IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS' USES, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, ROLES, AND PEDAGOGICAL METHODS ABOUT *PRONUNCIATION POWER* SOFTWARE IN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION INSTRUCTION

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to

ALLAH

The Lord, Creator, and Sustainer of the Heavens and Earth

Then to

My Dear Wife

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Affective Component
ACU	Attitude towards Computer Use
ASR	Automatic Speech Recognition
BIC	Behavioral Intention Component
CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CAPT	Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Teaching
CAS	Computer Attitude Scale
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDT	Innovation Diffusion Theory
IT	Information Technology
IU	Intention to Use
PCC	Perceived Control Component
PEU	Perceived Ease of Use
PU	Perceived Usefulness
PUC	Perceived Usefulness Component
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior

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PENGGUNAAN, SIKAP, KEPERCAYAAN, PERANAN, DAN KAEDAH PEDAGOGI TENTANG PERISIAN *PRONUNCIATION POWER* DALAM PENGAJARAN SEBUTAN BAHASA INGGERIS DI KALANGAN GURU IRAN YANG MENGAJAR BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA ASING

ABSTRAK

Perisian *Pronunciation Power* ialah satu perisian teknologi komputer dalam pengajaran sebutan dalam bahasa Inggeris. Guru EFL Iran mempunyai masalah serius dalam pengajaran sebutan mereka seperti kekurangan masa, pengetahuan, pengalaman, latihan dan bahan sebutan yang sesuai. Dalam kajian ini, penyelidik mengkaji bagaimana perisian ini membantu guru Iran untuk mengatasi masalah-masalah ini dan memperbaiki pengajaran sebutan dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini mengkaji cara penggunaan, sikap, kepercayaan, peranan guru serta kaedah pedagogi yang diterapkan semasa menggunakan perisian *Pronunciation Power* dalam pengajaran sebutan dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Penyelidik menggunakan kaedah campuran untuk mengkaji kesan penggunaan perisian ini untuk mengajar sebutan. Tinjauan secara kuantitatif dilakukan melalui satu soal selidik yang melibatkan sampel yang terdiri daripada 43 orang guru di tiga buah universiti terbuka di Iran manakala kaedah kualitatif pula dijalankan melalui temubual dengan mengemukakan soalan separa struktur kepada sampel sukarela yang terdiri daripada 5 orang guru dari Lahijan Universiti, Iran. Data kuantitatif dianalisis mengikut skor min dan sisihan piawai. Data kualitatif dianalisis berdasarkan proses mengumpul data, memeriksa, menyusun, penyenaraian dan mengenal pasti tema. Dapatan daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa guru sangat bermotivasi dan berminat

menggunakan perisian ini dalam pengajaran sebutan dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Dapatan menunjukkan guru Iran telah menunjukkan sikap dan kepercayaan yang positif terhadap penggunaan perisian ini dalam pengajaran sebutan dan perisian ini telah dapat memenuhi keperluan dan matlamat pengajaran. Perisian ini telah menukarkan peranan guru sebagai sumber pemberi maklumat kepada fasilitator maklumat. Perubahan peranan memberikan guru lebih autonomi dan peluang yang lebih besar dalam pengajaran sebutan. Dapatan menunjukkan perubahan yang signifikan dalam kaedah pedagogi pengajaran sebutan yang diamalkan oleh guru di Iran. Terdapat perubahan daripada kelas pengajaran berpusatkan guru kepada pengajaran berpusatkan pelajar dan kualiti penyediaan guru sebelum ke kelas juga berubah. Pengkaji membuat kesimpulan bahawa kemudahan pendidikan yang lebih banyak perlu disediakan supaya guru di Iran dapat menggunakan perisian *Pronunciation Power,* mempunyai sikap dan kepercayaan positif tentang penggunaan perisian tersebut, merubah peranan mereka dan tidak menggunakan pengajaran tradisional supaya hasil pengajaran yang diingini melalui penggunaan perisian ini dalam pengajaran sebutan dapat dicapai.

IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS' USES, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, ROLES, AND PEDAGOGICAL METHODS ABOUT *PRONUNCIATION POWER* SOFTWARE IN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION INSTRUCTION

ABSTRACT

Pronunciation Power software is one of the computer technologies for teaching English pronunciation. Iranian EFL teachers have serious problems in their pronunciation instruction such as lack of enough time, knowledge, experience, training, and suitable pronunciation materials. In this study, the researcher examined how this software helped Iranian teachers to overcome these problems and improve their pronunciation instruction. The study examined Iranian teachers' uses, attitudes, beliefs, roles, and pedagogical methods about *Pronunciation Power* software in teaching pronunciation. The researcher used a mixed method to examine the effect of this software on pronunciation instruction. The quantitative survey consisted of two questionnaires with a sample of 43 teachers from three open universities in Iran and the qualitative method consisted of semi-structured interview questions with a volunteer sample of five teachers from Lahijan University, Iran. Quantitative data were analyzed according to mean scores and standard deviation. Qualitative data were analyzed based on the process of collecting data, examining, organizing, listing, and identifying themes. The findings of this study showed that Iranian teachers had tremendous motivation about using this software in teaching pronunciation. The findings indicated that Iranian teachers expressed positive attitudes and beliefs about using this software in pronunciation instruction and this software met their teaching needs and goals. This

software changed Iranian teachers' roles from a dispenser of information to a facilitator of information. This change of role gave them more autonomy and greater opportunities in teaching pronunciation. The findings showed a significant change in pedagogical methods of Iranian teachers. The classes changed from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction and the quality of teachers' preparation for classes changed. The researcher concluded that enough educational facilities should be provided for Iranian teachers to use *Pronunciation Power* software, have positive attitudes and beliefs about it, change their roles, and traditional pedagogical methods so that they can achieve their desirable teaching outcomes through using this software in pronunciation instruction.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

English is the most important language throughout the world and the means of teaching and communication in significant fields like technology, research, trade, and medicine. As a result, individuals and groups try to learn English for various reasons and objectives. Due to easy access to journey, globalization of business and industry, and the wish of non-native speakers to communicate with native speakers of English, English learners should pay attention to their oral ability to communicate in the second or foreign language (Butler-Pascoe & Wiburg, 2003).

Intelligible pronunciation is one of the important needs for the language learners. According to Fraser (2000), courses and materials should be provided for ESL/EFL teachers to make better the effectiveness of their English pronunciation instruction. High quality, effective materials, and particularly computer-based materials are very important for ESL/EFL learners' pronunciation because they can use these materials and facilities in classes where the teachers need them for better instruction.

According to Morley (1991), teachers' and learners' roles should be changed. Teachers should play the role of pronunciation trainers and learners should be proactive learners who take the first steps to learn it. Akram and Qureshi (2012) also emphasized that if teachers want to help their learners to improve their English pronunciation, they

should recognize the weaknesses and strengths of their pronunciation and they should also serve as role models for their learners.

Morley (1991) stated that understandable pronunciation is one of the main purposes of pronunciation instruction not perfect pronunciation. It is of vital importance to communicative competence. Perfect pronunciation should not be the main aim of language learners. Realistic goals that are acceptable, effective, and appropriate for communication should be adopted for learners. People with proficient pronunciation are considered as more professional and they can have better social position in the society (Mishra & Sharma, 2005; Por & Fong, 2011). On the other hand, unintelligible pronunciation makes comprehension difficult for the listeners and it also changes the meaning of a message (Por & Fong, 2011).

According to Faizul (2012), pronunciation is closely related to communication. When we communicate with other people particularly to native speakers, we should not only have good grammar and vocabulary knowledge but also acceptable pronunciation in order to be understood by native speakers. If we do not speak clearly, other people will not understand us and this may stop communication.

Safari, Jahandar, and Khodabandehlou (2013) also emphasized the importance of pronunciation skill in English Language Teaching. They said that pronunciation is an integral part of foreign language learning because it impacts learners' communicative competence and performance. Therefore, if speakers do not have understandable pronunciation, listeners will have serious problems to understand them.

Learners should be able to understand pronunciation when people speak with different accents in real situations. According to Rajadurai (2001), the primary purpose of including listening and speaking skills in any course is to teach English pronunciation as an important oral communication part of learners because it is not reasonable to take away pronunciation from communication. Because of the significance of meaningful communication and understandable pronunciation, it is illogical to teach pronunciation in just pronunciation classes or in listening/speaking classes in some specific programs.

Pronunciation can always be introduced into the classes by teachers to strengthen the concepts that might have been taught before in pronunciation classes, emphasize the importance of pronunciation as an important part of the teaching of English as a second/foreign language, provide opportunities for learners to practice, and give motivation to learners for using it outside the classroom (Rajaduari, 2001). According to Mirzaei, Jahandar, and Khodabandehlou (2014), pronunciation instruction has an important role in English language teaching. Since pronunciation and communication are closely related to each other, EFL teachers should give more attention to the teaching of pronunciation in their English classes.

There are some misunderstandings about the need for pronunciation instruction at the university-level in Iran. For example, Gooniband Shooshtari, Mehrabi, and Mousavinia (2013) stated that some EFL teachers do not prioritize pronunciation instruction in their classrooms because they believe that it is a talent and cannot be taught, they do not have enough time, and they do not know how to teach it. Classroom teachers state that such misunderstandings are caused with a lack of attention to the

importance of pronunciation and the preference for teaching grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Although many teachers say that pronunciation should be taught in their classrooms, they do not pay serious attention to this important aspect of English.

Keeping up with innovations is one of the biggest challenges that teachers are faced with the change of education. A number of researchers have investigated the impact of the use of computer technology on education in different fields. All of these researchers had a similar finding that is pertinent to the impact of the use of computer technology on education and how it helps to improve teaching methods and students' knowledge (Frigaard, 2002; Miner, 2004; Schofield & Davidson, 2003; Timucin, 2006).

One of the vital parts of higher and professional education is technology-enhanced education (Wernet, Olliges, & Delicath, 2000). Through using computer technology, learners are not only given the opportunity to control their own learning process, but also are provided with ready access to a large amount of information over which the teachers do not have any power or control. The active agents in the process of changes and implementation of new ideas are teachers whose beliefs and attitudes may support or prevent the success of any educational reform like the use of an innovative technology program (Woodrow, 1991).

Bitner and Bitner (2002) stated that several factors such as funding, lesson plans, and decisions about hardware and software can guarantee the successful use of computer technologies in the classroom. The teacher is a determinant factor to get the learning outcomes because it is the teacher's skills, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, personality, and knowledge that influence the choices he/she makes about

what, when, and how to teach by means of computer technologies. Therefore, positive beliefs and attitudes about computer technologies help teachers to effectively use them for their instruction.

Pronunciation Power software is one of the computer technologies for teaching pronunciation and solving its problems. According to Faizul (2012), there are some reasons for choosing this software to teach English pronunciation. First, this software has animated diagrams that teach the correct tongue placement for vowel and consonant sounds. Second, this software has speech analysis that gives immediate feedback on the correct production of words and sounds. Third, it is convenient and cost effective. It's not necessary for teachers and learners to take part in pronunciation classes. They can improve their pronunciation at their own homes or offices by different exercises that the software provides for them.

In this study, the researcher attempts to investigate the impact of *Pronunciation Power* software on the Iranian EFL university teachers' uses, attitudes, beliefs, roles, and traditional teaching methods in teaching pronunciation. The rest of this chapter is organized as follows: statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, rationale of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of key terms.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

English pronunciation is a difficult skill to learn and it is of vital importance to the language teachers. Some Iranian EFL university teachers have serious problems in English pronunciation teaching (Hayati, 2010). Although pronunciation is very

important, in many Iranian English classrooms, little attention is paid to its instruction because pronunciation instruction involves some challenges. Some of these challenges have been reported by previous researchers (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2013; Behzadi & Fahimniya, 2014; Gilbert, 2008; Vafaei, 2013).

According to Vafaei (2013), Iranian EFL teachers do not pay enough attention to the pronunciation of words uttered by their learners because they do not know how to pronounce the words appropriately. Behzadi and Fahimniya (2014) said that pronunciation is the most neglected part of English teaching in Iran. For this reason, other skills such as grammar and vocabulary are much better understood by most of the Iranian EFL teachers than pronunciation.

Gilbert (2008) said that teachers do not have enough time in their classes to pay attention to pronunciation instruction. He continued that sometimes Iranian teachers have the necessary time for pronunciation instruction, but instruction is accompanied by a series of monotonous and irrelevant subjects. Negative consequences will be brought about by only practicing and repeating sounds and these cause teachers and their students to stop pronunciation instruction and learning.

Gilbert (2008) also emphasized that the other reason is related to the suitable teaching materials that are not provided for the Iranian EFL teachers to improve their pronunciation instruction, whereas teachers should be provided with appropriate materials to teach pronunciation well. According to Abdolmanafi-Rokni (2013), accurate pronunciation is not emphasized in Iranian institutes and universities and

students lack enough knowledge about it. He added that many Iranian teachers do not pay enough attention to pronunciation instruction.

Abdolmanafi-Rokni (2013) said that one of the major problems is that computer technology is not used in Iranian institutes and universities. English institutes are mostly book-based and universities are teacher-centered and unfortunately computer technology is not used in these learning centers. He also emphasized that English teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about pronunciation and their students are confronted with various pronunciations. Teachers' inability to check their students' pronunciation is largely due to the fact that there are a large number of students in their classrooms.

One of the good means of improving and solving English pronunciation teaching and learning is to use *Pronunciation Power* software. This software has been designed to help learners to identify key elements of their speech and then improve their pronunciation by practicing the important patterns of sound and speech. *Pronunciation Power* software teaches teachers and learners how to speak understandable English in an interactive environment that allows them to proceed on their own pace, practice listening and speaking as they desire, record and playback their own voice, and have fun with interactive games while learning (*Pronunciation Power*, 2000).

Some Iranian EFL teachers do not know how to use computer software effectively. They do not seem to make effective use of this software for their pronunciation instruction. They do not have enough experience, skill, knowledge, and training to use computer software effectively (Fathiyan, 2004). Zare-ee (2011)

expressed that there are some limitations on using computer software by the Iranian EFL university teachers due to individual human factors like lack of skills, experience, and insufficient trainers. There are not enough qualified teachers who can use computers for teaching pronunciation.

Iranian EFL university teachers have serious problems in their pronunciation instruction such as lack of enough time, knowledge, training, and suitable pronunciation materials (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2013; Fathiyan, 2004; Gilbert, 2008; Gooniband Shooshtari, Mehrabi, & Mousavinia, 2013). *Pronunciation Power* software has a lot of exercises for teachers to improve their teaching. They are listening and speaking exercises, accent, stress patterns, intonation, rhythm, vowel, consonant, and cluster sounds, and speech analysis (*Pronunciation Power, 2000*).

Pronunciation Power software is able to fill these gaps, support the teaching and learning of pronunciation, help the Iranian EFL teachers to overcome these problems, and improve their pronunciation instruction. The researcher explored factors that influence the Iranian EFL university teachers' use of *Pronunciation Power* software in English pronunciation instruction.

According to Bitner and Bitner (2002), the effective and successful use of computers is identified by teachers whose attitudes and beliefs impact the choices they make about what, when, and how to teach through computer software. If teachers are expected to be effective and successful users of computers, they should have positive beliefs and attitudes towards them.

Lam (2000) stated that there are not enough research investigating language teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards using computers for language instruction. He investigated the reasons behind EFL teachers' decisions to use computers for instruction, their choice of using or not using computers for instruction, and factors impacting these decisions. According to the results obtained from Lam's study and some others, it was suggested that teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards using computer resources influence their acceptance and use of these resources (Albion, 1999; Baylor & Ritchie, 2002).

Some Iranian EFL university teachers do not have good attitudes and beliefs towards using computers for their English language teaching specifically for their English pronunciation instruction. Although they use computer software for their teaching, but due to the lack of good attitudes and beliefs, they are not able to get the desirable results on using computers in their EFL classrooms in order to increase their students' learning (Attaran, 2004).

Therefore, it is especially important to understand the Iranian EFL university teachers' attitudes and beliefs about computers and their willingness or unwillingness to use it for their classrooms, since teachers play such an important role as the agents of change in the world of education. The researcher explored the Iranian EFL university teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the use of *Pronunciation Power* software in English pronunciation instruction.

Student-centered inquiry can be possible through the interactive nature of the computer technology and this computer capability requires a fundamental change in the

role of the teacher. According to Baylor and Ritchie (2002), Brown (1991), and Wenglinsky (2001), teachers should not be the transmitter of information to inactive learners but they should become a guide and a facilitator and provide learners with the tools that they need to research, explore, and make meaning.

According to Ryba and Anderson (1990), teacher's roles are divided into five categories: planner, manager, facilitator, guide, and participant in the use of computers. These categories suggest that integrating computers into the classrooms changes the teacher's traditional role from a giver of information to a facilitator of information.

Students can learn more about this change of role and they can have more opportunities to engage in high quality of learning experiences that produce higher order thinking skills like synthesizing, interpreting, and hypothesizing (Brett, 1996; Davies & Crowther, 1995; Dawson, Cavanaugh, & Ritzhaupt, 2008; Eastment, 1998; Ely & Plomp, 1986; Ferguson, 1997; Hope, 1998; Hopson et al., 2002; Kornum, 1992; Lam & Lawrence, 2002; Laurillard, 1995; Ryba & Anderson, 1990; Soo & Ngeow, 1997). The researcher examined whether the Iranian EFL university teachers' roles are changed when *Pronunciation Power* software is used.

Although Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT) has much more advantages than traditional teaching methods, but some Iranian EFL university teachers use traditional teaching methods such as the audio-lingual method for their learners instead of using pronunciation software. These EFL university teachers rely too much on traditional teaching methods in textbooks without paying attention to their own students' problems (Hayati, 2010).

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First, most materials do not have any solid foundation in English pronunciation research findings. This stops teachers' understanding of the reasons for the content and suggested activities and do not match their students' needs. Second, teachers who do not have a basis in either linguistics or English pronunciation research would not be able to make right decisions about the uses of computer software for English pronunciation instruction (Derwing & Munro, 2009). The researcher investigated how the Iranian EFL university teachers' traditional teaching methods have changed through *Pronunciation Power* software.

1.3   Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. explore factors that influence the Iranian EFL university teachers' use of *Pronunciation Power* software in the instruction of English pronunciation.

2. investigate the Iranian EFL university teachers' attitudes about *Pronunciation Power* software when it is used in English pronunciation instruction.

3. investigate the Iranian EFL university teachers' beliefs about *Pronunciation Power* software when it is used in English pronunciation instruction.

4. examine whether there is a change in teachers' role when *Pronunciation Power* software is used.

5. investigate how the Iranian EFL university teachers' traditional teaching methods have changed through using *Pronunciation Power* software.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of this study were to:

1. What factors influence the Iranian EFL university teachers' use of *Pronunciation Power* software in the instruction of English pronunciation?

2. What are the Iranian EFL university teachers' attitudes about the use of *Pronunciation Power* software in English pronunciation instruction?

3. What are the Iranian EFL university teachers' beliefs about the use of *Pronunciation Power* software in English pronunciation instruction?

4. How do the Iranian EFL university teachers change their role when *Pronunciation Power* software is used?

5. How have the Iranian EFL university teachers' traditional teaching methods changed when *Pronunciation Power* software is used?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

In this study, the theoretical framework was based on Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 1983), Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al., 1989), and the Combined Model of IDT, TPB, and TAM (Kriek & Stols, 2010). Innovation Diffusion Theory explains that technology adoption is a process that takes place over time. Technology adoption depends on five key factors: the relative advantage, the complexity of the innovation, the compatibility, the trialability, and observability (Ahmad et al., 2010). According to the Theory of

Planned Behavior, an individual's behavioral performance depends on her behavioral intention and perceived behavioral control.

Technology Acceptance Model states that two individual beliefs namely perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness can impact other variables on technology acceptance. This model explains that the real use of the system is identified by the behavioral intentions of users to utilize the system and this is identified by the users' attitudes towards using the system and their perceived usefulness of the system (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). According to the Combined Model, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and the perceived compatibility affects attitudes (Kriek & Stols, 2010). These models would be further discussed in Chapter Two.

1.6   Rationale of the Study

A number of research studies have dealt with pronunciation instruction and the problems teachers and learners are faced with English pronunciation (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2013; Gooniband Shooshtari, Mehrabi, & Mousavinia, 2013; Hayati, 2010). Research has indicated that pronunciation frequently interferes with communication. When people pronounce wrongly, this can stop communication. Teachers with acceptable pronunciation are more proficient speakers than those with poor pronunciation (Faizul, 2012; Mirzaei, Jahandar, & Khodabandehlou, 2014; Morley, 1991; Rajadurai, 2001; Safari, Jahandar, & Khodabandehlou, 2013).

Lahijan, Rasht, and Rudsar students sometimes were worried about the correct pronunciation of English words because their teachers pronounced English words differently in their pronunciation classes. The researcher tried his best to help his

colleagues to pronounce English words well. The researcher had a lot of worries because his colleagues had common mistakes in their English pronunciation. The researcher investigated into the reasons for this and it was found that because of the lack of time, knowledge, skill, and experience, some Iranian EFL teachers did not focus on pronunciation (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2013; Fathiyan, 2004; Gooniband Shooshtari, Mehrabi, & Mousavinia, 2013).

Iranian EFL teachers should pronounce nearly like native speakers of English because their pronunciation will influence their students' pronunciation. That is the reason why English Translation teachers' weak pronunciation has been a serious concern for the researcher. There has not been done any research in Iran to evaluate Iranian EFL teachers' uses, attitudes, beliefs, roles, and pedagogical methods about *Pronunciation Power* software and its impact on them to learn English pronunciation. Iranian EFL teachers' uses, attitudes, beliefs, roles, and traditional teaching methods about pronunciation software were the focus of this research.

Due to the great importance of pronunciation to language learning and the poor pronunciation of some of the Iranian EFL teachers (Hayati, 2010), the researcher decided to introduce some changes into the pronunciation course for English teachers in the hope of improving their pronunciation. That was the reason why the researcher conducted this study which tried to investigate the high potential of this software on the Iranian EFL teachers' pronunciation lessons to improve their pronunciation and their students' pronunciation.

1.7　Significance of the Study

The role of pronunciation software in teaching English pronunciation is very important and just the presence of this software does not guarantee a major change in learning process. Pronunciation software should be used for teaching pronunciation because it provides an interactive and enjoyable teaching environment. When teachers find that the teaching environment is enjoyable they will be highly motivated to teach (*Pronunciation Power*, 2000).

This research investigated the impact of *Pronunciation Power* software on helping the Iranian EFL teachers to use this software to improve their pronunciation instruction, have positive attitudes and beliefs about using this software, change their roles from transmitting pronunciation knowledge to helping them to find that knowledge, and change their traditional teaching methods through this software.

One of the significant findings of this study is to promote the importance of knowing how to use *Pronunciation Power* software for pronunciation instruction. It is the role of the teachers to raise awareness among students. Some students think that there is no necessary to improve their pronunciation since they have mastered other language skills. This study can also be a form of reference for teachers as well as students. Teachers can choose good pronunciation software for their students. It is teachers' responsibility to choose good pronunciation software for the pronunciation instruction.

The findings of this study can be useful for identifying teachers' uses, attitudes, beliefs, roles, and traditional teaching methods about *Pronunciation Power* software in

the instruction of English pronunciation in the fields of word stress, sentence stress, intonation, rhythm, and specially American accent because the educational system in Iran is based on American English and in all universities, high schools and English institutes, EFL teachers teach their English courses with American accent.

The study and its results might also suggest better ways of training and equipping teachers with strategies, techniques, and approaches to use *Pronunciation Power* software for teaching pronunciation. Such training can be obtained through implementing an effective training program on how to better use *Pronunciation Power* software. Finally, since some Iranian universities are not yet fully aware of *Pronunciation Power* software and its use for English pronunciation instruction, the study might provide some forms of guidance about English language programs throughout the country that want to follow a similar way in the future.

1.8   Limitations of the Study

Four limitations of the study were kept in mind when interpreting the results presented.

1. One of the study's limitations was that its research population in quantitative study is restricted to the Iranian EFL university teachers at the English Language Translation Department of three open universities in Iran. Therefore, the findings of this research might not be generalized to a wider population within the country. Research on other EFL teacher populations might show different findings within the Iranian context.

2. Although different techniques were used to ensure the quality of this study, how the researcher's interpretation of the collected data will be perceived, reinterpreted, and generalized by the readers is beyond his control. By describing the research contexts and presenting multiple views about *Pronunciation Power* software, the researcher expects his readers can experience what he was exploring and recording, recognize the similarities of this research to their own experiences, reach their own conclusions, and apply the findings of this research to their future experiences.

3. The present study's sample of the five EFL teachers from Lahijan University in qualitative study was also a limiting factor in itself in that the findings originating from this investigation can only be generalized to them. Studies in the other universities with different participants can have various findings.

4. The main purpose of this study was to gather data concerning the Iranian EFL teachers' uses, attitudes, beliefs, roles, and traditional teaching methods about *Pronunciation Power* software. Since some Iranian EFL teachers may have received training in both computer technology and *Pronunciation Power* software on their own prior to or during their university experience, this may affect their perceptions of *Pronunciation Power* software and the results of this study.

1.9   Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined in order to be operationalised in a clear manner.

(a) Use

In this study, *use* refers to the manner of employing *Pronunciation Power* software in teaching English pronunciation by the Iranian EFL teachers.

(b) Attitudes

According to Selwyn (1997), attitude is a necessary part of computer use and initial acceptance. Attitude affects not only initial acceptance, but also future behaviors concerning computer. In this research, *attitudes* refer to the Iranian EFL teachers' emotions and behaviors about *Pronunciation Power* software in the instruction of pronunciation.

(c) Beliefs

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined belief as the positive or negative evaluations of doing particular behaviors and it affects attitudes. In this study, *beliefs* refer to the Iranian EFL teachers' opinions about *Pronunciation Power* software in teaching pronunciation.

(d) Role

It is the part taken by a participant in any act of communication. Roles impact the way people communicate with each other (Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 2002). In this research, *role* refers to the way the Iranian EFL teachers use *Pronunciation Power* software for their pronunciation instruction.

(e)   Traditional Teaching Methods

Traditional teaching methods are defined as methods that depend on lectures and notes-taking and are very teacher-centered without using any teaching aids such as computer technologies (Gregory & Chapman, 2002; Johnson & Mighten, 2005; Stuart & Laraia, 2005; Talley & Littlefield, 2009).

1.10   Summary

First, this chapter introduced the importance of pronunciation instruction and emphasized the high potential of *Pronunciation Power* software to support the instruction of English pronunciation. Second, it discussed the Iranian EFL teachers' problems about their pronunciation instruction and the role of *Pronunciation Power* software to overcome these problems. Third, it proposed the research objectives and research questions that guided the study. Fourth, the theoretical framework was discussed briefly. Fifth, rationale of the study was elaborated. Sixth, the significance of the study was discussed and it was indicated that *Pronunciation Power* software can be an effective tool to enhance the teaching and learning of pronunciation if it is used appropriately. Then, limitations of this study were discussed. Finally, some key terms were defined.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

In this chapter it is attempted to provide a general survey of the viewpoints of the related researchers and experts on the field of this study. First, the history of teaching pronunciation is discussed in detail. Second, *Pronunciation Power* software is explained. Third, use of pronunciation software in English pronunciation instruction is thoroughly explored. Fourth, adoption of information and communication technologies at the university level in Iran is elaborated in detail. Fifth, teachers' roles in computer technology integration are elaborated. Sixth, barriers to teachers' use of computer technology are completely reviewed.

Seventh, factors contributing to teachers' use of computer technology are discussed. Then, teachers' attitudes and beliefs about computer technology and pronunciation software are thoroughly investigated. Finally, Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Combined Model of IDT, TPB, and TAM are elaborated in the form of theoretical framework. The researcher hopes that these elaborations will provide a better understanding of the theoretical and practical facets of the current study.

2.2 The History of English Pronunciation Instruction

According to Busa (2008), the amount of importance that has been ascribed to L2 pronunciation instruction has considerably changed the views that non-native pronunciation mistakes should be corrected. Lambacher (1996) said that in the 50's and 60's, the aim of L2 pronunciation instruction in audio-lingual method was to obtain a native-like accent. Pronunciation instruction was based on the discrimination and production of sounds as a way of developing the recognition and articulation of L2 particular sounds.

From the late 1960's to 1980's, the importance of pronunciation in the L2 classroom was questioned by many researchers. Some stated that native-like pronunciation cannot be achieved in a second language (Preston, 1981). Unfortunately, pronunciation instruction was omitted in many language programs. In the late 1980's, the importance of pronunciation was again emphasized. In place of mimicry, people paid attention to suprasegmentals, sound articulation, and voice quality of learning a new language (Esling & Wong, 1983).

The aim was to obtain communicative competence, an L2 learner's ability to not only use grammatical rules, but to produce pragmatically correct sentences and utilize them appropriately in different contexts. Although meaningful interaction was increased through this new idea, there had been less attention on true production of L2 particular sounds (Morley, 1991; Pennington & Richards, 1986).

Because of the effectiveness of pronunciation to a large group of international people in both ESL and EFL situations after 1980's, it got a new meaning (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Gatbonton, 2005; Shimamune & Smith, 1995). Immigrant residents, refugees, students, and academic professionals needed to improve their pronunciation because they left their native countries to stay in English speaking countries to include cultural, economic, and financial opportunities (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Chaudhary, 2009; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Wong, 1986).

Because of having foreign accents, many of these L2 learners, particularly immigrants and international students in the U.S. and Canada, faced many problems in finding jobs and this caused greater demands for learning English pronunciation. New perspectives on pronunciation teaching and learning emerged due to the needs of L2 learners' pronunciation (Haslam, 2010).

Pronunciation became an integral part of communication in the 90's. The emphasis of pronunciation instruction was on suprasegmentals and how they were used to communicate meaning and meaningful practice. Understanding the learner-centered speech and self monitoring were important in the learning of pronunciation (Morley, 1991). Views about the learning of pronunciation were changed from the teachers playing the key roles in the learning process to the students doing those roles (Brown, 2003; Oxford, 2003).

Pronunciation instruction is not integrated into the teachers' classes while they integrate grammar, vocabulary, and four language skills into their classes. Many teachers think that their students learn the pronunciation through exposure to more input

in the second language and many other teachers say that it is not important to spend time and energy to teach the segmental and supra-segmental features of L2 pronunciation (Lord, 2008).

We know that the phonological system of a language is the most important feature of the speech of a foreigner. Due to the increasing demand for international communication, obtaining proficiency in a second or foreign language is a need and this proficiency should cover vocabulary, grammar, and intelligible pronunciation (Lord, 2008). In this section, the goal of English pronunciation instruction and studies on the effects of pronunciation instruction are explained.

2.2.1 The Goal of English Pronunciation Instruction

We live in a global society and English has become the true international language. Therefore, being able to speak English in this global society is a need. But what forms acceptable English pronunciation? Acceptable pronunciation can be understood based on the following basic levels (James, 2010).

Level 1: What the speaker is saying is not understandable for people. The speaker utilizes the wrong sounds when producing English words or uses the wrong prosodic features when producing English sentences. According to Celce-Murcia and Goodwin (1991), there is a beginning level for pronunciation. If the pronunciation of a speaker falls below this level, he/she will not be able to communicate without considering his/her knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

Level 2: What the speaker is saying can be understandable for people, but the speaker's pronunciation is not acceptable because he/she has a strange and heavy accent. When a speaker's pronunciation is heavily accented, it can influence the listener's understanding (Morley, 1994).

Level 3: People understand the speaker and the speaker's pronunciation is also acceptable for the people who listen to him. According to Scovel (1988), this is called comfortable intelligibility and it should be the goal of pronunciation not native-like accuracy.

What shapes acceptable pronunciation? A speaker has acceptable pronunciation when other people can understand him/her and the speaker's English is intelligible to the listeners. For some learners, the goal of learning pronunciation is the native-like accent. This may be a valuable goal, it cannot be the ideal goal of teachers who want to improve their students' pronunciation and their confidence. Having an American or British accent is not the same as acceptable pronunciation (James, 2010).

What English models can one utilize for one's students? Different kinds of models can be found for English pronunciation. One can turn on his/her TV and find channels such as CNN International, BBC, or Sky News. Through using these channels, one can hear many different people from Germany, France, and the other non-English-speaking countries. All have acceptable pronunciation and this will facilitate the process of understanding (James, 2010).