The Effectiveness of using English Lab on English Language Students` Pronunciation at Mu`tah University from the students' perspectives

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Abstract
This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using English lab on English language students' pronunciation at Mu'tah University, and also aimed to investigate the effect of gender, year, and GPA on the point of view of students.

The study sample consisted of 90 students 48 males and 42 females from Mu'tah University. Means and standard deviations and t-test were used to analyze the results.

The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the views of the students on the effectiveness of English labs on English language pronunciation, also showed a statistically significant differences at the level of significance (α ≥ 0.05) in their views due to the gender variable, as there are statistically significant differences at the level of significance (α ≥ 0.05) in their views due to the year variable, and results also showed the existence of clear statistically significant differences in the views of the students on the effectiveness of English lab on students English pronunciation due to the general point average of the students (GPA).

Key words: English Laboratory, English language Pronunciation

Introduction
Listening is making sense of spoken language, normally accompanied by other sounds and visual inputs, with the help of our relevant prior knowledge and the context in which we are listening (Underwood, 1989). However, rather than thinking of listening as a single process, it is more accurate to conceive it as a bundle related process-recognition of the sounds uttered by the speaker, perception of intonation patterns showing information focus, interpretation of the relevance of what is being said to the current topic and so on (Brown, 2002).

Usually teachers of English language are unaware of these processes in their own language where achieving comprehension seems relatively effortless unless as unhelpful conditions, such as poor acoustics or an unfamiliar accents were used (Murphy, 1985). Moreover the same thing applies in trying to understand a second or foreign language (L2). Not the least of the problems teachers face as listeners is the fact that we generally get only one chance to process the (linguistic and other) input, and have to do so in real time
Only sometimes do teachers get the chance to ask the speaker to repeat or rephrase (Goh, 2000).

Traditionally, listening was viewed as a passive process, in which learners’ ears were receivers into which information was poured, and the listener had to do was passively register the message (Saricoban, 1999). Today, we recognize that listening is an ‘active’ process, and that good listeners are just as active when listening as speakers are when speaking, Whereas a recent research indicated that listening is an interactive process (Brown, 2002).

Active listening is also an interpretive process, Listening used to be thought of as the exact decoding of the message. In fact, listening involves subtle interpretation (Saricoban, 1999). This interpretive notion has long been recognized in reading, but it has taken a long time for it to be accepted in terms of listening. It's acceptance directly affects our notions of correctness, it requires an a acknowledgement of the inherent variation in listeners’ comprehension of what they hear, and of the importance of context and non-linguistic variables in this interpretation (Schmitt, 2006).

The introduction of the audio-lingual approach in the late fifties and sixties shifted the main focus of attention in foreign language (FL) programs away from reading and writing towards listening and speaking. It precursor, the so-called direct method, had also focused on the development of listening and speaking skills, but it was pedagogically unprincipled and inefficient. The audio-lingual method, guided by principles of behaviorist psychology and structural linguistics, adopted more disciplined procedures and techniques based mainly on systematic pattern-drilling (O'Malley, Chamot, and kupper, 1989 ).

The language laboratory rapidly established itself as the state-of-the-art technology in foreign language teaching (Chrisman, 1999). Indeed, it seemed an ideal instrument for the audio lingual method. In particular, it allowed for the endless repetition of minimally different sentences generated mechanically out of substitution frames as a means of “drilling in” correct grammatical structures. It also seemed a perfect aid in the teaching of correct pronunciation, not least because it exposed learners to good native-speaker models, thereby canceling out what was perceived as a major limitation of the non-native speaker instructor. So ideally suited was the aid to the method that in the mind of many practitioners, the aid was the method (Underwood, 1989).

In listening activities, listeners listen for a purpose where listeners make an immediate response to what they hear. There are some visual or environmental clues used to convey the meaning of what is heard. Stretches of heard discourse come in short chunks, and most heard discourse is spontaneous, therefore differs from formal spoken prose in the amount of redundancy 'noise' and colloquialisms, and its auditory character(Mendelson,1994).

In listening to English as a foreign language, the most important features can be defined as:

- Coping with the sounds,
- Understanding intonation and stress,
- coping with redundancy and noise,
- Predicting,
- Understanding colloquial vocabulary,
- Fatigue,
- Understanding different accents,
- and Using visual and environmental clues (Murphy, 1985)

This brings the listener to the thought that, while planning exercises, listening materials, task and visual materials should be taken into consideration. The teacher should produce a suitable discourse while using recordings. A preset purpose, ongoing learner response, motivation, success, simplicity, and feedback should be the things considered while preparing the task. Visual materials are useful for contextualization. The goals of listening might be categorized as listening for enjoyment, for information, for persuasion, for perception, for comprehension and lastly to solve problems (Saricoban, 1999).
Listening for comprehension can be divided into three stages; 
1st: Listening and making no response (following a written text, informal teacher talk), 2nd: Listening and making short responses (obeying instructions - physical movement, building models, picture dictation. etc.), true- false exercises, noting specific information, etc. and 3rd: Listening and making longer response (repetition and dictation, paraphrasing, answering questions, answering comprehension questions on texts, predictions, filling gaps, summarizing,…… etc (Saricoban,1999).

Significance of the study
Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning (Saricoban, 1999).

There is an association between expectation, purpose, and comprehension; therefore a purpose should be given to learners. Teachers should train their students to understand what is being said in conversations to get them to disregard redundancy, hesitation, and ungrammaticality. The major problem is the actual way listening material is presented to the students. Students should give a clear lead in what they are going to hear; use some kind of visual back up for them to understand; give questions and tasks in order to clarify the things in their minds; and be sure that these tasks help in learning, not confusing. Students should learn how to use the environmental clues; the speaker's facial expression, posture, eye direction, proximity, gesture, tone of voice, and that general surroundings contribute information (Schmitt, 2006).

In order to teach listening skills, a teacher should firstly state the difficulties. For a student of a foreign language, accurate and intelligent listening is a necessity, and the teacher is responsible to help his / her learners to acquire this skill which provides the very foundation for learning and functioning in a language. That the teacher can observe and isolate the errors in speaking, but could not in listening. In listening, the learner can exercise no controls over the structural and lexical range of the speaker to whom he is listening. Nevertheless, any listener can learn to focus on significant content items, to explain in another way he can learn to listen selectively. 

Helping the learners to distinguish sounds, teaching to isolate significant content and informational items for concentration may be provided by controlled listening exercises. One exercise is to give them certain performance objectives and general informational questions that they should be able to answer after they listen the material for the first time. These questions should require only the isolation of facts clearly revealed in the material. Questions that require application or inference from the information contained in the listening exercise are best used at later stages or more advanced students. (Saricoban, 1999)

Statement of the problem
Spoken skills form the core stone of the language proficiency. Therefore they gave them much attention, trying to develop all methods of teaching in order to graduate knowledgeable learners (Revell, 1983). The Ministry of Education puts much attention on spoken skills from the early stages of teaching English in Jordan. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education puts much attention on spoken skills specifically pronunciation, students still complain from their low level of understanding and producing correct utterances (Al-Irsan, 1992). It is generally observed that most sophomore English language students despite that fact that they had studied more than (50) credit hours, they still complain of their low level in producing correct sounds and words (Lott, 1983). This low level could be attributed to the techniques used in teaching pronunciation where some teachers use; lecturing, tape recorder, or they teach it using language labs. As so the case of Mu’tah University instructors use English Labs and lecturing technique. As a result of this
deterioration the researcher intends to study the effect of using English Lab on English language students’ pronunciation at Mu’tah University.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of using English laboratory on English language pronunciation from the students' perspectives, and also aimed to investigate the effect of gender, year, and GPA on the point of view of students.

**Questions of the study**

1. What is the point of view of students at Mu'tah University on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation?

2. Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Mu'tah University on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation due to gender (Male, Female)?

3. Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Mu'tah University on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation due to the year (first year, second year)?

4. Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Mu'tah University on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation due to GPA of the students (low, high)?

**Limitations of the study**

This study is limited to first and second year English language students at Mu'tah University in Jordan in the academic year 2013/2014.

**Operational definitions**

The following terms had the associated meaning in this study:

-Pronunciation: Making sounds of speech in its two forms written or spoken (O’conner, 1992). In this study, it is the student’s pronunciation of the words and texts that are prepared by the researcher.

**Literature review**

**Theoretical background**

**Advantages of the Language Lab**

The use of the language laboratory has a series of advantages. Wilga M. Rivers (1970,) refers to the following positive aspects regarding the use of the language lab in teaching English:

1. For the first time in the history of foreign-language teaching, each student may have the opportunity to hear native speech clearly and distinctly.

2. The students may hear this authentic native speech as frequently as he and his teacher desire.

3. The taped lesson provides an unchanging and unwearyingly model of native speech for the student to imitate.
(4) In the language laboratory the student may listen to a great variety of foreign voices, both male and female.
(5) Each student may hear and use the foreign language throughout the laboratory session, instead of wasting time waiting for his turn in a large group, as he does in the usual classroom situation.
(6) The laboratory frees the teacher from certain problems of class directions and classroom management, enabling him to concentrate on the problems of individual students.

In addition, language teachers and students can also encounter other possible advantages during lab sessions:

a- In language lab sessions, students can listen to different speakers recorded in high-quality tapes;
b- In the language laboratory, each student can participate and practice as much as possible while repeating sentences aloud. If a listen-response-compare laboratory is available, the learner can record the lesson. Then he or she can listen and compare his or her own responses with those of the tape; and

c- The language laboratory makes oral-aural assessment easier since teachers may separately evaluate students; thus, learners will not have access to other people’s answers. During an oral exam the teacher can focus on the oral production of the student he or she is interviewing. Afterwards, he or she can listen to the tape and take notes and make corrections. A feedback form with mistakes can be given to students as well.

Some experts have focused on the effect of the language laboratory on language acquisition in contrast to regular classroom settings. In regard to the teaching of pronunciation, Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996) pointed out another advantage in using a language lab where students can record themselves. They have suggested that controlled practice in the teaching of pronunciation can be conducted in a listen-respond-compare language laboratory. They said that:

Another controlled practice technique that works well if a language laboratory is available is that of mirroring or shadowing.

To begin, learners read over the written text of a speech sample—be it a conversation or monologue—several times making sure that they understand it well. Then learners listen to the tape several times while reading along silently until their eyes follow the text in coordination with the speaker. Using a two-track tape system, learners record their voice while reading along with the speaker trying to maintain the same speed, rhythm, stress, and intonation. Finally, learners can play back the two simultaneous recordings and compare them.

This type of activity may help students improve their pronunciation in the target language. Thus, the language lab is an excellent teaching tool that can be used to teach students from different levels of oral competence such as beginning, intermediate, and advanced students. Antich et al. (1988) suggest that “the language laboratory is very helpful in teaching advanced students, especially people who are focusing on a certain field of the language. They say that there is a wide variety of techniques for this purpose; this type of students is also able “to keep in contact with additional material for the courses that contain different styles and speakers. The same source explains that as they are advanced students they are able to recognize their own difficulties in any area such as the pronunciation of some phonemes and allophones or intonation; therefore, they can correct these mistakes by themselves.

Previous Studies

Here are many studies on teaching English pronunciation some of which take a different approach. Hsieh (2000) and Lin and Kuo (2001) discussed the use of K.K. phonetic symbols, phonics or combining K.K. phonetic symbols and phonics to teach English pronunciation, and many before them had also researched in this area. With modern technology to assist teaching English pronunciation, Chen and Liang (2003) proposed using software facilitated telephone recording functions to assist elementary students learning English conversation, including pronunciation and intonation. Hsia, Wang and Chung (2004) investigated...
the attitudes of college students toward software with speech recognition functions. These studies were all concerned with the effectiveness of teaching methods and functions in the computer software. Most of them used experimental and quantitative methods, but Hsia et al (2004) used qualitative methods.

Gass, Mackey and Ross-Feldman (2005) conducted a study in which they analyzed the quality of conversational interactions in classrooms and laboratories. These linguists worked with a group of participants who studied Spanish as a foreign language. After analyzing the data collected, they did not find major differences between the two teaching settings.

**Design and Methodology**

**Population of the study**

The population of the study consisted of all first and second year English language students at Mu'tah University in Jordan.

**Sample of the study**

The sample of the study consisted of 90 students, 48 males and 42 females from the Mu'tah University in Jordan; a questionnaire was distributed among them.

**Instrument of the study**

A questionnaire was distributed among the first and second year students in Mu'tah University and this questionnaire was designed by the researcher herself, it consisted of 25 items. Many variables were included such as the gender of the students, year, and GPA of the students.

**Reliability of the instrument**

To ensure the questionnaire reliability, the researcher applied it to a pilot sample of (10) students excluded of the study sample in the same university with a two-week period between the first and second time it was distributed. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using correlation coefficient sand it was found 0.87 which is suitable to conduct such a study.

**Procedures of the study**

A questionnaire about students' point of view about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation in Mu'tah University was given to 90 students (48 male, and 42 female). After that the researcher collected the questionnaires and collected data, and then this data was analyzed statistically.

**Statistical analysis**

The results were analyzed for each item in the questionnaire using suitable statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation. The researcher also used figures to clarify the results more.

**Findings of the study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of using English laboratory on English language pronunciation from the students' perspectives, and also aimed to investigate the effect of gender, year, and GPA on the point of view of students. A questionnaire was distributed among 90 students, 48 males and 42 females from Mu'tah University in Jordan. Means and standard deviations and T-test were used to analyze the results.

To answer the first question about students' point of view towards the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation: What is the point of view of students at Mu'tah University on the
effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation? A questionnaire was distributed among them and means and standard deviation were calculated. Results were shown in table 1.

Table 1: students' point of view about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>.732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.905</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>.880</td>
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<td>Q15</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>.672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QALL</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.584</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 show that there are statistically significant differences in students' point of views about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) students about their point of views about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that question 22 got the highest mean which was (4.63); question 11 comes next with a mean of (3.97).

Standard deviation for question 22 was (0.679) which is higher than ($\alpha$≤0.05) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for question 11 was nearly the same; it was (1.000) which is also statistically significant.
Diagram 1: students' point of views about the about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation

It is clear in the diagram that the mean of question 22 was the highest mean, question 1 comes next. The mean of the (4, 8, 19, and 24) are nearly the same, so students' point of view about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation.

To answer the second question about students' point of views and gender: Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Mu'tah University on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation due to gender (Male, Female)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 2 shows the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>-2.542</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>.425</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows there are statistically significant differences due to gender variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) students about their point about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that female students got a higher mean than male students which was (4.53, and 4.31) respectively; this indicates that the gender have an effect on students' attitudes.

Standard deviation for female students was (0.425) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for male students was higher; it was (0.685) which is also statistically significant. So, table 2 shows there are statistically significant differences due to gender variable in favor of females.
Diagram 2: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to gender variable

Diagram 2 shows that male students’ points of views are less positive about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation than female students. To answer the third question about students’ point of views and year: Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Mu'tah University on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation due to the year (first year, second year)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to year variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.722</td>
<td>-3.387</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows there are statistically significant differences due to year variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) students about their point of views about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that students who are in the first year got a lower mean than students who are in the second year which was (4.26, and 4.55) respectively; this indicates that year have an effect on students’ point of views.

Standard deviation for students who are in the first year was (0.722) which is higher than (α≤0.05) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for students who are in the second year was lower; it was (0.385) which is also statistically significant. So, table 3 shows there are statistically significant differences due to the year variable in favor of the second year students.

Diagram 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to year variable

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Diagram 3 shows that students of the second year got positive point of views about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation than students of first year.

To answer the fourth question about students' point of views and their GPA: Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Mu'tah University on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation due to GPA of the students (low, high)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 4 shows the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.853</td>
<td>-2.299</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows there are statistically significant differences due to GPA variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) students about their point of views on the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that students with high GPA got a higher mean than students of Low GPA which was (4.47, and 4.22) respectively; this indicates that GPA of the students have an effect on students' point of view.

Standard deviation for students of high GPA was (0.482) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for students with low GPA was higher; it was (0.853) which is also not statistically significant. So, table 4 shows there are statistically significant differences due to GPA variable in favor of students with high GPA.

So, table above shows there are statistically significant differences in students' point of views due to GPA variable in favor of students with high GPA.

Diagram 4: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to qualification variable

Diagram 4 shows that students with high GPA got positive point of views about the effectiveness of English laboratory on English language pronunciation than students with low GPA.

Conclusion

The researcher concluded that students are more engaged in learning when they are given a chance to listen to the native speakers of English. The researcher believes that with more coaching and practice with listening to native speakers and more training by using English laboratory, students will eventually become more comfortable pronouncing language. It is also clear that using English laboratory is effective in engaging students over a class time especially if students are monitored carefully.
Furthermore, using English laboratory is a powerful tool with which students can acquire the target language in a low anxiety setting and interesting, rich and comprehensive input. Previous research shed light on the deep impact of using English labs on EFL students' pronunciation. Students show positive attitudes towards using English labs for learning and practicing English pronunciation.

References


