

ELT Teacher Trainees' Self-Perceptions and Awareness of the Pronunciation Skill, and Their Attitudes Towards its Instruction*

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Abstract: Having received the stamp of an “often neglected” element in second language teaching, opinions of English Language Teaching (ELT) Teacher Trainees (TT) taking pronunciation as an explicit instruction course seem to be neglected in research advocated in this field as well. Moreover, features of pronunciation (segmentals and suprasegmentals), contributing to the development of this skill are minimally approached in a limited number of studies. Thus the present study aims at revealing ELT TTs’ self-perceptions toward the pronunciation skill, attitudes toward its instruction, and their awareness regarding the difficulty and importance of the features of pronunciation skill. Using a mixed-methods research design, quantitative data was collected via a questionnaire from 111 teacher trainees and qualitative data was gathered via semi-structured interviews conducted with 11 participants. The overall results revealed that TTs have positive self-perceptions regarding the pronunciation skill and positive attitudes towards its explicit instruction. TTs’ awareness of segmental and suprasegmental features was found to be different in some aspects and their awareness of the difficulty of suprasegmentals was dubious. Yet, participants consider segmentals as an easy feature of the pronunciation skill.

Anahtar sözcükler

Sesletim becerisi, sesletim eğitimi, İngilizce öğretmen adayları, parçasal özellikler, parça-üstü özellikler.

İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Sesletim Becerisi Hakkındaki Öz-algıları, Farkındalıkları ve Bu Becerinin Öğretimine Karşı Tutumları

Öz: Sesletim dersini alan İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının ikinci dil öğretiminde çoğu kez “ihmal edilen” bir konu olma damgasını yiyen bu ders hakkındaki görüşleri bu alandaki birçok araştırmada göz ardı edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, sesletim becerisinin geliştirilmesine katkıda bulunan parçasal ve parça-üstü özellikler az sayıda araştırmada asgari düzeyde çalışılmıştır. Bundan dolayı, bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının sesletim becerisine karşı öz-algılarını, sesletimin öğretimine karşı tutumlarını ve sesletim becerisini içeren öğelerin önem ve zorluğu hakkındaki farkındalıklarını araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Araştırmada karma yöntem kullanılmış, nicel veriler 111 öğretmen adayından bir anket yardımıyla elde edilmiştir. Nitel veriler ise yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ile 11 katılımcıdan toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar öğretmen adaylarının sesletim becerisi ile ilgili öz-algılarının ve sesletimin öğretimine ilişkin tutumlarının olumlu olduğunu göstermektedir. Öğretmen adaylarının parçasal ve parça-üstü özellikler hakkındaki farkındalıkları bazı açılardan farklılık göstermektedir ve parça-üstü özelliklerin zorluğu hakkındaki görüşleri ise net değildir. Buna karşın, katılımcılar parçasal özellikleri sesletim becerisinin kolay bir ögesi olarak görmektedirler.

1. Introduction

Being a key to the establishment of successful interaction, it is essential that foreign language teachers devote significant importance to teaching pronunciation of the second language to their students (Hismanoglu, 2011). Pronunciation is an important element of language. Even though the significance of its place in language teaching has been fluctuated and neglected at times, according to Demirezen (2005) the correctness and beauty of pronunciation are two indispensable ingredients of the teacher training field. Teachers of a foreign language with poor pronunciation give irreversible harm not only to themselves but to the students as well (Demirezen, 2005). Lacking correspondence between sounds and letters, pronunciation of the English language can be considered as one of the most difficult areas during the acquisition process. Thus at the segmental level, the acquired errors may result in the misunderstanding of words or parts of words in sentences due to the wrong articulation, whereas at the suprasegmental level, intonation errors may result in serious pragmatic misunderstandings, consequently leading to a communication breakdown (Cenoz & Lecumberri, 1999). Although teachers and learners have been concerned with L2 pronunciation for centuries, unfortunately, there is very little research presenting the ELT learner perspective on pronunciation in a mixed method research. The results of qualitative and quantitative investigations gained from this research may fill this gap by finding out the future English language teachers' self-perceptions toward pronunciation skill, attitudes toward its instruction and their awareness of segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation skill.

1.2. Background to the Study

Pronunciation has received the stamp of an "often neglected" element in second language teaching as well as research. It is widely accepted that fluctuations and shifts in teaching methods are the main reasons for such an outcome (Atli & Bergil, 2012). When reviewing the methods in English Language Teaching (ELT) chronologically, it is of no secret that with the arrival of each new method, the attention given to pronunciation was either increasing within the limitations of the approach or decreasing with very little or no attention paid to it (Dinçay, 2010). The 'Grammar-Translation' and 'Reading-based Approach' paid little or no attention to pronunciation, whereas with the arrival of the 'Direct Method,' correct pronunciation was emphasized. Behaviorist drilling that found body in the 'Audio-Lingual Method' in which contrastive analysis guided pronunciation instruction also became disfavored in the late 1970s with the development of communicative methods (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2014). Among all traditional teaching methods 'Communicative Language Teaching' has put the role of pronunciation instruction at its most passive role, by prioritizing the focus on meaning over form and assuming that exposure to the language will pave the way for pronunciation (Breitkreutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2001; Thomson & Derwing, 2014).

Pronunciation is an important constituent of any L2 curriculum, and its instruction should "draw learners' conscious attention to linguistic elements in the input during lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication; without special attention, learners are likely to ignore these elements" (Mompean, 2015, p. 294). Hence, it is important to know researchers' views and investigations towards explicit phonetic instruction, together with their consideration of the age factor. Some hold the floor for stating that there is no set system of what to teach, how to teach and when to teach. For example, "a common problem is deciding whether to focus on segmentals or suprasegmentals, and to what extent" (Darcy, Ewert & Linster, 2012, p. 93). Darcy et al. (2012) perceive pronunciation as a difficult aspect to teach, stating that "teachers are often left without clear guidelines and are confronted with contradictory purposes and practices for pronunciation instruction" (p.93). Derwing and Munro (2005) state that explicit phonological form contributes to students' realizations of the

difference between their own utterances and native ones. Conscious phonological awareness in terms of segmental and suprasegmental levels can possibly develop through explicit instruction (Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007). However, Burges and Spencer (2000, p. 207) indicated that “if pronunciation is approached through an integrated pedagogy, phonological features may arise apparently spontaneously and arbitrarily.....”

In their research Gordon and Darcy (2012) found that suprasegmentals show an effect two times stronger on developing the pronunciation skill than segmentals alone. In his study, Yates (2003) presents similar results, stating that segmental instruction underscored suprasegmental instruction twice. Another significant contribution on the issue was made by Saito (2012), who claims that instruction provided on either features generally paves the way to gains.

There are also some varying views on the acquisition age of pronunciation. Scovel (1988) predicted that “learners who start learning a second language later than, say, age 12, will never be able “to pass themselves off as native speakers” and will “end up easily identified as nonnative speakers of that language” (as cited in Bongaerts, Summeren, Planken & Schils, 1997, p. 448). Other researchers supporting the role of age with reference to critical period are Flege, Yeni-Komshian and Liu (1999), who believe that age has a strong role in pronunciation. However, a study conducted with adult learners aged 27, 44, 49 etc. suggests that “it is not impossible to achieve an authentic, native like pronunciation of a second language after a specified biological period of time (Bongaerts, Summeren, Planken & Schils, 1997, p. 447).

With the start of empirical researches and the design of interventions for the sake of seeking improvement of L2 pronunciation, a lot of discussions examined the effectiveness of instruction on segmental features vs. suprasegmental features (Lee, Jang & Plonsky, 2014; Saito, 2011). The results suggested outcomes in terms of easiness and effectiveness. Some researchers conveyed that pronunciation instruction within segmental borders may be easier for teachers to teach as well as for learners to learn (e.g. Levis 2005; Saito, 2014). Others claim that instructing suprasegmental features of pronunciation is more effective (Hahn, 2004). Missaglia (1999) also supports this by stating that suprasegmental-centered instruction helps students to do better in comparison to those who received segmental-centered instruction.

Recently, when discussing the goals of pronunciation instruction, researches often “revolve around the concepts of intelligibility and comprehensibility” (Atli & Bergil, 2012 p. 3666). Intelligibility is the degree to which a listener understands a speaker; comprehensibility is a judgment of how easy or difficult an individual’s pronunciation is to understand, and accentedness is a judgment of how much one’s speech differs phonologically from the local variety (Derwing, 2010).

Considering that the teaching and learning process in language teaching is happening within a cycle, a perfect place and time to analyze both students’ and future teachers’ perceptions towards pronunciation are ELT departments. As Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (2010) state:

Teachers of English as a foreign language who are not native speakers of English and who expect to serve as the major model and source of input in English for students’ fall within the group of learners who need pronunciation instruction whereby they can achieve a high level of intelligibility and comprehensibility (p.8).

Though pronunciation instruction is included in ELT teacher training curriculum in Turkey during the freshmen year as a compulsory three-hour credit course, it is the only formal explicit pronunciation instruction given to prospective English language teachers throughout the bachelor's degree. Hence, it is important to investigate ELT TTs' awareness of the themes introduced within the course, find out the students' attitudes towards the instruction of pronunciation skill, and if the undergraduate year has an effect on learners' self-perceptions of pronunciation.

2. Method

This study was conducted at a large state university in Turkey with prospective English language teachers. The study was implemented with freshman and senior year students with a purpose to see if the grade level has an effect on students' opinions of the pronunciation skill. A mixed-method research design was implemented in the study, involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Thus the purpose behind this combination is to achieve an in-depth understanding of the issue by looking at it from different perspectives (Dörnyei, 2011). There was a comprehensive analysis of the data, collected through the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews held by the researchers to answer the questions below:

1. What are teacher trainees' self-perceptions toward the pronunciation skill?
2. What are teacher trainees' attitudes toward the instruction of pronunciation skill?
3. Is there a relationship between TTs' grade levels and their self-perceptions of the pronunciation skill?
4. Is there a relationship between TTs' grade levels and their attitudes toward the instruction of pronunciation skill?
5. Are teacher trainees aware of the difficulty and importance of English segmentals and suprasegmentals?
6. Is there a relationship between TTs' attitudes towards the instruction of pronunciation skill and awareness of the importance of segmentals?

2.1. Participants

Participants in the study consisted of 111 undergraduate students of English Language Teaching Department who were selected via non-random convenience sampling. This sampling method was employed based on the purpose to meet such practical criteria as ease of access, geographical closeness, or participant willingness (Dörnyei, 2011). Fifty-six of the participants were freshmen and 55 were senior TTs, as to the gender, there were 72 females and 39 males. Among all, 103 of the TTs were native speakers of Turkish whereas 8 were of other nationalities.

Eleven participants out of 111 were chosen as interviewees. Six of the TTs were freshmen and five were senior students. Interviewees were chosen on voluntary basis, while taking homogeneity of grade levels and gender into consideration.

2.2. Instrumentation

The questionnaire used for the quantitative part of the research consisted of three sections. The first part asked for demographic information from the participants, the second part was adopted to explore TTs' self-perceptions towards the pronunciation skill and attitudes towards its instruction. The third part was concerned with TTs' awareness of difficulty and importance of the features of pronunciation skill. Demographic information on participants included learners' gender, grade level and native language.

The second section of the instrument was a questionnaire which consisted of 20 five-point Likert Scale items, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5), which was adopted from Atli & Bergel (2012) and adjusted for the purposes of this study. Within itself, the second section of the questionnaire included two sub-sections: the first contained statements about the participants’ self-perceptions of pronunciation skill, and the second one was looking for participants’ attitudes towards the instruction of pronunciation skill.

The third section of the instrument used in the study was taken from Cenoz & Lecumberri (1999) and included 8 questions about participants’ awareness of the importance and difficulty of the features of the pronunciation skill. These features were categorized as vowels and consonants for segmentals and stress and intonation for suprasegmentals. The participants were asked to mark the importance and the level of difficulty on a scale of 1 to 5.

Content and face validity of the instrument were provided by consulting the opinions of three experts in the ELT department. Next, the questionnaire was revised according to the experts’ opinions. The revised questionnaire was piloted with 20 TTs, and both sub-sections were found reliable with 0,77 alpha value for self-perceptions and 0,73 alpha value for TTs’ attitudes. Finally, the instrument was used with 111 participants, and the measurement was found reliable with 0,75 and 0,73 for consecutive sub-sections.

2.3. Data Collection Procedures

The quantitative data were gathered with the help of a teacher attending classes in both grade levels during the fall semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. Participants were asked to answer the questions in the instrument by ticking the answer most suitable to them. Interviews were conducted one by one by the researchers during times available for the participants. Each interview lasted 15-25 minutes.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis has taken two different steps. Firstly, descriptive statistics were used via SPSS 23 to analyze quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire. Skewness and Kurtosis values were used to identify the data distribution. The data was found to be normally distributed, being within the interval of + 1,5 and -1,5 (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2013). Thus parametric tests were conducted to carry out the analysis. An independent-samples t-test was computed to identify possible differences between freshmen’s and seniors’ attitudes towards the instruction of pronunciation skill. The same test was used to see the possible differences between the freshmen’s and seniors’ awareness of importance and difficulty of features of pronunciation skill. The Pearson product-moment correlation test was used to identify any relation between TTs’ attitudes and awareness of the importance of the features of pronunciation skill. As a second step, the interviews were content analyzed through identification of recurring themes in the data and thus placing them into groups and subgroups.

3. Results

The first research question (RQ 1) of the study aimed to find out TTs’ self-perceptions toward the pronunciation skill. According to the findings (Table 1), most of the participants believe that pronunciation is an important skill ($M=4,72$), and that it is essential for their future career ($M=4,46$). They claimed that they are aware of different sounds in English ($M=3,92$), pay attention to sounds when speaking ($M=4,19$) and do their best to improve their pronunciation ($M=3,95$). Moreover, as the results suggest TTs were dubious as to what extent they exercise pronunciation outside the instructional and educational context ($M=3,55$), and yet, they state

that they are able to produce sounds of English ($M=3,70$). The TTs are not sure whether their pronunciation of English is good ($M=3,36$), nor are they content with their pronunciation ($M=3,30$). However, the TTs indicated that they were not aware of the sounds, before taking pronunciation instruction during freshman year ($M=2,49$). Similarly, they claimed that they were not able to produce these sounds correctly, before their freshman year in the ELT department ($M=2,40$).

The interview results of participants supported the aftermath of the questionnaire. The first interview question addressed participants' self-evaluations of their pronunciation skill. Out of 11, 7 of the TTs reported that their pronunciation is better than the others, even though it is not native like, another 2 felt confident enough to say they are happy with it, and lastly 2 described their pronunciation as "not good enough".

Table 1

Teacher trainees' self-perceptions of the pronunciation skill

Items	N	M	SD
1. Pronunciation is an important skill.	111	4,72	0,61
20. Pronunciation is important for my future career.	111	4,46	0,74
13. When I speak, I pay attention to the sounds of English.	111	4,19	0,74
17. I do my best to improve my pronunciation.	111	3,95	0,86
6. I am aware of different sounds of English.	111	3,92	0,84
4. I can make different sounds of English.	111	3,7	0,89
15. I do pronunciation exercises outside the class.	111	3,55	1,12
10. My pronunciation of English is good.	111	3,36	0,86
19. I am happy with my pronunciation of English.	111	3,31	0,95
12. Before I started my first grade at university, I was aware of all sounds of English.	111	2,49	1,70
9. Before I started my first grade at university, I was able to produce all sounds of English correctly.	111	2,4	0,98

As to the opinions of participants regarding their attitudes toward the pronunciation instruction (RQ 2) (Table 2), it can be said that they perceive learning pronunciation as an important issue ($M=4,58$) and think that learning it contributes to developing confidence in speaking ($M=4,48$). Moreover, TTs strongly agree that instruction of pronunciation skill should be a part of English lessons in high school ($M=4,40$), with the help of which pronunciation skill can be significantly improved ($M=4,22$). TTs agreed that they enjoy having explicit pronunciation instruction ($M=4,17$), and they integrate what they have acquired through this instruction into their speech ($M=4,20$). TTs also agreed that they enjoy repetition exercises ($M=3,97$), and value speaking freely over accurate pronunciation ($M=3,72$). Although the participants perceive learning pronunciation as important, they are dubious about how easy it is to learn it ($M=3,23$).

The second interview question aimed to find out what TTs think about the instruction of pronunciation skill. All of the students said pronunciation instruction is important and that it contributes a lot to their speaking; six out of 11 added that it helped them to improve some common pronunciation mistakes. Similar results were also reflected in the descriptive analysis of questionnaire reporting that instruction is highly contributive to improvement ($M=4,22$) and confidence in speaking ($M=4,58$).

Table 2
Teacher trainees' attitudes towards pronunciation instruction

Expressions	N	M	SD
18. I think learning pronunciation is important.	111	4,58	.65
3. Learning pronunciation can help me become more confident in speaking English.	111	4,48	.69
14. I think pronunciation instruction should be a part of English lessons in high school.	111	4,41	.76
8. I think pronunciation instruction can help me improve my pronunciation significantly.	111	4,22	.74
16. When I speak English, I use what I learned about pronunciation.	111	4,20	.71
5. I like learning (about) pronunciation in class.	111	4,17	.85
11. I like doing repetition exercises while learning pronunciation in class.	111	3,97	.94
7. Speaking freely is more important than accurate pronunciation.	111	3,72	1,16
2. I think learning pronunciation is easy.	111	3,23	.93

An independent samples t-test was conducted to see the difference (if any) between TTs' grade levels and their self-perceptions towards the pronunciation skill (RQ 3). The values indicate that there is a significant difference between self-perceptions of freshmen ($M=3,74$; $SD=0,46$) and seniors ($M=3,53$; $SD=0,47$, $p=0,020$). However, no such difference is seen between freshmen ($M=4,13$; $SD=0,48$) and senior TTs ($M=4,07$; $SD=0,48$, $p=0,631$) in their attitudes towards the instruction of pronunciation skill (RQ 4). Similarly, interviews conducted with participants of both grades showed results that are in agreement with quantitative data. As two of the TTs stated:

Yes, I think pronunciation is an important skill, and it must be taught at schools and universities" (I3).

We learned important skills from that class; I think it should not be restricted to only freshmen year" (I8).

Out of nine participants who perceived their own pronunciation as good based on the first interview question, 6 were freshmen, the other 3 were seniors. Thus these results support the t-test, which indicated a significant difference between self-perception of pronunciation skill between freshmen and senior TTs.

In order to answer the fifth research question, an independent samples t-test was administered to find out if there was a significant difference in freshmen and senior TTs' awareness of the *importance* and *difficulty* of segmentals and suprasegmentals (Table 3). The results suggest that there was no significant differences regarding the TTs' perceptions of the *importance* of segmentals and suprasegmentals. Similarly, no significant distinction was found between participants' awareness regarding the *difficulty* of segmentals and suprasegmentals. However, even though there is no significant difference between grades, both freshman (segmentals $M=3,83$; suprasegmentals $M=3,97$) and senior TTs (segmentals $M=3,83$; suprasegmentals $M=4,20$) gave more *importance* to suprasegmental features, than segmental features. Although, the analysis have shown that freshmen ($M=3,08$) and seniors ($M=3,35$) seem to be dubious about the *difficulty* of suprasegmental features, they consider segmentals highly easy to learn (reverse item* freshmen $M=2,68$; senior $M=2,95$).

The third question of the interview aimed to find out whether the TTs consider the knowledge of consonant and vowel sounds important in developing the pronunciation skill. Nine out of 11 students agreed, yet two stated that “it is not crucial”. The fourth interview question addressed the difficulty of learning segmentals. The majority of students claimed that “it is not difficult.” As to the importance of stress and intonation, four of them suggested that “just like consonants and vowels, they are also important,” six of the participants stated stress and intonation are of more importance than consonant and vowels. One of the students was not sure about its importance. Finally, the last question of the interview asked if TTs think learning intonation and stress is difficult. Two of the participants stated that it really is, as its lack may cause serious misunderstandings. Others seemed not to be certain about its difficulty. This information obtained from interview supports the outcomes of the t-test.

Table 3

TTs' awareness regarding the importance and difficulty of the features of pronunciation

	M		t	d	P
	Freshmen (n=56)	Senior (n=55)			
Importance					
Segmentals	3.84	3.83	0,72	109	Ns
Suprasegmentals	3.97	4.2	-1,394	109	Ns
Difficulty					
Segmentals	2.68	2.95	-1,624	109	Ns
Suprasegmentals	3.08	3.35	-1,407	109	Ns

In order to assess the relationship between TTs' awareness of the importance of segmentals and their self-perceptions of the pronunciation skill (RQ 6), the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was computed. Results (Table 4) show that there was a significant and positive correlation between participants' self-perceptions of the pronunciation skill and their awareness of segmental importance ($r=.194$, $n=111$, $p=.041$). The outcome of the analysis indicates that the more positive self-perceptions TTs have of their pronunciation skill, the more important segmentals are for them.

Table 4

Correlation between TTs' self-perceptions of pronunciation skill and their awareness of the importance of segmentals

		Segmentals' Importance	Self-perceptions
Segmentals' Importance	Pearson Correlation	1	.194*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	111	111
Self-perceptions	Pearson Correlation	.194*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	N	111	111

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4. Discussion

The purpose of the questionnaire conducted in the study was to find out participants' self-perceptions of the pronunciation skill and attitudes towards its instruction. The results

obtained support the previous research conducted in this area (Saito 2011, Lee, Jang & Plosky, 2014; Thomson & Derwing, 2014). In her qualitative study, Tergujeff (2013) reports that students find pronunciation to be an important skill and think their pronunciation skill had developed because of the explicit pronunciation instruction and the activities held in the classroom. Also, in a study by Cenoz & Lecumberri, (1999), findings indicate that pronunciation is an important skill for learners. Similarly in the current study, the results have also shown participants' positive attitudes toward the pronunciation skill, which indicate that they value the skill and perceive its instruction as important and helpful.

As the descriptive results have revealed, TTs of a state university in a large city of Turkey had moderately positive self-perceptions of the pronunciation skill. They reported that their awareness of different sounds and ability to produce them are at a moderate level. They are also not sure whether they have good pronunciation. Responses given to items 2 and 3 indicate that participants gained awareness of the sounds of English in their freshmen year for the very first time. In line with other responses given, it could be concluded that through pronunciation instruction given in the first year of their education, the importance of it was recognized. Similar outcomes were found in Atli & Bergil's (2012) study. However, in the present study, participants' dissatisfaction with their own pronunciation skill might be due to the lack of sufficient practice. As one of the interviewee states:

....such an important class should not be restricted with freshman year only. We don't get chance to practice enough. (I 5)

For the TTs' attitudes towards pronunciation instruction, it can be said that participants have developed positive attitudes towards studying pronunciation through explicit instruction. As they were acquainted with such information for the first time, it must have raised their interest and consequently developed their awareness. The participants think that learning pronunciation contributes to their speaking confidence. This result is parallel with Arslan's (2013) review that introducing such an important, but neglected issue gives very positive outcomes, thus learners "appreciate the contribution of such education to their speaking skills" (p.36). As one of the TTs stated during the interview:

It's important that, when someone speaks a language he or she should be comprehensible, and these lessons are so for this purpose. (I 2)

When TTs' grade levels and their self-perception of the skill and attitude towards its instruction were examined, it was found that freshmen have significantly higher self-perceptions of the skill than seniors. This diversity could be due to freshmen's newly acquired knowledge of pronunciation, which seems to decrease in seniors after 3 years. The fact that no difference was found between TTs' attitudes and their grade levels also supports the fact that seniors too have positive attitudes towards pronunciation skill; however, passing years coupled with a lack of further instruction in this field might have decreased their self-perceptions. Having the same teacher instructing the lesson with the same materials is also a logical explanation to the lack of difference in attitudes towards the instruction between participants in different grade levels.

Being divided into segmental and suprasegmental features, and when analyzed in terms of their components, pronunciation instruction in the pedagogic field seems to have lost its way while trying to determine what to teach within the borders of the pronunciation skill. As mentioned in the literature review of the study, Darcy et al. (2012) states that there is not an

“agreed upon system” of deciding what pronunciation features to target, and when and how to teach them. While each of them provides learners with important knowledge that contributes to success in pronunciation skill, the scarcity of attention paid to either one may lead to inefficacy in pronunciation skill. This effect takes on a more serious consequence when considering that students facing this incompetency today might transfer it to their students when they become English language teachers. However, as Saito (2012) found in his research, providing the instruction on either of the features, segmental or suprasegmentals, commonly leads to gains. Together with these nuances, self-perceptions of TTs’ pronunciation skill and their attitudes towards its instruction are significant factors affecting TTs’ awareness of considering segmentals as important for developing the pronunciation skill.

The analysis of the relationship between awareness of pronunciation features and grades, showed no difference among groups for awareness of importance and difficulty of segmentals and suprasegmentals. Nevertheless, means received from the analysis indicate that both grade levels find suprasegmentals more important than segmentals. This finding is in alignment with other studies (Hahn, 2004; Lee, Jang & Plonsky, 2014; Levis 2005; Missaglia, 1999; Saito, 2011; Saito, 2014). As they state that all English segmentals can be clearly explained within three main phonetic characteristics such as articulator organs, place of articulation and manner of articulation, which “... is easier for teachers to teach and learners to learn” (Lee, Young & Plonsky, 2015, p.348). Although both groups have the same opinions on segmentals being easy, they seem hesitant to decide whether suprasegmentals are difficult. The reason for it might be the fact that pronunciation instruction is limited to the segmental level, since instructors might think that it has an impact on accentedness (Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012), thus straying from considering English as a lingua franca (Coşkun, 2011). One possible explanation is that they were briefly introduced to suprasegmentals during instruction, thus participants might think it is more complicated. The results of the interview also support either of the reasons. Two of the students reported the following in the interview:

Knowing consonant and vowel sounds is not a must for a good pronunciation. Some of them are hard to learn, like those that don’t exist in Turkish. (I 1)

I don’t think knowing consonants and vowels are very important, it is more about hearing and practicing them. I don’t think it is difficult to learn them. (I 10)

Knowing correct stress and intonation, of course is very important. I can say the most important thing in pronunciation. Learning them is very hard, why you put stress or intonation in that word is usually out of blue. I mean, even I can’t understand why we do and why we don’t do that. Frankly, even I am usually missing stresses in words. (I 5)

Stress and intonation, yeah these are really important. When you want to explain something, even if you forget the word your stress and intonation can help the interpretation of meaning. No, I don’t think it’s difficult, unless you try to memorize it. (I 9)

Thus the findings from the t-test analysis and interviews are similar to the findings of Tezel’s (2016) study, indicating that prospective teachers have serious problems regarding suprasegmentals, and that instruction on them must be given.

Lastly, TTs' self-perceptions of pronunciation skill were correlated with their awareness of segmental importance. Results indicated that the more positive the TTs' self-perceptions of pronunciation skill, the more important segmentals are for them. The 5th and 4th statements in the third part of the questionnaire directly represent this correlation. With high means, these statements suggest that students have high self-perceptions of pronunciation skill, and they are aware of and are able to produce different sounds. In addition, with a high mean, they consider pronunciation instruction important, thus having these factors all together result in their awareness that segmentals are important.

5. Conclusions

The overall results of the study indicate that TTs have high self-perceptions of the pronunciation skill and moderately positive attitudes toward its instruction. However, having taken the pronunciation course 3 years ago, senior participants' self-perceptions are lower than freshmen's. Nevertheless, both grade levels have positive attitudes towards the instruction of the skill. Moreover, seniors as well as freshman are aware of the fact that segmentals are important, indeed not difficult. For suprasegmentals, both of the groups think they are important, yet neither of them seems to be sure about its difficulty. Lastly, a significant correlation is found between participants' attitude toward the pronunciation skill and awareness of the segmental importance.

By shedding light on the importance of pronunciation skill, its instruction and content in terms of its features, this study contributes to literature by pointing at TTs' limited suprasegmental knowledge and their need for it. As suprasegmental knowledge contributes to the development of the pronunciation skill more than the segmentals (Darcy, 2012), necessary measures must be taken by teacher training institutions to cater to the needs of the TTs. Moreover, the results of both quantitative and qualitative data suggest explicit pronunciation instruction could start at high school level and be offered within the content of various courses such as "advanced speaking," "public speech" or other elective courses throughout teacher training. Also, it must be taken into consideration that TTs and learners of English can develop positive attitudes towards learning suprasegmentals if they are taught explicitly just as they are with segmentals. Thus this study contributes not only to TTs' better development of the pronunciation skill but to the improvement of teaching English as a second or foreign language since in its roots resides in the success of interaction.

The outcome of the study has implications for teacher trainers when designing the pronunciation skill syllabus. Increased awareness and/or further extended instruction of pronunciation education of suprasegmental features might be helpful for participants to better and further develop the skill. Moreover, higher importance can be given to practicing the skill by properly arranging and spreading its instruction throughout undergraduate education.

The data for the study is collected from a single university, thus generalizing the findings is rather difficult. Hence, further studies should be conducted with more universities for the purpose of comparing similarities and differences. Additionally, further research with the instructors could suggest a deeper understanding of content and instruction details.

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APPENDIX**PART I**

Please tick the best answer for you.

1. Gender: Female Male
2. Year: Freshman Senior
3. What is your native language?
 Turkish Other (please specify): _____
4. Do you speak foreign languages (**besides English**)?
 Yes (please specify): _____ No

PART II

In this section there are 20 statements about pronunciation skill. Please read each statemnt carefully and choose only one option.

Item No:	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Pronunciation is an important skill.					
2	I think learning pronunciation is easy.					
3	Learning (about) pronunciation can help me become more confident in speaking English.					
4	I can make different sounds of English.					
5	I like learning about pronunciation in class.					
6	I am aware of different sounds of English.					
7	Speaking freely is more important than accurate pronunciation.					
8	I think pronunciation instruction can help me improve my pronunciation significantly.					
9	Before I started my 1st grade at university, I was able to produce all sounds of English correctly.					
10	My pronunciation of English is good.					
11	I like doing repetition exercises while learning pronunciation in class.					
12	Before I started my 1st grade at university, I was aware of all sounds of English.					
13	When I speak, I pay attention to the sounds of English.					
14	I think pronunciation instruction should be a part of English lessons in High School.					
15	I do pronunciation exercises outside the class.					
16	When I speak English, I use what I learned about pronunciation.					
17	I do my best to improve my pronunciaiton.					

18	I think learning pronunciation is important.					
19	I am happy with my pronunciation of English.					
20	Pronunciation is important for my future career.					

Part III

- 1. Rate the following areas of pronunciation according to their importance for you. Circle only one number for each area. (1=not important; 5=very important)**

Vowels	1	2	3	4	5
Consonants	1	2	3	4	5
Stress	1	2	3	4	5
Intonation	1	2	3	4	5

- 2. Rate the following areas of pronunciation according to their difficulty for you. Circle only one number for each area. (1=very easy; 5=very difficult)**

Vowels	1	2	3	4	5
Consonants	1	2	3	4	5
Stress	1	2	3	4	5
Intonation	1	2	3	4	5