Enhancing the Saudi EFL Students' Pronunciation of the English Phoneme /v/ via Immersion in Virtual Platforms

Shafi S. Alqahtani

Department of English Language & Translation
College of Languages & Translation
King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This study provides findings about Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' pronunciation of the English phoneme /v/. Since the Arabic phonological system does not distinctly differentiate between /f/ and /v/, some Saudi (EFL) learners occasionally and unintentionally overlap these phonemes. One of the tools in the virtual platforms is online games such as the massively multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPGs) that offer English as the medium of instruction. Saudi families buy nearly three million PlayStation or X-Box sets per year to play MMORPGs. Generally, almost every family in Saudi Arabia owns an average of one set. Therefore, this study generally aims at investigating the effect of these online games, namely MMORPGs in enhancing pronunciation of the English phonemes /v/ by the Saudi EFL students at King Saud University-College of Languages & Translation (KSU-COLT). This study attempts to answer the two questions. First, will the incidence of EFL Saudi students' substitution of the NL /f/ for the TL /v/ be greater at the initial, medial or final positions while being immersed in MMORPGs? Second, will the incidences of error decline at ascending weeks of immersion in these virtual platforms? The findings showed that the students' overlapping of the /f/ and /v/ phonemes varied according to the position of these phonemes in the English words (whether initial, middle, or final) and by their co-occurrence with other phonemes (whether vowels or consonants). Furthermore, Saudi EFL students' communication in English via immersion in MMORPGs have generally shown an ascending improvement through out the four weeks of experiment regarding their pronunciation of the English phoneme /v/ in all positions.

Key words: Constructivism, MMORPGs, phonology, virtual worlds

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