Professional Skills of Pronunciation Instructors in Light of Education and Training Evaluation Commission Standards in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT This study explores the reality of the professional skills of pronunciation instructors considering Education and Training Evaluation Commission standards in Saudi Arabia. To achieve the study objectives, a descriptive method was used, relying on a questionnaire as a main tool for data collection. The study sample consisted of 40 male and female pronunciation instructors in Jeddah. The most notable findings of this study are as follows: the members of the study population are highly to moderately in agreement with the importance of the availability of general professional skills and teaching skills for speech training instructors. Being acquainted with the characteristics of students with speech and language disorders was ranked first, followed by being acquainted with the needs of the students. The results also showed statistically significant differences at the significance level of 0.05 in terms of educational qualifications and years of experience. However, this study found no differences in professional skills when the years of experience differed.

INTRODUCTION

The learning process in general, and specific education in particular, is established on many elements, the most important of which is the teacher. The teacher is regarded as the focus of all of these elements and is the most influential factor in achievement of learning objectives. Many countries are keen on developing teacher training programmes for both general education and specific education instructors, including speech and language instructors. Speech and language instructors play a major role in facilitating communication and dealing with issues caused by speech and language disorders. Article 9 of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates in paragraph 2 (e) that children must have access to human assistance, including assistance supplied by pronunciation instructors (United Nations 2007).

Mathews (2023) noted that special education instructors and pronunciation instructors need certain diverse skills and abilities, so instructors are required to receive special preparation. Instructors must obtain benefits from special training programmes to guarantee that they have the academic and professional preparation required for en-hancing their work performance. However, it was agreed by Rice and Smith (2023) that special education instructors require a range of professional skills that give them the ability to work effectively with students with disabilities.

Developed countries in general, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in particular, are interested in preparing pronunciation instructors according to the guidelines of the movement of qualification-based teacher training advocated by modern trends, which aims at enhancing the level of preparation for these instructors and enabling them to deal with the multiple problems that they may encounter in the field of education (Alnoaim and Alharbi 2023). Although there is growing international interest in training and hiring speech and language instructors, there is a lack of this in the Arab region. Indeed, Aalatawi (2023) mentioned that the job satisfaction of the majority of special education instructors is lower than that of general education instructors in the region. Perhaps one of the most important reasons for this lack of satisfaction is poor qualifications and training.

The KSA has recently witnessed considerable interest in teacher training programmes, including for special education teachers. Therefore, professional standards are the most important features

of development to improve the efficiency and quality of education because the teacher is the fundamental pillar of the success of the educational process (Rayesand More 2020).

The importance of the availability of professional skills for special education instructors, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission enacted standards that followed several steps before being approved. These standards include planning, team formation, preparation, preliminary examination, scientific arbitration, modification, application, and review. The Education and Training Evaluation Commission seeks to create standards that enhance the proficiency of speech and language instructors and provide high-quality services to students with speech and language disorders (Teacher's Guide For Students With Hearing Disabilities 2020).

This study will focus on two of the most important criteria: general professional skills and teaching skills.

The Council for Children with Disabilities has also worked on the development of several specialised standards for each disability group, including those with speech and language disorders, on which relevant bodies can rely to control the quality of pedagogical and educational services provided to students with speech and language disorders (Hegde 2022). Therefore, the standard-based professional skills of speech and language teachers in training is an important indicator of their success in performing their pedagogical and educational tasks (Ahmed 2020).

Given the importance of professional skills for male and female pronunciation instructors and the requirements for identifying them, this study was prepared to answer the following questions:
1. What is the reality of the professional skills of pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission?
2. Are there differences in the application of professional skills by pronunciation instructors that can be attributed to the variables of academic qualifications, years of experience, and the number of training hours?

The study aims to identify the most important professional skills from the perspective of speech and language training as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, as well as the differences concerning the reality of professional skills of speech and language instructors as attributed to the variables of academic qualifications, years of experience, and number of hours of training.

Objectives of the Study

Identifying the reality of the professional skills of pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission. Knowing the differences in the application of professional skills by pronunciation instructors that can be attributed to the variables of academic qualifications, years of experience, and the number of training hours.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is represented by the growing pursuit of educational institutions in the KSA to improve the quality and efficiency of the educational system. The study also highlights the most important qualifications needed for male and female pronunciation instructors. This study highlights foreign studies that discuss pronunciation instructors, and also helps education officials to take these skills into consideration while designing and preparing plans and programmes that handle speech and language disorders. It supplies recommendations and suggestions for children with speech and language disorders and their families. The results of the study are expected to benefit the training authorities in the preparation of training programmes for the professional development of pronunciation instructors.

Speech and Language Disorders

Both Alghamdi and Aldwaida (2020) define speech and language disorders as speech errors that arise as a result of defects in movement or an impairment in the pronunciation system that lead to speech problems such as the deletion, addition, substitution, and distortion of speech sounds. Pomper et al. (2022) describe these aspects as follows: deletion is the removal of a sound from a word, which makes it incomprehensible and may change its meaning. Addition refers to the addition of one sound that changes its meaning. Addition is one of the least widespread aspects of

speech and language disorders. Substitution indicates that an individual substitutes one sound with another, such as the substitution of the sound of the letter 'r' with the sound of the letter 'l', or the substitution of the sound of the letter 'k' with the sound of the letter 't'. This type of substitution may take place between similar sounds concerning the production of sounds and speech, which adversely impacts the ability of others to understand an individual's speech. The last aspect is distortion, which indicates the production of linguistic sounds in an unfamiliar manner. These voices cannot be distinguished or matched with the specific sounds that are known in the language.

There are many factors that cause communication disorders, including the following:

- ◆ Organic and physiological factors, referring to the organs or systems that are related to pronunciation or responsible for sound production and pronunciation. Besides the pronunciation system, we cannot ignore the role of the respiratory system in the pronunciation mechanism as the respiratory system provides air with a certain energy to produce sounds. These sounds sometimes depend on the amount of air coming out of the lungs. When the air passes through the acoustic strings, these strings vibrate to help produce sounds (Amari and Yunsi 2020).
- ◆ Neurological factors, which involve the dysfunction of the central nervous system as the brain is the most essential organ responsible for the different functions of the body. Any dysfunction in the brain, especially in centres responsible for speech and language, may lead to linguistic disorders (Katerina and Sufen 2020).
- · Functional factors, represented by the problems associated with auditory perception, the inability to acquire rules and foundations for the organisation and production of audio segments, and the inability to distinguish between different sounds (Hegde 2022).
- ◆ Psychological and social factors, which are not due to any organic dysfunction, but rather due to psychological disorders, such as anxiety or fear of internal conflict. Therefore, a child may use speech flaws as a trick to attract parents' attention or because of severe psychological trauma, such as the loss of a relative. They may also be due to a range of social environmental causes, such as pressure from relatives to speak at a young age, or due to multiple dialects and cultures (Alghamdi and Aldowaida 2020).
- ◆ Genetic causes, whereby the presence of speech and language disorders have been shown to run in families with a history of communication disorders. Imitation and simulation factors are also included as other family members may suffer from communication disorders (Ahmed 2020).

Standards of Education and Training Evaluation Commission in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Commission's criteria consist of two sections: the general section, consisting of 10 criteria, in which all special education instructors participate, and the course or specialisation section, which includes 22 criteria. Standards for instructors include training concerning knowledge and skills associated with specialisation, related active practices, values, the ability to work in a multidisciplinary team, acquaintance with language development stages and forms of communication disorders, knowledge of analysis methods, and explanation of the results. Other relative criteria include the ability to use all tests and evaluations for communication disorders, knowledge of how to prepare and write treatment and training reports, the development of individual plans based on evaluation results, the ability to effectively apply treatment and training plans, participation in scientific discussions and meetings in the field of specialisation, and the ability to spread awareness within the local community (Education and Training Evaluation Commission 2020).

Professional Skills Required for Pronunciation Instructors

The United States of America is one of the leading countries in the education of students with disabilities through enacting numerous laws that have undergone many modifications and improvements. In Law 94/142, amendments called for instructors to obtain licences to practise the profession, which encouraged the development of crite-

ria that could be used to evaluate specific services (Alqraini 2022). Abdukadirova (2022) adds that some of the most prominent criteria for professional skills as prescribed by the American Society for Speech, Hearing, and Language that contribute to significant results include collaborative work within the interdisciplinary team, and work to provide information to specialists such as occupational therapists, nutritionists, instructors, behavioural training experts, and parents.

Al-Anezi (2022) stressed the importance of skills for pronunciation instructors and the need for enhancing pre-service skills-based development to provide instructors in the KSA with the required personal and professional skills. Rayes and Mosaab (2020) sought to identify the most important professional skills of pronunciation instructors in deaf and hearing-impaired programmes, as well as the differences among pronunciation instructors concerning their level of professional skills. The findings indicated that the most important qualifications agreed upon by instructors include cognitive skills, the diagnosis and assessment of speech and language problems, problems associated with speech and language disorders, linking new concepts to past experiences, producing utterances, formulating pedagogic objectives to meet the demands of students, and commitment to professional ethics.

Al-Salem and Al-Humaidan (2020) also determined specialists' knowledge of the most basic skills while working with deaf and hearing-impaired students during pronunciation and speech sessions. The study investigated the specialists' skills in three main areas: planning and evaluation, technical skills, and professional skills. The findings showed statistically significant differences in the field of planning and evaluation, particularly regarding the scientific qualification variable, years of experience, and the number of courses. Kukuskina et al. (2020) and Paul (2020) explained the crucial role of instructors of deaf individuals, and speech and language instructors in aural rehabilitation involving cochlear implantation. The study aimed to review the professional skills needed for instructors after conducting long reviews of theoretical frameworks from previous studies. The study concluded that there is an essential need for developing programmes for the preparation of speech and language instructors as well as training them to perform their roles in the post-cochlear aural rehabilitation process.

By reviewing the studies that discussed the qualities of pronunciation instructors, we can summarise that some studies focused on skills, qualities, trends, and knowledge that contribute to teacher adequacy (Rayes and Mosaab 2020; Kukuskina et al. 2020). This study used a descriptive methodology (Reese and More 2020; Al-Salem and Al-Hamidan 2020). The researcher benefited from previous studies in formulating the study questions and building its tools, as well as obtaining theoretical information and concepts to enrich the theoretical framework of the current study.

METHODOLOGY

In light of the nature of the study and its objectives, a descriptive methodology was used to identify the professional skills of pronunciation instructors as approved by the Educational and Training Evaluation Commission in Jeddah. A descriptive methodology is defined as one used to describe a phenomenon accurately in reality and express it in a quantitative manner (Marlow 2023).

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 40 pronunciation instructors in Jeddah. Due to the small size of the population according to Ministry of Education (2017), the researcher used a comprehensive survey method.

Description of the Study Population

The independent variables related to the personal and functional characteristics of the study population are sex and years of experience. The independent variables related to the personal and functional characteristics of the study sample are academic qualifications, years of experience, and the number of training hours.

Academic Qualifications

In total, 65 percent of the study sample held a bachelor's qualification and 35 percent held a master's certificate.

Years of Experience

The vast majority of the study's participants had 5-10 years of experience in the role, representing 95 percent of the total study population. The

remaining 5 percent of the participants had 1-5 years of experience. Determining the amount of experience among the members of the study sample benefits the study, as those with more experience can provide more accurate responses – the more experience someone has, the higher their level of knowledge of the professional skills required for pronunciation instructors in accordance with the international standards.

Number of Training Hours

In terms of number of training hours, 85 percent of the total study population spent more than 21 hours on training, while 10 percent of the total study population spent between 3 and 12 hours in training and 5 percent between 12 and 21 hours. This result indicates the increased number of training hours concerning the members of the study population.

Study Tool

In light of the nature of the data collected, methodology, study objectives, and study questions, the researcher used a questionnaire as a study tool. The tool was designed according to the scientific references, previous studies associated with the subject, and variables of the study.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first was concerned with demographic information and variables of the study, while the second consisted of two parts: the first concerned general skills, and the second concerned the professional teaching skills of the male and female pronunciation instructors.

Reliability of the Study Tool

Interrater Validity

To identify the reliability of the study tool – that is, its ability to measure what it was designed to measure – the study utilised 11 raters who specialise in special education. In light of their guidance and suggestions, the researcher made adjustments until the final form of the questionnaire was determined.

Internal Consistency (Constructive Validity)

The internal consistency ensures that the questionnaire's questions are clear and measure what

was intended to be measured for the purposes of statistical analysis (Salter et al. 2023). After checking the virtual validity of the study tool, the researcher administered it to the pronunciation instructors working in Jeddah by distributing an electronic link. The responses were then inserted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program. The researcher calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire by calculating the correlation factor between the degree of each paragraph and the overall degree of the standard to which the paragraph belongs. All three standards – personal skills, cognitive skills, and professional skills – showed positive correlation values at a statistical level of 0.01, meaning that the questionnaire's phrases had high validity and measured the attributes they were designed to measure.

Reliability of the Tool

To verify the reliability of the research tool, the researcher used the Cronbach's alpha equation. The results showed that the reliability values of the study tool's standards were high, as these values ranged from 0.884 to 0.922. The total reliability value of the study tool amounted to 0.962, which is high and indicates that the questionnaire had a high degree of reliability, so it can be relied upon for use in the study.

RESULTS

RQ1: What is the reality of the professional skills of pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission?

To identify the reality of the current professional skills of speech training instructors according to the standards of the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, the averages, and standard deviations of the responses of the participants were estimated. The frequency, percentages, and averages of the responses were also estimated (Table 1).

According to Table 1, the study participants were found to strongly agree with the current professional skills of the pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission from the perspective of instructors, with an average of 4.41 out of 5, which falls

Table 1: Participant responses to phrases related to personal skills

S. No.	Phrases	Frequency and	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation	Serials of phrases	Scale of agreement
					Scale of agreement						
1	To have a general appearance that is decent and simple.	F	22	16	0	0	2	4.40	0.928	9	Strongly agree
		%	55	40	0	0	5				
2	To have self-confidence and trust his capabilities.	F	32	6	0	2	0	4.70	0.723	5	Strongly agree
		%	80	15	0	5	0				
3	To have a pronunciation that is sound.	F	28	12	0	0	0	4.70	0.464	4	Strongly agree
		%	70	30	0	0	0				
4	To comply with professional ethics.	F	32	6	2	0	0	4.75	0.543	3	Strongly agree
		%	80	15	5	0	0				
5	To be patient during training sessions.	F	36	2	0	2	0	4.80	0.687	2	Strongly agree
		%	90	5	0	5	0				
6	To be able to manage time and adhere to attendance and departure times.	F	30	6	4	0	0	4.65	0.662	7	Strongly agree
		%	75	15	10	0	0				
7	To listen carefully to others.	F	32	8	0	0	0	4.80	0.405	1	Strongly agree
		%	80	20	0	0	0				
8	To use simple and clear words while talking to students during training sessions.	F	28	8	2	0	2	4.50	0.987	8	Strongly agree
9	To be ready to work anytime.	F	12	8	12	2	6	3.45	1.377	10	Agree
		%	30	20	30	5	15				
10	To have effective communication skills to communicate information easily.	F	28	10	2	0	0	4.65	0.580	6	Strongly agree
		%	70	25	5	0	0				
	General Average							4.54	0.549		Strongly agree

into the fifth category of the fivefold sliding scale that ranges from 4.21 to 5. This category refers to 'strongly agree'.

The results shown in Table 1 also indicate that personal qualifications ranked first among the most important professional skills from the perspective of instructors, totalling 4.54 out of 5 on average, followed by cognitive skills (4.40 out of 5). In last place were professional skills, with an average of 4.30 out of 5. These results suggest that all members of the study population strongly agreed with all skills. Below is a detailed description of each skill.

Personal Skills

The results indicate that the participants strongly agreed with the importance of personal skills, which amounted to an average of 4.54, falling into the fifth category of the fivefold sliding scale that ranges from 4.21 to 5.

The results also show that the participants strongly agreed with nine phrases: 7, 5, 4, 3, 2, 10, 6, 8, and 1, with the averages ranging from 4.40 to

4.80. The participants agreed with one phrase, 9, with an average of 3.45. This average falls in the fourth category of the fivefold sliding scale which ranges from 3.41 to 4.20 and refers to 'Agree'.

The below points include the three phrases that achieved the highest scale and the two that achieved the lowest scale concerning the phrases related to personal skills from the perspective of instructors:

- *Phrase 7:* 'To listen carefully to others' ranked first among the personal skills required of pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission according to the perspective of the participants, scoring an average of 4.80 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.405. This can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA are keen on listening carefully to others to facilitate the speech and language of their students.
- *Phrase 5:* 'To be patient during training sessions' ranked second from the perspec-

tive of the participants, scoring an average of 4.80 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.687. This can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA assimilate their role in solving their students' speech and language problems and can work under pressure and be patient during training sessions.

- *Phrase 4:* 'To comply with professional ethics' ranked third among the personal skills according to the participants, scoring an average of 4.75 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.543. This can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA believe that they belong to an educational profession that has a specific mission and that they serve as role models for their students. Therefore, they have the skill of compliance with professional ethics.

- *Phrase 1:* 'To have a general appearance that is decent and simple' was ranked the second lowest among the participants, scoring an average of 4.40 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.928.

- *Phrase 9:* 'To be ready to work anytime' was ranked last among the participants with an average of 3.45 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.37.

Cognitive Skills

The results shown in Table 2 indicate that the members of the study population strongly agree with the cognitive skills from the perspective of pronunciation instructors working in Jeddah, scoring an average of 4.40 out of 5. This average falls into the fifth category of the fivefold sliding scale that ranges from 4.21 to 5 and refers to the scale of 'Strongly Agree'.

Table 2: Participant responses related to cognitive skills

S. No.	Phrases	Frequency and	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation	Serials of phrases	Scale of agreement
					Scale of agreement						
1	To hold a bachelor's degree as the minimum qualification.	F	30	6	0	4	0	4.55	0.932	4	Strongly agree
		%	75	15	0	10	0				
2	To have the appropriate knowledge of using educational methods for speech training.	F	24	12	0	4	0	4.40	0.928	6	Strongly agree
		%	60	30	0	10	0				
3	To be familiar with counselling and teamwork practices.	F	22	16	0	2	0	4.45	0.749	5	Strongly agree
		%	55	40	0	5	0				
4	To have knowledge of diagnostic principles and procedures.	F	26	14	0	0	0	4.65	0.483	2	Strongly agree
		%	65	35	0	0	0				
5	To have sufficient knowledge of behavioural modification methods.	F	15	10	10	4	0	3.95	1.037	10	Agree
		%	40	25	25	10					
6	To have the knowledge of preparing the necessary therapeutic and training plans for students.	F	28	12	0	0	0	4.70	0.464	1	Strongly agree
		%	70	30	0	0	0				
7	To be familiar with reading and interpretation of reports.	F	24	14	2	0	0	4.55	0.597	3	Strongly agree
		%	60	35	5	0	0				
8	To be familiar with the latest research in the field.	F	16	16	4	4	0	4.10	0.955	9	Agree
		%	40	40	10	10	0				
9	To know how to apply formal and informal speech disorder tests.	F	20	14	4	0	2	4.25	1.006	8	Strongly agree
		%	50	35	10	0	5				
10	Have knowledge of ways and methods to guide families of students with speech disorders.	F	20	18	0	2	0	4.40	0.744	7	Strongly agree
		%	50	45	0	5	0				
	General Average							4.40	0.625		Strongly agree

The results show that the participants strongly agreed with eight phrases: 6, 4, 7, 1, 3, 2, 10, and 9, with the averages of these phrases ranging from 4.25 to 4.70. The participants agreed with two phrases, 8 and 5, with averages ranging from 3.45 to 5.

The below points include the three phrases that achieved the highest scale and the two that achieved the lowest scale concerning the phrases related to cognitive skills from the perspective of instructors:

- *Phrase 6:* 'To have knowledge of preparing the necessary therapeutic and training plans for students' ranked first from the perspective of the participants, scoring an average of 4.70 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.464. This can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA seek to enhance their teaching capabilities and are therefore keen to attend scientific seminars and training courses that help them prepare the necessary therapeutic and training plans for students.
- *Phrase 4:* 'To have knowledge of diagnostic principles and procedures' was ranked second by the participants with an average of 4.65 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.483.
- *Phrase 7:* 'To be familiar with reading and interpretation of reports' was ranked third by the participants, scoring an average of 4.55 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.597.
- *Phrase 8:* 'To be familiar with the latest research in the field' was ranked second to last by the participants with an average score of 4.10 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.955.
- *Phrase 5:* 'To have sufficient knowledge of behavioural modification methods' was ranked the lowest by the participants, scoring an average of 3.95 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.37.

Professional Skills

The results shown in Table 3 indicate that the participants strongly agreed with professional skills from the perspective of pronunciation instructors working in Jeddah, totalling an average of 4.30 out of 5, which falls into the fifth category of the fivefold sliding scale ranging from 4.21 to 5 and refers to the scale of 'Strongly Agree'.

The results show that the study participants strongly agreed with ten phrases: 2, 8, 9, 5, 1, 3, 11, 6, 4, and 12, with the averages of these phrases ranging from 4.25 to 4.70. The findings also show that the participants agreed with three phrases: 13, 10, and 7, with the averages ranging from 3.50 to 4.20.

The below points include the three phrases that achieved the highest scale and the two that achieved the lowest scale concerning the phrases related to professional skills from the perspective of instructors:

- *Phrase 2:* 'To be able to formulate clear and accurate goals that conform to each student's individual capabilities' was ranked first by the study participants, scoring an average of 4.70 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.464. This can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA seek to enhance their teaching capabilities and are therefore keen to deal individually with the cases of their students in order to achieve their educational goals, so they have the skills of formulating educational goals that are appropriate for the needs of the students.
- *Phrase 8:* 'To be able to work within a multidisciplinary team' was ranked second by the participants with an average of 4.60 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.591. This shows how important it is to work within a multidisciplinary team as the decisive factor in the quality and integration of services provided in the field of special education.
- *Phrase 9:* 'To be able to solve problems and handle obstacles that may be encountered during the practice of the profession' was ranked third by the participants, scoring an average of 4.50 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 0.506.
- *Phrase 10:* 'To be able to provide training courses for instructors and families' was ranked second to last by the participants with an average of 3.55 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.37. This can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA seek to enhance their teaching capabilities and are therefore keen to encourage families to play a role in solving the pronunciation problems of their students, so they have the skills of providing training courses for instructors and families and engaging parents in the speech and language training sessions.
- *Phrase 7:* 'To be able to use diagnostic devices for speech disorders (Visi-Pitch)' was

Table 3: Participant responses related to professional skills

S. No.	Phrases	Frequency and	Scale of agreement					Average	Standard deviation	Serials of phrases	Scale of agreement
			Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree				
1	To be able to observe students and record their behaviours in different situations.	F	22	16	2	0	0	4.50	0.599	5	Strongly agree
		%	55	40	5	0	0				
2	To be able to formulate clear and accurate goals that conform to each student's individual capabilities.	F	28	12	0	0	0	4.70	0.464	1	Strongly agree
		%	70	30	0	0	0				
3	To be able to monitor students' progress by conducting a pretest and post-test.	F	22	14	4	0	0	4.45	0.677	6	Strongly
		%	55	35	10	0	0				
4	To be able to create the environment for effective training.	F	2	12	4	0	2	4.30	1.018	9	Strongly agree
		%	55	30	10	0	5				
5	To be able to link his past experiences with the new concepts.	F	20	20	0	0	0	4.50	0.506	4	Strongly agree
		%	50	50	0	0	0				
6	To be able to write reports at periodic meetings concerning the student's individual treatment plan.	F	22	14	4	0	0	4.45	0.677	8	Strongly agree
		%	55	35	10	0	0				
7	To be able to use diagnostic devices for speech disorders (Visi-Pitch)	F	8	16	8	4	4	3.50	1.219	13	Agree
		%	20	40	20	10	10				
8	To be able to work within a multidisciplinary team.	F	26	12	2	0	0	4.60	0.591	2	Strongly agree
		%	65	30	5	0	0				
9	To be able to solve problems and handle obstacles that may be encountered during the practice of the profession.	F	20	20	0	0	0	4.50	0.506	3	Strongly agree
		%	50	50	0	0	0				
10	To be able to provide training courses for instructors and families.	F	14	8	8	6	4	3.55	1.377	12	Agree
		%	35	20	20	15	10				
11	To be able to follow the gradualism technique through the method of graduation from easy to difficult during training sessions.	F	22	14	4	0	0	4.45	0.677	7	Strongly agree
		%	55	35	10	0	0				
12	To be able to apply effective evidence-based methods in training sessions.	F	22	10	4	4	0	4.25	1.006	10	Strongly agree
		%	55	25	10	10	0				
13	To be able to contribute to raising community awareness about caring for students with speech disorders.	F	18	12	10	0	0	4.20	0.823	11	Agree
		%	45	30	25	0	0				
	General Average							4.30	0.573		Strongly agree

ranked the lowest by the study participants, with an average of 3.50 out of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.21. This can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA seek to accurately know their students' speech and language levels to determine how to deal with them, so they have skills in identifying the levels of the current students based on the diagnosis and evaluation process.

RQ2: Are there differences in the application of professional skills by pronunciation instructors that can be attributed to the variables of academic qualifications, years of experience, and training hours?

Academic Qualifications

To find out whether there are differences in the participants' responses concerning the determination of the professional skills required for pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission that can be attributed to the variable of academic qualifications, the t-test was used for two separate samples (independent sample t-test), and this is shown in Table 4.

According to Table 4, there were no statistical differences in the responses of the pronunciation instructors concerning the identification of the professional skills required as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission that can be attributed to the variable of academic qualifications. This finding indicates that the level of professional skills required for pronunciation instructors is not influenced by academic qualifications.

Years of Experience

To find out whether there are differences in the participants' responses concerning the determination of the professional skills required for pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission that can be attributed to the variable of years of experience, the t-test was used for two separate samples (independent sample t-test), and this is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that there were no statistical differences in the responses of the participants concerning the identification of the personal skills required for pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission that can be attributed to the variable of years of experience.

The findings show differences in the responses of the participants, and by checking the averages shown in the previous table, these differences are found to be in favour of more experienced instructors (more than 5 years).

Training Hours

To find out whether there are differences in the participants' responses concerning the determination of the professional skills required for pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission that can be attributed to the variable of number of training hours, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used, and this is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 shows there are no statistical differences in the participants' responses concerning the identification of the professional skills required for pronunciation instructors as approved by the

Table 4: t-test to clarify differences between participant responses according to academic qualifications

Standards of the study	Academic qualification	Number	Average	Standard deviation	t-value	Scale of independence	Significance level	
Personal Skills	Bachelor's	26	4.59	0.385	0.817	38	0.419	Statistically insignificant
	Master's	14	4.44	0.778				
Cognitive Skills	Bachelor's	26	4.42	0.470	0.266	17.261	0.794	Statistically insignificant
	Master's	14	4.36	0.863				
Professional Skills	Bachelor's	26	4.29	0.532	-0.206	38	0.838	Statistically insignificant
	Master's	14	4.33	0.663				

Table 5: t-test to clarify differences between participant responses according to years of experience

Standards of the study	Academic qualification	Number	Average	Standard deviation	t-value	Scale of independence	Significance level	
Personal Skills	1–5 years	2	4.00	0.000	-1.446	38	0.156	Statistically insignificant
	More than 5 years	38	4.57	0.549				
Cognitive Skills	1–5 years	2	4.60	0.000	2.028	37.000	0.050	Statistically insignificant
	More than 5 years	38	4.39	0.640				
Professional Skills	1–5 years	2	3.77	0.000	-6.038	37.000	0.000	Statistically insignificant
	More than 5 years	38	4.33	0.575				

*Significant at the significance level of 0.05 and less.

Table 6: Results of ANOVA to identify differences in participant responses according to the difference in training hours

Standards of the study	Groups	Squares	Freedom scores	Average squares	F-value		Significance level
Personal Skills	Among groups	0.451	2	0.225	0.736	0.486	Statistically
	Among groups	11.325	37	0.306			insignificant
	Total	11.776	39				
Cognitive Skills	Among groups	0.529	2	.265	0.666	0.520	Statistically
	Within groups	14.711	37	.398			insignificant
	Total	15.240	39				
Professional Skills	Among groups	0.055	2	0.028	0.080	0.923	Statistically
	Within groups	12.761	37	0.345			insignificant
	Total	12.816	39				

Education and Training Evaluation Commission that can be attributed to the variable of training hours.

DISCUSSION

RQ1. What is the reality of the professional skills of pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission?

The results indicated that the study participants closely agreed with the professional skills of the instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission from the perspective of the instructors themselves. The results also showed that personal skills ranked first among the professional skills, followed by cognitive skills and, lastly, professional skills. This finding indicates that all members of the study population closely agreed with the skills in this order.

The high degree of agreement among the participants can be explained by the fact that the teacher is the most important element and one of the most important factors to clearly influence the promotion or harm of the educational process. This is even more important when we talk about instructors for students with disabilities, and pronunciation instructors. Special education is a creative area for instructors despite the many difficulties they face. Special education emerged in the late 1990s as a result of the standard-based reform process to oblige governments and relevant authorities to ensure that training programmes for students with disabilities meet clear criteria and that instructors are highly qualified. Standard-based professional skills also constitute a modern tendency towards qualifying instructors as a part

of the cultural movement that emphasises the idea of responsibility and the requirements of being a good teacher.

This study's findings are also consistent with those of Al-Anezi (2022), who found that the level of knowledge of students with hearing and pronunciation regarding the importance of the skills that speech and language therapists should possess is high. Moreover, this finding is consistent with the study of Al-Tayyar (2021), which indicated a higher rate of the professional skills possessed by the pronunciation instructors working in the Arab Kingdom.

In addition, this finding is consistent with those of Al-Shehri and Nabawi (2021) and Hancock et al. (2023) that indicated the need for strengthening and increasing the training skills of special education instructors, as well as their knowledge of curriculum content and how to deal with students with disabilities.

Personal Skills

The results showed that the participants strongly agreed that pronunciation instructors from Jeddah must possess personal skills, with the most important personal skills being to listen carefully to others, to be patient during training sessions, and to be committed to professional ethics. Pronunciation instructors in the KSA are keen to listen carefully to others to facilitate the speech and language of their students. Additionally, this study posits that speech and language therapists in the KSA are aware of their important role in solving their students' speech problems; therefore, these instructors could work under pressure be patient

during training sessions. In addition, they are aware that they belong to an educational profession with an endless educational mission, and that they must present a good example to their students, so they comply well with professional ethics.

This finding is consistent with Al-Shahrani and Taqatqa's (2021) and Albash, and Turkestani (2023) research that concluded that one of the most prominent skills that instructors must have been the ability to assess communication skills and prevent anything that may hinder the development of communication during their interaction with students.

Cognitive Skills

The results indicated that the participants strongly agreed with the notion that cognitive skills are important for pronunciation instructors working in Jeddah, with the most prominent skills being to have knowledge of the preparation of therapeutic and training plans for students, to have knowledge of diagnostic principles and procedures, and to be aware of the reading and explanation of reports.

An explanation for this is that speech training instructors in the KSA seek to enhance their teaching capabilities and therefore are keen to attend scientific seminars and training courses that help them prepare the necessary therapeutic and training plans for students.

This result is consistent with the findings of the study of Rayes and Mosaab (2020), which indicated that cognitive skills are one the most important skills that instructors agree are relevant. The most prominent are the diagnosis and evaluation of speech problems in deaf and hearing-impaired students, problems associated with pronunciation disorders in deaf and hearing-impaired students and linking new concepts to previous experiences.

The finding is also consistent with those of Ibrahim and Al-Nafi (2021), as one of the most important skills that pronunciation instructors must possess is the ability to use formal and informal standards in the diagnosis of pronunciation disorders, and to have the ability to use behavioural modification strategies that enhance students' success in the learning environment. Moreover, the findings support those of Al-Salem and Al-Humaidan (2020), which concluded that one of the most important skills for pronunciation instructors to possess is knowledge and awareness of the natural development of communication.

Professional Skills

The results showed that the study participants strongly agreed on the professional skills they perceived to be important for pronunciation instructors working in Jeddah, with the most important skills being to be able to formulate clear and accurate goals that conform to each student's individual capabilities, to be able to work within a multidisciplinary team, and to be able to solve problems and handle obstacles that may be countered during practice.

This finding can be explained by the fact that the pronunciation instructors who work in the KSA are keen to deal individually with their students in order to achieve their educational goals, and therefore possess the skills required to develop educational goals that are appropriate for the student's needs. This study also attributes this finding to the fact that the pronunciation instructors in Saudi Arabia are keen to accurately assess their students' pronunciation levels to determine how to deal with them, therefore developing the skills of determining students' levels based on the diagnosis and evaluation process.

These findings indicate that students with pronunciation disorders need to simplify their language pronunciation to enhance their abilities. Therefore, it is important that pronunciation instructors working in the KSA are familiar with simple ways to help students during pronunciation exercises. These instructors have to be able to formulate clear and accurate goals that conform to each student's individual capabilities and be able to work within a multidisciplinary team. They are also required to improve the pronunciation level of the students. Therefore, it is important that pronunciation instructors who work in the KSA are able to prepare clear and accurate reports on the student's pronunciation levels. Pronunciation instructors are also required to use smart technology-based devices that help them with pronunciation training.

This finding highlights the importance of working within a multidisciplinary team as a decisive factor in the refinement and integration of services provided in the field of special education. This echoes the work of Algamdi and Dawaidah (2020), which indicates that working in the field of special education and its programmes, including those outlined for speech disorders, requires that the pronunciation instructors have the required skills

of working within a team to ensure the success of the educational process and achieve the prospected goals.

The work of Rayes and Mosaab (2020) is also supported here, indicating that professional skills are one of the most important skills for pronunciation instructors to possess. The most prominent of these skills are the sound pronunciation made by instructors, the use of simple language, the formulation of individual educational goals, and compliance with professional ethics. This finding is also consistent with those of Zinedine and Al-Hamidi (2021) who found a range of results, the most important being the requirement for training on measurement and diagnostic skills, education planning, and training.

Lastly, these results are also consistent with Syed (2019), who asserted that one of the most important roles and responsibilities of pronunciation instructors are to filter, evaluate, diagnose, manage, and provide services to individuals.

RQ2: Are there differences in the application of professional skills by pronunciation instructors that can be attributed to the variables of academic qualifications, years of experience, and training hours?

Academic Qualifications

The results showed that there were no differences in the responses of the pronunciation instructors concerning the identification of the professional skills required as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission in terms of the variable of academic qualifications. This finding indicates that there is no influence of academic qualifications, and this may be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of the respondents hold bachelor's degrees, which makes their responses to the standards of the study the same, even in cases where the scientific qualifications differed.

This finding is consistent with those of Rayes and Mosaab (2020) and Brassel et al. (2023), who also found no statistically significant differences for academic qualifications at the 0.05 level. It is also consistent with the findings of the study of Algamdi and Dawaidah (2020), which found no statistically significant differences among pronunciation instructors concerning the level of importance of professional skills in terms of educational level.

However, this finding is not consistent with the study of Alsalem and Alhumaidan (2020), which indicated that there are statistically significant differences according to the differences in academic qualifications.

Years of Experience

The results showed that there were no differences in the responses of the participants in terms of determining the level and availability of the professional skills required by pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission attributed to the variable of years of experience. However, there were differences in their responses regarding the identification and availability of professional skills, with the results showing statistical differences in favour of the more experienced instructors (more than 10 years).

This finding can be attributed to the fact that pronunciation instructors with more experience enjoy a high level of knowledge and have a higher degree of cognitive and professional skills that distinguish them from other instructors with fewer years of experience. This finding is consistent with those of Rayes and Mosaab (2020), which showed statistically significant differences at the 0.01 level among participants in favour of those with over 5 years' experience in the role. However, the findings are not consistent with those in the study of Alsalem and Alhumaidan (2020) and Kurawa (2019), which highlighted statistically significant differences according to the differences in the years of experience. Moreover, Alasim (2023) found no statistically significant differences among male and female pronunciation instructors concerning the importance and availability of professional skills according to the variable of years of experience.

Training Hours

This study found no statistically significant differences in the responses of the participants in terms of identifying the professional skills required by pronunciation instructors as approved by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission according to the variable of training hours. This finding indicates that there is no influence of this variable.

This finding is consistent with those of Rayes and Mosaab (2020), which also found no statisti-

cally significant differences according to how many hours of training the instructors were given. However, the results so not support those of Alsalem and Alhumaidan (2020), who did find statistically significant differences for this particular variable.

CONCLUSION

This study of 40 pronunciation instructors from the KSA revealed several notable findings. First, the participants were in high to moderate agreement regarding the importance of the availability of general professional skills and teaching skills. Being acquainted with the characteristics of students with speech and language disorders was ranked first, followed by being acquainted with the needs of the students. The ability to prepare teaching sessions and outline their objectives were found to be among the most essential teaching skills required by speech training instructors. The results also showed statistically significant differences at the significance level of 0.05 in terms of educational qualifications and years of experience; however, no significant differences were found in terms of professional skills when the years of experience differed.

Considering these findings, the researcher recommends that pronunciation instructors attend and participate in relevant scientific seminars and conferences. There is also a need to develop programmes for qualifying pronunciation instructors and raise awareness of the importance of collaborative work within the multidisciplinary team. An awareness must also be raised among pronunciation instructors of the nature of procedures for evaluating students with pronunciation disorders and conduct research similar to the current study in other cities and governorates of the KSA to determine the availability of professional skills required for pronunciation instructors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Urging speech training teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to attend scientific seminars and training courses related to the field.
- The need to develop programs to prepare speech training teachers.
  " Providing a more stimulating environment for language development for students who suffer from linguistic delay.

- Ensure that speech and language teachers, special education teachers, school teachers, and families combine their efforts to overcome the speech problems that students suffer from.
- Spreading awareness among teachers of the importance of familiarity with the professional competencies required for pronunciation training teachers in accordance with international standards.
- Urging pronunciation training teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to work on familiarizing themselves with scientific developments in the field of pronunciation training.
- Urging speech training teachers in the Kingdom to work on involving parents in speech training sessions and to respect the principle of family participation contained in international laws and local legislation.

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