



Turkish Studies *Educational Sciences*

Volume 14 Issue 6, 2019, p. 3439-3452

DOI: 10.29228/TurkishStudies.32650

ISSN: 2667-5609

Skopje/MACEDONIA-Ankara/TURKEY



INTERNATIONAL
BALKAN
UNIVERSITY

EXCELLENCE FOR THE FUTURE
IBU.EDU.MK

Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

Article Info/Makale Bilgisi

✍ *Received/Geliş:* 23.08.2019

✓ *Accepted/Kabul:* 20.12.2019

📅 *Report Dates/Rapor Tarihleri:* Referee 1 (11.12.2019)-Referee 2 (16.12.2019)

This article was checked by iThenticate.

AN ANALYSIS OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF SPELLING RULES AND VARIATIONS IN PRONUNCIATION OF POSSESSIVE CASE

*Saliha TOSCU**

ABSTRACT

This study primarily aimed to reveal what extent Turkish pre-service English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers were aware of the spelling rules and pronunciation variations of the possessive case in English. The study involved the voluntary participation of ten undergraduate senior students in the department of ELT at a state university in Turkey. Based on a one group pretest posttest research design, the study investigated whether there were any changes in the participants' awareness of the spelling rules and pronunciation variations of the possessive case after a remedial teaching designed to increase the participants' awareness. The data were collected by the means of quantitative methods and analyzed employing non-parametric tests on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0 due to the small sample size in the study. The findings showed that the spelling and pronunciation of possessive case might be problematic for the pre-service ELT teachers, yet that the problems are likely to be overcome through the class instruction which is designed intentionally to increase the pre-service teachers' awareness. The findings from the current study give a valuable insight into the necessity of attention on the instruction of spelling and pronunciation awareness for the pre-service ELT teachers.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate Turkish preservice English Language teachers' awareness of the spelling and the variations in pronunciation of the possessive case (possessive s) in English. The



Dr., Çankaya Üniversitesi, E-posta: salihatosci@cankaya.edu.tr

study was carried out with the participation of ten preservice teachers, who were senior students at the English Language Teaching (ELT) department in a state university in Turkey. As for the selection of the participants, a convenience sampling was used.

In order to investigate the participants' awareness of the use of possessive case with regard to its spelling and pronunciation, a one-group pretest posttest experimental design was employed. Thus, the same group of participants was given a pretest to identify their awareness regarding possessive case and exposed to a treatment (also referred to remedial teaching in this paper) and then administered a posttest (the same as the pretest) to reveal the change (if any) in their awareness.

The data collection procedures involved quantitative methods. The instrument used for the data collection included two parts. The first part aimed to reveal the rules related to the spelling and punctuation of the possessive case. The second part, whereas, was to identify the awareness of its variations in pronunciation. In the first part, a 55-item test was administered to the participants. The items aimed to find out whether the participants knew how to use 'only apostrophe' or 'apostrophe + s' to show possession in English a) with proper names, b) with common nouns (singular and plural) c) to show ownership (joint and individual) and d) with ancient names and some exceptional phrases with sake. The test items were at the sentence level and in each sentence, the phrases of possession were given without the possessive case punctuation mark ('), and the participants were asked to show possession appropriately with an apostrophe or with an apostrophe + s (or both if possible) indicating the place of the apostrophe with a mark.

The second part of the pretest aimed to find out whether the participants could pronounce the possessive case attached to the test items correctly or not. The test involved fifty items grouped in the categories to identify the pronunciation of the possessive case with the words ending in a) voiceless (non-sibilant) consonants; b) voiced (non-sibilant) consonants; c) sibilant consonants; and d) with ancient names ending in -s, -ce, -z, -x. The participants took the test individually. This part of the test involved recording the participants' responses so as to identify their pronunciation of the possessive case with the words which it was attached to. All the data were examined by two analysts (the researcher and the participant teacher) by the means of the audio recordings.

After the pretest, a remedial teaching, which was completed in four 30-minute-sessions in two weeks, was done in a classroom setting. The teaching was carried out by a participant teacher, who was a native speaker of English, and involved giving detailed information about the use of the possessive case (spelling & punctuation and pronunciation) with the means of drill exercises, minimal pair exercises, tongue twisters and videos to show the articulation of the sounds. Two weeks later than the teaching, the participants were administered the test again and the changes in their scores were analyzed.

The collected data were analyzed using a Descriptive Statistics test and a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks (non-parametric) test on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0. The Descriptive

Statistics test was employed to draw conclusions about the participants' awareness regarding the use of the possessive case before the treatment and to identify the points in which the participants had difficulty. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was used to reveal the effect of the treatment-if any- on the participants' awareness comparing their scores in the pretest to the scores in the posttest.

Findings from the tests showed that before the treatment, the participants had problems with the spelling and punctuation of the possessive case. However, after the remedial teaching the participants' awareness was found to have increased because the scores in the pretest increased to a statistically significant degree in the posttest after the remedial teaching.

Concerning the participants' awareness of the pronunciation variations in the phrases with the possessive case, it was found that before the treatment, the participants had problems with the pronunciation of the words ending in sibilant consonants when the possessive case was used. However, the treatment had a positive influence on the participants' awareness, and their total scores increased statistically significantly after the remedial teaching. Based on the results from the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test, it might be suggested that the treatment helped the participants to be more aware of the pronunciation of the possessive case with the words ending in voiced and voiceless (non-sibilant) and sibilant consonants.

Overall, the current study showed that the spelling and the pronunciation of the possessive case might be problematic for preservice ELT teachers, but a class instruction to increase their awareness of its spelling and pronunciation might assist improving their understanding about how to use it in writing and how to pronounce it. Despite the limitations of the study arisen from its small sample size and research design (one group pre and posttest design), this research provides evidence that possessive case, as a grammar subject generally taught at elementary level of English, possesses some difficulties even for prospective ELT teachers with regard to its spelling and pronunciation. Thus, the findings of this study might show that the awareness of spelling and pronunciation is neglected, so the non-native speakers of English may misuse the possessive case in spelling or mispronounce it. Therefore, this study may call the instructors and the teacher trainers' attention on the importance of the instruction of spelling rules and the importance of pronunciation awareness training at schools.

Keywords: Possessive Case, English Language, Spelling Rules, Variations in Pronunciation.

İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ İNGİLİZCE İYELİK EKİNİN YAZIM KURALLARI VE TELAFFUZU İLE İLGİLİ FARKINDALIĞININ ARAŞTIRMASI

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, öncelikli olarak İngiliz Dili Eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının İngilizcede bulunan iyelik ekinin yazım kuralları ve telaffuz farklılıkları konusunda ne ölçüde farkında olduklarını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmaya, Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümünde 4. sınıf öğrencisi olarak okuyan, on Türk lisans öğrencisi gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Çalışmada, tek gruplu ön test son test deneysel araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, katılımcı gruba ilk önce ön test yapılmıştır. Bu sayede, katılımcıların çalışma öncesi iyelik eki yazım kuralları ve telaffuzu ile ilgili farkındalıkları ölçülmüştür. Ardından, katılımcıların farkındalığını artırmak için tasarlanan bir eğitim verilmiştir. Eğitim tamamlandıktan iki hafta sonra bir son test uygulanmıştır. Bu sayede, verilen eğitimin katılımcıların İngilizce iyelik ekinin yazım kuralları ve telaffuz farklılıklarına ilişkin farkındalığını ne ölçüde etkilediği ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Çalışmada veri toplama, nicel yöntemler kullanılarak yapılmıştır ve toplanan veri, çalışmadaki küçük örneklem büyüklüğü nedeniyle, Sosyal Bilimler İstatistik Paketi (SPSS) 17.0 üzerinde parametrik olmayan testler kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları öğretmen adaylarının İngilizcedeki iyelik eki yazım kuralları ve telaffuz farklılıkları ile ilgili problemlerinin olabileceğini, fakat bu problemlerin özel olarak tasarlanmış öğretim ile giderilebileceğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Mevcut çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümündeki öğretmen adayları için imla kuralları ve telaffuz farklılıkları ile ilgili farkındalık artırıcı öğretimin gerekli olabileceği konusunda öngörü kazandırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İyelik Eki, İngiliz Dili, Yazım Kuralları, Telaffuz Farklılıkları.

Introduction

Morphology is a field of study which involves the formation of the words and is divided into two as derivational morphology and inflectional morphology (Salim, 2007). Generally speaking, derivational morphology involves creating linguistic forms by using affixes (Bauer, 2008). In English, for example, suffixes which are joined to the end of the words are derivational and alter the part of speech of the words to which they are attached. Prefixes are also in the category of derivational morphemes, yet prefixes in English do not have an effect on the lexical category of a word, but they affect what a word means.

Inflectional morphology does not affect the meaning of the word like derivational morphology, but it involves “the use of linguistic means to create word-forms” (Bauer, 2008, p.197). Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin and Griner (2010) state that the connection between the sound system and inflectional morphology is very close in the regular grammatical inflections of the language. In English, words can take “eight regular morphological inflections: plural, possessive, third-person singular present simple tense, past tense, present participle, past participle, comparative degree and superlative degree” (Bauer, Lieber, & Plag, 2015, p.29). Most

morphological inflections exhibit phonological changes based on their immediate environment (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). The rules of pronunciation of “the regular plural inflection, the third-person singular present-tense inflection and the possessive inflection” all are the same, even though they differ in terms of “spelling and punctuation” from the possessive (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 248; Katamba, 1993).

The learning difficulties of those morphological inflections which English as a foreign language (EFL) learners possess have been investigated by some researchers and the possessive case has been indicated as one of the linguistic forms which EFL learners have difficulty in learning or acquiring for EFL learners. To illustrate, Sabrina (2010) revealed that language learners whose mother tongue is Arabic were not able to master the rules of possessive case in English due to the effect of their first language, and hence the learners could not have full understanding of possessiveness in English. In a different study, Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017) similarly indicated that Iraqi EFL learners lacked sufficient knowledge of possessive case in English as the learners tended to omit the possessive case in their writings where they had to use it. An analysis on the linguistic forms which Jordanian EFL learners used while translating some news headlines to English revealed that even though the learners did know the rules of possessiveness, they still misused the possessive mark omitting (where necessary) or overusing it (Al Karazoun, 2016). Also, whether the possessive case was problematic as a linguistic form to learn for Turkish ELF learners or not was investigated and it was found that the possessive case was found to be one of the linguistic forms which the Turkish elementary learners make errors in writing (Atmaca, 2016). Despite some findings regarding the difficulties which Turkish learners could have while using the possessive case at elementary level, no studies have been carried out to investigate whether the EFL learners with higher English proficiency level had full awareness of the punctuation and spelling rules of the possessive case.

Additionally, the possessive case in English has variations in pronunciation depending on the ending sounds of the words it is attached to. However, to the researcher's knowledge, the literature does not involve any studies which show the EFL learners have any awareness of the variations of the possessive case in pronunciation. Therefore, this current study intends to investigate and provide insights about specifically the preservice English language teachers' awareness of the spelling and punctuation of the possessive case in English together with its pronunciation.

Possessive Case

The possessive case in English does not indicate simply whom an object belongs to, but it shows different connections “between a noun marked for possession and a noun that follows” (Houghton Mifflin, 1990 p. 241). Possessive case in English indicates “possession (John's car), subject of an action (Amy's presentation), object of an action (The Company's owner), description or type (learner's dictionary), attribute (the character's greed), a constituent part (the book's cover), origin (Beethoven's symphonies) and amount or measure (a day's journey)” (Houghton Mifflin, 1990 p. 241).

The Spelling and Punctuation Rules of Possessive Case

English makes possessive forms of nouns by adding an apostrophe and an *s*, or sometimes just an apostrophe at the end of the word. For example, the possessive form of singular and common nouns not ending in *-s* or *-z* sound and the possessive of the irregular plurals such as *children*, *women* or *lice* are formed adding an apostrophe and an *s* to the end of the word (e.g., one's home, the president's speech, children's book, women's investments), whereas the possessive form of the plural nouns which end in an *-s* or *-z* sound is shown with an attachment of only an apostrophe to the end of the word (for example; dogs' leashes, birds' migration).

Generally, the possessive form of the proper names is given “in the same way as those of common nouns” (Houghton Mifflin, 1990, p.64). In order to form “the possessive of singular proper names”, ‘an apostrophe and an –s’ is added to the word as can be seen in the examples of *Jane’s rules* or *Tom’s presentation* (Houghton Mifflin, 1990, p.64; Merriam-Webster, 1998; Shewan, 2007). In the construction of the possessive of singular proper names ending in -s or -z sound, either ‘an apostrophe and an s’ or just ‘an apostrophe’ is added to the word (Chalker & Weiner, 1994; Elliott, Geraci, & Ebner, 2005). Thus, the usages of possessive case as *Dickens’s novels* or *Dickens’ novels* both are acceptable. However, the possessive of plural proper names is made by adding just an apostrophe (e.g., *The Browns’ house*). Classical or biblical names such as *Ramses* or *Socrates*, “which end in –s or –es are made possessive by adding just an apostrophe” (Houghton Mifflin, 1990, p.35; Shewan, 2007). These names are not used with ‘an apostrophe and an s’. Instead, they take only apostrophe to the end of the word. Their possessive forms are shown as *Ramses’ kingdom* and *Socrates’ students*. Similarly, words ending in /s/ or /z/ simply take only apostrophe when they are used with the word ‘sake’ (as in the examples: For conscience’ sake [fɔːr ˈkɒŋʃəns seɪk] or for old acquaintance’ sake [fɔːr ɔʊld əˈkweɪntəns seɪk]).

The possessive case in English can also show joint ownership or individual ownership in the possessive phrases. If two or more people possess something in common, an ‘apostrophe + s’ is taken by the last of the owners. Namely, in the possessive phrase of *Paul and Danielle’s mother*, an apostrophe and an s added to the end of the second name and this shows a joint ownership. However, if the possession is not shared, each name takes an ‘apostrophe + s’. To illustrate, the possessive phrase of *Susan’s and Ben’s rooms* shows individual ownership (Houghton Mifflin, 1990; Naphtine, 2013, p. 51; Shewan, 2007).

The Pronunciation of Possessive Case

The possessive case exhibits phonological changes based on the ending sounds it is attached to. The pronunciation rules of the possessive case are predictable since the phonological changes are affected by the last sound of the words to which the possessive case is added (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Shewan, 2007):

1. When the noun or the verb ends in a sibilant consonant (/s, z, ʃ, ʒ, ʒ or dʒ/), the inflection has an extra vowel and is realized as unstressed /ɪz/ or /əz/.
2. When the noun or verb ends in a voiced non-sibilant sound (all vowels and /b, d, g, l, m, n, r, v, w or y/), the inflection involves progressive assimilation and is realized as /z/.
3. When the noun or verb ends in a voiceless non-sibilant consonant (/k, t, p, f or θ/) the inflection also involves progressive assimilation and is realized as /s/.

(Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 395)

Although ‘only apostrophe’ or ‘an apostrophe and an s’ is possible after personal and common names ending in -s, the pronunciation does not change. No matter either ‘an apostrophe and an s’ or ‘only apostrophe’ is attached to the phrases as in the example of *the boss’s secretary* [bɔːsəz ˈsekrətəri] or the *boss’ secretary* [bɔːsəz ˈsekrətəri], the possessive case is realized as /əz/ in both of the cases.

However, ancient names or biblical names ending in -s and some words ending in /s/ and /z/ and the ones used with the word ‘sake’ are different (e.g., *Socrates’ student* [ˈsɒkrətiːz ˈstuːdnt] *[ˈsɒkrətiːzɪz ˈstuːdnt], *Moses’ Ten Commandments* [ˈməʊzɪz ten kəˈmændmənts] *[ˈməʊzɪzɪz ten kəˈmændmənts], *for appearance’ sake* [əˈpɪərəns seɪk] *[əˈpɪərənsɪz seɪk]). They are written only with an apostrophe and the possessive case with these nouns is not pronounced; in other words, an extra /əz/ sound is not realized in the pronunciation of these words (Hedge, 2010; Houghton Mifflin, 1990).

The possessive form of regular plural nouns has the zero /Ø/ allomorph. In writing, it is shown only by punctuation (Heidinger, 1984). An apostrophe is used after the plural inflection. As can be understood from the examples of *the students' book* ['stu:dnts bok] or *the student's book* ['stu:dnts bok], despite the difference in spelling, regular plural words with possessive and singular nouns with possessive inflection do not show any phonetic differences. That is, they are pronounced in the same way.

Methodology

This study aimed to reveal whether the Turkish pre-service ELT teachers were aware of the spelling rules and the pronunciation variations of possessive case in English. In aligned with this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Do Turkish pre-service ELT teachers have any difficulty in the spelling rules regarding the possessive case in English?
 - a. To what extent does an instruction aid the participants to increase their awareness of the spelling differences of possessive case?
2. Do Turkish pre-service ELT teachers have any awareness of the pronunciation variations of the possessive s in English?
 - a. To what extent does an instruction aid to increase the participants' awareness of the variations in the pronunciation of possessive s?

Participants

In the selection of the participants, a convenience sampling was employed. 10 Turkish pre-service ELT teachers participated in the study depending on a voluntary basis. They were at the age range of 20-24. Two of the participants were male while the rest was female. The participants were at the 4th year at the English Language Teaching department in a state university in Turkey and studying in the last semester to complete their undergraduate education. The language proficiency of the participants was not ascertained via a test before the treatment in this study, but it was assumed that the participants had advanced level of English proficiency. The reason for the assumption was based on the fact that the participants were already enrolled in a teacher education program with a score, the base point of which was 428.07 in a university entrance exam. The exam tested the participants' English proficiency with a multiple choice test and was administered by the student selection and placement center in Turkey.

Data Collection

The data were collected through an instrument which involved two parts, one of which was to investigate the participants' awareness of spelling rules regarding the possessive case, while the other part of which was to reveal the participants' awareness of its pronunciation variations. In the study, a one-group pretest and posttest design was followed and the same instrument was used firstly as a pretest, which was later followed by a remedial teaching, and then finally as a posttest. The details of the instrument used in the present study are as given in the following section.

Pretest

In order to identify if the participants had any problems in the spelling of possessive case and to determine the parts which they had difficulty with, a test including 55 questions was prepared. In the preparation of the items, the spelling rules and pronunciation rules of possessive case provided in a variety of resource books (Azar, 2003; Chalker & Weiner, 1994; Elliott et al., 2005; Houghton Mifflin, 1990; Merriam-Webster, 1998; Moes, 1996; Shewan, 2007) were benefitted from.

The test items were not added any ‘punctuation marks (‘an apostrophe’ or ‘an apostrophe and s’) intentionally. Instead, the participants were asked to put a mark (^) to show the noun which needs a possessive marker. In this way, finding out whether the participants knew where to put the apostrophe or apostrophe + s in the sentences was aimed to be explored. When a participant marked the noun which needs the possessive case, she/ he was asked to decide whether ‘an apostrophe + s’ or ‘only apostrophe’ should be attached to the noun. For these test items, in the beginning of the test, the participants were acknowledged that they could use both of the forms (an apostrophe + s and only apostrophe) where possible in the test. The test items were prepared based on the rules of possessive case in spelling with the words below:

- Proper names (with and without ending –s)
- Common nouns (singular and plural nouns)
- Ownership (joint and individual)
- Ancient and Biblical names and some exceptional phrases with sake

After the first part was completed by the participants, the second part of the test was administered. The second part aimed to identify whether or not the participants were aware of the allomorphs (/s/, /z/, /əz/) of possessive case. In this part, 50 test items were prepared. In the choice of the items, the final sounds ending in voiced and voiceless consonants (non-sibilant), sibilant consonants and vowels of the nouns were taken into consideration. Also, ancient and biblical nouns ending in -s were intentionally included into the test since their pronunciation is irregular when compared to common or personal names ending in -s. It was additionally aimed to investigate whether or not the participants were aware of the similarity between the singular nouns and regular plural nouns in pronunciation with the possessive case (For example, *my sister's bike* [maɪ'sɪstəz baɪk] and *my sisters' bike* [maɪ'sɪstəz baɪk] are different in spelling, but they are identical in the way both nouns are pronounced). The test items with plural (regular & irregular) and singular nouns were included in the test in order to explore whether the similarity of their pronunciation would create any problems for the participants or not. Each participant took the test individually. The students read the sentences with possessive case aloud and their voices were recorded for the analysis of the data. The findings coming out of the audio recordings enabled the researcher to find out whether the participants had any problems in the pronunciation of the possessive case or not. Also, the parts with which the participants had problems was intended to be identified.

For the reliability and validity of the test, all the test items were brought together in a set and the test was given a final touch after an evaluation process which involved the participation of three language professionals who held master's degree in English language teaching and worked in language departments in higher education. Also, a reliability test was performed on the SPSS and the reliability coefficient was found .76.

The Remedial Teaching

After the pretest, the participants' common problems with the possessive case in spelling and pronunciation were specified. Depending on the findings from the pretest, a remedial teaching was planned to be given to the participants. The teaching took two hours in total (and was carried out in four different 30-minute sessions throughout two weeks) and done by a participant teacher, who is a native speaker of English with more than ten-year experience in language teaching and one of the analysts of the data in this study. Before the remedial teaching, the researcher and the participant teacher worked on the lesson plan and they decided on what issues to cover in the class. Then they prepared and compiled the materials required in this class.

The first part of the instruction included giving information about the spelling of possessive case. In the beginning of the instruction, the participant teacher of the study explained the aim of the class for the participants. Then he gave a list of the words to the participants. The list included a hundred words and was chosen according to the spelling and pronunciation rules of the possessive case. Thus, singular common and personal nouns, ancient names, irregular and regular plural nouns were provided in the list. Firstly, the words were grouped by the participants in small groups and then the answers were checked by the teacher. After that, the participant teacher gave the general rule of possessive case and the exceptional usages for the nouns ending in *-s*. For each word, some examples were given at phrase level and sentence level. Then the participant teacher focused on the pronunciation of the possessive case by drawing a tree diagram on the board, through which he showed the allomorphs of the possessive case.

Then the participant teacher explained that *-s* as a part of the possessive case sometimes causes problems for non-native speakers of English because of the variations in its pronunciation. He expressed that the pronunciation depends on the last sound of the noun which is usually consonant. He also explained the differences between voiced and voiceless consonants. In order to make his explanations clearer for the participants, the teacher used some educational videos to inform the participants about the articulation rules of voiced and voiceless consonants. Next, the participant teacher explained how to produce sibilant sounds and modeled in the class getting participants to articulate the same sounds with him. After that, all these sounds were practiced in the class through all of the words given in the list with and without apostrophe (and an *s*). Thus, the participants realized how the ending sounds affect the pronunciation of the possessive case, and they practiced the same sounds. After giving out the basic rules, he focused on the exceptions. He took the examples of possessive case attached to plural nouns, ancient names and nouns ending in *-s* and some exceptional expressions with *sake* from the list. He gave more examples for each category on the board and warned the participants about the rules related to each category. All the rules were explained giving a number of examples and practiced through the activities including recognition tests and rewriting exercises, tongue twisters and minimal pairs (The minimal pairs were chosen from the list and used to show the accurate comprehension of the pronunciation of the possessive case in class time. The tongue twisters and minimal pair test exercises were created by the researcher. Other materials used in the class were compiled from grammar reference books or resource books as aforementioned).

The Posttest

14 days later than the remedial teaching which was designed to overcome the problems the participants had in spelling and pronunciation of the possessive case, a posttest was administered to the participants. The same test items with the pretest were used in the posttest. In the next part, there is detailed information about how the data were analyzed in the current study.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the means of quantitative methods using a descriptive statistics test and a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks (non-parametric) test because of the small sample size of the study. In the analysis of the first part of the test, the participants' response to each question was entered onto the SPSS as correct or incorrect, and thus their total score was calculated on the software.

The analysis of the data collected through the second part of the instrument involved the analysis of the audio recordings of the fifty sentences which were read aloud by the participants. The records were analyzed by two analysts, one of which was the researcher of the present study and the other one was the participant teacher who was involved in the remedial teaching. The analysts examined each sentence recorded by the participants one by one and filled in a checklist

putting a check mark on it for each correct pronunciation of the participants. After that, all the data were fed onto the SPSS with a score depending on the in/correctness of the participants' pronunciation.

Findings and Discussion

This study involved the investigation of the pre-service ELT teachers' awareness of spelling rules and pronunciation variations of the possessive case. The findings derived from the analyses are presented in this section. Firstly, the findings and discussion regarding the spelling and punctuation rules of the possessive case; later, regarding its pronunciation variations are presented below.

Participants' Awareness of the Spelling and Punctuation of the Possessive Case

This research firstly intended to reveal whether the pre-service ELT teachers had any difficulty in the spelling and punctuation of the possessive case. In order to explore the first research question, the first part of the pretest was analyzed using descriptive statistics on the SPSS. The findings from the analysis of the pretest (See Table 1) showed that the participants did have recognition of the spelling and punctuation rules of possessive case ($M= 38.5$, $SD= 6.3$). When the participants' scores for the categories of proper names ($M= 7.9$, $SD= 3.4$), common nouns ($M= 19.6$, $SD= 2.9$), ownership ($M= 8.7$, $SD= 4.2$), and ancient names and some exceptional expressions ($M= 2.3$, $SD= 3.7$) were taken into consideration, the participants seemed to have had difficulty in recognizing how to use the possessive case especially with the ancient names and also some expressions used with 'sake' because the participants' mean score for the test items evaluating their use with the possessive case was lower than the others ($M= 2.3$, $SD= 3.7$). Therefore, the results from the pretest gave insights about the possibility that the participants' level of recognition of the spelling and punctuation of the possessive case was high among the participants, but the participants lacked full knowledge of all the rules.

In order to examine the difference between the participants' scores in the pretest and the posttest after the remedial teaching, the scores of the two tests were compared using a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test on the SPSS. The results of the test were as shown in the table below:

Table 1: The Statistics related to the Spelling Rules of the Possessive Case

	N	Pretest	SD	Posttest	SD	P (2 tailed)
Proper names	10	7.9	3.4	11.1	3.5	1.1
Common nouns	10	19.6	2.9	21.3	.6	.05
Singular nouns	10	6	.3	7	.52	.05
Plural nouns	10	15	2.8	15	.48	.16
Regular plural nouns	10	9	2.5	7	.32	.41
Irregular plural nouns	10	6	1.1	6	.42	.34
Ownership	10	8.7	4.2	8.9	5.1	.67
Joint ownership	10	5	1.2	4	1.15	.21
Individual ownership	10	5	4.2	4	1.4	.93
Ancient and Biblical names	10	2.3	3.7	8.8	1.47	.007
Overall	10	38.5	6.3	49	6.33	.011

As shown in Table 1, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test indicated a statistically significant increase in the awareness of the spelling rules of the possessive case following the remedial teaching, $z= -2.56$, $p = .011$, with a large size effect ($r= .8$) (according to Cohen's d criteria, 1988). The participants' scores on the spelling rules of the possessive case increased from the pretest ($M= 38.5$) to the post ($M= 49$). Considering the result here, it might be suggested that the treatment had

a positive effect on the participants' awareness of the spelling rules regarding the possessive case in English. When analyzed in detail, it was revealed that the treatment affected the participants' awareness of the use of common nouns and ancient names, specifically. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference between the scores from the pretest ($M= 19.6$) to the posttest ($M= 21.3$) in the use of possessive case with common nouns, $z= -1.89$, $p= 0.5$, with a medium size effect ($r= .5$). In a similar way, the difference between the pretest ($M= 2.3$) and posttest ($M= 8.8$) scores concerning the use of possessive case with ancient names (together with the exceptional expressions investigated in the study) was statistically significant, $z= -2.67$, $p= .007$ with a large size effect ($r= .8$) according to Cohen's d (1988). Such a result indicates that the remedial teaching assisted the participants to be more aware of the use of the possessive case with ancient names. Depending on the increase in their awareness of how to write the ancient names, it might be concluded that the remedial teaching helped the participants to comprehend whether or not and how to use a punctuation mark (') together with such nouns.

Participants' Awareness of the Variations in the Pronunciation of the Possessive Case

The second part of the pretest was used to investigate whether the participants had any problems in the pronunciation of the possessive case or not. The test items were grouped in the four categories below:

- a) Words ending in a voiceless (non-sibilant) consonants
- b) Words ending in a voiced (non-sibilant) consonants
- c) Words ending in a sibilant consonant
- d) Ancient names ending in -s, -ce, -z or -x and exceptional expressions used with the word 'sake'

In the investigation of the participants' knowledge of the variations in the pronunciation of the possessive case, the categories above were taken into consideration. The analysis of audio recordings was done to figure up whether the test items were pronounced correctly or incorrectly by the participants. The participants were given a score out of 50 in the second part of the test depending on their responses. The results were analyzed in descriptive statistics on the SPSS (See Table 2).

Table 2: The Statistics related to the Variations in the Pronunciation of the Possessive Case

	N	Pretest	Std. Dev.	Posttest	Std. Dev.	P (2-tailed)
Voiceless (non-sibilant) consonants	10	10	.67	11.5	1.2	.02
Voiced (non-sibilant) consonants	10	10	3.6	14	1.9	.04
Sibilant consonants	10	8.5	3.4	11	1.8	.005
Ancient names ending in -s, -ce, -z, -x and expressions with <i>sake</i> .	10	10	.82	10.5	.82	.91
Overall	10	39.5	6.7	44	4.4	.009

The Descriptive Statistics test indicated that prior to the remedial teaching, the participants' awareness was high with a score of 39.5 out of 50 in the pretest. Compared to the other categories, the score belonging to the category of the words ending in sibilant consonants was found to be lower ($M= 8.5$; $SD= 3.4$). This result suggested that the participants had less awareness of the pronunciation variation of possessive case [əz] with the words ending in the sounds such as /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ or dʒ/ when the possessive case is used.

In order to examine the difference between the participants' scores in the pretest and the posttest after the remedial teaching, the results were compared using a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test on the SPSS (See Table 2). The comparison of the total pretest ($M= 39.5$, $SD= 6.7$) and the posttest

($M= 44$, $SD= 4.4$) scores indicated that the remedial teaching brought about a statistically significant increase in the participants' awareness of the pronunciation variations of the possessive case, $z= -2.60$, $p= .009$ with a large size effect ($r= .8$). Thus, it is likely to infer that the teaching helped an increase in the participants' awareness of the variations in how the words are pronounced when the punctuation mark of the possessive case is attached to them.

The examination of each category showed that the scores related to the words which end in voiceless (non-sibilant) consonants ($z= -2.23$, $p= .02$), voiced (non-sibilant) consonants ($z= -2.09$; $p= .04$) and sibilant consonants ($z= -2.82$, $p= .005$) increased statistically significantly with a large effect size ($r>.5$). It is noteworthy to mention here that the teaching might have increased the participants' awareness of the pronunciation of the possessive case with sibilant consonants because the participants' scores increased dramatically from the pretest ($M= 8.5$, $SD= 3.4$) to the posttest ($M= 11$, $SD= 1.8$). The only category which the teaching did not cause a change from the pretest to the posttest was the pronunciation of the words with ancient names or some expressions with 'sake' since the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference, $z= -1.108$, $p= .91$. Regarding this finding, it should be borne in mind that the participants' awareness of the pronunciation of such words was not low in the pretest, but the teaching seemed not to have affected their recognition much. This result might suggest that more examples or practice might have been necessary for the participants to have higher recognition of the pronunciation of those words.

Conclusion

This study revealed that the spelling and pronunciation of the possessive case might be problematic for prospective ELT teachers, but that those problems are likely to be overcome through the class instruction designed intentionally to increase the instructors' awareness.

The findings of this study indicated that the class instruction helped raise the pre-service English language teachers' awareness in the spelling and punctuation rules of the possessive case in English together with the variations in its pronunciation. Although the participants in the present study were assumed to be proficient learners of English because they were prospective language teachers, they were lack of full awareness of how to use the possessive case in English in writing and how to its pronunciation varies. A short remedial teaching helped them to raise their awareness. It seems that the teaching positively affected the participants' awareness. As Bigelow (2000) indicates, the drawing learners' attention to one linguistic form which they don't know or partially know helps them to focus on those forms. Despite the fact that the participants' awareness was raised in the spelling and punctuation rules of the possessive case, it was found that the treatment did not have a significant effect on the participants' awareness of the pronunciation of the possessive case when used with ancient names or some expressions with *sake*. This finding might attract the attention to the importance of exposure. The ancient names given in this paper were not among the words which could be thought as common words the participants could often encounter. Therefore, the lack of exposure to those words might have produced such an effect.

The spelling of the words bears importance as it affects good writing skills even if today computers provide opportunities such as spell check programs (Berninger & Fayol, 2008). Scott (2000) states that spelling problems are really disappointing for the educators, so teaching spelling is a necessity; however, due consideration is not given to its education at schools adequately. In the current study, it was found that the prospective ELT teachers did not have full awareness of the use of the punctuation mark of the possessive case in English, which suggests the necessity of the integration of such spelling instruction trainings for the educators.

Another aspect of the current study investigated the awareness of pronunciation variations and showed that the prospective language teachers lacked the full recognition of how to pronounce

the words to which the punctuation mark of the possessive case is attached. The importance of the pronunciation in language teaching arises from the fact that correct pronunciation is essential in communication (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Therefore, considering that pronunciation involves only producing the sounds accurately would be quite superficial (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). The importance of pronunciation instruction lies in the fact that it improves the language users' overall communication ability and it is the language teachers' responsibility to increase learners' awareness of pronunciation (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). When the recognized importance of pronunciation for an intelligible communication is taken into consideration, teaching pronunciation in class attracts great attention in language teaching classes. The literature indicates that teachers or "teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) who are non-native speakers of English and who expect to serve as the major model and source of input in English for their students" have a great responsibility for providing a good model of pronunciation for their learners (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 9). The findings of the study gave insights about the pre-service teachers' lack of awareness of pronunciation, which is likely to be an indication of the lack of integration of such an awareness raising training in their own education. The findings from this study revealed how a pronunciation awareness training might be essential in language teaching departments.

There are a number of limitations of the present study, so the findings should be interpreted with caution. One limitation of the study derived from its small sample size. The study was conducted only on 10 participants. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the findings. On the other hand, had the study been conducted on more participants, the study would give more reliable results and provide a better understanding of the population. Also, the research design which the present study was based on (one group pretest posttest design) lacks a control group, which inhibits from attributing the change in the participants' scores to the treatment. Some intervening variables such as the participants' realization of the use of the possessive case in the pretest, for example, might have produced an effect on the scores, as well.

In spite of the limitations of this study, it provides evidence that the possessive case, as a grammar subject taught at elementary level in the schools, has some difficulties even for prospective ELT teachers in terms of spelling and pronunciation. This situation suggests that the teaching of the possessive case may be neglected, so the non-native speakers of English may be misusing the possessive case in spelling or mispronounce it. Therefore, this study may call the instructors and the teacher trainers' attention on the importance of the instruction of spelling rules and the importance of pronunciation awareness training at schools.

REFERENCES

- Al Karazoun, G. A. (2016). A linguistic analysis on errors committed by Jordanian EFL undergraduate students: A case of news headlines in Jordanian newspapers. *English Language Teaching*, 9(8), 170-189.
- Al-Shujairi, Y. B. J. & Tan, H. (2017). Grammar errors in the writing of Iraqi English language learners. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 5(4), 122-130.
- Atmaca, Ç. (2016). Error analysis of Turkish learners: A case study. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 232, 234-241.
- Azar, B. S. (2003). *Fundamentals of English grammar* (3rd Ed.). New York, the USA: Pearson Education.
- Bauer, L. (2008). Derivational morphology. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 2(1), 196-210.

- Bauer, L., Lieber, R., & Plag, I. (2015). *The Oxford reference guide to English morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berninger, V. & Fayol, M. (2008). Why spelling is important and how to teach it effectively. Retrieved from <http://www.literacyencyclopedia.ca/index.php?fa=items.show&topicId=234>
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation* (2nd Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chalker, S. & Weiner, E. (1994). *Oxford dictionary of English grammar* (1994). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.
- Elliott, K., Geraci, C., & Ebner, D. (2005). *Barron's how to prepare for the COOP/ HSPT/ TACHS*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series.
- Gilakjani, A. P. & Ahmadi, M. R. (2011). Why is pronunciation so difficult to learn? *English Language Teaching*, 4(3),74-83.
- Hedge, M. N. (2010). *A coursebook on scientific and professional writing for speech –Language Pathology*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar.
- Heidinger, A. V. (1984). *Analyzing syntax and semantics: A self-instructional approach for teachers and clinicians*. Virginia: Gallaudet University Press.
- Houghton Mifflin. (1990). *The American heritage book of English usage: A practical and authoritative guide to contemporary English*. Boston, the USA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Katamba, F. (1993). *Morphology*. Basingstroke, England: Macmillan Press LTD.
- Merriam-Webster. (1998). *Merriam-Webster's manual for writers & editors*. Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated.
- Moes, G. J. (1996). *Applications of grammar: Structure for communication effectively*. Arlington, Heights, Illinois: Christian Liberty Press.
- Napthine, M. (2013). *Grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary*. St Kilda, Victoria: Insight Publications.
- Sabrina, L. (2010). *Errors in Applying Rules for English Possessive Case. The Case of 3rd Year Students, Constantine* (M.A Thesis). Retrieved from <https://bu.umc.edu.dz/theses/anglais/LEM1165.pdf>
- Salim, B. (2007). *A companion to teaching of English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributers.
- Scott, C. (2000). Principles and methods of spelling instruction: Applications for poor spellers. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 20(3). 66-82.
- Shewan, E. (2007). *Applications of grammar: Principles of effective communication*. Arlington, Heights, Illinois: Christian Liberty Press.