

PRONOUCIATION BASED SECOND LANGUAGE LERNERS' USE

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ABSTRACT

The current study is an attempt to examine the extent of the students 'applying of some aspects of English pronunciation relating to vowels, consonants, stress, connected speech and homophones. The sample of the study is 23 students enrolled in the seventh and eighth semesters in the English Department in Almarj Faculty of Education during the academic year, 2022. The aim of this study is to discover the extent of applying the aspects of vowels, consonants, stress, connected speech and homophones when speaking in English language. Data were collected through using a recording oral test, which consists of some questions relating to the topic of the study, that was applied to the whole sample of the study. Data were analyzed according to the assessment criteria posited in the study. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the participants showed a low level of performance when using the basic elements of English pronunciation. Some recommendations were offered to help both the teacher and the students in improving and highlighting the quality of learning and teaching the basic components of English pronunciation.

Keywords: English language - basic elements - teacher - exam.

استخدام متعلمي اللغة الثانية لمهارة النطق

أ. إيمان ونيس البراني

الملخص :

البحث التالي هو محاولة لدراسة مدى تطبيق بعض عناصر النطق باللغة الإنجليزية لدى متعلمي اللغة الثانية بجامعة بنغازي، عينة البحث هم 23 طالب من كلية التربية المرج المقيدون بالفصل السابع والثامن بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية خلال الفصل الدراسي ربيع 2022، تم جمع البيانات عن طريق إمتحان شفوي تسجيلي لجميع طلبة العينة بحيث كانت لهم الفرصة الكافية للإجابة على أسئلة تتعلق بموضوع الدراسة، وتم تحليل البيانات وفقا لإداء وصفية إحصائية لتقييم أداء الطلبة، وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة بأن الطلبة أبدوا مستوى ضعيف من الأداء أثناء الإجابة على أسئلة الإمتحان حيث كان من الواضح بأن الطلبة يواجهون مشاكل في عدم استخدام العناصر الاساسية للنطق باللغة الانجليزية بالشكل الكافي مما أثر سلبا علي جودة أدائهم، وفي الجانب الأخير من

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الدراسة قدمت الباحثة عدد من التوصيات لكل من الطالب والمدرس والتي بموجبها تساعد في تحسين جودة تعلم وتدریس العناصر الأساسية للنطق باللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : اللغة الانكليزية - العناصر الأساسية - المدرس - الإمتحان .



BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

One of the major goals of language learning is to speak accurately and fluently like native speakers. Speaking is considered one of the productive skills of language learning; it is the basic component of communicative language. English pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learners' competence and one of the most significant aspects of language learning and language instructions that affects strongly the speaking skill. Actually, pronunciation is a complicated linguistic aspect of language learning and teaching because of the nature of the different sounds that are included in English language system. Therefore, if a learner's pronunciation is poor, the speech will be ambiguous and unpleasant but if it is pronounced well, the learner's speech will be more interesting and understood.

Pronunciation and phonology are obviously two aspects that related to the skills of listening and speaking. Pronunciation training develops the abilities of the learners' speaking that clarify speaking which in turn improves intelligibility and minimize efforts for interlocutors. In addition, it helps to develop the learners' perception abilities, even though, experimental evidence is still limited (Linbaugh and Roche, 2015 as cited in 5).

Pronunciation generally refers to the way in which word is spoken. "The exact meaning of pronunciation is how word is pronounced". It is the production of sound that we use to make the intended meaning. (11:16).

Actually, some features of English pronunciation are divided into two main parts: segmental and suprasegmental. Segmental features are aspects of speech that related to stress, intonation and connected speech or linking while suprasegmental features are aspects related to vowels and consonants.

Because of the complex nature of English sounds, we always find that many students face challenges in catching the correct pronunciation, particularly in the area that relate to vowels, consonants, stress, linking and homophones when speaking in English language. In this research, we will see in details the most important features of English pronunciation and some factors that affect foreign language learners when learning some of the phonological aspects of English sounds.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As being a teacher, it is well observed that there are many students who still face phonological difficulties in pronunciation when speaking in English although they spent many years studying English specification. Therefore, this study is principally devised to investigate the challenges that face the students when learning and practicing some aspects of English pronunciation, particularly vowels, consonants, stress, homophones and connected speech or linking.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to know the problems that encounter the students in learning and practicing the phonological aspects of English pronunciation, particularly in the area that relate to vowels, consonants, stress, homophones and connected speech.

1.4 The Research Question

The research question of this study is as follow: what are the phonological problems that face the students in learning and practicing vowels, consonants, stress, connected speech or linking and homophones?

SOME ASPECTS RELATING TO ENGLISH PRONOUCIATION

2.1 Introduction

English language is one of the most popular languages in the world. It is the language that 80 % people in the world speak in. It is not like Chinese, Turkish or French. It is an international language that more than half of the world people can use when travelling, working, and learning outside their homelands. For this reason, mastering this language is of great necessity for the language users' whatever their purpose were.

Beside the basic language skills, there are three major aspects of learning any language; they are grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Learning these abilities properly lead to catch the competence of the four language skills. Pronunciation is one of the significant aspects of the language learning since it is the base of the skill of speaking that is considered the most important part of communication in the world.

2.2 The Importance of Pronunciation

Pronunciation and phonology are two phenomenon that are closely related to the skills of listening and speaking since pronunciation training helps to improve speaking abilities and increases intelligibility of interlocutors (5).

However, many teachers, particularly non-native speakers, still ignore the aspect of English pronunciation when teaching in a classroom. They often focus on teaching grammar and vocabulary, try to help learners to learn the basic skills of language, and communicate only in the target language. They think that communication is enough when the learners only understand the text (6).

(1:7) views that many academic researchers of language realize that pronunciation is both desirable and necessary for foreign learners of any language for the following reasons: "It helps students to understand the spoken language they hear, and helps them make their own speech more comprehensible and meaningful to other speakers as well". Croft (1972) as cited in (1:7) emphasizes "One cannot even hear a new language correctly until one has learned to pronounce it reasonably well oneself". In addition, Kenworthy (2002) as cited in (1:7) says, "pronunciation is important for it may help learners who want to approach a native-like accent because of the nature of their work which requires them to deal with native speakers.

It is also important for learners who want to become teachers of English whose pronunciation is needed to approximate a native accent”

2.3 Factors Affecting English Pronunciation

There are many factors that affect learning pronunciation in any language. These factors principally have a positive role in improving the quality of learning and practicing pronunciation. In this research, we will talk in more details about some factors that have a strong impact on learning the basic phonological aspects of English pronunciation.

2.3.1 Exposure to the Target Language

Learners’ English pronunciation is affected by the amount of the target language they experienced in their daily life. In other words, it relates to the length of time the learners live in the foreign country environment “it does not matter the place or the country the learners stay, but it depends on how much they use English in their daily life” (13:44). Learners who live in English speaking country have more chances to listen, speak and hear sounds than those who have few hours to hear spoken English only during classes for few hours every week. Therefore, the more time they spend in their speaking environment, the better results on their pronunciation will be achieved.

2.3.2 Language Aptitude

Aptitude plays a significant role in the process of development learners’ pronunciation competence. (2:86) defines language aptitude as “an individual’s initial state of readiness and capacity for learning a foreign language, and probable facility in doing so given the presence of motivation and opportunity”. (12) add foreign language aptitude refers to a set of perceptual and cognitive abilities which allow second language learners to understand, explain, diagnose and predict why and how some individuals can acquire second language in more effective and efficient ways. (2) argues that the nature of language aptitude includes several components (A) phonetic coding ability (B) grammatical sensitivity (C) inductive language learning ability (D) memory ability. (3) says that some people have more aptitude or talent for practicing English pronunciation than others; that leads to say that, there are some people who “have good ear” for language. If aptitude is reflected on the amount of time, an individual needs to learn something under optimal conditions of motivation, chances to

learn, and quality of instruction, the role of aptitude can either increase or decrease when the other conditions are different.

2.3.3 Motivation

(9) claims that motivation is closely related to the students' personality. In a similar meaning, some learners are not aware about making mistakes whatever they were either grammatical or phonological, just so long as they want to communicate effectively. Others are very concerned about correctness that stem from the desire to identify with the target culture, or because they have a natural abilities to speak correctly. (13:42) says "motivation is a descript as an inner drive, impulse emotions, or desire that moves one to a particular action". In fact, there are not teachers who force the students to learn unless they are motivated. This leads to the truth that if learners are well motivated for having good pronunciation, they will be better interested in their learning abilities about all the aspects related to sounds and phonology.

2.3.4 Mother Tongue Interference

According to Lott (1983) interference refers to the errors that second language learners committee as a result of their mother tongue. At the phonological ground, the interference is most prominent because most of the phonological aspects are language specific (as cited in 7). The learners' mother tongue has a crucial influence on the way in which teachers try to learn how to pronounce. Actually, learners' pronunciation habits in their first language can make it more challenging for them to utter sounds in the new language that do not exist in their mother tongue (13).

2.4 Features of English Pronunciation

The components of English pronunciation are considered basic elements of language competence that relates specifically to the speaking skill. Phonetically, there are mainly two major types of pronunciation aspects; namely, they are suprasegmental features and segmental features.

2.4.1. Suprasegmental Features

According to (8), suprasegmental features are features of speech that can be analyzed and applied to groups of segments or phonemes. These features are very significant in English language. They are stress, intonation and connected speech or linking.

2.4.1.1 Stress

Stress can be defined as the relative degree of force that a speaker gives to a syllable in a word (10). There is no possible way to know which syllable of a word is stressed but every time you learn, you must know how a word is stressed (2). (11) adds that English is an accent based-language, not all the word syllabus are pronounced with the same quality of emphasis since stress changes the way the word is pronounced. For this reason, (2) says that if the stressed syllable is wrongly pronounced, the shape of the word will be spoiled; hence, a hearer may have a challenge in recognizing the word.

Syllable is a part of a word that includes one vowel sound; it may contain one or more than one consonant sounds. Generally, the amount of vowels in one word is the one that determines the number of syllables. In every word, there is a stressed syllable that means, "The vowel sound in that syllable is said louder, is said on a higher pitch and is held longer than the other vowel sounds in the same word. This pattern is called syllable stress. Each word has one stressed syllable. Other syllables are less stressed or are weak syllables" (10:19).

1-One Syllable Word

Cup *all*

2-Two Syllable Words

Answer *afraid*

3-Three or More Syllable Words

Discouvery *radio*

2.4.1.2 Intonation

Intonation is a feature that distinguishes native speaker from a speaker of the foreign language. Intonation can be defined as the melody of the language (11). According to (2), There is no language that is spoken on the same musical note all the time. The voice goes up and down and the various notes of the voice combine to make tones. These tones are called pitches. The nature of speaking utterances demand variation in the pitch of the voice utterance for creating various meanings for the same utterance. Intonation has two basic patterns: rising and falling (10)

2.4.1.3 Connected speech

According to (8), there are some aspects of connected speech that categorized as follow: assimilation, elision and linking.

- **Assimilation** is a term that describes how the utterance of speech's sounds modify each other.
- **Elision** describes the loss or disappearance of a sound when pronouncing.
- **Linking** is joining two words together until they are sounded as one word.

2.4.2 Segmental Features

Segmental features or phonemes are the various types of sounds within a language. Definitely, the set of segmental features consists properly of two categories: vowel sounds and consonant sounds (8).

2.4.2.1 Vowels in English

Pronouncing the spelling rules in English is not easy to learn. It is confusing for both native and non-native speakers. Vowels in English are made by different mouth shapes with different tongue positions. Vowels in English should be learned by listening and imitating frequently (4). Vowels are divided into two main kinds: long vowels and short vowels.

1-Producing /iy/

be *seat*

2-Producing /i/

list *him*

3-Producing /ey/

vain *say*

4-Producing /e/

get *said*

5-Producing /æ /

man *at*

6-producing / a/

Calm *college*

7-Producing /aw/

out cloud

8-Producing /ə /

Sundayblood

9-Producing /ay/

Eye die

10-Producing/ɔ/

Also awful

11-Producing/ ow/

Soul sew

12-Producing/ər/

Water her

13-Producing/ɔy/

Oil royal

14-Producing /uw/

shoe whose

2.4.2.2 Consonants in English

Based on reviewing a lot of research and theories about phonetic and phonology, consonant sounds in English were classified into three major points.

1. Place of articulation that focuses on the organs that help to shape the voice like (lips, teeth, tongue, and mouth).
2. Manner of articulation that emphasizes how does the air flow out the mouth or the nose.
3. Voiced or voiceless sounds. Voiced sounds happen when the vocal cords vibrate while voiceless sounds happen when the vocal cords don not vibrate.

Table 1: Consonants Sounds in English (4)

	billable	labiodental	Dental	alveolar	Palate alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
Unvoiced								
voiced								
Stops	P b				t d		k g	

Fricates		F v	θ	S z	ʃ ʒ		h	h
Affricates		F v			tʃ dʒ			
Nasals	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Approximates	W2				r	j	W2	

2.5. Features of Some English Phonetic Alphabets.

1. The letter “c” is pronounced “k” if it is followed by (a, o, u, l, and r).

Clear card cool cut crash

2. The letter “c” is pronounced “c” if followed by (i, y, e).

City see cycle

3. When the letter “g” comes after “n” and “m”, it is not pronounced.

Sign diaphragm

4. Sometimes the letter “cc” represent the sound /ks/

Accident success

5. When the letter “kn” begin the word, the “k” is not pronounced.

Knife know

6. The same sound may be represented by many letters.

See key machine seize

7. A combination of letters may represent a single sound.

*Shoot deal Thomas physics rough
character furniture composition vision leisure*

9. “N” is not pronounced after “m”.

Column autumn

10. “T” is not pronounced in words that end in “stle–sten- stle-en”.

Listen often castle thistle

12. A silent “l” is not pronounced when it follows “a-o-u”

Half yolk should

13. A silent “w” often comes before “r”.

Write wriggle

14 “G” is not pronounced before “h”.

Right bought night

16. “C” is not pronounced before “s”.

Science sense

17. The letter “u’ is not pronounced when it comes before vowels.

Build colleague guitar

18. The letter “h” is not pronounced before “o -w -k -y -g and c”.

Honest ach rhyme spaghetti Sikh what

19. The “p” is not pronounced after “s”.

Psychology psalm

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 Research Strategies

Methodology is the major step when carrying out any research. Methodology helps the researcher to choose the best methods of collecting data from the participants. After collecting the data, the researcher starts in the process of data analysis according to the tool that suites the nature of data collected. Then, the researcher summarizes the results and draws conclusion. This study depends on a descriptive quantitative results. Thus, it is regarded a descriptive quantitative study.

3.2 Sample of the Study

The participants in this study are 23 students enrolled in the Department of English in Almarj Faculty of Education at University of Benghazi during the academic year 2022. The sample of the study are all undergraduate students in the advanced semesters. The researcher choose the advanced semesters in order to discover the extent of the students’ usage of some aspects of English pronunciation because the students had mastered all the aspects of English pronunciation related to the testing items. The participants are all native speakers of Arabic enrolled in the seven and eighth semesters. They are 2 males and 21 females aged between 20-28 years of age.

3.3 Instrument of the Study

The instrument used to collect data in this study is a recording oral test. The researcher recorded the performance of the participants during the test. The participants were given

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some papers that include certain exercises about the testing items, which are vowels, consonants, stress, connected speech and homophones. They were asked to pronounce loudly certain words and phrases relating to the topic of the study. The test items were chosen on the base of their importance to the research topic. The research test includes five sections. The first section consists of certain words relating to the vowel sounds. The second section includes some words relating to the consonant sounds. The third section of the test is about practicing homophones. The fourth section is about practicing the aspect of linking when speaking. The last one is about applying the aspect of stress in some words. Each student was given enough amount of time to do the research task. The researcher has the role of the supervisor, in which she observes and records only the participants' speech.

3.4 Data Analysis

After interviewing the students and collecting the data, the researcher began to analyze the data by listening to every record and marking the test items. Notes were made about the kinds of problems that the students faced when they were uttering Errors were identified and classified into their types. Particular grades were given to each item on the test, and the range of scores for each one on the scoring protocol were identified and calculated as percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research is to discover the extent of applying some aspects of English pronunciation, particularly vowels, consonants, stress, connected and homophones, when speaking in the target language. Thus, the current chapter presents and discusses the results of the study based on data collected from the participants. Evaluation of correct and incorrect responses were noted. The scores were calculated using the tool of descriptive statistic. The data were presented in table forms that were divided into two main sections. The first section begins with the evaluation of the participants' performance according to the assessment criteria and the second section presents the overall performance in percentage form.

4.2 Assessment Criteria

The students were directed to the same questions about the same topic and all the participants had enough amount of time to answer. The students were asked to answer certain questions about pronouncing some English words and phrases relating to vowels, consonants, stress, connected speech or linking and homophones. Scoring protocols were devised to mark the students' responses. They appear in tables from (2) to (13). Data were collected by a mean of a recording oral test that was applied to 23 students who enrolled in the seventh and eighth semesters in the Department of English in the Almarj Faculty of Education. Data were analyzed statistically based on the student responses to the test items.

4.3 Analysis of the Assessment Criteria

In this section of research, the researcher presents the results of data analysis and shows how they were assessed. The results of data analysis, in this section of research, are divided into five main parts:

- 1-Analysis of Vowels
- 2- Analysis of Consonants
- 3- Analysis of Homophones
- 4- Analysis of Linking
- 5- Analysis of Stress

4.3.1 Analysis of Vowels

Vowels are mainly one of the English sounds that are easy for the tongue to pronounce. However, in this research, the results showed the reverse in which many students encountered some challenges when pronouncing English vowels. In other words, it was clear that a high number of the students were not able to differentiate between the sounds of long and short vowels; they depended on pronouncing the sounds with the same vowel quality. In my point of view, this phenomenon can properly back to language interference that considered significant factor that affects learning and practicing pronunciation since English vowels are many and similar to pronounce while Arabic vowels are easy and few.

In English, short vowels are considered the easiest sounds for the second language learners to pronounce. They are clear sounds and are not difficult for the tongue to pronounce, and, in most cases, they are often pronounced as they are written. Unexpectedly, through the analysis of data, it was noted that some of the participants did not have enough ability to pronounce short vowels correctly. The sound /ɛ/, for example, was a challenge to pronounce particularly in the word “guess”; most of the participants pronounced it as it was written. They seemed to utter it as the sound /u/. It was a confusing word for the students to pronounce because the sound /ɛ/ was written after the sound /u/ causing them to mispronounce the sound in the right way.

In addition, this case spread to be applied to the other sort of vowels like /I/ and /a/. Words like “bread and said” were a source of ambiguity for some students because the words include a mix of vowels /ɛ/, /I/ and /a/ together. Apparently, the students were confident that the sounds are pronounced as they looked in their written form. Thus, they mispronounced them.

Obviously, it was observed that the majority of the students have a little amount of knowledge about vocabulary that they can use in English; their level about English pronunciation and phonetics are, accurately, very limited. Actually, this phenomenon can be traced to the fact that most of the students are not familiar with the aspects of practice in classrooms that have effective role in enhancing the ability to learn.

The sound /I / in “sick” and “sit” is one of the easiest sounds that is supposed to be pronounced correctly, but the results were not so that. Scores revealed that some of the

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participants did not have enough ability to pronounce it in the correct way although they had passed the academic stages of mastering the basic rules concerning this aspect of English sounds. This difficulty, principally, can be attributed to the truth that, the students tended to follow a strategy when pronouncing some English words; they, obviously, depended on pronouncing the sounds as they seem in their written forms ignoring the basic rules relating to English sounds and phonology.

In fact, in this study, not only short vowels that cause obstacles to the participants but also long vowels also appear to be another problem for most of the students since they are mix of some vowels together or some vowels with some consonants that form a sort of various pronunciation. Without doubt, these combinations of letters lead the students to be confused when looking at the words. In more details, the researcher noted that some of the participants pronounced the sound /ay/ in a wrong way; they apparently used other sounds like /ɛ/, /a/, /æ/, /ow/, /I/, /O/ and /w/ instead of it. In addition, other students confused the sound /ey/ with other sounds such as /ay /ey/, /ʌ/, /ɛ / and /a/.

Another problem encountered by the students, in this study, was uttering the sound /a/ wrongly. In other words, most of the students pronounced it as it was formed like in the word “college” and “occupy”; they tended to replace it to other sounds like /ʌ/, /I/ ,/ay/ ,/ey/. This difficulty can be due to that, the students did not master all the basic rules relating to pronouncing the sound /a/.

Some of the students’ errors in uttering vowels are listed as follow:

- Some participants mispronounced the sound /Oy/; they used the sounds /O/, /ow/, /ʌ /, /ɛ/, and /a /instead of it.
- Some students confused the sound /O/ with /Oy/, /a/, /ɛ/, /ʌ/, /ey/, and /I/.
- Some students used /Oy/ instead of /aw/ particularly in the word “ouch”.
- Other students replaced the sound /ow/ with /Oy/.
- Some participants mispronounced /uw/ with / ow, /ʌ/ and /iy/.

The degree of /O/ was sound seen, accurately in this study, as a linguistic challenge that encountered the majority of the participants because its pronunciation is similar to three basic sounds “Oy, ow and uw”; therefore, it was observed that most of the students uttered it

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incorrectly, in which they confused the sounds with each other, and pronounced it to the nearest sound, they think it is the right sound. Scores also indicated that 20 % of the students mispronounced the vowel /ʌ/; they definitely seemed to pronounce it as the sound /a/.

There is another deficiency viewed in the students' performance, which was disorganizing the correct sounds for some words like "blood" and "out". The two vowels are formed as parts of the words that are pronounced as long vowels. Thus, the students resorted to utter them as they were looked.

Moreover, 40 % of the participants pronounced the long sounds as the short vowel (ɛ). This problem may be due to the fact that the students do not have sufficient knowledge to differentiate between the sounds of English vowels that considered important part of English phonetics. The participants also struggled challenges in pronouncing long vowels that have combination of vowels like "people", "meet" and "place" which cause ambiguity for them to catch the proper utterance.

There is frequently appearance of the confusing sounds in this study because they are nearly similar in pronunciation to each other. Hence, some students have doubt of how to utter them correctly, and they seemed to pronounce the words several times and in different ways. This variant pronunciation of the same vowel, in different words, creates some difficulties for the participants to catch the proper pronunciation. It can be suggested that the cause of these errors is that the students' inability to differentiate between the sounds of short and long vowels particularly when the vowel sounds are similar. This weakness can be resulting from lack of practice and the absence of good quality of teaching in classroom.

In this study, it was clear that the students have very limited background about the major components of English pronunciation relating to vowels, consonants, stress, connected speech and homophones. It is a problem that advanced students have this low level of performance when pronouncing in the target language. Actually, pronunciation is one of the significant aspects of language learning and needs much attention and practice to be well mastered. It requires using the following points when teaching in a classroom:

- Much homework.
- Much practice in classroom.
- Presentation in groups.

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- Classroom activities frequently.
- The best methods and techniques of teaching phonetics and phonology.

An important note was discovered in my experience in teaching is that the students' main aim is only to pass the exams and move to another grade without focusing on the abilities of their language production that improve and upgrade their level of the linguistics aspects. The students in this way will not reach to the desired results of language learning. What makes the students well learned is their continuous practice of pronunciation since it is efficient way to evaluate and enhance the students' learning abilities.

Table: 2 Overall Scores

The sounds	I	ε	iy	æ	ey	a	ay	aw	ɔ	ɔy	Λ	ow	uw
The Scores for Each Sound	3	4	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3
Case 1	3	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	2	3
Case 2	1	1	1	2	5	1	2	2	1	2	0	1	3
Case 3	3	2	2	2	3	1	4	1	2	2	0	1	1
Case 4	3	2	3	1	4	0	2	2	2	0	0	2	1
Case 5	1	3	3	2	3	0	2	2	3	4	1	2	3
Case 6	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	2
Case 7	2	4	4	3	5	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3
Case 8	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
Case 9	3	2	2	1	4	1	0	0	2	4	2	3	2
Case 10	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	2	1
Case 11	2	1	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	2
Case 12	3	2	2	3	4	4	0	0	4	4	4	3	2
Case 13	2	3	2	2	5	1	2	2	4	3	2	3	3
Case 14	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	1	0	3	2
Case 15	1	0	2	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Case 16	1	3	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	1
Case 17	0	2	0	2	5	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	3

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Case 18	1	2	2	3	4	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	3
Case 19	0	1	3	3	2	a	0	1	0	2	1	3	2
Case 20	1	2	2	3	5	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	1
Case 21	1	2	2	1	5	1	0	1	2	1	1	2	1
Case 22	0	1	2	1	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
Case 23	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2

Table 3: Overall Scores and the Percentage Grade for Each Student.

Cases	The Total Score=48	Percentages
Case1	21	43.75%
Case 2	23	47.91%
Case 3	24	50%
Case 4	19	39.58%
Case 5	29	60.41%
Case 6	10	20.83%
Case 7	40	83.33%
Case 8	14	29.16%
Case 9	26	54.16%
Case 10	16	33.33%
Case 11	17	35.41%
Case 12	35	72.91%
Case 13	34	70.83%
Case 14	25	52%
Case 15	10	20.83%
Case 16	13	27%
Case 17	18	37.5%
Case 18	20	41.66%
Case 19	19	39.58%
Case 20	20	41.66%

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Case 21	20	41.66%
Case 22	14	29.16%
Case 23	10	20.83%

Table 4: Overall Grades and Percentages

Evaluation	Percentages	
Excellent	0	0 %
Very good	1	4 %
Good	2	9 %
Weak	4	18 %
Poor	15	68 %

4.3.2 Analysis of Consonants

Consonant sounds were another phenomenon that faced the participants in this study. It was obvious that the students do not have enough ability to pronounce certain consonant sounds correctly, particularly those that do not exist in Arabic language such as /v/ and/p/.

In addition, it was observed that most of the students lack training in the practical side of the aspect of pronunciation, and this lack may trace to the fact that the students did not practice unless they are forced to, mostly for exams and in certain skills. In addition, there is another possible reason that lays behind this challenge, which is lack of classroom activities during the teaching process; since they are very efficient parts that weaken the process of language learning. Concerning this respect, there are some teachers who may think that doing these activities would take a lot of time, so they could not finish quickly and for this reason, they ignored them.

In my opinion, part of the obstacles that challenged the students in the process of learning may be due to certain points of weakness that are relating to either the teacher or the surrounding environment. The surrounding environment that belongs to language learning can be represented in providing adequate rooms, laps, visual aids, modern instruments and devices that help to improve both the processes of learning and teaching.

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Some sounds in the test create difficulties for some students to be pronounced in the right way. It was noted that a little number of students could pronounce correctly the / f / sound, particularly in the word “laugh”, but missed the / f / in “rough” while a high number of students mispronounced the / f / in “laugh”. These mistakes may be certainly, due to the fact that the sound /f/ in this word is a mix of two letters /p/ and /h/ that cause the participants to be confused, so they pronounced it wrongly. This difficulty refers to the truth that most of the students are not aware of the whole rules relating to pronouncing consonant sounds in English; since there are some letters that are pronounced in a way that differs from their written forms.

In addition, the majority of the students incorrectly uttered the silent letters as the /b/ sound in “climb” and “dumb”. Clearly, they seemed to pronounce them as they are spelled in Arabic; ignoring the fact that the letter/ b / when comes after /m /, it is not pronounced. In other words, the participants seemed to resort to apply the strategies of using Arabic language since no silent letters in their mother tongue.

Some students tended to repeat the same mechanisms of pronouncing the letters as they are written, so they started to pronounce the /k/ sound as the sound /c/ as it was written in words like “success” and “vaccine”. Others resorted to pronounce the /z/ sound as /s/ in words like “noisy” and “position”. Actually, it was obvious that the students are not familiar with the whole rules relating to English sounds particularly consonants.

Similarity between the written form and pronunciation of some letters, in this study, appears to confuse the participants to catch the correct pronunciation. This phenomenon appears, accurately, in practicing the sound /dʒ /; many students tended to pronounce it as the sound /j/ as in “judge” and “budget”.

There are, basically, many students who had mistakes in uttering the main vowels and some consonant sounds even though the testing sounds were pronounced correctly. This phenomenon, in particular, leads to misunderstanding the words and interrupting communication between the listener and the speaker.

Another obstacle that encountered the students, in this study, is the spelling problem. In other meaning, the participants seemed to spell the words more than times and spend more time in spelling the words. This issue implies that the students are not familiar with practicing

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pronunciation and reading skills although the words being tested are suitable to their academic level.

Moreover, some students ignored pronouncing some words in the test. This leads to say that this truth implies definitely that the students do not have idea of how to pronounce them, so they left them and moved to pronounce other words.

It was viewed that some participants hesitated to utter some sounds. This issue refers to that the students are not sure about choosing the correct pronunciation. This bad habit of language learning is due to applying the weak practicing of sounds in classrooms.

Another challenge that faced some of the students is that when they read a word, they start to divide it into two separate parts like in the words “sympathy” causing the word to be unclear and confused.

It was observable that some participants pronounced the /v/ sound as the /f/ sound. In my opinion, this unexpected result is due to the interference between the two languages since the /v/sound does not exist in Arabic language; thus, the participants replaced it directly by the /f/ sound. In this case, the learners selected the nearest phoneme in Arabic that is similar to this sound. Thus, the interference of the mother tongue appeared when they spoke.

In addition, some students mispronounced the combination of some letters that pronounced as one sound such as “construction” “pleasure”. 7 students misused pronouncing this sound causing ambiguity to some students to pronounce the sound correctly. Moreover, a high number of the participants did not get to the stage of mastering the sound /ʃə/ particularly when it comes in the middle and at the beginning of the word as in “natural” and “butcher”. They tended to pronounce it in different ways because it is a combination of two letters. Clearly, they appeared to be confused and depended on pronouncing it as it was written.

It was also noted that the students cannot differentiate between the sound /t/ combined with other letters like “h” to form new different sound. 15 students pronounced it as the sound / ty/. Thus, the students resorted to pronounce them wrongly. The case of these errors is the combination of some letters together, resulting different sounds. In addition, the sound /ʃ/ was a problematic area that properly faced the participants. The participants tended to pronounce it as the sound/ti/. They, obviously, mixed the pronunciation of these two sounds together causing wrong utterance to the words. The main reason that lays behind this difficulty is

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combination of some letters together that form different sound from the written one, leading the students to mispronounce the sound rightly.

15 students misused uttering the sound /g/ in the word “tongue”; they ignored it and considered it a silent letter. Other students replaced it by another sound in the word “ghost” and two students replaced it by the sound /j/ as in “single” because it is similar in the form to the letter /j/. Thus, it confused the students to practice the correct pronunciation. The case of this challenge, in my opinion, is the similarity that exist between the two letters in form and sound, helping the students to catch the missing pronunciation.

Another phenomenon that faced the participants, in this study, is that some students missed uttering the whole word. They missed pronouncing the last letters of the word like “biography” to get “biograph” or add letters to the main word like “youth” to get “youther” causing ambiguity to understand the main word

Table: 5 Overall Scores

sounds	ð	θ	dʒ	f	s	tʃ	k	ʃ	z	η
The scores for each sound	3	5	6	2	4	4	8	7	4	3
Case 1	3	2	0	1	3	0	1	4	2	2
Case 2	2	5	1	1	3	0	2	3	3	3
Case 3	3	4	1	1	3	1	2	4	0	2
Case 4	3	5	1	1	1	4	2	1	1	3
Case 5	3	4	4	1	2	0	4	3	0	1
Case 6	3	4	6	2	2	4	7	1	1	3
Case 7	3	4	3	1	2	1	5	6	2	2
Case 8	3	5	3	2	2	2	4	6	2	3
Case 9	3	5	3	1	2	4	5	5	2	2
Case 10	3	5	1	1	2	0	8	7	2	2
Case 11	3	3	4	1	2	4	2	4	2	2
Case 12	3	5	6	1	3	3	5	4	4	2
Case 13	3	4	2	1	1	0	6	5	1	2

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Case 14	2	3	1	0	1	0	5	1	0	0
Case 15	3	5	1	1	3	0	5	1	0	1
Case 16	3	3	1	0	2	0	2	2	0	1
Case 17	3	4	2	1	1	3	3	2	0	2
Case 18	3	3	2	1	4	0	2	2	0	3
Case 19	3	1	1	1	3	2	4	3	0	2
Case20	3	4	1	1	4	0	1	4	0	2
Case21	3	5	1	1	4	2	3	2	0	2
Case 22	2	3	2	1	2	0	3	2	0	1
Case 23	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	1

Table: 6 Overall Scores and Percentage for Each Student

The Cases	The Total Score =46	The Percentage
Case 1	18	39 %
Case 2	23	50 %
Case 3	21	46 %
Case 4	22	48 %
Case 5	22	48 %
Case 6	33	72 %
Case 7	29	63 %
Case 8	32	69 %
Case 9	32	69 %
Case 10	31	67 %
Case 11	27	59 %
Case 12	36	78 %
Case 13	24	52 %
Case 14	13	28 %
Case 15	20	43 %
Case 16	14	30 %

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Case 17	21	46 %
Case 18	20	43 %
Case 19	20	43 %
Case 20	20	43 %
Case 21	23	50 %
Case 22	16	35 %
Case 23	14	30%

Table 7: Overall Grades and Percentages

Evaluation	Percentages	
Excellent	0	0 %
Very good	1	4 %
Good	4	17 %
Weak	5	22 %
Poor	12	52 %

4.3.3 Analysis of Homophones

Catching homophones refers to the learners' ability to use properly the basic rules relating to English phonology. The results of the current study indicated that the students demonstrated a low level of performance when practicing homophones. According to listening to the students' recordings, it was noted that the participants read each couple of words in different sounds although the two words have linguistically the same pronunciation. The nature of the different letters made the students pronounce each sound differently according to its form ignoring the basic rules relating to English sounds, particularly vowels. This reality indicates that the students do not have any experience about practicing this important element of English sounds and had a low level of teaching this aspect in a classroom.

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Table 8: Overall Scores and Percentage for Each Student

Cases	The Total Mark = 10	Percentages
Case 1	2	20 %
Case 2	6	60 %
Case 3	1	10 %
Case 4	4	40 %
Case 5	2	20 %
Case 6	10	100 %
Case 7	1	10 %
Case 8	1	10%
Case 9	4	40 %
Case 10	2	20 %
Case 11	6	60 %
Case 12	9	90 %
Case 13	2	20 %
Case 14	0	0 %
Case 15	0	0 %
Case 16	1	10 %
Case 17	2	20 %
Case 18	5	50 %
Case 19	3	30 %
Case 20	2	20 %
Case 21	4	40 %
Case 22	1	10 %
Case 23	1	10%

Table 9: Overall Grades and Percentages

Evaluation	Percentages
Excellent	9 %
Very good	0 %
Good	0 %
Weak	13.6 %
Poor	77 %

4.3.4 Analysis of Linking

Linking is an aspect that adds more strength to the speaker's accent and give impression to the learner's capability on mastering the skill of speaking. The analysis of data relating to the linking aspect is generally considered very bad comparing to the academic level of the students. According to my observation to the test application, more than half of the students could not be able to use this aspect; they read each word individually without linking them together. Data analysis also showed that the students are not aware of using this aspect when speaking; they do not have any background about applying this effective component of English pronunciation.

It was obvious that this type of exercise about linking were given to the students for the first time. This truth helps us to suggest that the students were not given classroom activities relating to applying this type of pronunciation, and this topic was not mainly part of the course design.

Finally, we can say that the students' use of language is a traditional use. They have limited knowledge about their use of English sounds. They speak without focusing on the main features of English pronunciation like linking; they tend to pronounce each word individually without taking its relation to the preceding or the following word.

Table: 10 Overall Grades and Percentage for Each Student

Cases	The Total Mark = 6	Percentages
Case 1	0	0 %
Case 2	0	0%

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Case 3	1	16.6 %
Case 4	1	16.6 %
Case 5	0	0 %
Case 6	1	16.6 %
Case 7	0	0 %
Case 8	1	16.6 %
Case 9	1	16.6 %
Case 10	1	16.6 %
Case 11	4	66.6 %
Case 12	2	33 %
Case 13	1	16.6 %
Case 14	0	0 %
Case 15	0	0 %
Case 16	0	0 %
Case 17	0	0 %
Case 18	3	33 %
Case 19	1	16.6 %
Case 20	0	0 %
Case 21	1	16.6 %
Case 22	1	16.6 %
Case 23	1	16.6%

Table 11: Overall Grades and Percentages.

Evaluation	Percentages
Excellent	0 %
Very good	0 %
Good	4.5 %
Weak	0 %
Poor	95.4 %

4.3.5 Analysis of Stress

The majority of the students, in this study, missed the right use of stress on the right syllable. Many students made errors of stressing the / r/ sounds in words like “deliver” and “disappear” while few numbers of students recognized the correct use of stress on the right syllable. In addition, some students stressed two syllable on the same words like “deliver” and “comfortable”.

During analyzing the problems relating to the stress, it was noted that there are other obstacles relating to applying English sounds. These problems are related to using the right usage of some vowels and consonants in the words that affect using the appropriate stress. In more details, some students pronounced the /v/ sound /f/. In this case, the role of language interference appears because the /v/ sound not found in Arabic. Thus, the students resorted to pronounce it to the nearest sound in their mother tongue /f/. Other participants also tended to utter /J/ sound as /g/ in “agency” and /z/ sound as /s/ in “rise”.

Moreover, pronouncing some words in separation was another phenomenon that challenged the participants in which they were not able to recognize the appropriate stress. In other words, they started to utter some words like “deliver” and “productivity” in parts. These errors are very effective in a way that weaken the quality of learning, particularly in the area that relating to the science of phonetics. The main reason that lays behind this weakness in catching the right stress is the absence of practice and depending on the theoretical part when teaching in a classroom.

The crucial challenge that faced the participants in this study was how to place the proper stress when pronouncing words. They looked to pronounce the words without focusing on their syllabus. Through interviewing the participants, I asked some of them if they know the syllabus number of each word; they said no. Actually, this negative phenomenon definitely affects the process of learning pronunciation. Thus, the teacher’s responsibility is to focus on how to deal with this negative point and try to find solution to avoid errors when pronouncing in English.

Generally speaking, some students properly faced difficulties in pronouncing some English sounds and these difficulties may be due to many reasons that are considered obstacles to the process of mastering English pronunciation. In my opinion, this weakness may be back to the

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weak mechanism that the students were learned in, or due to weakness in the process of teaching, in that the teachers resort to teach without focusing on the importance of the practical side of the lessons. Other possible reasons are that there are some students who are considered lazy and careless about their learning tasks, and some students tend to learn in a wrong style that affects negatively on their learning abilities.

In a summary, the level of the students' performance is generally very low in recognizing the linguistic basis relating to English pronunciation and phonology, though the students are graduate students and studied English language for many years.

Table 12: Overall Scores and Percentages for Each Student.

Cases	Scores=14	Percentages
Case 1	1	7 %
Case 2	7	50 %
Case 3	5	35.7 %
Case 4	4	28.5 %
Case 5	5	35.7%
Case 6	12	85.7%
Case 7	5	35.7 %
Case 8	7	50 %
Case 9	6	42.8 %
Case 10	0	0 %
Case 11	9	64 %
Case 12	9	64 %
Case 13	6	42.8 %
Case 14	1	7 %
Case 15	2	14 %
Case 16	1	7 %
Case 17	3	21 %
Case 18	1	7 %
Case 19	5	35.7 %

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Case 20	1	7 %
Case 21	5	35.7 %
Case 22	2	14 %
Case 23	1	7 %

Table 13: Overall Grades and Percentages

Evaluation	Percentages
Excellent	% 5
Very good	% 0
Good	% 14
Weak	% 14
Poor	% 77

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

From the previous discussion, the results of the study showed that although the students are at the advanced stage of studying English language, they obviously still have a low level of performance in using some aspects of English pronunciation, particularly vowels, consonants, stress, connected speech and homophones. It was conducted that this weakness can be traced to various reasons that lay behind this challenge. Thus, the importance of this aspect of language learning and its role in improving and highlighting the ability of learning needs to be well organized and taken into consideration.

5.2 Recommendations

The results of the current research emphasize the urgent need to insert a solid basis for English language teaching, particularly in the area that relate to practice English sounds and pronunciation since they are considered one of the main aspects of language learning.

English language is not a complex language, nor is it easy to be mastered. Thus, it is difficult for the teachers to bring the students, whose mother tongue is Arabic, to the stage of mastering the productive skills, particularly the skill of speaking because it requires many linguistic and communicative abilities to be well practiced. As we know, pronunciation is the core element of the skill of speaking, since no speaking without pronunciation. Therefore, teachers should put more and more focus on the practical side in each class since there is no learning without practicing.

Based on the results of the study, there are some points that both the teacher and the students should follow in order to build successful learning and teaching environment. Teachers should raise the students' awareness of English pronunciation and insist its significant role in learning the target language successfully.

In fact, my experience in teaching ensured that some learners like to learn about the surface level of the language while other learners like to practice the language as being a mean of communication to express what they think and feel. Therefore, teachers should always try to use a variety of approaches and teaching methods; helping the students to engage in the process of learning in different ways.

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Great consideration should be given to the course design. In this respect, textbooks should have an ample amount of knowledge and instructions that emphasize all the aspects that required when learning and teaching English pronunciation. Teachers should also choose the best methods and techniques to teach English pronunciation with great focus on applying the four main steps needed in the teaching process, which are presentation, practice, evaluation and revision. Moreover, it is of great necessity to emphasize, from time to time, the role of evaluation in the learning process and ensure the effect of its results on the performance of the students' learning abilities.

Actually, practicing English pronunciation needs suitable environment for both teachers and students in order to help them to create successful learning and teaching processes. In other words, there should be well-equipped labs with data shows, visual aids, recording instruments and modern devices for practicing English sounds in various ways.

In addition, there are some students who tend to be lazy and careless about their process of learning. They often prefer to be silent in the classroom. Thus, we often see that the degree of their academic level is always low, which in turn affects the assessment process that identify the quality of learning the target language. Also, the nature of the students' personality affects the process of learning since we found that some students tend to be shy and lack confidence to speak among the students in the class. In other words, they often get afraid of making mistakes, so they do not prefer to participate. In addition, some students are disappointed to communicate with the rest of the students in the class; they think that they will not achieve good results and they will make mistakes among the students who are better than they are. Without doubt, English teachers have an effective role on improving the students' personality in situations like these. Thus, the teacher' responsibility is to change the students' attitude toward learning English by motivating them to do their best to practice all the aspects of pronunciation inside and outside classrooms. This way would help them to build their confidence toward learning English since learners with positive attitude and motivation are more interested in their abilities of language learning.

Students should be given more opportunities to practice English pronunciation in classrooms in which they should be provided by enough time to use all the chances to apply pronunciation. In addition, teachers should divide class time in the right way in which more

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time is given to applying the practical part and using class activities relating to pronunciation like presentation, general discussion and working in groups. This way is very helpful since it leads to improve and highlight the abilities of pronouncing effectively.

It is of great importance for the teachers to use microphones and recording devices when teaching in classrooms since these devices are helpful in simplifying the process of the students' pronunciation. Moreover, teachers should encourage the students to work together inside and outside classroom. In classrooms, students should be divided into groups and be allowed to work together, instead of working individually. This way will help them to develop their pronunciation habits and increase their additional energy to practice.

More importantly, two aspects are considered essential when teaching in classrooms. These aspects are "time and place". More attention should be given to classes' time in which extra time is allowed to the training courses in order to give students chances to do all the aspects needed when learning and practicing all the aspects of pronunciation. In addition, it is good for the students to be well distributed, in that each class should include a limited number of students in which the teacher can control the whole class and can do all the activities relating to practicing pronunciation.

The evaluation of students from time to time is of vital necessity in enhancing the ability to learn since assessment of students' performance helps to understand the area of weakness in both the process of learning and teaching. Hence, some remedial work can be suggested as a solution to the challenges that both the teacher and the students face.

Emphasizing the continues contact with all the staff in the department has a significant part in both the processes of learning and teaching because the contact leads to know all the obstacles that face the teachers during the academic periods. Therefore, teachers can make solutions to prevent the challenges that encounter the staff members and try to upgrade the quality of the teacher's performance.

Moreover, teachers should frequently attend academic modern programs and conferences, and see recent studies about issues relating to learning and teaching the target language, particularly in the area that belongs to phonetics and phonology; this way will help them to develop their academic level and improve their performance when teaching in classrooms.

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In fact, self-activities can enable and facilitate the students' learning process; for this reason, teachers should encourage the students to extend their knowledge and background by listening to music, watching TV programs and films and encouraging them to join English team relating to practice conversation that strengthen the students' practice of English pronunciation. This way will help them to better improve and develop their pronunciation abilities. In addition, teachers should insist the students to save English pronunciation programs on their mobile phones since they can enable them to practice daily and in any time, they want. English pronunciation programs are very beneficial because they help learners to achieve better results on improving and strengthening their pronunciation qualities.

Moreover, teachers should encourage the students to follow the best ways when learning and practicing sounds. The students should choose the best time and the best ways of learning instead of wasting time in following negative styles of learning. Also, teachers should always do continues training exams to the students for practicing sounds and pronunciation because continues exams enforce the students to study more and more at home and take into consideration the significance of the course being taught.

Through my experience in teaching, it was noted that there are some students who do not attend classes and they come only for midterm and final exams. Officially, teachers should make solution to this type of students who are lazy, careless and always absent for their classes; they should be punished from the administration of the department and the faculty. This way will make all the students attend classes regularly, and feel responsibility toward their educational stage. It also helps the teachers to explain and practice with all the students in classrooms; thus, they can make the overall assessment to get the desired results.

It is essential that the teachers help the students to contribute in the process of learning in classroom by giving them tasks about preparing reports and assignment about some aspects of English pronunciation. Tasks should be prepared from their major course and from other English sources, and be presented to the whole class. This way is very successful and effective in enhancing the students' leaning abilities.

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