

In The Name of God



Shahrood University of Technology

English Language Department

M.A. Thesis in Language Teaching

Exploring Techniques of Teaching Prosodic Features of Speech: A Qualitative Study

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با نام و یاد خداوند متعال، ارزیابی جلسه دفاع از پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد خانم یارا میرفندرسکی با شماره دانشجویی ۹۶۱۴۸۱۴ رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی گرایش آموزش زبان انگلیسی تحت عنوان Exploring Techniques of Teaching Prosodic Features of Speech: A Qualitative Study که در تاریخ ۹۸/۱۱/۷ با حضور هیأت محترم داوران در دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود برگزار گردید به شرح ذیل اعلام می گردد:

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to four beloved people who have meant and continue to mean so much to me. To my adorable parents, Mirsaeed Mirfendereski and Saba Baqeri, whose love for me knows no bounds and, who taught me the value of hard work. Next, it is dedicated to my darling sister, Yasaman, who taught me to speak English when I was 10.

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تعهدنامه

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- تحقیقات در این پایان نامه توسط اینجانب انجام شده است و از صحت و اصالت برخوردار است.
- در استفاده از نتایج پژوهشهای محققان دیگر به مرجع مورد استفاده استناد شده است.
- مطالب مندرج در پایان نامه تا کنون توسط خود یا فرد دیگری برای دریافت هیچ مدرک با امتیازی در هیچ جا ارائه نشده است.
- کلیه حقوق معنوی این اثر متعلق به دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود می باشد و مقالات مستخرج با نام «دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود» و یا «Shahrood University of Technology» به چاپ خواهد رسید.
- حقوق معنوی تمام اقرادی که در به دست آمدن نتایج اصلی پایان نامه تأثیرگذار بوده اند در مقالات مستخرج از پایان نامه رعایت می گردد.
- در کلیه مراحل انجام این پایان نامه، در مواردی که از موجود زنده (یا بافتهای زنده) استفاده شده است ضوابط و اصول اخلاقی رعایت شده است.
- در کلیه مراحل انجام این پایان نامه، در مواردی که به حوزه اطلاعات شخصی افراد دسترسی یافته یا استفاده شده است اصل رازداری، ضوابط اصول اخلاقی انسانی رعایت شده است.

تاریخ

امضاء دانشجو

مالکیت نتایج و حق نشر

- کلیه حقوق این اثر و محصولات آن (مقالات مستخرج، کتاب، برنامه های رایانه ای، نرم افزارها و تجهیزات ساخته شده است) متعلق به دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود می باشد. این مطالب با ید به نحو مقتضی در تولیدات علمی مربوط ذکر شود.
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Abstract:

Although techniques of teaching prosodic features have been vastly explored, very few studies have given voice to practitioners' perspectives. This data-driven study situated in the Iranian public schools context contributes to filling this gap by theorizing experienced EFL teachers' experience of teaching prosodic features of speech. To this end, teachers' perspectives were explored through qualitative interviews and then analyzed in line with the coding schemes of grounded theory. Iterative data collection and analysis revealed eight techniques that lead to effective communication with a focus on prosody in pronunciation teaching.

Keywords: Foreign language teaching, EFL teachers, Pronunciation, Prosodic features, Techniques, Perspectives

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Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1. Overview

Paying attention to the teaching of prosodic features of speech, we can have foreign language learners gain comprehensible communicative abilities or native-like language competency. Considering the needs of the learners, foreign language teachers may employ different strategies in order to teach prosodic features of speech.

Previously, prosodic features of speech were ignored in the Iranian national syllabus for public high schools. Recently, however, materials developers have added such features to the syllabus. This top-down change has been imposed on classroom practice without any in-service teacher preparation programme; hence, a great many teachers do not know how to teach these prosodic features.

Accordingly, it is essential that the gap be filled by advancing our understanding of teaching prosodic features of speech. To this end, this study theorized experienced EFL teachers' perspectives of techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech. Not only do the findings drawn from this qualitative study affect considerations in teaching, but they also lead to some hints in putting some effective techniques into practice. That is, all language teachers are the first group who can take advantage of such findings while teaching. Besides this group, language policy makers who take the responsibility of training both pre-service and in-service teachers will come up with insightful guidance to educate teachers effectively and to make all teachers aware of the most practical techniques of teaching prosodic features of EFL through training courses. Finally, the findings of the present study will help students to acquire prosodic features of English language effectively and to be more efficient users of EFL.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study was motivated by language teachers' pedagogical concerns regarding techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech. To provide these teachers with down-to-earth techniques of developing EFL learners' phonological competence, this data-driven study aimed at uncovering techniques of teaching prosodic features through class observation and interviews. More specifically, it aimed at answering "how do experienced EFL teachers teach the prosodic features of speech?" Not only do the findings help language teachers in this context and other similar contexts, they

complement the theory-driven perspectives on developing EFL learners' phonological competence.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Previously, prosodic features of speech were ignored in the Iranian national syllabus for public high schools. Recently, however, materials developers have added such features to the syllabus. This top-down change has been imposed on classroom practice without any in-service teacher preparation programme; hence, a great many teachers do not know how to teach these prosodic features. To provide these teachers with useful techniques for developing EFL learners' phonological competence, the current study aims at uncovering the successful techniques that experienced EFL teachers use for teaching prosodic features.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

To collect data for this grounded theory research, the researcher held interview sessions along with classroom observations. It is common for studies like this to collect data through focus groups but that was not possible due to practical constraints. In consequence, this study might have missed other convincing perspectives that teachers might have revealed had they been interacting with each other rather than only with the researcher. A further potential limitation on the methods employed in this study relates to the limited sample size which might also have constrained the range of concepts and techniques which emerged. In spite of the fact that there were many professional EFL teachers in Iran, finding the participants who were willing to share their information with the researcher was difficult. Thus, the researcher was not able to get access to all cases. There can be different techniques which are employed by such cases in developing the prosodic features of speech; however, this study could not uncover all the techniques employed by EFL teachers in different environments.

1.5. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The current study was conducted in Iran and it used both purposive and theoretical sampling procedures for it targeted 12 Iranian EFL teachers handling the subject related to the techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech. The range of the study was from October 2018 to March 2018.

Furthermore, the general intent of this study was to discover techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech with the focus on the experienced EFL teachers' perspectives; therefore, the researcher limited its coverage on the number of participants.

Chapter 2:
Review of the Related
Literature

2.1. Overview

This study is an attempt to unearth techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech by EFL teachers in language schools. Therefore, this section offers an overview of the definitions and theories behind prosodic features of speech. Next, the researcher will try to highlight the empirical findings of teaching prosodic features in EEFL environments. She will then discuss the gap of research in the desired field.

2.2. Theoretical Perspectives

To pave the way for presenting a clear picture of the importance of teaching prosodic features of speech, the techniques used by EFL teachers at language schools, and the theoretical perspectives regarding teaching of pronunciation, phonemic awareness, and prosodic features of speech will be analyzed.

2.2.1. Phonological Competence

There are several competences that are necessary to learn a foreign language in order to use that language as a means of communication. According to Figure 2.1, language competence is divided into two competences (i.e. organizational and pragmatic competences). One of the subcomponents of organizational competence is the grammatical competence whose elements are syntax, vocabulary, phonetics, and morphology (Bachman, 1990).

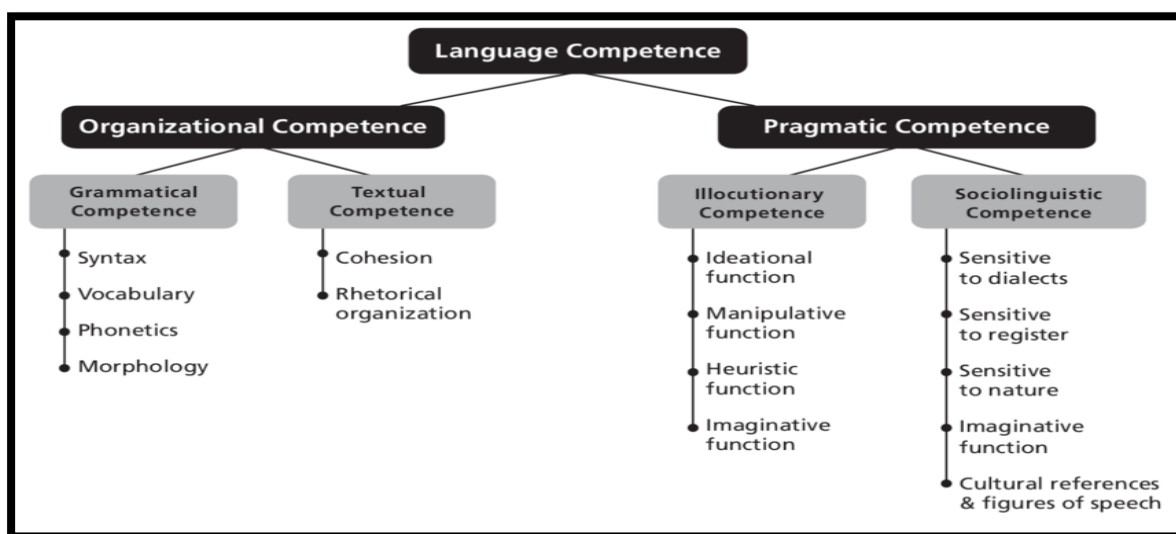


Figure 2.1. Components of Language Competence (Bachman, 1990, p. 87)

Phonological competence is the knowledge a speaker has in order to correctly pronounce words, and to understand other speakers' phonetic realizations. This knowledge implies not only the knowledge of the phonemes of the language, but also the way these phonemes are actually realized phonetically, according to their distributional patterns (i.e. stress, intonation, pitch, etc.).

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), phonological competence is an essential element for communicating successfully with others in foreign language environments. Celce-Murica et al. (2010) have also pointed out when non-native speakers of English ignore acquiring phonological competence, communication breakdowns appear no matter how good they might be at grammar and vocabulary. Then, as Diaz (2014) claimed, pronunciation is in relation with intelligibility; therefore, learners who have good knowledge of oral skills of English are more likely to convey their meanings and to be understood even if they make errors in other areas of that language.

Due to the confusing nature of English pronunciation system, it could be one of the most complicated and challenging skills to be improved. And, pronunciation has been given insufficient attention in EFL teaching plans. Considering this fact, many attempts have been made in order to incorporate this competence into the language curriculum (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In spite of the different attempts that have been made in order to integrate pronunciation into EFL classroom, it is still the Cinderella skill (Kelly, 1969), meaning a skill often ignored in language teaching and learning due to a greater emphasis on other sub-skills. On the whole, pronunciation is, still, not given priority by language teachers and stakeholders of education in foreign language contexts.

2.2.2. Pronunciation

“Pronunciation is largely identified with the articulation of individual sounds and, to a lesser extent, with the stress and intonation patterns of the target language” (Pennington & Richards, 1986, p. 208). With regard to this definition, pronunciation is not limited only to the articulation of sounds, but it goes further to cover stress and intonation patterns. Therefore, pronunciation, as a global construct, includes segmental features (i.e. consonants and vowels) and supra-segmental ones (i.e. stress, intonation, rhythm, rate, volume). In the target language, the accuracy of pronunciation requires mastering

production of both segmental (i.e., consonants and vowels) and supra-segmental features of speech (Lengeris, 2012).

2.2.3. Teaching Pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation at all proficiency levels is very significant since without pronouncing a language correctly, the speakers will not be understood by the listeners. However, it is ignored within the English as a second/foreign language in classrooms, while designing course materials (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Seyedabadi et al., 2015). Kenworthy (1987) believes that second/foreign language learners, who are adult, can acquire native speakers' way of pronouncing to meet their own basic needs. Many jobs need an excellent English speech such as EFL teachers, businessmen, pilots, etc. Silveira (2002) pointed out that teaching pronunciation was absent from the second/foreign language classes for a long time because of the conventional beliefs that pronunciation is not of importance, cannot be taught by teachers, and can be acquired by learners.

As Zarifi and Sayyadi (2015) suggested, a number of researchers have conducted various studies on different aspects of pronunciation in Iranian contexts. These studies have explored the Iranian EFL pronunciation problems and difficulties (see Gordani & Khajavi, 2012; Seddighi, 2010), called for teaching pronunciation in Iranian schools (see Shooshtari et al., 2013), reviewed the related theories on teaching English pronunciation to EFL learners (see Nikbakht, 2011), examined the related literature to explore the place of pronunciation in EFL and ESL classrooms (see Gilakjani, 2011), and investigated the influence of integrative instruction of segmental and supra-segmental features of pronunciation (see Aryanpour & Karbalaei, 2014).

Additionally, learners must be introduced to the components of English pronunciation and their importance in their learning (Al Tuhafi, 2011). To do this, pronunciation is divided into two major categories: segmental and supra-segmental features. This division of pronunciation into components is to experience an easier way of teaching pronunciation. In other words, as suggested by McDonough and Shaw (2003), pronunciation instruction includes learning the sounds of the language as well as stress, rhythm, intonation, and links.

2.2.4. Supra-segmental Features of Pronunciation

Sounds of a language are considered as segmental features of pronunciation, whereas the rest (e.g. stress, intonation, rhythm, pitch, etc.) are referred to as supra-segmental features (Zarifi & Sayyadi, 2015). In other words, as Van Heuven (1994) pointed out, all the features of speech which cannot be understood through direct linear sequence of segments are referred to as prosody (see Yenkimaleki, 2016). Gussenhoven (2015) also suggested an alternative definition that prosody refers to all features of speech that are not directly related to the articulation of the vowels and consonants in an expression.

2.2.5. Teaching Supra-segmental Features of Pronunciation

To teach pronunciation at segmental level, language teachers set their teaching procedures in order to deal with isolated consonants and vowels or showing learners how sounds are articulated via explanation and demonstration (Harmer, 2007). The segmental aspect of pronunciation, nevertheless, failed to help language learners to have control over their pronunciation while communicating in a second/foreign language (Keys, 2000). Then, some scholars such as Morley (1991) and Jenkins (2002) presented the idea of shifting the main pedagogical focus from segmental elements of the pronunciation to the supra-segmental ones. This decision was made because effective communicative pronunciation competence is perceived to be achieved more efficiently through improving supra-segmental productions rather than the segmental ones (Jenkins, 2002). In other words, in communications, participants can make mutually interpretable interactions through employing supra-segmental features of a language.

Jilka (2007), discussing the difficulties and problems associated with teaching prosodic features of speech, pointed out that setting comprehensive rules and guidelines for speech production and teaching prosody is difficult. Jilka (2007) also believes that the nature of prosodic features is complicated and due to this complexity and the emergence of errors, no specific teaching methodology deals with them properly. Thereupon, most of foreign language teachers prefer to focus on segmental aspects in foreign/second language contexts.

To highlight the importance of supra-segmental features, it is worth mentioning that in English language, supra-segmental features are employed distinctively. They play critical roles in determining the meaning of an utterance because they accentuate the most important part of the message and signify where the listener ought to pay

particular attention (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2010). Furthermore, changes in some of supra-segmental features might lead to some changes in the meaning of an utterance (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2010). Thus, it appears that supra-segmental features of pronunciation should be regarded as some of the most central aspects of communicative competence to be practiced in English learning classrooms. Also, recent investigations have highlighted the vital role of supra-segmental aspects of language in achieving fluency and proficiency in foreign/second language interpretation and pronunciation, and have suggested that learners who had greater exposure to prosodic features of language, made progress in spontaneous production better than those who learned only segmental ones (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Saito & Saito, 2017). Mary and Yegnanarayana (2008) also acknowledged that prosodic features such as rhythm, stress and intonation can provide important information about the utterance for the listener. That being so, the significance of supra-segmental features is attributable to the fundamental function of the language as a means to the communicative sharing of meaning, emotions, and cognitive information (Yang, 2016).

Prosody, thus, plays a crucial role in the world of language learning, and foreign language teachers and learners are supposed to be aware of the most practical techniques in this field.

2.3. Empirical Findings

A growing body of literature has studied techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech. In the section that follows, the empirical findings of these studies are discussed.

2.3.1. Techniques of Teaching Supra-segmental Features

Prosodic elements such as *stress*, *intonation*, *pitch* and *rhythm* are language universals that are uttered naturally in the mother tongue without training but need to be learned systematically in the target language. That end, teachers can help EFL learners develop their phonological competence and knowledge of supra-segmental features in different ways. Firstly, for the web generation, recent technology-based interventions seem to have been effective in raising learners' awareness of prosodic features of speech (Mehrpour et al., 2016; Su et al., 2018; Sztahó et al., 2018; Yenkimaleki & Heuven, 2019). The impact of computer-assisted prosody training (CAPT) versus instructor-based prosody teaching for improving speaking skills was compared by Yenkimaleki

and Heuven (2019). Their study showed that CAPT resulted in better performance of learners in developing speaking skills. Sztahó et al. (2018) also found that students using computer-based prosody teaching software were able to produce more acceptable prosody than other students. A prosody model of native English continuous speech as corrective prosodic feedback for non-native learners was presented by Su et al. (2018). The researchers concluded that their model is effective for implementing computer-assisted language learning (CALL) which helps learners to generate native-like prosody, and at the same time serves as corrective feedback for L2 learners. In another study, Mehrpour et al. (2016) aimed to examine whether accent reduction software in conversation classes would result in development in EFL learners' pronunciation or not. It was concluded that in EFL environments, where exposure to target language is rare, software programs can be appropriate options to compensate for pronunciation practice. Furthermore, EFL learners can be provided with extra exposure to target language input and can practice with specifically designed CAPT¹ programs.

A second effective way to raise learners' awareness of the prosodic features of speech is the use of authentic materials such as radio, songs, podcasts, films, TV, and news which help the learners to learn the patterns of the target language's pronunciation features (Cakir, 2012; Namaziandost et al., 2018; Sawaengmongkon, 2013; Totoy Sani, 2019). Namaziandost et al. (2018), examining the impact of using authentic videos on prosodic ability, found that participants learning supra-segmental features via authentic videos outperform those who learn them without the use of authentic materials. In other words, teaching via authentic videos had a significant effect on improving learners' prosodic ability. Additionally, teaching supra-segmental features of English through films can develop the listening achievement of learners (Sawaengmongkon, 2013). Totoy Sani (2019) also concluded that TED Talks videos are innovative tools which facilitate the teaching of supra-segmental features of pronunciation. He also suggested that language teachers need to include authentic materials to improve the teaching process, increase student's phonological awareness and reach intelligible pronunciation. Additionally, Cakir (2012) studied the effectiveness of using extensive listening in pronunciation correction process and concluded that using extensive listening activities enhanced correct pronunciation (i.e. segmental and supra-segmental features) and developed

¹ Computer Assisted Program Training

native or native-like pronunciation. It also helped students to feel less anxious about speaking. Aufderhaar (2004) also found out that authentic text enables learners to internalize articulation rules and speech. It was concluded that perceived audio literature, including theater, poetry, and short stories can be used to supplement a pronunciation course curriculum.

Teachers can also develop learners' phonological awareness and prosodic features through auditory feedback (Rosse, 1999; Wulandari et al., 2008) which leads to improvement in students' phonological ability, especially in pronouncing word-stress (Wulandari et al., 2008). It is considered a method for developing more native-like speech for advanced adult ESL learners. Furthermore, in using this technique, language learners attempt to repeat immediately after the speaker whatever the speaker says (Rosse, 1990). Therefore, learners can be led to more native-like phrasal and sentence rhythm and are forced to focus on intonation contours, stress and rhythm (Rosse, 1990). Besides, explicit teaching of prosody improves speaking skills among interpreter trainees. According to Yenkimaleki and Van Heuven (2016), the trainees who were exposed to listening to authentic audio tracks in English and discussing their contents, watching authentic English movies, discussing issues in the movies outperformed the ones who were only studied theoretical explanation of supra-segmental features of English. The results also showed that the prosodic feature awareness training significantly developed the students' speaking skills. (Yenkimaleki and Van Heuven, 2016). Furthermore, students' listening comprehension were reported to be positively affected by the explicit way of teaching supra-segmental features of speech (Yenkimaleki & Van Heuven, 2016).

In addition to providing auditory feedback, teachers can make effective use of visual prosody training (Levis & Pickering, 2004; Wulandari et al., 2008). Levis and Pickering (2004) suggest, intonation, which is one of the supra-segmental features of speech, can be addressed through the use of speech visualization technology which helps language teachers show how intonation and tonal patterns function in discourse. Likewise, Wulandari et al. (2008), in studying the use of audio visual aids in improving students' knowledge of supra-segmental features, found that audio visual aids play a positive role in pronouncing the correct word-stress and by watching videos the students could monitor the speakers' expressions, listen to native speaker's voices, and

read the subtitles. In addition, to generate correct intonation, (Spaai, & Dik, 1993) made several attempts to teach intonation with the help of devices that display the pitch of speech via a visual system. This system helps language learners to acquire correct positioning of the pitch movements. Vowel onsets are therefore measured and displayed, too. Thus, proper intonation can be taught (Spaai, & Dik, 1993).

Next, along with providing visual signs, tongue twisters are considered to be another technique of teaching supra-segmental aspect of pronunciation (Mu'in et al., 2017; Putri et al., 2018). Putri et al. (2018) carried out a study to determine how tongue twister can improve students' pronunciation skill. The result indicated that tongue twisters could improve students' pronunciation. Moreover, they could improve the ability to use correct word stress, correct intonation, and reduction in pauses and hesitation to pronounce different words. Another study conducted by Mu'in et al. (2017) on the effect of tongue twister technique on pronunciation ability of students, in spite of insignificant results, suggested that tongue twisters were considered to be effective as the learners perceived that practicing them cultivated joyful learning and helped them to improve their fluency and motivation in learning pronunciation. In Addition, tongue twister practice could complement the use of repetition technique to enhance students' learning experience and learning outcome (Mu'in et al., 2017).

A further way to develop learners' phonological competence is the use of phonemic transcription, based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which is used to teach intonation, accent, stress, and articulation (Snow, 2001) in using this technique for special education. To learn phonemic transcription plays an important role in increasing learners' phonemic awareness and the accuracy of their speech. Moreover, it can be used to teach supra-segmental features such as linking sounds (Lintunen 2004). Additionally, reading aloud phonemic transcriptions is considered an effective strategy for improving students' pronunciation (Gerhard, 1964; Lintunen 2004).

Gesture is also regarded as another technique of teaching and learning supra-segmental features of second language pronunciation such as word stress, rhythm, and syllabification. In other words, gesture can be employed as an instructional tool to expedite foreign language learners' identification and production of syllables, word stress, and the rhythm of speech. (Smotrova, 2015)

The eighth technique is using minimal pairs which are used to teach some limited aspects of pronunciation (Altamimi, 2015; Hamzah & Bawodood, 2019). Minimal pairs can be applied in a foreign language classroom to teach sounds. Moreover, this teaching strategy is an effective way which can solve the pronunciation problems among foreign language learners (Hamzah & Bawodood, 2019). Besides, Altamimi (2015) found out that pronunciation of some specific consonants that are present in the target language of learners, but are absent in their mother tongue.

Among other techniques, the use of proverbs can be utilized effectively to acquire natural rhythm and articulation of the target language (Yurtbasi, 2012). Furthermore, proverbs can be used to produce acceptable pronunciation and intonation in the second/foreign language (Yurtbasi, 2012).

At long last, it is necessary to mention that drilling method can also be used to enhance the students' word stress mastery of pronunciation (Basuki, 2018). Mirzaei et al. (2012) also explored those language learners who learn pronunciation through planned instructional activities (e.g. listening to native speakers' audio-recorded, being exposed to intonation assessment tasks, practicing intonation patterns, receiving metalinguistic explanations, describing pictures, and role-playing) use more correct English intonation patterns.

2.4.Statement of the Gap

The above review shows that multiple techniques are already used to raise learners' phonological competence. However, they rarely reflect experienced teachers' perspectives. Rather than being driven from teaching practice, they are imposed on classroom practice. Although language education has come of age and it is no longer dependent on mother disciplines such as linguistics and psychology, many educators still follow the applied science model of teacher education (Day, 1993). Therefore, following a transmission model of teacher education, they impose theories on classroom practice. However, successful practice can also shed light on suitable approaches. The current study, therefore, theorizes teachers' experience in this area.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

3.1. Overview

This study collected and analyzed interview data using a grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) approach to inductively discover techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech from teachers' own perspective. The findings were triangulated against field notes made during the observation of classroom practice.

3.2. Grounded Theory Research Method

Among the different qualitative approaches, Grounded Theory was introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Glaser and Strauss co-founded grounded theory in the 1960s, and this was followed by the first publication they co-authored titled *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Soon after this publication, they then differed on the usage of grounded theory and agreed upon publishing together on this methodology (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that grounded theory analysis is more verificational than what Glaser and Strauss had suggested in their original work. Their viewpoint on verification is that researchers should constantly examine the data, and there should be an on-going process throughout the study. However, Glaser (1992) points out that the grounded theory is not verificational and that it is only after the development of theory that researchers can verify.

Grounded theory is a general methodology, a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). It focuses on the discovering or constructing theory from data (Tie et al., 2019). This approach is so named because its aim is to produce an innovative theory that is grounded in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their experiences in a social context. In other words, the grounded theory is a methodology that enables the researcher to seek out and conceptualize patterns in order to construct theories about a specific subject (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the process of grounded theory, the data is collected inductively (Morse, 2001). Therefore, the researcher had no preconceived ideas to confirm or reject the constructed theories. In this process, the researcher analyzes data through constant comparison between interpretations translated into codes and categories and more data. This constant comparison builds the researcher's final theory in the participants' comments. According to the classic version of grounded theory, Glaser (2002) has identified it as a

perspective methodology. In line with classic grounded theory, participants' perspectives are investigated with an aim to raising these perspectives to a conceptual level (Glaser, 2002).

As a matter of fact, the participants' perspectives and comments affect their behavior. Yet, via constant comparison, grounded theory aims to conceptualize a continuous pattern of behavior that clarifies as much variation in the data as possible. Therefore, grounded theory goes beyond the empirical differences to provide conceptual, rather than interpretive or descriptive patterns of behavior. Having considered the role of researcher in this method, Glaser (1998) suggested that the researcher is supposed to interview participants, analyze these interviews, and compare them with other data and codes. The researcher's perspective is integrated as more data to be constantly compared. By privileging participants' concerns over the concerns of the researcher, the study attempts to generate a theory that is comprehensive, practical, meaningful and relevant to the participants. A grounded theory is a theory; it does not intend to be verified, but to be used and revised (Glaser, 1992). Classic grounded theory is a general method that can use any type of data and is not derived from any theoretical perspective. It is ontologically and epistemologically neutral. As Glaser (2005) claimed, discussions of ontology and epistemology are moot within classic grounded theory.

Generally, grounded theory is an approach used to look systematically at qualitative data (e.g. transcripts of interviews or protocols of observations) aiming at the generation of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). There are some elements of grounded theory in which Glaser and Strauss still agree. These include theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, the coding process, constant comparative analysis, and theoretical memoing. These are considered to be fundamental grounded theory elements that are contributed to objectivity (Rennie, 1998). The first element is theoretical sensitive coding that generates theoretical strong concepts from the data to explain the phenomenon of the research. The second element is theoretical sampling which decides whom to interview, or what to observe next based on the state of theory generation, and that implies starting data analysis applying the first interview, and writing down memos and hypotheses. And the last one is the need to compare the phenomena with contexts in order to make the theory strong.

Significant concepts of grounded theory methodology are categories, codes, and coding, according to scholars in this field. The principle behind grounded theory method is neither inductive nor deductive, but a combination of both. This will lead to a research practice in which data sampling, data analysis, and theory development are not considered as distinct and disjoint, but as different steps. These steps are repeated until one can describe and explain the phenomenon that is to be explored. This point is reached when new data does not change the emerging theory anymore (Charmz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

According to Corbin & Strauss (1990), theoretical sensitivity is about “having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, the capability to separate the pertinent form that which isn’t” (p. 41). Unlike Glaser, Corbin and Strauss (1990) argue that theoretical sensitivity is derived from a number of sources. One such source is the reading of literature for researchers to be familiar with publications that would provide them with a rich background of information that would sensitize them to what is happening with the phenomenon of study. Other important sources of sensitivity rejected by Glaser but recognized by Strauss and Corbin (1990) are the professional and personal experience of researches.

3.3. Sampling Procedure and Participants

Target participants were English teachers with at least ten years of teaching experience in the Iranian public school system. The researcher believed that teaching experience gives the participants an insight into the way they use techniques to teach prosodic features of speech. Those who were willing to share their perspectives on teaching the prosodic features of speech were selected through purposive sampling. An initial round of data collection was used to extract categories indicative of teaching techniques. Concepts related to the emerging categories were theoretically sampled and the iterative process of data collection and analysis continued until the emerging categories reached a point of theoretical saturation. In total, 12 participants were interviewed and their classes were observed. The demographic information of participants and their students is presented in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

Table 3.1

Demographic Information of Participants

Teacher Participants	Age	Gender	English language level	Teaching Experience
T.P.1	38	Female	M.A. in English Language and Literature	11
T.P.2	37	Female	M.A. in TEFL ²	13
T.P.3	31	Female	B.A. in TEFL	10
T.P.4	44	Male	M.A. in English Language Translation	24
T.P.5	33	Female	B.A. in TEFL	10
T.P.6	35	Female	M.A. in TEFL	12
T.P.7	30	Female	M.A. in TEFL	11
T.P.8	29	Female	Ph.D. Candidate in TEFL	10
T.P.9	31	Male	M.A. Student of TEFL	12
T.P.10	32	Female	Ph.D. in TEFL	10
T.P.11	41	Male	B.A. in English Language and Literature	19
T.P.12	42	Male	B.A. in English Language and Literature	22

Table 3.2

Demographic Information of the Participants' Students

Age Range	Gender	English Language Level
16-18	Male & Female	Intermediate – Upper Intermediate

3.4. Data Collection

The primary instrument employed in this study was a semi-structured interview in which the researcher did not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. Instead, the

² Teaching English as a Foreign Language

interviewer asked more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewees rather than a straightforward question and answer format. Through the qualitative interviews, the researcher tried to elicit EFL teachers' experience of techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech. A first round of data was collected and analyzed to drive more refined question for theoretical sampling of concepts related to the emerged techniques. More specifically, initial data collection determined subsequent questions which helped us sample theoretically relevant concepts. In addition to the interviews, the secondary source of data was the observation of classroom practice and collection of field notes. Observation of classes aimed at verifying the techniques which were inductively driven from teachers' perspectives or established the credibility of the findings. Observation data was coded separately from interview data and provided a means to validate the information from the EFL teachers. The interviews took place at the participants' workplaces (i.e. their private offices, language institutes, and schools) in winter 2018. It should be mentioned that the interviews were conducted in Persian language. Then, the data was translated by the researcher and the accuracy of translations was verified by a linguist. The total number of interviews and class observations were 24 and 12 respectively.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data, from the interviews and observations of participants' classes, were analyzed in line with the coding scheme in grounded theory, which is a three-step process. Firstly, the transcribed interview data were analyzed line by line and sentence by sentence to build concepts and categories and to ensure that the emerging concepts and categories are descriptive of the participants' perspectives. Secondly, axial coding was used to improve the breadth and depth of concepts by answering what, when, how, and why questions and answering them through theoretical sampling of concepts related to the emerging concepts and categories. Attention was also paid to the grouping of codes or concepts to form categories and how the categories develop and grouped to form patterns. Finally, selective coding was used to develop the core category which is an abstraction and description of all codes and categories, and pulls them together into a unified whole. The emerged conceptualization together with the data substantiating were then fed to MAXQDA software to visualize the research findings.

3.6. Methodological Limitations

It is common for studies like this to collect data through focus groups but that was not possible due to practical constraints. In consequence, this study might have missed other convincing perspectives that teachers might have revealed had they been interacting with each other rather than only with the researcher. A further potential limitation on the methods employed in this study relates to the limited sample size which might also have constrained the range of concepts and techniques which emerged.

3.7. Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is defined as the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. In this study, credibility was established via data triangulation (e.g. data was collected through interviews, class observations, & taking field notes). That is, data were collected through two independent sources: elicitation data collected through qualitative, open-ended interviews, and field notes reflecting observation of classroom practice. Moreover, the final conceptualization was verified through member checking. That is, the emerged categories which were inductively driven from field notes and elicitation data were shown to the participants for verification and any possible modifications.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

“Ethics begin and ends with you, the researcher” (Neuman, 2011, p. 143). Ethical issues are important in both qualitative and quantitative studies. However, ethical considerations are more important in qualitative studies as they interfere in participants’ lives (Punch, 1998). In this study, ethical issues were taken as serious as possible. While collecting data, we made known all advantages and disadvantages that may affect the participants. Furthermore, participation was voluntary and all the participants were aware of all aspects of the study. The participants also knew that they could stop taking part whenever they wanted during the interviews. The researchers gained the confidence, consent, and approval of the participants before starting the interviews, as well. During and after data collection, all the data were kept safe and locked, and the anonymity of the participants was assured.

3.9. Design of the Study

Having identified the characteristics and principles of the Grounded Theory, the present research design helped the researcher to consider it as the most useful research method that fits with the objectives of this study. The initial stage of this study got an in-depth understanding of philosophies and rationale behind this type of research method. The researcher obeyed the principles of grounded theory in terms of sampling procedure, data collection, and data analysis. Therefore, the researcher made use of the principles of grounded theory to build her own theory in terms of the notion of the techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech.

With regard to sampling procedure, the researcher chose initial participants through purposive sampling. In this step, some participants who were representative of the intended issue were identified to be interviewed. Initial codes were emerged through analyzing the interviews taken from these first participants. Next, the theoretical sampling was followed by the researcher through which the researcher had to look for the theories and extracted codes to expand them. This theoretical method helped the researcher to select better-formulated samples which were more sensible and significant than others. Thus, having utilized this type of sampling, the researcher selected samples that had a particular process, examples, categories and even types that are relevant to the ideal or wider universe.

The study took place in Golestan, one of the provinces in Iran. Eight female and four male teachers participated in the study. All of the participants were singled out among experienced EFL teachers who had language related education and believed in raising their learners' knowledge of prosodic features of speech. The number of participants was twelve in total, first six of which were selected through to purposive sampling to elicit initial codes and the rest of them through theoretical sampling saturate the initially generated codes. It is necessary to mention that the teacher participants were assured they remain anonymous during the whole process of research.

According to the principles of grounded theory in the process of data collection, the researcher carried out two methods to collect the intended data. The first step was interviewing the participants. During the interviews, he researcher asked questions which were likely to yield as much information about the study phenomenon as possible

and also addressed the objectives of the research. In those qualitative interviews, the researcher asked open-ended questions and began with the questions that participants could answer easily and then the researcher proceeded to more difficult or sensitive topics. Then, the researcher made use of the theoretical memos in order to expand and verify the already collected data through interviews. Memoing was used when the running notes of each of the concepts that were being identified were kept. This step was the intermediate one between the coding and the first draft of the completed analysis. Memos were field notes about the concepts in which the researcher wrote down her observations and comments. Memoing started with the first concept that has been identified and continued right through the process of breaking the text and of building theories.

The final step was analyzing data which was totally done based on the presented principles in grounded theory. This step was divided into two main steps; open coding and selective coding. Through the first step of data analysis, the researcher took a small chunk of the text where line by line being coded. Useful concepts were being identified where key phrases were being marked. The concepts were named. In other words, the researcher broke down the transcribed data into units of meaning (concepts), and then labeled them with words close to those of the participant, and integrated them for alternative interpretations, conditions surrounding the meaning, and gaps left unfilled. In addition, the constant comparative method was included in this step and it went on throughout the grounding theory process up through the development of complete theories. The second step of data analysis was selective coding process through which a core story was generated. The core story was a brief narrative of the most important aspects of the data, subsuming all of the other categories and explaining their relationships with the core story. The researcher continued the conceptual level when she wrote about the concepts and how they are related to one another. Also, selective coding was applied by reviewing old memos or field notes which were already coded once at an earlier step or by coding newly gathered data. Axial coding was also used as a set of procedures whereby data were put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. The study ended with creating the ultimate theory in accordance to the core codes which concerned closely the notion of techniques of teaching EFL prosodic features of speech.

Chapter Four:

Results

4.1. Overview

This chapter provides a detailed description of the findings of this study, that were collected and analyzed based on the rules and methods of data collection and analysis of grounded theory research design through which twelve EFL teachers were interviewed in order to uncover their techniques for teaching prosodic features of speech by asking how they teach the prosodic features to their learners.

The results of the study are presented in two phases. First, the emerged categories are described and grounded in the participants perspectives. Second, using MAXQDA software outputs, we will first graphically display the extent to which the emerged conceptualization is grounded in participants' perspectives via bar graphs which show the number of times the category has been supported by extracts from the participants' perspectives. Then, we will graphically display the degree of overlap between the emerged techniques.

4.1. Techniques Substantiated by the Participants' Perspectives

This section describes from participants' own perspectives the techniques they use to teach features of prosodic speech. The techniques fall into 8 categories: using authentic input, audio feedback, visual symbols, technology, phonemic transcription, grammar, drama voice techniques, and minimal pairs.

First of all, the frequency of each technique employed by the participants is presented in Table 4.1. Then, the techniques are going to be considered in detail.

Table 4.1

Frequency of Techniques

Techniques	Frequency ³
Authentic Input	11
Audio Feedback	10
Visual Symbols	10
Technology	9
Phonemic Transcription	7
Grammar	6
Drama Voice Techniques	6
Minimal Pairs	5

4.1.1. Using Authentic Input

Authenticity refers to the degree of similarity between language used inside and outside the classroom. Language teaching materials are contrived since they have been developed for pedagogical purposes and thus do not reflect the way language is used outside the classroom. To overcome this gap, participants utilized samples of real language use such as newspaper and magazine extracts, and radio and TV programs.

The participants used interesting news stories as authentic input but rather than having students listen for meaning, they were encouraged to listen to the intonation patterns. One of the participants explained:

“Having presented a news story to my students [downloaded from PRESS TV], I asked them to listen to it carefully in order to recognize its intonation and tone. Then, the students realized that typically, a phrase that is 'news' - that is, information that the hearer is not expected to know - has both a falling intonation and a falling tone. Therefore, they came to an understanding that the pattern presented in news stories contrasts with the information that the hearer and speaker already shared, which has a rising or fall-rising tone.” (T.P.7)

³ Number of participants who claimed to use each technique.

The participants also suggested keynote speeches for teaching the concept of pause, as another supra-segmental feature of speech. These keynote speeches include lectures given by students and academics in class or at a conference, reports given by business people at meetings, texts read aloud by teachers or broadcasters to their pupils or their audience. One of the participants explained how he raises learners' awareness of pause as a prosodic feature:

“Once I used a speech delivered by Hillary Clinton on a National Run for Office Day in the USA. In this video, Clinton presented a prepared speech. In other words, she tended to put speech unit boundaries, often marked with a pause, at clause boundaries. So, I wanted the students to watch the video, transcribe it, and mark the speech units with //. [Claimed by the teacher in interviews and presented to the researcher during the observation of the classroom.] Having watched that video, the students analyzed the clauses in which pause was used and they concluded that pause is used between two clauses linked by and or but, before and after an adverbial clause [i.e. a clause that gives more information about how, where, when, why, etc.], after a clause which is the subject of a sentence, and before and after a non-defining relative clause [i.e. a clause that gives more information about a noun or noun phrase before it.]” (T.P.2)

Additionally, another participant used the ‘Coco’ animation in order to teach the intonation pattern of both Yes-No and WH questions. She pointed out:

“In one of its sequences, a little boy sang a song in English. He used different WH questions. I wanted the students to find out the pattern of WH questions based on the tone of the little boy’s voice. (e.g. ‘What color is the sky?’ and ‘Where should I put my shoes?’ had falling intonation patterns. So, the students reached the conclusion that ‘WH questions’ have falling intonation patterns and the tone of our voice decreases while using such sentences.)” (T.P.6)

4.1.2. Using Audio Feedback

Audio feedback is commonly used in language teaching for listening to recordings of native speaker discourse and for allowing students to replay their own output. As a

technique of teaching supra-segmental features of speech, it can be applied in different ways. As one of the participants mentioned:

“I always ask learners to record their own voices. Then, I want them to listen to their own voice to notice whether it seems different from what they expect or not. Sometimes I encourage them to record a conversation with a partner, and listen to the intonations they used and check whether it sounds natural or not.” (T.P.7)

Having employed audio feedback as a technique of teaching supra-segmental features, another participant suggested:

“In the audio feedback technique, I give an audio file [usually a conversation] to the students [accompanied by a questionnaire]. Then, they answer the questions in the questionnaire according to what they hear. The questions are all about the intonation of the sentences and the meaning each sentence carries. In this process, the students will gradually find out the intonation patterns of English and the meaning they convey.” (T.P.12)

Audio feedback also allows by students to focus on a range of supra-segmental features when listening to themselves reading a passage. A participant referred to this point as follows:

“I usually ask language learners to record their own voices reading written passages aloud and ask me for feedback. Therefore, the stress patterns of words, intonation patterns of sentences, pause, pitch, and rhythm are all going to be considered and corrected. Actually, by applying this technique, the learners will become more aware of the right and appropriate use of supra-segmental features of speech.” (T.P.5)

4.1.3. Using Visual Symbols

Visual symbols are used to emphasize and represent particular prosodic features of speech in a word or a sentence. They can be used for teaching stress patterns of words, intonation patterns of sentences, tone and pitch.

Participants pointed out that visual reinforcement can be used by EFL teachers in different ways. As one of them commented:

“I teach the intonation patterns of different accents of English language with the help of visual symbols. [As you see in Figure 4.1], the sentence ‘are you hungry?’ has a rising intonation pattern in American accent, however, in British and Australian accent, it is considered to be falling. I show the intonation patterns via visual signs [i.e. rising (↗) or falling (↘).]” [These signs were utilized by the teacher while teaching intonation patterns during observation of the classroom practice.]” (T.P.10)



Figure 4.1. Using Visual Symbols for Teaching Intonation

Visual symbols are also used to teach the stress patterns of words. Following this strategy, one of the participants said:

“I use visual symbols to make word stress visible. It would be possible via writing the stressed syllable in bold letters or words. Look at the stress patterns of the following words: ‘**before**’ and ‘**When**’. They show that ‘before’ has two syllables and the second syllable is stressed. And, ‘when’ has one syllable and its stress pattern is as shown. Furthermore, I use dots to show stressed syllables. That is, I used larger dots to show the stressed syllable. For example, ‘catwalk’ is patterned in this way: • • [Teacher’s explanations while class observation.]” (T.P.12)

Into the bargain, one of the participants suggested another strategy of teaching stress patterns of words and intonation with the use of visual symbols:

“I use my pencil or pen to knock on the desk or board when I am pronouncing the word and that represents the stressed syllable of that word. During this process, you should ask students to watch the movement of the pen and listen to its sound. In writing, you can ask the students to underline the stressed syllable of the word or to capitalize the stressed syllable of the word. And something like this, you know. It can help.” (T.P.3)

4.1.4. Using Technology

Participants believed that teaching prosodic features of speech can be enhanced if teachers use technological aids such as talking dictionaries, and pedagogical websites. One of the participants explained how and why she uses talking dictionaries as follows:

“I often use TahlilGaran Dictionary which helps learners master supra-segmental features of speech. It provides lots of phonologically useful information including phonetic transcription, audio-taped pronunciation differentiating American and British pronunciation (both the phonetics and the audios), American and British accents, and stress patterns. Most importantly, it shows the number of vowels and syllables of a word via a visual pattern [See Figure 4.2].” (T.P.8)

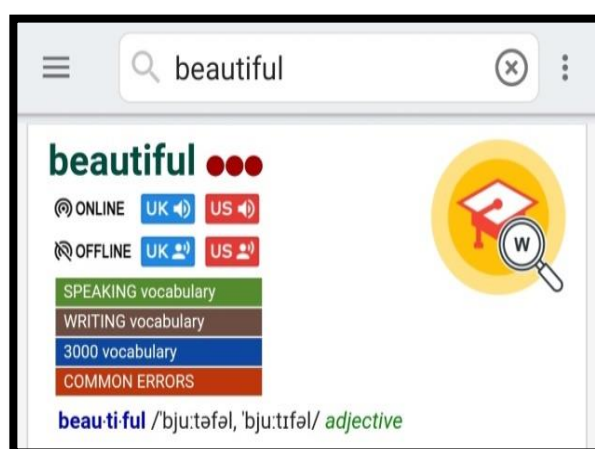


Figure 4.2. TahlilGaran Dictionary

Another innovative tool used and introduced to the researcher by the participants was a list of different websites which help language teachers access numerous sources of instructional videos, exercises, and worksheets in order to teach prosodic features of speech. For instance, as one of the participants suggested:

“I use Busy Teacher Website for teaching prosodic features of speech. It provides the users with IPA flashcards through which the students can learn and review the International Phonetic Alphabet. Also, there are three sample words for each sound/symbol; therefore, pronunciation can be practiced in context. Additionally, this website makes the language teachers have access to different activities and songs for teaching and practising phonetics.” [You can see the main page of this website in Figure 4.3.]” (T.P.2)

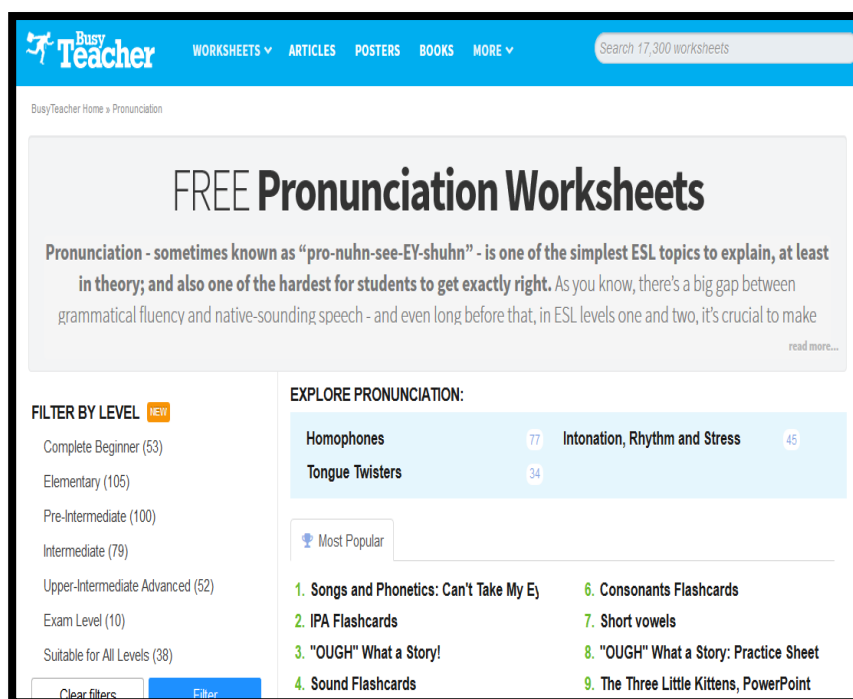


Figure 4.3. Busy Teacher Website

Another participant suggested an application through which foreign language learners can master word stress and intonation:

“ELSA (English Language Speech Assistant) is an English pronunciation app that helps students to speak English confidently and clearly. I have told my students to install this application on their phones and practise

word stress and intonation. This app acts as a language teacher. It provides learners with so many features, so that they can easily master English pronunciation.” (T.P.4)

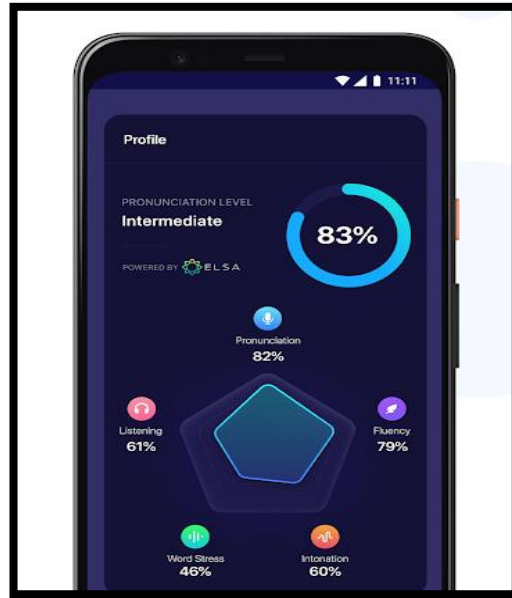


Figure 4.4. ELSA Speak Application

4.1.1. Using Phonemic Transcription

Phonemic transcription also known as broad transcription, involves representing speech using a unique symbol for each phoneme of the language. Such transcriptions do not represent actual sounds, but abstract mental constructs. They are considered to be the categories of sound that speakers understand to be the sounds of their language’ Dictionaries which provide phonemic transcription can greatly improve learners’ phonemic awareness and knowledge of supra-segmental features. Participants believed that teaching learners how to read phonemic transcriptions greatly improves their phonological awareness.

Explaining how the teacher can make learners cognizant with the way words are phonemically transcribed, one of the participants stated:

“I always make my students familiar with phonemic transcription. When they become aware of the phonemic transcription, they can easily recognize the syllables of a word, its stress pattern, vowel shifts and stress shifts drills, the concept of primary stress, the concept of secondary stress,

intervening syllables, unreduced syllables, and unstressed syllables. [As shown in Figure 4.2] I usually choose a word from a dictionary and teach its prosodic features based on the information in the phonemic transcription of that word (see Figure 4.5).” (T.P.3)

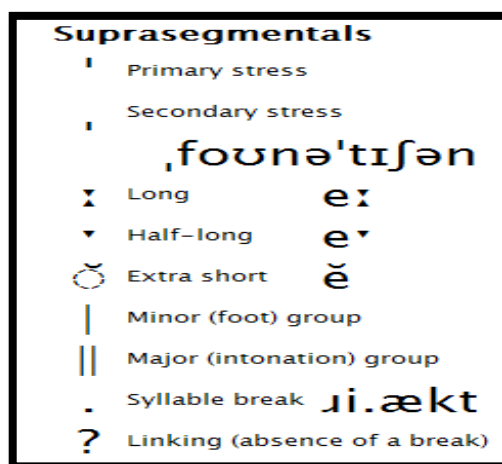


Figure 4.5. An Example of Phonemic Transcription

Stress shift and vowel shift can also be taught through phonemic transcription. One of the participants exemplified this point as follows:

“I teach vowel shift and stress shift via phonemic transcription. I make the following examples. Having a look at the phonemic transcriptions of a given word, students notice how vowel and stress shifts can change the pronunciation, meaning, and even the part of speech of a word. For instance, I tell the students that in the examples ‘rid /rid/’ and ‘read /ri:d/’, a vowel shift occurs. And, based on the phonemic transcriptions of the word ‘record’, the students realize that the noun form of this word is different from its verb form due to both a vowel shift as well as a stress shift (e.g. record [noun] /'rekɔ:d/, record [verb] /rɪ'kɔ:d/ - stress shift. [The use of this technique was stated by the teacher during the interview and then some extra explanations were added during classroom observation.]” (T.P.8)

Regarding the use of phonemic transcription as a technique of teaching prosodic features of speech, one of the participants suggested:

“One of the techniques I employ in the classroom is distributing some worksheets to language learners and asking them to do the exercises. In doing so, the learners are given a word and they are supposed to find the correct phonemic transcription for it or vice versa. For instance, they are given /'ɪŋkri:s/ and they are expected to find out whether it is a noun or a verb. [The word “increase” can be pronounced either /ɪn'kri:s/ or /'ɪŋkri:s/ depending on whether it is a noun or a verb.]” (T.P.11)

4.1.2. Using Grammar

Six of the participants of the present study preferred to teach some aspects of supra-segmental features of speech (e.g. intonation) along with grammar. As one of the participants reported:

“I teach the intonation patterns of different sentences according to their structures. In other words, I define an intonation pattern for each structure. Yes-No questions, for instance, have a rising intonation pattern. On the other hand, WH questions have a falling one.” (T.P.1)

Considering the use of grammar while teaching intonation, another participant added:

“When I teach intonation using grammar, I hit two birds with one stone. I mean, the students will understand two aspects of language simultaneously. For example, before identifying the intonation of question tags, it is necessary to pay attention to its purpose. For chatting, it would be falling, but for checking, it is considered to be rising. Therefore, the students will be taught both grammar and intonation.” (T.P.9)

To sum up, the highlighting of intonation can be taught with the help of grammar according to Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Teaching Intonation via Grammar

Sentence Type	Example	Intonation Pattern
WH Questions	Where do you live?	Falling
Yes-No Questions	Are you a teacher?	Rising
Question Tags: Chat	It shouldn't look like that, should it?	Falling
Question Tags: Check	It shouldn't look like that, should it?	Rising
Statements	I am a student.	Falling
Lists	You need flour, milk, and butter.	Rising, Rising, and Falling

4.1.3. Using Drama Voice Techniques

Drama voice techniques prompt students to dramatize a conversation and produce oral utterances in the form of a dialogue or a role-play. Since expression is very important in drama, various aspects of supra-segmental features of speech are strengthened. Using this technique, one of the participants acknowledged:

“I use this technique to teach pitch, volume and different tones of English language in my class. To do this, I choose a drama or a conversation and I have the students role-play using different styles [e.g. high or low pitch]. Then, we discuss the role-plays in groups and the students find out the ways that range, pitch, and pronunciation affect the meaning they convey and their performance. Therefore, the audience can hear and understand the speaker. The speaker will be able to convey his/her meaning, as well.”
(T.P.10)

Another participant suggested the use of drama voice techniques in teaching supra-segmental features via poetry in the classroom:

“One means in which drama voice technique can enter pronunciation classroom is for teachers to employ poetry. For instance, I provide my students with various English poems. Then, we discuss the variety of

tones and intonation patterns of lines and stanzas in order to understand the relationship between supra-segmental features and the meaning they convey in different conditions.” (T.P.4)

Considering the use of drama voice, as a technique of teaching supra-segmental features, another participant stated:

“One of the techniques which I use is to do role-play in different tones. It suggests the speaker’s mood and intention towards the listener, e.g. happy or sad. For example, I provide the students with a conversation. They role-play it two by two through the agency of different moods and intonations. And, the audience (other students) guesses the tone of the conversation based on their play.” (T.P.6)

4.1.4. Using Minimal Pairs

Minimal pairs and minimal sets are words that have different meanings but their pronunciation differs only in one phoneme. For instance, ‘pin’ and ‘bin’ are minimal pairs in English. Participants made effective use of minimal pairs to teach prosodic features of speech (e.g. number of syllables and stress patterns). Concerning this technique, one of the participants claimed:

“I teach pronunciation of the word ‘air’ using the words ‘chair’ and ‘hair’. While using the above examples, I tell the students to pay attention to the number of vowels in these words and recognize the number of syllables based on the number of vowels. For example, ‘air’ has one vowel, so it is a one-syllable word. In this way, the students realize that by adding a consonant to the previous word, they will have a new word with the same syllable structure. So, the words ‘hair’ and ‘chair’ will have one-syllable structures, as well.” (T.P.5)

Concerning the use of minimal pairs, another participant suggested how to teach the stress patterns of different words via using minimal pairs:

“For instance, I present some words (e.g. *alive* and *arrive*) to students and I explain that these two minimal pairs have two vowels and two syllables. Then, I ask the students to recognize stress patterns of the two words.

Therefore, they will figure out that there is a relationship between the vowels and patterns of stress in English words. Finally, I ask them to make some other examples and create new words with the same stress pattern. In this strategy, they will become familiar with the concept of vowels, stress and stress pattern based on the similarities of the words.”
(T.P.7)

4.2. MAXQDA Outputs and Grounding of the Categories in the Data

MAXQDA was used to find out the degree to which the emerged categories of techniques for teaching prosodic features of speech (as described in the previous section) are grounded in the participants’ perspectives.

MAXQDA’s analytic tools yielded a code relation browser which graphically shows the degree of overlap between the emerged techniques and a bar graph which show the degree to which the emerged techniques reflect the participants’ perspectives. Code relation browser is a visual tool in MAXQDA which presents the degree of overlaps between codes. In code relations browser, the squares indicate the co-occurrence of codes, and the size of them represents the degree of overlap. This tool helps us explore how codes are interrelated.

According to Figure 4.6, the code relation browser shows the degree to which categories overlap. This visual tool makes use of squares, the size of which reflects the degree of overlap. It helps us to figure out whether there is a meaningful relationship between codes according to the grounded theory or not. In other words, the bigger the size of the square is, the higher the degree of overlap and the stronger the relationship between categories will be.

As shown in Figure 4.6, the degree of co-occurrence is higher between using authentic input and using audio feedback since the square size is bigger. It means as the teacher participants suggested in their comments, one can use authentic input and also have the students reproduce what they hear and practise the supra-segmental features via providing audio feedback.

On the contrary, as indicated by the small size of the square, the degree of overlap between using visual symbols and using drama voice techniques is lower since the

square size is smaller. It shows that visual symbols cannot be considered as a practical source of drama voice techniques for the purpose of teaching supra-segmental features.



Figure 4.6. Code Relations Browser

In addition to the code relation browser that graphically represents the degree to which codes overlap, MAXQDA helped us create a chart which represents the degree to which emerged codes are grounded in the participants' perspectives.

According to Chart 4.1, using authentic input, audio feedback, visual symbols, technology, phonemic transcription, grammar, minimal pairs, and drama voice techniques were substantiated by 91.6%, 83.3%, 83.3%, 75%, 58.3%, 50%, 50%, and 41.6% of the texts, respectively. High and low frequencies show the degree to which the documents and texts referred to the codes. They also show the number of times the categories have been verified by extracts from the participants' perspectives.

On one hand, for instance, the highest frequency was calculated at 91.6% in using authentic input, since most of the documents referred to this code which means this technique was verified by almost most of the teacher participants of the current study. On the other hand, the lowest frequencies were calculated at 41.6% in using minimal pairs. In other words, this technique was referred to by only 41.6% of the documents (see Chart 4.1).

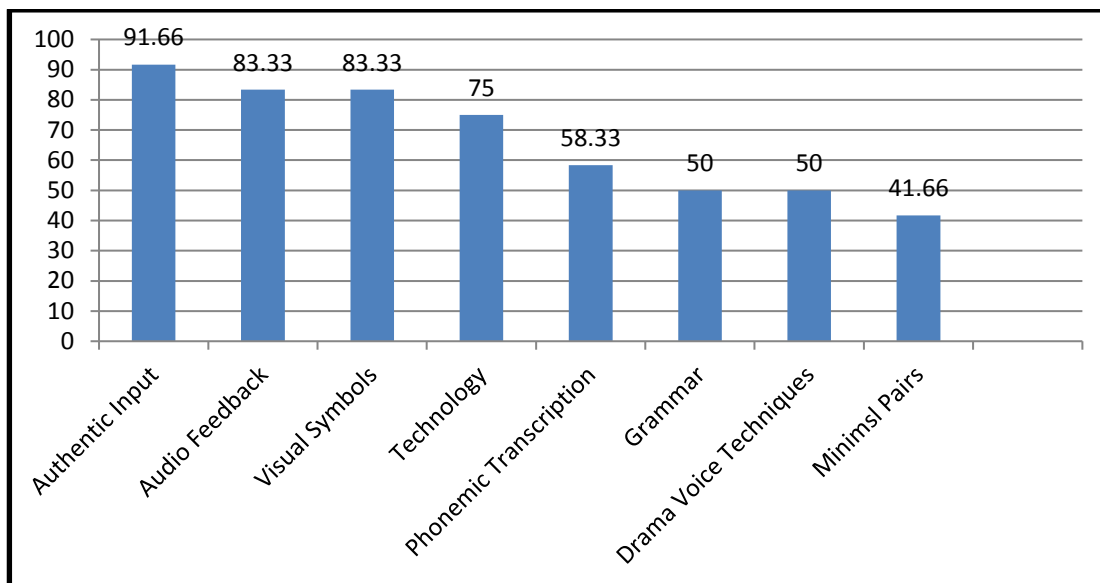


Chart 4.1. The Indicating Fit Chart of the Emerged Codes

Thus, Chart 4.1 indicated that all the emerged techniques had a high chance of representativeness and degree of fit to the documents since they have been highly assigned to the participants' perspectives and experiences. In other words, the techniques suggested by the participants can be considered as tools of increasing phonological competence and knowledge of prosodic features in EFL environments. Besides, it is necessary to mention that all the eight emerged techniques were saturated according to the degree to which the codes were grounded in the documents. Finally, a model for techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech is presented in Chart 4.2.

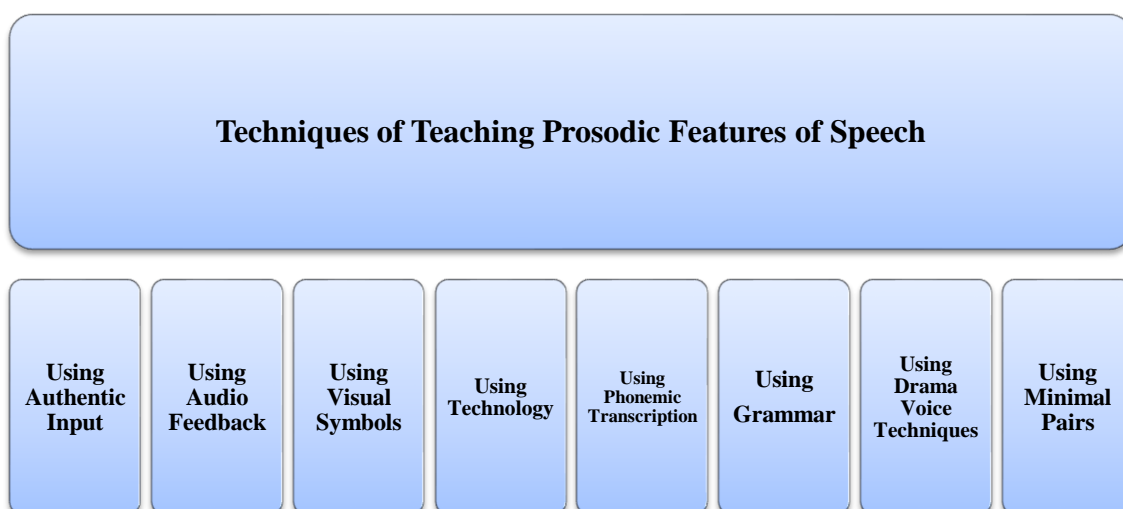


Chart 4.2. The Presented Model for Techniques of Teaching Prosodic Features

Chapter Five:

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Overview

The goal of this research is to uncover techniques of teaching supra-segmental features of speech in EFL contexts by asking professional teachers' perspectives as well as investigate the effective ways through which applying such techniques is accomplished. To this end, 12 EFL teachers who have been successful in explaining and elaborating on their knowledge, were chosen to be asked to introduce their applied techniques and also explain the 'how' of employing such techniques. This chapter presents a summary of the findings, a discussion of these findings in relation to the previous studies in the field, the pedagogical implications of the study, and the recommendations for further research.

5.2. Summary of the Findings

Results from this study tried to fill in the gap in the field of teaching the neglected aspect of pronunciation in foreign language environments (i.e. supra-segmental features). To this end, this data-driven study aimed at theorizing experienced EFL teachers' experience of teaching supra-segmental features of speech.

Grounded in teachers' own practices and perspectives, this study investigated the techniques of teaching prosodic features of speech and the analysis yielded a total of eight emerged techniques including using authentic input, using audio feedback, using visual symbols, using technology, using phonemic transcription, using grammar, using drama voice techniques, and using minimal pairs which were used by participants in teaching prosodic features. These techniques are suggested to be used by teachers in order to fulfill phonological needs in EFL contexts.

In the next section, the techniques drawn from the review of literature will be discussed in relation to the findings from the research under consideration.

5.3. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the participants in the context under review favour techniques for teaching prosodic features of speech which are consistent with findings from other research and have developed some techniques which are less well researched elsewhere.

The previous studies have indicated that using authentic videos and films has a significant impact on developing the prosodic ability of language learners (Namaziandost et al., 2018; Sawaengmongkon, 2013), and that using audio files also enhances the listening experience (Elder et al., 2004; Cakir, 2012). The current study suggests that additional inputs such as news, lectures, animations, and podcasts are also useful authentic materials which help expose learners to native and native-like prosodic features. The participants in this study believe such exposure will enable learners to learn and imitate the language patterns they contain.

The audio feedback techniques reported by participants in the current study are in line with the tracking technique (Rosse, 1999) because they use authentic materials to provide input and as an opportunity for learners to repeat and practice. This technique allows the teaching of several supra-segmental features (e.g. sentence rhythm) and promotes a focus on intonation contours and stress.

Participants also report using visual prosody training which is known to teach how intonation and tonal patterns function in discourse (Levis & Pickering, 2004). In contrast, while other studies focused on the use of audio visual aids for teaching word-stress (Wulandari et al., 2008), the participants in this study emphasized the role of visual symbols (e.g. falling and rising signs, boldness, etc.) in representing specific prosodic features in a word or a sentence.

Similarly there is a contrast between earlier studies and this one in the use of computer-based prosody teaching. Elsewhere, the focus was on computers to produce better prosody (Sztahó et al., 2018) or to provide corrective prosody feedback (Su et al., 2018). However, in the current study, the participants focused on the use of computers to provide practical tools (e.g. dictionaries) and information (e.g. informative websites). Such provisions will familiarize with a variety of supra-segmental features.

As with other studies (see, for example, Snow, 2001), the participants in the current study recognized that phonemic transcription can be used to teach various features such as intonation, accent, stress, and articulation. However, they add features such as number of syllables, stress patterns, vowel shifts, stress shifts, the concept of primary stress, secondary stress, intervening syllables, unreduced syllables, and unstressed syllables.

Minimal pairs have been considered beneficial in teaching segmental features of speech including sounds (Hamzah & Bawodood, 2019) including specific consonants of the target language that are absent in the learners' mother tongue (Altamimi, 2015). However, the current findings revealed a more extensive use of minimal pairs for teaching supra-segmental features such as the number of vowels, syllables and stress patterns of words.

Uniquely, two of the teaching techniques revealed in the current study (i.e. using grammar and drama voice techniques) as useful techniques for teaching features of prosodic speech have not been documented elsewhere in the literature.

5.4. Conclusion and Implications for Practice

This research has looked at the techniques used by experienced teachers for teaching prosodic features of English in Iranian EFL settings. The goal has not been to measure quantitatively the effectiveness of those techniques, which may be an impossible task given the variables involved, but to tap the wealth of knowledge of experienced teachers. By analyzing the techniques reported by those teachers and by triangulating those reports against observations of their teaching practice, the current study has identified eight preferred techniques. The purpose is not to claim that these are the only successful techniques or that these techniques must be used. It is rather to show readers a range of techniques that have been found useful in one specific context. It is for readers to decide for themselves whether their teaching context is sufficiently similar for the research here to be relevant and whether the described teaching techniques fit comfortably with their own personal teaching styles.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Research

It is clear that more research is needed in this area. For example, although this research has focused on EFL it would be interesting to look at similarities and differences in techniques used to teach other languages. It would also be of great value to consider techniques for teaching supra-segmental features of speech in special education and among foreign language learners who suffer from hearing problems or communication disabilities.

All in all, it is important that the techniques recorded in this research, along with others which might be discovered in later research, be incorporated into the mainstream teacher education curriculum so that future novice teachers do not have to discover useful teaching techniques through trial and error (which is never to the advantage of their students), or through the good graces of their seniors within the profession (who may not always have the time or patience for such unpaid tutoring).

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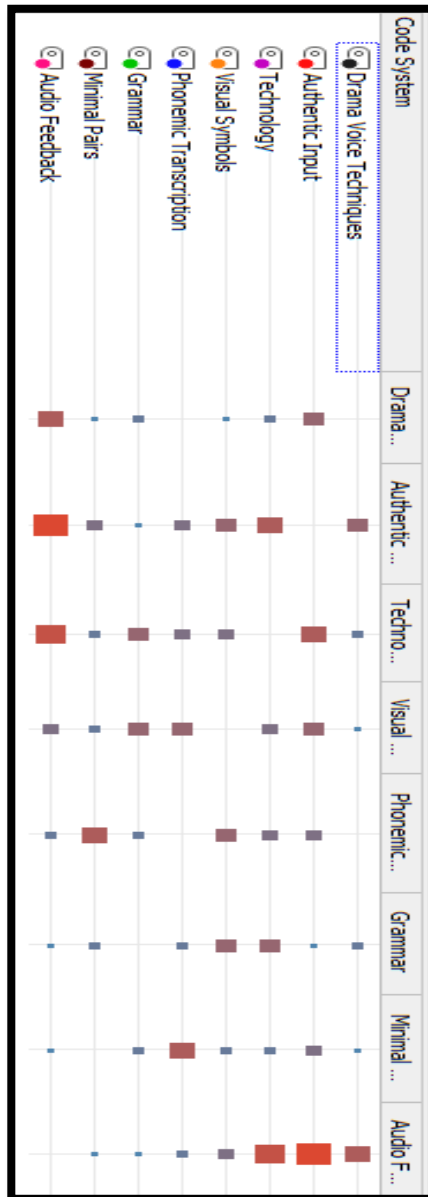
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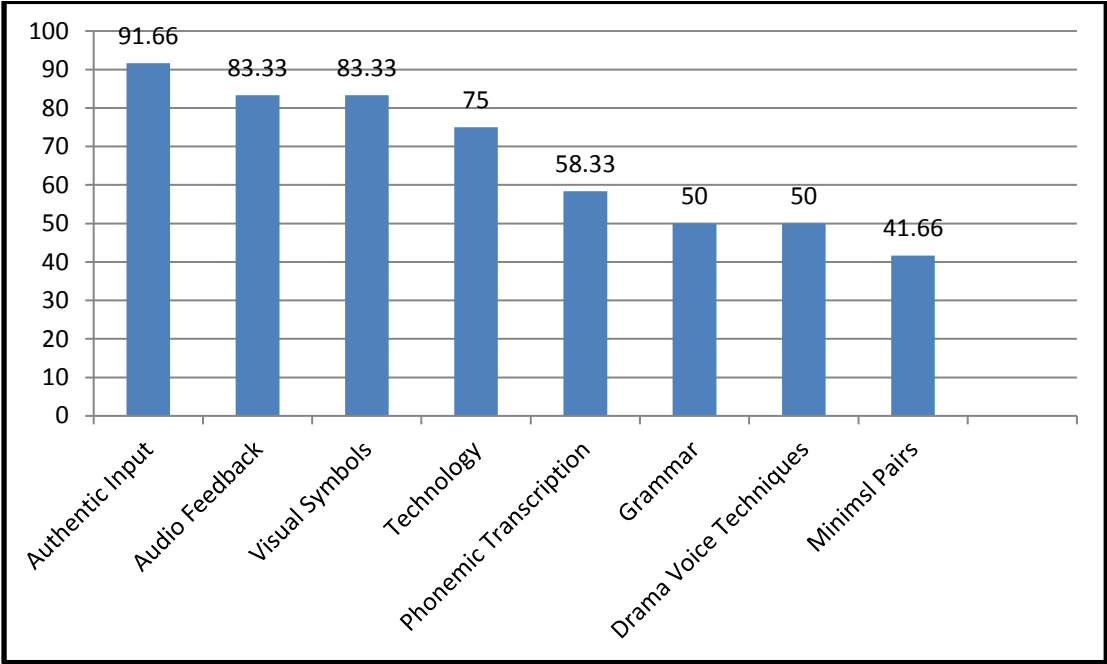
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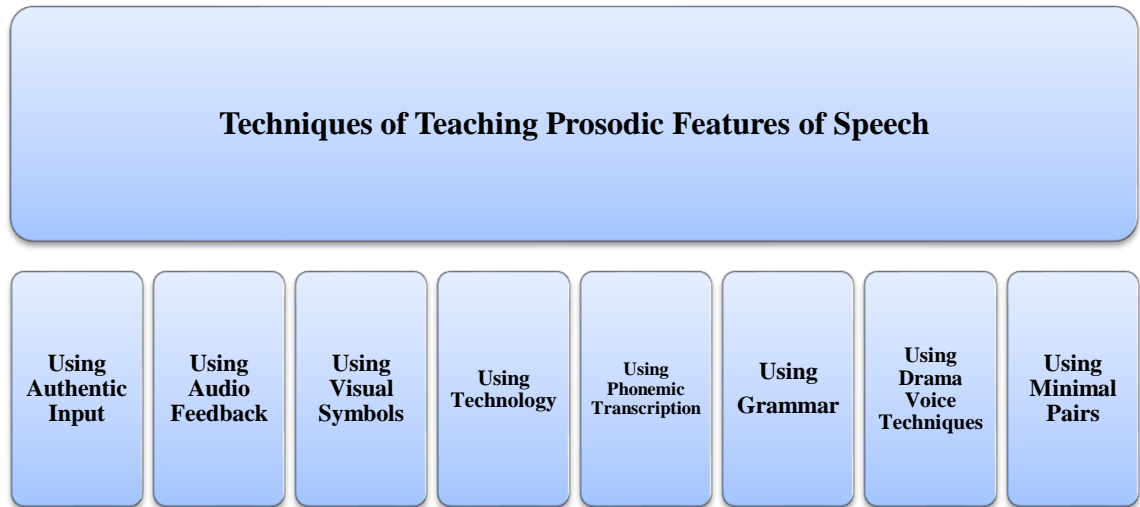
Appendix A: Code Relations Browser



Appendix B: The Indicating Fit Chart of the Emerged Codes (Frequency of Codes)



Appendix C: The Presented Model for Techniques of Teaching Prosodic Features



چکیده

اگرچه تکنیک های آموزش عناصر زبرزنجیری به طور گسترده مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است، اما تعداد کمی از مطالعات به نظرات معلمان در این باب پرداخته اند. به همین دلیل، این تحقیق داده بنیاد با هدف جمع آوری نظرات معلمان با تجربه در خصوص تدریس عناصر زبرزنجیری در زبان انگلیسی، انجام گردیده است. بدین منظور، دیدگاه معلمان از طریق مصاحبه های کیفی و مشاهده، گردآوری گردید و سپس با انجام کدگذاری مطابق با روش نظریه بنیادی، مورد بررسی قرار گرفت. پس از تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها، هشت تکنیک استخراج گردید. استفاده از این هشت تکنیک منجر به برقراری ارتباط مؤثر با تمرکز بر قواعد عروضی در آموزش تلفظ زبان انگلیسی می شود.

کلمات کلیدی: آموزش زبان، تکنیک ها، تدریس عناصر زبرزنجیری، نظرات معلمان



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