Learning English Phonetics: Preferences, Attitudes and Expectations of Libyan EFL University Students

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study is to explore the impact of learning phonetics on the pronunciation of Libyan EFL university students. This is achieved by testing the students' preferences, expectations and attitudes towards learning and teaching of phonetics. The participants of this study are 30 students graduated from the Department of English in the Faculty of Languages at the University of Tripoli. This survey employs a questionnaire consisting of 9 various themes covered in the phonetics courses during four semesters and a close-ended questionnaire consisting of 20 statements to test the students' perspectives of English phonetics. The results indicate that aspects related to segments are highly favored by the participants than suprasegmental-related aspects. In addition, the survey reveals that the participants have a positive attitude towards learning phonetics and that it did help them improve their English pronunciation. Finally, students have expectations about the teaching and learning of phonetics, such as lecturers should implement more methods and activities during lectures, provide more practice to students, and integrate technology to the teaching and the learning of phonetics.

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى استكشاف تأثير تعلم الصوتيات على نطق الطلبة الذين يدرسون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعات الليبية. ويتم ذألك من خلال اختبار تفضيلات الطلاب وتوقعاتهم ومواقفهم اتجاه تعلم وتعليم الصوتيات. المشاركون في هذه الدراسة هم ثلاثون طالبا من خريجي قسم اللغة الانجليزية من كلية اللغات جامعة طرابلس. يستخدم هذا الاستطلاع استبيانا يتكون من **9** مواضيع مختلفة في الصوتيات تم تدريسها للطلاب خلال أربعة فصول دراسية و الجزء الاخر من الاستبيان يتكون من **20** سؤال لاختبار آراء ووجهات نظر الطلاب في تعلم الصوتيات. تشير النتائج

الى أن المواضيع المتعلقة بالحرف الصوتي هي المفضلة عند الطلبة مقارنة بالمواضيع المتعلقة بالمقطع الصوتي. بالإضافة الى ذألك، يكشف الاستطلاع بأن المشاركين في الدراسة لديهم موقف إيجابي اتجاه تعلم الصوتيات وإن ذألك ساعدهم على تحسين نطقهم باللغة الإنجليزية. أخيرا، لدى الطلاب توقعات حول طريقة تدريس مادة الصوتيات، مثلا انه يجب على المحاضرين استخدام المزيد من الانشطة والتدريبات للطلاب أثناء المحاضرات، ودمج التكنولوجيا في تعليم وتعلم الصوتيات.

KEYWORDS : Phonetics, EFL learners, attitude, preferences, expectations, Libya

Introduction

Speaking is one of the productive language skills which plays an essential role in helping students to use their oral communication skill (Anggraeni et al., 2020, p.92). It is also one of the skills that requires more effort from students since it comprises components of language that must be learned by students so that their ideas can be expressed clearly. These components include pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Ali et al., 2023).

Pronunciation is a salient component for an effective oral communication (Pei & Qin, 2015, p.75) Accordingly, having successful oral communication presupposes learning pronunciation skills (Ketabi, 2015). Pronunciation is considered a key component of communicative competence (Metruk, 2017). As emphasized by Roach (2009, p.48), intelligible pronunciation is "an essential component of communicative competence" and considered a vital part of oral communication. The purpose of learning pronunciation is not to ask learners to have a native-like pronunciation (Ketabi, 2015, p.184). Rather, intelligible pronunciation that can be understood must be the real goal of oral communication and language learning (Gilakjani, 2016)

The two fields of linguistics concerned with pronunciation are phonetics and phonology (Savitri & Andrianto, 2021, p.52). Phonetics is often taught along with phonology in order to understand the sounds of languages (Hayes, 2011). However, phonetics deals with speech production and perception. It covers the physical or acoustic reality of speech sounds (acoustic phonetics), how these sound effects are achieved

by the speaker (articulatory phonetics), and how they are perceived by listeners (auditory phonetics) (Ashby, 2020, p.12). Phonology, on the other hand, studies how speech sounds are organized into patterns and systems and how certain phonological aspects may be found in one language and not the other.

Learning both phonetics and phonology helps learners to obtain a full understanding of how speech sounds are produced and how they function (Roach, 2009). Learners will also have better pronunciation of words since they will gain the information of why those words are pronounced in a certain way (Istiqomah et al., 2021, p.198). Moreover, learners will also attain the knowledge about the segmental and the suprasegmental aspects or features of the language (Lintunen & Mäkilähde, 2015, p.51). Becoming aware of this knowledge will contribute to enhancing the students' phonological awareness (Hamilton,2007). Phonological awareness is the ability of someone to realize the phonetic features and the phonological processes of a language. Phonetics, in particular, offers a way to develop good pronunciation through augmenting learners' awareness to relevant aspects of speech (Ashby, 2016, 2020). Thus, instructors must always find the best way to teach phonetics in order to raise the phonological awareness of the students into the everyday classroom environment (Savitri & Andrianto, 2021).

According to Lintunen & Mäkilähde (2015, p.51), phonetics has two roles; it strengths the practical language skills of learners, and it provides the theoretical information on the target language studied. Especially in the former case, phonetics helps to deepen the students' knowledge of the target language and support their overall pronunciation skills. For example, the use of phonetic symbols or explaining the articulation of the most difficult and challenging English sounds. In other words, the practical side of successful L2 (Second Language) pronunciation skills is the goal of successful phonetics teaching (ibid). However, the practical side alone is not sufficient for future EFL instructors. Ashby (2002) stated that EFL instructors are required to have a good knowledge of phonetics as well as knowledge of the phonology of both L1 and L2 enhanced by a well- trained phonetic ear.

Yilmaz (2008) also stresses "learning theories are indispensable for effective and pedagogically meaningful instructional practices" (p.161).

Thus, any form of teaching without theoretical basis can easily confuse learners and drift their focus to different directions. Almihmadi (2012, p.43) proposed a paradigm for teaching phonetics to non-native speakers which is both theoretically and practically founded on the constructivism approach. This approach is based on learners constructing knowledge based on their experiences rather than passively receiving it from instructors. For example, according to the paradigm, students explore for themselves the basic concepts of phonetics by recording and analyzing their own speech, interpret and discuss their findings or conclusions. In other words, students go through what she refers to as a "constructivist cycle" of action-reflection-interpretation every time students come to the phonetics class.

Nevertheless, phonetics is considered sometimes a challenging subject to study. It may cause students to experience difficulties in the learning process (Istiqomah et al., 2021, p.200). This could be due to different factors (e.g., Muzdalifah et al., 2022, Istiqomah et al., 2021, Gilakjani, 2016, Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). First, the weakness of students' pronunciation skills which could be due to their low level of their English proficiency, the influence of L1, the lack of use of technology-based learning media or even none at all, lack of proper learning materials or educational facilities which cause instructors to ignore their attention to phonetics. The lack of the instructors' awareness of proper pronunciation, lack of their language skills, lack of training and experience, and the teaching activities and methods used in lectures. Moreover, the lack of students' confidence, motivation or even their attitude towards phonetics. Also, the students' learning goals and needs, their different levels of intelligence, and their learning style preferences. In addition, some instructors consider learning pronunciation irrelevant to EFL learners. This led to the condition that learning English pronunciation does not receive much attention in the preparation of the curriculum at most universities (Gilakjani, 2016).

The goal of this study is to examine students' attitudes towards phonetics course's learning process and its impact on their English pronunciation. The questions to be investigated are as follows:

1) What are the attitudes of Libyan EFL University students towards the learning process of phonetics?

2) What are the students' views of the impact of phonetics learning on their pronunciation?

3)What are the students' preferences and expectations regarding the learning and teaching of phonetics?

Previous studies

Researchers have paid less attention to learners' attitudes towards phonetics learning. Thus, only few studies have been conducted to examine the perception and attitude of learners when learning phonetics. Lintunen & Mäkilähdes' (2015) was the first study to examine the attitudes of Finnish EFL learners towards phonetics learning and teaching. The results revealed that the students' attitudes were positive. Students considered phonetics interesting and useful but also challenging. In addition, students thought that phonetics had improved their English pronunciation. The study has also shown that the theme of different accents of English was the most preferred topic by the students.

Pei & Qin (2015) conducted a survey to reveal the perceptions of Chinese university students towards English phonetics. The findings have disclosed that the majority of students believed that phonetics is important. However, most of them were not satisfied with their pronunciation and most of them had the desire to pronounce like English native speakers. The topics that helped students improve their phonetic competence were connected speech processes, followed by intonation and then rhythm, all of which belong to suprasegmentals. Moreover, peer correction was the most common teaching method used by lecturers. Also, the participants reported that the most frequently used facility by phonetics instructors were computers for playing audio materials.

 Bani Ahmad (2018) obtained his data through a questionnaire which was analyzed qualitatively. The results indicated that the students of the English Education at the University of Singaperbangsa Karawang had positive attitudes towards phonetics. According to the students, the course of phonetics and phonology helped them reduce errors and enhanced their English pronunciation. The findings have also shown that the students were able after the course: to use speech organs to produce sounds, distinguish voiced from voiceless sounds and also be able to read phonetic transcriptions.

Savitri & Andrianto (2021) conducted a study to examine the attitudes of Indonesian students of the Universitas Brawijaya towards phonetics. Adapting the questionnaire of Lintunen & Mäkilähdes' (2015), the researchers have revealed that the participants had positive attitudes towards phonetics. They deemed English phonetics learning important to improve their pronunciation skills. In addition, learning phonetics made students feel more confident with their English pronunciation. The highest chosen themes from the participants were the vowel system, speech rhythm and accent differences.

In her study, Safitri (2021) investigated the perception of the sixth-semester students in the English Education study program at the Sriwijaya University after taking Phonetics and Phonology course. Results have shown that participants were motivated and eager to learn phonetics and their English pronunciation had significantly improved after the course. The students were also able to read phonetic transcriptions and to avoid any mispronunciation.

Istiqomah et al. (2021) have also utilized Lintunen & Mäkilähdes' (2015) questionnaire to examine the attitudes of Indonesian EFL college students towards phonetics. According to the findings, some students had positive responses towards phonetics Nevertheless, most responses indicated that students still find phonetics challenging. The study revealed that learners found some phonetic terms confusing and difficult to comprehend particularly segmental aspects such as; the use of IPA symbols as well as the differences between the manner and place of articulation. The most preferred topic which drawn a spotlight on the students' interest was accent variations

Unlike the above studies, Ali et al.'s (2023) conducted a survey at the Department of English at the Universitas Negeri Gorontalo to examine the students' perceptions and expectations of English phonetics and phonology, as well as the impact of studying phonetics on the students' pronunciation. They used a qualitative method to analyze data collected from students' interviews. According to the results, the students found the course enjoyable and the material was well-explained. Moreover, students gained a better understanding of phonetics symbols, and able to distinguish and produce different English sounds with the proper use of speech organs. They were also capable to apply the correct stress patterns and intonation to English words and sentences.

Description of the Phonetics Course

English phonetics is a staple course in EFL taught programs offered by universities around the globe (Hazan & van Dommelen, 1999). The course is variably named *Phonetics*, *Phonetics and Phonology*, *Phonetics and Pronunciation*, *English Phonetics*, etc. (Almihmadi, 2012, Ezza & Saadeh, 2011).

English phonetics, as a course, is commonly taught at the university level in almost all Libyan Universities. In the Department of English at the Faculty of Languages (University of Tripoli), a compulsory course namely, Phonetics is introduced to undergraduate level students in the fifth semester (Phonetics 1), (Phonetics 2) in the sixth, (Phonetics 3) in the seventh and (Phonetics 4) in the eighth semester. The course is predominantly theoretical and relies on a lecture format. The practical side usually encompasses different exercises on how to articulate the sounds and pronounce words or phrases in which the sounds appear in different contexts. The assessment is usually summative and less formative or interactive[1]. It includes mid-term and final written exams, graded assignments (e.g., transcription exercises), in-lecture quizzes or tests etc.

One of the major objectives of including this course is for students to have an understanding of the various necessary phonetic and phonological aspects of English. Additionally, it helps students understand the similarities and differences between their L1 and L2, as well as improve their pronunciation norms of certain English sounds and English intonation patterns. The course covers both segmental and suprasegmental features of English. In *Phonetics 1*, students are introduced to the technical terms related to phonetics, the basic concepts for understanding how sounds are produced in English i.e., the speech apparatus. Then, students are presented with the criteria that classify consonants and how they are produced, as well as how to use the International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) as a tool for transcribing sounds and words. In *Phonetics 2*, students are acquainted with vowels and the parameters used in classifying English vowels including monophthongs

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[1] Formative assessment uses feedback to improve the learning and the teaching process, whereas summative assessment measures what students have learned to certify a grade (Glazer, 2014, p. 277).

and diphthongs. They are also introduced to subsegmental aspects, such as nasality and voicing, the differences between phonetics and phonology; as well as the terms phoneme and allophone are also presented. Finally, students are introduced briefly to acoustic phonetics. The aim of *Phonetics and Phonology 3* [2]is to enhance the students' knowledge to more segmental related topics of the English sound system. Thus, it focuses dominantly on allophonic variations of consonants (e.g., devoicing, syllabic consonants) and vowels (e.g. nasalization). The course also concentrates on suprasegmentals such as English syllable structure, consonant clusters, as well as stress and intonation patterns. Finally, in *Phonetics and Phonology 4* students are acquainted with different connected speech processes e.g. Assimilation in all its types (place, manner, voice), dissimilation, deletion, epenthesis and metathesis. The notion of gestures in Articulatory Phonology and how gestures represent the discrete physical events during speech production are also considered in this course. As far as English accents are concerned, the features and the norms of both the Receive Pronunciation (RP) and the General American (GA) are briefly presented in *Phonetics 1*. However, when describing the articulation of sounds as well as in written transcription tests; students are usually required to implement RP English.

Research Method

Participants

The survey sought to collect the data from 30 Libyan EFL students. They were 23 females and 7 males ranging from 21 to 22 of age. All of the participants studied in the Department of English at the Faulty of Languages (University of Tripoli). Accordingly, they have all undertaken and passed the four courses of phonetics. Thus, they have evidently enough knowledge of English phonetics.

Material

To measure the students' attitudes, a close-ended questionnaire was distributed via google form to students. The survey was conducted using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire

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[2] The fact that the course named Phonetics and Phonology does not imply that all phonological related aspects or theories are profoundly considered. However, students are acquainted with few theories related to syllable formation and division in Phonetics and Phonology 3.

includes the participants' demographic information (age, gender). Moreover, the students were also asked to choose their preferred theme based on what have been taught during the semesters. The second part of the questionnaire contained 20 statements with discrete points (1 Strongly Agree, 2 Agree ,3 Neutral, 4 Disagree, 5 Strongly Disagree). Most of the statements in the questionnaire were developed by the author in the shadow of literature review such as (Lintunen & Mäkilähde, 2015, Pei & Qin 2015, Ali et al., 2023), and some were proposed specifically for this study during a discussion with peer lecturers. The statements were categorized to three important issues: the attitudes of student towards learning phonetics, the effect of learning phonetics on the students' pronunciation, and the students' expectations of learning and teaching phonetics.

Results
Preferred Themes
The first section of the results reveals the most preferred and the least preferred themes by students. As figure (1) demonstrates, 24.1% of the students clearly preferred allophonic variations. The second three most favored themes received 13.8% each were: syllable structure, Articulatory Phonology, as well as IPA symbols and phonetic transcription. The third most preferred theme was the human speech apparatus which was chosen by 10.3% of the students. The least preferred themes were consonants and vowels with both equal percentage 6.9% of the students, connected speech processes selected by 3.4% and 0% for stress patterns and intonation.
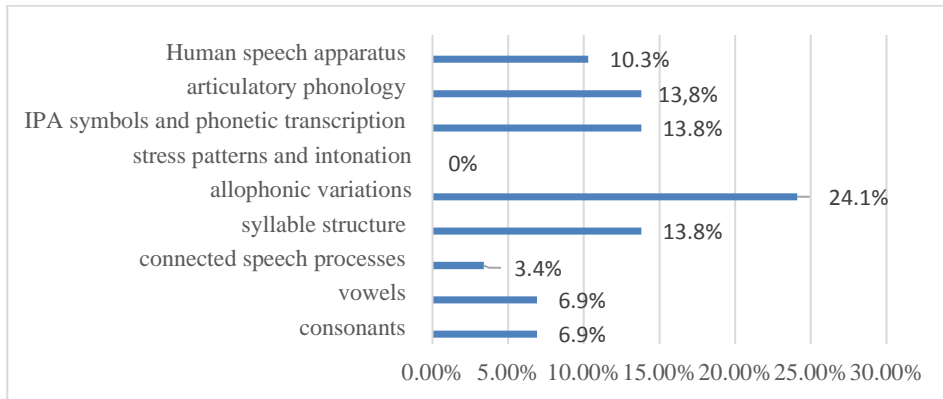
Figure (1) Percentage of students preferring a given theme

Students' attitude towards learning Phonetics

The second section reveals the general attitudes of students towards the course of phonetics as depicted in table (1).

Table (1) Students' attitude towards learning Phonetics

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) I find phonetics enjoyable and interesting.	23.3% 7	53.3% 16	13.3% 4	3.3% 1	6.7% 2
2) The teaching methods used by lecturers helped me understand the course material.	37.9% 11	31% 9	17.2% 5	6.9% 2	6.9% 2
3) The course material was well-explained and straightforward to understand.	17.9% 5	28.6% 8	46.4% 13	3.6% 1	3.6% 1
4) The course was more theoretical than practical.	10.3% 3	41.4% 12	27.6% 8	17.2% 5	3.4% 1

Table (1) comprises general questions in order to test the students' attitudes towards the process of learning phonetics. In statement (1), 53% of the students

agreed and 23.3% of the students strongly agreed that phonetics is enjoyable and interesting. This could be due to the teaching methods used by lecturers as shown clearly in statement (2), where 37.9% strongly agreed and 31% agreed. However, 46.4% of the participants reacted neutrally, 28.6% agreed and 17.9% strongly agreed that the course material was well-explained as illustrated in (3). Reasons of such reaction can be drawn from statement (4), where 41.4% of the participants agreed that the course was theoretical and there was not enough practice.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) Phonetics helped me understand phonetic symbols as well to read and write the phonetic transcriptions of words.	20% 6	43.3% 13	26.7% 8	6.7% 2	3.3% 1
2) Phonetics helped recognize English sounds i.e. Consonants and vowels.	26.7% 8	50% 15	13.3% 4	6.7% 2	3.3% 1
3) Phonetics helped me recognize the difference between place and manner of articulation	20% 6	60% 18	10% 3	6.7% 2	3.3% 1
4) I am capable of producing English sounds with the proper use of speech organs.	26.7% 8	43.3% 13	16.7% 5	10% 3	3.3% 1
5) I am aware of the allophonic variations of vowels and consonants.	16.7% 5	53.3% 16	26.7% 8	0	3.3% 1
6) Phonetics helped me understand the nature of syllable and the types of syllables.	16.7% 5	36.7% 11	26.7% 8	20% 6	0
7) Phonetics helped me understand connected speech process assimilation, epenthesis, elision	10% 3	53.3% 16	26.7% 8	6.7% 2	3.3% 1
8) I know how to apply stress and	24.1%	51.7%	20.7%	3.4%	0

intonation correctly to English words and sentences	7	15	6	1	
9) My pronunciation has improved after taking the course.	40% 12	33.3% 10	16.7% 5	6.7% 2	3.3% 1
10) I will implement the phonetic knowledge I have learned in my further teaching experience	44.8% 13	17.2% 5	31% 9	3.4% 1	3.4% 1

Table (2) Students' views towards the impact of learning Phonetics on their pronunciation

Table (2) includes statements concerning whether phonetics was useful to students and whether it helped their pronunciation. In statement (1), 43.3% agreed that phonetics symbols aided their ability to recognize speech sounds and helped them write and read words in phonetic transcription. Also, 50% of the participants agreed that phonetics has enhanced their awareness of the different English speech sounds. Moreover, 60% agreed that phonetics learning helped them know how to distinguish place and manner of articulation. This could also be due to the results shown in (4) where 43.3% of the participants showed a better understanding of the use of the appropriate organs of speech when producing sounds. In (5), 53.3% of the students agreed that phonetics improved their understanding of the allophonic variations of consonants and vowels. Statement (6), provoked slightly less positive reactions where only 36% of the participants agreed that phonetics aided their understanding to the nature of syllable and syllable types. In statement (7), 53.3% of the participants agreed that phonetics helped them understand connected speech processes. In (8), 51.7% of the participants agreed that they know stress patterns and intonation. Overall, 40 % of the participants strongly agreed that phonetics improved their pronunciation as shown in (9), and 44.8% strongly agreed that they will implement the knowledge they have gained in their future careers as revealed in (10).

Table (3) Students' expectations with regard to learning and teaching phonetics

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) Lecturers should implement more interesting teaching methods and activities	58.6% 17	31% 9	6.9% 2	3.4% 1	0
2) Lecturers should focus more on practice during lectures	51.7% 15	31% 9	13.8% 4	3.4% 1	0
3) Lecturers must ensure that students understood the material before ending the lecture	48.3% 14	44.8% 13	6.9% 2	0	0
4) Lecturers should implement technology (e.g. different apps and media) when teaching phonetics	55.2% 16	37.9% 11	3.4% 1	0	3.4% 1
5) Lecturers should focus on more than one accent of English	31% 9	34.5% 10	17.2% 5	10.3% 3	6.9% 2
6) Lecturers' assessment should include oral examinations and tests and not merely written essays and transcription tasks	55.2% 16	24.1% 7	10.3% 3	3.4% 1	6.9% 2

Table (3) presents the learners' expectations with regard to learning and teaching phonetics. The participants who strongly agreed with statement (1) were 58 .6% yet who disagreed were 3.4%. In addition to expecting more teaching activities and methods, 51.7% of students hoped that lecturers would provide more opportunities for practice as revealed in statement (2). In statement (3), 48.3% of the participants strongly agreed

that lecturers should ensure that students have comprehended the content before ending the lecture. In statement (4), 55.2% of the participants strongly agreed that technology should be integrated in phonetics courses. In (5), 34.5% agreed and 31% strongly agreed that lecturers should focus on more than one accent of English. Finally, 55.2% of the participants strongly agreed that learning assessment should include oral exams or tests and not just written essays and transcription tasks.

Discussion

The study endeavored to explore the views and attitudes of Libyan EFL university students towards phonetics. It aimed to look at the preferred themes that were introduced to the participants during learning phonetics, the learners' attitude towards phonetics; the effects of English phonetics on their English pronunciation, and their expectations regarding the learning and the teaching of English phonetics. Regarding their favored theme, the findings revealed that the learners were mostly interested in allophonic variations which is introduced in *Phonetics and Phonology 3*. In studies such as Lintunen & Mäkilähde (2015) and Istiqomah et al. (2021), students preferred different accents of English over the other given themes. Different accents of English were not taught to the participants of the current study. In fact, different English accents are taught in the Department of English in a separate course named Varieties of English. The course briefly presents the general differences between British and American English with regard to pronunciation, vocabulary and spelling. In the study of Savitri & Andrianto (2021), accents of English were the least preferred topic by participants, whereas the English vowel system was the most preferred theme among Indonesian learners.

With respect to their attitude towards phonetics and the learning process, the students' answers indicate mixed reactions. Firstly, students have agreed that phonetics is enjoyable and interesting. This could be due to teaching methods used by lecturers which made the course easy to understand. Similar findings were reported in Ali et al. (2023) and Bani Ahmad (2018). Ali et al. (2023, p.12) revealed that students thought that lecturers' teaching style facilitated their comprehension of the material. Some participants responded that lecturers frequently used videos to teach English sounds so that students can easily learn and practice

consonants and vowels directly from native English speakers. Secondly, unlike previous studies, the participants of this study thought that the course was theoretical and did not involve practical skills. In the study of Lintunen & Mäkilähde (2015), students did not think that theoretical phonetics teaching affected their practical pronunciation skills. In the same vein, the findings of Savitri & Andrianto (2021, p.55) have shown that phonetics helped students to improve their pronunciation skills even when the area of phonetics was more theoretical than practical. It worth mentioning that when learning phonetics, both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills are simultaneously required for an effective leaning process (see Ashby 2002). Finally, the participants neutrally reacted to whether the material was conveyed in a straightforward and well-explained manner. This finding contrasts with what was revealed in Ali et al. (2023), where students believed that the course material was delivered in a clear and straightforward way by lecturers. This led students to improve their understanding to the material and encouraged them to participate in lectures.

The second part of the questionnaire focused on the impact of phonetics on the students' English pronunciation. The participants have reacted positively to all statements. As to which aspects of teaching contents helped them enhance their phonetic competence, the students' top response was their recognition of the differences between: place and manner of articulation, the articulation of consonants and vowels, and allophonic variations of consonants and vowels, all of which belong to the segmental level (cf. Pei & Qin, 2015). First, students believed that phonetics helped them recognize phonetic symbols and bettered their understanding of the English sounds i.e., vowels and consonants. Similar results were achieved in Ali et al. (2023), Bani Ahmed (2018), Savitri & Andrian (2021) and Lintunen & Mäkilähde (2015). They have all posited that phonetics has augmented the learners' knowledge on how to identify and distinguish English speech sounds. However, in Istiqomah et al. (2021), the answers have shown that students were less confident with their competency to English consonants and vowels. Turning to the participants in our study, the improvement in pronunciation and their ability to recognize English sounds is also caused by their knowledge on the manners and places of articulation of sounds. This could be due to their understanding of the proper use of speech organs. This was also

reported in Istiqomah et al. (2021) Savitri & Andrian (2021) and Lintunen & Mäkilähde (2015). Ali et al. (2023) stated that "…students used to pronounce English sounds in the same way as Indonesian sounds, but after taking this course, they learned about human articulators and how to use them to produce sounds in English" (p.13). Secondly, phonetics also helped students understand stress and intonation, connected speech processes and allophonic variations of sounds as seen in table (2). Allophonic variations, in particular, have received a high percentage since it was considered as their highly preferred topic as depicted in figure (1). However, students seemed less confident with their understanding of the nature of syllable and syllable types. Finally, the majority of students thought that phonetics has improved their pronunciation. They considered the knowledge they have gained is essential for their future careers. Similar conclusion was found in Lintunen & Mäkilähde (2015), Istiqomah et al. (2021), Savitri & Andrian (2021) and Safitri (2021).

The last part of the questionnaire was dedicated to the students' expectations and hopes for learning and teaching English phonetics. Although students were satisfied by the teaching methods used by lecturers as revealed in table (1); students hoped to see more interesting methods and activities. The findings are in the vein with the results found in Ali et al. (2023). In their study, the students stated that one of the factors that make students motivated to learn phonetics is the "…enjoyable teaching methods and techniques implemented by lecturers" (p.9). They suggested that students become less interested in learning and certainly bored by a monotonous teaching method. Pei & Qin (2015) disclosed different types of activities used in Chinese phonetics lectures. For instance, listen and repeat: poetry and speeches, tongue twisters, imitation of audio-visual materials such as songs and movie clips; listening and speaking practice in forms of giving a talk or discussing a topic in pairs or groups etc. Their study revealed that 71.9% of university Chinese learners preferred the activity "listen and repeat what lecturers would say" (p.79).

In addition to expecting more teaching activities and methods, students hoped that lecturers would offer more time for practice. Participants also expect lecturers to see if students have understood the material before ending the learning activity. Ali et al. (2023) uncovered that the

participants became able to recognize and pronounce speech sounds by practicing them in lectures. It was found that students wanted to have the opportunity to practice pronouncing English words with the appropriate stress and intonation. The study suggested that lecturers should allot additional time for in-class activities since the assigned time would not be enough for practice. Ali et al. (2023, p.10) also stated that students differ in how quickly and how slowly they can comprehend the material being taught. Thus, to determine whether or not students have understood the material they have learned, lecturers should evaluate the students or ask them questions before the end of lectures.

 Even though technology is not necessarily or significantly employed in Libyan phonetics courses, participants were highly expecting lecturers to use technology when teaching phonetics. With the fast development in technology "entirely new forms of teaching interactions" trigger instructors to use alternative ways of teaching phonetics (Mompean et al., 2011, p. 1). Ashby et al. (2005a) suggested that the use of technology in the classroom "can augment students' learning experience, and break down unnecessary division between theory and practice" (p.1). The role of multi-media technology in teaching phonetics was acknowledged in many previous studies. For instance, Anggraeni et al. (2021) revealed that students had a positive perception towards the use of O'speak (a mobile application) in learning the correct pronunciation of words in a phonetics and phonology classes. Thomson (2011) used a specially designed Computer Assistant Pronunciation Training (CAPT) application that has improved the participants' pronunciation of vowels through providing both adequate visual and auditory feedback. In Pei & Qin (2015), 68.8% of the participants reported that computers for playing audio materials are the most frequently used facilities by phonetics instructors to demonstrate how certain phonemes are pronounced. The use of podcasts has also been proven to be an effective way of teaching phonetics. In Roberts & Lemoncello (2023), students were encouraged to produce their own ideas by creating their own podcasts when learning phonetics. For instance, students reported "that listening to or being involved in the creation of podcasts made them better prepared for class and improved mastery of IPA" (p.9). Almaqrn & Alshabeb (2017) have also reported that Saudi EFL learners had a positive attitude towards new Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) applications before using

them in a practical way. The results have shown a high positive rate of acceptance of podcasts by the students. Aulia (2018, p.165) has found that WhatsApp groups helped students to enhance their self-confidence and reduce their anxiety when learning English consonant sounds. The records of students' voice were used to see their progress of practicing English consonant sounds during meetings. One can conclude that multimedia system and technical devices play a significant role in phonetics instruction; therefore, the application of such technology in Libyan EFL phonetics lectures is highly necessary.

Moreover, students also wanted lecturers to asses them through oral examinations or tests and not just by written essays and transcription tasks. The grades in Libyan EFL phonetics classes are obtained from mid-term and final-term written exams but almost no oral examinations. In Pei & Qin (2015, p.80) emphasized that in Chinese phonetics lectures, two types of assessments should coexist in English phonetics instruction: Formative assessment and summative assessment. The former includes the students' attendance records and their participation in extracurricular and intercultural activities. The latter encompasses forms of written tests (e.g., listen and discriminate minimal pairs) and oral tests (e.g. read words, sentences, passages or give a talk) at the end of the course. Cui (2010) suggested that summative assessment should be a combination of both written and oral tests. Ashby (2016) stated that tasks based on intonation and tone or accuracy and fluency require the use of oral examinations and tests.

The final statement in the last part of the questionnaire is related to the use of different accents in phonetics lectures. According to the results, students do not seem to favor the use of different accents in phonetics courses. This could be due to the fact that the differences between English accents are not taught in phonetics courses. For reasons of consistency, students are only taught to use RP during the four courses. The finding is different from former studies where the theme of accents of English was one of the most highly reported issue by participants (cf. Lintunen & Mäkilähde, 2015 and Istiqomah et al., 2021). In Pei & Qin (2015), Chinese students preferred being taught by native speakers of British accents and American accents. According to the researchers, lecturers should incorporate various English accents into their teaching materials "…as an embodiment of the concept of world Englishes" and

exposing students to different accents for "… comprehensibility during intercultural communications" (p.80).

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore the attitudes of Libyan EFL university students towards leaning phonetics. Based on the answers, the attitudes of Libyan EFL students toward learning English phonetics was positive. Furthermore, the participants thought that learning phonetics had an efficient impact on their English pronunciation skill. The survey revealed that the students' preferred themes were the allophonic variations as well as almost all segmental and subsegmental related aspects. Thus, one can suggest that the students were dominantly competent with aspects related to the segments rather than the suprasegmentals. Accordingly, lecturers need to revolve around both segmental and suprasegmental features in lectures and balance between the two. The results also posited that instructors should pay attention to the use of practical learning activities and encourage students to accept the importance of the theoretical basis of phonetics. In addition, lecturers should be versatile in the use of different teaching methods and should amalgamate different techniques of assessments. The results also implied that lecturers are prompted to use technological tools to modernize their phonetics classes. Therefore, lecturers should study where and how technology and pronunciation instruction interconnect to attain better teaching effect and students can experience the real use of English phonetics.

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