

Long Term Effect of Phonetic Instruction on the Production of /p/ by EFL Arab Learners: an Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Most previous studies, that have examined the effect of explicit pronunciation instruction on foreign language speech, have focused on the short term effect of explicit pronunciation instruction, usually measured immediately after instruction. For this reason, it is not yet clear whether the attested benefit from pronunciation instruction can be sustained for a long time after instruction. The current study attempted to explore the long term effect of phonetic instruction on the production of the English bilabial voiceless stop /p/ by Arab learners of English as foreign language (EFL, henceforth). Nine Arab EFL learners were assigned to two groups, control and experimental. The experimental group received phonetic instruction on how to produce the English sound /p/, whereas the control group did not. The production of the English sound /p/ was elicited from all the learners in both groups, once before the instruction and once after 11 weeks of the instruction. Two experienced native English instructors were asked to judge whether the students produced /p/ or /b/. The results generally showed no benefit from the phonetic instruction on the delayed production of /p/ by the EFL Arab learners. Although the results do not seem encouraging for pronunciation instruction, it is difficult to reach a conclusion with regard to pronunciation instruction due to the small sample size used in the current exploratory study, and to the difficulty to generalize the results on /p/ to all other sounds. Future studies may use larger sample sizes and include more sounds in their instruction methods.

Keywords: Arab EFL learners, instruction, phonetic, pronunciation, teaching

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