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Difficulties facing English language students at Al Balqa Applied University in English pronunciation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the pronunciation problems that undergraduate students at Al-Balqa Applied University face with different English consonant sounds. The paper provides an introduction on pronunciation, consonant sounds in English and Arabic and the reasons that lead to these errors. All the participants in the study are EFL learners and they have never been to any English speaking country .The students are from English major and they belong to different areas in Jordan. The problematic sounds are: /p/, /f/, /f1/, / /, /z/, /v/, /s/, /3/, the cluster /gz/ and /'{/. Finally, the paper attempts to provide some suggestions and methods that could help students, teachers and learners of English as a second language improve their pronunciation.

Keywords: Pronunciation, consonant sounds, EFL, methods to improve pronunciation.

INTRODUCTION

English is the second language taught in Jordan after Arabic. Students are introduced to it in their first grade at school. It is also an integral part of university curricula with all universities incorporating a number of English communication courses in their study plans. These courses usually cover the basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Some university courses emphasize the role of pronunciation and there are specific sections in these courses to cover this problematic and most frequently frustrating aspect of language learning to students and instructors alike.

Different approaches to language learning have had conflicting views on the teaching of pronunciation in the classroom. While it had no role to play in the grammar-translation method, it had strong footing in the audio-lingual approach (Otlowski, 1998, p.1). In her Paper entitled *"Utopian Goals for pronunciation Teaching*", Tracy Drewing draws attention to several methods that have been used in teaching pronunciation, such as the silent method championed by Gattegno1976, Stevinck's 1957 emphasis on the importance of starting early and stressing accuracy and Jesperson's attempts at the scientific study of pronunciation. (Drewing, 2009). Remarkably enough, one major method of English language teaching, the communicative approach has also had its share of challenges where accent and pronunciation are concerned.

There are many theories that have influenced second language learning. Robert Lado's Contrastive Analysis Theory is one of the most influential theories of language learning. It is based on the close scrutiny of two different languages, investigating the similarities and differences in their grammar, phonology, culture and writing. The main aim of the theory is to assist the language learning process. It was mainly propagated by Robert Lado, himself an adult language learner. Lado learned English in his twenties and developed a strong understanding of and sensitivity to the language learner. Lado states in his prominent book "*Linguistics across Culture"* that "individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture' (Lado, 1957, p.2). This is what became to be known as the concept of transfer. Lado argues that learners will tend to apply the rules of their mother tongue to that of the language they are trying to learn. Learners will find it easier to learn a language that has similar structures to their own mother language than one that is not. This is

referred to as positive transfer by some linguists. Negative transfer is the opposite. Learners will experience it when the difference between the two languages is great, and where the second language does not correspond to the mother tongue (Isurin, 2005, p.1115).

Another important theory is that of Critical Period Hypothesis which was introduced by Lenneberg in1967. This theory argues that learners have a certain period in which they can attain native fluency. A period which ends by the age twelve and which proponents of this theory connect with the cerbral laterlization of the brain (Al-Saidat, 2010, p.15). According to this theory adults will find it much more difficult to become fluent in a second language because they have missed that window of opportunity.

Furthermore, Al-Saidat argues that the purpose behind teaching pronunciation is not to attain perfect pronunciation but rather to allow students to become intelligible speakers. This could be reinforced with the arguments presented by the aforementioned theory.

This leads to our question, what is pronunciation and what constitutes good pronunciation?

Oxford dictionary defines pronunciation as a "person's way of speaking a language" (Hornby, 1978, p.503). This is true of all languages. Native speakers of English in this case, acquire language unconsciously. This is mainly due to the mentally stored elements in their brains as discussed in Carr (Carr, 1999, p.35).

Pronunciation is a key element in conveying ideas. Intelligible pronunciation enables an individual to communicate his ideas clearly. The problem with ESL learners of English is that they have a difficulty in learning pronunciation because teachers usually focus on grammar, vocabulary and reading skills and they sometimes neglect to focus on the sounds that may be problematic to students

The following study investigates the pronunciation errors made by students at Al-Balqa' Applied University while pronouncing English consonant sounds.

MATERIALS AND RESULTS

All the participants in the study are first year students who learn English as a second language at Al-Balqa' Applied University. They have never been to any English speaking country. They were chosen randomly. They belong to different areas in Jordan. Their voices were recorded to be sure of the produced sounds. Six words were given for them containing the same consonant sound in different positions.

The students were asked to say the following words loudly to investigate the pronunciation problems of these letters and sounds:

1. P: /p/: initial position: pen, pencil, pool, place, plate, plain.

/p/: medial position: lipstick, hamper, aspire, stamper, camper, eclipse

/p/: final position: hop, lamp, cramp, help, stamp , sharp

2. V: /v/:initial: vein, veal, voice, Venus, vile, vertical
Medial: shovel, shrivel, liver, havoc, avoid, lovely
Final: move, love, shove, stove, grove, cove

3. CH: /ʧ/: initial: chair, change, charge, chop, chain, channel
Final: teach, watch, church, hatch, reach, catch

4. X: /z/: initial: xylophone, Xerox, Xenon, xanthan, xenophobia, xebec

5. S: /s/: medial : cast, task, cost, castle, last, trust
Final: case, chase, lapse, lass, class, bliss

6. C: /ʃ/: medial: deficient, efficient, sufficient, proficient, omniscient, beneficent

7. X:/gz/: medial: exact, example, exam, exhaust, exaggerate, exalt

8. S: /ʒ/: medial: television, leisure, vision, measure, treasure, closure

9. Ng: /ŋ/ final: belong, swing, ring, wing, sting, thing

10. G: /g/ /ʤ/:initial: gentleman, gym, giant, gesture, germ, gene,
final: huge, fudge, ledge, badge, hedge, pledge

DISCUSSION

Teaching for many years, the researchers have noticed students' struggle with different aspects of English. These include: grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing and pronunciation. The most frustrating aspect for teachers and students has always been pronunciation. Throughout their school years students are made to focus on other skills such as reading and writing, with grammar being the prominent element of study. This has led to students' indifference to pronunciation and hence they encounter many difficulties when they enter university and find that much of the language of instruction is in English. They also are surprised that they are obliged to make presentations in English which require that they speak in an intelligible manner to get their message through. The English courses at Al-Balqa' Applied University all concentrate on pronunciation, and it is an integral part of the material taught at the university. It is included in their exams and they are required to recognize the different sounds of English. They are also introduced to the phonetic transcription of both the vowel and consonant sounds.

Students at Al-Balqa' University, as mentioned above, come from different regions and different social classes. The researchers have noticed that these, among other factors, do play a role in the student's ability to recognize and pronounce sounds in English. These factors are: exposure to the target language, attitude and motive, age and influence of the mother tongue.

Factors Influencing Second Language Learning
Exposure to Target Language

Halliday et.al (1984) states that "Oral mastery depends on practicing and repeating the patterns produced by a native speaker of the foreign language. It is the most economical way of thoroughly learning a language.....When one has such a control of the essentials of a language, he can almost automatically produce the usual patterns of that language" Ghaleb Rabab'ah in his paper "*Communication Problems Facing Arab Learners of English*" argues that some students find a difficulty with some consonant sounds because "listening materials are not widely used" by school teachers and students lack the model of the native speaker pronunciation (Rabab'ah, 2003). This goes hand in hand with what the researchers have found with their students. Upon arrival to university, most of the students have had no exposure to English from a native speaker and according to Rabab'ah "Lack of the target language exposure as spoken by its native speakers" could be an important reason for students' weakness in pronunciation (Rabab'ah, 2003, p.188).

Attitude and Motivation

There is a strong connection between motivation and communication skills that play an important role in improving the pronunciation of any student (Rabab'ah, 2003)

According to MacIntyre, one of the most important variables in learning a new language is motivation. It is what sets learners apart from each other and what prompts one learner to do better than other learners in the same situation (MacIntyre 2002).

There are many theories on the importance of motivation for the learning process, the most prominent of which is probably that of Gardner. Gardner's famous theory on motivation argues for the existence of four main elements: a goal, the willingness to achieve this goal, the existence of a positive attitude and finally the willingness to work, or effort. These four are what Gardner refers to as "affective variables" to distinguish them from other variables such as intelligence, aptitude, learning strategies and others. (MacIntyre 2002).

The beauty of Gardner's theory is that it follows the main stream of literature on what motivation is, yet it also makes room for a connection between motivation and emotion which is usually ignored in cognitive psychology (MacIntyre, 2002). Gardner's work on the motivation theory also led to some established standardized tests such as the Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery AMTB, which has been used quite extensively ever since its establishment. In his theory, Gardner stresses two types of motivation. These are instrumental and Integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation is linked with the goals one wishes to achieve by undertaking a new language, completing a course, getting employment, etc. The Integrative motivation is related to one's desire to integrate with people from other cultures and communicate with them (MacIntyre, 2002). Gardner's theory is not the only theory on the ground though. Despite the momentum and influence it has had, it has also had its critics. Many fault it for not detailing the cognitive aspects of learning, an area that has been at the heart of much of the research in educational psychology for the last years (Dornyei, 1994). Other Critics such as Crookes and Shmidt argued for the negative effects of Gardner's socio-educational model as not allowing for other models to emerge since it was too dominant (MacIntyre, 2002).

Another major critic of Gardner's theory is Dornyei. Dornyei's work is different from Gardner's
where the learning situation is concerned, but his work is mainly theoretical and requires much research to test his ideas. The importance of Dornyei's work lies in the fact that it calls for a more expanded motivational framework (MacIntyre, 2002).

The sheer mass of work on motivation only serves to prove the importance of this factor in language learning. Most of the students who are enrolled in the English courses at the university do so not because they want to, but because they have to. Their motivation is an instrumental motivation. These courses are mandatory courses and students cannot graduate unless they take these courses and pass them. Their motivations as such, are extrinsic. They are not learning for the sake of learning, but are learning because they need to pass their courses. The problem with the students, as the researchers have witnessed throughout the years, has not been the goal, rather their attitude and the effort they put into it. Most students have a negative attitude towards English in general and they feel that it is a very difficult language. Moreover, these courses are not courses within their majors, they are service courses, and the students do not have the same motivation and attitude towards these courses like they have towards their other courses. Many of them just want to pass. They do not give these courses, and consequently, their components, their full concentration as they do in the courses at the heart of their fields of study.

Age

Another important factor influencing second language learning is that of age. Age is linked to a great extent to the ability of detecting a non-native accent. Laura Lee Moore states that the Critical Period Hypothesis plays an important role in the acquisition or learning of a second language because children are better equipped to acquire a language system. Their brains are more capable of absorbing the language without much effort since their brains are organized and more capable to

Table1. English Consonant Sounds

Manner	bilabial	Labio-dental	dental	alveolar	Post-alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
Plosive	P b			t d			k g	
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Fricative		f v	ð Θ	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					ʧ ʤ			
Approximant	w			l	r	j		

Table 2. Arabic Consonant Sounds

	bilabial	Labio-dental	dental	alveolar	Post-alveolar	palatal	velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	glottal
Plosive	b		t d				k	q		ʔ
Nasal	m		n							
Fricative		f	ð Θ	s z	ʃ		x ɣ		ħ	h
Affricative					ʤ					
Trill										
Approximant						J				
Lateral-approximant					l					

learn a language whereas those of adults are not (Moore, 1999, p.1). This hypothesis states that the child develops the ability of learning the second language rapidly while it becomes so difficult to develop this ability after puberty. This period is "around age 10 or 12".

After this age, learners find some challenges in acquiring language particularly the native accent (Laura Lee Moore, 1999, p.1).

Singleton and Lengyel elaborate on this point by stating that:

"During this period the dominant hemisphere becomes more and more specialized for language, and, at puberty, all language functions are concentrated in that part of the brain. This process of inter-hemispheric specialization, and the concomitant loss of cerebral plasticity, is held responsible for the alleged fact that after the onset of puberty languages have to be taught and learned through a conscious and labored effort and that foreign accents cannot be overcome easily".(Singleton and Lengyel, 1995, p.31).

Influence of the Mother Language

Every language in the world has a specific system of sounds, vocabulary, stress, intonation and grammar. The mispronunciation of sounds reflects the system of sounds of the mother language. The sound system of the mother language has a big influence on English because the learner sometimes tries to carry the different characteristics from the mother tongue and to transfer it to the second language especially if the learner is an adult or if that he started to learn the language after the age of puberty (Gimson, 1989, p. 312). The researchers have noticed that there are three different aspects for mispronunciation in this area:

1. The learner or the student may mispronounce words if he finds new sounds that are not used in the mother language and that he is not familiar with.
2. The learner or the student may mispronounce words although the two languages have the same sounds. This results from the fact that the rules of combining sounds in each language are different (Gimson, 1989, p. 312).
3. Learners may mispronounce words because they try unconsciously to transfer phonetic and phonological features from their mother language into English. This reinforces the argument presented in Lado's Contrastive Analysis Theory about the transfer from the mother tongue to the new language as mentioned earlier in the paper.

Non-native pronunciations of English result from the differences between the mother tongue and English because non-native users of English carry the pronunciation rules from their mother tongue. Speakers also create pronunciations for English sounds not found in the speaker's first language.

Modern Standard Arabic has 28 consonant whereas English has twenty-four. The two languages have some common sounds but they also have different sounds.

Arabic contains emphatic sounds, whereas in English there are no emphatic sounds.

Some consonant sounds are found in the two languages but what makes students mispronounce words is that those sounds have a different phonetic realization.

FINDINGS

The results indicate that:

1. /v/ sound was mispronounced as /f/ in all positions.
2. /p/ was mispronounced as /b/ in all positions.
3. /z/ was mispronounced as /ks/ only in the initial position.

Table3. (The difficult Consonant Sounds, the Phonetic Misrepresentation and the Percentage of Mispronunciation).

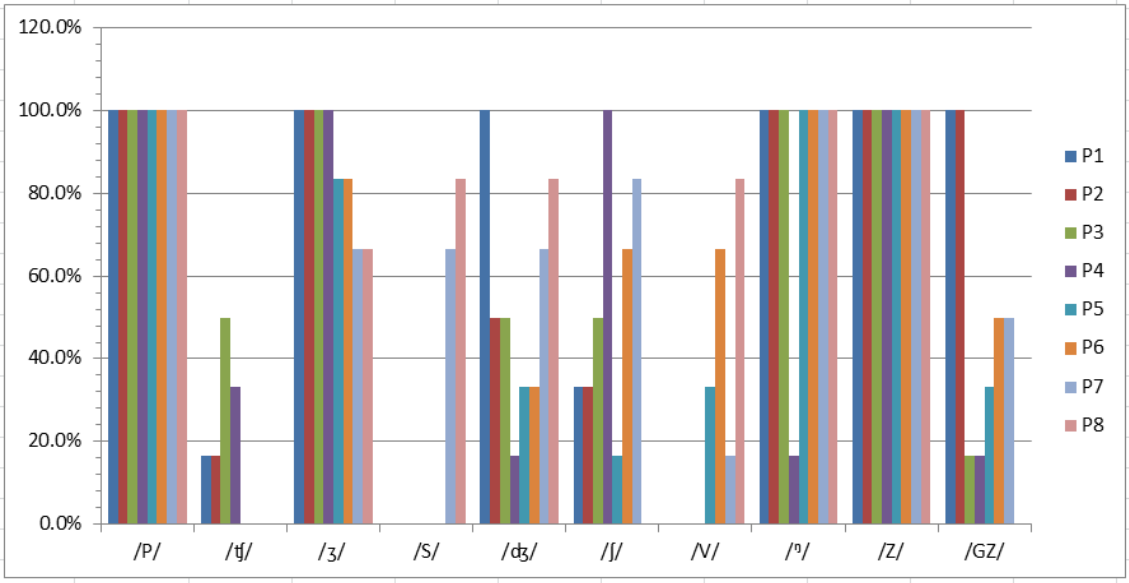
Number of Participants In The Study	**The Problematic Consonant Sound**	**Phonetic Representation**	**Phonetic Misrepresentation. (Mispronunciation)**	**% of mispronunciation**
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	ch in the initial and final positions	/ʧ/	/ʃ/	16.7 % 16.7 % 50 % 33.3 % 0 0 0 0
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	p in all positions.	/p/	/b/	100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 %
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	x in the initial position.	/z/	/ks/	100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 %
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	/ng/ in the final position.	/ŋ/	/n/	100% 100 % 100 % 16.6 % 100 % 100 % 100 % 100 %

Table 3 continued

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	v in all positions.	/v/	/f/	0 0 0 0 33.3 % 66.7 % 16.7 % 83.3 %
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	c in the medial position.	/ʃ/	/k/	33.3 % 33.3 % 50 % 100 % 16.7 % 66.7 % 83.3 % 0
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	g in the initial and final positions.	/ʤ/	/g/	100 50 % 50 % 16.6 % 33.3 % 33.3 % 66.7% 83.3 %
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	s in the medial and final positions.	/s/	/z/	0 0 0 0 0 0 66.7 % 83.3 %
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	s in the medial position	/ʒ/	/ʤ/ + /ʃ/	100 100 100 100 83.3 % 83.3 % 66.7% 66.7 %
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.	x in the medial position.	/gz/	/ks/	100 100 16.7% 16.7% 33.3 % 50 % 50 % 0

Graph 1: (The Percentage of each Mispronounced Consonant for Each Participant).

	/P/	/ʧ/	/ʒ/	/S/	/ʤ/	/ʃ/	/V/	/ŋ/	/Z/	/GZ/
P1	100.0%	16.7%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
P2	100.0%	16.7%	100.0%	0.0%	50.0%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
P3	100.0%	50.0%	100.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	16.7%
P4	100.0%	33.3%	100.0%	0.0%	16.7%	100.0%	0.0%	16.7%	100.0%	16.7%
P5	100.0%	0.0%	83.3%	0.0%	33.3%	16.7%	33.3%	100.0%	100.0%	33.3%
P6	100.0%	0.0%	83.3%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	66.7%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%
P7	100.0%	0.0%	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%
P8	100.0%	0.0%	66.7%	83.3%	83.3%	0.0%	83.3%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%



4. /s/ was mispronounced as /z/. Students could not recognize the different sounds of /s/ when it falls in the medial and final positions.
5. /ʃ/ proved to be problematic for students in the medial position. It was mispronounced as /k/.
6. /g/ followed by /z/which is a cluster sound of the letter X. This cluster was mispronounced as /ks/ in the medial position.
7. /ʧ/ was mispronounced as /ʃ/ in the initial and final positions.
8. /ʒ/: was mispronounced as /ʤ/ and as /ʃ/ only in the medial position.
9. /ŋ/: was mispronounced as /n/ only in the final position.
10. /ʤ/ was mispronounced by students as /g/ in the initial and final positions.

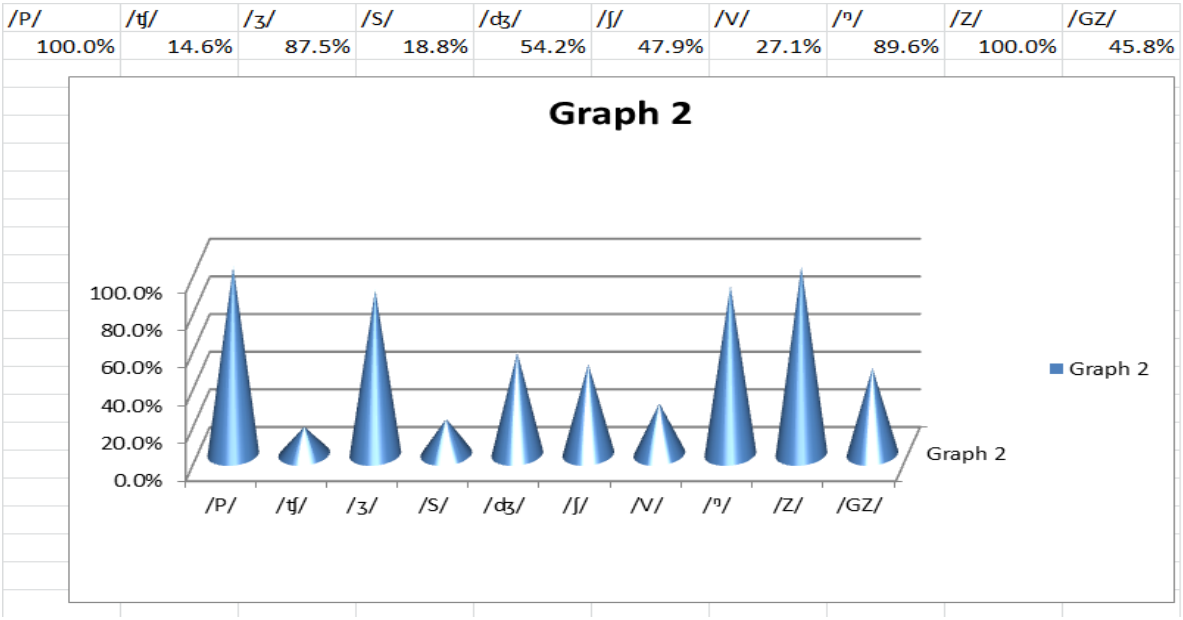
After recording the sounds, the results were obtained by calculating each error against the total number of trials conducted by the students. It was then divided by the total number of trials and multiplied by 100% to come up with the percentage of mispronunciation for each sound. This is illustrated in Table 3 and graph 1.

The following tables illustrate that the students had a difficulty with some consonant sounds. Some of these consonants were more difficult than others. The percentage of mispronunciation shows the degree of difficulty for those students. Phonetic representation and phonetic misrepresentation are provided in Table 3.

The above bar graph shows each participant's mispronounced results. It shows the percentage of each mispronounced consonant in each participant's speech. The average was found by calculating the number of mistakes and dividing them on the total number of trials that contain different sounds in different positions multiplied by a 100.

1. Participant one experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /s/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/, 33.3% problems in pronouncing the sound / ʃ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ŋ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /z/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound cluster /gz/.
2. Participant two experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 0% problems in pronouncing

Graph 2: (The Average Mispronunciation of Consonants by all the Participants).



the sound /s/, 50% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/, 33.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʃ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ᵑ/,, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /z/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound cluster /gz/.

3. Participant three experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 50% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /s/, 50% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/, 50% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʃ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ᵑ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound/z/, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound cluster /gz/.

4. Participant four experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 33.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /s/, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʃ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ᵑ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /z/, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /gz/.

5. Participant five experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 83.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /s/, 33.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/,, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʃ/, 33.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ᵑ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /z/, 33.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /gz/.

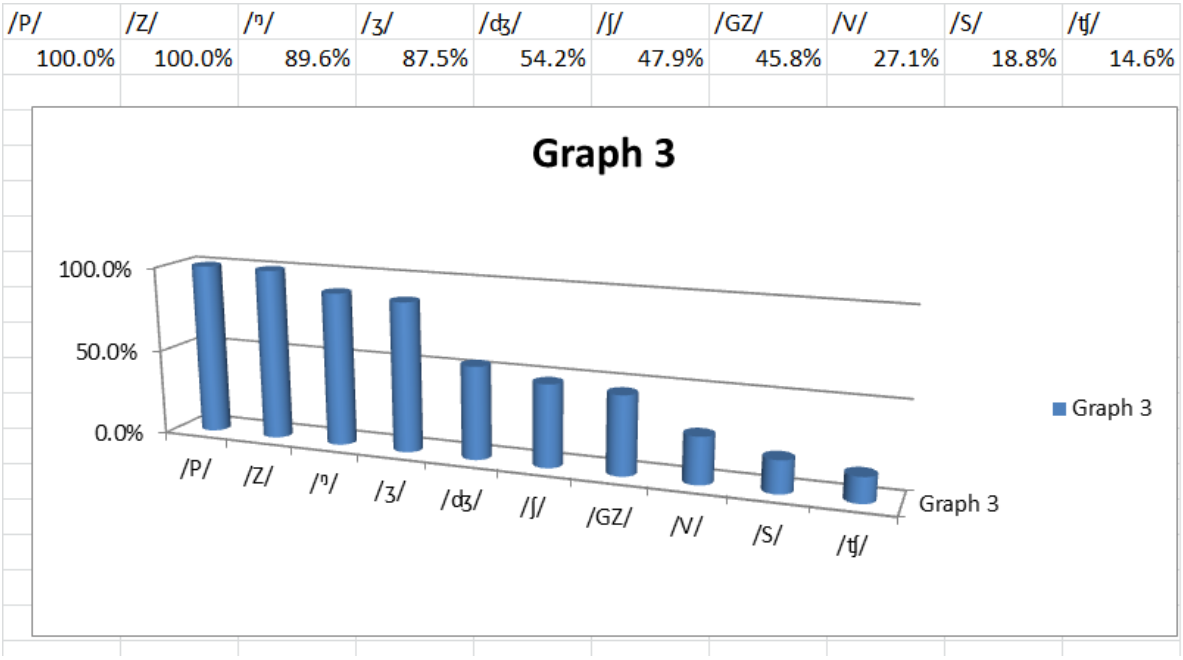
6. Participant six experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 83.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /s/, 33.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/, 66.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʃ/, 66.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ᵑ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /z/, 50% problems in pronouncing the sound /gz/.

7. Participant seven experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 66.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 66.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /s/, 66.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/, 83.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʃ/, 16.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ᵑ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /z/, 50% problems in pronouncing the sound /gz/.

8. Participant eight experienced 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /p/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/, 66.7% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/, 83.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /s/, 83.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʤ/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /ʃ/, 83.3% problems in pronouncing the sound /v/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /ᵑ/, 100% problems in pronouncing the sound /z/, 0% problems in pronouncing the sound /gz/.

The above bar chart shows the average mispronunciation of consonants by the eight participants.

Graph 3: (Order of Consonants: The Highest Percentage of Mispronunciation to the Lowest).



The two sounds /p/ and /z/ represent the highest percentage of errors by first year students at Al-Balqa' Applied University. They were mispronounced in the six cases given to them. /ʧ/ represents the lowest percentage of error made by students (14.6%). The sounds /ŋ/ and /ʒ/ also represent a considerable percentage (89.6) and 87.5 respectively.

The above graph summarizes the results of the ten sounds given to the eight students at Al-Balqa' Applied University. It illustrates the most mispronounced sounds to the less mispronounced sounds. Furthermore, it indicates that the sounds that were most mispronounced were /p/ and /z/, followed by /ŋ/ at 89.6%, /ʒ/ at 87.5%, /ʤ/ at 54.2%, /ʃ/ 47.9%, the cluster sound /gz/ at 45.8%, /v/ at 27.1%, /s/ at 18.8% and /ʧ/ at 14.6 %

Suggestions and Methods to Improve Pronunciation

The teacher must take into consideration the time given to the learning of a second language. Enough time should be dedicated to practice the spoken language. Gimson states that there are certain obstacles that face teachers while teaching pronunciation because phonetic and phonological characteristics of the second language are present from the first lesson even if the second language learner is not familiar with them (Gimson, 1989, p. 312). He elaborates more on this point by mentioning that "grammatical forms can be taught in a specific order and vocabulary can be taught on a basis of frequency occurrence" (Gimson, 1989, p.312). Gimson also draws attention to the difference between native speakers and foreign learners of English. He believes that the native speaker uses English in a habitual way that he acquires from his parents or family members close to him in an early stage of life (Gimson, 1989, p.313). What characterizes the speech of the native speaker is the phonetic and phonological properties that he learns in a natural way when he tries to express himself in different situations like expressing happiness, sadness, anger, disturbance or other forms of expression (Gimson, 1989, p.313). He also states that the native speaker of English has a certain capability in understanding other forms of English even if they reveal diversity in phonetic and phonological structures and this is what he calls "receptive efficiency" brought out through radio and television (Gimson, 1989, p.313). The difference between native speakers and foreigners becomes clear when the foreigner tries to learn English in an "artificial fashion" because in this case, the foreigner cannot obtain the "receptive competence" that the native speaker has (Gimson, 1989, p.314). There are two important sides of language for the foreigner: the receptive side and the productive side. This means that for any second language learner, at the beginning of learning pronunciation, it is enough to be proficient in the production of one type of English pronunciation, but when the student masters English, reception of more than one type of English is important by being exposed to radio, television programmes, films and sports games or commentaries (Gimson, 1989, p.314). That is why he advises students to restrict themselves to one type of spoken English at the beginning of learning pronunciation. Later on, when the learner learns more about the English language and when he builds up self-

confidence, he can expose himself to other types or forms (Gimson, 1989, p.314)

Teaching should concentrate on sound features not found in the mother language. This enforces the learner's knowledge of English as a second language. The teacher plays an important role in teaching pronunciation because he presents stimuli to the learner. The teacher must bear in mind some important factors. For example:

1. The age of the learner. Is the language learner young or old? (Gimson, 1989, p.314)
2. The reason for learning the language (Gimson, 1989, p.314). Does the learner intend to learn to communicate or for educational reasons?
3. The number of students in the classroom lesson.

Based on all that has been mentioned before, the researchers suggest the following to improve students' pronunciation:

1. Schools teachers should be made aware of the differences between the English and Arabic phonemic sound systems and phonemic realizations and recognize the importance of teaching pronunciation to their students.
2. Students should be encouraged to read aloud to identify the difficult sounds. Corrections need to be made in an encouraging manner, illustrating the importance of recognizing the difference between the problematic sounds.
3. Teachers should put particular emphasis on sound recognition from a young age to enhance the learners' ability to learn the second language.
4 Students should be encouraged to learn the phonetic symbols and phonetic transcription and should be encouraged to use the dictionary at an early stage to learn correct pronunciation of words.
5. Special concern should be given to listening and auditory skills because they enable the student to become familiar with new words and it becomes like ear training.
6. Special concern should be given to speaking in classrooms. Students should be encouraged to speak in order to improve their pronunciation.
8. Students' communication skills need to be enhanced using different forms of verbal expression to improve the utterance of sounds in different positions in words.
9. Minimal pairs are an integral part of developing intelligible pronunciation as they allow for the separation of a single sound at a time. ESL teachers should focus on explaining the meaning of minimal pairs and on providing many examples to help students differentiate the problematic sounds.
10. Exposure to English is another factor that should be encouraged. Films, music and radio are all means that would help students listen to native speakers using language in a natural setting.
11. The internet can provide a wealth of listening materials starting with online dictionaries, pronunciation tests and authentic listening materials from native speakers. Students should be encouraged to use the Internet outside the classroom to listen to different teaching lessons.
12. Learners need to attempt and distance themselves from their mother tongue and consciously work at learning the structure, sound system and grammar of the second language.

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