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ERRORS MADE IN SPOKEN ENGLISH BY  
ARABIC - SPEAKING - STUDENTS  
IN  
SYRIA AND LEBANON

by

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A Thesis

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Dedicated to My Father

Wahid Hakki

I wish to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the  
members of the Education and the English Departments  
for their interest and generous guidance in the  
preparation of this thesis

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The subject of the thesis is "Errors Made in Spoken English by Arabic-Speaking-Students in Syria and Lebanon." The purpose in choosing this subject for the dissertation is to determine which words give most difficulty in pronunciation to Arab students, why students encounter these difficulties and what possible suggestions can be given for correcting and preventing errors. For the sake of simplicity, all measurements of errors are undertaken in word isolation rather than in continuous discourse.

Although stress is plainly acknowledged to be of major consideration of spoken English, this dissertation is concerned only with the articulatory characteristics of speech sound apart from complex factors of intonation.

This study consists of three major chapters:-

Chapter I deals with a synopsis of the sounds of English. The writer relied for her information on several authorities. The various sounds are discussed, how they are produced, which ones have equivalents in Arabic, and which ones give difficulty in pronunciation to the learners of the English language.

Chapter II deals with the tests given on pronunciation. The introductory part of the chapter takes up a study

of the schools in Damascus and Beirut from which the students were selected for the tests. Then follows a discussion of the method which those schools use in teaching English, the qualification of the teachers, and the curricula used. The pronunciation tests fall into five parts:-

Part I, the Auditory Discrimination Test A;

Part II, the Pronunciation Recognition Test B;

Part III, the Productive Pronunciation Test C;

Part IV, the Productive Pronunciation Test D;

Part V, General Conclusions from the Four Tests Given.

Chapter III. When the errors in pronunciation are known with apparent reasons for their occurrence, possible methods for their prevention and correction are set forth.

An Abstract  
of  
Errors Made In Spoken English By  
Arabic-Speaking-Students  
in  
Syria and Lebanon.

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Amal Hakki

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## An Abstract of the Thesis

The subject of the thesis is "Errors made in Spoken English by Arabic-Speaking-Students in Syria and Lebanon." The purpose in choosing this subject for the dissertation is to determine which words give most difficulty in pronunciation to Arab students, why students encounter these difficulties and what possible suggestions can be given for correcting and preventing them.

This study consists of three major chapters:-

Chapter I deals with a synopsis of the sounds of English. Some sounds in English give difficulty in pronunciation to Arab students because they have no equivalences in Arabic such as [ə:] in "bird", [ɔ] in "God", [eɪ] in "tale", [oʊ] in "coast", [ɛə] in "air", [ɪə] in "clear", [tʃ] in "chureb", [dʒ] in "general", [ɪŋ] in "singing", [t] in "candle".

Chapter II deals with the tests given on pronunciation to a chosen group of one-hundred and seven students from Damascus private and public schools and from the Preparatory School in Beirut.

Test A, the auditory discrimination test, is to find the ability of the students to recognize the pronunciation of similar words through visualization, e.g.

soon

son

sun

Test B, the pronunciation recognition test, is to find the ability of the students to recognize the correct pronunciation of a word as they hear it pronounced by the examiner.

Test C, the productive pronunciation test, is to detect errors in the students' own pronunciation as they read the list of words in the test.

Test D, the productive pronunciation test falls into two parts:-

Part I tests the influence of early learned words on subsequent ones.

Part II tests the ability of the students to differentiate between words written with the same spelling but pronounced differently and meaning different things, according to the way they are used.

The following are the general conclusions of the four tests A, B, C, and D.

The fact that English is not a phonetic language gives rise to the basic cause for difficulties in learning the language. Words like "women", "says", "singing", "plough", "cough", "occasion", "psalm", "bowl", "valuable", "cupboard", "foreigner", "ancient", "sword", are frequently mispronounced because students tend to pronounce them the way they are written.

Words tend to be pronounced the same when there is

little difference in their spelling, such as:-

write and writ, sit and site.

Confusion arises when two letters in one word are pronounced completely differently in another such as:-

"ea" letters:-

tear (noun), ear, hear, fear = [ɪə]

tear (verb), bear = [ɛ:]

heaven, breakfast, dread = [ɛ]

heart, = [ɑ:]

break, = [eɪ]

"ou" letters:-

route, soup, group = [u:]

sour, our, flour = [aʊ]

mourn, four, pour = [ɔ:]

The absence of the equivalent sounds in Arabic presents difficulty in pronunciation, such as:-

[ŋ] in "singing", "ringing", "playing". Students tend to insert a [g] after [ŋ], hence "singing" becomes [sɪŋgɪŋg] instead of [sɪŋɪŋ].

[tʃ] in "church", "reach", "cheap". Students tend to leave out the [t] sound before [ʃ].

[dʒ] in "gentle", "bridge", "general". In Syria and Lebanon the [dʒ] does not occur in spoken Arabic, hence students tend to substitute [ʒ] for [dʒ] very frequently.

Influence of foreign languages on the pronunciation of certain words.

A. Arabic - The words "police" and "doctor" tend to be pronounced [bɒlɪ:s] and [dɒktə:r] just like Arabic.

B. French - The long [i:] sound used inappropriately in words like "scissors" [sɪ:zəz], and "biscuits" [bɪskwɪts]. The sounding of [w] in [bɪskwɪts] is also due to French influence.

Some words give rise to confusion when association has not been developed between the word in the written form and the correct pronunciation of it. For example, the students have learned the words

choose chose shoes

but they have not connected clearly each word with its proper pronunciation. This has led to confusing the pronunciation of one word with another.

Early learned words influence subsequent ones. Test D with its two parts took up this point and the results confirmed the statement. "Ear" and "hear" are early learned words and from the results of Test D it was seen that they influenced the pronunciation of "early" which became

Certain words in English are written with the same spelling but are pronounced differently and mean different things. This causes confusion in pronunciation, such as "close" (adjective) and "close" (verb), "use (noun) and "use" (verb).



In general, errors in spoken English are due to two basic causes:-

1. The teachers' pronunciation
2. Methods used in teaching

Teachers of the English language must have adequate pronunciation. They are the models which the students will be stimulated to imitate. Since the native dialect of the teacher influences the pronunciation of the students, the following are some suggestions which can help the students and the teachers to improve their pronunciation:-

- I. The teacher should discipline her own applied phonetics. There are books on phonetics which can be of help.
- II. Teachers and students can listen to radio where programs are given for the purpose of teaching spoken English. These programs are prepared by the British Broadcasting Corporation for foreigners learning the English language. Students can benefit from the systematic demonstration. There are also records prepared in English to teach correct pronunciation. One class session per week can be given to listening to these pronunciation records.
- III. The third suggestion is the teachers' conscious attacking of errors made in pronunciation. The teacher points out the error made in pronouncing a certain word and helps the student to discriminate between his wrong pronunciation and the correct one. Then the student attempts to acquire the

correct pronunciation with plenty of drill and practice. This conscious method takes time but it yields good results.

IV. Another suggestion is the direct stimulation - imitation method. This scheme of correcting errors in pronunciation is widespread and is used by practically all teachers. It deals with easier cases by correcting in a natural way the errors as they occur in a paragraph or in conversation. The student is stimulated to imitate the teacher's pronunciation. This method takes a long time but the results can be satisfactory.

## CHAPTER I

Although all men have similar speech organs, the sounds of no two languages are exactly alike. This chapter is devoted to a study of the English sounds. The purpose is to find out which sounds are difficult to pronounce for Arabic-speaking-students.

### A. The English Vowels

In producing a particular sound, the tongue modifies the way through which the breath passes. Hence the formation of a vowel is chiefly done by the tongue.

[i:] . This vowel sound is similar to the Arabic vowel in the words "tIn," figs, or "fIl," elephant. Since this vowel sound occurs in Arabic, Arabic-speaking-students do not find difficulty in pronouncing it such as in words like "keep," "tree," "thief," "meat," "receive," As with other vowels, there is a variety of ways in which this vowel sound is spelt: "ee" in "see," "ea" in "sea," "ie" in "piece," "ei" in "receive," and "e" in "Steve." Due to this variety of writing Arabic-speaking-students are inclined to confuse [i:] and [i] where the spelling is similar such as "ie" in "sieve" and "piece," where "sieve" is pronounced with a short [i] sound and "piece" with a long [i:] sound.

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(1)

Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp. 17-18.

[i]. This vowel sound is similar to the vowel in the Arabic word "sin," tooth. Arabic-speaking-students do not find any difficulty in pronouncing it such as in words like "big," "fish," "with," "sit." There is a variety of other ways in which this vowel sound is spelt: "ie" in "sieve,"<sup>(1)</sup> "e" in "basket," "women," "pretty."

Some Arabic-speaking-students are inclined to confuse [i:] and [i]. They do not distinguish between the following words:-

|      |       |      |     |
|------|-------|------|-----|
| [i:] | week  | wick | [i] |
|      | leave | live |     |
|      | reach | rich |     |
|      | sheep | ship |     |
|      | seek  | sick | (2) |

[ɛ]. This sound is often heard in the Syrian colloquial spoken in Damascus. As with other vowels, there is a variety of ways in which this vowel sound is spelt:- "u" in "bury," "e" in "guest," "ay" in "says," "a" in "Thames," "ea" in "dead." Due to spelling some students diphthongize this sound as in [teimz] and [seiz].<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp. 17-18.

(2) Ibid., p. 18.

(3) Ibid., pp. 20-22.

[æ]. This vowel sound is similar to colloquial Syrian in words like "kān," there was, and "fulān," that person. In English it is heard in words like "man," "angry," "fat," "thank," "bank," Arabic-speaking-students find no difficulty in pronouncing it.

[ɑ:]. In Arabic, the words "fāda," flooded, and "nār," fire, have the same vowel sound as the English [ɑ:]. Since this vowel sound occurs in Arabic, Arabic-speaking-students do not find difficulty in pronouncing it when it appears in words like "father," "calm," "half," "laugh," "past," "heart," "basket."<sup>(1)</sup>

[ɔ]. This is the sound of "o" in "god," "box," "clock," "pot," "gone," "cottage," "knock," "often." In this sound, the tongue is low, the lips are rounded, and the vowel is uttered in the most backward position. Sometimes students fail to pronounce [ɔ] properly because they think it is similar to cardinal [o]. In this particular case spelling misleads them.<sup>(2)</sup>

[ɔ:]. This vowel sound does not exist in Arabic. Arabic-speaking-students often find difficulty in pronouncing it. They place it similar to the long cardinal [o:]. In words

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English, pp. 22-24.

(2) Ibid., pp. 24-26.

like "law," "daughter," "thought," "caught," "cause,"  
"brought," the vowel sound is apt to be replaced with [o:]  
because [ɔ:] does not exist in Arabic. (1)

[u]. This vowel sound exists in Arabic, hence it offers  
no difficulty. However, students tend to lengthen the  
sound unnecessarily making the word sound awkward, as in  
pronouncing the following words: "put," "book," "good,"  
"foot." This error is made because students are confused  
not knowing when to use a long [u:] and when to use a short  
one especially when the spelling is not differentiated. (2)

[u:]. This vowel sound is heard in "food," "room," "who,"  
"blue," "true." It exists in Arabic such as in "sūr" wall,  
and "yākun" will be. This sound is absolutely pure but some  
English people diphthongize it. (3)

[ʌ]. This vowel sound exists in Arabic such as in "baṭ" [bʌt],  
a duck, "rab" [rʌb] god, and "shaṭ" [ʃʌt] river. In English this  
sound is written sometimes with "u" such as "cut," "but," "cup,"  
"hut," and sometimes with "o" such as "come," "constable,"  
"front," "nothing," "month," "love," "blood."

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp.26-28.

(2) Ibid., pp. 28-29, and

Ripman, English Phonetics. pp 128-130.

(3) Gairdner, The Phonetics of Arabic. p. 43.

[ə:] . Some people use the symbol [ɜ:] for [ə:] . However, the writer will make reference to the second symbol in her study. This vowel sound does not exist in Arabic and hence gives trouble to students. It is usually followed by "r" which some people prefer not to pronounce, like [wə:d], [wə:k], [bə:d].<sup>(1)</sup>

The short vowel sound of [ə] is not heard in classical Arabic, but students find no difficulty in pronouncing it in words like "above," "along," "letter." The students of English should remember that [ə] occurs only in unstressed syllables, "ability," "ahead," "among," "appear," "seaman."<sup>(2)</sup>

### B. The English Diphthongs

Diphthongs are vowels so placed and so pronounced that they form one syllable. English makes a great use of them. Properly speaking Arabic has no diphthongs, but it does put together two vowels and the glide between the two sounds is the main essence of a diphthong. [aɪ], [aʊ], [ɔɪ], are often heard in Arabic in words like "aɪdi" hands, "maʊjɪd" there is, and "bayt" a house.<sup>(3)</sup>

[eɪ] . The learner often finds difficulty in pronouncing this diphthong because it does not occur except in colloquial Arabic. Arabic-speaking-students tend to replace this diphthong with long [e:] such as [te:l] "tale", [gre:t] "great," [fe:l] "fail."<sup>(4)</sup>

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- (1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. p. 32.  
(2) Ibid., p. 32, & Bowman, English Pronunciation Drill, p.27.  
(3) Gairdner, The Arabic Phonetics. p. 45.  
(4) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. p. 38.

[ou]. This diphthong does not exist in Arabic. Students find great difficulty in pronouncing it properly partly because they do not know it is a diphthong, and partly because they confuse it with cardinal [o:]. Hence [o:] sound is often wrongly substituted for [ou]. Students show no difference between:-

|      |        |      |   |             |      |
|------|--------|------|---|-------------|------|
| [ɔ:] | cost → | [o:] | ← | coast       | [ou] |
|      | bought |      |   | boat        |      |
|      | saw    |      |   | so          |      |
|      | called |      |   | cold        |      |
|      | law    |      |   | low         |      |
|      | hall   |      |   | hole, whole |      |
|      | jaw    |      |   | Joe (1)     |      |

[aʊ]. This diphthong is not difficult to pronounce because it exists in Arabic in words like "maujūd" there is, and "zaūrak" a boat. In English this diphthong is written with "ow" such as "bow"(verb), "now," "town," "down," and "ou" such as "flour," "our," "hour," "sound," "doubt."

[ɔɪ]. Although this diphthong does not exist in Arabic, yet Arabic-speaking-students find no difficulty in learning it and in imitating it. This sound is heard in words like "boy," "noise," "joy," "voice," "coin."

[ɪə]. This diphthong rarely exists in Arabic, and Arabic-speaking-students often fail to pronounce it properly. The

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(1)

Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp. 39-40.



first element of the diphthong is short [ɪ] followed by [ə] .

English phoneticians, W. G. Bowman, F. Wear, and D. L. Rankin favor leaving out the [r] sound at the end of the words like "clear" [kɪə], "ear" [ɪə] , "beer" [bɪə].(1) [ɛə] . This diphthong does not exist in Arabic and students find difficulty in pronouncing it and in learning it. They tend to lengthen [ɛ:] sound and leave out [ə] . Words like "bear," "hair," "there" tend to be pronounced [bɛ:r], [hɛ:r], [ðɛ:r] . A diphthong [ɛə] must be used instead of a long vowel.  
(2)

[ɔə] . This diphthong also does not occur in Arabic and students find difficulty in pronouncing it properly. The diphthong starts at [ɔ:] sound and moves rapidly to [ə] . [ɔ:] is often substituted for [ɔə] hence "floor," "pour," "door" becomes [fɔ:r], [pɔ:r], [dɔ:r] . This is not a serious error and many English speakers use long [ɔ:] instead of the diphthong [ɔə].  
(3)

[uə] . This diphthong starts with short [u] and moves rapidly to [ə] . The main error made by students is to begin with a long [u:], hence jeopardizing the fact that this sound

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp. 44-45.

(2) Ibid., pp. 45-46.

(3) Ibid., pp. 46-47.

is a diphthong. Words like "moor," "poor," "tour" should be pronounced with a diphthong [uə] and not a long [u:] sound.<sup>(1)</sup>

### C. The English Consonants.

Unlike the vowels, the consonants stop the breath in some definite way. For instance in pronouncing "p" and "b" the breath is stopped by the lips. In general, however, we can hardly classify consonants into two groups, voiced and unvoiced. The voiced consonants produce vibrations in the vocal chords such as in making the "z" sound. The voiceless consonants produce no vibrations in the vocal chords such as in making the "s" sound. The following is a list of the voiced and the voiceless consonants in phonetic symbols:-

|          |      |        |          |
|----------|------|--------|----------|
| Unvoiced | [p]  | Voiced | [b]      |
|          | [t]  |        | [d]      |
|          | [k]  |        | [g]      |
|          | [f]  |        | [v]      |
|          | [θ]  |        | [ð]      |
|          | [s]  |        | [z]      |
|          | [ʃ]  |        | [ʒ]      |
|          | [tʃ] |        | [dʒ] (2) |

Consonants [m], [n], [ŋ], [r], [l], [t], are

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(1)

Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. p. 47.

(2)

Ibid., p. 53.

voiced and have no unvoiced sounds corresponding to them. [j], [w], are semi vowels and both are voiced. [h] is unvoiced and there is no voiced consonant corresponding to it.  
(1)

Consonants may be described as:-

"Plosive, where the breath is stopped and then abruptly set free like "p", "d," "t," "b," "k," "g,"

Nasal, for sounds where the air passes through the nose like "m," "n," [ŋ].

Lateral, where the air passes at the side of the tongue such as "l."

Rolled, where the tongue taps against the upper teeth ridge like "r."

Fricative, where the air makes a rubbing noise as it passes the point where it was stopped.

This is the case with most of the other consonants." (2)

[p]. This consonant is the unvoiced form of [b]. It does not exist in Arabic. Wear and Rankin believe that students often find difficulty in pronouncing it.  
(3)

[b]. This consonant is the same as the Arabic "b". Students rarely encounter difficulty in pronouncing it. However, students sometimes do not realize that [b] is silent in certain words like "debt," "comb," "lamb," "doubt," "subtle," "dumb."

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(1)

Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp.56-57.

(2)

Ibid., pp. 52-53.

(3)

Ibid., pp. 54.

[t] , [d]. In Arabic these consonants are formed by putting the tip of the tongue on the upper teeth, where as in English they are formed by putting the tip of the tongue on the teeth-ridge. In Arabic, the tongue is loosely touching the upper teeth whereas in English it is pressed tightly against the teeth-ridge. Not much difficulty is encountered by students in adapting the tongue position to form the English [t] and [d] .<sup>(1)</sup>

[k] . This consonant is almost the same as the Arabic "k" in "kalb" dog. Arabic-speaking-students find no difficulty in pronouncing it. When [k] is followed by [t] , students find it difficult to pronounce without inserting a vowel sound in between, for example "asked" [a:s kt] tends to be pronounced [a:s kɪd] as though it rhymes with "basket" [bɑ:s kit].<sup>(2)</sup>

[g] . This sound does not exist in classical Arabic but in colloquial Egyptian, Iraqi, and in the Arabian Peninsula, it exists. However, this sound is not difficult to learn and not much difficulty is encountered in pronouncing it. There is a variety of ways in which it is written. "gh" in "ghost," before "e" and "i" in certain words like "girl," "get," before "gu" in "guard," "guest," and with some words

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp. 56-57.

(2) Ibid., p. 57.

which begin with "ex" such as "examine."<sup>(1)</sup>

When [n] precedes [g], in some words the [g] is sounded such as in "anger" [æŋgə], "hunger" [hʌŋgə], "longer" [lɔŋgə]. Hence in such words, consonant [ŋg] is used for "-ng". In some other words, consonant [ŋ] is used for "-ng" such as in "singing" [sɪŋɪŋ], "longing" [lɔŋɪŋ], "hanging," [hæŋɪŋ].<sup>(2)</sup>

[f]. This consonant is similar to the Arabic "f". It is sometimes spelt with "f", "ph," and "gh":- "fat," "flour," "flame," "philosopher," "phrase," "laugh," "cough," "tough,"

[v]. This consonant, the voiced sound of [f], does not exist in Arabic, yet no difficulty is encountered in learning it.

[θ], [ð]. Both of these consonants exist in classical Arabic but in the colloquial, [θ] is replaced by [t] and [ð] is replaced by [d]. For instance, [θæki:l], heavy, [θæli:dʒ] snow, and [θæmæn] price, in the colloquial Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian, become [tæki:l], [tæli:dʒ], and [tæmæn]. In some other cases like [θɜrə] revolution, the [θ] sound

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(1)

Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. p. 58.

(2)

Ibid., pp. 58-59.

is replaced by [s], [saurə], and [ʃænb] a fault, is replaced by [z] hence it becomes [zænb] which is often heard in colloquial Arabic. In English, there is also a tendency to substitute [t] or [s] for [θ], and [d] or [z] for [ð].<sup>(1)</sup>

When [θ] and [ð] occur next to [s] or [z] they give trouble to most Arabic speakers, such as "baths," "months," "breathes." Difficulty also arises in distinguishing between the pronunciation of "bath" and "bathe," "breath" and "breathe."<sup>(2)</sup>

[s], [z]. These two consonants are very similar to Arabic. The difficulty lies not in pronouncing them but in knowing when to pronounce them. Spelling gives rise to this difficulty and there are no simple rules to be taught to students which can be of help to them.

[ʃ]. This consonant corresponds to the Arabic "sh". In English it is usually spelt with "sh" as in "ship," "sheep," "shoot." It is also heard in words spelt with "si," "ci," "ti," as in "mission," "mansion," "physician," "associate," "condition," "station."<sup>(3)</sup>

[ʒ]. This consonant is the voiced form of [ʃ]. It exists in classical Arabic and it is often used in the colloquial languages particularly in Syria and Lebanon. It is heard

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. pp. 61-62.

(2) Ibid., p. 62.

(3) Ibid., pp. 64-65.

in "pleasure," "vision," "usual," "treasure," and in words derived from French, "mirage," "rouge," "garage."<sup>(1)</sup>

[dʒ], [tʃ]. The second pair of consonants does not exist in Arabic. It is commonly spelt with "ch" or "tch" as in "church," "such," "match," "kitchen."

[dʒ] is the voiced sound of [tʃ]. This consonant does not occur in classical Arabic but it is heard in colloquial Iraqi. In practice it gives rise to trouble. The sound used notably in Syria and Lebanon is [ʒ] where [dʒ] is made very little use of. When it comes to English the same problem arises of substituting [ʒ] for [dʒ].<sup>(2)</sup>

[m], [n]. These two consonants are the same as in Arabic. They present no difficulty to students learning the language.

[ŋ]. In Arabic there is no sound equivalent to this consonant. It is commonly spelt with "ng" and it is the spelling in this case which bears an effect on the pronunciation of this sound. For instance, in some words, the "g" sound is heard as in "finger," [fɪŋgər], and "linger" [lɪŋgər]. Influenced by the spelling, students are inclined to insert "g" sound in words like "singing" which becomes [sɪŋgɪŋg], "ringing" which also becomes [rɪŋgɪŋg]. This is a serious error in pronunciation due to lack of early correct phonetic training.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. p. 65.

(2)

Ibid., p. 66.

(3)

Ibid., pp. 68-70.

[r] . There is a considerable difference between the Arabic [r] and the usual English [r] . The Arabic [r] is a rolled consonant produced by a succession of tongue taps against the teeth-ridge. The unrolled [r] is formed by curving back the tip of the tongue towards the hard palate and this is the [r] often found in British English, and in the north eastern dialect of American English. (1)

As to the sounding of [r] , it is pronounced in words where there is a vowel following it as in "read," "ride," "room," "around," "bring." It is also pronounced when it falls at the end of a word and when the next word begins with a vowel as in "here I am," "there is," after us." (2)

[r] is not pronounced when it is followed by a consonant as in "arm," "bird," "dark," "farm," or when it is final as in "air," "bigger," "larger," "mother," or when it is followed by an unsounded "e" as in "fire," "care," "before," "more," "here." (3)

[l] , [t] . It is necessary to distinguish between the "clear" and the "dark" l's. The "clear" l is formed by touching the upper teeth with the tip of the tongue, raising the front of the tongue to stop the air passage at the top, and letting

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(1) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. p. 71.

(2) Bowman, English Pronunciation Drill. pp. 59-60.

(3) Ibid., p. 60.



the air pass from one side of the tongue or both. This is very similar to the Arabic "l." The "dark" l is formed by touching the teeth-ridge with the tip of the tongue, and the back part of the tongue which was depressed in the "clear" l, is now raised towards the back of the soft palate. The "dark" l is heard only occasionally in Arabic notably in "Allah" God, [attɑ:h], or when it occurs near a back consonant which influences it as in "talab" a request, [tætɑb] where        is a back consonant and influences the "l" turning it into a "dark" one. So is the case with "yuslab" to be crucified, [justɑb] where the "l" occurs next to [s] <sup>(1)</sup>.

[l] is pronounced only before vowels and never finally as in "leave," "look," "love," "learn." [t] is pronounced before consonants and finally as in "feel," "gentle," "solve," "terrible," "able." <sup>(2)</sup>

Arabic-speaking-students often find difficulty in pronouncing the English [t] as it occurs in words like "feel," "help," "solve." The reason is that in Arabic a neighboring back consonant [z], [t], [d], [s], is formed by raising the back part of the tongue towards the extreme back of the palate. If an "l" precedes or follows one of these consonants, the tongue position helps to produce

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(1) Gairdner, The Phonetics of Arabic. pp. 17-19.

(2) Ibid., p. 18.

because the back part of the tongue is already raised towards the palate. In English there are no such extreme back consonants to precede or follow "l" hence the students find difficulty in pronouncing [t].<sup>(1)</sup>

[j], [w], Both these sounds are semi-vowels. They occur in Arabic and students find no difficulty in pronouncing them.

[h]. This sound is the same as the Arabic "h" in [hæ: ʔæ] this. Nevertheless, there is a difference in usage. In English [h] is used only before vowels as in "hair," "host," "heart," "help," but in Arabic it may occur everywhere and often finally. [h] is silent in a few words when it precedes a vowel as in "vehicle," "honest," "hour," "heir."<sup>(2)</sup>

This chapter was mainly devoted to a discussion of the English vowels, diphthongs, and consonants. Reference was given to each English sound, how it is made, whether it has an equivalent sound in Arabic, and which sounds are likely to give Arabic-speaking-students difficulty in producing them.

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(1) Gairdner, The Phonetics of Arabic. pp. 17-19.

(2) Wear and Rankin, The Speaking of English. p. 74.

## C H A P T E R   I I

### Part I

A series of words was given to chosen groups of students from public and private schools in Damascus and the Preparatory Section at the American University of Beirut. The words selected for the tests were either taken already by the students in the readers or the students will be adding them soon to their vocabulary. The purpose in giving the tests is to identify the errors in Spoken English made by Arabic-speaking-students and to give explanations for them. The following are the tests:-

1. Auditory Discrimination
2. Productive Pronunciation.

The first two tests were adapted with certain necessary alterations from Philip Hunter Du Bois' "A Test Of Recognition Of Correct Pronunciation of English Words By Near Eastern Students." The last test was prepared by the writer herself.

Before starting the discussion of the tests and their results it will be helpful to mention the schools from which the students were selected for the tests, the curriculum they have, and the method they use in teaching English particularly.

The Dawhah High School for girls is a private school in Damascus but the curriculum is imposed by the Ministry of

Education and the teachers have to follow it rigidly. At the end of the fourth and the sixth years high school the girls have to pass an external examination which is carried out under the strict authority of the Ministry of Education.

English is taught beginning with the first year secondary school and continues up till the sixth year which is the Baccalaureat class. It is taught six to eight hours per week. Dr. Michael West is the author of the textbooks used. The third year studies in the Alternative Reader 3, the fourth year in the Alternative Reader 4, the fifth year in the Alternative Reader 5, and the sixth year in "King Solomon's Mines" which is a supplementary reader, grade five. Aside from English, all the other subjects are taught in Arabic.

In this school the classes are small. The number of girls in one class does not exceed twenty. Hence there is an opportunity for every student to participate in class discussion and recitation. Educationally, this method stimulates activity in the students, better attention, cooperation, and better grasping of the subject. The pronunciation of the teacher herself is nearly perfect for an Arab speaking the English language. She had had her London Matriculation and has a good deal of knowledge about the language and the effective method of teaching it.

To the four classes she teaches, the third, the fourth,

the fifth, and the sixth, she gives a composition lesson once per week, a short recitation written or oral, grammar, reading with explanation of the new words, and oral questions and answers about the chapter taken. Nevertheless, Arabic is frequently used during the explanation of the lesson wherever it is deemed necessary. In general, the plan she follows has lots of variety and initiative. Her aim in teaching English is to develop the four basic abilities:-

1. The ability to speak
2. The ability to write
3. The ability to read
4. The ability to understand.

The Tajhzeze High School for Boys follows the same curriculum and teaches in the same textbooks as those of the Dawlah School because they are required by the Ministry of Education and strictly supervised by it. Besides the New Method Readers of Dr. Michael West, Supplementary readers are required to be read at home or out of school. Each pupil reads at his own pace and when he finishes one Supplementary reader he may be supplied with another of the same grade. Once a fortnight, one of the reading periods is devoted to testing individual pupils in their home reading and encouraging them to read these books for enjoyment. The Supplementary reader of a particular grade is not issued to pupils until the principal reader of that grade has been completed and its

vocabulary learnt. This prevents the pupils from encountering words in the Supplementary reader which he had not met. The Dawhah school also makes use of these Supplementary readers since they are required by the Ministry of Education.

In the Tajheez too, English is taught by Arab teachers. The third and the fourth years are taught by a teacher who had had his London Matriculation and whose pronunciation is adequate. The fifth and the sixth years are taught by a teacher who had had his "Licence" in English Literature and again whose pronunciation is adequate.

The number of students constituting each class is large, reaching sometimes as high as sixty in one class. This is a fundamental disadvantage to the students because discussions are difficult to carry out. Give and take between students and teacher is limited. Hence a student rarely gets a chance to contribute an idea in class. To save himself from class disturbance and to obtain discipline, the teacher does the explanation. This is a handicap for activity, initiative, cooperation, and real grasping of the material on the part of the student.

Composition is assigned once every two or three weeks hence giving a very limited opportunity to the students to do written work. The teacher explains the lesson every now and then asking oral questions. Silent reading is frequently used

to make every student work and have his attention on the lesson. Written or oral recitations are held once every two weeks. The reason written tests are not given as frequently as they should be is that of the trouble they give the teachers in correcting the huge number of papers.

Faced with this serious difficulty the teacher's aim in developing the basic skills of speaking, writing, reading, and understanding are not all fulfilled. Not much emphasis for instance is given to spoken English because of limited opportunity. What also encourages the teacher to neglect correct pronunciation and enunciation of the students is the fact that the Ministry of Education considers only the written part with complete disregard to the oral one.

In the Preparatory School of the American University of Beirut, English is taught beginning with the first year elementary. The seventh and the eighth grades were selected for the test because of two reasons:-

1. They have had English for the same number of years as the fifth and the sixth years in Damascus.
2. They take the same textbooks as the other two classes in Damascus. Hence the vocabulary of the two groups should be at least theoretically on the same level.

English is not the only subject taught in the seventh and the eighth grades. There are other subjects taught in English. The seventh grade takes geography, science, and Arithmetic in English. The eighth grade takes history, science, and Arithmetic in English. Added to this, history is taught in the eighth grade by an American teacher. Hence pupils get considerable practice in English whether it be in writing, speaking, understanding, and reading. This is the fundamental reason why the students of the Preparatory School in Beirut are far ahead of the students in the schools of Damascus.

The curriculum is prepared by the Administration of the school. But the teacher does not have to follow it rigidly. If any alterations are found necessary the Administration does not object but on the contrary cooperates with the teacher and tries to help him in the best way possible. There is more or less a friendly relationship between the teacher and the students. The teacher seeks to understand his students to see where their weaknesses lie and try to help them. The important thing is that the teacher tries to adapt, as far as he can, the subject matter to the students and not vice versa, taking into consideration the potentialities and the ability of the students.

The classes are small. The number of students in one class does not exceed twenty-seven. Hence the teacher and his students can cooperate freely in class discussion and recitation. Every pupil gets a chance in this discussion.



Educationally, this encourages active participation of the students, better attention, cooperation, and better grasping of the subject matter.

The teachers had their education in American institutions and hence their pronunciation is quite adequate. As to the method followed in teaching English, the teacher strives to develop the four basic skills in language equally:-

1. The ability to speak
2. The ability to write
3. The ability to read
4. The ability to understand.

Class discussions on the reader or on grammar are carried on every day. Much opportunity is given to every student to speak in class to improve his pronunciation if there is need for it. Hence by listening to their teachers speak correct English and by consciously trying to imitate them their pronunciation improves with time especially as they go to higher classes and study under American teachers.

Once per week a composition and a written recitation are given. Hence the teacher tries to develop all the skills without neglecting any.

Part II

Auditory Discrimination Test A

Source and Aim of the Test:- This test was adapted from Philip Hunter Du Bois' "A Test of Recognition of Correct Pronunciation of English Words by Near Eastern Students." In each of the following series of three words, two words are written differently but pronounced the same. This is to test the ability of the students to recognize the pronunciation of similar words through visualization.

|            |       |       |
|------------|-------|-------|
| 1. soon    | son   | sun   |
| 2. deer    | dear  | dare  |
| 3. know    | now   | no    |
| 4. hear    | hire  | here  |
| 5. tall    | tale  | tail  |
| 6. mate    | meet  | meat  |
| 7. blew    | blue  | blow  |
| 8. four    | fur   | fore  |
| 9. sees    | cease | seize |
| 10. hard   | heard | herd  |
| 11. pain   | pane  | pan   |
| 12. sit    | sight | site  |
| 13. foul   | fowl  | fool  |
| 14. flower | floor | flour |
| 15. knight | knit  | night |
| 16. writ   | write | right |
| 17. weak   | wick  | week  |
| 18. toe    | tow   | two   |

|     |      |      |      |
|-----|------|------|------|
| 19. | ell  | ail  | awl  |
| 20. | sell | seal | cell |

Method:

Different groups were selected for the test. From the Dawhah High School for Girls a group was selected from the third, fifth, and sixth years and were given the test. Class four could not be given the test because of the strict program they were following for the external examination in June. The tested group all speak Arabic at home. Their ages range between 13-20, and they have had English from 3-8 years.

From the Tajheeze High School for Boys a group of students from the fifth and the sixth years were given the test. They all speak Arabic at home. They have had English from 3-7 years and their ages ranged between 16-20. Hence the total number of students tested was sixty-three. Three papers had to be excluded because they were badly done.

From the Preparatory School in Beirut a total of forty-seven students from the seventh and the eighth grades were given the tests. The language spoken at home is Arabic. They have had English from 3-8 years and their ages ranged between 11-16.

In general one-hundred and seven students from Damascus private and public schools, and from the Preparatory Section in Beirut were given Test A. In explaining the requirements of the test the writer put on the board the follow-

ing three words:-

By                      Bee                      Buy

The students taking the test were told clearly that the first and the third words even though they are written differently are pronounced exactly the same. She drew a line under By and another under Buy. Next she asked them to underline in each series of three words, the two words that are pronounced exactly the same.

After the test was administered and the results known, the examiner selected fourteen students from the eighth grade at the Preparatory School in Beirut. Their results in the test were not adequate. The examiner interviewed with each student separately, seeking the reasons for their mistakes. Their interpretations were recorded to serve as explanations for errors made in pronunciation.

In scoring Test A, one point (demerit) was recorded for each wrong choice or omission. Zero would thus represent a perfect score and 20 a complete failure.

Result of Test A:-

The average for all taking the tests and for the various groups and classes:-

|                           | Whole | 3rd Yr. | 4th | 5th  | 6th |
|---------------------------|-------|---------|-----|------|-----|
| Tajheeze Boys' average    | 7.09  |         |     | 8.08 | 6.1 |
| Dawahh Girls' average     | 4.8   | 6.8     |     | 3.2  | 4.0 |
| Preparatory Boys' average | 4.8   |         |     | 6.0  | 3.6 |

The following tables show how many errors were made on each item.

|      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1    | ..... (7)  |
| 2    | ..... (9)  |
| 3    | ..... (8)  |
| 4    | ..... (21) |
| 5    | ..... (15) |
| 6    | .... (4)   |
| 7    | ..... (7)  |
| 8    | .... (4)   |
| 9    | ..... (30) |
| 10   | ..... (26) |
| 11   | ..... (13) |
| 12   | ..... (10) |
| 13   | ..... (27) |
| 14   | ..... (22) |
| 15   | ..... (9)  |
| 16   | ..... (6)  |
| 17   | ..... (7)  |
| 18   | ..... (24) |
| 19   | ..... (17) |
| * 20 | ..... (8)  |

Table 1 : Comparative Incidence of Errors Made by the Thirty Students of the Tajheeze Boys' School in Test A.

Number of Errors

|      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1    | ... (3)    |
| 2    | .. (2)     |
| 3    | ..... (7)  |
| 4    | .... (4)   |
| 5    | ..... (10) |
| 6    | . (1)      |
| 7    | ... (3)    |
| 8    | .. (2)     |
| 9    | ..... (25) |
| 10   | .... (5)   |
| 11   | ..... (10) |
| 12   | ..... (12) |
| 13   | ..... (12) |
| 14   | ..... (7)  |
| 15   | .. (2)     |
| 16   | ..... (8)  |
| 17   | ... (3)    |
| 18   | ..... (12) |
| 19   | ... (3)    |
| * 20 | ..... (5)  |

Table 1 : Comparative Incidence of Errors  
Made by the Thirty Students of the  
Dawah Girls' School in Test A.

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\* Numbers of the Work Items in Test A

Number of Errors

|      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1    | ..... (4)  |
| 2    | ..... (6)  |
| 3    | ..... (24) |
| 4    | ..... (4)  |
| 5    | ..... (8)  |
| 6    | ..... (10) |
| 7    | ... (3)    |
| 8    | (0)        |
| 9    | ..... (39) |
| 10   | ..... (11) |
| 11   | ..... (10) |
| 12   | ..... (16) |
| 13   | ..... (25) |
| 14   | ..... (15) |
| 15   | .. (2)     |
| 16   | ..... (10) |
| 17   | ..... (6)  |
| 18   | ..... (31) |
| 19   | ..... (6)  |
| * 20 | ..... (6)  |

Table 1 : Comparative Incidence of Errors  
Made by the Forty-Seven Students of the  
Preparatory Boys' School in Test A.

---

\* Numbers of the Work Items in Test A

### Results of Test A.

Certain words in the test were not taken up because they were not commonly mistaken by students tested. As to the following pairs of words, they were commonly chosen by students as sounding exactly alike:-

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| <u>soon</u>   | <u>son</u>   |
| <u>know</u>   | <u>now</u>   |
| <u>sees</u>   | <u>cease</u> |
| <u>hard</u>   | <u>heard</u> |
| <u>pane</u>   | <u>pan</u>   |
| <u>sit</u>    | <u>site</u>  |
| <u>knight</u> | <u>knit</u>  |
| <u>writ</u>   | <u>write</u> |
| <u>sell</u>   | <u>seal</u>  |

Out of the fourteen students who were chosen to give their interpretation of the reasons for their errors in pronunciation, two who had underlined soon and son as sounding alike, said that they did so because of the "on" at the end of both words.

Six out of the fourteen chosen as a sample said that they underlined know and now because of the letters "now" at the end of know which are similar to now. One student put it in another way saying that if "k" was left out in know, the word would be exactly like now.



Sees and cease were the most commonly mistaken words. Twelve out of fourteen tried to explain their error by saying that the word "sees" was pronounced [si:z] with a [z] sound. They thought "cease" must also be pronounced [si:z] with a [z] sound because "sees" is written with "s" too and pronounced [z]. One student said that he underlined sees and cease as sounding alike because he thought the third word "seize" was pronounced "size" [saiz].

Hard and heard were chosen only by three out of the fourteen. Their explanation was directed towards the spelling of the word where there was similarity in the last three letters "-ard".

Pane and pan were chosen only by four out of the fourteen. They all said that an "e" at the end of the first word would not make change in pronunciation especially when the first three letters in the words are similar in spelling "pan".

Two out of the fourteen had underlined sit and site. When asked for their reason they said that those two words looked alike in spelling except for the letter "e" at the end of the second word.

For knight and knit one student said that he just underlined them in a way of guessing. The others said that

the "kni" letters at the beginning of both words are the same so they tend to pronounce them alike.

The same interpretation was given for writ and write, as for sit and site where there is a difference in spelling between the two words only in the letter "e" at the end of write.

The words foul, fowl, fool perplexed the students. Seven out of the fourteen had this mistake. Various answers were given to explain their mistake. Most of them knew the correct pronunciation of "fool". Therefore it was choosing between "foul" and "fowl". "Foul" was their choice because one of them said that it reminded him of "group" where "ou" letters are pronounced [u:] . Others said that they remembered "soup", or "route" which led them to pronounce "foul", [fɑ:l] and not [faʊəl]. This was a common error where sixty-four students out of one-hundred and seven fell into this error.

There was guessing for number 14, flower, floor, flour. Several students objected to the fact that there were two words in the item pronounced exactly alike. In an interview with some of the students, they explained clearly the reason for choosing flour saying that the word "four" came to their mind which is pronounced [fɔ:r] , and this word actually led them to pronounce "flour" which has the same ending "-our" [flo:r] instead of [flaʊər].

Part III

Pronunciation Recognition Test B.

Source and Aim of the Test:-

This test was also adapted from Philip Hunter Du Bois' "A Test of Recognition of Correct Pronunciation of English Words by Near Eastern Students." Each word in the test was pronounced by the examiner in three different ways but only one was correct. This is to test the ability of the students to recognize the correct pronunciation of the word as they hear it pronounced by the examiner.

|              |              |             |                       |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. sword     | 1 [so:rd]    | 2 [swo:rd]  | 3 [sə:rd]             |
| 2. heart     | 1 [hə:rt]    | 2 [hɑ:rt]   | 3 [hi:rt]             |
| 3. southern  | 1 [sautərn]  | 2 [sauðərn] | 3 [sʌðərn]            |
| 4. answer    | 1 [ænswə]    | 2 [ænsi:r]  | 3 [ænsər]             |
| 5. guard     | 1 [gɑ:rd]    | 2 [dʒɑ:rd]  | 3 [gɑ:rd] trilled "r" |
| 6. biscuits  | 1 [bi:skits] | 2 [biskits] | 3 [biskwits]          |
| 7. clothes   | 1 [klouðz]   | 2 [glouðz]  | 3 [klouðiz]           |
| 8. linen     | 1 [linin]    | 2 [ləinɪn]  | 3 [li:nɪn]            |
| 9. castle    | 1 [kæstɪl]   | 2 [kæst]    | 3 [kæsl]              |
| 10. weapon   | 1 [wɛpən]    | 2 [wɛbən]   | 3 [wi:pən]            |
| 11. gentle   | 1 [ʒɛntl]    | 2 [gɛntl]   | 3 [dʒɛntt]            |
| 12. hawk     | 1 [hauk]     | 2 [hɑ:k]    | 3 [hɔ:k]              |
| 13. heard    | 1 [hə:rd]    | 2 [hi:rd]   | 3 [hɑ:rd]             |
| 14. scissors | 1 [skɪzərz]  | 2 [sɪzərz]  | 3 [si:zərz]           |
| 15. choose   | 1 [tʃouz]    | 2 [ʃu:z]    | 3 [tʃu:z]             |

|               |               |              |               |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| 16. psalm     | 1 [sɑ:təm]    | 2 [psɑ:təm]  | 3 [sɑtəm]     |
| 17. bringing  | 1 [brɪŋɪŋɪŋ]  | 2 [brɪŋɪŋ]   | 3 [brɪnɪŋ]    |
| 18. police    | 1 [bɒlɪs]     | 2 [pɒlɪ:s]   | 3 [bɒlɪs]     |
| 19. page      | 1 [peɪdʒ]     | 2 [peɪʒ]     | 3 [peɪg]      |
| 20. these     | 1 [ði:s]      | 2 [ðɪs]      | 3 [ði:z]      |
| 21. though    | 1 [ðəʊ]       | 2 [ðəu]      | 3 [θəʊ]       |
| 22. bridge    | 1 [brɪʒ]      | 2 [brɪ:dʒ]   | 3 [brɪdʒ]     |
| 23. this      | 1 [ðɪs]       | 2 [ði:s]     | 3 [dɪs]       |
| 24. breakfast | 1 [breɪkfəst] | 2 [brɛkfəst] | 3 [brɪ:kfəst] |
| 25. heaven    | 1 [hi:vən]    | 2 [hevən]    | 3 [heɪvən]    |

**Method:-**

The same group of one-hundred and seven students from Damascus private and public schools, and from the Preparatory School were given Test B. In explaining the requirements of the test, the examiner put on the board the following:-

thousand      1                      2                      3

She explained to the students clearly that she will pronounce the word in three different ways but only one will be correct:-

1 [tauzənd]    2 [səuzənd]    3 [θəuzənd]

If the first pronunciation was correct they were to put a circle around number 1, if the second pronunciation was correct they were to put a circle around number 2, and if the third pronunciation was correct they were to put a circle around

---

**N.B.** The words in ink were written only in the examiner's copy.

The following tables show how many errors were made on each word item.

|      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1    | ..... (15) |
| 2    | ..... (24) |
| 3    | ..... (23) |
| 4    | . (1)      |
| 5    | ..... (8)  |
| 6    | ..... (29) |
| 7    | ..... (27) |
| 8    | ..... (23) |
| 9    | ..... (7)  |
| 10   | ..... (26) |
| 11   | ..... (9)  |
| 12   | ... (3)    |
| 13   | ..... (15) |
| 14   | ..... (17) |
| 15   | ..... (6)  |
| 16   | ..... (18) |
| 17   | ..... (23) |
| 18   | ..... (11) |
| 19   | ... (3)    |
| 20   | ..... (7)  |
| 21   | ..... (19) |
| 22   | ..... (7)  |
| 23   | ..... (9)  |
| 24   | .... (4)   |
| * 25 | ..... (24) |

Table 2 : Comparative Incidence of Errors Made by the Thirty Students of the Tajheeze Boys' School in Test B

Number of Errors

|      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1    | ..... (9)  |
| 2    | ..... (17) |
| 3    | ..... (17) |
| 4    | (0)        |
| 5    | ..... (13) |
| 6    | ..... (14) |
| 7    | ..... (13) |
| 8    | ..... (14) |
| 9    | ..... (13) |
| 10   | ..... (21) |
| 11   | ..... (11) |
| 12   | ..... (8)  |
| 13   | ..... (10) |
| 14   | ..... (18) |
| 15   | ..... (10) |
| 16   | ..... (16) |
| 17   | ..... (23) |
| 18   | ..... (9)  |
| 19   | ... (3)    |
| 20   | ..... (13) |
| 21   | ..... (15) |
| 22   | ... (3)    |
| 23   | ..... (6)  |
| 24   | .. (2)     |
| * 25 | ..... (6)  |

Table 2 : Comparative Incidence of Errors  
Made by the Thirty Students of the  
Dawah Girls' School in Test B.

Number of Errors

|      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1    | ..... (16) |
| 2    | ..... (21) |
| 3    | ..... (27) |
| 4    | (0)        |
| 5    | ..... (16) |
| 6    | ..... (44) |
| 7    | ..... (8)  |
| 8    | ..... (26) |
| 9    | ..... (10) |
| 10   | ..... (35) |
| 11   | ..... (10) |
| 12   | ..... (18) |
| 13   | ..... (12) |
| 14   | ..... (29) |
| 15   | ..... (12) |
| 16   | ..... (27) |
| 17   | ..... (32) |
| 18   | ... (3)    |
| 19   | ... (3)    |
| 20   | ..... (14) |
| 21   | ..... (16) |
| 22   | (0)        |
| 23   | ... (3)    |
| 24   | ..... (15) |
| * 25 | ..... (6)  |

Table 2 : Comparative Incidence of Errors  
Made by the Forty-Seven Students of the  
Preparatory Boys' School in Test B

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\* Numbers of the Word Items in Test B.

### Results of Test B.

In this particular test the words "answer", "police", "page", "these", "bridge", "this", "breakfast", are not retained in the discussion because they were not commonly mispronounced.

**Sword:** Out of the one-hundred and seven students who took the test, thirty-eight chose the pronunciation [swo:rd] and two chose [sə:rd]. When this error was taken up in the discussion with the fourteen students they said that they pronounced the [w] sound because they thought it was like "swim", "sweet", where the [w] is pronounced.

**Heart:** Forty-six students chose the pronunciation [hi:rt] and sixteen chose [hə:rt]. The reason that so many students chose [hi:rt] is because the "ear" letters reminded them of "ear" and "fear" where they are pronounced [i:r]. One student commented in the interview that "ea" letters always puzzle him because they are pronounced differently in various words such as "ear", "heart", "head".

**Southern:** Sixty-four students chose the pronunciation [sauðərn] and eight chose [sautərn]. When asked for the reason they pronounced "southern" [sauðərn], thirteen students out of the fourteen said that they thought it was like "south" where "ou" letters are pronounced [au].

**Guard:** Thirty-six students chose the pronunciation



[gɑ:rd with a trilled "r", and one chose [dʒɑ:rd]. In Arabic the "r" is trilled hence students learning the English language tend to trill the "r" the way they do in Arabic.

**Biscuits:** Eighty-two students chose [bɪskwɪts] and five chose [bi:skɪts]. The examiner found that all the students who made error in the pronunciation of this word knew French. "Biscuits" in French is pronounced [bɪskwi] where the "u" is sounded, hence students pronounced "u" in English turning the "ui" into [wi].

In French the "i" sound is long in many words such as "lire", "ecrire", "livre". This was the reason given by the students for choosing [bi:skɪts] with a long [i:].

**Clothes:** Forty-four students chose [Klousɪz] and five chose [glousɪz]. Four students out of fourteen said that they chose [Klousɪz] because of the letters "-the-" which are pronounced [ʃɪ] in "the army", or "the hour". Three students said that they pronounced it [Klousɪz] because there is "e" before the "s" which reminded them of "washes", "watches", or "reaches", where a vowel sound is inserted before the "s". Two students said that they encounter much difficulty in pronouncing it [Klousɪz] without inserting a vowel sound between the two consonants that occur successively.

**Linen:** Sixty-four students chose the pronunciation [lɪnɪn] and four chose [li:nɪn]. The first four letters

"line" are pronounced [laɪn] and actually seven students out of the fourteen who were interviewed said that they confused "line", and "linen".

The four students who chose [li:nɪn] attributed this error to French influence where the "i" sound is prolonged such as in "livre", "lire", "ecrire".

Castle: Thirteen students chose [kæ:stl] and seventeen chose [kæ:sl] with a clear "l". The presence of the "t" before the "l" was the reason for pronouncing "castle" [kæ:stl]. Three students out of the fourteen who were interviewed attributed this reason for their error. As to [kæ:sl] with a clear "l", most of the students said that they find much difficulty in pronouncing the dark "l".

Weapon: Eighty-two students chose [wi:pən] and for [wɛbən] there was no choice. When asked for their reason in choosing [wi:pən], eleven students out of fourteen said that they thought it was like "weep", "beat", or "eat", where they are pronounced with [i:] .

Gentle: Twenty-four students chose [ʒɛntt] and six chose [gɛntt]. It is a common mistake to have the [d] sound left out in [dʒɛntt]. Four students said that they find difficulty in pronouncing the [dʒ] .

Hawk: Nineteen choices were for [hauk] and ten

for [hæ:k]. Most of the students said that the letters "aw" puzzled them. Some of those who chose the pronunciation [haʊk] said that they did this mistake because the word "how" occurred to them while they were answering.

**Heard:** Thirty-three students chose [hi:rd] and four chose [hæ:rd]. When the examiner interviewed the fourteen students, five said that "ear" "hear" made them choose the pronunciation [hi:rd] where "ea" are pronounced [i:]. Two students said that they chose [ha:rd] because they did not notice the "e" before the "a". Only one said that he chose [hæ:rd] because he linked it with "heart" where "ea" are pronounced [æ:].

**Scissors:** Thirteen students chose the pronunciation [skɪzərz] and forty-one chose [si:zərz]. The interpretation of the fourteen students was that "scout", "scold", "scarce", "scatter", are written with "sc" and pronounced [sK]. This led them to pronounce the [K] in "scissors".

All the students who pronounced "scissors" [si:zərz] knew French and therefore this error was due to French influence.

**Choose:** Nine students pronounced it as [tʃəʊz] and nineteen [ʃu:z]. When asked why they made this mistake, four students out of fourteen said that they confused "choose", and "chose" because of the similarity in spelling. As to why they pronounced "choose" [ʃu:z] one explanation was given and that

was confusing "choose" and "shoes" because they thought there was very little difference in their pronunciation.

Psalm: This word was included in the test although students have not taken it yet and the purpose was to find out the tendency to pronounce it the first time they read it. It was interesting to note that twenty-nine students chose the pronunciation [psa:təm] and thirty-two chose [sʌtəm]. The reason they gave for pronouncing it [psa:təm] was the presence of the "p". Six out of fourteen pronounced it [sʌtəm] because it sounded more familiar to them than [sa:təm], and actually they had taken the word "solemn" before.

Bringing: Seventy-one students chose the pronunciation [brɪŋɪŋg] and twelve chose [brɪnɪŋ]. This word was among the most commonly mistaken ones. When the fourteen students were asked why they inserted a [ŋ] sound in [brɪŋɪŋg] eight answered that they had never been taught carefully before how this word was properly pronounced. They always pronounce d it [brɪŋɪŋg] and nobody even told them that it was wrong. The "g" made them pronounce the word [brɪŋɪŋg] not realizing that "ng" represents one consonant [ŋ] and not two [ŋg].

Though: Fifteen students chose [ðəʊ] and thirty-five chose [θəʊ]. When the examiner interviewed some of the students, they said that they confuse "thou", "though", "through", "thought", because of the little difference in spelling.

Heaven: Twenty-eight students chose the pronunciation [hi:vən] and eight chose [heivən]. When the students were asked why they made a mistake, some said that the "ea" letters confuse them because they are pronounced in various ways in different words. They gave the example "ear", "hear", and "fear" where "ea" letters are pronounced [i:] which led them to choose the pronunciation [hi:vən] for "heaven".

#### Part IV

#### Productive Pronunciation Test C

Aim and source of the Test: The purpose in giving this test is to detect errors in the student's own pronunciation. A list of one-hundred words was chosen from the readers in which the students study. The test was given first as preliminary to select the most commonly mispronounced words. The following is the list of the selected words:-

|         |           |           |          |
|---------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| women   | watched   | pour      | handle   |
| tale    | vine-yard | valuable  | cupboard |
| chose   | breathe   | real      | risen    |
| coast   | months    | ancient   | umbrella |
| won't   | breath    | quiet     | says     |
| ringing | occasion  | weary     | sew      |
| cheap   | these     | dawn      | drawn    |
| feel    | shout     | rough     | purpose  |
| dog     | bowl      | plough    | drown    |
| cost    | loose     | foreigner | ragged   |

Method:-

A group of forty students from Damascus private and public schools, and from the Preparatory School was selected for Test C. It is an individual test where the student reads the list of words and the examiner detects the errors made in pronunciation. Ten students were then interviewed by the examiner to find the reasons for errors made in pronunciation. The ten students were chosen from the seventh and the eighth grades at the Preparatory School in Beirut.

Results of Test C.

Women: Out of the forty students who took this test thirty-eight pronounced this word [wʊmən]. Only two students pronounced it properly [wɪmɪn].<sup>(1)</sup> This word was among the most commonly mispronounced words. When the examiner asked each of the ten students selected for the interview, to explain the reason for this error, most of them answered that "o" and "e" letters misled them, and they tended to pronounce the word the way it was written.

Tale, date: Twenty students pronounced "tale" [tɛ:t] with a long [ɛ:], and twenty-four students did the same mistake in the word "date", replacing the diphthong [eɪ] with a long [ɛ:]. The examiner pronounced the words properly in front of them [teɪt] and [deɪt], showing them the nature of

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(1) Ripman, English Phonetics, page 113.

their mistake. Actually they had not noticed the difference between the long vowel and the diphthong until then.

Chose: Twenty-four students pronounced this word [tʃu:z]. The interpretation given by five students out of the ten was that they confused "choose" and "chose" because there is little difference in their spelling. Three students said that they thought of the word "lose" where the letters "-ose" are pronounced [u:z] and so they pronounced "chose" [tʃu:z].

Coast, won't: The proper pronunciation for these two words is [kəʊst] and [wɒnt]. These two words were the most commonly mispronounced words. The forty students pronounced them [kɔ:st] and [wɔ:nt] with long cardinal [ɔ:]. Not one student pronounced them correctly. The reason they gave for this error is that they did not know that a diphthong [ɔu] was used.

Ringin': Twenty-two students pronounced this word [rɪŋŋɪŋŋ] with "g" a separate syllable instead of [rɪŋɪŋ]. The reader is referred to page 13 to see the reason given for mispronouncing this word or similar ones.

Cheap: Twenty-eight students pronounced this word [ʃi:p]. Four students out of the ten said that they encounter difficulty in pronouncing [tʃ] sound. Two said that they were careless while reading the list and so did not pay good attention.

**Feel, handle:** Both these words should be pronounced with a dark [ɫ]. But out of the forty students who took the test not one student pronounced them with a dark [ɫ]. Most of them said that it was difficult for them to pronounce the dark [ɫ].

**Dog, cost:** Thirty-seven students pronounced the two words with cardinal [o] instead of [ɔ]. Eight students out of ten said that the letter "o" led them to pronounce the two words with cardinal [o].

**Watched:** Nineteen students pronounced this word [wɔtʃɪd] instead of [wɔtʃd] and inserting a vowel sound before the [d]. Most of them said that they find difficulty in pronouncing those two consonants successively [tʃ] and [d] without inserting a vowel sound in between.

**Vine-yard:** Twenty-seven students pronounced it [vaɪnjɑ:rd]. When the examiner asked them to explain why they pronounced it [vaɪnjɑ:rd] and not [vɪnjɑ:rd], three students out of ten said that the word "vine" is pronounced [vaɪn] which made them use the same pronunciation in "vine-yard". Four others said that they thought of "wine", "line", and "five" which led them to pronounce "vine" like wise in "vine-yard".

**Breathe, breath:** Nineteen pronounced "breathe" [brɛθ], and thirty-three pronounced "breath" [brɪ:ð]. The reason they gave for making this error was that they were confused



as to which was which, especially because there was little difference in spelling.

Months: Fifteen students pronounced this word [mʌnθɪz] even though there was no "e" before the "s". The explanation given by students for doing this mistake was that they encountered difficulty in pronouncing those two consonants successively without inserting a vowel sound.

Occasion: Fifteen students pronounced this word wrongly. Three pronounced it [okæzjən] which showed the influence of French. The other twelve pronounced it [okɛɪʃən]. The reason they gave for mispronouncing this word was that they remembered words like "mission", "confession", where "sion" combination in such words is pronounced [ʃɪn].

These: Twenty-nine students pronounced this word [ʃi:s]. When the examiner interviewed the ten students, the explanation they gave was that the presence of "s" misled them. They did not realize that "s" is pronounced [z].

Shout: Thirteen students pronounced this word [ʃa:t]. Three said that there is little difference in the spelling of "shout" and "shoot" which they did not notice while reading the word. Four students said that they remembered "group" or "soup" when they came to this word, where "ou" are pronounced [u:]. This led them to pronounce "shout" [ʃa:t].

Bowl: Thirty-six students pronounced this word [baul]. Most of them said that they thought of "bow", "how", "cow", or "now" when they pronounced it which led them into this error.

Says: Forty students mispronounced this word. They all fell into the error of pronouncing it [seiz]. They interpreted this mistake as due to the influence of the word "say" which is pronounced [sei], hence leading them to pronounce "says", [seiz].

Loose: Thirty-one students pronounced this word [lu:z]. The examiner asked ten students to explain the reason for this error. Six students said that they confused "lose" and "loose" where there was little difference in their spelling. Three said that "loose" should be pronounced [lu:z] because it was like "choose" where "oose" are pronounced [u:z].

Pour: Thirty-eight students pronounced this word wrongly. Fourteen of them pronounced it [pauar] and the other twenty-four [puir]. Those who pronounced it [pauar] said that "-our" reminded them of "our" which is pronounced [auar]. Four students attributed this reason to their error.

Those who pronounced it [puir], some of them said that there was little difference in the spelling of "pour" and "poor" which confused them. Others thought that it must be

pronounced [pu:r] like "route", "soup", or "group", where "ou" are pronounced [u:].

Valuable: Twenty-seven students pronounced this word [væljʌəbl]. Most of them said that the presence of letter "a" before "b" led them to pronounce it as such.

Real: Thirty-seven students mispronounced this word by replacing the diphthong with a long vowel and so [riət] became [ri:t]. Students said that they did not know that a diphthong should be used instead of the long vowel.

Quite, Quiet: Thirty-four students pronounced "quiet" [kwaɪt]. They failed to distinguish between "quite", and "quiet". Two students said that they find difficulty in differentiating the pronunciation of those two words because they are somewhat similar in spelling. Four students find difficulty in making the diphthong [aɪə].

Weary: Thirty-one students pronounced this word [wɛ:rɪ]. The examiner asked the reason for this error. The answer was that most students associated the word "weary" with "wear", and since "wear" is pronounced [wɛ:r] it led them to pronounce "weary" [wɛ:rɪ].

Dawn, drawn, drown: Nineteen students chose the pronunciation [daʊn] for "dawn". Three students out of ten said that it was due to the word "down" which was similar in

spelling to "dawn". Four attributed the error to the presence of "a" before the "w".

Eleven students pronounced "drawn" [draun]. One student interpreted his error as due to the presence of "a" before "w". The majority which was seven out of the ten said that they confused it with "drown".

Thirty-four pronounced "drown" [droin]. When asked for the reason, most of the students said that "o" misled them because it gave them the notion that the sound should be [o:].

Rough, plough: These two words puzzled the students mainly because the way they are written does not indicate their pronunciation.

Twelve students pronounced "rough" [ro:]. The explanation they gave for this is that it resembled in spelling the word "though", and they were trying to guess.

Thirty-seven students pronounced "plough", [plʌf] or [plo:]. When it was checked with the students the examiner found that those who knew the pronunciation of "rough" [rʌf] pronounced "plough" [plʌf]. There were six of those who made this type of mistake and they did that because the spelling of "plough" was very much like "cough".

Foreigner: Nineteen students pronounced this word [foreiner]. Six of the ten who were asked to give their reasons

for mispronouncing this word said that they were trying to pronounce the word the way it was written hence letter "e" before "i" gave them the notion that the sound should be [ei], [foreinar].

Cupboard: Thirty-nine students fell into the error of pronouncing "cupboard" [Kʌpbɔ:rd]. The explanation they gave for this error is that they were trying to pronounce it the way it was written.

Risen: Twenty-one students pronounced this word [raizɪn]. All the students said that they associated "risen" with "rise" which is pronounced [raɪz], hence they fell into this error of pronouncing "risen" [raizɪn].

Umbrella: Thirty-eight students mispronounced this word. They put a stress on the "l" which is rarely done in English, hence "umbrella" became [ʌmbrɛllə]. Most of those who made this mistake have taken French and they attributed this error to words like "villa" which is pronounced [villə] in French or "village" [villɑ:ʒ].

Sew: Thirty-nine students pronounced it [su:]. This was among the most commonly mistaken words. The examiner took it up with the ten students to find out the reasons underlying this error. She found out that students associated the word with "drew", "blew", or "grew" which actually led them

to pronounce it [su:].

**Purpose:** Thirty-six students pronounced this word [pəɾpo:z]. Three students said that they made this mistake because of the letter "o" after "p". Six others thought of such words, "suppose", "propose" where "-pose" are pronounced [po:z].

**Ragged:** Thirty-seven students pronounced this word wrongly, [ræ:gd] leaving out the vowel sound [ɪ] between the [g] and the [d]. The only explanation that the students gave for this error was their ignorance of the proper pronunciation. They did not know that such adjectives "ragged", "cursed", "wretched", "blessed", are all pronounced with a vowel sound [ɪ] before the [d].

Part V

Productive Pronunciation Test D.

Aim and Source of Material for the Test:

The purpose in giving this test is mainly to show the influence of early learned words on subsequent ones. The test was prepared by the writer herself. The words were selected from the reader books in which the students study. The test was in two parts:-

- I. A series of three words are prepared where the first word is an early learned word and quite familiar to the student, followed by difficult ones to show whether that early learned word bears any influence on the subsequent one.
- II. Certain words in English are written exactly the same but pronounced differently and mean different things according to the way they are used. This test consists of sentences introducing such homonymes to see whether the students are able to differentiate between their pronunciation.

The following are the two tests I and II:-

I. Read the following series of three words carefully:-

|           |         |           |
|-----------|---------|-----------|
| 1. ear    | hear    | bear      |
| 2. how    | cow     | slow      |
| 3. group  | soup    | pour      |
| 4. swore  | swollen | sword     |
| 5. blew   | drew    | sew       |
| 6. brown  | crown   | grown     |
| 7. line   | mine    | determine |
| 8. mind   | kind    | kindling  |
| 9. foot   | food    | flood     |
| 10. our   | hour    | flour     |
| 11. hear  | ear     | early     |
| 12. rough | cough   | plough    |
| 13. good  | stood   | food      |
| 14. pearl | heard   | beard     |

II. Read the following sentences carefully:-

1. The mother advised her son.
2. The boy wound the watch.
3. The boy scout played with the bow.
4. The thief had a wound in his hand.
5. The people bow to their king.
6. The students tear their exam paper.
7. He is a close friend of mine.
8. They used their copybooks.
9. The mother closed the door.
10. The use of the verb is common.
11. A tear fell from the eye of the father.
12. The teacher gave me advice.



Method:

The same group of forty students from Damascus private and public schools, and from the Preparatory School in Beirut was given Test D. It is an individual test where every student reads the words and the examiner detects the errors made in pronunciation.

The examiner interviewed ten students to find the reasons for errors made in pronunciation. The ten students were selected from the two classes at the Preparatory School, the seventh and eighth grades.

Results of Test D.

The examiner interviewed ten students to see why they made mistakes in this test. The answer from them all was that the first word in the series of three influenced the pronunciation of the third or even the second words.

I. 1. ear, hear, bear.

All the forty students pronounced "ear" correctly which was easy for them, "hear" was easy too but when it came to "bear" they said [biəɾ] . Thirty-seven students made this mistake.

2. how, cow, slow.

The word "slow" occurs very often in the reader and in daily conversation, yet it was pronounced [slau] by nineteen students.

3. group, soup, pour.

Twenty-seven students pronounced "pour" [pɔ:ɪr].

This word gives trouble to students very often.

4. swore, swollen, sword.

Twenty-one students having pronounced "swore", and "swollen" correctly proceeded to "sword" and pronounced it [swo:ɪrd] with the [w] sound.

5. blew, drew, sew.

Thirty-nine students pronounced "sew" [su:] instead of [sou] for the same reason.

6. brown, crown, grown.

Thirty-three students pronounced the third word [graun] instead of [groun]. Even though the word "grown" occurs several times in the reader, <sup>and</sup> the students never hesitate to its proper pronunciation, yet when it was preceded by "brown", and "crown", its pronunciation was influenced.

7. line, mine, determine.

Thirty-one students pronounced "determine" [dətərmaɪn] instead of [di:tə:rmin]. Again it was due to the same cause mentioned on the previous page.

8. mind, kind, kindling.

The word "kindling" is not included in the vocabulary of the students. It was put in the test to see what the students will be likely to pronounce it the first time they come across

it when it is preceded by "mind" and "kind". Forty students pronounced it [kaindlɪŋ] instead of [Kindlɪŋ].

9. foot, food, flood.

The vowel sound in each of the three words is different. The first word "foot" [fʊt] was properly pronounced by all. As for "food", thirty-three students pronounced it [fud] instead of [fu:d]. Still more interesting is "flood" where twenty-one students pronounced it [flud] instead of [flʌd].

10. our, hour, flour.

Those three words have the same vowel sound. The word "flour" did not give much difficulty to students in this test. Thirty-five pronounced it correctly [flaʊər], and only five pronounced it wrong [flo:r].

11. hear, ear, early.

No difficulty was encountered in pronouncing "hear", and "ear". But for "early" sixteen students pronounced it [iərli].

12. rough, cough, plough.

Some students found no difficulty with "rough" and so went on to "cough" and pronounced them properly [rʌf] and [kʌf]. When it came to "plough" they pronounced it the same way [plʌf]. Thirty-six students had this error.

13. good, stood, food.

Twenty-six students pronounced "food" [fud] with the same vowel sound [u] used in the two preceding words "good", and "stood".

14. pearl, heard, beard.

Most of the students had no difficulty in sounding the words "pearl" and "heard". When it came to "beard", twenty-eight pronounced it [bɜ:rd] like the two preceding words.

#### Results of Test D.

II. The main purpose in giving this test was to see how well students can differentiate between words written exactly alike but pronounced differently in various occasions according to their usage. For the method used in administering the test, refer back to page 56.

1. The mother advised her son.

The teacher gave me advice.

Four students out of the forty pronounced "advice" [ədʊəɪz] just like the verb. When the examiner interviewed ten students for the possible causes underlying this error, she found out that those four students had learned the verb "advise" before the noun "advice" which led them to pronounce the noun just like the verb.

2. The boy wound the watch.

The thief had a wound in his hand.

Thirty-seven students pronounced "wound" (verb) [wʌ:nd] exactly like the noun hence showing no difference whatsoever in their pronunciation. The explanation for this error given by eight students out of ten selected for the interview, was that they knew the noun "wound" and they could pronounce it properly, but the verb "wound" was pronounced [wʌ:nd] because they were not corrected by their teachers when they did pronounce it as such hence they associated this pronunciation to the verb "wound".

3. The boy scout played with the bow.

The people bow to their king.

Fourteen students pronounced the word "bow" (noun) [bəʊ]. When asked why they did this mistake the students answered that they had learned the verb "bow" before which made them pronounce the noun "bow" just like the verb. One student said that he thought of "how" while reading.

Twenty-one students pronounced the verb "bow" just like the noun. The reason they gave for this error was that they thought it was pronounced like the noun [bəʊ]. Two students said that they remembered "blow" while reading this word which influenced their pronunciation.

4. The students tear their exam papers.

A tear fell from the eye of the father.

The noun "tear" [tɪər] presented no difficulty in pronunciation to any of the students. The verb "tear" [tɛ:r] gave students much difficulty where thirty-three fell into the error of pronouncing it just like the noun [tɪər]. The examiner interviewed ten students and four said that knowing the noun "tear" made them pronounce the verb "tear" just like the noun [tɪər]. Two said that "-ear" letters reminded them of "ear" which is pronounced [ɪər]. Hence it led them to pronounce it [tɪər].

5. He is a close friend of mine.

The mother closed the door.

Thirty-seven students pronounced the adjective "close" [kləʊz] with a [z] sound [kləʊz] just like the verb. They failed to differentiate between the verb and the adjective. Most of them said that they had never been told before that the adjective [kləʊs] was pronounced with [s] sound not with [z].

6. They used their copy books.

The use of the verb is common.

Students found no difficulty in pronouncing the verb "use" [ju:z]. But thirty-eight pronounced the adjective of "use" [ju:s] with a [z] sound [ju:z]. Most of them attributed this error to inadequate teaching saying that the teacher never

corrected them when they pronounced "use" just like the verb [ju:z]. As a matter of fact they said that this was the first time they hear [ju:s] pronounced with an [s] sound.

General Conclusions of the Four Tests A, B, C, and D.

1. The fact that English is not a phonetic language gives rise to the basic cause for difficulties in learning the language. Words like "women," "plough," "cough," are frequently mispronounced because students tend to pronounce them the way they are written.

2. Words tend to be pronounced the same when there is little difference in their spelling, such as:-

writ and write, sit and site.

3. Confusion arises when two letters in one word are pronounced completely different in another such as:

"ea" letters:-

tear (noun), ear, hear, fear, = [i:]

tear (verb), bear = [e:]

heaven, breakfast, dread, = [e]

heart, = [a:]

break, = [e]

"ou" letters:-

route, soup, group = [u:]

sour, our, flour, = [a:]

mourn, four, pour, = [o:]

4. The absence of the equivalent sounds in Arabic which presents difficulty in pronouncing them, such as:



[ŋ] in singing, ringing, playing.  
[tʃ] in church, reach, cheap. (1)  
[dʒ] in gentle, bridge, general.

5. Influence of foreign languages on the pronunciation of certain words.

A. Arabic. The words "police" and "doctor" tend to be pronounced [bɒli:s] and [dɒktɔ:r] just like Arabic.

B. French. The long [i:] sound used inappropriately in words like "scissors" [si:zəz], and "biscuits" [bɪskwɪts]. The sounding of the [w] in [bɪskwɪts] is also due to French influence.

6. Some words give rise to confusion when association has not been developed between the word in the written form and the correct pronunciation for it. The students have taken the words

choose            chose            shoes

but they have not connected clearly each word with its proper pronunciation. This led to confusing the pronunciation of one word with another.

7. Early learned words bear influence on subsequent ones. Test D with its two parts took up this point and the

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(1)  
See p. 13.

results confirmed the statement. "Ear" and "bear" are early learned words and from the results of Test D it was seen that they had influence on the pronunciation of "early" which became [ɪərli].

8. Certain words in English are written in exactly the same way but are pronounced differently and mean different things. This causes confusion in pronunciation:-

Verb

Adjective

Noun

bow [bəʊ]

bow [bəʊ]

tear [tɪə]

tear [tɪə]

close [klaʊz]

close [klaʊs]

advise [ədvaɪz]

advice [ədvaɪs]

use [juːz]

use [juːs]

wound [waʊnd]

wound [waʊnd]

### C H A P T E R III

The two previous chapters were devoted to a study of the sounds of English whether they be vowels, diphthongs, or consonants. Reference was also made to how those sounds were produced and whether they were difficult to the students of English to pronounce. Words were then selected for a detailed study and some reasons were suggested for their mispronunciation.

Since errors were discussed as to how and why they occur, the present chapter will therefore be directed to the methods by which those errors can be corrected.

Errors in spoken English are due to two basic reasons:-

1. The teachers' pronunciation.
2. Methods used in teaching.

Teachers of the English language must have adequate pronunciation. They are the models which the students will be stimulated to follow and imitate.

The teacher should bear in mind that preventing errors in pronunciation is far easier than correcting them. Hence her aim should be to use efficient methods from the very beginning when the students are only starting to learn the English language. Once the students are drilled in

correct pronunciation from the beginning, they are apt to have no difficulty in speaking the language correctly with the least errors in pronunciation.

In all schools the writer visited whether Damascus private and public schools or the Preparatory Section at the American University of Beirut, English is taught in the first year secondary or in the elementary school. No highly qualified teachers are employed to teach the beginners. This is a basic cause leading up to difficulties in pronunciation in later years. It should be made a point that children who are beginning to learn the English language should not be taught except by qualified teachers whose pronunciation is adequate.

The teacher should have some special knowledge about the various sounds of English: which ones are easy, which ones are somehow difficult, and which ones are very difficult to acquire. The following is a table showing the degree of difficulty of the sounds of English:-

V.D. means difficult to learn  
 L.D. means moderately difficult to learn  
 N.D. means not difficult to learn

Vowels

|      | V.D. | L.D. | N.D. |
|------|------|------|------|
| [i:] |      |      | ✓    |
| [ɪ]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [ɛ]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [æ]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [a:] |      |      | ✓    |
| [ɔ]  | ✓    |      |      |
| [ɔ:] | ✓    |      |      |
| [u]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [u:] |      |      | ✓    |
| [ʌ]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [ə:] |      | ✓    |      |

Diphthongs

|      | V.D. | L.D. | N.D. |
|------|------|------|------|
| [eɪ] | ✓    |      |      |
| [aʊ] |      |      | ✓    |
| [ɔɪ] |      |      | ✓    |
| [oʊ] | ✓    |      |      |
| [aɪ] |      |      | ✓    |
| [ɛə] | ✓    |      |      |
| [ɔɛ] |      | ✓    |      |
| [uə] |      | ✓    |      |
| [ɪə] | ✓    |      |      |

The Unvoiced Consonant

|      | V.D. | L.D. | N.D. |
|------|------|------|------|
| [p]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [t]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [k]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [f]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [θ]  | ✓    |      |      |
| [s]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [ʃ]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [tʃ] | ✓    |      |      |

Other Mixed Consonants

The Voiced Consonants

|      | V.D. | L.D. | N.D. |
|------|------|------|------|
| [b]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [d]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [g]  |      | ✓    |      |
| [v]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [ð]  | ✓    |      |      |
| [z]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [ʒ]  |      |      | ✓    |
| [dʒ] | ✓    |      |      |

|     | V.D. | L.D. | N.D. |
|-----|------|------|------|
| [m] |      |      | ✓    |
| [n] |      |      | ✓    |
| [ŋ] | ✓    |      |      |
| [r] | ✓    |      |      |
| [l] |      |      | ✓    |
| [t] | ✓    |      |      |
| [j] |      |      | ✓    |
| [w] |      |      | ✓    |
| [h] |      |      | ✓    |

This table is based on the results of the tests that were given to students in pronunciation. While taking up words separately or in sentences the teacher should concentrate on the difficult sounds giving them more attention and striving for their perfection from the beginning hence preventing errors in spoken English.

There is a conscious effort which the teacher can use to correct pronunciation. This method is to introduce the word embodying the difficult sound. The teacher should pronounce the word in front of the students distinctly and carefully, then let the students pronounce it separately the way it should be. The next step should be to drill the students until they get the correct pronunciation of the various difficult sounds that need concentration.

The sound [ŋ] is the most difficult to learn and to pronounce. The teacher should clearly indicate to the students that this sound is nasal where the air passes through the nose and it is a continuant. In taking up words like "sing," and "ring," the teacher should pronounce them several times and prolong the [ŋ] sound to show how the air passes through the nose. Then she can introduce sentences or words to drill the students until they acquire the adequate pronunciation.

Another step may be included and that is to emphasize that the student discriminates himself between the error he makes and the correct pronunciation. For example,

the student should be asked to pronounce the word [sɪŋgɪŋg] with [g] sound inserted after [ŋ], then he should attempt to pronounce it correctly as the teacher shows him. This helps him to see the difference himself by pronouncing both the correct and the incorrect.

As a demonstration, the writer selected a Syrian student in the seventh grade at the Preparatory School whose pronunciation was inadequate. The [ŋ] sound as well as others were discussed with him. The writer explained to the student first that in words like "sing," and "bring," the [ŋ] sound is nasal and there is no [g] sound at the end. She pronounced the two words several times in front of him. Then he was asked to pronounce them like the teacher. When words were taken separately, the student pronounced them well because he was careful, but when he read a certain passage out of a book, he mispronounced the words again, falling into his old error of inserting a [g] sound after [ŋ]. The writer did not allow such an error to pass without correcting it at the very minute when it occurred. With practice the student became more careful and could pronounce the words without difficulty. Helping him to overcome this difficulty took over three weeks of daily sessions.

This case involved correcting errors already acquired. The teacher should have used methods to prevent errors from the very beginning by instructing the students in the correct pronunciation of the word. It would have been easier for the students learning the language to get

the adequate pronunciation from the start, than to use measures of correcting the errors after the students had developed a habit of mispronouncing various sounds.

There are certain errors made in spoken English which are due not to the difficulty in pronouncing the sound, but to lack of knowledge. The words "use" (verb), and "use" (noun), "close" (verb, and "close" (adjective), "sees" and "cease." In the tests on pronunciation given to students these words showed a high frequency of errors. The students definitely could not have had difficulty in pronouncing "use" (noun), and "cease" with an [s] sound, but it was their ignorance of the word which led them to pronounce "use" (noun) [j u : z] and "cease" [s i : z] . When the writer took up the matter with the students and explained it to them, they simply said that this was the first time they had heard "use" and "cease" pronounced both with an [s] sound. This error was due to inadequate instruction. After the writer pronounced each word clearly, she took up with them a paragraph in their reader books where some of these words appeared. They found no difficulty in differentiating between the following words:-

|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| use (noun)        | use (verb)   |
| close (adjective) | close (verb) |
| loose (adjective) | lose (verb)  |

Therefore teachers should give part of their time to training in correct pronunciation.



There are other errors in spoken English which are due to the difficulty encountered by the students in sounding them. The words "clothes" and "months" were commonly mispronounced by inserting a vowel sound before the [s] in each case. According to the students' own interpretation this error was made because of the difficulty they encounter in pronouncing [ʃ] and [θ] followed by [s] or [z] successively without inserting a vowel sound between them.

Bearing this in mind, the writer took the first step in correcting this error by showing the student who was chosen for this demonstration, the difference between his incorrect pronunciation [kləʊʃɪz] and [mʌnθɪz] and the correct one [kləʊʃz] and [mʌnθs]. The second step was to get him to pronounce "month" correctly by imitating the writer. After he had done that several times and seemed positively sure of his pronunciation, the writer inserted an "s" at the end and pronounced the words distinctly three times, [mʌnθs]. The student, after watching how the lips and the tongue were moving to produce this word, was asked to attempt it himself. His first attempt was not adequate. Again the writer pronounced it distinctly for him. The second attempt was a little better. With practice the student eliminated the old way of pronouncing the word and established a new and adequate one. The following questions and answers were taken up for practice:-

Teacher: How many months in the year are there?

Student: There are twelve months.

Teacher: What do you put on?

Student: I put on my clothes.

This interview with the student took twenty minutes. The second day the writer asked him in class to read a passage from the reader book, and while reading, she attempted not to let any error in pronouncing these words escape her. The student did much better than usual and with more drill and practice he mastered the right pronunciation for these words.

Another case was taken up. A seventh grade student from the Preparatory School found difficulty in pronouncing [ð] and [θ] in words like "thank you," "this," and he substituted [z] and [s] for them. It was not easy to help him in overcoming this difficulty. The writer first pointed out where the error was, but it gave no result. The best method proved to be that of showing the equivalent sounds of [ð] and [θ] in Arabic, and pronouncing them distinctly several times in front of him showing the exact position of the tongue. After repeating those sounds the student was asked to pronounce them himself. The next step was to use words with [ð] and [θ] such as "think," "thank," "the," "this." Even sentences were constructed orally by the student for drill:-

"I think that it is true."

"I thank you for this."

"The boy thinks it is true."

"This is the thief."

With practice the student was able to overcome this difficulty, but it was not easy nor accomplished in a short time. Four weeks of daily sessions were given to drill, until the student could read and speak without making an error in those particular sounds [ʒ] and [θ] .

This method of correcting errors in pronunciation is the individual method which cannot be used extensively by the teacher. But the same method can be used by giving instruction to a whole group of students with certain necessary adaptation. The teacher must have special knowledge about the words and sounds that give most trouble to students. Few minutes of every class period can be devoted to instruction in correct pronunciation. The teacher can take [dʒ] sound, for example, and explain plainly and specifically the error made in pronouncing it as it occurs in words like "general," "geography," "gentle." She should also emphasize that in such words there is a [d] sound which must be heard clearly. The students may then be asked to repeat after the teacher the sound quietly and see that it is adequately done. The next step is to drill the students by using sentences where words with [dʒ] sound are used frequently. When the lesson passes to the reader or to grammar, the teacher should never allow her attention to

pronunciation be deviated, but should endeavour to correct mistakes whenever they occur.

Since the language is not phonetically written, the teacher is faced with this other basic problem. Words like "women," "cough," "plough," are not pronounced the way they are written, hence they present difficulty to the Arabic-speaking-students. The teacher's duty is to explain to the students that such words in English are not pronounced the way they are written. Repeating the pronunciation of such unphonetically written words is efficient because of the drill that the students get in learning how each word is pronounced. Such is the case also with words like "weary," "dread," "early," "have," "heard," where the letters "ea" in each word are pronounced differently. The influence of spelling on pronunciation again enters here and the best method of overcoming it is to practice and use each word frequently. The teacher should encourage class discussions where the students get an opportunity to put their thoughts into words pronounced adequately. Through such discussions the teacher can detect the errors made in pronunciation and attempt to correct them with the help and participation of the whole class.

Students sometimes feel embarrassed if they were corrected whether in pronunciation or in the usage of the language. It is up to the teacher not to allow such a feeling of embarrassment get a strong hold on the pupils

and interfere with their learning. The writer had such an experience in teaching the eighth grade at the Preparatory School. She stopped a student once to correct his pronunciation of the word "cease." The other members of the class laughed at the student and he got embarrassed. If this incident were left to pass without anything being done about it, in later situations the students would not have liked to be corrected fearing the ridicule of others. The matter was put to an end by a serious talk to the students telling them that everyone is apt to make a mistake and it is the responsibility of the teacher to correct any discrepancies because the aim of the teacher is to help the students in their written and spoken English. This did help the writer later, when more errors were taken up in the discussion to correct them and acquire the adequate pronunciation for them. There was general participation from all members of the class and they were ready to improve their speech if it were deemed necessary.

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that the dialect of the teacher influences the pronunciation of the students. The following suggestions can help students and teachers to improve their pronunciation:-

I. The teacher should discipline her own applied phonetics. There are books written on phonetics which can be of help.- See the bibliography on page 83.

II. Teachers and students can listen to radio where programs are given to teach spoken English. These programs are prepared by the British Broadcasting Corporation for the foreigners learning the English language. They teach English by radio and students can benefit from the systematic demonstration.

There are also records prepared in English to teach correct pronunciation. These records are available at the British Council and the teacher can make use of them in her class. One class session per week can be given to listening to those pronunciation records. With practice, the teacher should require from her students correct speech and pronunciation.

III. The third method is the teacher's conscious attack of errors made in pronunciation. This was discussed elaborately in the first part of this chapter. The teacher mainly points out the error made in a certain word and helps the student to discriminate between his wrong pronunciation and the correct one. Then he attempts to acquire the correct pronunciation with plenty of drill and practice. This conscious method takes time but it yields good results.

IV. Another method is the direct stimulation - imitation method. This scheme of correcting errors in

pronunciation is widespread and used by practically all teachers. This method deals with easier cases by correcting in a natural way the errors as they occur in a paragraph or in conversation. The student is stimulated to imitate the teacher's pronunciation. This method takes a long time but the results can be efficient.

C O N C L U S I O N



## C O N C L U S I O N

The teaching of English as a secondary language has become quite extensive both in Syria and in Lebanon. Therefore, the duty of the teachers is to strive to perfect the English language both in usage and in pronunciation.

This study revealed the difficulties in Spoken English encountered by Arab students. The difficulties were due to the unphonetic writing of the English language, unfamiliarity of the students with particular sounds, confusion arising out of spelling similarity of words, and the influence of other languages, whether they be French or Arabic, on the pronunciation of particular words.

The four tests on pronunciation determined the words that give most difficulty to students. As to the methods of eliminating such errors, it is basically and primarily the duty of the teachers. The teacher is responsible for the occurrence of errors, and by all means, the one also responsible for overcoming such errors. If her methods in teaching are adequate and efficient right from the start when the students are only beginning to learn English, there would be little possibility of errors occurring. If they do occur, it is her duty as a conscientious teacher to put all her effort in using measures that would help students to overcome their difficulties.

In teaching English some schools lay all emphasis on the written part, neglecting to a large extent the oral one. The public and some private schools in Damascus follow this system. The Ministry of Education does not consider oral English in the external examinations. This is one basic cause for inadequate pronunciation because not much emphasis is laid on oral English. In fact, the Ministry of Education has been studying the question of whether or not oral examination in English and in other courses should be required. If they do come to a decision of adding oral examination to the program, they would be taking a large step towards better speaking of English. Once this is done, the teachers will direct their attention on oral English, encourage discussions in class, and seek for suitable methods to apply in teaching the language which will prove efficient in the improvement of pronunciation which is an essential step in the perfection of the language.

In Damascus, English is taught beginning with the first year secondary school. Aside from English, all other subjects are taught in Arabic. Hence the small number of academic years given in teaching English, together with the limited opportunity available to practice and learn the language, are a handicap to students for speaking and writing adequately. English should be taught from the elementary school and continue up till the last year secondary school which is the Baccalaureat class.

This will raise the standard of English by leading to better usage and to proper pronunciation of the language.

Finally, the writer hopes that in the near future there will be enough teachers well qualified, and conscientious to help the young generation effectively in giving a better mastery of English for all its uses.

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