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Investigating Pronunciation Difficulties Encountered by Arab Students in Learning English Sounds

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Abstract

This study is a descriptive study that tries to investigate the pronunciation errors of the native Arabic speakers, who are attempting to learn English as a second language. This paper sheds the light on the factors that may cause problematic pronunciation errors. Factors leading to these problems are mother tongue effect, phonological effect, differences in orthography, and Stages of development. Studying these factors may help to predict some occurring problems concerning pronunciation errors. Therefore, this study tries to provide some useful pedagogical recommendations to overcome and prevent some of English pronunciation problems.

Keywords: Pronunciation errors, Arab learners, First language effect, Phonology

تقصي صعوبات النطق التي يواجهها الطلاب العرب في تعلم أصوات اللغة الإنجليزية

ملخص البحث :

هذه الدراسة عبارة عن دراسة وصفية تحاول تقصي أخطاء النطق لدى الناطقين باللغة العربية الذين يحاولون تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية. تسلط هذه الورقة الضوء على العوامل التي قد تسبب أخطاء النطق. إن العوامل التي تؤدي إلى هذه المشاكل هي تأثير اللغة الأم، والتأثير الصوتي، والاختلافات في قواعد الإملاء، ومراحل التطور. قد تساعد دراسة هذه العوامل في التنبؤ ببعض المشاكل التي تحدث فيما يتعلق بأخطاء النطق. لذلك تحاول هذه الدراسة تقديم بعض التوصيات التربوية المفيدة للتغلب على بعض مشاكل النطق باللغة الإنجليزية ومنعها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أخطاء النطق، المتعلمين العرب، تأثير اللغة الأم، علم الأصوات.

1. Introduction

Generally speaking, learning any foreign language remains a high priority for many people around the world. This step enables learners to discover and know about the culture of the target language. It also opens the door for job seekers to have positions in different sectors, including the field of education. At present, one of the most attractive languages is learning English language. The complete learning process necessitates being well aware of writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills. Speaking English is considered as an important skill by which multinational speakers can orally communicate with each other. The main goal of non-native English learners is to be well-spoken and fluent like native speakers. However, English foreign language learners apparently experience some difficulties throughout the learning process of speaking skill. One of these hitches is the incorrect pronunciation of English sounds which is a highly problematic issue. The previous studies [3-22,25] state that the production of English sounds is a very challenging task for learners, where they need a long period of time to pronounce sounds in a right way. Moreover, the mispronunciation of sounds could have a negative effect on learners' performance. According to PourhoseinGilakjani [25], poor pronunciation makes learners experience troubles during learning, while good pronunciation encourages them to learn the target language. Harmer [14] states that many teachers do not focus on teaching pronunciation because they consider it monotonous and complicated. Therefore, teaching pronunciation in earlier stage of learning should be a first priority for English language teachers. The difficulties that foreign learners meet when they acquire pronunciation is due to some phonological factors such as, the first language interference, the discrepancy of the sounds system of languages, and so forth.

This paper aims at identifying the difficulties that EFLs face in producing English sounds and discussing the factors which impede EFLL from producing the correct pronunciation of sounds. In addition, some suggestions will be presented in an attempt to improve the pronunciation of English foreign language learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Consonant sounds

Hassan [15] conducted a phonological study to identify the difficulties that Sudanese students confront in learning English pronunciation. Fifty students from the University of Sudan of

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Science and Technology were chosen to participate in the study after the completion of their first year at the Education College. The participants were requested to produce some words included the target consonant sounds. The instrument used by the researcher comprised recordings of the tokens produced by the interviewees, some written notes taken through the observation and a structured questionnaire designed for the thirty English language tutors of the same college. The collected data was decomposed through utilising a statistical and descriptive method. The results of the research showed that the vast majority of the students have obstacles in producing some consonant sounds of English in the correct form. The pronunciation difficulty of such sounds (/p/, /θ/, /ð/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /s/, /d/) was due to the fact that some factors influenced the student in the production process of target sounds such as first language interference, the discrepancy in the inventory system of sounds between Arabic and English language.

In the study [12] which aimed at investigating the pronunciation problems faced by Saudi learners of English as a second language. The informants of the research were divided into two sections. The former which was selected randomly and equally to the three years was sixty students of the first, second and third years of the El-Ehsan Secondary School and the latter was thirty English Second language teachers from the same school. Two instruments were utilised in this study. The students were requested individually to read a sample of words which were inserted into meaningful sentences. In order to clearly identify the mispronouncing sounds, the target words were placed in three different positions. Before the recording phase, the respondents were given three minutes to check the data and then they asked to read loudly the sentences. For the teachers, they were asked to fill in a structured questionnaire about their experiences and the pronunciation errors made by their students. The gathering data were described, classified, analysed and explained via a descriptive and statistical approach. The findings revealed that some problematic sounds were observed in various positions of the words. According to the researchers, the mispronunciation of these target sounds (/p/, /ʒ/, /ŋ/, /r/, /tʃ/, /t/, /ʌ/, /v/, /k/, /l/, /d/) were caused by the interlingual errors, the distinction of phonetic realisation between Arabic and English languages, and the different consonant phonemes.

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In Egypt, the paper [16] did a study to explore the pronunciation inaccuracy in producing English consonant sounds by Egyptian people. The sample of the research was five recording videos of five Egyptian women who were sending messages on YouTube. The data collected randomly were observed and then analysed by the researcher. He found that the participants encounter difficulties in pronouncing some consonants such as, (/θ/, /ð/, /p/, /tʃ/, /v/). [16] stated that the major factors behind incorrect pronunciation is the variations between Arabic and English language, lack of concentration on teaching pronunciation, and "Inadequate teaching curricula"

2.2. Vowel Sounds

Kalaldehy[17] carried out a study to identify the English pronunciation errors that students encounter at the University of Jordan. Six students who were from the same city and their average age was 23 were invited to take part in the study. Six vowels (ɪ - ε - α - ɔ: - oo - ə) were put in words in the onset and in the coda position, then the respondents were instructed to read these target words twice after they were placed' in a carrier phrase 'say _____ again. The number of the tokens produced by the informants was 1248. For the purpose of having good findings, the researcher tends to randomise the words. Collecting the data was via recording the students with recording software at the Radio Station Studio of the university. The data was decomposed acoustically through using Praat Software. The results showed that Jordanian informants had problems in the production of these vowels / ɪ/, /ε/, /α/ /ɔ:/ /oo/ /a/ /ə/. These hitches of pronunciation were related to the fact that the influence of the informants' mother tongue on the target language and the disparity among the sound systems of languages.

Shamallakh [28] did research to discover the English vowels pronunciation errors made by the undergraduate Palestinian students of the Second and Fourth year at the Islamic University in Gaza. 71 male participants from the English Department were joined in the study. The research encompasses two stages. Firstly, the students were instructed to answer a questionnaire and then they were invited to an interview. Twenty pure and diphthong vowels were embedded in a list of words. The target vowels were located in the initial, middle and final position respectively. The result revealed that Producing these vowels (/æ/, /ɒ/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/ /i:/ /ʊə/, /iə/, /əʊ/, /eə/, /ei/ and /aʊ) were the most problematic sounds for the informants.

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These pronunciation difficulties were ascribable to the differences between the first language and the target language and the lack of consistency between orthography and pronunciation of English language.

2.3. Consonant cluster

Al-Saidat[5] conducted a study to determine the difficulties encountered by Arab students in learning pronunciation. The purpose of the research was to analyse the way that learners are declusterised consonant cluster in the onset and coda position. Twenty Jordanian participants studying in the fourth year of the English Language and Literature at two public universities were voluntarily invited to take part in this research. The learners were requested to read a list of words and then they were recorded. The result showed that the learners intentionally tend to insert the high front short vowel /i/ to declusterise consonant cluster in the onset and coda syllable structure. The researcher justifies the process of declusterisation to the effect of the first language on learning the second language.

Similar research carried out by Alzainadi and Abdel Latif [6] to explore the problems of producing consonant clusters in initial and final positions. The participants of the study were forty female Saudi students whose ages ranged from 19 to 24 years old. At the date of gathering data, the respondents were undergraduate students at a Saudi university. On the basis of their knowledge of English language, the informants were equally divided into two groups. They were requested to produce a list of twelve words which were thought to be problematic for learners. The findings revealed that students have difficulties with pronouncing consonant clusters in initial and final positions. Additionally, the participants made much more mistakes when producing words of three and four consonant clusters rather than that of two consonant clusters. According to the researchers, the main reasons for making these errors might be the difference of phonological systems of languages, the variety of the syllable structures of languages, and the influence of the mother tongue.

3. Factors affecting learning English Pronunciation

3.1. Mother tongue effect

Mother tongue refers to the language that a child is exposed to since birth, it is also called first language, and native language [11]. Mother tongue or first language is the first linguistic system that is acquired by children, and this system contains all the required components of a

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language. First language is complete when the child masters all the aspects of this language. Therefore, any other language comes after the completion of the first language is considered a second language, which may be affected by the first one. The knowledge of first language may negatively and positively influence second language acquisition or learning in some ways especially in case of pronunciation[10-15,20]. The effect of first language comes of many shapes, however, only interlanguage and first language transfer will be discussed in this paper below.

3.1.1. Interlanguage

Interlanguage is an approximate system of language that lies between the first language(L1) and the second language(L2), this approximate system is resulted from the overlap between native language and target language, where learners try to hypothesize and predict target language rules mostly based on their native language knowledge [9]. However, interlanguage is not always effected by first language, it illustrates the phase that learners came to so far and the learning system of that stage that might or might not be resulted from first language interference .Some predictions about target language that made by learners can be useful when these predictions are correct. However, some hypothesis can be problematic when learners are influenced by the previous knowledge about their first language and the corresponding rule is different , therefore, the resulting language will be target language dependent and may lead to errors caused by first language. Even though it is problematic in a sense, interlanguage is a temporary phase that can be passed once learners improves their linguistic competence of (L2)[12]. Many researchers has agreed that most of errors made by second language learners in interlanguage phase are not found in later stages, if these errors are treated correctly.

3.1.2. First language transfer

First language transfer refers to the effect of the first language on learners who try to learn a second language. Learners tend to heavily rely on their previous knowledge of first language to learn target language elements; therefore, some errors can be committed due to differences between first language and target language[30](p.114). Language transfer concept is similar to interlanguage in term of first language effect; however, there is a crucial difference between these two terms. In interlanguage system, the cause of errors can be resulted not only

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from first language influence, but it can be caused by developmental errors that learners make as they learn and adapt to rules of the target language and these errors not necessarily resulted from native language influence. Such errors can be committed by a child when he is constructing and developing his first language, therefore, this kind of errors is not influenced by native language it is rather caused by the developmental stage of acquiring language. On the other hand, errors in language transfer are solely resulted from the native language interference.

3.2. Phonological effect

The difference in phonology between English and Arabic gives rise to difficulty in pronunciation of words for Arab learners, where the transition from first language to second language is faced by such differences [8]. One of the challenges to produce an adequate English pronunciation for Arab learners is to recognize sound structure of Arabic and English. Therefore, it will be appropriate to shed light on some phonological factors that may affect English pronunciation of Arab learners.

3.2.1. Differences in the sound system:

English consists of twenty-four consonant phonemes and twenty-two vowel phonemes. In the phonological system of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) there are thirty-six phonemes of consonants and vowels. These phonemes consist of twenty-eight consonants and eight vowels. Vowels contain two diphthongs /aj/ and /aw/, and six vowels /a, i, u, a:, i:, u:/, where /a, i, u/ are short vowels and /a:, i:, u:/ are the long version vowels. Both Arabic and English have its peculiar phonemes. Many English phonemes have equivalents in Arabic; however, some English phonemes do not have Arabic counterparts i.e /p, v/ are not found in Arabic inventory sound system among many other examples. In addition, (MSA) is one of the phonemic languages as its vowel sound duration is phonemic [4]. Accordingly, MSA has four more consonants than English and less fourteen vowels which make MSA a consonant-heavy language in comparison with English [21]. These noticeable differences between Arabic and English sound systems may contribute to causing errors in pronouncing certain sounds for Arabic who are learning English as a second language and vice versa. The following section will draw attention to some areas of difficulties posed by consonants and vowels differences between Arabic and English.

3.2.2. Problems with consonants

Consonants can be a hard task in terms of pronunciation for Arab learners. One of the problematic area of consonants is the lack of some English consonants in the Arabic sound system, which represents areas of difficulty for the native speakers of Arabic who are learning English as a second language. English consonants like /p/, /v/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/ and /ŋ/ are not found in MSA or any Arabic dialect consonant sound system, therefore, when Arab learner try to produce these consonants they resort to their first language, where they can find a similar sound as a repair strategy [21]. For example, in case of /p/ and /v/ sounds, Arab learners use voice alteration in order to compensate their failure of producing these sounds. They voice /p/ sound to become /b/ as in the word pen when it mispronounced as ben. Devoicing takes place when /f/ replaces /v/ as in the word video when it is mispronounced as* fideo. This use of voice alteration as a repair strategy may lead to miscommunication between the speaker and the listener (as in pen and ben), further, it can result in producing nonexistence words like* fideo [30].

In addition to voice alteration, Arab learners use different types of repair strategy if they came across a sound in a target language that is not found in their first language. One of the main strategies they use is deletion. In terms of consonants, deletion is applied by Arabs in case of affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, where they tend to delete the first part of affricate sounds altering the affricates to fricatives in order to meet their Arabic counterparts. For example, word like *chapter* /tʃæptə/ is usually pronounced as /ʃæptə/ and word like *gentle* /dʒentəl/ can be mispronounced as /ʒentəl/. In addition to the missing sounds /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in Arabic inventory sound system, it appears that Arab students are not familiar with double gesture articulation in their articulatory system, therefore, they use deletion strategy to compensate the lack of /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in their native language, and that can result in mispronunciation of some English words as seen in the previous examples [21].

In addition to the absence of some English consonant phonemes, Arab speakers may encounter another problem which is the different realization of some English consonants. In other words, the place of articulation and manner of articulation function of the same phoneme can be different in Arabic and English. For example, In English /t/ is an aspirated and alveolar if it precedes a vowel in word initial position like tea /ti:/ whereas in Arabic /t/

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is non-aspirated and dental in word initial position followed by a vowel as in /ti:n/ (fig) [1]. Another example of the different realization of consonants sounds is /r/ sound. English /r/ is a continuant frictionless retroflex whereas Arabic /r/ is an alveolar trill. Furthermore, Arab speakers pronounce the alveolar trill /r/ sound in all positions in contrast to non-rhotic English; consequently, they usually pronounce /r/ in the final position as in teacher, doctor, car... etc.) .

Arab speakers also do not easily distinguish dark /ɹ/ from light /r/ as they have strong tendency to pronounce the light /r/ instead of dark /ɹ/ in certain positions. Arabic has two allophones of this sound light /r/ and dark /ɹ/, where dark /ɹ/ can be only pronounced if it is followed by emphatic consonants. However, English does not have emphatic consonants, therefore, Arabic speakers face some difficulties when pronouncing dark /ɹ/ especially if it appeared in final position [12]. Another problematic consonant for Arab speakers is the sound /ŋ/, although it exists in Arabic, it is realized as an allophone of phoneme/n/. On the other hand, /n/ and /ŋ/ in English are two different phonemes as in (sin vs. sing). The voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ can occur in medial and final position, whereas in Arabic /ŋ/ can only appear before velar stops in medial position and never occurs in final position. Consequently, Arab learners may add /k/ or /g/ sounds at the end of words with final position /ŋ/, e.g. the word tank /raŋk/ becomes /rank/ and tongue /tʌŋ/ can be mispronounced as /tʌng/[19].

3.2.3. Problems with vowels:

As the case of consonants English vowels and Arabic vowels exhibit clear differences in terms of occurring in both sound systems and vowels quality and quantity in each language. According to Saadah [27], vowel quality and vowel quantity are the two main phonetic parameters of describing vowels. Vowel quality is concerned with vowels' place of articulation, where the vowel quality is determined by tongue position in the vocal tract, the size of the stricture between articulators, shape and position of the lips, and vowel nasalization. On the other hand, the duration of vowels which determine phonemic identity of the vowel is referred to as vowel quantity. In contrast, other languages are classified as a centrifugal vowel system means that vowels are placed at the boundaries of the acoustic space. The Arabic vowel system lies between centripetal and centrifugal vowel systems. Arabic phonetics inventory consists of a 6-vowel system which contrasts short and

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long vowels, and English phonetics inventory consists of a 12-vowel system that contrasts lax short vowels and tense long vowels. According to the two previous phonetic parameters of vowel description (vowel quality and vowel quantity), it is safe to say that there are noticeable differences between Arabic and English in terms of vowels quality and quantity which affect Arab speakers ability to achieve an adequate pronunciation.

As a result of the previous differences between Arabic and English vowel systems and the absence of some English vowels and diphthongs in Arabic, Arab learners may encounter some challenges in producing certain types of vowels. For instance, In Arabic, Central vowels like /e/, /ɜ:/, and /ʌ/ are not found in the vowel system, consequently, the central vowel /ʌ/ is usually replaced by /a/, /æ/ or /u/ [7]. Arab speakers also exhibit difficulties in distinguishing between certain vowels, especially open, lax, short vowels like /e/ and /ɪ/ where the vowel /e/ can be pronounced as /æ/ or /i/ and the vowel /ɪ/ may be lowered or lengthened to /e/ [26]. Another problematic area for Arab learners is the difficulty of differentiating certain pairs of vowels like /ɪ/ and /e/ as in 'sit' and 'set'; /ʌ/ and /ɒ/ as in 'luck' and 'lock'; /ɔ:/ as in 'coat' and 'caught' [17]. In addition, certain English diphthongs are absent in Arabic language, therefore, Arabic speakers tend to substitute these diphthongs with their counterpart in Arabic as a result of first language interference. For example, /eɪ/ replaces /eə/; /u:/ replaces /ʊə/; /i:/ replaces /ɪə/; and /ɔ:/ replaces /aʊ/ [19].

3.3. Syllable structure:

Syllable structure, in simple terms, is the way of combining the sounds of a language in order to produce sound constituents that form a meaningful word. These sound units are regulated by certain rules and restrictions to produce certain combinations and structures. Therefore, Comparison between Arabic and English syllable structures could be of great help to predict some areas of difficulties to Arab speakers where they fail to produce correct pronunciation. According to [23](p.205) Arabic and English syllable structures are noticeably different, therefore, it is expected that problematic interference will be faced when Arab speakers try to learn English.

In comparison to English, Arabic language shows limited types of syllable structures. In Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) there are three underlying syllables in MSA: CV, CVC and CVV and two syllables CVVC and CVCC that appear only in surface phonetic forms such as

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at pause or following other phonological processes” [13] (p.2246). In MSA, consonant clusters never occur in syllable initial position. However, In English initial consonant clusters like CCVC and CCCVC are adopted by English syllable structures as in *play* and *split*. Another area of differences is the medial clusters; MSA does not allow medial clusters. Consequently, Arab speakers may exhibit some difficulties in producing some English syllable structures that are not found in their first language. According to [6] Initial two consonant clusters can be problematic for Arab speakers where they tend use epenthesis (vowel insertion to string of segments) to initial clusters in order to break to two syllables, for example, when Arab speakers face a word contains an initial cluster like 'sport', /spɔ:t/ becomes /ispɔ:t/, they tend to insert a vowel to the onset to constitute another syllable as a repair strategy to break up the onset cluster [5].

3.4. Stress

The syllable structure of any given language has a crucial impact on its stress patterns, and may rise some difficulties in acquiring another language if the target language has a different syllable structure. Accordingly, Arabic and English are predicted to have noticeable differences in terms of stress patterns since they have different syllable structures. Some of pronunciation errors committed by Arab speakers are related to the incorrect stress shifts that resulted from syllable structure combinations and the patterns of stress [18]. In other words, if the speaker misplaces the stress, stresses the wrong syllable, or does not stress any syllable in polysyllabic words, it may be difficult for native speakers to understand the word as one of its components (stress) is missing.

Khurma and Hajjaj [19](p.24-25) summarize the English word stress patterns as follows:

- (i) All one-syllable words, spoken in isolation, are stressed
- (ii) A two-syllable word has one stressed syllable, on the first as in '*study*, or on the second as in *be'lieve*.
- (iii) Prepositions, like verbs, often have stress on the second syllable, e.g. *a'bove*.
- (iv) If a word has a diphthong or a tense vowel, the stress often falls on it, e.g. *ho'riзон*.
- (v) If there is no tense vowel or diphthong, stress often falls on the third short vowel from the end or the second from the end if followed by two consonants e.g. '*cinema*, hori'zontal.

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(vi) In words of three or more syllables there is usually one stressed syllable, but occasionally there may be two, e.g. *ex'cessively* or *'over'esteimate*.

Kharma and Hajjaj [19] (p. 26) argue that in contrast to English, Arabic stress can be easier to be predicted and they also simplify the Arabic word stress patterns to four types:

- (i) A word of one syllable whether short or long, takes a primary stress, e.g. *'min* (from), *'bard* (cold).
- (ii) A word of two or three syllables takes a primary stress on the first syllable, e.g. */ʔbædæn/* (never), */kætæbæ/* (he wrote).
- (iii) A multi-syllable word takes the primary stress on the last syllable if it is long, e.g. */yæktu'bu:n/* (they write).
- (iv) If the last syllable is not long, the primary stress falls on the last long syllable, e.g. */ʔihti'mæmuhu/* (his interest).

As seen above, Arabic and English show noticeable differences in terms of stress patterns, these differences, in some extent, can result in ambiguity for native listener. Accordingly, stress patterns may influence Arabic speaker to shift the stress of certain words according to his native language patterns leading to pronunciation errors. For instance, Arabic speaker may shift the stress of a word like *present* */'prez(ə)nt/* as a noun to become */pre'z(ə)nt/* as a verb, this result in changing the class of the word *present* which may confuse the listener. In addition, changing the place of stress in certain words can affect the quality of vowel, for example, when an Arabic speaker tries to pronounce some words like *comfortable* */'kʌmfətəbəl/*, *believe* *-/bɪ'li:v/*, or *Practical* *-'præktɪkəl/*, he/she may produce them as */kɔ:mf'tæbəl/*, */bɪ:lɔ:v/*, and */prækteɪl/* [2]. The quality of vowel in the word is one of the essential parts of its identity; therefore, changing vowel quality can affect the perception of the listener.

According to the above comparisons between the Arabic and the English stress patterns, we notice that Arab speakers might face challenges stressing the correct syllable or resort to repair strategies like stress shifting. This may be justified as the influence of Arab learners' competence of their first language syllable structures and stress patterns.

3.5. Differences in orthography

Spelling directly contributes to causing some errors in pronunciation. For example, words like (cough, caught){listen, written] (cat, city) (shark ,action) and (church , school) among many other examples, are very problematic to Arabs who are learning English. The dilemma that faces Arab learners is that Arabic orthography and English orthography are different. Arab learners, in their early stages of learning, tend to apply their knowledge of Arabic orthography to English which resulting in some pronunciation errors[29]. In contrast to Arabic orthography, English orthography is an irregular and rather a complicated system where the relation between sounds and letters is not consistent. In other words, in English one letter can be represented by different sounds i.e. the letter *C* is pronounced /s/ in *city*, /k/ in *cat*, and /tʃ/ in *church*. Furthermore, one sound can be represented by more than one letter as /f/ in *cough*, /k/ in *school* and /ʃ/ in *action*[19].

On the contrary, Arabic orthography is regular and simple in terms of consonants and long vowels representation, where every sound is represented with a letter in one to one relation. Except of some occasions of assimilation of definite (ال-the) with the adjacent letter. Otherwise unlike English, every letter must represent one sound only and there is no existence of silent letters. Therefore, Arab learners suffer of this direct opposition to English orthographic system, when they try to take English orthography as reliable guide to pronunciation resulting in some errors in pronunciation[28].

3.6. Stages of development:

The acquisition of a language does not occur in one stage. Language acquisition comes through many stages, as it constructed of a system that build out of a set of abstract rules that a learner need to acquire in order to master the target language. Learners in each stage try to acquire certain set of abstract rules by modifying, adding, or deleting these rules into their interlanguage. Accordingly, errors committed by learners in early stages of learning a language are not always a source of concerns or desperation it rather a sign of their stage of development. As discussed in previous sections most of the pronunciation errors are systematic and related to the transition from first language to the target language, and with time and practice these errors disappear gradually when the learners reach advanced levels[16]. Therefore, the stage of development must be considered when facing certain

errors, because some errors are committed by the learner due their stage of development where they still modify their abstract rules.

4. Suggestions for Improving Pronunciation

Indicating to the factors discussed above learners of English as a Second Language encounter some problems when they produce sounds. In this part, some tips were suggested as an attempt to surmount these identified phonological difficulties.

- Teachers should focus on authentic English speaking materials.
- Teachers in teaching Phonetics should greatly focus on the physical part not only the mental part.
- Teachers should concentrate on multi-English accents to make learners familiarise with various correct pronunciation
- Students should be provided with understandable and unmonotonous materials such as using computer technologies, playing English videos in classrooms and being asked to watch video at home and introduce an oral summary in the next class.
- Students should be guided in training sessions how to move the organs of speech such as lips, tongue in producing English words.
- Teachers should pay more attention to the discrepancies of sound systems of languages
- In teaching Phonetics, there should be intensive physical sessions.
- Teachers should motivate learners to use pronunciation apps which could contribute in leading them to produce correct sounds
- Teachers should enlighten learners as to the phonological rules such as unpronounced sounds so that they are already aware of the silent letters.
- Learners should be instructed how to look the new words up in British-English dictionaries in order to avoid wrong pronunciation.

5. Conclusion

This paper attempts to shed light on the main difficulties of English pronunciation that are experienced by English Foreign Language Learners. The purpose of the current study was to find out the mispronunciation of English consonant and vowel sounds produced by English

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Foreign Language Learners. In order to identify the sounds errors, literature reviews of some previous studies in the Arabic regions and other countries were documented. The findings revealed that students encounter problems with respect to producing certain sounds such as /p, t, d, w, θ, ð, tʃ, dʒ, s, v, ɪ, e, a, ɔ:, a, ə, u, ʌ, ʊʊ, ei, uə, iə, və, iə, əʊ, eə, aʊ/. This could be attributed to phonological and innate factors. Differences in sounds system and the influence of the first language on learning English as a second language are considered the most problematic factors. In addition, some tips for improving learners' pronunciation were suggested. However, it should be acknowledged that this research is basically reliant on the findings of former studies in various countries around the world. Hence, conducting an experimental study depending on a questionnaire instrument followed by participants' interview could lead to a better diagnosis to these phonological hitches.



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