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Collegial Reactions to Faulty Pronunciation of Teachers in relation to English Language Teaching

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the collegial reactions of teachers to faulty pronunciation in relation to English language teaching. Some vowel and consonant sounds of English language are problematic for Turkish English teachers because they do not exist in Turkish inventory of sounds. The pronunciation of these English sounds usually results in fossilized mistakes for the Turkish teachers of English and teacher trainees. In this respect, a questionnaire with 21 items and three subheadings, 'reactions in terms of profession-wise', 'professional efficiency of non-native teachers' and 'reactions in terms of collegial friendship', was developed by the researchers of this research. The data were collected from 30 Turkish teachers of English who worked at different state universities in Turkey via a five-point Likert scale and were analyzed through Independent Samples T-test and ANOVA. The results demonstrated that while most teachers support their colleagues in regard to professional efficiency of non-native teachers and collegial friendship, only a small percentage of the teachers support their colleagues in respect to professional-wise.

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1. Introduction

It has been argued for many years that there are several factors such as age, native language, social pressure or innate ability which hinder clear pronunciation in a foreign language. According to Demirezen (2007) a great majority

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of pronunciation errors are due to inevitable mother-tongue pronunciation habits, which exhibit certain resistance to the sounds of the target language. On the other side, Acton (1984) claims that once one reaches puberty, the ability to learn a second language, including the possibility of acquiring a native-like accent, begins to deteriorate. It is difficult to cure fossilized pronunciation errors after a certain age, but some scholars (Acton,1984; Demirezen, 2003; Hişmanoğlu,2007; Wei, 2008) in SLA claim that it is not impossible. A notable example of this is audio-articulation model (Demirezen, 2003, 2004) which is one of the most effective models used to rehabilitate the fossilized pronunciation errors of Turkish teachers of English.

Good pronunciation in the target language is one of the most crucial skills that non-native teachers of English should gain since teachers who have faulty pronunciation seem less fluent than they are and it affects their professionalism at their job in a negative manner. Moreover, studies by Brown (1992), Claire (1993), Fraser (2000) and Yates (2001) suggest that teachers in adult ESL programs face some difficulties meeting the pronunciation learning needs of their students and have indicated that many teachers tend to avoid dealing with pronunciation because they lack confidence, skills and knowledge (cited in Macdonald, 2002). It must be noted right from the beginning that faulty pronunciation, which also paves the way for faulty intonation, is not acceptable in foreign language teacher education.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. 2.1. Collegial Ethics

The concept of a code of ethics is important because it implies that all the rules can be found in one place and therefore those affected by the code can be expected to be knowledgeable of the requirements. (Dickey, 2006) For this reason, there are some standards of professional ethics published as code of ethics for the teachers of English and one of the requirements of these ethical standards is not to cause any offensive situations for the colleagues. (Demirezen; Kulaksız, 2015) Hence collegial ethics can be considered as a branch of professional ethics.

By definition, ‘collegial’ means relating to a friendly relationship between colleagues (Cambridge Online Dictionary). Kuhar (2013) states that when things are going smoothly, and there are no conflicts or problems, it can be relatively easy to offer support to our colleagues. However, Collegial Ethics (CE) proposes that we actively support our colleagues, not only in ordinary times but also in troubled times. The word ‘ethics’ is used here because this word is a set of rules of conduct embraced by a group. CE improves our quality of life, both professionally and personally, whether we are the ones giving or receiving support. It is part of overall ethics, but it has been useful, for purposes of focus, emphasis and development, to name or label subtypes of ethics (Kuhar, 2011).

We often avoid supporting or helping the students or colleagues as a result of some automatic responses. The reason why teachers avoid their colleagues with faulty pronunciation may be that we instinctively avoid the ill because we might catch a disease. Some teachers think that colleagues who have fossilized pronunciation errors are not successful at their job and can be harmful to their future pronunciation development or their already obtained level of efficiency in the profession.

In spite of how important collegial interactions are in our everyday personal and professional lives, there does not seem to be any training in CE. Courses on CE are needed and should be structured so that they could be done privately if necessary. (Kuhar, 2011).

2.2. Fossilized Pronunciation Errors

‘Fossilization’ is a term which was first used by an American linguist Selinker and it has been a controversial issue among linguists. While Selinker (1974: 41-47) assumes the fossilized linguistic structures ‘even when seemingly eradicated, are still somehow present in the brain, stored by a fossilization mechanism in an Interlanguage (IL), Brown (1994: 217) defines fossilization as ‘cryogenation’ which is a metaphor used for the process of freezing matter at very low temperatures; to depict the reversibility of fossilization. (cited in Butler-Tanaka, 2000). On the other hand, Hişmanoğlu (2007) defines fossilized pronunciation errors as chronic articulation mistakes made by language learners in the acquisition of the phonological system of the target language which continue for a long time and cannot be easily solved. Because language learners apply the phonological rules of their mother tongue to those of the target

language, they make fossilized pronunciation errors and these errors are one of the most significant obstacles to second language phonological acquisition. According to Demirezen (2005) pronunciation fossilization is a burden that impedes pronunciation learning, pronunciation improvement, and hence near native-like or native-like fluency in learning a second or foreign language.

In the field of teacher education, pronunciation is one of the crucially essential areas as lack of knowledge about the sound patterns and supra segmental causes communication problems between speakers. According to Hişmanoğlu (2006), 'foreign language teachers must attribute proper importance to teaching pronunciation in their classes since sounds play an important role in communication. However, this fact is very much neglected by many foreign language teachers.' Besides, Morley (1991) states that not attending to a student's pronunciation needs is 'an abrogation of professional responsibility'. Lastly, Demirezen (2010) claims that in the pronunciation of a foreign language, accuracy and intelligibility occupy crucial roles for the quality of a non-native speaking teacher because these two features set up the mutual comprehension and understanding between native speakers and non-native speakers. Accuracy and intelligibility pave the way to fluency and if this trio, namely accuracy, intelligibility and fluency is faulty, the result is the establishment of fossilized pronunciation errors.

3. Methodology

This study was carried out to reveal the collegial reactions of Turkish teachers of English working at different universities to faulty pronunciation of teachers in relation to English Language Teaching. In this regard, the following research questions were answered;

1. Do the reactions in terms of "collegial friendship" vary depending on gender?
2. Do the reactions in terms of profession-wise differ depending on the educational background of the participants?
3. What is the relationship between professional efficiency of non-native teachers and age of participants?
4. Do the years of teaching experience of the participants affect their collegial reactions to faulty pronunciation of teachers?

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 30 (10 male and 20 female) Turkish teachers of English working at different universities such as Bulent Ecevit University, Hacettepe University, Baskent University and Gazi University in the year of 2015. 21 of the participants had their BA degree and 9 of them had their MA degree as well. The age of the participants' ranged from 18 to 54. All participants' undergraduate area of study was English Language Teaching.

3.2. Instruments

The study was carried out using a five-point Likert scale which had two sections. In the first section, the participants gave their personal information answering the questions about the institution, gender, age, year of teaching experience, educational background and undergraduate area of study. On the other hand, the second section consisted of 21 statements and it was divided into 3 parts. The first part included 6 statements and it investigated reactions in terms of "profession-wise". The second part consisted of 10 statements and it investigated professional efficiency of non-native teachers. The last part had 5 statements and it examined reactions in terms of "collegial friendship".

To demonstrate consistency among observational ratings provided by multiple coders, three experts in a committee examined and made refinements on the Likert test so as to improve the inter-rater reliability. The author also received some help from her advisor, the second author of the present article, who also commented on the Likert test and study design. Thus, the Likert had been scrutinized by four experts of ELT. The questionnaire proved to be reliable with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient value at 0.702.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

To collect data, the questionnaire was conducted with 30 Turkish teachers of English whose undergraduate area of study is English Language Teaching.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. RQ 1: Do the reactions in terms of “collegial friendship” vary depending on gender?

Table 1. Percentages of Participants’ Responses Related to ‘collegial Friendship’

Reactions in terms of ‘collegial friendship’	SD	D	N	A	SA	Missing	Total
I cannot even be friendly in social life with the colleagues who have faulty pronunciation.	60%	30%	6,7%	0%	3.3%		100%
I feel nervous and irritated when my colleagues insist on making the same pronunciation errors.	6.7%	30%	23.3%	16.7%	3.3%		100%
My colleagues’ pronunciation errors decrease my motivation to work with them in a group.	13.3%	43.3%	23.3%	16.7%	3.3%		100%
I cannot professionally trust my colleague if she/he has a faulty pronunciation.	16.7%	26.7%	36.7%	20%	0%		100%
Colleagues with faulty pronunciation will decrease my already obtained level of efficiency in the profession.	26.7%	46.7%	20%	6.7%	0%		100%

When we examine Table 1 considering ‘Strongly Disagree’ and ‘Disagree’ categories together, we can induce that a large majority of the participants with a percentage of 90 state that faulty pronunciation of their colleagues do not affect their friendship in a bad manner in social life. More than half of the participants at 56.6% state that their colleagues’ pronunciation errors decrease their motivation to work with them in a group. It is also highlighted in Table 1 that 43.4% of the participants can professionally trust their colleague even if she /he has faulty pronunciation. Lastly, a great majority of participants (73.4%) believe that colleagues with faulty pronunciation do not affect their already obtained level of efficiency in the profession.

Table 2. Independent Samples Test Results

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means								
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Upper	
								Lower	Upper		
Collegial friendship	Equal variances assumed	1.047	.315	-.445	28	.660	-.11000	.24728	-.61653	.39653	
	Equal variances not assumed			-.407	14.548	.690	-.11000	.27002	-.68709	.46709	.46709

When Table 2 is examined, it can be concluded from the Independent Samples Test that the sig (2-tailed) or p value is bigger than .05. It indicates that there is not a statistically significant difference between the participants’ gender and their reactions to faulty pronunciation in terms of collegial friendship. Hence participants’ gender does not have an effect on their reactions.

4.2. RQ 2: Do the reactions in terms of profession wise differ depending on the educational background of the participants?

Table 3. Percentages of Participants' Statements Related to 'Profession Wise'

Reactions in terms of 'profession-wise'	SD	D	N	A	SA	Missing	Total
Colleagues with faulty pronunciation are harmful to my future pronunciation development.	20%	26.7%	23.3%	26.7%	3.3%		100%
I do not want to work in a team with fellow teachers who have faulty pronunciation.	10%	36.7%	33.3%	16.7%	3.3%		100%
I do not want to be partners to teach a course with a colleague whose pronunciation is not professionally acceptable.	0%	16.7%	33.3%	43.3%	6.7%		100%
Colleagues with faulty pronunciation have no right to assess the speaking skill of their students.	3.3%	40%	16.7%	30%	10%		100%
Colleagues with faulty pronunciation themselves are responsible for their faulty professional level of their efficiency in pronunciation.	6.7%	10%	20%	46.7%	16.7%		100%
Teachers with faulty pronunciation are harmful to the profession.	6.7%	6.7%	50%	23.3%	3.3%	10%	100%

When we consider “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” categories together, we can infer from Table 3 that 46.7% of the participants do not think their colleagues with faulty pronunciation harm their future pronunciation development and they do not find working with fellow teachers with faulty pronunciation risky. However, when it comes to being a partner to teach a course with a colleague whose pronunciation is not professionally acceptable, only 16.7% of the participants want to teach a course in the same class as partners. Furthermore, we can conclude from Table 3 it is a mere 16.7% of the participants who think colleagues with faulty pronunciation themselves are not responsible for their faulty professional level of their efficiency in pronunciation and link their inefficiency to other factors while 63.4% of them think they are responsible for their own professional level of their efficiency in pronunciation. On the other side, 26.6% of them believe teachers with faulty pronunciation are harmful to the profession, which outnumbers the participants who assert the contrary with a percentage of 13.4.

Table 4 Independent Samples Test Results

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
profession-wise	Equal variances assumed	.023	.882	1.352	28	.187	.34815	.25751	-.17934 .87563
	Equal variances not assumed		1.385	16.081	.185	.34815	.25130	-.18437 .88067	

As demonstrated in Table 4, Sig. (2-tailed) or p value is greater than .05. This result suggests that there is not a statistically significant difference between educational background of the participants and their reactions to faulty pronunciation of teachers in terms of profession-wise. In other words, whether they have a BA or an MA degree does not affect their reactions to faulty pronunciation in regards to profession-wise.

4.2.1. RQ 3: What is the relationship between professional efficiency of non-native teachers and age of participants?

Table 5. Percentages of Participants' Responses to Statements Related to Professional efficiency of non-native teachers

Professional efficiency of non-native teachers	SD	D	N	A	SA	Missing	Total
I think teachers with faulty pronunciation cannot teach English well.	16.7%	36.7%	26.7%	20%	0%		100%
I think teachers with faulty pronunciation have feared teacher self.	6.7%	16.7%	36.7%	33.3%	3.3%	3.3%	100%
Colleagues with faulty pronunciation should never be employed.	16.7%	46.7%	26.7%	6.7%	3.3%		100%
Pronunciation lessons are better taught by teachers with correct pronunciation.	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	46.7%	40%	3.3%	100%
I believe that correct pronunciation is highly important for non-native speaking teachers.	0%	6.7%	6.7%	70%	16.7%		100%
All non-native teachers ought to be trained during the BA education and while they are on the job.	0%	3.3%	3.3%	50%	43.3%		100%
All teachers should be adequately equipped to address the pronunciation needs of the students.	0%	3.3%	3.3%	56.7%	36.7%		100%
All non-native teachers of English should at least have near native efficiency in pronunciation.	0%	13.3%	26.7%	46.7%	10%	3.3%	100%
All English teachers should have at least a near-native accent.	0%	23.3%	33.3%	36.7%	6.7%		100%
All non-native teachers should never give up correcting all of their pronunciation errors during their professional life.	3.3%	3.3%	0%	40%	40%		100%

When we analyze the responses to the statements pertaining to professional efficiency of non-native teachers in Table 5, we can see that only 20% of the participants think teachers with faulty pronunciation are bad at teaching English. Nevertheless, a great majority of them with a percentage of 86.7 think teachers with correct pronunciation are better at teaching pronunciation lessons. Table 5 illustrates that participants are not very strict about the statement “colleagues with faulty pronunciation should never be employed” since only 10% of them responded as “Yes” to this statement. As for the statement ‘correct pronunciation is highly essential for non-native speaking teachers’, ‘Yes’ answer rates reach 86.7%. The statement related to training during the BA education and while on the job has the greatest proportion with a percentage of 93.3. A vast majority of the participants with a percentage of 93 think all teachers should be adequately equipped to cater to the needs of the students. While more than half of the participants with a percentage of 56.7 believe that all non-native teachers of English should at least have near-native efficiency in pronunciation, less than half of the participants with a percentage of 43.4 think all English teachers should have at least a near-native accent. Therefore it can be said that some of them give more importance to efficiency in pronunciation than a near-native accent. Lastly, a large majority of the participants with a percentage of 80 believe all non-native teachers should go on correcting all of their pronunciation errors during their professional life.

Table 6. ANOVA Results

Professional efficiency of non-native teachers	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.272	3	.091	.534	.663
Within Groups	4.413	26	.170		
Total	4.685	29			

When Table 6 is examined, it can be deduced from the results that the sig. value is greater than .05.

Accordingly, it can be said that age of participants in this study does not influence their reactions to faulty pronunciation of teachers considering professional efficiency of non-native teachers.

4.3. RQ 4: Do the years of teaching experience of the participants affect their collegial reactions to faulty pronunciation of teachers?

Table 7. ANOVA Results

Collegial Reactions to faulty pronunciation of teachers					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.997	3	.332	3.400	.038
Within Groups	1.955	20	.098		
Total	2.952	23			

As you can see in Table 7, the sig. value is less than .05. This result demonstrates that there is a statistically significant difference between the years of teaching experience of participants and their collegial reactions to faulty pronunciation of teachers. It means that years of teaching experience of participants has a remarkable effect on their collegial reactions to faulty pronunciation.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate collegial reactions to faulty pronunciation of Turkish foreign language teachers in relation to English Language Teaching. 30 teachers who worked at different universities in Turkey participated in the study and answered a five-point Likert scale. The scale consists of three subheadings which examine the participants' reactions in different aspects such as 'profession-wise', professional efficiency of non-native teachers and 'collegial friendship'. In regard to profession-wise while 20% of the participants did not want to work in a team with fellow teachers who have faulty pronunciation, 50% of them did not want to be partners with a colleague whose pronunciation is not professionally acceptable. Accordingly, it can be said that participants pay more attention to the colleagues they become partners than the colleagues they work with. On the other side, only 13.4% of the participants did not think teachers who have faulty pronunciation are harmful to the profession and supported their colleagues in this section, which is not a great proportion. In respect to professional efficiency of non-native teachers, although 86.7% of the participants stated that correct pronunciation is highly important and pronunciation lessons must be taught by teachers with correct pronunciation, only 10% of them claimed that colleagues with faulty pronunciation should never be employed. Therefore it is obvious that the participants supported their colleagues in this section much more. However, most of them also stated the requirement of a training and life-long learning. Lastly, in terms of collegial friendship, it is a mere 3.3 % of the participants who thought faulty pronunciation of their colleagues affect their friendship in social life in a negative way. Hence it can be said that almost all participants supported their colleagues in this section.

6. Pedagogical remarks

To conclude, the result of the faulty pronunciation is a bad sounding articulation that does not suit the professional career of a foreign language teacher. It must be borne in mind that bad pronunciation impedes and obscures intelligibility, accuracy and fluency. Since teaching foreign languages is a vocational job, developing a good intelligible pronunciation is an integral part of the profession. (Morley, 1991; Macdonald, 2002; Hişmanoğlu, 2006; Demirezen, 2009) However, collegial ethics requires supporting the colleagues even in troubled times, here in this context, when they have faulty pronunciation. It is important to make them aware of their fossilized errors and promote them to correct their pronunciation errors during their professional life. The audio-articulation method (Demirezen, 2003,2004; Hişmanoğlu, 2004) can be used to remediate such fossilized pronunciation errors.

A code of ethics can set minimal standards, provide a benchmark, or promote high standards. Hence it is essential to publish a code of ethics for teachers of English as codes prevent professionals from being judged by individualistic standards. (Dickey, 2006) As a branch of professional ethics, collegial ethics promotes supportive interactions with colleagues, yet more focus on this is needed because there is little or no training in it.

7. Limitations

Inasmuch as this is a pilot study, it is needed to do a further research with a larger number of participants in order to validate the results and findings of this study. In addition, collegial ethics promotes supportive interactions with colleagues and more focus on this is needed because there is little or no training in it.

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