errors only unique to the students in the domain of this research, but other Turkish EFL learners might also make the same errors if we consider the reasons of the errors. The reasons of the errors were also investigated by means of the questionnaire given to the subjects of this study.

Keywords: Error, pronunciation errors, overgeneralization

Introduction

EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners make errors or mistakes during the process of learning. The terms 'error' and 'mistake' are different since they are caused by different factors. The difference is also explained in this article. In this study the mispronounced words are considered as errors because they are mispronounced deliberately, that is, the subjects of this study

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do not know the correct pronunciations. There are, if classified, different sorts of errors depending on the fact that they may occur at different levels of language such as phonetics, lexis, syntax, pragmatics, discourse, etc.

On the other hand, it is possible to classify errors in terms of the factors, which influence the learner's production. These factors are quite influential on learners' errors. One of the most important factors is the learner's own native language. Learner's native language interferes both with the learner's learning and the use of English. Since the two languages (i.e., Turkish and English) are very different at all levels, there will always be a risk of making errors. The other factor is English as the target language. Various rules and overgeneralization of these rules and inefficient learning of these rules may cause the learner to make errors.

This researcher has taught speaking skills at the ELT Department of Gazi Education Faculty for more than six years. During his speaking classes, he collected a list of words that were mispronounced by most of his students very commonly.

This study deals with these certain words mispronounced by the EFL teacher trainees at the ELT Department of Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University. The problem is quite serious because the learners make these errors although their language level is advanced and if we consider the fact that they will be EFL teachers namely models for their prospective students, the problem seems to be much more serious. Instructors at the ELT Department of Gazi Education Faculty should have a diagnostic approach to these errors and should provide practice to treat them.

Errors and Mistakes

An EFL learner may deviate from the correct form or the acceptable form due to some reasons and depending on these reasons the learner may make either an error or a mistake. A qualified EFL teacher should recognise the deviation from the correct form as an 'error' or a 'mistake and should have different attitudes to them. As stated earlier, the two terms are different from each other. Mistakes, as Crystal (1992) defines, "…are unsystematic features of production that speakers would correct if their attention were drawn to them (e.g. those rising out of tiredness or a lapse of memory" (p. 125). In other words, mistakes do not rise out of lack of knowledge of the correct form. Even native speakers of English may make mistakes due to these reasons. On the other hand, "Errors are considered to be systematic, governed by rules, and appear because a learner's knowledge of the rules of the target language is incomplete" (Crystal, 1992, p.125). Errors occur due to the lack of necessary knowledge and the learner cannot provide the correct or the acceptable form and as Nunan (1999) states, "Errors can occur at the level of discourse, grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation" (p. 307). Therefore, errors are more serious and should be treated by the EFL teacher more carefully.

Types of Error

We can classify errors into two main types depending on the fact that there are two main sources of errors, that is, the learner's native language and his/her target language. The first type is 'interlingual errors', which rice out of the learner's native language, and the second is 'intralingual errors', which rise out of the learner's target language.

Interlingual Errors

Various terms such as 'interlanguage error', 'transfer' and 'interference' also stand for interlingual errors. As Richards and Sampson (1985) state "Sentences in the target language may exhibit interference from the mother tongue" (p.5). The language learner is always under the influence of the features of his/her native language. Namely, the learner's native language will interfere with the learner's production of the target language and the learner's utterances in the target language will carry some features of his/her native language. Most simply, interlingual errors occur due the learner's application of his/her native language rules to the target language.

Especially at the early stages of foreign language learning, this interference is higher. Brown (1987) points out to emphasise the importance of these early stages and he states that "The beginning stages of learning a second language are characterized by a good deal of interlingual transfer from the native language, or interference. In these early stages, before the system of the second language is familiar, the native language is the only linguistic system in experience upon which the learner can draw" (p. 177).

Intralingual Errors

An intralingual Error is not the result of conflict with the native language but the result of some problems in the acquisition process of the second/foreign language. Richards (in Richards and Sampson, 1985) refers to the items generated by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. Namely, the language learner may be influenced by what he/she has learned before. Overgeneralisations of previously learnt rules may cause this kind of errors. This kind of errors may occur at various levels such as phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics. Richards and Sampson (1985) emphasise the influence of previous input on the input received later "Both language transfer and intralingual errors confirm the traditional notion of transfer of training; that is previous learning may influence later learning" (p.6).

Methodology

The aim of this study is to reveal and illustrate the number of students who mispronounce the selected words, which were assumed to be mispronounced most commonly. Necessary data for this study were collected at ELT Department of Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were freshman students at the ELT Department of Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University. The total number of the subjects was 100. All of the subjects attended the English Preparatory School of Gazi University last academic year for eight months. The subjects also took a speaking course three class hours a week in the Fall term at the department for 16 weeks.

Instruments

Twenty words, which were assumed to be mispronounced most commonly by the students at the department, were selected among the mispronounced words in the following list.

1) advocate (v)
2) advocate(n)
3) answer (v & n)
4) answer (v)
5) bathe (v)
6) bear (n)
7) bear (v)
8) beard (n)
9) breathe (v)
10) bullet (n)
11) bulletin (n)
12) bury (v)
13) colonel (n)
14) cupboard (n)
15) determine(v)
16) Edinburgh
17) examine (v)
18) glove (n)
19) innocent (adj)
20) instalment (n)
21) law (n)
22) lawyer (n)
23) lead (n)
24) listen (v)
25) listen (v)
26) magnificent (adj)
27) mother-in-law (n)
28) national (adj)
29) natural(adj)
30) oven (n)
31) pear (n)
32) plumber (n)
33) priest(n)
34) steak (n)
35) stubborn (adj)
36) suggestion (n)
37) telephone (n) & (v)
38) worm (n)
39) heart (n)

The words, which were selected for this study, are as follows.

1) bullet (n)
2) glove (n)
3) bury (v)
4) colonel (n)
5) Edinburgh (proper n.)
6) pear (n)
7) bear (n)
8) oven (n)
9) worm (n)
10) steak (n)
11) determine (v)
12) examine (v)
13) stubborn (adj)
14) lead (n)
15) innocent (adj)
16) national (adj)
17) breathe (v)
18) suggestion (n)
19) comb (n) & (v)
20) bulletin (n)

List of Sentences

In order to stabilise the part of speech of each word, a list of sentences containing the words in the above list were given to each subject to be read aloud, and their readings were audio recorded.

1. The cowboy had only one bullet.
2. I want to buy a pair of gloves.
3. They are going to bury the treasure somewhere in the garden.
4. The colonel ordered the soldiers to attack the village.
5. Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland.
6. The boy was eating a pear.
7. A bear wanted to steal our honey.
8. The chicken is in the oven.
9. A worm was moving on the leaf.
10. Do you like steak?
11. She cannot determine her course of action.
12. The doctor is going to examine the patient.
13. He is very stubborn.
14. Lead is a very heavy metal.
15. They finally understood that the man was innocent.
16. They were singing the national anthem.
17. It was difficult to breathe in the cave.
18. I did not like his suggestion.
19. She is going to comb her hair.
20. There was a bulletin board on one of the walls of the classroom.

Questionnaire

A brief questionnaire was administered to the subjects in order to collect data about the subjects' ideas about the reasons of their errors. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part, there were four questions to reveal subjects' ideas about the reasons of their errors. In the second part, questions were asked to reveal their experience of pronunciation and phonetics. Before, the administration of the questionnaire, subjects were given feedback about their errors they made during the voice recording process.

Data Analysis

IPS (International Phonetic Symbols) in the following table were used to transcribe the subjects' correct and incorrect pronunciations.

Table 1. IPS (International Phonetic Symbols)

Consonants			Vowels		
Symbol	Key Word	Other common spellings	Symbol	Key Word	Other common spellings
/p/	pen	happy	/eə/	there	bear bare their
/t/	tick	doubt attire	/a /	crowd	spout plough
/k/	key	cool lock cheque	/ ə/	here	cheer weir fierce
/t /	chip	match nature question cello	/ ə/	poor	sure tour
/d /	jump	germ edge soldier	/ ə/	oar	door roar pour
/b/	back	rubber	/ /	ship	savage guilt system
/g/	get	leggings ghost	/e/	let	head said guest friend
/v/	van	of navvy	/æ/	bat	plaid gas
/f/	fat	cough off	/ /	cod	what cough yacht
/θ/	thing	teeth bathroom	/ /	put	bush hook wolf
/ð/	then	teethe bathe	/ /	shut	udder son tough supper
/s/	sink	psychology fasten mess scene	/ə/	letter	cupboard the colour actor
/z/	zip	was fuzzy	/i:/	sheep	field team key
/ /	ship	sure tension vicious	/ :/	father	calm heart
/ /	azure	measure rouge	/ :/	caught	ball board
/h/	hat	who	/u:/	boot	move shoe group
/j/	yet	use new Europe	/ :/	bird	burn fern worm
/w/	wet	one when	/ i/	boy	poison lawyer
/l/	huddle	balloon led	/e /	make	pray vein steak
/r/	red	marry wriggle rhubarb	/e /	note	soap soul
/m/	sum	hammer thumb calm	/a /	bite	pie buy try
/n/	sun	funny know gnaw			
/ŋ/	sing	longer twinkle			
/d/	day	ladder could			

After having collected the data, the audio recordings were analysed and the following table was designed to illustrate the results. The following table shows the mean scores of the subjects' correct and incorrect pronunciations of the words. As seen in the table, the ratios of the subjects' incorrect pronunciations are very high. None of the subjects could pronounce most of the words correctly.

Table 2. Trainees' Correct and Incorrect Pronunciations

Words	(n = 100)		
	Correct Pronunciation %	Incorrect Pronunciation %	Incorrect Pronunciation %
bullet (n)	/b l t/ or /b lət/ 0%	/b lət/ 79%	/b lɪt/ 21%
glove (n)	/gl v/ 0%	/ gl v/ 100%	
bury (v)	/berɪ/ 3%	/b :rɪ/ 97%	
colonel (n)	/k :nl/ 0%	/k lənəl/ 100%	
Edinburgh (prop.n)	/edınbərə/ 0%	/edinbu:rg/ 92%	/edinb :rg/ 8%
pear (n)	/peə/ 0%	/pıər/ %100	
bear (n)	/beə/ 0%	/bıər/ 100%	
oven (n)	/ vn / 0%	/ vən/ 100%	
worm (n)	/w :m/ or /wə:m/ 4% 2%	/w :rm/ 94%	
steak (n)	/steık/ 0%	/sti:k/ 100%	
determine (v)	/dıt :mən/ 27%	/dıt :rmaın/ 73%	
examine (v)	/ıgzæmın/ 29%	/egzemaın/ 71%	
stubborn (adj)	/st bən/ 2%	/st b rn/ 98%	
lead (n)	/led/ 0%	/li:d/ 100%	
innocent (adj)	/ınəsnt/ 0%	/ın sənt/ 100%	

national (adj)	/næʃnl/ 0%	/neɪʃənəl/ 100%	
breathe (v)	/bri:ð/ 0%	/bret/ 56%	/bri:t/ 44%
suggestion (n)	/səd ̮est ̮ən/ 0%	/səd ̮esʃən/ 100%	
comb (v)	/kəum/ 14%	/k mb/ 86%	
bulletin (n)	/b lətɪn/ or /b lɪtɪn/	/b lətən/ 63%	/b lətɪn/ 37%

Note: adj = adjective, prop. n = proper noun, n = noun, v = verb,

The next step was the analysis of the questionnaire. In the first section of the questionnaire, Likert's Scale was used and students were asked to evaluate, on these scales, the reasons of their weaknesses in pronunciation. The table below shows the results of the subjects' evaluations of the reasons.

The first reason in the questionnaire, tricky and distracting spelling was found as the second most important reason. The mean score for this reason was 4.36, which indicated the serious importance of this reason.

The most important reason was students' overgeneralizations of the pronunciations of some previously learned words. The mean score for this reason was 4.39.

The third reason in the questionnaire was about students' habit of checking pronunciations in a dictionary. The lowest mean score belongs to this reason (3.40), but this reason should not be regarded as unimportant because it is higher than the half of the highest score on the scale.

The mean score, 3.85 belongs to the last reason in the questionnaire and indicates that most subjects believe their teachers also make similar errors.

Table 3. Analysis of the Reasons of Errors

Reasons	1 = unimportant 5 = very important (n = 100) Mean
Tricky and distracting spellings of some words such as 'colonel'.	4.36
Overgeneralisations (i.e., the pronunciations of previously learnt words might cause you to think some other words with similar spelling, which are learnt later, should be pronounced in the same way. For example, you may think that the first vowel of 'bullet' is the same as the vowel in 'but'.	4.39
I do not check pronunciations of words in a dictionary. I try to guess them.	3.40
Most of my previous teachers also made the same errors. I was taught the incorrect pronunciations of the words introduced in this study.	3.85

The second part in the questionnaire included questions about the subjects' experience with phonetics and pronunciation. Only 21 % of the subjects were taught English sounds and only 26 of them specified that they could read phonetic symbols. Big majority of the subjects (97%) believe that it will be useful for them to learn phonetics, phonetic symbols and English sounds for their pronunciation. The percentages are illustrated in the table below.

Table 4. Subjects' Experience with Phonetics and Pronunciation

Questions	n = 80	
	Yes %	No %
Have you ever been taught English sounds?	21%	79%
Can you read phonetic symbols?	26%	74%
Do you think it would be useful to learn phonetics, phonetic symbols and English sounds for your English pronunciation?	97%	3%

Suggestions and Conclusion

Pronunciation errors may cause communication breakdowns; therefore they should be treated by EFL teachers seriously. When teaching vocabulary, teachers should spare time to teach the correct pronunciations of the words they are going to teach. Besides, they should also teach their students phonetic symbol so that they can use dictionaries to learn correct pronunciations of English words when they study alone, namely, when there is no guidance or a model to provide the correct pronunciation. This is actually necessary for life time self-improvement of the student's English pronunciation.

The pronunciation errors held in this study are quite serious because they are the errors made by producing incorrect phonemes. This kind of phonetic deformation such as a non-native who wants to say 'bullet' but pronounces it as /b lɪt/ instead of /b lət/ prevents the native speaker from guessing the actual word which the non-native mispronounces and consequently communication breakdown occurs.

At the ELT Department of Gazi Education Faculty, the curriculum included phonetics course three years ago. It was a useful course in which the trainees learned various aspects of English pronunciation such as English consonants and vowels, stress, pitch point, intonation, juncture and rate, and they also learned phonetic symbols. In the informal interviews, the trainees specified that a course on phonetics would be useful for their own pronunciation and their teaching of pronunciation in their future work domain. Therefore, there must be a phonetics course in the curriculum of ELT departments as in the past.

In order to contribute to the solution of the problem, this researcher provides correct pronunciations of the commonly mispronounced words by means of 'wav' sound files on his web site (http://w3.gazi.edu.tr/web/gboran). Trainees can visit this web site and listen to the correct pronunciations and also record the sound files of the correct pronunciations on the Hard Disks of their computers in order to listen and practise more without visiting the site.

In sum, if we believe that language is primarily oral, the matter of pronunciation will always be important. EFL teachers of the future studying at ELT departments must be furnished with correct pronunciation and necessary knowledge about English sound system and other aspects of pronunciation so that they can teach better pronunciation to their prospective students.

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