

Nativeness and Intelligibility: Investigating Kurdish EFL Teachers' Orientations

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate Kurdish EFL teachers' orientations toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in their pronunciation and how they view their own accent. Data will be gathered from questionnaire respondents from English Department/College of Basic Education at Salahaddin University. In addition, the research tries to draw the distinction in orientations between teachers who have studied MA abroad and those who have been awarded their MA/PhD by universities in Kurdistan Region (KR)- Iraq. This would show the potential influence of being exposed to the foreign language and culture on teachers' orientations toward nativeness and intelligibility principles. The data were analysed statistically by using SPSS. The main conclusions of the study were that the majority of Kurdish EFL teachers were in favour of nativeness principle in their pronunciation. Moreover, a higher rate of the teachers who studied abroad were nativeness oriented in their pronunciation as compared to the teachers who have pursued their higher study in KR- Iraq.

Key Words: Nativeness, Intelligibility, Accent, Identity

Introduction

It is apparent that accent mirrors speakers' identity. If the goal is to communicate in English, then it seems rather senseless to focus on native like accent; while, using English for academic purposes needs to meet some kind of standard. Many EFL teachers, including Kurdish teachers, endeavour to sound as native like as possible to better teach native English accent.

Identity construction makes up an integral part of human beings' existence. It has been researched thoroughly and through different fields due to its significance in studying social sciences, which includes learning a foreign language. Edwards (1999) asserts that identity and

accent (the way a person speaks) are closely interrelated, and a speaker's accent is deemed a significant part of a speaker's social identity.

Language learning does not only imply learning a formal set of grammatical or phonological rules, but it also involves learning the foreign culture as well. This would result in continuous negotiation about identity. As a result, academic interest in identity and its relationship to language use has witnessed an apparent concern on the part of researchers (Miller, 2004).

When talking about the issue of native accent, the French writer François de La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680) is considered the most authoritative source to quote from: "The accent of our native country dwells in the heart and mind as well as on the tongue" (cited from Pullen, 2011). This quotation implies that speaking a mother language is not a mere physical ability; instead, it is an aptitude that is interrelated with speakers' existence and identity. Doubtlessly, the native accent of one's mother tongue is deeply rooted in his/her being. Hence, aspects of the first language's phonological system more often trespass on the way the second language is pronounced. In other words, one's native accent is retained and reflected in the production of another language.

This study is concerned with matters of native-like and non-native accent. According to Becker (1995) an accent is "the part of a person's language that serves to identify the speaker's regional origin or national/ethnic identity" (p. 37). Richard and Schmitt (2010) put forward a similar definition and describe accent as "a particular way of speaking which tells the listener something about the speaker's background", e.g. their region/ country and social class.

Owing to the differences between the phonological systems of a speaker's native language and a foreign language, his/her foreign accent can be easily distinguished (Flege, Bohn, and Jang 1997). In other words, foreign language accents result when pronunciation rules from the speaker's first language trespass onto the second language, which causes second language speakers to utilise the intonation and phonemic inventory from their first language and put it into practice in the second language.

As for EFL teachers, having a native accent for them is a negotiable matter in the literature. Park (2013) maintains that having native-like accent is not the only necessary proficiency awaited from EFL teachers to indicate their skilfulness, and cites "native-like proficiency and competency in English language teaching is merely one part of the qualities that both native and non-native teachers should possess as English language teachers". This makes the adequate linguistic and pedagogic preparation a necessary prerequisite for English teaching.

Park (2013) argues that regarding the native speaker of English as superior, and the non-native speaker of English as an inferior teacher is "too simplistic" to exactly explain the requirements and experiences of EFL teachers. Native EFL teachers might speak with an excellent native accent, have the same first language and culture, and are familiar with their local society and environment; yet, this is not all that is required from EFL teachers.

This study seeks to advance the cause of Kurdish EFL teachers' orientations toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in their pronunciation in the Kurdish context. In this respect, the study addressed the following research questions:

- What is Kurdish EFL teachers' orientation toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in their pronunciation?
- Is there any difference between the teachers who have been awarded their certificates from the universities of Kurdistan Region –Iraq and those who have studied abroad concerning their orientation toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in pronunciation?

2. Literature review

2.1 Nativeness or intelligible pronunciation

The ultimate goal of mastering native language pronunciation is to understand and to be understood by native speakers. In the last few years, a thorough discussion has been held to discover whether the goal of pronunciation learning is to acquire native-like speaking or to concentrate on the intelligibility of the student. Most EFL English teachers view intelligibility as the ultimate goal of learning pronunciation. They look on native-like pronunciation as dispensable. Instead, intelligibility seems to be a predominant paradigm of communicative competence. On the contrary, some other EFL teachers pay more attention to native-like pronunciation and assume that they should sound just like native speakers. So, they intend to acquire native-like accent during learning English pronunciation. According to Levis (2007), nativeness and intelligibility are the two main goals of pronunciation learning.

Stern (1983) defines nativeness as the ability to use the target language with certainty, consistency, and automaticity. Keeley (2016, p.60) describes native-like pronunciation as “approximating that of a native speaker in oral communication”. In the middle of the twentieth century, the nativeness was the primary goal of pronunciation learning, but “its influence was rapidly diminished by research showing that nativeness in pronunciation appeared to be biologically conditioned to occur before adulthood” (Levis, 2005, p. 370).

The notion of ‘intelligibility’ is considered as an appropriate goal for learning L2 pronunciation and it is recognized as one of the most important aspect of all communication. If there is no intelligibility, communication will fail. Jenkins (2000) defines intelligible pronunciation as the extent of phonological features of language that makes the message identifiable by a listener. According to Levis (2005) the intelligibility principle implies that different features have different effects on understanding. For this reason, pronunciation learning instruction should

focus on those features that are helpful to acquire real understanding, by contrast, it should disregard those that are unhelpful.

Cook (2012, p. 2) claims that “the primary target for much language learning may be using the L2 effectively to other L2 users, and communicating with native speakers is a secondary target”. He believes that the purpose of learning pronunciation should be geared toward making change from the more realistic goals of developing functional intelligibility development of speech monitoring strategies. From Cook’s words, it can be concluded that intelligibility and comprehensiveness are the core of a successful communication and not nativeness. In other words, he seems to consider good pronunciation as being intelligible. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010, p.29) have similar ideas. They considered intelligibility as a realistic goal of pronunciation learning. They define intelligibility as “speaking in a way that most listeners, both native and non-native speakers, can understand without too much effort or confusion”. Munro and Derwing (1995, p.292) define intelligibility as ‘the extent to which the speaker’s intended utterance is actually understood by a listener’. Derwing (2010) presents another definition to the term ‘intelligibility’ and states that “Intelligibility is the degree to which a listener understands a speaker” (p.29). From the above definition we conclude that foreign language pronunciation teachers’ focus should be laid upon improving their pronunciation intelligibility and comprehensibility because communication is more important than native-like speech.

2.2 The relationship between identity and language learning

Identity issues in learning a foreign language are increasingly gaining recognition. This can be attributed to the fact that most people tend to modify their communication according to situational and personal variables.

In this respect, Howard Giles developed a Communication accommodation theory (CAT), which is considered a theory of communication. This theory has to do with two main concerns: how people make behavioural changes so as to accustom their communication to the listener, and the degree to which people recognise their partner as properly accustomed to their language. In general, this theory covers the interrelationship between language, context, and identity. Both the intergroup and interpersonal factors that lead to accommodation are dealt with, in addition to the ways that macro and micro-context concerns influence communication behaviours. Hence, this theory emphasises the patterns of convergence and divergence of communication behaviours, encompassing people’s goals for “social approval, communication efficiency, and identity”. In this sense, convergence includes the strategies through which individuals adapt to each other’s communicative behaviours to reduce these social differences. Meantime, divergence bears on the instances in which individuals brings to the fore the verbal and non-verbal differences between themselves and their partners. Hence, this theory explains the motivations that underlie specific shifts in speakers’ speech styles during social interactions (Gallois, Ogay, and Giles, 2005).

Similarly, Jenkins (2000) accentuates the importance of CAT in justifying learners' accent by proposing two main orientations: 'convergence' where speech is adjusted towards the speech of their interlocutors, or 'divergence' moving away from the speech of their interlocutors. Conforming to the first principle 'convergence', learners tend to make their accent similar to that of the target language in order not to be considered as an outsider due to their foreign accent. Whereas, the second principle 'divergence' requires learners show loyalty to their native language and digress their accent from the interlocutors' one in order to prove their patriotism to their speech community and express sense of belongingness. They believe that being a part of the target language community does not necessarily mean disregarding their in-group identity.

By the same token, Sifakis (2004) proposes two main approaches in communication and language learning: cultural-bound approach and norm-bound approach. The former perspective calls attention to the process of cross-cultural comprehensibility between learners as a communicative goal in itself and considers it prior to notions of accuracy. The latter perspective accentuates accuracy of language and considers it of great importance for proper communication.

It becomes clear that language and identity are interrelated and the way a person speaks is a prominent social power in representing his/her identity.

2.3 Variables influencing pronunciation Learning

Based on reviewing previous research and theories about factors influencing pronunciation, pronunciation mastery for almost all ESL/ EFL learners is influenced by a variety of factors. These common factors include age and amount of exposure, native language, learners' attitude and language ego, and motivation. (Rivers, 1968; Krashen, 1982; Kenworthy, 1987; Nation and Newton, 2009; Celce-Murcia and UCLA, 2013).

Kenworthy (1987) considers students' age one of the prominent factors affecting pronunciation acquisition. She claims that younger students, especially 1-12 years of age, acquire foreign language pronunciation better in comparison to older students and they have more chance of developing native-like pronunciation.

Similarly, Nation and Newton (2009) believe,

“If the learner began to speak in the second language before the age of six there will be little or no accentuated, and if they began to speak between the age of seven and eleven, the learner is likely to have a slight accent. However, if the learner began to speak after the age of 12, the learners almost always retain an accent.” (p. 78).

Depending on the above ideas, it seems that different aged people have different levels of developing pronunciation abilities.

Another factor that affects learners' pronunciation development is 'exposure'. According to Krashen (1982), learners acquire a foreign language pronunciation mainly from input. He

emphasizes that the ESL/EFL learners will have good native-like pronunciation if they receive a large amount of comprehensible input before speaking. In other words, the more opportunities to listen to and to use English a student has the better their pronunciation normally is.

Pronunciation is also affected by the learners' native language. Rivers (1968) pointed that learner's first language is a significant factor which determines the accuracy of learners' accent and the similarities between a learner's first language and the target language have a negative influence on developing the pronunciation of the target language. More clearly, learners will master the pronunciation of the sound segments that exist in the mother tongue easier than those which have no counterpart simply because the sounds they produce seem odd and they are produced in unexpected ways.

Another probable factor that causes pronunciation deficiency is due to learners' attitudes and language ego. According to Nation and Newton (2009) a learner's attitude plays a crucial role in developing target language pronunciation. As it is clear, positive attitudes to the target language or target culture, enables the learner to develop his/her pronunciation easily and accurately. Oppositely, a learner's negative attitude toward the target language and culture will yield bad effect in his/her language learning.

Finally, the lack of Motivation is seen as another factor affecting pronunciation improvement and it facilitates language learning (Shively, 2008). Hence, the lack of motivation influences developing native-like pronunciation and decreases language learning rate. Based on the previous view, learners with higher motivation and lower anxiety can develop their native like pronunciation easily and effectively.

2.4 Kurdish identity

Since identity and language are directly correlated with one's own national group, the provision of a brief discussion on Kurdish identity is deemed necessary.

Pullen (2011) assumes that identity reveals "the degree of attachment of individuals to their culture" (p.28). Similarly, Çetkin (2016) defines identity as how an individual/a group position themselves among other individuals or groups. Kurdish people have long tried to preserve their own identity, at the same time they have been striving to make others (Arabs, Turks, and Persians) accept their own language and identity.

According to Sheyholslami (2011), Kurdish national identity refers to a shared language, territory, culture, and future political aspirations. Kurdish people are divided among four countries: Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. These four states have always endeavoured to inhibit Kurdish nationalists from achieving national freedom and rights. These states worry about any potential independent Kurdistan because they dread losing some of their territory. In spite of this, a pan-Kurdish identity is increasingly growing among Kurdish people disregarding the nation-state they live in. There is a clear cross-border Kurdish identity and it is getting stronger as

Kurdish people are being oppressed in the states they belong to. This collective national identity was best revealed when Iraqi Kurdistan Region held its independence referendum in 2017 where thousands of Kurds from Turkey, Iran, and Syria honoured and celebrated the process.

2.5 Previous studies

A series of studies have been carried out to investigate foreign learners' perspectives toward nativeness and intelligibility. In a study by Bøhn and Hansen (2017), they investigated teachers' perspectives towards their assessment of nativeness and intelligibility principles, specifically: pronunciation features such as word stress, segmental, sentence stress, and intonation. They found out that there was a strong agreement among the teachers on the importance of intelligibility. However, they expressed a strong disagreement on the salience of nativeness.

Khatib and Monfared (2017) carried out a quantitative and qualitative research study that involved 112 native American and British teachers, 120 Indian and 120 Iranian teachers to explore their attitudes towards pronunciation pedagogy within the framework of English as an international language. When the participants were asked about the importance of having a native-like pronunciation or attaining a clear and intelligible pronunciation in communication, the responses indicated that majority of teachers (68 %) from three circles believed in communication and comprehensibility. However, the percentage of Iranian teachers who believed in accuracy-oriented was substantially greater than Indian and native teachers (56%). Native and Indianan teachers had a more cultural-oriented tendency with more emphasis on comprehensibility and intelligibility. In other words, Iranian teachers expressed more orientation towards having a native-like accent as compared to Indian and native teachers.

Pullen (2011) conducted a study to obtain a greater understanding of non-native speakers' attitudes toward their pronunciation of English among 145 first- and second-year undergraduate Turkish students studying in various departments at two large universities located in Ankara. The majority of participants reported that their pronunciation of English was irrelevant to their identity, and thus, not a sign of indicating their cultural identity. Hence, the study did not reach conclusive results concerning the nature of the relationship between cultural identity and pronunciation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 20 Kurdish EFL teachers in English department/College of Basic Education at Salahaddin University; twelve of them have been awarded their certificate (MA/ PhD) by universities in Kurdistan Region –Iraq, and eight of them got their certificate abroad. The rationale of choosing these two groups of teachers was to identify the difference

between the teachers have been awarded their certificates by universities in Kurdistan Region – Iraq, and those who have studied abroad concerning their perceptions toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in pronunciation.

3.2 The procedures

To achieve the aims of the study the following procedures are followed:

- Presenting theoretical background on nativeness and intelligibility,
- Highlighting the previous research into nativeness and intelligibility,
- Constructing a questionnaire to the participants,
- Collecting data from the selected sample of the study through the study tool, and
- Using Spss 24 to carry out statistical procedures to analyse the results.

3.3 Data collection instrument

The data collection instrument of this study is a 20-item questionnaire which was constructed by the researchers themselves. The first 11 items aim at investigating participants' view on native-like pronunciation; whereas, the second 9 items aim at investigating participants' self-identity perceptions in relation to their feelings to their native culture/country. The items of the questionnaire are measured using a 3 point Likert scale ranging from (1) Disagree; (2) Undecided; (3) Agree.

3.4 Data analysis and discussion

The questionnaire aimed to elicit data from the respondents to provide answers to the first research question of this study: What is Kurdish EFL teachers' orientation toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in their pronunciation?

The mean scores, standard deviation and the percentage of agreement were calculated as is shown in table (1) below:

Table (1) The descriptive statistics of the questionnaire

Items	N	Mean	SD	Percentage
1-I am enthusiastic about using a dictionary to pronounce English words in a native-like manner	20	4.6000	.50262	Agree 95.2
				Disagree 4.8

2- Being successful in my career requires me to have a native like accent	20	4.2500	.44426	Agree 73.4 Disagree 23.6
3-Poor pronunciation means poor communication.	20	4.5000	.51042	Agree 92.8 Disagree 8.2
4-I feel it is my duty to be fluent and act as a successful native like model for my students.	20	4.5000	.60481	Agree 87.6 Disagree 10.2 Undecided 2.2
5-Having accurate pronunciation of English words is the biggest indication of my knowledge of the language.	20	4.2500	.78640	Agree 87.6 Disagree 12.4
6-The use of incorrect stress placement and intonation rhyme might cause misunderstanding.	20	4.1000	.55251	Agree 69.8 Disagree 19.0 Undecided 9.2
7-Since English is considered a prestigious and international language, it is necessary to speak it fluently and at an advanced level.	20	4.0000	.45883	Agree 81.3 Disagree 9.5 Undecided 9.2
8-I listen to authentic language (songs, audios, and movies) to get the melody of the language.	20	5.8000	8.78156	Agree 76.7 Disagree 23.3
9-Having traits of my first language makes my English seem absurd.	20	3.7000	.86450	Agree 76.3 Disagree 15.4 Undecided 8.3
10-How my accent is perceived by native speakers is important because I am expected to have a perfect pronunciation as an EFL instructor.	20	4.1000	.71818	Agree 87.7 Disagree 12.3

11-When I listen, I try to identify how people's accent is different from my own.	20	3.9000	1.07115	Agree 60.3 Disagree 37.3 Undecided 3.4
12-Having fluent native like pronunciation and being understood by others run parallel.	20	3.3000	1.26074	Agree 52.1 Disagree 43.9 Undecided 4.0
13-Since my students are non-native speakers of English, it does not matter to have a native like fluency or not.	20	2.1500	1.03999	Agree 27.5 Disagree 62.2 Undecided 9.2
14-Having a native like accent is not that essential since my pronunciation is a part of my identity.	20	2.3500	.87529	Agree 31.2 Disagree 68.8
15-Having a native like accent is not necessary since my pronunciation shows my culture.	20	2.6500	1.22582	Agree 33.3 Disagree 61.7 Undecided 6.0
16-As my non-native accent shows my identity, I do not like to have native-like accent	20	2.3500	.87509	Agree 16.2 Disagree 83.8
17-Not being familiar with the pronunciation of new English words does not cause inconvenience to me.	20	2.1500	1.13761	Agree 28.6 Disagree 71.4
18-I would rather like to communicate well than to acquire a native-like accent.	20	2.3000	1.18210	Agree 38.7 Disagree 55.1 Undecided 6.2

19-Since language is a part of culture, my pronunciation is affected by the way that I speak and the way I pronounce my language.	20	2.7000	1.17429	Agree 43.8 Disagree 54.0 Undecided 2.2
20-Learning a native-like accent is completely unattainable for adults.	20	2.2500	1.06992	Agree 36.0 Disagree 40.2 Undecided 23.8

In the first item, 95% of the teachers agree that they are enthusiastic about using a dictionary to pronounce English words in a native-like manner. This high percentage of agreement shows that the teachers are eager to regularly check dictionaries to improve their pronunciation, which is in turn a reasonable indication of their concern about pronouncing words in a native-like manner. As for item No2, 73% agree that being successful in their career requires them to have a native like accent. This indicates that the teachers know the crucialness of having a well-grounded pronunciation for becoming successful EFL teachers. As for item No3, 93% of the teachers expressed their agreement with the notion that poor pronunciation means poor communication. It seems that the majority of the teachers deem good communication contingent on having good pronunciation. In item No4, 88% of the teachers feel it is their duty to be fluent and act as a successful native like a model for their students. They consider themselves the protagonist and believe it is a prerequisite for their profession as a university instructor to be able to speak English fluently. Having the majority of the teachers assume this moral and academic responsibility towards their students reveals their sincerity and high sense of responsibility. Moreover, this sense of responsibility on the part of the teachers results from the fact that Kurdish EFL students lack enough exposure to native English speakers in their daily life; therefore, the teachers try to bridge up this gap and act as a model for their students. In item No5, 87% of the teachers agree that having accurate pronunciation of English words is the biggest indication of their knowledge of the language. This is based on their conviction that pronunciation is not limited to producing the right sounds and goes beyond listening and repeat; yet, it includes features of the language such as vocabulary and grammar. As for item6, 70% of the teachers agree that the use of incorrect stress placement and intonation rhyme might cause misunderstanding. This shows that the teachers are keen on acquiring a native-like and lay emphasis on creating the rhythm and melody of English. They are aware of emphasising key syllables of key words and communicating extra meaning through rises and falls in pitch. As for item No7, 81% of the teachers are of the belief that it is necessary to speak English fluently and at an advanced level since it is considered a prestigious and international language. This demonstrates the teachers' interest in fluency in speaking, since English is increasingly gaining

recognition worldwide. In item No8, 77% of the teachers listen to authentic language (songs, audios, and movies) to get the melody of the language. Teachers find authentic materials a fairly easy and convenient way to improve their fluency. As for item No9, 76% of the teachers believe that having traits of their first language makes their English seem absurd. This is an excellent point in favour of nativeness principle on the part of Kurdish teachers since they find it widely unreasonable and unacceptable to speak English language with a Kurdish flavour. This orientation on the part of Kurdish teachers is further affirmed by item No10, where 88% of the teachers think how their accent is perceived by native speakers is important because they are expected to have a perfect pronunciation as an EFL teacher. As for item No11, 60% of the teachers state when they listen, they try to identify how people's accent is different from theirs. This agreement serves as a sign of the teachers' passion to compare their own accent with others' so as to attain a better accent. As for item No12, 52% of the teachers claim that having fluent native like pronunciation and being understood by others run parallel. On the other hand, 44% of them disagree and have a contrary opinion. This item shows the divergence in teachers' attitude toward nativeness and intelligibility principles. In item No13, 62% expressed their disagreement with the statement that it does not matter to have a native like fluency or not since their students are non-native speakers of English. This shows how the teachers consider and care about their students' points of view and do their best to meet their students' needs in having an acceptable accent. As for item No14, 69% of the teachers disagree that having a native like accent is not that essential since their pronunciation is a part of their identity. Similarly, in item No15, 62% of the teachers disagree that having a native like accent is not necessary since their pronunciation shows their culture. The results of these two items come out in favour of nativeness principle on the part of Kurdish EFL teachers. Correspondingly, in item No16, 84% of the teachers disagree that since their non-native accent shows their identity, they do not like to have native-like accent. Here, they accentuate their concern about having a native-like accent. As for item No17, disagree that not being familiar with the pronunciation of new English words does not cause inconvenience to them. In other words, they find it embarrassing and inconvenient if they are unfamiliar with the pronunciation of new words. This would tell us that the teachers feel themselves responsible for having good knowledge of English words. As for item No18, 39% of the teachers agree that they would rather like to communicate well than to acquire a native-like accent. On the other hand, 55% of them highlight the importance of acquiring a native-like accent than to communicate well. In item No19, 49% agree that their pronunciation is affected by the way that they speak since language is culture-based. Whereas, 54% of them disagree with this statement and hold the belief that language and culture are two different things and do not exert undesirable impacts on each other. As for the last item, 36% of the teachers agree that learning a native-like accent is completely unattainable for adults; while, 29% of them are undecided. For the same item, 40% of the teachers disagree that adult cannot attain a native-like accent, i.e., they believe that adults have the ability to acquire a native-like accent if the environment is well-conditioned.

So far, a detailed analysis has been provided for the questionnaire items that were intended to reveal the EFL Kurdish teachers orientation toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in pronunciation. The items of the questionnaire were divided into two parts (item No 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, and 11) were aligned with nativeness principle; whereas, the second part (items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) are aligned with intelligibility principle. 79% of the teachers preferred nativeness as a goal of their pronunciation and had the tendency to have a native-like accent. This high percentage of agreement on the part of Kurdish EFL teachers toward nativeness principle originates from their conviction that EFL teachers, irrespective of their overall teacher qualifications, are sometimes evaluated on the basis of their pronunciation. As we know, pronunciation is often defined in terms of foreign accent. Another point to add, Kurdish EFL teachers know that students will perceptually adjust to their teachers' accents; hence, the teachers would like to act as an exemplar for their students to imitate.

On the other hand, 22% of the teachers expressed an opposing view, saying that they prefer to be intelligible rather than to have an adequate pronunciation. Calculating the mean of the two parts of the questionnaire reveals that P-value is (0.002) significant (Sig. $P < 0.005$), i.e., that Kurdish EFL teachers in the English department/College of Basic Education are in favour of nativeness principle in their pronunciation, as is shown in table (2):

Table (2) Paired Samples Statistics of the teachers' goal of mastering English pronunciation

Teachers' goal	Mean	N	SD	Percentage	T-test	P-value
Nativeness	4.6500	20	1.0883	79.1	3.174	0.002
Intelligibility	2.7500	20	.72045	21.9		

* Sig. $P < 0.005$

The second research question says: Is there any difference between the teachers who have been awarded their certificates from Kurdistan Region- Iraqi universities and those who have studied abroad concerning their orientation toward nativeness and intelligibility principles in pronunciation?

To answer this research question, the mean scores and percentage rates of the two groups (8) teachers who studies abroad and 12 teachers who have pursued their higher education in KR of Iraq were calculated as is shown in table (3) and (4) below:

Table (3) Teachers awarding their certificate from Kurdistan Region -Iraq

Teachers' goal	Mean	N	SD	percentage
Nativeness	4.1000	12	.55481	56.2
Intelligibility	3.9000	12	1.08226	43.8

Table (4) Teachers awarding their certificate abroad

Teachers' goal	Mean	N	SD	Percentage
Nativeness	4.6500	8	.7537	71.2
Intelligibility	2.9000	8	1.3913	28.8

Contemplating the two tables reveals the fact that both groups of teachers opt for nativeness principle as against intelligibility principle (56% against 44%; and 71% against 29%). Yet, a noticeable difference can be detected in the response of the two groups. It is apparent that the Kurdish teachers, who studied abroad, especially in UK, are more tolerant with using English accent and inclined to adopt nativeness principle in their pronunciation than the Kurdish teachers who have been awarded their degrees from universities of KR-Iraq.

Doubtless to say, the teachers who have studied abroad are more aware of the native accent demands. They have experienced a process of immersion and identity development. They developed intercultural competence and international awareness. Consequently, this enhanced their abilities to understand and respect cultural differences, and to create favourable attitudes toward other languages. Being familiarised with different cultures usually yields in developing coping skills and results in more inclusive and open practices. This is why we find the teachers who have studied abroad have more inclination toward nativeness principle in their pronunciation.

4. Conclusions

Taking into account the results obtained in this study, the researchers concluded that:

- The majority of Kurdish EFL teachers (79%) do not show a conservative attitude toward English accent and tend to be in favour of nativeness principle in their pronunciation. This is due to the fact that they do not consider the native English accent as a threat to their own identities; whereas, (22%) preferred intelligibility as a goal of their pronunciation.

- Although nativeness principle has got the lion's share in teachers' response to the goal of their pronunciation, there is an apparent variance in their response in terms of the place where they have been awarded their degrees. It seems that living abroad has had an effect on the teachers' orientation in pronunciation. As for the teachers who studied abroad, 71% of them are nativeness oriented to the aim of their pronunciation; whereas 56% of the teachers who have pursued their higher study in KR of Iraq are nativeness oriented.

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