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***The Role of Audio Stories in  
Enhancing EFL Learners'  
Pronunciation***

***(the dark [l] and the clear [l])***

*A case study: third year LMD students of English at Relizane  
University*

**Submitted by: Mehdi Djoher Supervised by: Dr. Sarnou Dalal**

**Board of examiners**

**Dr. Sarnou Dalal**

**Mrs. Bekrileila**

**Ms. Kharoubi Mounira**

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## Dedication

### I WISH TO DEDICATE THIS WORK

*To all my family members, my mother and father*

*To my dear sister and brothers*

*To my lovely nieces: Nourhane and bouthaina*

*To my handsome nephew: Med. Soukman*

*To my dear friends*

*And to all those who love me*

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## Abstract

Teaching pronunciation has long been neglected in many EFL classrooms which leads to a series of difficulties and obstacles for English learners concerning the articulation of sounds due to the absence of using audio materials inside the classroom .Audio materials use in learning a foreign language is vitally important due to its positive reflection on the acquisition of an accurate pronunciation through a direct exposure to the target language as it is produced by the native speakers . The present research tries to find out the importance of using audio stories in improving EFL student's pronunciation accuracy. The current study hypothesizes that the use of short stories by EFL teachers as a listening input leads to a better achievement of an accurate pronunciation of the dark [l] and the clear[l] to a large extent. For this reason quasi-experimental design was designated to the third year LMD students at the department of English, University of Relizane. The use of the chosen method would provide us with a wide-ranging representation of the reflection of listening to audio stories on the acquisition of the accurate pronunciation of the dark [l] and clear [l] for the two groups (experimental and control group). The results revealed in this work shows the significant role of listening to audio stories on acquiring accurate pronunciation of the dark [l] and clear [l], by EFL learners. Subsequently, this dissertation confirms the importance of listening to audio-stories on improving EFL learners' pronunciation accuracy.

**Key words:** Pronunciation, articulation of sounds, audio-stories,EFL learners

## **List of abbreviations**

**LMD: License, Master, Doctorate**

**EFL: English as a foreign language**

**% : percentage**

**Vs: verses**

**EXP: experimental**

**SPSS :Statistical Package for the Social Sciences**

## **List of tables**

<b>Table (01) :</b> The experimental and the control groups ‘scores in the pre-test.....	25
<b>Table (02):</b> The experimental and the control groups mean score in the pre-test.....	26
<b>Table (03):</b> Results and score differences of the control and experimental group in the post-test.....	28
<b>Table (04):</b> Control group’s mean (Pretest Vs. Posttest).....	28
<b>Table (05):</b> Experimental group’s mean (Pretest Vs. Posttest).....	30
<b>Table (06):</b> Experimental group pre-test Vs post-test scores differences.....	32
<b>Table (07):</b> The paired sample T-test for the experimental group.....	33
<b>Table (08) :</b> The mean of the experimental group Vs control group in the post-test .....	33
<b>Table (09) :</b> An independent sample test .....	35

## List of figures

<b>Figure (01):</b> Articulatory Differences in /l/ Velarization (Recasens,2012,p.369).....	17
<b>Figure (02):</b> Experimental Group Procedures.....	19
<b>Figure (03):</b> Control Group Procedures.....	20
<b>Figure (04):</b> Example of the Lateral Dark [ɫ] in the Word “child”.....	21
<b>Figure (05):</b> Example of the Dark [ɫ] in the Word “felt”.....	22
<b>Figure (06):</b> Example of the Clear [l] in the word “closet”.....	23
<b>Figure (07):</b> The Native Speaker’s Pronunciation of the Clear [l] in the Word “life” .....	24
<b>Figure (08):</b> The Native Speaker’ s Pronunciation of the Dark [ɫ] in the Word “deal”.....	24
<b>Figure (09):</b> Experimental Vs. Control Group scores (Pretest).....	26
<b>Figure (10):</b> The scores differences of the control group in the pre-test and post-test.....	29
<b>Figure (11):</b> The Scores Frequencies of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and the Post-test.....	31
<b>Figure (12):</b> The Scores differences of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and the Post-test.....	32
<b>Figure (13):</b> The Scores Frequencies of the Control Group and the Experimental Group in the Post-test.....	34

## Content

Dedication	VII
Acknowledgment	VII
Abstract	VII
Liste of abbreviation	V
Liste of tables	VII
Liste of figures	VII
Content	VII
General introduction	01
Chapter One: Listening to Audio-Stories	05
Introduction	05
1 Definition of Listening Skill	05
1.2 Listening Processes	07
1.2.1 Bottom-up Process	07
1.2.2 Top down process	07
1.3 Definition of Audio-Stories	08
1.4 Advantages of Using Audio-Stories	08
Conclusion	09



Chapter Two: Reflection on Pronunciation.....	10
Introduction .....	10
1 Definition of Speaking Skill.....	10
1.2 Speaking Sub-Skills.....	11
1.3 Definition of pronunciation.....	12
1.4 Factors Effecting Pronunciation.....	12
1.4.1 Internal Factors.....	13
1.4.2 External Factors.....	15
Conclusion.....	17
Chapter Three: Field Work.....	18
Introduction.....	18
1Methodology.....	18
1.1.1 Research Participants.....	18
1.1.2 Instruments .....	19
1.1.3 The Procedure.....	19
1.2 The Research Design.....	19
1.2.1 The Pre-test Phase.....	20
1.2.2 The Treatment Phase.....	21
1.2.3 The Control Group.....	22

1.2.4 The Post-test Phase.....	22
1.3 Scoring and Data Analysis.....	23
1.3.1 The Pre-test: Control Group Vs. Experimental Group (independent Sample t-test).....	25
1.3.2 Control Group Pre-test vs. Control Group Post-test.....	27
1.3.3 Experimental Group Pre-test vs. Experimental Group Post-test (Paired Sample t-test).....	30
1.3.3.1 Paired Sample t-test.....	32
1.3.4 The mean of the Experimental Group Vs. Control Group in the Post-test.....	33
1.3.4.1. An Independent t-test: Experimental Group Vs. Control Group in the Post-test.....	35
1.4 Discussion of the Results.....	36
1.5 Pedagogical Implications.....	37
Conclusion.....	38
Limitations of the study.....	38
General conclusion.....	39
List of references.....	40
Appendices .....	43
Appendix A.....	43
Appendix B.....	44

Appendix c.....45

# General Introduction

## Introduction

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the main skills we need to communicate in any language. Each skill is related to other skills. Listening is regarded by many scholars as the most important one. Feyten(1991) maintains that more than 45% of communication is spent on listening. It can have effects on speaking, reading, writing and grammar. Before the learners can speak they need to be able to listen.

Pronunciation and listening comprehension are closely interrelated by a unified system within which individual sounds are regularly related. Acquiring comprehensible pronunciation for EFL learners is one of the key supplies for language proficiency. As Bradley-Bennet (2007) maintains, the key to develop student's pronunciation is listening, but listening should be presented in a context that is both comprehensible to the learners and relates to their lives beyond the classroom.

Nowadays, mastering the foreign language is the main concern that most of EFL learners share. This high attention has increased due to the exposure to the target language, and to the complications that learners may face at whatever time they want to communicate whether with foreigners or with each other using the English language. Many foreign language learners are concerned about speaking and believe that their pronunciation of the sounds of English is an obstacle to communicate with others. They do believe that pronunciation is essential for speaking.

Besides, listening is not only a matter of innate ability, but also it is a matter of how to develop that inborn capacity in order to improve the learners' pronunciation accuracy. As some researchers believe, audio stories play a significant role for students to learn pronunciation. They can support the development of learners' ability in listening and speaking as well as pronunciation, as it can be enjoyable for students and provide them with authentic practice in listening to native speaker speech. Furthermore, the use of audio stories in teaching EFL learners helps to evidence that an effective listening process leads to an effective articulation.

Teaching pronunciation is necessary for all English learners, yet English pronunciation is ignored in many classrooms in different countries. It has no position in our country either which is the main reason why the Algerian EFL learners encounter many problems concerning articulation, because they do not have much opportunities to be exposed to the real language as it produced by the native speakers. Since English is a foreign language, learners avoid using it outside the classroom which is resulted in a bad pronunciation. Therefore, Algerian teachers should plan some activities that should be interesting and should get students' attention. For instance, they are required to use audio-stories inside the classrooms which is considered as a useful way to increase their motivation level toward learning pronunciation, develop students' second language and to improve their pronunciation accuracy.

The present study aims at investigating the role of the audio-stories in fostering learners' pronunciation and enhancing their motivation in learning pronunciation. It seeks to answer the following questions:

-1-Does listening to audio-stories help EFL learners improve their pronunciation of the dark [l] and the light [l] ?

-2-Do audio-stories enhance learners' motivation to learn pronunciation?

As an answer to this question, we first hypothesize that:

-H1- presenting short stories as a listening input leads to a better achievement of an accurate pronunciation of the dark [l] and the clear [l]

-H2-Audio-stories have no effectiveness on enhancing learners' motivation in order to learn pronunciation neither on improving their pronunciation of the dark [l] and the clear [l].

Therefore, in order to achieve the aim of our research, a quasi-experimental design will be administered to second year LMD students of English Department at Ahmed Zabana University of Relizane (Bourmadia). The selected sample (40 students from 230) consists of two groups: the control group and the experimental group. Both groups will be pretested in order to assess their pronunciation accuracy level. The pre-test is a kind of a short story and short sentences that contain the dark [l] and the clear [l] in which learners are asked to read them. After that, the Praat (software) will be used in order to record their voices. Later on, the experimental group will take the treatment for two sessions, where participants will listen to short audio stories and have some phonetic instructions, each session will take one hour. However, the control group will not receive any kind of treatment (they will be taught in a normal way without listening to audio stories). Furthermore, a post-test which is different from that of the pre-test will be administered to both groups in order to test their pronunciation development.

The present study is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical one, It is about listening to audio stories, in which we define the listening skill, and mention the main listening processes. After that, we introduce audio- stories in general, its use, and advantages. The second chapter deals with the pronunciation of the dark [l] and the clear [l]. at the beginning, we shed light on the definition of speaking skill, and its

sub-competencies. After that, a part of this section deals with the definition of pronunciation. Besides, it introduces factors that affect pronunciation. The third chapter (field work) concerned with the analysis of the data gathered and interpreting results .

# Chapter one: Listening to Audio Stories

## Introduction

Nowadays, there is a great emphasis education theorists and practitioners are putting on the listening skill since it plays a significant role in teaching and acquiring the foreign language. So, this high attention has increased because of the difficulties that learners face whenever they want to communicate. Therefore, many researchers shed light on Audio Stories as a tool that can help in developing the learners' listening process as well as improving their speaking skills and precisely their pronunciation.

## 1.1 Definition of listening skills

“The word of listening is defined as making an effort to hear something: to pay attention or heed” Downs (2008). In other words, Downs (2008) argues that listening is the way learners pay attention to what is being said. In her opinion, listening is an active process that includes using a variety of processes which are: attending, understanding, interpreting, responding, and remembering. Furthermore, listening is an important source of knowledge. It is recognized as the ability of transforming and interpreting the spoken messages that are received by the ears, from the daily life situations .As well as it plays a significant role in teaching EFL classrooms. This process guides EFL learners to an effective communication. Therefore, the listening skill can be classified into two different types: Extensive listening, and intensive listening.



- **Extensive listening**

Extensive listening has to do with the learner's fluency. In other words, the learner has to master vocabulary, grammar...etc., and later on he must combine them together to form a meaningful conversation. So, fluency depends on the listener's ability of understanding whatever he is exposed to whether in an audio tape, a text, a song...etc.

Harmer (1998) states that extensive listening is the way students practice their own listening outside the classroom. Students should enjoy listening to an audio material because they can understand them without the teacher's help. Also, students can depend on CDs and tapes so that they are going to have another chance to listen to their course books dialogues that they have already provided to them inside the classroom. In addition, learners must be stimulated to listen to the English language films with sub-titles, because this helps students to acquire the foreign language.

In brief, extensive listening, and according to the *Extensive Reading-Central* (2012), includes:

Listening to massive amounts of text which learners can understand reasonably smoothly

- \* high levels of comprehension
- \* Listening without being constrained by pre-set questions or tasks
- \* Listening at or below one's comfortable fluent listening ability

So, extensive listening aims to make learners enjoy developing their listening skills. ([Harmer's chapter on Listening - WordPress.com](#)).

- **Intensive listening**

In contrast to extensive listening, intensive listening aims to develop the learners' specific listening skills, and more precisely to raise the learners' attention about the spoken language. Intensive listening occurs whether in classrooms or laboratories. It exists mostly when teachers guide their students and provide them with help concerning listening problems that they face, and try to highlight them (Harmer, 2007). So, intensive listening according to the Extensive Reading-central (2012) is:

- \* Listening for specific information
- \* Listening for the exact words of a phrase or expression
- \* Listening for details
- \* Listening to mimic a text.

## **1.2 Listening processes**

In the listening process, there are two distinct strategies. This is devoted to as bottom-up, and top-down.

### **1.2.1 Bottom-up process**

Richards (1990) states that "bottom-up processing refers the use of incoming data as a source of information about the meaning of a message" (p. 50). According to him, the bottom-up process deals with the perception of sentence components, i.e., recognizing the meaning of sounds, words, sentences, clauses...etc., until reaching the meaning of the whole message.

### **1.2.2 Top-down process**

"Top-down processing, on the other hand, refers to the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message" (Richards, 1990: 51). In contrast to the bottom-up process, Richards (1990) points out to the Top-down as the process of using

the listeners' previous knowledge to attain meaning as whole, not attaining the meaning of individual words.

### **1.3 Defining audio-stories**

The term audio-story is a combination of two words: audio and story. By definition, audio is sound within the aural range accessible to humankind. Nowadays, audio stories can be used to many reasons, and the most important one is the exposure to the real language of native speakers by EFL learners. Rubin (2015) points out: "audio stories are an engaging form of communication that combines speech and music into a compelling narrative". That is to say, audio stories are the process of telling stories through sound and sound effects only. Furthermore, audio-stories are broadly accredited to progress in portable equipments (electronic devices) for instance smart phones, tablets, and multimedia entertainment systems. Thus, EFL learners find it easy and enjoyable to listen to those audio stories.

### **1.4 Advantages of using audio-stories in EFL classrooms**

The effective use of audio stories in EFL classrooms is surely beneficial for both learners and teachers. Firstly, as Rodero (2012, as cited in Eckert, 2016) claimed that: "Audio stories that use sound effects and sound shots enhance the learner's attention and creation of visual images significantly compared to those without them" (p. 16). In other words, using audio-stories in EFL classrooms develops learning and listening environments, and provides learners with an imaginary trip inside their minds. As it enhances learners' pronunciation, since the s/he is exposed to the natural voice. On top of that, EFL teachers can use audio stories as a guideline to his/her lecture or,

they can use it at the end of the course as a reward. Moreover, the EFL teachers depend on audio-stories in improving learners' vocabulary through memorization. Learners can enrich their vocabulary whenever they listen to those stories because each time they learn some new words. Finally, audio stories can raise interest even for those learners who are not attracted to reading.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, audio-storytelling is a perfect implement for any EFL classroom. Listening to audio stories aids EFL learners to improve the target language pronunciation. Due to the fact that they are exposed to the real language as it is created by the native speakers. Besides, using audio stories in EFL classrooms increases learners' interest toward learning the foreign language, and also enhances their speaking skills. This point is further discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter two: reflections on pronunciation**

## **Introduction**

Being able to speak English as a target language fluently and accurately seems to be quite essential for all EFL learners. However, students face a lot of obstacles when communicating with each other or with native speakers. One of these obstacles is mispronunciation, misunderstanding, or misinterpretation of the speaker which may lead to a communication breakdown. Furthermore, learners' mispronunciation occurs due to various factors that affect their oral language, and as a consequence it affects their speaking proficiency.

### **1.1 Definition of Speaking Skill**

Mastering the foreign language is the aim of every EFL learner. Speaking is one of the most important language skills as it plays a significant role in sharing ideas and thoughts among individuals. Torcky (2006) defines speaking as follows: "It is the means through which learners can communicate with others to achieve certain goals or to express their opinions, intentions, hopes and viewpoints" (p. 13). So, the main objective of EFL learners is to be able to contribute and to speak the target language in order to strengthen their oral communication.

However, there are some researchers who describe speaking as a hard task. They argue that EFL learners find it so hard to master the foreign language, and face a lot of difficulties even after studying it many years at schools. Bueno and McLaren (2006, as cited in Alonso, 2011), point out:

"Speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face. In spite of this, it has traditionally been forced into the background while we, teachers of English, have spent all our classroom time trying to teach our students how to write, to read and

sometimes even to listen in a L2 because grammar has a long written tradition”.

(p. 321) .On the whole, the speaking skill is a very important process that EFL learners need to acquire in order to master and shape the target language.

## **1.2 Speaking Sub -Skills**

Torky (2006) claims that learners must be able to express themselves in a given context in order to be proficient in mastering the foreign language. She points out to several speaking skills or competencies that help to achieve this aim, which are:

- **Linguistic Competence**

Torky (2006) states that learners must be skillful in using pronunciation, i.e., their pronunciation must be clear. Additionally, students have to use correct grammar and proper lexis.

- **Discourse Competence**

At the beginning, learners have to be able to use a well-organized discourse. It must be clear and unified. Besides, they have to be competent in handling discussion and cooperating efficiently in order to avoid the communication breakdowns.

- **Pragmatic Competence**

EFL learners have to be proficient in using a variety of functions that are related to the same context and register.

- **Huge Fluency**

Speaking smoothly without any complications, and with a suitable degree of speech

speed.

### **1.3 Definition of Pronunciation**

Pronunciation plays a fundamental role in learning and improving the target language. Poposka (2016) argues that pronunciation is the key factor of language in its universal notion, and she claims that pronunciation should be defined in relation to different perspectives. Poposka (2016) states some of the various points of view concerning pronunciation definition, which are:

- The act or manner of pronouncing; uttering of speech
- A way of speaking a word especially a way that is accepted or generally understood
- A graphic representation of the way a word is spoken, using phonetic symbols. (p. 200).

Moreover, Dauer (1993, as cited in Ummah, 2014) states that “pronunciation is the act of producing the sound of speech including articulation, vowel, formation, accent inflection and intonation, often with reference to the correctness or acceptability of the speech sound” (p. 10). Furthermore, Adult Migrant English Program research center (AMP; 2002) points out, Pronunciation refers to the production of sounds that we use to make meaning. it includes attention to the particular sounds of language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (Suprasegmental aspects). (p.1)

In other words, AMP research center argues that even if these two aspects, suprasegmental and segmental structures, are treated separately; it is necessary to know that they work hand in hand in a given context whenever someone speaks.

### **1.4 Factors effecting pronunciation**

In fact, there are several factors that affect the learners’ pronunciation.

These factors can be classified into: internal factors and external factors.

### **1.4.1 Internal Factors**

Zhang (2009) states that internal factors can be categorized also into: biological factors, individual differences, and individual efforts and goal setting.

- **Biological Factors**

They are branded into three features: age, ear perception, and aptitude

- 1) Age**

There is a difference between young learners and adult learners concerning the acquisition of the accurate pronunciation. Nonetheless, this does not mean that adult learners cannot get accurate pronunciation as well. They have to work much harder because their brains' plasticity reduces. That is to say, age has a great impact on English pronunciation. Furthermore, (Nation and Newton (2009), as cited in Zhang, 2009) claim that:

Usually, if the learner began to speak in the second language before the age of six there will be little or no accent. If the learner began to speak between the age of seven and eleven, the learners likely to have a slight accent. If the learner began to speak after age of twelve, the learners almost always have an accent (p. 78). This is the reason behind the acceptance of the idea that learners find it so hard to acquire the foreign language after maturity.

- 2) Ear Perception**



One of the most important factors that affect the learners' acquisition of the foreign language is the "ear perception". Zhang (2009) claims that the hearing abilities differ from one person to another. That is to say, there are learners who have a strong hearing capacity, they can hear sounds in a very clear way which help them in reproducing the native speakers' pronunciation smoothly. Whereas, there is that kind of learners who do not have that ability. However, Zhang argues that the ear perception has nothing to do with the learner age. He claims that it is natural that learners may lose some of their capacities whenever they become older.

### **3) Aptitude**

Foreign language aptitude is the person's ability to learn a foreign or a second language very rapidly, and with no troubles (Wen, 2011). According to Carroll (1962, 1981) four components constitute language aptitudes, which are:

- Phonemic coding ability (i.e. the ability to identify and retain sounds and link them to phonetic symbols).
- Grammatical sensitivity (i.e. The ability to analyze language and figure out rules)
- The ability to learn inductively (i.e. to infer and generalize linguistic structures from language samples).
- Memory (i.e. The ability of rote learning activity needed to internalize something) .(Celce-Murcia,Brinton,&Goodwin ,1996,p17).

Hence, aptitude has an important role in improving learners' foreign language.

Although, Zhang (2009) argues that all individuals have a language aptitude ability, but they differ only in the degree of that aptitude capacity. Also, he claims that we cannot say that those people who have a sophisticated level of language aptitude will get to the top, and people with an inferior level of language aptitude will go pear-shaped.

- **Individual Differences**

Zhang (2009) states that learners' different personalities affect the way they acquire the foreign language pronunciation. He argues that extroverted learners are more likely to acquire the target pronunciation rather than introverted learners, because extroverted learners are not afraid of making mistakes, which is not the case with the introverted learners who face always the fear of failure. Besides, extroverted students are friendlier; they tend to work with others which leads them to practice the target language, so they become more familiar with it which aids to improve their pronunciation very quickly. (p. 40-41)

- **Individual Efforts and Goal setting**

Generally speaking, the main goal of each EFL learner is to master the foreign language in order to communicate with others. Zhang (2009) points out: "we must always remember that teaching never causes learning, but rather creates the conditions in which learning can occur" (p. 42). Besides, he emphasizes that pronunciation is really a very hard task that learners can acquire in a few days, but it is not something impossible that learners cannot achieve. Though, as much time learners spend in practicing the target language pronunciation, the better results they will get.

### **1.4.2 External Factors**

External factors can be classified into three aspects: learners' native language, exposure to target language, and educational factors.

- **Learner's Native Language**

Universally, the learners' native language affects their pronunciation of the foreign

language. Zhang (2009) states that students' mother tongue reflects the way they pronounce a certain word in the target language, and this is due to the differences that are found between the two languages. In other words, learners find a lot of complications in articulating some sounds, for the reason that some of those sounds do not occur in their native language. (p. 43)

- **Exposure to the Target Language**

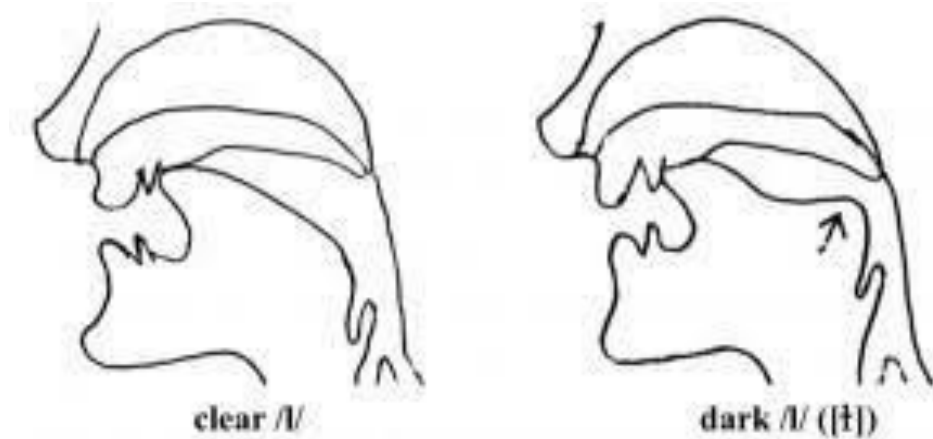
Zhang (2009) shows that the acquisition of English language pronunciation is related to the amount of exposure to it as it is produced by the native speakers. That is to say, this depends on the learner himself, i.e., on the situation in which the learning process occurs. In other words, Zhang argues that it does not matter whether learners live in a native country or not, it is a matter of how much time they listen to the foreign language, and how much time they use it. Zhang (2009), states "the more they spend their time for listening and speaking English the better their English pronunciation will be" (p. 44). Thus, learner's pronunciation accuracy depends on the surrounding environment where the target language takes place.

- **Educational Factors**

At the start, the system of education is responsible for students' learning process. Worthy educational structure provides a lot of chances for learners to be exposed to the target language, through creating a suitable learning environment. Additionally, EFL teachers' accent reflects the learners' pronunciation, because learners take teachers as an exemplary in order to improve their pronunciation. That is why; teachers should work on their pronunciation initially. (Zhang, 2009)

**figure:1**

## Articulatory Differences in /l/ Velarization



Source: Recasens, 2012, p.369

### Conclusion

To end with, it is important to acknowledge that pronunciation is one way that leads to an effective and successful communication. That is why, many researchers shed light on the investigation of some factors that may influence the EFL learners' pronunciation. As a result, these identifying concepts help foreigners to overcome their difficulties when they are introduced to the target language.

## Chapter three: field work

## **Introduction**

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of listening to audio-stories on acquiring accurate pronunciation of the two allophones of the English consonant L sound .As it is mentioned in the title,this chapter is about the field work of the dissertation. In other words, this part includes the research methodology,the research design, scoring, data analysis, discussion of the results and pedagogical implications.

## **1 Methodology**

### **1.1.1 Research Participants**

The sample of this study is third year LMD students' at the English Department of RelizaneUniversity. The selected sample comprises forty(40) students of different gender (male and female) , they are between the ages of twenty(20) to twenty three (23). Likewise, the selection of third year students was preferred for several reasons. The first reason was that third year students have experienced learning through audio supports. Additionally, they are aware of the significance of listening comprehension unlike the first year who are only caring about the new atmosphere in the University, and the second year who are attracted to speaking English rather than listening to it. At first, the sample was divided into two groups; a control group and an experimental group.Each group contains twenty (20)students. Actually the sample was supposed to be made up of sixty (60) students, in which each group covered thirty (30) students. However, there were a lot of absences in both groups during each test. Therefore, the sample size was reduced from sixty to forty students .

### **1.1.2 Instruments**

In order to gather reliable data that help to accomplish the aim of our research, a quasi-experimental design was designated for third year LMD students. The use of the chosen method will provide us with a wide-ranging representation of the reflection of listening to audio stories on the acquisition of the accurate pronunciation of the dark [ɹ] and clear [ɹ] for the two groups.

### 1.1.3 The Procedures

Under the goal of collecting dependable data, an experiment was conducted over four sessions, i.e., one session for the pretest, one session for the posttest and two sessions for the treatment period. First of all, participants were pretested in order to assess their pronunciation accuracy level of the dark [ɹ] and clear [ɹ] (the dependent variable).

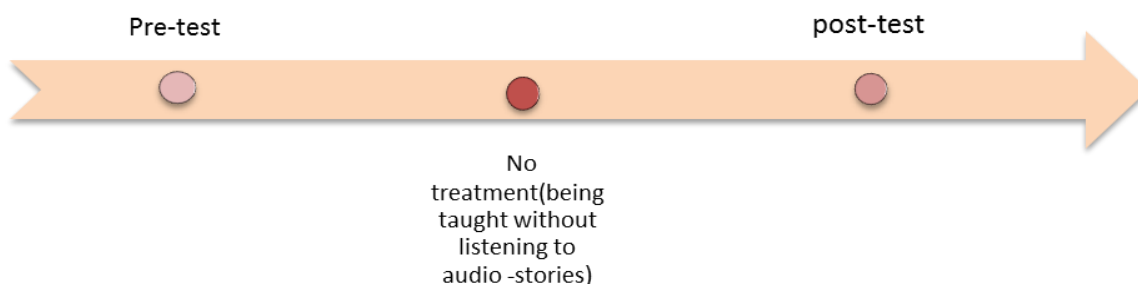
After that, a period of treatment was only taken by the experimental group unlike the control group. Later on, a post-test was managed for both groups in which the results were gathered using a software known as the “Praat” (is a free computer software package for the scientific analysis of speech in phonetics).

## 1.2 The Research Design

**Figure 2.**  
**Experimental Group Procedures**



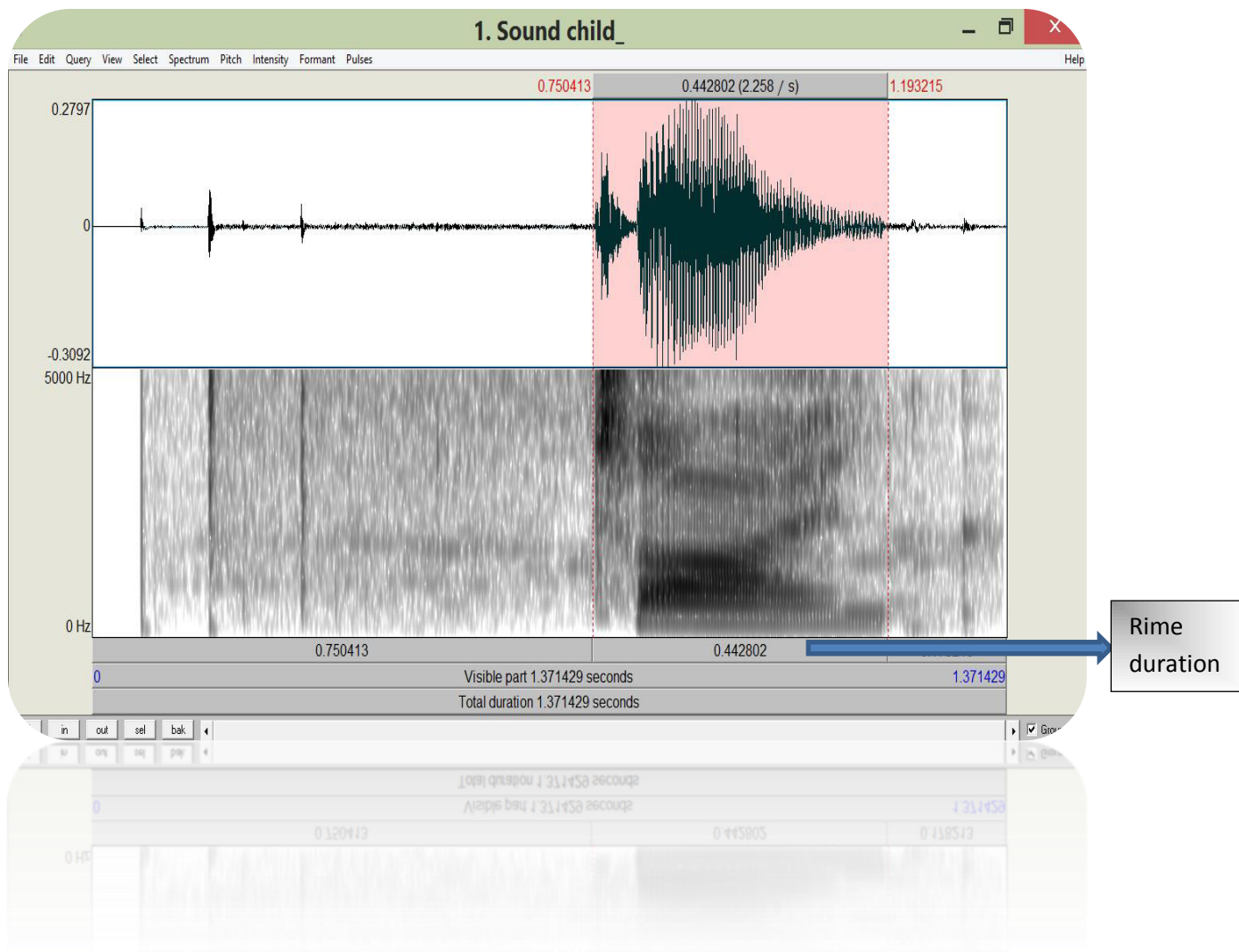
**Figure 3.**  
**Control Group Procedures**



### 1.2.1 The Pre-test Phase

The experiment used intends to show the positive effect of donating short audio stories on obtaining correct pronunciation of dark [ɪ] and light [i]. At the outset, students in both groups were requested to read a passage derived from a short story named “The Secret Garden– There is no one left (chapter one)” that was written by Frances Hodgson Burnett (1911). Plus short sentences (See Appendix A). After that, their voices were recorded using the Praat. The highest focus here was raised toward the rime duration (The length of a syllable of the dark [ɪ] and the clear [i]). Throughout the pretest, EFL learners found themselves unable to pronounce the two sounds correctly. Sometimes they pronounce the dark [ɪ] similarly to the clear [i] i.e., they spend the same duration for pronouncing the two sounds. Yet from time to time they pronounce them differently but in a wrong way, i.e., they spent a rime duration that is not accurate neither for the dark nor for the clear [i].

**Figure 4.**  
**Example of the Lateral Dark [ɪ] in the Word “child”**



### 1.2.2 The Treatment Phase

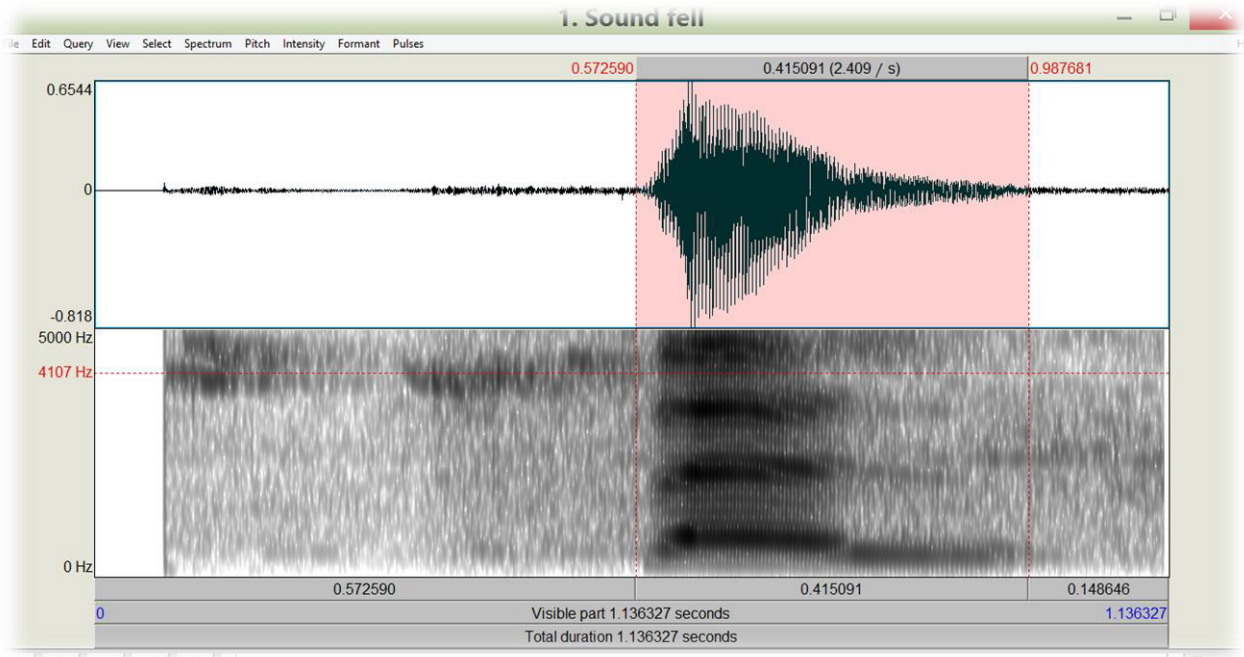
After dealt with the pretest, and after getting the authorization of oral expression teacher, students in the experimental group received the treatment in two sessions, i.e. each session took one hour (60 minutes). In this period students were provided with audio-stories(See Appendix C), they were asked to listen carefully in order to be having an opportunity to improve their pronunciation of both the dark and the clear [l] through listening to the accurate one. Besides, they discussed the story being listened. In contrast, students in the control group were taught the oral expression without receiving any kind of treatment .



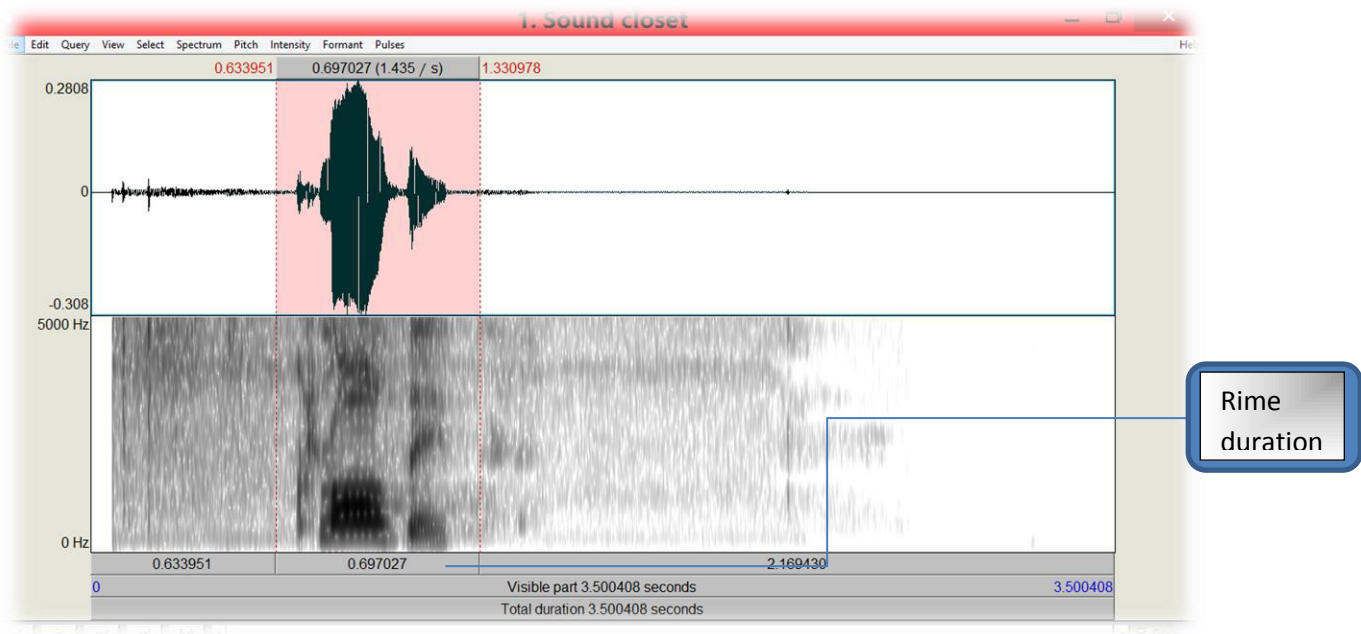
### 1.2.3 The Post-test Phase

Once the treatment period has finished, a posttest was administered to both the experimental group and the control group in order to scrutinize the progress that participants had made during the period of training . This test was a kind of a passage taken from a story entitled “ The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”(chapter one), the title of the passage is “Cheeky Tom” written by Mark Twain (1876),plus single words (see Appendix B). For the period of the posttest a sort of progression was observed in experimental group learners’ pronunciation of the two allophones ,particularly in pronouncing the single words. Though, it was not the case with the control group learners.

**Figure 5**  
**Example of the Dark [l] in the Word “fell”**



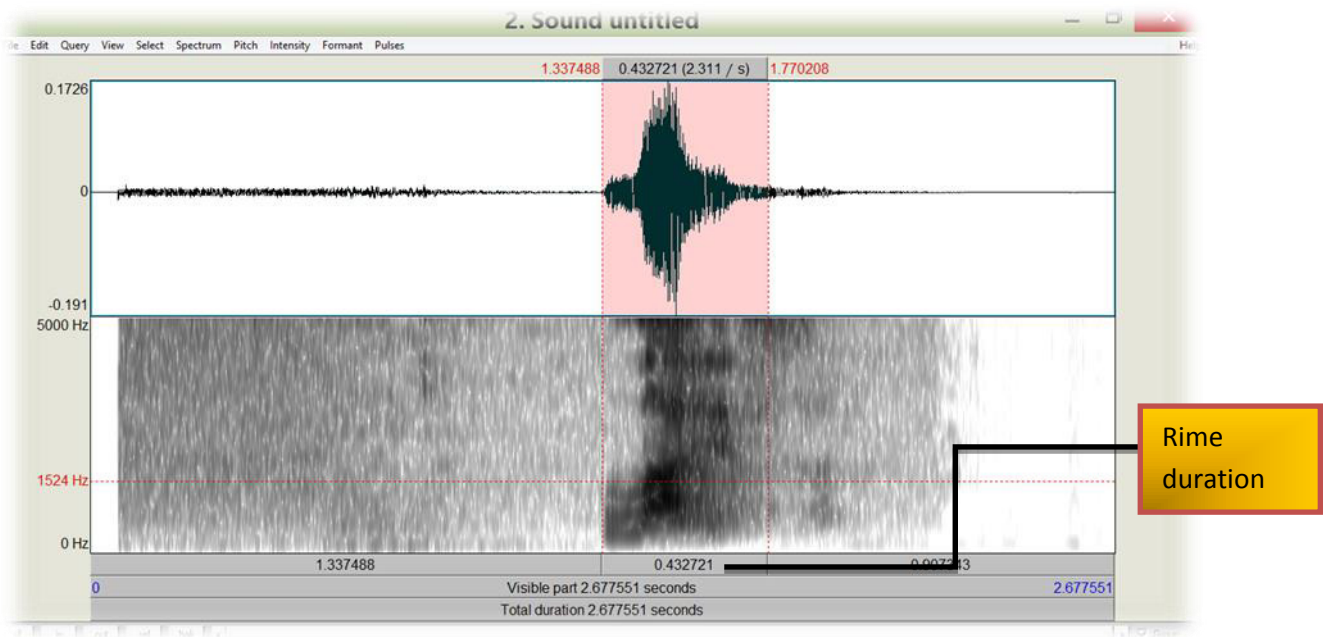
**Figure 6.**  
**Example of the Clear [l] in the word “closet”**



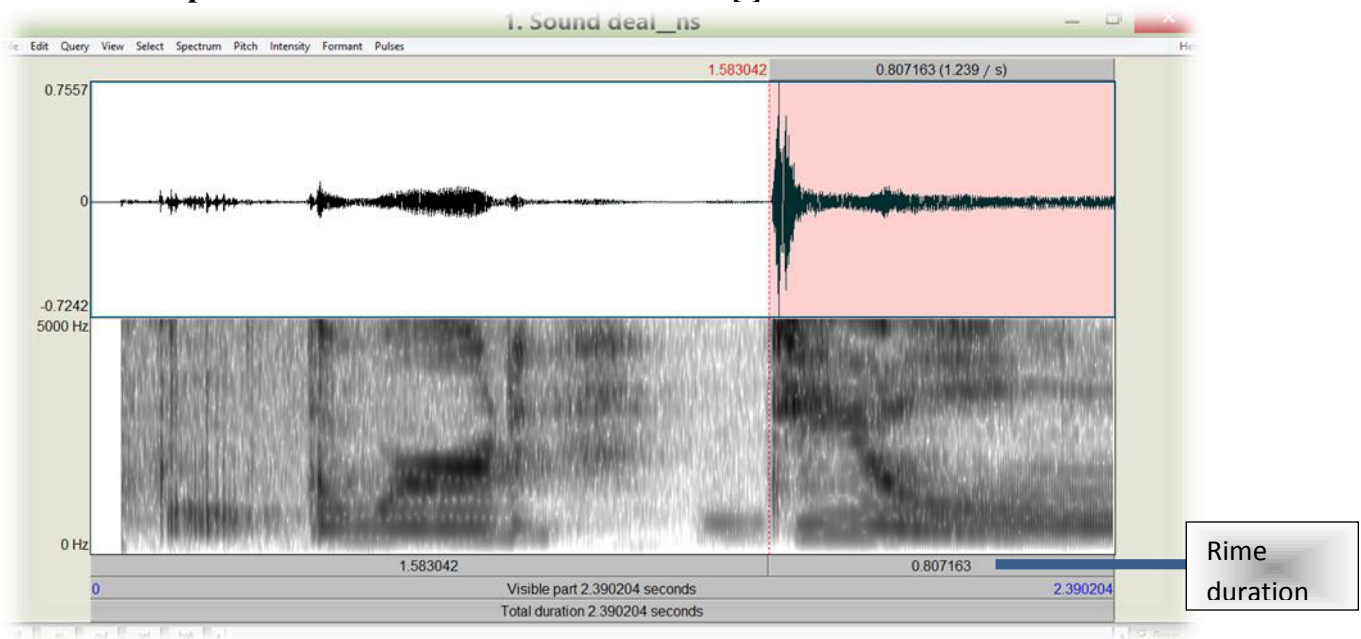
### 1.3 Scoring and Data Analysis

At the end of the posttest, participants were evaluated by giving them scores out of six (see table 1 and 3) immediately after comparing the recorded voices of the learners' pronunciation of the L sound (the clear [l] and the dark [l]) to the native speaker's pronunciation. Yet, in order to ensure the improvement of EFL learner's pronunciation of the two allophones, we based our investigation on the native speaker's voice, and also we have analyzed the rime duration of two words containing the consonant L sound "life" and "deal" as examples.

**Figure7.**  
**The Native Speaker's Pronunciation of the Clear [l] in the Word "life"**



**Figure8.**  
**The Native Speaker's Pronunciation of the Dark [l] in the Word "deal"**



From this two figures we have noticed that the native speaker has spent 0.43s in pronouncing a perfect light [l] in the word "life" (see figure 7), while he spent 0.80s to produce an ideal dark [l] for the word "deal" (see figure 8). In fact, this analysis paved the way to our research to be concrete.

**Table 1**  
**The Experimental and Control Groups ‘scores in the pre-test**

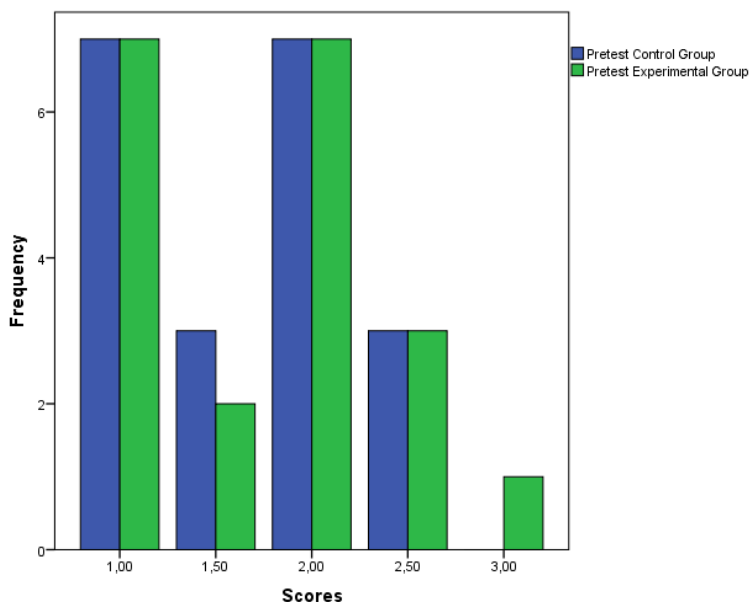
Pre-test				
Students	Control group	Experimental Group	Rime duration (second)	
			Control	experimental
1	2	2.5	1.27	1.16
2	1	2	1.30	1.21
3	1	1	1.16	1.02
4	1.5	2	1.04	1.10
5	2.5	1.5	0.80	0.95
6	2.5	2.5	0.16	0.15
7	1.5	2	0.91	0.87
8	2	2	1.08	1.09
9	1	1	0.65	0.63
10	2.5	2.5	1.31	1.23
11	1	1	1.50	1.45
12	1	1	1.72	1.65
13	2	2	0.99	1.11
14	2	1	0.80	0.99
15	1	1	1.27	1.09
16	1.5	2	1.49	1.30
17	2	1.5	0.99	0.85
18	2	3	0.49	0.23
19	1	2	1.10	1.01
20	2	1	0.85	1.05
Total	33	34.5	20.88	19.14

### **1.3.1 The Pre-test: Control Group Vs. Experimental Group (Independent Sample t-test)**

In order to compare between the control and the experimental group in the pre-test, learners ‘scores were calculated. As well as we have calculated the rime duration spent by students in each group for the pronunciation of the two allophones (see table 1). Furthermore, the data collected, i.e. the learners’ scores, were used in calculating the means of both groups (see table 2). The mean is calculated using a software for analysing data and running statistical tests called “SPSS” (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

**Figure 9**

**Experimental Vs. Control Group scores (Pretest)**



**Table 2**

**The experimental and the control groups' mean score in the pre-test**

*Group Statistics*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. ErrorMean
Pretest Score1	Pretest Control Group	20	1,6500	,56429	,12618
	Pretest Experimental Group	20	1,7250	,63815	,14269

In order to calculate the Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) Results, we have to use the following formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

N: stands for the total numbers of students in one group.

$\sum x$ : stands for the total number of data that was gathered from the pre-test.

$\bar{X}_1$ : stands for the mean of the Control Group.

$\bar{X}_2$ : stands for the mean of the Experimental Group.

$$\text{So: } \bar{1} = 33 / 20 = 1.65$$

$$\bar{X}_2 = 34.5 / 20 = 1.72$$

From figure 9, we can notice that 1 and 2 are the most frequent scores in both the experimental and the control groups in the pre-test.

This remark can be confirmed from table 1. Moreover, from the second table we can notice a slight difference between the mean of the two groups. The control group's mean is 1.65 whereas the mean of the experimental group is 1.72. As a result, we assume that the level of both groups is nearly the same. Concerning the rime duration of the phoneme /l/ in both groups, it is to some extent the same too. This observation is realized in table 1, precisely in the total duration ( Exp=19.14s \_C=20.88s)

### **1.3.2 Control Group Pre-test vs. Control Group Post-test**

To check if there is any kind of progression in the control group's scores in the post-test (see table 3), we have calculated the posttest's mean and the mean of the pre-test of the same group using the SPSS (see table 4) then we compared them with each other. Additionally, we have calculated the rime duration that has been spent. at last we have point out the learners' scores differences between the two tests for approving the development. (See figure 10).

### **Table 3 Results and Scores Differences of the Control and Experimental group in the Post-test**

	Post-test
--	-----------

Students	C.pre	C.post	E.pre	E.post	Rime duration (second)			
					C.pre	C.post	E.pre	E.post
1	2	2	2.5	4.5	1.27	0.99	1.16	0.62
2	1	1	2	5	1.30	1.15	1.21	0.20
3	1	1.75	1	3.75	1.16	1.02	1.02	1.04
4	1.5	1.5	2	4.5	1.04	1.10	1.10	0.99
5	2.5	2	1.5	5	0.80	0.98	0.95	0.42
6	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	0.16	0.94	0.15	1.20
7	1.5	1.5	2	5.5	0.91	1.30	0.87	0.22
8	2	2.25	2	5	1.08	0.96	1.09	0.30
9	1	1	1	5.25	0.65	1.60	0.63	0.27
10	2.5	1	2.5	4.75	1.31	1.62	1.23	0.34
11	1	1	1	4	1.50	1.56	1.45	0.50
12	1	1.75	1	4	1.72	1.03	1.65	0.49
13	2	2	2	5	0.99	1.01	1.11	0.29
14	2	2	1	4.5	0.80	1.02	0.99	0.31
15	1	2.5	1	5.5	1.27	0.99	1.09	0.27
16	1.5	1.5	2	5	1.49	1.07	1.30	0.45
17	2	1	1.5	4.75	0.99	1.21	0.85	0.32
18	2	2	3	4.25	0.49	1.02	0.23	0.37
19	1	2	2	5	1.10	1.05	1.01	0.44
20	2	1.25	1	5.25	0.85	1.30	1.05	0.40
Total	33	33.5	34.5	93.5	20.88	22.92	19.14	9.44
Diff	+0.5		+59		+2.04		-9.7	
Mean	1.65	1.67	1.72	4.67				
The mean $\bar{d}$	+0.02		+2.95					

**Table 4**  
**Control Group's Mean (Pre-test Vs. Post-test)**

*PairedSamplesStatistics*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. ErrorMean
Pair 1 C Group Pretest	1,6500	20	,56429	,12618
C Group Posttest	1,6750	20	,50719	,11341

In order to calculate the mean( $\bar{X}$ )result of the control group in the post-test, we have to apply

the following formula:  $\bar{X} = \sum x / N$

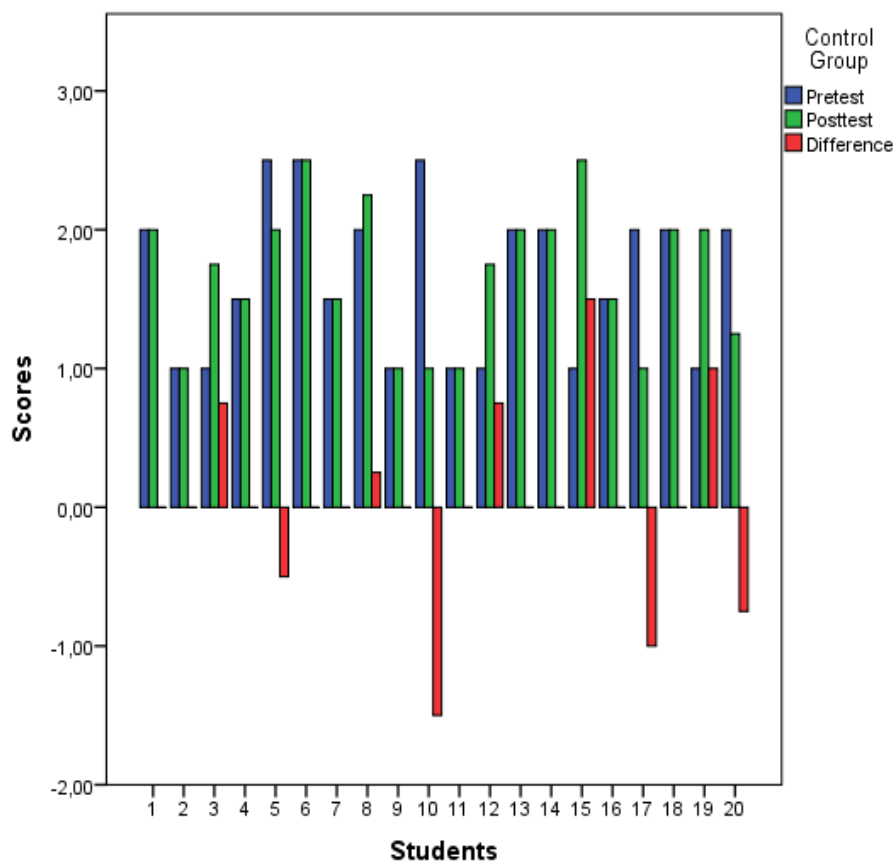
$\Sigma$ : stands for the total number of the data collected in the post-test of the control group

N: refers to the total number of students

So:  $\bar{X} = 33.5/20 = 1.67$

**Figure 10.**

**The scores differences of the control group in the pre-test and post-test**



A very insignificant development has been shown in both figure 10 and table 3 concerning learners' scores in the post-test. Farther, only students 3,8,12,15 and 19 from a total number of twenty have proved the improvement. Besides, the mean of the control group has increased from 1.65 in the pre-test to 1.67 in the post-test, i.e. the mean  $\bar{d} = +0.02$  (which is not an absolute development).



### 1.3.3 Experimental Group Pre-test Vs. Experimental Group post-test (Paired Sample T-test)

In order to identify the scores' differences between the results of both the post-test and the pre-test in the experimental group, we have calculated the mean of the post-test (see table 5) and compared it with that of the pre-test to ensure if there is any improvement.

**Table 5**  
**Experimental Group's Mean (Pretest and Posttest)**

<i>Paired Samples Statistics</i>					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Experimental Group Pretest	1,7250	20	,63815	,14269
	Experimental Group Posttest	4,6750	20	,62880	,14060

From Table 5, we notice that the mean of the experimental group increased from 1.72 in the pre-test to 4.67 in the post-test with a mean difference of 2.95 ( $d^- = +2.95$ ), and we can calculate the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) of the post-test using the following formula:

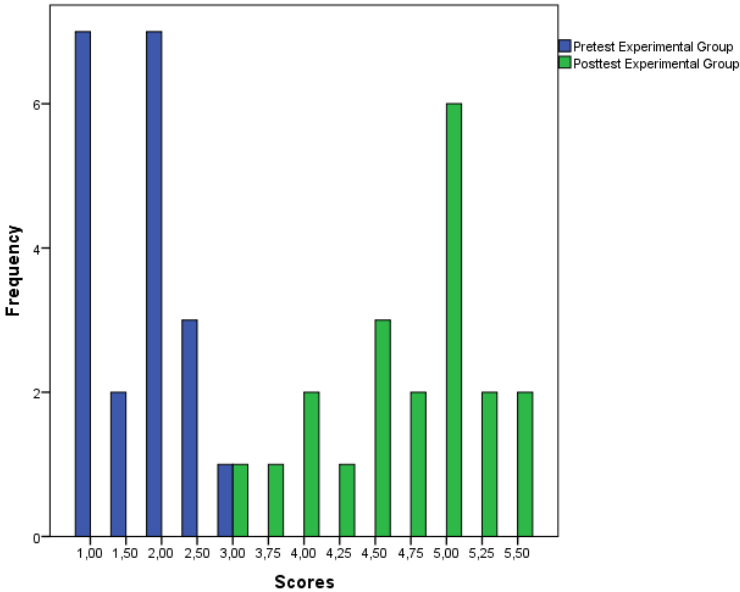
- $\bar{X} = \sum x / N$
- $\sum$  = Stands for the total number of data that was gathered from the post-test in the Experimental Group
- $N$  = Stands for the total number of students

So:  $\bar{x} = 93.50 / 20 = 4.67$

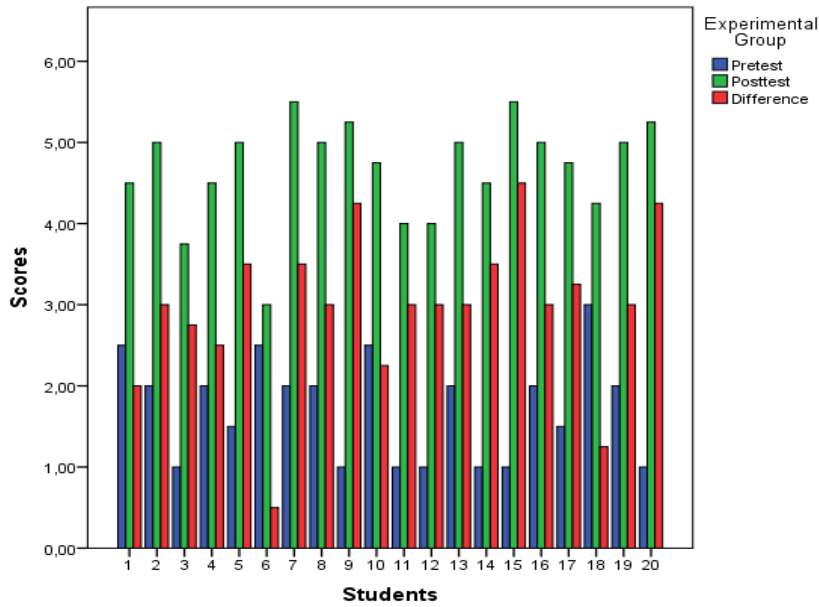
A very clear development in learners' post-test scores is seen clearly from the third table. Moreover, figure 11 shows that the most frequent scores that learners in experimental group have gained are: 4.5, 4.75, 5, and at last 5.5 out of six. That makes a huge difference from the scores of the pre-test in which the most frequent scores were 1 and 2. In addition to all of this results, we can add that the sum of the rime duration of the post-test differs from that of the pre-test ( $d^- = -9.70$  s). Therefore, in

the light of this results we ensure that the treatment period had had a very positive effect on learners' acquisition of the pronunciation of the dark [ɪ] and the clear [i]. Besides, this improvement was proved in the mean difference between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group. Although in the light of these results we can say that the period of treatment really affects in a positive way the learners' acquisition of the pronunciation of the dark [ɪ], and the clear [i]. Besides, this enhancement was improved in the mean difference between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group. Though, this comparison is not enough for making sure of the positive impact of listening to audio-stories on learners' pronunciation of the phoneme /l/. as a result, a paired sample T-test was designed to assess the learners' achievement and to see whether we accept or reject the Alternative hypothesis or the Null one.

**Figure 11**  
**The Scores Frequencies of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and the Post-test**



**Figure 12**  
**The scores differences of the Experimental Group in the pretest and the posttest**



### 1.3.3.1 The paired Sample T-test

With the aim of knowing if there is an absolute difference between the post-test and the pre-test scores of the same group, a t-test was conducted .

#### 1.3.3.1.1 Control Group Pretest vs. Control Group Posttest (case 1)

**Table 6**  
*Paired Samples Test*

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pa ir 1	Control Group Pretest - Control Group Posttest	-.0250	,66836	,14945	-,33780	,28780	-,167	19	,869

Since P value is greater than 0.05, we failed to reject the null hypothesis. It means that there is no significant difference between the means.

### 1.3.3.1.2 Experimental Group Pretest vs. Experimental Group Posttest (Case 2)

**Table 7**  
*Paired Samples Test*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Paired Sample 1	Exp Group Pretest – Exp Group Posttest	-2,9500	,95490	,21352	-3,39691	-2,50309	-13,816	19	,000

P value = 0.000 is less than 0.05. So, we reject the null hypothesis and we accept the alternative one. We can say that there is a significant difference between the means. Consequently, we can deduce that the improvement that was achieved by the experimental group in the post test did not occur by chance, actually it occurred due to listening to audio-stories that has a progressive effect on learners' pronunciation of both the clear [l] and the dark [ɫ].

### 1.3.4 The mean of the Experimental Group Vs. Control Group in the Post-test (An independent T-test

**Table 08**

*Group Statistics*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score4	C Group Post-test	20	1,6750	,50719	,11341

Exp Group	20	4,6750	,62880	,14060
Post-test				

To calculate the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), we use the following Formula:

$$\bar{X} = \sum x / N$$

So:  $\bar{X}1 = \sum x / N$

$\bar{X}1$ : refers to the mean of the control group in the post-test

N: refers to the total number of students in the control Group

$\sum x$ : stands for the sum of scores of the control group in the post-test

$$\bar{X}1 = 33.5 / 20 = 1.675$$

$$\bar{X}2 = \sum x / N$$

$\bar{X}2$ : stands for the mean of the experimental group in the post-test

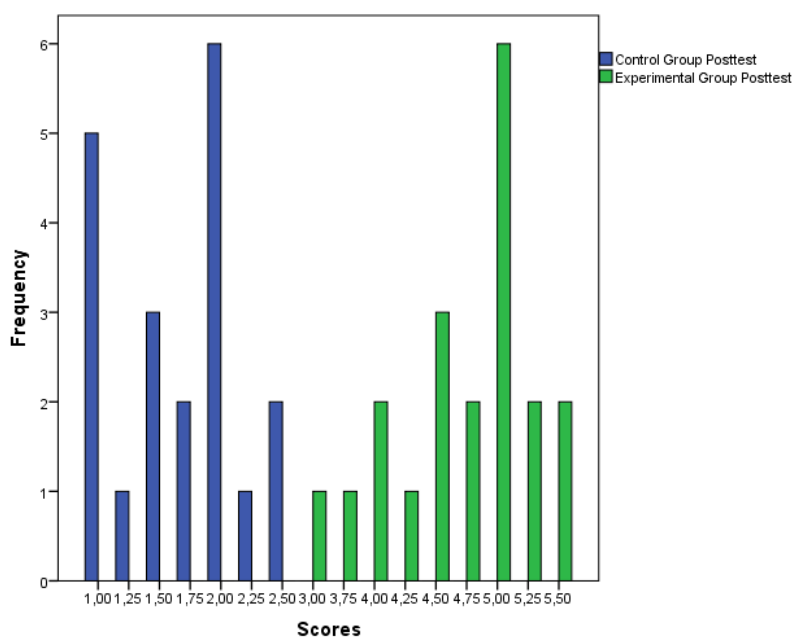
N: refers to the total number of participants in the experimental group

$\sum x$ : Stands for the sum of scores of the experimental group in the post-test

$$\text{So: } \bar{X}2 = 93.5 / 20 = 4.675$$

**Figure13.**

**The Scores Frequencies of the Control Group and the Experimental Group in the Post-test**



From the previous analysis of the mean of both the control and the experimental group in the pre-test (see Table 3), we have noticed that the level of students in both groups is almost the same, and there is only a slight difference between them. Though in the post test, the scores of the experimental group has increased, and as a result the mean average has increased too after the treatment phase for the experimental group (from 1.72 to 4.67), which is not the case for the control group who were taught without being exposed to any kind of treatment (see Table 8, and Figure 10). Besides, we can notice the development also in the rime duration in students' pronunciation of the dark [l] and the clear [l] of the experimental group in the post-test, unlike the control group.

### 1.3.4.1 An independent t-test: Experimental Group Vs. Control Group in the Post-test

A t-test is used in order to show if there is any significant difference between two diverse groups in the same test. In our case, we want to examine if there is any variation between the experimental group and the control group in the post-test. So, a t-test was conducted.

**Table 9**  
*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
S c o r e	Equal variance assumed	,326	,572	16,607	38	,000	3,000	,18064	3,36569	-2,63431
	Equal variance			16,6	36,	,000	3,00	,18064	3,36	-2,63377

---

s not	,6	3	000	623
assume	07	7		
d		0		

---

Depending on the t-value (16.607), we compare it with the critical p-value at  $p=0.05$ . Therefore, we have two options:

1- If t-value is greater than the critical p-value ( $t\text{-value} > \text{critical-value}$ ), we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

2- If t-value is less than the critical-value ( $t\text{-value} < \text{critical-value}$ ) we accept the null hypothesis and refuse the alternative hypothesis.

we can say that:

$$T\text{-value} = 16.607 > 0.05$$

- We accept the alternative hypothesis, and reject the null hypothesis.

$$P\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$$

- The alternative hypothesis is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Depending on these results, we can say that there is a real change between the experimental group and the control group in the post test at the level of pronunciation, due to the positive influence of the independent variable which is: “listening to the audio-stories”. Therefore, students of the experimental group showed a significant progress at the level of pronunciation, and precisely the dark [l] and the clear [l] pronunciation.

## 1.4 Discussion of the Result

The recent examination has inspected the role of listening to audio stories on obtaining accurate pronunciation of the dark [l] and the clear [l]. First of all, in the pretest we noticed that learners of both groups have the same level and it was confirmed by calculating their means. The control group scored a mean of 1.65, while the experimental group scored a mean of 1.72 and also they have got almost the same scores concerning the rime duration of both allophones i.e. the clear [l] and the dark[l]. After that, in the post-test a significant development was marked by the students of the

experimental group due to the period of treatment that occurred to the oral expression sessions compared to the students of the control group. Besides, the mean score of the experimental group has been raised from 1.72 to 4.67, while the mean score of the control group has been increased only from 1.65 to 1.67. Additionally, a t-test was conducted to show if there is any statistical significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the post-test. Lastly, the results have revealed the positive influence of the treatment phase on the level of pronunciation accuracy. Finally, the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the other one was rejected.

### **1.5 Pedagogical implications**

The current research maintained the positive influence of the use of audio stories in enhancing EFL learners pronunciation. Accordingly, we states the following implications:

- ✚ Audio-stories provide a natural voice, complete with natural intonation and expression which helps EFL learners improve their pronunciation.
- ✚ In using multimedia devices (audio-stories in our case), students will gain much needed exposure to English conversation, boosting their confidence when it comes to putting language knowledge into practice.
- ✚ Audio-stories can be used by EFL teachers as a starter in order to attract their learner's attention to the lecture presented or at the end as a reward.
- ✚ Most audio short stories are under 15 minutes long and therefore can easily be integrated into any lesson plan.



## **Conclusion**

The current study aims at investigating the effectiveness of listening to audio-stories on fostering the target language pronunciation of the two allophones of the L sound. In this chapter, we first analyzed the rime duration of the native speaker's pronunciation of words containing the dark [l] and clear [l], in order to compare it to the EFL students pronunciation before evaluating them. After finishing the three phases (pre-test, post-test and treatment phase) a slight difference between the two groups was clearly observed. This observation was confirmed through a t-test which leads to agree on the hypothesis that was stated at the beginning of this research i.e. listening to audio-stories has a crucial role on acquiring accurate pronunciation of the dark and clear [l] by EFL learners.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This research has some limitations as any other research. We have faced the following obstacles:

- ✚ Limited sources, i.e., most of the sources that were available were not relevant to our study.
- ✚ Time constraints: this study needs much more time to conduct better results.
- ✚ Students absences in the pre-test and the post-test, and others did not receive the treatment at all.
- ✚ The lack of interest in the beginning of the session

## **General conclusion**

This research has somehow confirmed the problem stated at the beginning of this research which was that the Algerian EFL learners in the English department at ‘‘Ahmed Zabana’’ University, face a lot of difficulties concerning the acquisition of the accurate pronunciation of the phoneme /l/. Moreover the present study attempts to investigate the role of listening to audio stories on acquiring accurate pronunciation of the dark [l] and clear [l], by EFL learners. This research covered three main chapters. In the first chapter, we tackled the point of listening to audio stories, whereas, the second chapter discussed the reflection of listening to audio stories on the pronunciation of the clear [l] and the dark [l]. The third chapter represented the practical part; the methodology. The data analysis showed that there is a positive relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. This means that, there was a slight improvement in the acquisition of the phoneme /l/ by the students of the experimental group who had received the treatment period. Also, it indicates that the more we provide learners by audio-stories in the oral expression session, the more they acquire a better pronunciation as has been stated in our alternative hypothesis. Subsequently, this dissertation detected the importance of listening to audio-stories on improving EFL learners’ pronunciation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: A pre-test

#### The Secret Garden

#### Chapter One: THERE IS NO ONE LEFT

When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to **live** with her uncle everybody said she was the most disagreeable-**looking child** ever seen. It was true, too. She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin **light** hair and a sour expression. Her hair was **yellow**, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been **ill** in one way or another. Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay **people**. She had not wanted a little **girl** at **all**, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, who was made to understand that if she wished to please the Mem Sahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. So when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby she was kept out of the way, and when she became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she was kept out of the way also.

#### Sentences

- when she was about nine years **old**, she awakened feeling very cross.
- The woman **looked** frightened, but she **only** stammered that the Ayah could not come.

## Appendix B: A Post-test

### The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

#### Chapter One: Cheeky Tom

"Tom!" yelled Aunt Polly. There was no answer. "Tom!" she shouted again. "Where is that boy?" she muttered. Aunt Polly **looked** everywhere for her young nephew, but he was nowhere to be found. He wasn't in his bedroom. He wasn't in the yard, and he wasn't in the kitchen.

Aunt Polly knew that if she couldn't see Tom, he was **probably** getting into **trouble**. Tom was an orphan, and he loved mischief and adventure. But sometimes he was too mischievous. "When I find you, I'll give you a spanking." Aunt Polly shouted. Then she grabbed the broom. "Where on earth has that boy gone?" Aunt Polly said to herself. "T-o-m-m!" she screamed. Her glasses **fell** to the tip of her long, narrow nose. As she pushed the glasses back up, she spied something moving under the bed. "I've got you now, boy!"

Aunt Polly took the broom handle and quickly pushed it under the bed. She wasn't surprised when she struck something, but it wasn't Tom. Instead her cat sprang out from under the bed with an angry howl. Just then Aunt Polly heard footsteps behind her, and she turned to see Tom sneaking out of the **closet**. Aunt Polly grabbed the boy by his shirt and gave him a quick shake and a long look. His hands were filthy, and he was grinning from ear to ear.

"What were you doing in the closet?" asked Aunt Polly.

"Nothing," said Tom sheepishly.

"Nothing!" shouted Aunt Polly. "Look at your hands. Look at your mouth. Why are you so filthy?"

"I don't know," said Tom innocently. "well, I know" .Said his aunt.

#### Words to read

Fell

Closet

Well

Probably

Trouble

## **Appendix c: Treatment phase**

### **i. Session one (60 minutes)**

- **Listening to “ the whispering palms “ by DeepaGangwani and Tina Suchanek.**

### **ii. Session two (60minutes )**

- **Listening to “what should soma grow “written by Munda writers group.**