Pronunciation Errors of Turkish Learners of English: Conceptualization Theory as a Teaching Method

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Abstract

Pronunciation of certain English words by Turkish English learners is a challenging task. The difficulty posed by pronunciation is closely related to little exposure to interaction with native speakers, distinctive phonological system of L1 as in Turkish, a shallow orthographic language. In the literature, it is claimed that most of the pronunciation problems stem not from physical articulatory but from cognitive causes. In other words, the problem is not that the person cannot physically make the individual sounds, but that they do not conceptualize the sounds appropriately or discriminate them, organize them in their minds and manipulate them as required for the sound system of English (Fraser, 2001). This study attempts to examine oft-cited sounds such as *Schwa* (Ə), *Voiced and voiceless Th* (/ð/-/θ/) and *ng* (/ŋ/) sound. The data were collected from 24 adult EFL students. Each student was given 10 words from schwa, th and ng sounds respectively. Their pronunciations were recorded and transcribed through IPA alphabet and compared with the phonetic transcription in Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 3rd Edition. It was found that Turkish foreign language learners of English have serious difficulties in pronouncing *schwa*, *th* and *ng* sounds. The study suggests that, in order to facilitate the pronunciation of these sounds, the students could be trained through conceptualization methodology, which helps learners to form an idea or principle about what is to be learnt.

Keywords: Conceptualization, phonetic awareness, EFL pronunciation problems

1. Background

Pronunciation difficulty of Turkish learners of English has received a great deal of attention in Turkey in recent years. Demirezen (2007) studied fossilization in Turkish teachers' pronunciations and suggested Audio articulation method (AAM) to cure the wrong articulation of the teachers on the job. Bekleyen (2011) investigated factors that pose pronunciation difficulties. Hişmanoğlu (2007) explored pronunciation errors that became fossilized. Demirezen (2005) in another study categorized some of the problematic sounds and suggested the AAM for curing fossilized pronunciation errors. Şenel (2006) discussed the factors that affect the pronunciation of Turkish EFL learners. These studies highlight the role of audio-articulation method in the promotion of EFL learners' pronunciation problems. Audio articulation method as well as many others can be linked to one general approach, namely communicative approach, a methodology that basically aims to help students gain the ability for the ideal pronunciation of the sounds in English language students (Larsen-Freeman, 2002). It

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seems in the present literature that teacher educators focus on specific activities to promote students' pronunciation through the methods of *listen and repeat, audio listening and repetition drilling,* which are based on demonstration and imitation, focusing on articulation of sounds. These techniques are closely related to the behaviorist notions of second language acquisition, which favors learning through habit formation by repeating and modeling.

Jones (1997) on the other hand refers to non-behaviorist approaches to pronunciation acquisition such as cognitive development, linguistic universals and psychological and sociological conditions. It is this aspect of pronunciation teaching that the present study examines. The gap the present research attempts to fill in is the crucial role of conceptualization (Fraser, 2001) in teaching English pronunciation to the Turkish non-native adult learners of English. The rationale behind conceptualization is to teach how to pronounce English words by internalizing the conceptual properties of sounds and their functions such as intonation, juncture, pitch, stress and linking.

The study investigates English sounds among three most problematic ones: voiced [ð] and voiceless *th* [θ], (Demirezen, 2003 &2004), *schwa* [ə] (Bayraktaroğlu, 2008), *ng* [ŋ] (Demirezen, 2007). With this in mind, 24 subjects of the study were given a set of 10 words for each of these sounds and their pronunciations were recorded, which were then transcribed in International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to clearly see the difference between the subjects' pronunciation and those in IPA. This paper discusses alternative approaches to teaching adults English pronunciation through the principles of conceptualization argued by Fraser (2001), which also criticizes that though learners can consciously know the rules of English pronunciation, they still break these rules. This, as Fraser claims, occurs due the fact that the concepts relevant to English pronunciation have remained at the conscious level, and not filtered down to the intuitive or subconscious level, where they can influence understanding and behavior.

2. Literature review

There are many types of studies regarding teaching pronunciation. Some are based on audio materials and repetition. Some other important studies are suggesting the same method within the support of focusing on segmentals (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998; Jenkins&Setter, 2005; Demirezen, 2007; Şenel, 2006; Hişmanoğlu, 2007; Karakaş & Sönmez, 2011).There are others highlighting the role of cognitive development, linguistic universals and psychological and sociological conditions (Baker, 1981; Jones, 1997; Kendric, 1997; Fraser, 2001; Ahmadi, 2011). Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe (1998) supplied some empirical evidence for the cardinal points of teaching suprasegmentals and segmentals and the effects of these instructions in pronunciation teaching in English. Jenkins&Setter, (2005) on the other hand advocates that teachers of English do well raising student awareness regarding the target sound system and how its diverse elements impact communication. In Turkish context, there are also studies that address the same issue. For example, Demirezen (2007) discusses the *audio-articulation method* (AAM), a method of teaching the correct pronunciation of the vocabulary items and rehabilitating the wrong articulation of problematic sounds by Turkish learners of English. This method attempts to cure the fossilized pronunciation mistakes of the foreign language learners by proposing the following basic steps in applying AAM:

1. Specifying the pronunciation problem-causing phoneme;
2. Preparing a general corpus of words of problem causing 50-100 phonemes and pairs;
3. Specifying the words into minimal pairs within contrastive analysis;
4. Preparing minimal pair corpus out of the general corpus as a case of contrastive analysis;
5. Developing tongue twisters, cliché articulations, minimal sentences, contextual clues, and problem-sound concentrated sentences for practice in class;

This model concentrates on phonemes, minimal pairs, minimal sentences and contextual clues to teach pronunciation, but does not mention the role of these sounds in stress and intonation, which is

part of pronunciation teaching using conceptualization. For example, Şenel (2006) suggests some helpful techniques. The initial teaching technique stresses on importance of stress and intonation, the fall or rise. In the remedial method, learners are given specific instructions for the difficult-to-pronounce sounds as in the *th* (/ð/ /θ/) sounds for voiced and voiceless fricatives to enhance learners' awareness on the sound itself by pointing the main facts on the board and giving demonstrational exercises uttering the sounds with care. Finally, the drilling as in all areas is the integral part of the sound exercises. There are many useful drills for teaching and beautifying the correct and accurate pronunciation of the utterances and words as in word associated and saturation drills. On both of the exercises the students' motivation and attention are drawn on the specific phonemes where they often make the mistakes, concentrating on the phonemes. Learners are given word samples that may be related to one another in which the sounds are playing the role for a good utterance. This way, learners elicit and gain awareness of ideal sounds. It seems that these techniques blend pronunciation teaching methods both from audio-lingual perspectives and from cognitive approaches. Learners can be trained to conceptualize the use of stress and intonation in the target language. Hişmanoğlu (2007) also emphasized the importance of the audio articulation method, a way to improve and eliminate the fossilized pronunciation mistakes and suggested that the teachers of English (non-native teachers) should explain how to utter the problematic sounds by using the technique of exhortation, in which sounds are articulated by the instructors orally and demonstrated with charts and diagrams. The problematic sounds are then shown and drilled repeatedly and carefully. However, again Karakas and Sönmez (2011) designed a sample lesson for teaching pronunciation through Audio Articulation Method (AAM), taken as a tool to cure fossilized pronunciation errors especially for those commonly problematic *th* (/ð/ /θ/) sounds. Unlike Hişmanoğlu (2007), who suggested that learners be exhorted in the teaching of pronunciation, Karakaş and Sönmez (2011) recommend that learners not be overwhelmingly elicited within a lesson. It seems that in different contexts, AAM is applied through different techniques. With respect to error erasing and elimination of the pronunciation mistakes, Bayraktaroğlu (2008) mainly underlines the importance of the isolated sounds, stress, rhythm and their combination scenarios in the target language.

Yule (1996) stated that there is no reliable correspondence between sound and the symbol in English. In the other words, we are not speaking what is written, which stands to be like two different aspects in one language. The problem then starts when the acquired language merges with the native language as the learner intuitively transfers the native language sound articulations into target language right from the starting phase of a new language acquisition mostly because of Turkish being syllable-timed but English stress-timed language. In addition, Bekleyen (2011) claims that the reason of mispronunciation problems is believed to be due to lack of focus in stress patterns in English language. She stated that students of English are given less training for weak and strong forms of the words and it is this that causes unnatural sounds and overgeneralizations in their pronunciations in the target language. Therefore, applicable exercises for the weak and strong words are advised for the learners.

Likewise, Rivers (1986, p.125) suggests that native speakers of English have bad experience in listening to foreigners' speaking and in understanding their message. This is not because of nonnative speakers' lack of knowledge in vocabulary and language structure, but because of the peculiar sounds and improper intonation and stress in unexpected places. This claim indicates that most of the people learning a second language have some problems of pronunciation of English language, due to lack of knowledge in the stress and intonation system of target language. In order to get rid of this problem, Bayraktaroğlu (2008) demonstrated the differences under orthographic aspects of both English and Turkish, which seems to stand as a barrier to acquiring English due to the role of the orthographic interference. He therefore advises phonemic transcription exercises for both instructors and learners of English and claims that with the application of this error eliminating corrective practices, learners would see the orthographic differences in two languages and be able to learn the oral and visual sound distinctions. He suggested that symbolized language analysis would help them discriminate and learn the target language in a more correct way. In another study, Boran (2005) also believes that

pronunciation errors may cause communication breakdowns; therefore they should be treated by EFL teachers seriously. When teaching vocabulary, teachers should spend time to teach the correct pronunciations of the words they are going to teach. In addition, they should also teach their students phonetic symbols 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.

It needs to be noted that the studies above focus on the role of repetition, exercises, exhortation, guidance and modeling. However, there are also studies that highlight the role of cognitive aspects and emphasize that most of the pronunciation difficulties are closely related to cognitive causes rather than physical or articulatory causes. More specifically, what causes the pronunciation problem is that teachers do not encourage conceptualization of how pronunciation can and should be generated (Fraser, 2001). The conceptualization requires the ability to discriminate, cognitively organize, manipulate English sounds that are explicitly instructed. Learners may not be able to play around sounds when instructed through AAM, whereas in conceptualization, learners are explicitly taught how to combine theoretical and practical knowledge of sounds. This is thought to improve learners' ability to manipulate the sounds more easily. Besides Fraser (2001), Baker's (1981) research is one of the studies that support the implications of conceptualizations. According to Baker (1981), learners cannot learn to pronounce words by hearing simply accurate articulation. Likewise, Kenworthy (1987) claims that the uses of repetition and imitation exercises depend on learners' adaptation to oral imitation, which may cause insufficient acquisition of sounds in the target language for those who don't have good ears. O'Connor and Fletcher (1989) also highlight the crucial role of having good ears to succeed in oral imitation and suggest that those with poor ears may not be able to reproduce the heard sounds adequately. This shows that there should be alternative ways that do not directly depend on the learners' articulatory capacities, but on the intelligibility of the tasks and approaches of teaching.

What is needed is for teachers to consider the conceptual properties of sounds for the learners to learn the conceptual patterns of the sounds of the target language. It is stressed that one cannot relate a speech wave or articulate diagram to auditory quality of the sounds simply by seeing it. Rather, they need to understand the detailed knowledge of how these sounds can be articulated. In addition, Ahmadi (2011) examined the factors affecting the learning of pronunciation and identified the needs of the learners and suggested ways of dealing with them. He concluded that learners should be encouraged to conceptualize the pronunciation by arguing that learning the pronunciation of isolated words may not contribute to communication. Instead, teachers should highlight and teach the elements of sounds such as syllabus, stress, and intonation in order to help them understand the critical and essential features of the sound system in the target language. This way, learners will also raise awareness of sound production through productive skills.

2.1 Conceptualization as a method of teaching English pronunciation

Fraser (2001), however, describes conceptualization as mental structures which underlie between external reality and our understanding of that reality. This could mean that when sounds are to be produced, one subconsciously thinks about them, deconstruct and reconstruct them with the concept already acquired. This is also the case even when a sound is repeated as in a parroting exercise. Learners may not be able to repeat the sounds they hear in such an exercise because they subconsciously resort to the concepts internalized in the first language acquisition period. It is actually this linguistic resource that seems to be the hindrance to the proper pronunciation. Fraser (2001) attributes the majority of pronunciation problems to cognitive causes rather than to physical and articulatory causes. Fraser claims that the problem is that learners do not conceptualize the sounds appropriately, discriminate sounds, organize them in their minds, and manipulate them as required

for the sound system of English. Although foreign language learners use similar or the same sounds in their own language, because these sounds are conceptualized differently in English, foreign language learners need to change these deeply rooted, sound-related concepts acquired during the first language acquisition so that they can produce the sounds they normally do in their own languages when speaking the target language. The cause of most mispronunciations in English is the failure to conceptualize the sounds in a new way as the English language requires. Rather than merely repeating sounds, learners may need to understand and conceptualize them in terms of stress, intonation and pitch. To do this, they need to practice larger chunks of speech, such as syllables, words, phrases, and sentences. This does not necessarily mean that they would not need to study the individual sounds and syllabus, but the general focus should be on the practice of these larger chunks (Fraser, 2001). In addition, the students generally learn the permissible sounds of the target language but have little courage to speak them.

2.2 The characteristics of three problematic sounds

This study covers three problematic sounds that Turkish learners of English experience in communication. The difficulty in the articulation of these sounds is posed mainly due to the fact that *th*/ ð̞ /, / θ /,*ng*/ ŋ /and *schwa*/ ə / are not found in the sound system of Turkish language.

Voiced dental fricative   / ð̞ /

Its manner of articulation is fricative, voiced, oral consonant which means it is produced by constricting air flow through a narrow channel at the place of articulation, causing turbulence. It does not have the grooved tongue and directed airflow, or the high frequencies, of a sibilant. Its place of articulation is dental which means it is articulated with the tongue at either the upper or lower teeth, or both. (Most stops and liquids described as dental are actually denti - alveolar.) Its phonation is voiced, which means the vocal cords vibrate during the articulation. It is a central consonant, which means it is produced by directing the airstream along the center of the tongue, rather than to the sides.

Voiceless dental fricative / θ /

Its manner of articulation is fricative, oral consonant which means it is produced by constricting air flow through a narrow channel at the place of articulation, causing turbulence. It does not have the grooved tongue and directed airflow, or the high frequencies, of a sibilant. Its place of articulation is dental which means it is articulated with the tongue at either the upper or lower teeth, or both. (Most stops and liquids described as dental are actually denti-alveolar.. Its phonation is voiceless, which means it is produced without vibrations of the vocal cords. In some languages the vocal cords are actively separated, so it is always voiceless; in others the cords are lax, so that it may take on the voicing of adjacent sounds.

Schwa   / ə /

An unstressed and toneless neutral vowel sound in some languages, often but not necessarily a mid-central vowel. Such vowels are often transcribed with the symbol <ə>, regardless of their actual phonetic value. The mid-central vowel sound (rounded or unrounded) is articulated in the middle of the vowel chart, stressed or unstressed. In IPA phonetic transcription, it is written as [ə]. In this case the term mid-central vowel may be used instead of schwa to avoid ambiguity. Schwa is special not only from the point of view of phonological theory. We find that it is a special vowel also if we look at it from an articulatory point of view: it could be described as a `targetless vowel' for which no inherent articulatory target has been specified, or as a vowel which targets a neutral vocalic position, `the mean tongue-tract variable position for all the full vowels.' (Browman&Goldstein, 1992).

Ng sound - Velar nasal   / ŋ /

Its manner of articulation is stop, a voiced nasal consonant which means it is produced by obstructing airflow in the vocal tract. Since the consonant is also nasal, the blocked airflow is redirected through the nose. Its place of articulation is velar, which means it is articulated with the back of the tongue at the soft palate because the sound is not produced with airflow over the tongue, the central–lateral dichotomy does not apply. It is articulated by pushing air solely with the lungs and diaphragm, as in most sounds.

3. Methodology

This is a mix-method study where the qualitative data were also quantified through quantitative tools using percentages. According to Cresswell, Fetters, Ivankova (2004), such integration of data is necessary because mixed methods lend themselves to valuable opportunities for data triangulation and transformation and instrument design.

3.1 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following two questions in order to measure the students' current level of pronunciation competences.

1. How do students pronounce three most problematic sounds th (/θ/-/ð/), ng (/ŋ/), and schwa (/ə /)?
2. What could be the reasons for the mispronunciations of these sounds?

3.1. Participants

In the first phase of the data collection, 24 adult students learning English at an intensive Language Learning program at Gediz University, İzmir were randomly selected for the study. They started to learn English from beginning level and currently they are pre-intermediate level. They are not specifically trained for pronunciation skill. They learn pronunciation incidentally in productive courses where they have the opportunity to listen and speak and in receptive courses where they are exposed to teacher talk. There is intensive learning of English to achieve a level of proficiency to deal with the course in their majors. In fact, speaking is an important part of their program as they need to interact argumentatively. In the second phase of the study, from the same setting 60 students were randomly selected and given a questionnaire that elicited responses on subjects' retrospective practices on pronunciation learning. It should be noted that although this is a small population of Turkish learners, it might give us an insight into a general tendency on how learners developed their pronunciation.

3.3. Instruments and procedures

The instrument included 30 words of three different sounds ('th' sound the voiceless /θ/ and the voiced /ð/ forms, 'schwa' /ə /, and the 'Ng' sound /ŋ /). These sounds were the output of the observed mispronunciations of students throughout the year. The mispronounced words were classified in accordance with the distinctive sounds they contained.

Two instruments were used in the study. First, the learners were asked to read out loud the problematic words one after the other in one-to-one session, and the pronunciations the students uttered were recorded by the teacher. The recordings were then transcribed into IPA in order to see

the learner pronunciations in the sound form and compare them with standard sound patterns. All recordings of pronunciations were then listed. The second instrument was an open-ended questionnaire with one question in order to understand how they were taught pronunciation by their teachers in previous years. The responses were required because students' mispronunciation could also be attributed to particular teacher practices. The data were collected as written reports in a retrospective mode. The responses were thought to give clues about their pronunciation learning background as well as to justify the necessity of incorporating pronunciation training at conceptual level more specifically through conceptualization. For this purpose, three problematic sounds were orally elicited and one open-ended question was asked in order to gain insight into the participants' existing and previous knowledge of pronunciation.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected through oral practices from 30 students where the sounds were articulated in a sequenced format and they were transcribed in IPA format. Later, the transcriptions were categorized as correct and incorrect. The responses were then categorized in percentage values for 24 students in order to measure and provide evidence for the students' ability to pronounce the most common problematic sounds.

Second, the data collected through written reports were treated with content analysis and according to the principles of grounded theory; six thematic categories emerged (See Table 2). These categories were then qualitatively interpreted. The data and the interpretations in the research are limited to the participants' responses.

4. Findings

4.1. RQ 1:

The first research question was to identify the way students pronounce the problematic sounds. Among the three phonemes recorded, the nasal ng /ŋ/ sound articulation collected the highest correct scoring (51%), which showed that the students were more capable of producing *ng* sounds than the two other sounds – schwa /ə /, and the voiced and voiceless (/ð/(/θ/) *th*. As for schwa sound, the pronunciation seems to be quite inappropriate especially in terms of the students' awareness of where schwa is. The students correctly pronounced this sound by 16%. In the above schwa containing words schwa sound is represented by different vowel sounds such as (/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/) which could pose difficulty for students to recognize the schwa sound in the word pronunciation. *Th* sound also posed similar challenge for students because only 13% of the whole word pronunciations were phonetically correct. Table 1 shows the number of the correct and incorrect pronunciations of the target words.

Table 1. The number of the correct and incorrect pronunciations of the target words

Ng sound	Cor.	Incor.	Schwa	Cor.	Incor	Th sound	Cor.	Incor
ringing	4	20	adept	6	18	Feather	0	24
rank	1	23	synthesis	0	24	Rather	0	24
singing	3	21	cousin	3	21	They	0	24
longing	3	21	stomach	0	24	Rhythm	1	23
angry	11	13	above	0	24	Therewith	3	21
finger	24	0	character	16	8	Thought	0	24
drink	20	4	adjust	9	15	Thin	4	20
language	12	12	confront	0	24	Math	12	12
hungry	22	2	address	3	21	Think	2	12
bank	24	0	among	3	21	Thank	9	15
Total *f*	**124**	**116**		**40**	**200**		**31**	**209**
Total %	**51**	**49**		**16**	**84**		**13**	**87**

RQ2;

What could be the reasons for the mispronunciations of these sounds?

The students were also given an open-ended questionnaire to be able to identify the causes of their mispronunciations. With reference to their quotations, the main causes were related to the teachers' teaching practices. Based on the responses elicited from the 60 participants, it was found that the major causes of mispronunciation of words were the little attention that was paid to the classroom pronunciation training. 62 retrospective comments made by these 60 students as to the teachers' approach to focusing on pronunciation in classroom setting can be thematically categorized in 6 groups in Table 1:

Table 2. Teacher Practices in retrospective comments

No focus on pronunciation	61 %
Repetition-based approach	13 %
Modeling	11 %
Recasting	8 %
Audio and visual-based repetition	3,4 %
Showing place of stress	1,6 %

These categories inducted from the qualitative data can lead to an understanding that pronunciation training at schools may lack some necessary phases such as helping learners to create a concept for sounds by engaging them in suprasegmental as well as segmental features. The retrospective responses of students clearly show that there was negligence in teaching these aspects of language. This could either be because of inadequate teacher knowledge or because of the curriculum and syllabus constraints, which will not be discussed here as they are out of the scope of the present study.

The first category emerging from the data was that the teachers made little or no focus on pronunciation training which can also be interpreted from the selected responses from 38 participants. The number in the parenthesis indicates the number of the participants who made the same remark.

No focus on pronunciation:

1. *"I myself wasn't interested in the sound of English because our teacher was very boring and he was only teaching us grammar in the lesson."*
2. *"We didn't do anything special for pronunciation."*
3. *"No attention was paid to the pronunciation of words"*
4. *"They did nothing"*
5. *"I don't remember they did something for this"*
6. *"We were doing nothing"*
7. *"No special activity was done, we only read texts"*
8. *"Nothing"*

Another emerging category pointed to the fact that the teachers modeled the pronunciation of the words to help students learn the correct pronunciation. This approach is comprehensively discussed in the literature review. In this model, showing that students need to conceptualize knowledge of sounds.

Modeling Approach:

1. *"She was demonstrating us the pronunciations of words"*
2. *"He used to read reading text himself for us to learn the pronunciation"*
3. *"They were only repeating the word again for us to correct the mispronunciation"*
4. *"They only read text and we tried to figure out the pronunciation*
5. *"We were writing the words on the board and reading aloud all together"*
6. *"We used to make pronunciation practices by the guidance of the teacher"*
7. *"He used to pronounce the word once"*

The next category shows that teachers' pronunciation practices were based on having students repeat after them. This practice is also demonstrative rather than cognitive, which could contribute to the phonetic competence.

Repetition-based approach:

1. *"Sometimes our teacher asked us to repeat the words but these exercises were so rare.''*
2. *"She was making us repeat the words all the time for 3 or 4 times."*
3. *"I met teachers who made us repeat the words ten times. I was fed up with the repetition"*
4. *"He used to make us repeat the newly learnt vocabulary"*
5. *"They often made us repeat continuously"*
6. *"He was telling us to repeat the words he was saying"*

7. *"Repetition of the teacher's pronunciation"*
8. *"He used to have us repeat after him for us to learn properly"*

Three students also reported that their teachers integrated audio and visual aids to teach pronunciation. The teacher not only made a repetition practice but also presented the words and sentences in these materials. This could be seen a more effective way of pronunciation instruction.

Audio and visual- integrated repetition:

1. *"Our teacher did a lot of listening activities and made us repeat them after she said them."*
2. *"We did multi-media activities and repetition exercises and sometimes listened to songs and played games. I think they help me to understand the English lessons better today."*
3. *"We used to watch movies together and when a word hard to pronounce was encountered, he paused and made us listen again"*

Three students mentioned in their remarks that when they mispronounced, they were orally corrected and their utterances were recast by the teacher, providing the correct form of imporperly articulated sounds. This approach is argued to have little influence on student learning. Lyster (1997) found that recasts result in the lowest rate of uptake of knowledge. Teachers' act of correction and articulation of the correct forms for students' learning seem to be ineffective in leading to successful learning.

1. *"He corrected our pronunciation mistakes"*
2. *"They were correcting my mistakes"*
3. *"He was seldom correcting out mistakes"*

There is only one student who made a different remark. In his explanation, it can be clearly seen that the teacher was teaching pronunciation with stress placement training with which the students would know how to utter words where pitch levels are required. With this kind of training, the students are more likely to know how to pronounce the words properly because learners could insightfully acquire one of the suprasegmental features that is important in pronunciation skills.

Showing place of stress:

1. *"He used to show us how to pronounce by pointing the stress points"*

The findings show that the attained experiences in pronunciation were quite limited. The students were only taught pronunciation based on the repetition, modeling, and recasting methods. There were almost no practices exemplifying the conceptualization of pronunciation knowledge. The training provided by the teacher also made little or no reference to teaching subconsciously, which is the main component of conceptualization as described by Fraser (2001). More specifically, teaching the correct articulation of sounds, syllable sound variations and patterns of stress or intonation were not in question.

5. Results and Discussion

The results above confirm that teaching pronunciation is overlooked in language learning as suggested by (Ahmadi, 2011; Bekleyen, 2011). The low success of students in pronouncing the words in a phonetically appropriate way could be related to the practices of teachers reported in students' retrospective description. Even the most frequent content or function words in the spoken and written

English corpus are not pronounced properly by the students in this study. This shows that there is considerable neglect or direct tendency to see pronunciation as secondary in the foreign language teaching context.

As far as Turkish language education is concerned, it is clearly seen that there are issues in understanding the concepts of English sound system when teaching the language as a second language both with the instructors and with the learners. Nonnative teachers of English, therefore, need greater attention for pronunciation training which needs to coincide with the other necessities of language acquisition within a framework. Due to the lack of this crucial factor, teachers and learners of ESL face difficulties in completing the language acquisition process, which affects effective communication when using the language in the period of education and the rest of their lives.

Therefore, conceptualization theory in pronunciation teaching can be used to enable learners of ESL and to give them the chance to come to an ideal level in using the language with all its components. As a start to this method, it would be ideal to begin with learning what *The Concept* actually is. Concepts are mental bodies which stand between external reality and our intake of that reality; whereas perception on the other hand, is basically the ability to be conscious of something through one of our senses. If perception was the only criteria, we would have no understanding, we would be like a thermostat that senses temperature and responds to it in a pre-programmed way. In order to understand something, we have to know what it is; that 'knowing' involves applying a concept to it (Fraser 2001, p.21). It is clearly seen from the above discussion that with the help of concept ability one can differentiate what is known to what is visualized. For example, in Turkish there are different words for someone's father's sister and for his mother's sister, which are 'hala and teyze' respectively. However, in English, the word for the same person is just one term and that is 'aunt'. These kinds of differences, in two languages, in a way, put us in two different routes in acquiring the second language and giving us the clues not to mix with the first one. Once this example is taken as a model, we can visualize that we are there to play the same game but in a different way and therefore we should change our concepts and not allow those we already have to come in between and interfere with the new one. Hence, this current study proposes that conceptualization is crucially important not just in using language to understand the world, but also in understanding and using the world of a different language itself.

With regards to the sound system in English as mentioned before in this article, English is a stress-timed language while Turkish is syllable-timed, which causes overgeneralizations and mispronunciations. This difference can be exemplified with reference to Roach (1998), who states that the difference in the phonemic articulation in speech is not the only cause of sound contrast on the lexical basis in English but is more the reason of supra-segmental causes. For example, the word 'import' can be pronounced in two different ways, as one with a strong stress in the first syllable making the word a noun and also with the strong stress utterance at the end making the word a verb. Also in another example, the word 'right' can be pronounced in two different ways and the meaning can change. If there is a voice rising towards the end of the word it may be heard as 'continue to tell me more' and when there is a falling with lower voice it is generally understood as a confirmation or agreement. This change in intonation seems to have an essential and a pragmatic function that could not be made with any other linguistic mechanisms. This valuable knowledge can only be taught through carefully planned, adequately-focused, and conceptual-oriented pronunciation training. The supra-segmental knowledge is needed to be shown in the practice of English pronunciation which is therefore an important component in the conveyance of meaning in communication in an appropriate way. Ahmadi (2011) also suggests that in gaining a new ability in pronunciation, rather than teaching the pronunciations of isolated sounds or individual words and phrases, ESL teachers should also focus on supra-segmental features in larger chunks with every opportunity and point the elements of sounds, syllables, stress and intonations, which would not only enhance students' intelligibility but also awareness. The following example may be useful in justifying the addressed theory.

1. Kim's cousin frank has recently sold four very fine old cars.
2. That would have been ideal if you could come up with a better idea.

Once we read the sentences we can see that it is obvious that the number of words in the second sentence is more than in the first. However, the number of stressed syllables in the first sentence is more than in the second. Therefore, the time required for uttering the first one would be clearly more than the second sentence. With the change in the stress level of each chunk or segment or a word it is clearly seen that the more stress is cared for a better pronunciation the better message to be given across. All this is important for students who are learning English as a second or foreign language.

Segmental features - consonant sounds and vowel sounds - are less important than supra-segmental features because the intelligibility of English does not depend so much on segmental properties but on supra-segmental sounds. As stated before, teaching and eliciting more on the concepts in English sound variations on the contextualized texts highlight the role of single words in a better way. With this in mind, the unconscious concepts that actually drive our pronunciation can be quite different from phonemes. In order for learners to gain a good level of pronunciation and understand speech, therefore, we should teach sounds within sentential level using larger chunks of contextualized texts. By only repeating the words, as in ' AAM method' the learners may require a longer period to gain the true pronunciation of that word, however once the conceptualization phenomenon comes in the way, we may find that it might be easier to pronounce it correctly in a shorter period of time.

We can also conclude that the identification of deviant pronunciations of the subjects show that there are fossilized habits of articulating English sounds due to factors ranging from little awareness of the importance of pronunciation during language learning (Fraser, 2001) to orthographic structure difference between Turkish and English language (Bayraktaroğlu, 2008). Fraser (2001) also claims that it is unnecessary giving rules of stress patterns if the learner does not actually comprehend what stress and intonation is. It is irrelevant to tell them to make sure they make distinctions in between the consonants and vowels of the language unless relevant and sufficient groundwork is given. The learners will only understand the facts of pronunciation when they are fully capable of separating the forms of L1 and L2 sound systems accurately which acquires good amount of time and practice. Likewise, Ahmadi supports this comment of Fraser by saying that rules the patterns and the orthographic differences of phonetics may only contribute a little to second language awareness, therefore he claims that if the pronunciation instruction is given with the focus on supra-segmental features there may be a better understanding of second language pronunciation acquisition. Also through such methods, Bray (1995) for instance claims that the use of limericks and tongue twisters in the ESL classroom sessions may address help the supra-segmental problems and may help improve the pronunciation level of the students hence the communicative way may be more effective than inductive way of learning.

We, the teachers, should play an active role in the learning of pronunciation by producing speech rather than only teaching the rules of pronunciation. This is one of the ways in which they can transfer explicit knowledge of pronunciation into practice. It is the teachers' job to design activities that put the learners at the center of practicing pronunciation, by which they can conceptualize English phonology. To sum it all up, as a fundamental part of language training, pronunciation plays a great role in learning a new language which determines the ability of learners when they use L2 in their lives either as a need or a tool. This is one of the main reasons that the pronunciation training should be in the curriculum where the language education is given. Today's perspective towards language learning is strongly relying more on articulating a second language in a smooth and correct way. Hence, recent research focuses more on the pronunciation acceptability than intelligibility of speech in a language, therefore the learners need to gain and improve the pronunciation levels in order to maximize their communication as far as L2 acquisition is concerned.

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