



*English Pronunciation Instruction in EFL Classes between Priority
and Negligence. The Case of Third Year EFL pupils in Middle School-
Tébessa*

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Abstract:

This paper investigates English pronunciation instruction in third year middle school EFL classes. It assumes that pronunciation is neglected in the EFL classroom, leading to errors and poor speech performance. A semi-structured questionnaire is administered to English teachers to answer three questions: 1) Is pronunciation prioritized in EFL syllabuses? 2) Do learners apply pronunciation rules in their speech? 3) Do teachers emphasize correct pronunciation in speaking classes? The results indicate that pronunciation is included but not emphasized in the syllabus. It is mainly taught and assessed through writing rather than speaking. Moreover, the practice and materials are inadequate to develop a good proficiency level. Additionally, the learners are unaware of the correct application of the pronunciation rules, which may reflect the teaching approaches, methods and tools used in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: *English pronunciation, Pronunciation instruction, pronunciation errors, speaking skills.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The post world war era witnessed the emergence of English as the most spread and prestigious language in the world. It started to be the medium of international communication, the world market and most importantly, science and technology. Consequently, the number of speakers of English had been enormously increasing through the past decade because people started to be eager to learn and speak this foreign language despite their different tongues and backgrounds. English then becomes an international language (EIL) (Mc Kay, 2002). Accordingly, English is used and performed differently among individuals depending on their needs, practices and objectives. The realizations of the correct utterances of English language by foreign speakers has always become a tremendous challenge at all the linguistic levels; and at the same time an interesting area of investigation and studies among which this research paper has the attempt to shed some light on the status of English pronunciation in the Algerian (Tébessa) middle school in relation to teachers practices and pupils' proficiency.

II. Review of Literature

II.2. English Pronunciation

The increasing desire to learn and speak English all over the world; mainly in Europe has led to the emergence of many varieties and so called Euro-English (Hietanen, 2012). Modiano (2009) further stated that this spread of English in Europe is characterized by many and sometimes deep changes regarding the language system, namely the phonological and morphological ones. In other words, when non-native speakers use English as an international language (EIL), they make errors of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. For this particular reason, Jenkins (2000) restricted an accepted pronunciation to the following criteria:

- * The ability to recognize all the consonants (fricatives, stops, aspirated)
- * The ability to respect consonant cluster.
- * The ability to distinguish short vowels from long vowels.
- * The ability to use stress in the appropriate position (it affects meaning and interpretation)
- * The ability to manipulate the prosodic features (stress, intonation, rhythm)

Indeed, the phonological errors that appear within English pronunciation can be caused by the processes of omission, addition, or substitution of segments in different ways (Munro, 2008). Gilakjani (2011) has further stated some factors for pronunciation errors as follows:

- * Lack of motivation and attitudes towards the target language.
- * Lack of enough opportunities of practice and activities.
- * Teachers do not concentrate on pronunciation errors during classes.
- * Problems of interference of the L1/L2.
- * Lack of attention and awareness of FL learners.

II.2. Pronunciation Instruction

Pronunciation is one of the very important aspects of foreign language learning. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that it is very difficult to be acquired when we compare it to grammar or vocabulary. Besides, many scholars agree upon the fact that little attention is devoted to pronunciation teaching inside the FL classroom (Gilakjani, 2011, Florez, 1998). Historically speaking, this language aspect gained enormous attention and occupied the position of priority with the emergence of the "Grammar Translation Method" and the "Audio-lingual Method" (1930's -50's). By the issue of the communicative approach (1960's-70's), attention has been minimized towards correct pronunciation (Fraser, 2000, Bray, 1995). The matter was not only related to ESL and EFL learners but also to tutors who started to give less priority to it in the design of their syllabuses and courses. All these issues would have an impact on learners' proficiency and development of good and correct pronunciation. Accordingly, in some regions in the world as Bangladesh, little attention is paid to the listening and speaking skills while the primary focus is on the reading and writing ones (Manirozzaman, 2008). He further states that neither classroom activity types nor the adequate teaching materials are available inside the EFL classroom. In Thailand, Wei & Zhen (2002) believe that English pronunciation is highly

neglected. Besides, in Mexico, this important aspect is isolated from the EFL teaching curriculum.

Moreover, in teaching English pronunciation opinions differ between whether to focus on models that lead to native like speech performance or to leave learners the freedom to create multiple varieties which can be caused by some factors such as identity (Hietanen, 2012). Odisho (2003) for instance, believes that the adoption of both bottom-up/ top-down models has become more than a tradition inside pronunciation classes. Indeed, the former enables learners to discover the smaller units of sounds gradually till they arrive at the larger discourse while the latter permits them to distinguish between the same features and to understand the whole phonological system.

The Received Pronunciation (RP) is the most prominent model among many other varieties of English pronunciation which resists against changes. It is also known by the “Queen’s English” and expanded in Britain’s schools, BBC channels and broadcasting (Przedlacka, 2005). However, it is not the same case for general American which covers a wide range of varieties came all from the different tongues of the inhabitants of the American nation. Those varieties are all accepted and widely spread in the world than the RP.

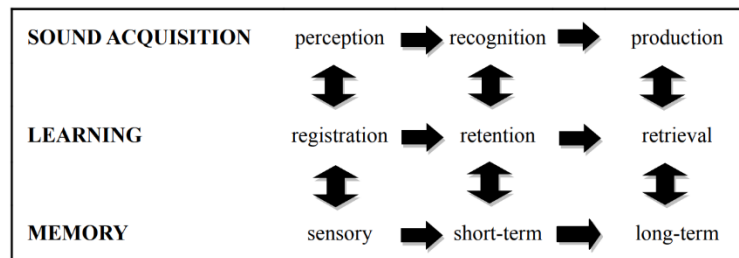
Among the very prominent questions one can ask is “*how do teachers introduce pronunciation to EFL learners?*” Indeed, the tutors need to devote considerable attention to pronunciation instruction with all its aspects (segmental/supra-segmental). They can insert them inside several activities of grammar (intonation), reading (stress) or vocabulary (Florez, 1998). Practice also needs to gain same attention because this language aspect requires much exposure to talk and immediate feedback so as not to develop incorrect habits of sound production. In doing so; many advantages will be achieved as follows:

- * Interlocutors will understand each other well.
- * It contributes to developing listening and comprehension skills.
- * It contributes to ameliorate the speaking skills of the target language.
- * It increases self-confidence.
- * It permits speakers to integrate themselves into social groups (role play) (Florez, 1998)

II.3. The Cognitive Theory for FL Acquisition

Theories in psycholinguistics (FLA/SLA) agree upon the fact that the development of proficiency in SL/FL learning and acquisition is associated with the development of the psychomotor skills of individuals’ cognitive structure. Lennenberg (1967) insists on the exposure to the target language before the age of puberty when the brain starts to lose its plasticity; an element which is very essential for language acquisition and skills development. Henceforth, learners at pre-intermediate level are better at developing native like pronunciation than the ones at advanced level as it is the case for middle school pupils. The majority of FL learners start to be exposed to foreign languages at advanced stages of life for academic or professional purposes. This would automatically lead to the occurrence of many errors, namely those of pronunciation. Strange (1995) called the disability to use the phonetic and phonological rules of the target language correctly in pronunciation “*Perceptual Foreign Accent*”.

Furthermore, Scholars do not agree upon one single model or approach to pronunciation learning and teaching but instead they all insist on the importance of particular factors namely age, attitudes and motivation (Odisho, 2003, Lightbown&Spader, 2001). In addition, as pronunciation requires good articulation of speech sounds, it also needs good perception and cognitive skills (Hietanen, 2012) related to the basic stages of learning: registration, retention, retrieval (Odisho, 2003). The following figure can better illustrate the process:

Figure (01): Three Stage Cognitive Sequencing in Learning Pronunciation (adopted from

Odisho, 2003, p. 12)

Odisho (2003, p. 13) describes the cognitive complexity of acquiring and remembering sounds as follows:

in order to perceive a sound, one has to be exposed to it at least in passing through the sensory memory; to have it registered, at least temporarily, it should be stored in the short memory; however, in order to retrieve and produce a sound at will, it has to be retained and consolidated in the long-term memory through rehearsal.

In the same line of thought, Kenworthy (1987) has identified particular aspects every FL learner needs to know for good and correct pronunciation. First, the ability to distinguish between the vowels and consonants and how they are arranged together in different speech stretches (CVC. CV. CC). Second, the ability to cut down morphemes into different root and affixes. Third, the ability to cut down words into syllables.

III. Study Design and Data Analysis

This study is done in the favour of investigating the status of English pronunciation and its instruction in middle school in Tébéssa. Among the aims also is to discover the extent to which teachers give either considerable attention or neglect it during their English classes. The present section introduces the research design, means of data collection and analysis procedures and process. Indeed, those steps refer to the research design which stands for the plan the researcher uses in order to guarantee the enrolment of the investigation in a practical and systematic way (Kumar, 2011).

III.1. Research Approach and Tool

The present research paper adopts a mixed (qualitative& quantitative) approach. Kumar (2011) said that among the objectives of qualitative design is the accessibility to discover, explore and describe a particular situation using the participants' perceptions and experiences towards the studied phenomenon in a more flexible way. The quantitative design appears in rating the frequencies after turning a part of data explored into statistics using the SPSS software. This study is also descriptive because the data collected will provide evidence about the status of pronunciation inside EFL middle school classes and how it is taught, treated, and prioritized by instructors.

A semi-structured questionnaire is used as a primary and only means of collecting the needed data for answering the questions and hypothesis. It is administered via the "captive audience type" i.e., the researcher meets the respondents in middle school institutions, hand them the copies and takes them back from them three days after. Kumar (2011), in the same respect; believes that the data is collected very fast because you will check the presence of all the participants, guarantee the answers of all of them, save time, explain ambiguity, and adjust errors of misunderstanding.

The survey questionnaire has multiple advantages. First, it is easy for distribution to a large sample population. Second, it is found to be less expensive compared to other tools of research. Third, the anonymity of participants leads to increase the rate of reliability of responses. However, it has some short comings such as: misinterpretation of questions,

interference of attitudes and perception (subjectivity) and sometimes the low rate of responses; mainly when the using the mailed survey type (Kumar, 2011).

III.2. Sample Population

The participants of this study are third year EFL teachers in middle school at Tébessa. They are selected using the non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling). Cohen & Manion & Morisson (2010) said that this type is used with “*small scale research*” as it is the case in this investigation, when just English teachers of third year middle school are required over four middle school institutions.

III.3. Description of the Questionnaire Content and Procedure of Distribution

In order to obtain the necessary data, the survey questionnaire is designed on the basis of mixture of closed and open-ended question types. It consists of three sections. Section one is devoted to collect data about the English teachers’ profile (gender, qualification, experience ...etc.). Section two is designed upon questions related to the process of teaching pronunciation in EFL middle school classes and its related concepts (instruction, syllabus content, priorities, feedbacketc.). Section three introduces questions about the pupils’ pronunciation performance and its related issues (errors, proper performance, and awareness etc.).

The survey questionnaire is administered hand to hand to five (05) EFL third year teachers in Ibn Badis Middle School, five (05) EFL third year teachers in Frontz Fanon Middle School in Tébessa, three (03) of them in El Khansaa Middle school in Tébessa and three teachers at Mohamed boudhief Middle school in Tébessa during the academic year of 2022/2023. The reason behind choosing four institutions is to try to cover an acceptable number of responses, increase reliability and variations among them.

IV. Data analysis and Interpretation

Analysis of the responses’ frequencies and percentages

Item 01: Are you male or female?

	N	%
Male	2	13.3%
Female	13	86.7%

Based on the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that the majority of the respondents were female English language teachers in middle school. Out of all the respondents, 86.7% identified as female while only 13.3% identified as male. This suggests that there is a higher representation of female English language teachers in middle school at Tébessa.

Item 02: Qualification

	N	%
BA degree	9	60.0%
Magister	1	6.7%
Master	1	6.7%
Licence	1	6.7%
Classic	1	6.7%
E. N. S	1	6.7%
Other	1	6.7%

According to the data extracted from the questionnaires, the majority of the respondents held a BA degree, with 60% of respondents indicating this as their qualification. Other qualifications reported by respondents included Magister (6.7%), Master (6.7%), Licence (Bachelor of Arts) (6.7%), Classic (6.7%), E.N.S (6.7%), and Others (6.7%). The variety of qualifications the English teachers possess supports the research with reliable feedback related to teaching pronunciation in middle school. Moreover, it contributes to enriching the study with different opinions and views towards the status of this important phonological aspect.

Item 03: How long have you been teaching English in middle school?

	N	%
3-5	3	20.0%
5-10	2	13.3%
10-15	1	6.7%
More than 15 years	9	60.0%

According to the data extracted from the questionnaires, the majority of respondents (60%) have been teaching English in middle school for more than 15 years. Hence, they have spent a considerable period of time teaching English to middle school pupils. In addition, 20% of respondents have been teaching for 3-5 years. This leads to say that some of them have joined the same profession recently while 13.3% for 5-10 years, and 6.7% for 10-15 years. This leads also to say that other teachers have been teaching English for an accepted period of time which permits to obtain reliable data from their experience.

Item 04: Is pronunciation, as a language aspect, included in your syllabus?

	N	%
Yes	15	100.0%

According to the data extracted from the questionnaires, all of the respondents (100%) replied that pronunciation, as a language aspect, is included in their syllabus. That is to say, this phonological aspect is taught to middle school pupils during English classes.

Item 05: Which aspect of pronunciation you focus more in your classes?

Aspect of pronunciation		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Vowels and consonants	Vowels and consonants	15	46.9%	100.0%
	Intonation	9	28.1%	60.0%
	Accent	4	12.5%	26.7%
	Rhythm	4	12.5%	26.7%
Total		32	100.0%	213.3%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The data in the chart reveals that the majority of respondents (46.9%) indicated that they focus more on vowels and consonants when teaching pronunciation in their classes. Accordingly, these two phonological aspects classified under the segmental features of English pronunciation take the lion's share in syllabuses regarding their role to determine correct pronunciation. 28.1% of respondents showed that they focus more on intonation, while 12.5% focus more on accent and others 12.5% on rhythm. These reveal that teachers of English in middle school do also cover the left aspects and cannot neglect them. Indeed, they all work in a related chaining system to achieve effective English pronunciation.

Item 06: How often do you teach 'listening & speaking' rubric per month?

	N	%
Once	2	13.3%
Twice	8	53.3%
Three times	3	20.0%
More	2	13.3%

According to the data extracted from the questionnaires, the majority of respondents (53.3%) indicated that they teach the 'listening & speaking' rubric twice per month which shows that it does not take enough time as it should be regarding its importance in developing the pupils' oral/aural skills. 20% of respondents answered that they teach it three times per month, which is acceptable compared to the previous category of respondents. Besides, 13.3% of

teachers indicated that they teach it once per month and 13.3% indicated that they teach it more than three times per month. The latter shows that in some middle school institutions, the 'listening and speaking' rubric does not gain much importance and priority in English classes, and this can be related to some factors like the absence of the teaching material or big class size ...etc.

Item 07: Do you assign much activities of pronunciation to your pupils?

	N	%
No	11	73.3%
Yes	4	26.7%

The obtained data reveals that the majority of respondents (73.3%) indicated that they do not assign many activities of pronunciation to their pupils. In other words, the pupils in middle school do not receive much practice of pronunciation as it should be which may consequently affect their proficiency and manipulation of this phonological aspect. On the other hand, 26.7% of respondents indicated that they do assign additional activities of pronunciation to their pupils.

When teachers are asked to mention some types of activities they choose for their pupils, eight (08) of the respondents did not provide any response while seven (07) of them mention that they do not adapt any other types of tasks and they stick to what the textbook includes. Besides, this important phonological aspect is either practiced through 'selection of the appropriate sound', 'listen and identify' or 'classification of sounds in tables /final 'ed', s''. One of the seven respondents highlights the fact that pronunciation needs not to be practiced through the written channel, as it is now the case in third year middle school classrooms but rather the oral one. The latter can be interpreted by the fact that third year middle school pupils do not receive a high-quality practice at their early stages of acquisition as it is recommended by many scholars (Elliot, 1995, Lenneberg, 1967, Fraser, 2005).

Item 08: Which of the following you adopt when teaching English pronunciation?

	Responses		
	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
When teaching English pronunciation You expose pupils to native speakers' tapes or videos	7	26.9%	46.7%
	10	38.5%	66.7%
	9	34.6%	60.0%
Total	26	100.0%	173.3%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Based on the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that English language teachers in middle school use a variety of resources to teach English pronunciation. 38.5 % of the respondents show that they just use passages from the textbook and read them aloud. In this respect, the tutor's pronunciation will be the model for the pupils who do not have the opportunity to interact with native speaker's pronunciation via tapes, videos or recordings. 34.6% rely on role play and dialogues and only 26.9% of them use instances from native speakers' tapes and records which permit them to acquire native like pronunciation. This suggests that teachers use a combination of audiovisual materials, reading materials, and interactive activities to teach English pronunciation but not to a large extent.

Indeed, when tutors are asked to report any additional material, they use during the 'listening/speaking' classes, fourteen of them (14) have replied in relation to the options provided in the questionnaire (item 08). However, one teacher said that she pronounces words in the classroom and asks the pupils to repeat after her. Indeed, the type of the pronunciation they will develop depends on the teacher's one. Another tutor mentioned that she sticks to the textbook rubric activities but in the written medium not the oral one. Henceforth, the pupils cannot logically develop proficiency or native like pronunciation. Accordingly, Elliot (1995) affirmed that tutors may not possess the required material and instrument for pronunciation

instruction. This is among the reasons behind neglecting this phonological aspect in ESL/EFL classes.

Item 09: Which approach do you follow in teaching English pronunciation?

	N	%
Inductive approach (learners rely on themselves to discover the aspects of pronunciation)	6	40.0%
Deductive approach (the tutor provides the rules of pronunciation in a direct way)	9	60.0%

According to the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that English language teachers in middle school at Tébéssa follow different approaches when teaching English pronunciation. 60% of the tutors reported that they follow the deductive approach. It means, they provide the rules of pronunciation in a direct way. On the other hand, 40% of them follow the inductive approach when learners rely on themselves to discover the aspects of pronunciation. This suggests that there is some variation in the approaches adopted by teachers when teaching English pronunciation.

Item 10: How can you describe the status of English pronunciation in 3rd year middle school syllabus?

	N	%
Highly neglected	2	13.3%
Neglected	3	20.0%
Gains priority	9	60.0%
Gains high priority	1	6.7%

According to the data extracted from the questionnaires, when asked to describe the status of English pronunciation in 3rd year middle school syllabus, 60% of respondents indicated that it gains priority. Unfortunately, this contradicts with their responses to items 6 and 7 when more than the half (60% and more) show deficiency corresponding to the number of hours and amount of practice devoted to pronunciation. This contradiction can be caused by various factors such as: teachers' indifference, absence of concentration when reading the questions, rapid and random answers. In addition, 20% indicated that it is neglected, 13.3% indicated that it is highly neglected. This can be related to the lack of teaching materials of the speaking skills in middle schools, the number of hours of English classes, the big class size or even the inappropriate textbook design. 6.7% of the tutors indicated that it gains high priority.

Item 11: How can you describe the number of sessions devoted to pronunciation instruction in middle school?

	N	%
Needs to be increased	5	33.3%
Not enough	8	53.3%
Appropriate	2	13.3%

According to the data extracted from the questionnaires, when asked to describe the number of sessions devoted to pronunciation instruction in middle school, 53.3% of respondents indicated that it is not enough, 33.3% indicated that it needs to be increased. The great majority of the instructors believe that the amount of hours devoted to teach pronunciation need to be increased in order to enhance the pupils' oral skills. This leads to assume that they agree upon the necessity to integrate more hours, tasks and draw attention to towards this English phonological aspect. 13.3% indicated that it is appropriate having the belief that teaching English pronunciation via the scheduled sessions takes the appropriate path.

Item 12: Which pronunciation type you find it much in your classes?

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Pronunciation type	Received Pronunciation (Queen's pronunciation)	7	31.8%	46.7%
	Accented pronunciation	6	27.3%	40.0%
	American pronunciation	2	9.1%	13.3%
	Pronunciation affected by regional dialects	4	18.2%	26.7%
	Pronunciation affected by another foreign language (French)	3	13.6%	20.0%
Total		22	100.0%	146.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Based on the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that English language teachers in middle school reported that a variety of pronunciation types exists among their pupils. 31.8% of them said that their pupils use Received Pronunciation (Queen's pronunciation), 27.3% reported accented pronunciation, 9.1% reported American pronunciation, 18.2% reported pronunciation affected by regional dialects, and 13.6% reported pronunciation affected by another foreign language (French). This suggests that there is a diversity of pronunciation types among middle school pupils.

Item 13: How can you evaluate your pupils' English pronunciation (third year level)?

	N	%
Unaccepted	3	20.0%
Bad	2	13.3%
Accepted	8	53.3%
Good	2	13.3%

Based on the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that the majority of the English language teachers in middle school (53.3%) evaluate their pupils' English pronunciation at the third-year level as "Accepted". 20% of the teachers evaluate their pupils' pronunciation as "Unaccepted", while 13.3% evaluate it as "Bad". On the other hand, 13.3% of the teachers evaluate their pupils' pronunciation as "Good". This suggests that there is some variation in how teachers evaluate their pupils' English pronunciation at the third-year level.

Item 14: Do pupils pay attention to their mistakes of pronunciation?

	N	%
No	11	73.3%
Yes	4	26.7%

Based on the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that the majority of the English language teachers in middle school (73.3%) believe that their pupils do not pay attention to their mistakes of pronunciation. The latter can be related to the low degree of awareness of those pupils about the errors they make or the indifferent behaviour they develop during English classes. On the other hand, 26.7% of the teachers believe that their pupils do pay attention to their mistakes of pronunciation. This suggests that most of the teachers believe that their pupils are not actively trying to correct their pronunciation mistakes.

Item 15: Pupils' rate of pronunciation errors is:

	N	%
Low	4	26.7%
Moderate	4	26.7%
High	7	46.7%

According to the obtained data from the questionnaires, it appears that the majority of the English language teachers in middle school (46.7%) believe that their pupils' rate of pronunciation errors is "High". 26.7% of the teachers believe that their pupils' rate of pronunciation errors is "Low", while another 26.7% believe it is "Moderate". This suggests that almost half of the teachers believe that their pupils commit a high number of pronunciation errors regarding their age, level, motivation rate, awareness... etc.

Item 16: How often do you correct their pronunciation mistakes/errors?

	N	%
Often	9	60.0%
Always	6	40.0%

Based on the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that the majority of the English language teachers in middle school (60%) often correct their pupils' pronunciation mistakes/errors. 40% of the teachers always correct their pupils' pronunciation mistakes/errors. This suggests that most of the teachers make great efforts to correct their pupils' pronunciation errors and highly consider them.

Item 17: Which error/mistake type do they much frequently commit?

Error /mistake type ^a		Responses		
		N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Vowel & consonants	Vowel & consonants	10	27.8%	66.7%
	Intonation	9	25.0%	60.0%
	Accent	5	13.9%	33.3%
	Stress	12	33.3%	80.0%
Total		36	100.0%	240.0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Based on the data extracted from the questionnaires, it appears that English language teachers in middle school reported a variety of error/mistake types when it comes to their pupils' pronunciation. 27.8% of the teachers reported errors/mistakes related to vowels and consonants, 25.0% reported errors/mistakes related to intonation, 13.9% reported errors/mistakes related to accent, and 33.3% reported errors/mistakes related to stress. This suggests that pupils make errors/mistakes in various aspects of pronunciation, with stress being the most common error/mistake type reported by teachers.

Item 18: Do you think the type and number of activities devoted to pronunciation teaching is appropriate for pupils to acquire good level of or native like pronunciation?

	N	%
No	9	60.0%
Yes	6	40.0%

The responses to this question have indicated that the majority of the English language teachers in middle school (60%) do not think that the type and number of activities devoted to pronunciation teaching is appropriate for pupils to acquire a good level of or native-like pronunciation. This can indicate that middle school pupils need much opportunities of practicing English pronunciation through novel types of tasks and activities which may attract their attention and increase their awareness. On the other hand, 40% of the teachers believe that the type and number of activities devoted to pronunciation teaching is appropriate for pupils to acquire a good level of or native-like pronunciation. This suggests that there is some variation in how teachers view the effectiveness of the activities devoted to pronunciation instruction.

When the middle school tutors are requested to provide further explanation related to their responses to item 18, twelve (12) of them did not write any feedback. This fact can be interpreted by their quick process of answering this survey despite the large time period devoted to them (three days) or maybe they are not serious towards the questions. By contrast, four (04) of them provided their feedback claiming that neither the number of hours nor the quality of

activities are suitable to permit the pupils to develop pronunciation proficiency. They also recommended for developed teaching material to assist them in their speaking classes. Besides, they added that the instruction of pronunciation should not be taught as it is now i.e., integrated within the lessons but instead, it should be presented in isolation by devoting separate lessons to its segmental and supra-segmental features to raise the awareness of middle school pupils. They further stated that pronunciation cannot be taught via voice classification or tenses of grammar only. This was a shared opinion between all of them; one tutor says: “*this is not sufficient in acquiring correct pronunciation*”. One other teacher stated that the activities devoted to teach pronunciation need to be well structured and carefully designed through multiple chances of practice.

Moreover, the present questionnaire ends up with a free space left for EFL middle school teachers to feel comfortable in adding any further details from their expertise in order to support the research aims. Accordingly, seven (07) of the total did not provide any feedback while nine of them did and their notes are summarized as follows:

- * Teaching English pronunciation needs to take place in equipped language laboratories not in ordinary classrooms which permit the pupils to discriminate between the different speech sounds and features (V, C, intonation, stress)
- * To avoid teaching pronunciation as integral part in reading and writing rubrics.
- * Some English sounds are dropped from the English syllabus of third year which require attention and priority.
- * The ministry of education needs to reconsider the English pronunciation instruction and devote separate lessons to it.
- * The teachers of middle school need to raise the attention of their pupils to this crucial phonological aspect, particularly at this age category.
- * The assessment of the pronunciation skills of the pupils needs to be revised and via the oral medium not the written one.
- * Teaching pronunciation needs to be assisted by developed material.

V. Discussion of the Results

The results obtained from the questionnaire are discussed in accordance with the basic theory presented in the review of literature and the three basic research questions upon which the present study is constructed. As far as the first question is concerned: 1) Is pronunciation prioritized in EFL syllabuses? the results demonstrate that pronunciation of English takes part in EFL classes. It is almost included within third year middle school curriculum. However, the English teachers reveal that this phonological aspect deserves more attention from the ministry of education. In other words, they do not accept the fact that it is taught deductively via old approaches and methods or integrated in textbook passages. Elliot (1995), in this respect, claims that pronunciation has always been as a part of linguistics not language fluency aspect and almost neglected in language classes.

Moreover, the quality of practice devoted to pronunciation is not suitable regarding the number of sessions and activity types. The great majority of tutors agree that middle school pupils do not receive enough chances of practicing it regarding its importance as a language aspect. Gilakjani (2011) asserts that pronunciation is not speaking but rather it represents one of its salient sub skills. Consequently, they all call for novel activity types to be adopted and also developed teaching instruments in the EFL classes.

Concerning the second research question: 2) Do learners apply pronunciation rules in their speech? the findings demonstrate that in the same classroom, the pupils use a variety of pronunciation types as being influenced by different factors, but the rate of errors is increased among them. The latter happen at the level of vowels, consonants, stress, and intonation despite the frequent feedback provided to them. This leads to suggest that those pupils are not aware about the correct rules of English pronunciation and do not apply them in their speech performance.

Regarding the third research question: 3) Do teachers emphasize correct pronunciation in

speaking classes? the findings indicate that EFL teachers in middle school do pay attention to speech performance of their pupils during classes. They are involved in multiple tasks but meanwhile they insist on correcting the pupils' errors starting from the belief that they need to be adjusted at the moment they appear in order not to develop as incorrect language behaviour in the future. The latter supports the claims of the "critical period hypothesis" which suggest that individuals whose age around twelve (12) start to lose their flexibility to learn/acquire the SL/ FL efficiently because of some biological and neurological factors related to the psycho-motor skills (Lenneberg, 1967 cited in Barros, 2003). Henceforth, it is highly required to pay careful attention to the instruction of pronunciation regarding the approach, methods and employed tools in the language classroom on the one hand and the biological age of pupils on the other.

According to the findings, it appears that the assumption which states that "English pronunciation is not given the status it deserves when teaching English speaking skills is true to a large extent. In other words, a considerable lack of careful instruction of the features of English phonological system may be partially supported. While 100% of the English language teachers in middle school reported that pronunciation is included as a language aspect in their syllabus and 60% believe that English pronunciation gains priority in the middle school syllabus, 60% of the teachers also believe that the type and number of activities devoted to pronunciation teaching is not appropriate for pupils to acquire a good level of or native-like pronunciation. Additionally, 73.3% of the teachers believe that their pupils do not pay attention to their mistakes of pronunciation and 46.7% believe that their pupils' rate of pronunciation errors is "High".

In conclusion, based on the analysis of the questionnaire results, it appears that while English pronunciation is given some priority in EFL syllabuses, there may be room for improvement in terms of providing more careful instruction of the segmental features of English phonological system to help pupils acquire a good level of or native-like pronunciation.

VI. Conclusion

This research paper is designed for the sake of investigating the status English pronunciation occupies in EFL middle school classroom. It has the attempt to shed some light on whether this important phonological aspect is taught, learned and assessed properly. The results indicate that despite its existence in third year middle school English syllabus, pronunciation of English is neglected to a great extent regarding the some necessary aspects such as: the medium of instruction, the quality and quantity of practice, number of sessions and used teaching material and instruments. Accordingly, EFL speaking classes need to be further reinforced with the necessary equipments and material in order to assist the pupils to achieve a good level of pronunciation proficiency. This will also lead the English teachers to work in comfortable atmosphere so as they can safely transmit the required aural/oral knowledge during their speaking classes.

Regarding all these facts, it is highly recommended to conduct further investigations on the instruction of the different features of pronunciation, each in separate research so as to have deep insights on them and how they operate in the EFL classroom.

VII. Limitations

The present study has few limitations to be considered and listed as follows:

- * It is worth to mention that the great majority of middle school teachers did not provide any feedback in the relation the questions when necessary. Therefore, few details appear in the qualitative analysis.
- * The number of teachers appears to be fifteen (15) in the quantitative analysis while sixteen of them appear in the qualitative analysis. This was caused by the fact that one of questionnaire was not acceptable for analysis because it had too many missing responses, and replacing or predicting these responses could falsify the results.

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