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From Perception to Production: Common Pronunciation Errors in Libyan EFL Classrooms

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من الإدراك إلى الإنتاج :أخطاء النطق الشائعة في فصول دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا.

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Abstract

Errors are seen as an essential component of language learning in general and second language acquisition (SLA) in particular. In order to comprehend the process of second language acquisition, SLA experts have long been interested in the phenomena of error. Additionally, researchers believe that second language teachers will be better able to identify the process of L2 (second language) learning if they have a better understanding of the sources of learners' errors. Consequently, the development of second language learning will be successful if learners' errors are identified, categorized, and explained. The purpose of this study is to provide a brief description of the many errors in pronunciation made by Libyan EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. A quantitative approach was used to collect and analyze the study's data. Seventeen undergraduate students from the University of Benghazi's Department of English participated. The findings indicate that learners commonly struggle to distinguish certain sounds, substitute one sound for another, create gaps between sounds, pronounce long words, and properly apply stress and intonation.

Key words: errors, errors analysis, interlingua, intralanguage, pronunciation.

المستخلص

تُعَدّ الأخطاء جزءًا أساسيًا من عملية تعلم اللغة عمومًا واكتساب اللغة الثانية (SLA) على وجه الخصوص. ولفهم أعمق لعملية اكتساب اللغة الثانية، اهتمَ خبراءُ اكتساب اللغة الثانية منذ زمن طويل بظاهرة الأخطاء. حيثُ يعتقدُ الباحثون أن معلمي اللغة الثانية سيكونون أكثرَ قدرةً على تبيان عملية تعلم اللغة الثانية إذا تَمكّنوا من فهم مصادر أخطاء المتعلِّمين بشكل أفضل. وبناءً عليه، سيكون تطوّر تعلم اللغة الثانية ناجحًا إذا جرى تحديد أخطاء المتعلِّمين وتصنيفها وشرحها. وهدف هذه الدراسة هو تقديم وصف موجز لأنواع الأخطاء النطقية التي يرتكبها طُلّاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا. استُخدمت مقاربات كمية في جمع وتحليل بيانات الدراسة. شارك في الدراسة سبعة عشر طالبًا جامعيًا من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بنغازي. وتشير النتائج إلى أن المتعلِّمين يواجهون صعوبات شائعة في تمييز أصوات معيّنة، واستبدال صوت بآخر، وإحداث فراغات بين الأصوات، ونطق الكلمات الطويلة، وتطبيق قواعد النبرة بشكل صحيح.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأخطاء، تحليل الأخطاء، بين اللغات، داخل اللغة، النطق.

1. Introduction

Learning to speak a language involves many aspects: it presupposes learning how the sound system is organized, how units of meaning are organized in words, the principles by which these words are put together to form sentences, and principles by which interaction with other speakers is regulated (Jorda, 2002).

Whilst pronunciation is generally recognized simply as the act or manner of pronouncing words (Richard & Schmidt, 2002), others like Otlowsk (1998) argue that pronunciation is the way of pronouncing words that is acceptable by a native speaker of a particular language. Therefore, since it plays very effective role in learning a second language, defining pronunciation becomes an essential, albeit not easy, task.

Since many instructors and second language researchers believe that pronunciation is one of the most difficult skills in second language acquisition, it is acceptable that learners make errors when they learn a second or foreign language. In fact, English language differs in many aspects from other languages, especially Arabic. Therefore, it is possible for students to commit some errors or face difficulties in their learning process. Teachers always try to understand why some learners repeat the same error. Especially when such error has been explained to them. However, some second language researchers believe that errors can be seen as positive aids to learning.

Many teachers and second language experts consider pronunciation as one of the most challenging skills to master, so it is understandable, to some extent, that learners make errors when learning a second or foreign language. Considering the fact that the English language differs significantly from other languages (particularly Arabic), students may make errors or encounter some challenges in pronunciation. Teachers constantly attempt to determine why certain students make the same errors. Especially when they explained that error before. Nevertheless, believe that errors can be a good sign of learning. In this regard, Norrish (1983) claims that errors may be a vital component of learning a language.

2. Research Aims

This study has two main objectives:

1. To identify and categorize the specific pronunciation errors made by Libyan English major students, focusing on phonetic distinctions, syllable counting, and vowel sounds in connection to their impact on pronunciation proficiency.

2. To investigate the relationship between students' awareness of phonetic variances, silent letters, and their pronunciation skills.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the most common pronunciation errors made by Libyan English major students?

2. How does the awareness of phonetic differences and the presence of silent letters among Libyan students influence their ability to pronounce English words accurately and communicate efficiently?

4. Literature Review

In SLA, mother tongue functions generally as a filter for what sounds people are able to distinguish. When learning a second or foreign language, students have to understand that it uses a different set of sounds and different orthographic rules from their mother

tongue (i.e. the same letter written in a different language may be pronounced differently). What learners often do is that they try to approximate the sounds by the ones they are already familiar with and read words as if they were written in their native language(s).

4.1 Contrastive Analysis (CA)

Behaviorism and structuralism were the primary theories that shaped both language and psychology in the 1940s and 1950s. Within this context, Contrastive Analysis (CA) emerged as a widely used tool for second language teaching. Imssalem (2001) observes that until the late 1960s, behaviorism dominated applied linguistics research as well as language teaching and learning, framing errors as the outcome of negative transference of mother tongue habits into the target language. In this view, contrastive analysis became essential for identifying patterns of interference and for designing specific instructional strategies aimed at minimizing earner errors.

Gast (2013) points out that contrastive analysis examines the contrasts between two languages against similarities in order to contribute to apply it to fields like foreign language instruction and translation. On the other hand, Saville-Troike and Barto (2016) refer to contrastive analysis as a framework for studying the acquisition of a second language. It involves systematically comparing learners' first language (L1) and second language (L2) to find the similarities and differences between these languages. Moreover, according to Hummel (2014), one of the main objectives of CA was to identify linguistic contrasts through a structural analysis of both languages. This procedure entails the description of both languages at every level (phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon) for components that are likely to cause issues throughout the learning process.

However, because contrastive linguistics lacked a strong basis in learning psychology, it encountered empirical issues and received serious criticism (Gast, 2013). As a matter of fact, Imssalem (2001) points out that Contrastive Analysis was seriously criticized as being not fully useful because of its limited view as well as it cannot predict the nature of the mother tongue interference. In fact, one of the main criticisms that CA received was its emphasis on mother tongue interference as the only source of errors; meanwhile, CA completely ignores the significance of other factors like age, the type of language acquisition, personality, etc.

4.2 The emergence of Error Analysis

Based on the radical developments in linguistics and psychology in the 1970s, errors were no longer seen to be connected to first-to-second language transfer. In fact, Error Analysis, in contrast to Contrastive Analysis, was founded on the idea that the errors learners make indicate certain learning attitudes and cannot only be attributed to the transferring patterns and forms from the first language into the target language. In this regard, Erdoňan (2005) argues that part of applied linguistics, namely error analysis, was developed in the 1960s to show that the errors made by second language learners reflect universal learning processes in addition to the learners' mother tongue.

Subsequently, one goal of error analysis, according to James (2013), is to find the guidelines that should be followed for successful error correction. Furthermore, according to Wu & Garza (2014), error analysis is a method for evaluating the written or oral performance of second or foreign language learners.

In this aspect, a clear distinction between "error" and "mistake" should be made, since these two concepts are usually confused. Botley (2015) states that systematic deviations from a target language's rules are referred to as errors. On the other hand, mistakes are typically perceived as undeliberate errors brought on by simple forgetfulness or sloth or inadequately internalized rules. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), teachers must recognize that mistakes are caused by "memory lapses, physical states, [or] psychological conditions" rather than a problem in the first or second language's linguistic competence. Furthermore, Corder (1967) makes a distinction between mistakes that result from a processing failure, such as a memory lapse, and errors that can be linked to a lack of second language proficiency.

However, it is crucial for language teachers to be able to analyze and evaluate learners' errors in order to ensure that these errors are used effectively to improve the students' proficiency level. According to Ellis (2008), the analysis of errors made by students includes the several stages. Firstly, the process starts with collecting data, which typically involves obtaining answers from students who complete the same activity or task. The next step is the identification of errors and specifically whether they are mistakes or systematic errors. Then a description of errors based on linguistic levels should follow. The following stage, which is crucial, is in an attempt to determine why errors occurred, therefore an explanation of errors. An assessment of errors or error evaluation is the last phase. This stage looks at the impact of error, such as how much it affects social interaction, general intelligibility, and meaning misunderstandings.

4.3 Errors in Pronunciation

Despite their significance in the learning process, teachers and second language researchers have long overlooked pronunciation errors and their causes. Kelly (2004) argues that consideration of learners' pronunciation problems and how these can hinder successful communication is essential. As a matter of fact, recognizing these challenges makes a strong case for prioritizing pronunciation instruction in the classroom.

According to Pusfarani et al. (2021), pronunciation is known as the way someone speaks or pronounces words that are understood in a certain language. On the other hand, Derwing and Munro (2015) define pronunciation errors as a regular loss of intelligibility in communication between native speakers, such as when speakers of new dialects come into contact or between native and non-native speakers. Pronunciation errors made by English language learners are frequently classified into two main categories: interlingual and intralingual. In this aspect, Saville-Troike (2016) presented these two main categories persuasively, arguing that two of the most frequent causes of second language errors are intralingual ("within language") factors which are not related to cross-linguistic influence and interlingual ("between languages") factors that result from negative transfer or mother tongue interference.

However, Richards (1971) distinguishes between three sources of error. The mother tongue interference is the first source of error, which is referred to as "interference error". The second source, "intralingual error," reflects the inaccurate generalization of the principles within the target language. The final source is "developmental errors," which happen when students make assumptions about the target language based on the limited knowledge they have. An error analysis study of the silent letters "H" and "W" was conducted by Utama (2018). While findings demonstrated a variety of errors made when pronouncing the silent letter, the main cause of these errors was attributed to the distinctive features of the mother tongue. On the other hand, Imssalem (2001) asserts that errors are universal and independent of the learners' language backgrounds and can

be attributed to either the teaching methodology or the distinctive features of the target language.

4.3.1 Sounds

Second language learners typically use their native language as a starting point when they want to study another language. Mother tongue interference has therefore long been seen as a possible cause of errors (Fartizan et al., 2024). Some learners pronounce certain consonant sounds incorrectly since they mix ‘voiced’ and ‘unvoiced’ sounds. For instance, they might substitute ‘p’ for ‘b’ or ‘t’ for ‘d’. These sounds are so easily confused because their only difference is whether or not voice is employed to produce them. Like saying ‘tuck’ for ‘duck’ or ‘pay’ for ‘bay’.

Mixing short and long vowel sounds is another factor that contributes to errors. Vowel sounds are easily confused, just like consonant sounds. The most frequent vowel problem occurs when learners confuse long and short vowel sounds (Caisaguano Tigasi, 2024). For instance, the extended 'ee' sound in 'seat' is contrasted with the short "i" sound in 'sit.' Accordingly, students who mix up these sounds often produce words with totally different meaning. In their study, Rafael and Nusantara (2012) found that one cause of errors students made was that they used Indonesian vowels instead of English ones. This may be confusing in conversation since it encourages people to focus much more on the context of their speech than on the speech itself. Moreover, according to Salwa's (2017) study, the most common interlingual pronunciation error made by students was the [θ] sound.

4.3.2 Stress

Generally, stress has traditionally been regarded as one of the main sources of errors, simply because the vast majority of second language learners' first language has a stress pattern that is unlike English (Pusfarani et al., 2021). In this aspect, some students tend to stress some words incorrectly or emphasize the wrong syllables. In fact, stressing individual words incorrectly makes it very hard for native English speakers to ‘translate’ a word spoken as ‘caLENdar’ to the way they would pronounce it, ‘CALendar’. On the other hand, non-native English speakers are less affected by this and will most likely comprehend what learners are attempting to convey.

Moreover, the results of the study by Styvant et al. (2019) show that the majority of students still pronounce some English words incorrectly, particularly when it relates to stress syllable words. Chitravelu et al. (1995) argue that like words, sentences utilize stress to convey meaning. Stressing the wrong words in a sentence can end up sending a completely different message than the one intended. For example, one could say this sentence in a number of different ways:

“I didn’t say we should drive this way.”

If "I" is stressed, the emphasis that taking that route was not the speaker’s idea. On the other hand, if "drive" is stressed, the emphasis is on the mode of transport.

4.3.3 Intonation

Intonation is considered as the variation of pitch when speaking. Therefore, poor intonation can cause misunderstanding and even produce an unfavorable impression of a person. Cutler (1980) claims that intonation contours, beyond sentence stress, are shaped by factors such as sentence type (statement vs. question), discourse context, and the speaker’s emotional state. For many teachers, it is difficult to teach intonation and

they may avoid it. However, working with intonation may be enjoyable, and it can make other language areas simpler to teach. In addition, within the communicative paradigm, teaching intonation entails training students to see speech as the transmission of a message from one person to another.

In their study, Rusadze & Kipiani (2018) found that the most frequent intonation errors are using the incorrect pitch and failing to raise the pitch; students frequently fail to express their emotions with the appropriate pitch.

5. Previous Studies & Research Gap

Undoubtedly, pronunciation is an important language learning skill since it allows individuals to communicate in an acceptable manner. Therefore, in recent years, second language researchers have conducted many studies in order to fully understand the nature of errors in pronunciation that second language learners usually commit. Based on the findings, researchers have explored some solutions to reduce the number of errors, although eliminating them totally is unfeasible.

Sugiarto (2013) conducted a study to find out what kinds of pronunciation errors fourth-grade students make. In his research, data was collected using a video as an instrument. The researcher taped the class and then transcribed it to analyze pronunciation errors the students committed. The results of this study revealed that there are seven different types of tongue slips: anticipation, perseverance, exchange, blend, substitution, addition, and deletion. The seven forms of slips of the tongue, according to this study, occur because learners were in a rush and substituted certain words for others.

Another study by Visonil and Marlina (2020) looked into commonly mispronounced vowel sounds. This study investigated speech performance errors in order to obtain more naturalistic pronunciation as data. Accordingly, six voice recordings from students' English activities in speaking classes at the Department of English (Universitas Negeri Padang) served as the basis for this research. Pronunciation mistakes were extracted from the speeches using the recordings. The mistakes were measured and assessed once it was completed.

The findings indicated that [ae], I [e], [ou], and [er] were often committed mistakes. Several sounds were used to replace these sounds. As a result, it is proposed that while teaching English to L1 Indonesian EFL students, these specific faults be considered.

El Zarka's (2013) research looked at the pronunciation errors of native Arabic learners of English, as well as the impact of Arabic interference on Arab learners of English as a second language. In addition, this study aimed to examine the specific role of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and vernacular Arabic dialects (diglossia) in causing pronunciation deviations. In fact, this study came up with some important findings. First of all, vernacular Arabic dialects vary significantly across regions which accordingly affect pronunciation (diglossia means speakers of different dialects produce different English errors). Second, the findings revealed that many pronunciation errors are dialect-specific rather than solely attributable to MSA. These errors can be categorized into segmental errors (consonant and vowel substitutions, insertions/prothesis) and suprasegmental errors (stress shifts, syllable structure, and intonation). In addition, findings showed that learners employ various repair strategies (e.g., vowel insertion, stress-shift adjustments, and consonant substitution).

Kalaldeh (2016) carried out a study to describe and characterize the main English pronunciation errors made by Jordanian university students (Jordanian Arabic—JA speakers). The study also aimed to examine four areas of production: selected

consonants (/p, v, ʧ, ʤ, ŋ, ɹ, ɬ/), consonant clusters (within and across words), selected vowels (/ɪ, ɛ, ɑ, ɔ:, oʊ, ə/), and word stress patterns. In addition, it determined how these sounds/clusters/stress patterns are realized by JA speakers and identified typical error patterns.

Findings showed that Jordanian (JA) speakers systematically substitute /p, ŋ, ɹ, ɬ/ with [b, ng, ɾ, lʲ] respectively, insert epenthetic vowels in consonant clusters. Also, they often merge vowel contrasts (KIT/DRESS and THOUGHT/GOAT) while producing the LOT vowel with a more central/back rounded quality. In addition, findings revealed that Schwa realization is strongly influenced by spelling, and word-stress placement is frequently shifted toward heavy/penultimate syllables.

Similarly, Ababneh (2018) conducted a study to identify and classify common English pronunciation errors produced by Saudi university students (University of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia). 50 female Saudi students sampled were randomly from two departments (25 English majors in Year 4; 25 Arabic majors). Interestingly, the findings demonstrated that both groups produced many errors, but English-major students made fewer errors than Arabic-major students. These pronunciation errors are systematic and largely attributable to Arabic–English phonological and orthographic differences and insufficient/pronunciation-focused training. The findings also showed vowel confusions and vowel insertions, consonant substitutions (notably /p/→/b/ and /v/→/f/), problems with irregular orthography and silent letters, as well as frequent misplacement of word stress and prosodic features.

Octaviana (2019) conducted a study to identify the main factors which cause Sundanese students' English pronunciation errors and classify the types of pronunciation errors. 32 students from high schools in Garut, West Java, participated in this study. This descriptive study used to collect data, a questionnaire (10 closed items) and a reading task recorded for analysis. The findings showed that both internal factors (lack of practice, low self-confidence, limited exposure to English) and external factors (phonological differences between Sundanese and English play a role. Besides, mismatch between English spelling and pronunciation also contributes to errors. The main errors are concentrated in vowels (short vs. long vowels, diphthongs, triphthongs), plus related stress and intonation errors. In addition to common manifestations, which include shortened long vowels, spelling-driven mispronunciations, and inability to produce diphthongs/triphthongs.

However, most previous studies on second language students' pronunciation errors, which were conducted in various contexts, rely on small, convenience samples, reading tasks and impressionistic transcription. In addition, these studies rarely combine perceptual tests, spontaneous speech, and acoustic analysis. Importantly, none of the existing studies have examined Libyan learners or students at the University of Benghazi. This leaves a clear gap for a locally grounded study that uses random sampling and develops evidence-based teaching materials for the University of Benghazi students.

6. Methodology

The current descriptive study focusses on the errors in pronunciation commonly produced by undergraduate students at the Department of English, Faculty of Languages, during the Fall semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. In order to achieve this goal, the researchers adopted a quantitative research design to collect and analyze data. This approach was adopted to provide measurable insights into the types

and frequency of pronunciation errors, therefore allowing a more objective evaluation of patterns throughout the student sample.

6.1 Research Design

The researchers used a two-part pronunciation test that combined controlled written tasks with spoken performance. The main aim was to gather both perception data, namely students' ability to recognize correct pronunciation in written form, and production data, that is to say, students' ability to pronounce sounds accurately in speech. The test was administered to fifth semester students at the Faculty of Languages, University of Benghazi.

6.2 Participants

The sample for this study consisted of seventeen Libyan English-major students in the fifth semester of the Faculty of Languages at the University of Benghazi. They were chosen randomly to guarantee the maximum level of reliability. It is worth to mention that all participants speak Arabic language as their first language and received the same formal instruction of English when they were in high school. Consequently, they have minimal exposure to English spoken language in their daily life and almost have no chance to participate in conversations in English outside their classroom. Participants were similar in age (20-21 years old). Therefore, the participants met the study's objectives and were suitable to produce data for analysis.

It is crucial to note that participants gave their informed consent for the study before the actual data collection procedures began. The researchers then provided the participants with a brief explanation of the purpose and nature of the study before the test was distributed.

6.3 Data Collection Procedures

After the informed consent was obtained from the students, they were asked to respond to the same test in order to determine the patterns of errors. In this regard, the first section of the test was administered to the students by the researchers following a general description of its contents. Then, the second section of the exam was conducted, in which the students were tested individually.

6.3.1 Test: Part One

The first part of the exam (written/aural recognition and transcription) included seven short tasks that explore segmental knowledge and phonemic awareness as follows: (Q1) phonetic transcription of seven words, (Q2) orthographic reconstruction from ten phonetic transcriptions, (Q3) syllable counting for a list of words, (Q4) lexical retrieval of words that contain target phonemes (e.g., /ɔɪ/, /æ/, /ɜː/, /ə/), (Q5) listening discrimination (circle the word heard in minimal-pair style items), (Q6) phoneme-oddity grouping (circle the item with a different initial/final sound), and (Q7) reading words from given transcriptions. In fact, the aim of these tasks is to assess students' ability to perceive, identify, and map phonetic symbols to orthography as well as to distinguish closely related English sounds.

6.3.2 Test: Part Two

On the other hand, the second part (spoken production) included two tasks as follows: first, a short monologue (three-minute: self-introduction) and then a controlled reading of a short passage about combs. These tasks aimed to examine natural connected speech as well as read, timed production to reveal segmental errors (vowels/consonants,

substitutions, insertions) and suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, intonation, pacing). It is worth to mention that this part of the test was recorded for later analysis.

6.4 Data Analysis

After the data were collected, the data were analyzed statistically via SPSS. Errors were counted and classified them as follows.

6.4.1 Test: Part One

The results of the test indicate that students make a variety of errors that fall into the following categories:

1. 90% of the students face a crucial difficulty in recognizing the difference between the sounds /ɔː/ and /əʊ/, as in:

- thought /θɔːt/ — throat /θroʊt/
- law /lɔː/ — low /loʊ/
- caught /kɔːt/ — coat /koʊt/

2. 88% of the students are not aware of the difference between the sounds /dʒ/ and /ʒ/, such as in:

- jeans /dʒiːnz/ — vision /ˈvɪʒən/ (vision contains /ʒ/ in medial position)
- jam /dʒæm/ — measure /ˈmɛʒər/ (measure contains /ʒ/)

3. 85% of the students could not pronounce the sound /v/ and replaced it by the sound /f/, as in:

- very /ˈvɛri/ (often produced as /ˈfɛri/)
- save /seɪv/ (→ /seɪf/)
- have /hæv/ (→ /haf/)

4. 75% of the students did not recognize the difference between /g/ and /ʒ/ sounds, such as:

- go /goʊ/ — garage /gəˈrɑːʒ/ (garage contains /ʒ/)
- get /gɛt/ — genre /ˈʒɑːnrə/ (contrast velar stop vs postalveolar fricative)

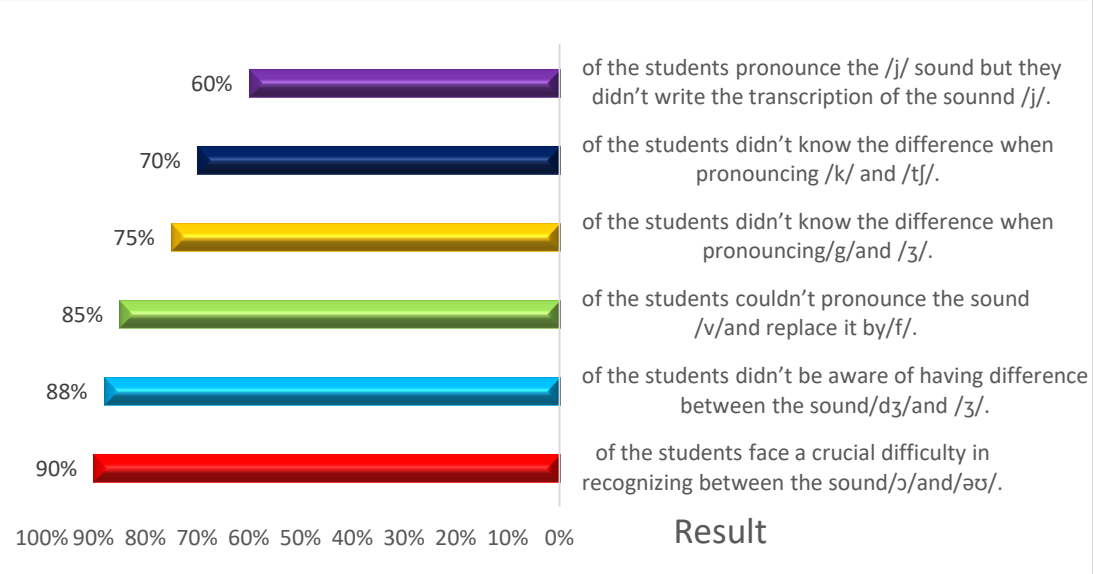
5. 70% of the students could not differentiate between /k/ and /tʃ/ sounds, as in:

- cat /kæt/ — chat /tʃæt/
- coat /koʊt/ — choke /tʃoʊk/
- key /kiː/ — chi/cheep /tʃiː/ (e.g., cheap /tʃiːp/)

6. 60% of the students pronounced the /j/ sound but did not write its transcription, such as in:

- young — /jʌŋ/

Figure 1 Errors Percentages (First Part)

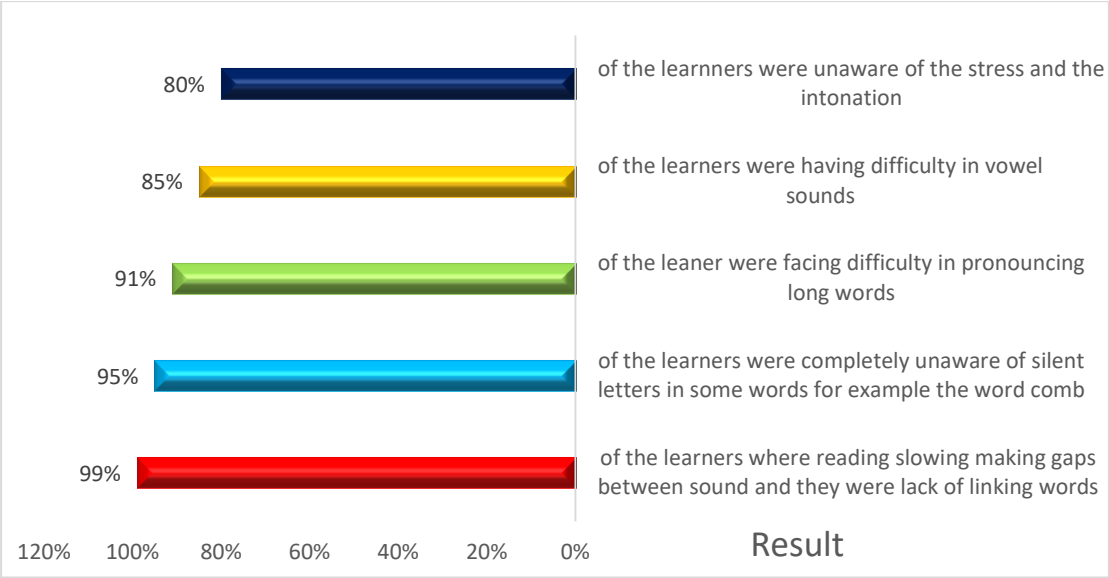


6.4.2 Test: Part Two

The purpose of the second part of the test, as previously mentioned, is to determine segmental and suprasegmental errors that learners make in order to assess their pronunciation. Results show the following:

1. 99% of the students read quite slowly and made gaps between sounds.
2. 95% of the students were completely unaware of the silent letters in some words such as "comb".
3. Nearly 91% of the students were facing difficulty in pronouncing long words such as "tortoiseshell, settlements".
4. 85% of the students had difficulties in vowel sounds.
(e.g, holds /oʊ/, ivory /aɪ/, animals /æ/, combs /oʊ/ + /z/ (plural), forms /ɔː/)
5. 80% of the students were unaware of stress and intonation. For example:
polished — POL-ished (where the stress on first syllable), some put stress on second syllable.
concerns — con-CERNS (where the stress on second syllable), some put stress on first syllable.
tortoiseshell — TOR-toise-shell (stress on first syllable). Some put stress on second syllable.

Figure 2 Errors Percentages (Second Part)



7. Discussion

Because errors are of various natures and resources, researchers carried out a variety of studies to fully comprehend the nature of errors and thoroughly evaluate errors that individuals make while learning a foreign language. The findings of these studies provided feedback that may allow instructors to adopt some remedial procedures to enhance the process of language learning.

The current study's findings showed that Libyan English-major undergraduates display pervasive segmental pronunciation errors that directly answer the first research question with regard to the common types of errors and their impact on pronunciation proficiency. In this aspect, quantitative results from perception and production tasks revealed high confusion rates for specific phoneme contrasts such as /ɔː/ vs /oʊ/ (90%), /dʒ/ vs /ʒ/ (88%), /v/→/f/ substitutions (85%), other consonant confusions (/g/ vs /ʒ/, /k/ vs /tʃ/), and substantial vowel difficulties (85%). These segmental errors reduce lexical distinctiveness in minimal-pair contexts and thus impair intelligibility and fluency. This finding is compatible with other studies on L1 transfer and phoneme substitution in Arabic and other L1 backgrounds (e.g., El Zarka 2013; Ababneh 2018; Kalaldeh 2016) which similarly report systematic consonant and vowel confusions that are attributed to phonological differences between learners' L1 and English.

In light of the second research question, the findings indicate limited phonetic awareness and weak orthography–phonology mapping; students frequently failed perceptual discrimination tasks, omitted or misread silent letters (95% unaware), and produced slow, gap-filled speech with misplaced word stress and limited intonation (80–99% on suprasegmental measures). These suprasegmental deficits and orthographic-driven errors point to intralingual/developmental issues and limited exposure rather than solely L1 transfer. This finding is consistent with main perspectives of Error Analysis that emphasize the generalization and developmental stages in SLA (Ellis, 2008; Corder, 1967). In addition, these results mirror other studies that showed that learners with classroom-bound exposure struggle with prosody and spelling-driven pronunciation (Sugiarto 2013; Octaviana 2019; Visonil & Marlina 2020), which emphasized the need for integrated perceptual training, explicit prosody instruction, and orthography-focused teaching to improve intelligibility.

8. Limitations & Future Research

The current study was an attempt to open the door to investigate the errors that Libyan EFL students make with regard to pronunciation. However, several limitations may temper its findings. First of all, the sample size is relatively small (N=17) and drawn from a single institution and semester; therefore, generalization beyond this cohort is limited. Consequently, future research may collect data from various universities to have an overall view of errors that Libyan EFL students commit. In addition, this study relied on controlled tasks and short spoken samples (three-minute monologues and a short reading); while these reveal many error types, they do not capture longer spontaneous conversations or classroom interactional dynamics. Acoustic analysis was not reported in the current study; therefore, fine-grained phonetic measures that could enrich explanations were not available. Accordingly, future research should bridge this gap.

9. Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the pronunciation errors of Libyan EFL learners. This study provided an empirically based picture of pronunciation difficulties among Libyan English-majors at the Faculty of Languages, University of Benghazi.

The findings revealed that intelligibility issues which Libyan students encountered can be attributed to a combination of segmental confusions due to L1 transfer as well as intralanguage developmental issues and suprasegmental deficits which are linked to limited exposure and instruction. In order to overcome these issues, language instructors and syllabus designers should adopt a balanced pedagogical approach that integrates perceptual training, explicit prosody work, orthography-aware teaching, and fluency-building activities. In fact, the implementation of such activities and techniques should help learners make measurable gains in both accuracy and communicative effectiveness.

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