

The Effect of using GET on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Pronunciation and Motivation

Behrooz Ghoorchaei
behroozghoorchaei@gmail.com
Farhangian University, Iran.

Masoomeh Rahmani
Mahrahmani1391@gmail.com
Islamic Azad University of Goorgan, Iran.

Received: 10 October 2018
Accepted: 21 November 2018
Published: 30 December 2018

ABSTRACT

Pronunciation has always been one of the most difficult parts of language learning. Since Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) seeks to make language learning easier, it can be found quite effective and helpful in teaching and learning pronunciation. So the present study aims at investigating the effect of using General English Training software (GET) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation and motivation. Thirty male students from two classes participated in the present study. They were studying English at Soroush Language Institute, Tehran, Iran in 2017. The range of their age was from 12 to 15 years old. The instruments employed in the study included: Students' motivation questionnaire (Vaezi, 2008) and a picture description task given as the pretest and posttest. The findings showed that using GET Software has a significant and positive effect on EFL learners' pronunciation and motivation. The results of the present study has implications on EFL teachers, materials developers and teacher educators.

Key words: Computer Assisted Language learning, General English Training Software, motivation, pronunciation, intermediate learners, EFL

INTRODUCTION

Most language experts agree that comprehensible pronunciation is essential for each target language user (Gilakjani, 2015; Afshari & Ketabi, 2017). Despite the importance of pronunciation

for students, it has been largely ignored in most ESL/EFL classes mainly because of the shortage of time in classroom settings (Chavangklang, 2013). Safari, Jahandar, and Khodabandehlou (2013) hint at the significance of teaching English language pronunciation. They define pronunciation as constituent part of learning a foreign language. If speakers lack intelligible pronunciation, there will be serious problems for their listeners. If teachers intend to assist their learners in improving their English pronunciation, they ought to identify the strengths and weakness of their learners in the skill (Akram & Qureshi, 2012).

It has been shown in related literature that affection and affective factors, particularly self-esteem, anxiety, motivation and social distance, play an important role in education in general and in ELT. Motivation has been a topic of interest in various fields, e.g. education, sociology, psychology, human development, and business (Stirling, 2014). Chalak and Kassaian (2010) defined motivation as "the most used concept for explaining the failure or success of a learner" (p. 37) while Dornyei (1998) defined motivation as an inner source, a key to learning, desire, need, emotion, reason, impulse or purpose, that motivates a person to a special action. Broussard and Garrison (2004) further clarify motivation as "the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something" (p. 106).

Due to the importance of motivation in language learning, different strategies should be implemented to expedite the process of learning and motivating learners. The strategy of using General English Training software may assist teachers to help their students pronounce correctly and speak fluently. Literature review indicated that the number of experimental studies investigating the effect of General English Training software on EFL learners' pronunciation in a Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) environment is rare, especially in Iran, where more investigation is needed. Therefore, in the present study, the researchers aim at investigating the effect of this software (GET) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation and motivation.

Hence this research addressed the following questions:

RQ1: Does General English Training Software have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation?

RQ2: Does General English Training Software have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' classroom motivation?

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Computers have been used for language teaching since the 1960s. Stockwell (2013) clearly states that from the early days of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), there has been discussion of how technologies can play a role in motivating learners in learning a language and as technologies have become more sophisticated, the growing range of uses of technology in and out of the classroom increases the potential for enhanced motivation" (p.156). Therefore the "explosion of interest" in implementing computers for teaching and learning a language (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 57) has been widely noted.

The application of technology in education has allowed foreign language practitioners to vary their teaching methodologies as they have the option to adopt innovative methods over simplistic ones such as fill-in-the-gap exercises. Rohani (2013) mentions that "with the development of computers and the Internet, most second language teachers and learners use computer programmes for foreign language teaching and learning" (p. 570). To benefit from the use of computers, practitioners could take cue from research that focus on the complementary relationship between computer technology and appropriate pedagogic programmes (King, 2003).

Rohani (2013) also points out that computer assisted pronunciation teaching (CAPT) is implementing technology to teach and learn "the features of sound system" (p.571). As cited in Rahimi and Yadollahi (2011), during the last decade, more attention has been devoted to the "relationship between language ability and computer use" due to positive effects of "technology on education". Computer is utilized as an aid for presenting, reinforcing, and assessing what learners are going to learn (Talebi & Teimoury, 2013, p. 52). Besides teachers, administrators too are keen in adopting technology for teaching purposes (Timuçin, 2006).

Experimental Studies on the Use of CALL in L2 Environment

Park and Son (2009) examined factors influencing EFL teachers' use of computers in their classrooms and their approaches to CALL to develop CALL practice in schools. The teachers

showed positive attitude and satisfaction in using computers. They considered computer technology as a useful teaching tool which could offer language input and promote learners' learning experiences. However, they also revealed detrimental external factors such as lack of time, inadequate computer facilities, rigid school curricula, textbooks and lack of governmental support that have affected the implementation of CALL in the classroom. Internal factors included factors such as educators' limited computer skills, knowledge, and insights of CALL.

Similarly, Nachoua (2012) confirmed that CALL is motivating and could be effectively applied in second/foreign language classes to increase learners' listening skill. Nachoua's participants in the experimental group (CALL) outperformed those in the control group for grammar, vocabulary, writing and listening. In Iran, Edalati Shams (2013) examined the impacts of hybrid learning on Iranian EFL students' autonomy in vocabulary learning. Hybrid Learning (HL), as mentioned by Bärenfänger (2005, in Edalati Shams, 2013), is a learning approach that merges traditional classroom learning, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), and self-directed learning (SDL) to enhance language learning. Edalati Shams' findings showed that the students displayed a substantial level of autonomy in learning from the beginning. They were used to watching movies, reading books, listening to music, surfing the net, and gaming in English. They also performed well in publishing posts and comments on the weblog. The quantitative analysis verified that they improved in both vocabulary and levels of autonomy.

In a study involving listening, Barani (2011) examined the relationship between CALL and listening skills of Iranian EFL learners. The findings also showed that there was a statistically significant difference between CALL users and nonusers in support of the experimental group ($p < .05$). Ghalami and Ahangari (2012) discovered that CALL also improved Iranian EFL learners' task-based listening as their results showed that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The former also displayed higher motivation than the latter.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Thirty male students participated in the present study. They were learning intermediate English at Soroush English Language Institute, Tehran, Iran in 2017. Their ages ranged from

twelve to fifteen years old. Persian was their first language while English was their foreign language. The participants were divided into an experimental and a control group of fifteen each.

Instruments

English Pronunciation Pretest/Post-test

In this study, a picture description task was used as the pretest and posttest. The same pretest was implemented as the posttest. The task was composed of six pictures and the participants were asked to construct a story related to the pictures. They were given five minutes to talk about the story, which was recorded, transcribed and graded. The grading was based on the pronunciation rubric adopted from IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors, a public version released by the British Council. It has a score from 1 to 9. The rating was made twice by one of the researchers to ensure reliability. The intra-rater reliability coefficient was .74.

Students' Motivation Questionnaire

The students' motivation questionnaire, adapted from Gardner's questionnaire (Vaezi, 2008), had 25 statements. It included a 5-point scale, ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree' which were coded from one to five respectively. The reliability and validity of Gardner's questionnaire was confirmed by three university teachers after a few items were revised and edited. To check its reliability, it was given to 60 learners in a pilot study. The results showed a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .73 which is an accepted level of reliability.

General English Training (GET) Software

General English Training (GET) software is published by PartoDanesh Languages Institute as indicated in Figure 1. It includes additional software programmes such as Flash Player, Foxit Reader, Quick Time, and KM Player. The programme has a placement test which is divided into three sections: 1) grammar, 2) listening test (part one and two), and 3) reading comprehension. All the items are multiple-choice. Students are given only one chance to choose the right answer; when they click on an answer, the subsequent question will appear. If they are unable to answer, they could opt to click on the NEXT button or the STOP button. The second page of the software is shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1. The second page of General English Training (GET) software

The third button of this page involves pronunciation and idioms. By clicking this button, four fields appear namely, Pronunciations power, Pronunciation power (idioms), North American idioms, and American accent video as illustrated in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Pronunciation Power page

By clicking the first button, Pronunciations Power appears (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Lessons and Exercises

Pronunciation Power is the main focus of this study. This page includes sections such as Lessons and Exercises. At the bottom part of this page, there are Instructions, Credits, and Exit. In Lessons section, vowel sounds, consonant sounds, and cluster sounds are presented as a) description, b) suggestion, c) side view legend. In Exercises section, sample words, comparative words, listening discrimination, S.T.A.I. R and sentences are presented.

PROCEDURES

Data collection procedures involved the following steps: (1) giving the pronunciation pretest, (2) giving the motivation questionnaire before the treatment, (3) treatment for the experimental groups (eight sessions), (4) teaching the control groups (eight sessions), (5) Giving the pronunciation posttest, and (6) giving students' motivation questionnaires as a posttest.

DESIGN

The study employed the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design. The independent variable of the study used the General English Training (GET) software and the dependent variables are pronunciation and motivation. The statistical procedure of independent-samples T-test was used to determine if there existed any difference between the pronunciation and motivation of the groups prior to and after the treatment.

RESULTS

The results of different statistical tests are presented here. Firstly, the results of normality test are reported and it was revealed that the data were normal. Then, the results of paired samples t-test and independent samples t-tests are presented.

Data Normality Test

First, to check the normality of the data, K-S test was carried out. As it is clear from Table 1, the data is normal as the p values (.06 & .20) are greater than .05. As the data is normal, a parametric statistical procedure, independent samples t-test, was used to compare the performance of the two groups (control group and experiment group) in the pronunciation test.

Table 1

KS-test for pronunciation

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Pronunciation Test	Control	.175	14	.06
	Experimental	.147	14	.20*

According to Table 2 which is concerned with the data obtained from motivation tests, the data is also normal as the p values (.08 & .14) is greater than .05. As the data is normal, hence, a parametric statistical procedure of independent samples t-tests was used to compare the performance of the two groups (control group and experiment group) in motivation.

Table 2

KS-test for Motivation.

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Motivation Test	Control	.41	14	.08
	Experimental	.58	14	.14*

Independent Samples t-tests on Pronunciation Test

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of learners' performance in the two pre-tests of experimental and control groups. As it is clear from this table, the mean score of the learners in the control pre-test is 6.1 out of 10, and for the experimental group, the mean score in the post-test is 6.8. To see whether the difference between the mean score of the experimental group and control group pre-tests of pronunciation is statistically significant or not, an independent samples t-test was run.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Pre-tests of Pronunciation for Experimental Group and Control Group

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre Test	Control	15	6.1	.541	.79
	Experimental	15	6.8	.700	1.558

The Table 4 shows the results of the independent samples t-test carried out on the learners' scores for pre-tests of pronunciation for experimental group and control group. The data of Levene's test for equality of variances reveals that it violates the assumption of equal variance as the sig value in levene's test is smaller than .05 ($F=.665, p<.05$). As Table 4 indicates, the sig value (2-tailed) for t value is .09 which is bigger than the required cut-off of .05 at $t(28) = .784, p>.05$. Therefore, it can be said that there is no statistically significant difference between the performance of pre-tests of pronunciation for experimental group and control group.

Table 4

Independent Samples T-test for Pre-tests of Pronunciation for Experimental Group and Control Group

	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
Equal variances assumed	.665	.031	.784	14	.09	.748	1.295		-1.895	3.47
Equal variances not assumed			.784	14	.09	.748	1.411		-1.776	3.47

Table 5 below presents the descriptive statistics of learners' pronunciation scores in the two post-tests of experimental and control groups. As indicated in the table, the mean score of the learners in the control post-test which was out of 10, is 6.4 and for the experimental group, their mean score in the post-test is 7.9 To see whether the difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and control group in the post-tests of pronunciation is statistically significant or not, an independent samples t-test was conducted.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Post-tests of Pronunciation for Experimental Group and Control Group

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post Test	Control	15	6.4	.451	.81
	Experimental	15	7.9	.654	1.008

Table 6 shows the results of the independent samples t-test carried out on the learners' scores for post-tests of pronunciation for experimental group and control group. The data of Levene's test for equality of variances reveals that it does not violate the assumption of equal variance as the sig value in levene's test is greater than .05 ($F=.579, p>.05$). As Table 6 indicates, the sig value (2-tailed) of t value is .03 which is smaller than the required cut-off of .05 at

$t(28)=.656$, $p<.05$. Therefore, it can be said that there is a statistically significant difference between the performance of post-tests of pronunciation for experimental group and control group. In addition, their pronunciation in experimental group post-test was better than the control group post-test which shows that the General English Training Software had a significant and positive effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation.

Table 6
Independent Samples T-test for Post-tests of Pronunciation for Experimental Group and Control Group

		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	
Equal variances assumed		.579	.451	.656	14	.03	.850	1.295	-1.772	4.47
Equal variances not assumed				.656	14	.03	.850	1.295	-1.776	4.47

According to the results obtained from Tables 4 and 6, it was found that there was not a significant difference between the two pre-tests of pronunciation for experimental group and control group, however there was a significant difference between the two post-tests of pronunciation for experimental group and control group. Thus, it can be concluded that the treatment which was given to the experimental group General English Training Software had a significant and positive effect on learners' pronunciation.

Independent Samples T-test on Students' Motivation

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics of learners' motivation in the pre-tests of experimental group two and control group two. As it can be seen in this table, the mean score of the learners before they received treatment in control group is 45.2 and in experimental group, 46.1. To see whether the difference between the mean scores of the two groups is statistically significant and

meaningful, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the scores of learners in their pre-test.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Pre-tests of Experimental and Control Groups in Motivation

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre_tests of Motivation	Control	15	45.2	2.001	.895
	Experimental	15	46.1	3.390	.458

The Table 8 shows the results of the independent samples t-test carried out on the learners' scores of the pre-tests of experimental and control groups. As Table 8 indicates, the sig value (2-tailed) for t value is .12 which is bigger than the required cut-off of .05 at $t(24)=3.41$, $p>.05$. Therefore, it can be said that there is no statistically significant difference between the performance of control and experimental groups in motivation tests before they were given different treatments. However, the Lavene's did not confirm the equality of variance ($F=3.98$, $p<.5$)

Table 8

Independent Samples T-test for pre-tests of Experimental and Control Groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	d	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Equal variances assumed		3.98	.04	-3.41	14	.12	-5.255	1.741	-4.047	-2.745
Equal variances not assumed				-3.41	14	.12	-5.255	1.741	-4.058	-2.745

Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics of learners' motivation in the post-tests of experimental group and control group. As it can be seen in this table, the mean score of the learners after they received treatment in control group is 44.8 and in experimental group it is 52.3. To see whether the difference between the mean scores of the two groups is statistically significant and meaningful, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the scores of learners in their post-test of motivation

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics of Post-tests of Experimental and Control Groups in Motivation

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post tests of Motivation	Control	15	44.8	2.964	.662
	Experimental	15	52.3	4.390	.981

The Table 10 shows the results of the independent samples t-test carried out on the learners' scores of the post-tests of experimental and control groups. The data of Levene's test for equality of variances reveals that it does not violate the assumption of equal variance as the sig value in Levene's test is greater than .05 ($F = -3.42, p > .05$). As table 10 indicates, the sig value (2-tailed) for t value is .02 which is smaller than the required cut-off of .05 at $t(28) = 3.92, p < .05$. Therefore, it can be said that there is statistically significant difference between the performance of control and experimental groups in motivation tests after they were given the treatments. The mean difference and the meaningfulness of the difference between the groups reveal that the experimental group who received the treatment of General English Training Software outperformed the control group who did not receive this treatment. Thus, it can be said that General English Training Software has a significant and positive effect on EFL learners' motivation.

Table 10

Independent Samples T-test for Post-tests of Experimental and Control Groups in Motivation

		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	
Equal variances assumed		3.42	.07	-3.92	14	.02	-4.650	1.184	-7.047	-2.252
Equal variances not assumed				-3.92	4	.02	-4.650	1.184	-7.058	-2.241

DISCUSSION

The present study showed that using GET software had significant effects on EFL students' pronunciation and motivation. Learners using the GET software are exposed to substantial amount of sound and therefore have been benefitting from the pronunciation lessons. The results of the present study are in line with Park and Son (2009). They examined factors influencing EFL teachers' use of computers in their classrooms and the outcome of their study showed that teachers had positive and satisfactory approaches towards CALL. Likewise, the present study also derived the same conclusion that GET has positive effects on learners' pronunciation and motivation. The results also echo Nachoua (2012), Ghalami Nobar and Ahangari (2012) who found that is an effective method to increase students' motivation.

Besides, the results of this study are in line with Barani (2011) and Ghalami Nobar and Ahangari (2012) who found in their experimental studies that there was a statistically significant difference between CALL users and nonusers in terms of their listening skill. Bekleyen (2011) recommends that one of the main reasons of mispronunciation is the absence of emphasis in stress patterns in English language. She believed that English students are given less exercise for weak and strong forms of the words and it is this that grounds unnatural sounds and overgeneralizations in their pronunciations in the target language. Hence appropriate exercises for the weak and strong words are recommended for the learners. Different strategies should be implemented to expedite

the process of learning and to motivate the learners. Undeniably, the strategy of using GET is shown to help students improve their motivation and pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

This research was done to find out whether GET has any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation and motivation. The results obtained from this research revealed that the software has a positive and significant effect on both pronunciation and motivation. As pronunciation is considered as a very important sub-skill in learning a language, teachers normally look for more insight in the different aspects and components of this sub-skill. As a result, the findings of this study provide insights to teachers. Besides, this study could contribute to existing literature on CALL by filling the gaps such as the effect of GET on motivation hence pronunciation in the local context of Iran. The findings can cast more light on the blurry areas of research in the scope of CALL especially among the foreign language learners.

REFERENCES

- Afshari, S., & Ketabi, S. (2017). Changing paradigms in teaching English pronunciation: a historical overview. *International journal of research studies in language learning*, 6(2), 269-281.
- Akram, M., & Qureshi, A. H. (2012). Problems in Learning and Teaching English Pronunciation in Pakistan. *International Journal of Research in Linguistics and Lexicography*, 1 (4), 43-48.
- Barani, G. (2011). The Relationship between Computer Assisted Language learning (CALL) and Listening Skill of Iranian EFL Learners. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 15(2),4059–4063.
- Bekleyen, N. (2011). Pronunciation problems of the Turkish EFL learners. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, 10 (36), 94-107.
- Broussard, S. C., & Garrison, M. (2004). The relationship between classroom motivation and academic achievement in elementary-school-aged children. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 33(2), 106-120.
- Chalak, A., & Kassaian, Z. (2010). Motivation and attitudes of Iranian undergraduate EFL students towards learning English. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 10(2), 37-56.

- Chavangklang, P. (2013). Enhancing Final Consonant Pronunciation Skill of the First Year Students at Nakhonratchasima Rajabhat University through e-Learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 91, 437-443.
- Dornyei, Z. (1998). What is motivation? Paper presented at the AAAL 1998 Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Edalati Shams, I. (2013). Hybrid learning and Iranian EFL learners' autonomy in vocabulary learning. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93(4), 1587–1592.
- GhalamiNobar, A., & Ahangari, S. (2012). The Impact of Computer Assisted Language Learning on Iranian EFL Learners' Task-Based Listening Skill and Motivation. *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, 2(1), 39-61.
- Gilakjani, A. P. (2015). Iranian EFL Teachers' Uses, Attitudes, Beliefs, Roles, And Pedagogical Methods About Pronunciation Power Software In English Pronunciation Instruction. Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- King, L. (2003). *Improving the quality of language learning in schools: approaches to teaching and learning*, London: CILT.
- L. S. Wei, T. F. T. Sulaiman, W. Mohamad, and Z. A. Kasim, —Motivation and study habits of working adults: A case study of Masters students in Open University Malaysia, in Proc. Conference Proceeding in International Conference of Lifelong Learning, Kuala Lumpur, November 2011, pp. 14-15,
- Nachoua, H. (2012). Computer-Assisted Language Learning for Improving Students' Listening Skill. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 69(3), 1150 – 1159.
- Park, C.N., & Son, J.-B. (2009). Implementing computer-assisted language learning in the EFL classroom: Teachers' perceptions and perspectives. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 5(2), 80–101.
- Rahimi, M., & Yadollahi, S. (2011). Foreign language learning attitude as a predictor of attitudes towards computer-assisted language learning. *Procedia Computer Science*, 3, 167-174.
- Rohani, Z. (2013). The Effect of Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Training on English Pronunciation Accuracy. Paper presented at the 11th TELLSI International Conference.
- Safari, H., Jahandar, S., & Khodabandehlou, M. (2013). The Effect of Using Phonetic Transcription of Words as Footnotes on Iranian EFL Learners' Pronunciation Improvement. *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences*, 3(2), 19-24.
- Stirling, D . (2014). Motivation in Education . Aichi Universities English Education Research Journal. Retrieved on September 24th, 2018 from: file:///C:/Users/sony/Downloads/Documents/Stirling_MotEdu.pdf

Stockwell, G. (2013). Technology and motivation in English-language teaching and learning. In E. Ushioda, *International perspectives on motivation: Language learning and professional challenges* (pp. 156-175). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Talebi, F., & Teimoury, N. (2013). The effect of computer-assisted language learning on improving EFL learners' pronunciation ability. *World Journal of English Language*, 3(2), 52.

Timuçin, M. (2006). Implementing CALL in an EFL context. *ELT Journal*, 60(3), 262-271.

Vaezi, Z. (2008). Language learning motivation among Iranian undergraduate students. *World applied sciences journal*, 5(1), 54-69.

Warschauer, M., & Healey, D. (1998). Computers and language learning: an overview. *Language Teaching Forum*, 31(5), 7-71.