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# THE COMMON PRONUNCIATION ERRORS THAT MADE BY LIBYAN STUDENTS STUDYING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

أ.فاطمة جواد بوبكر مسعود

محاضر – قسم اللغة الإنجليزية – كلية الأداب -جامعة درنة

f.msood@uod.edu.ly

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## Abstract:

This research examines prevalent mistakes in the English vowel and consonant sounds of pronunciation among undergraduate Libyan students majoring in English for the year 2022-2023. The sample consisted of ten second- and third-year students from the English department of Derna University, who had already taken a pronunciation class. Students were selected based on their completion of an English department course titled Pronunciation. This is qualitative research which describes observation and audio recordings of students pronouncing words and direct observations as well as recorded audio as the students' session. The results indicated a high frequency of word and sentence articulation errors. Students in the sample struggled to produce vowel sounds with 150 incorrect pronunciations recorded, as opposed to 75 instances of erroneous consonant pronunciations. These findings help clarify some of the phonological problems English is perceived as or taught to be and provides guidance towards resolving them.

***Keywords*:** Pronunciation errors, vowel sounds, consonant sounds, Derna University.

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## 1.0 Introduction

As with any other language, proficiency in English as a Second Language (ESL) especially comes from often practicing speaking skills, and accurate pronunciation is an essential aspect of competency. Several ESL learners aim to achieve a native-like pronunciation of English but are often met with obstacles on their journeys (Derwing, 2003). Many children who struggle with SLI and dyslexia often experience co-occurring deficits in phonological processing, grammar, semantics, without being fully aware of these layered impairments, which can go unnoticed by teachers or caregivers, especially if the child compensates well in other areas. (Bishop and Snowling 2004). To speak English with fluency, one must be skilled at English phonetics and grammar. (Gilakjani, 2011). This further proves the need for constructive phonetics teaching within ESL programs (Jahan, 2011; Hismanoglu, 2006). The basic difficulties of English pronunciation rules, such as the difference between how words are written and spoken, impose significant challenges for all learners and cause them to make systematic errors in speaking.

Making errors is a crucial aspect of undertaking a foreign language, according to (Corder 1976), errors are “systematic” and reflect the learner’s underlying knowledge and hypotheses about the language. Therefore, they provide valuable insight into the learning process. Dulay et al. built on Corder’s ideas, reinforcing that making errors is a natural, inevitable part of second language acquisition. They defined errors as “the flawed side of learner speech or writing” and saw them as important indicators of how learners process and internalize language rules. Of note, native speakers paying attention to learners’ English as they speak brings their pronunciation into focus, as pointed out by Zimmermann (2004), underlining the major contribution of this element to speech and its interaction. Such errors need remediation in order to facilitate smooth acquisition of the second language.

English professors in Libyan higher education, particularly those at Derna University, struggle to teach English majors proper word pronunciation. Some of these problems come from the fact that Libyan Arabic has different phonological properties than English, such as missing some vowel and consonant sounds. As seen in classrooms and backed up by previous research (e.g., Altaha, 1995; Ahmed, 2011), this phonological gap often causes English phonemes to be pronounced differently.

المجلد الثالث
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But there isn't a lot of information out there on these kinds of problems at Derna University. In addition, informal curriculum assessments and anecdotal classroom observations show that many English programs don't focus as much on pronunciation as they do on vocabulary and grammar. This difference could be one of the reasons why pupils have trouble with pronunciation all the time.

This study is meant to fill in a specific gap in the literature by building on Jabali and Abuzaid's (2017) work on consonant errors made by Palestinian students. by addressing the predominant vowel errors among the English department students at Derna University alongside consonant errors.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Pronouncing English vowel and consonant sounds correctly is a major challenge for Libyan ESL students, particularly Derna University English majors. The main cause of the pronunciation problems is the phonological difference between Arabic and English, specifically the lack of corresponding consonants in the students' mother tongue. These difficulties often appear during reading and oral speaking assignments, resulting in poor communication, low fluency, and misunderstandings. The English language curriculum does not pay sufficient attention to phonology, even though pronunciation is essential for successful language acquisition. To fill this gap, this study examines the pronunciation errors made by these students and evaluates the linguistic and educational factors influencing them.

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

This research offers practical benefits for students, teachers, and educational institutions.

The findings increase awareness of common pronunciation errors and guide students toward improving their phonetic accuracy. Effective pronunciation skills can improve students' academic achievement and oral communication proficiency.

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For teachers: This study identifies significant shortcomings in current pronunciation instruction and provides practical recommendations for effective remedial interventions. Teachers can leverage these data to develop more targeted pronunciation exercises and assessment tools.

The study highlights chronic problems in English phonology, guiding curriculum planners at the University of Derna. The findings can help modify course content, including pronunciation-focused resources, and develop more proficient English speakers among graduates.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The intention of this investigation should be to fulfill the objectives of:

1. Determining and classifying the common English pronunciation error tendencies at the component level and the factors associated with them among Libyan English undergraduate students at Derna University in English vowel and consonant sounds.
2. Formulate instructional strategies designed to help English learners from Libya who are still struggling with excessive Mesos tic error production and inappropriate phonological alternation in speech using simple phrases.

### 1.4 Research Questions

The objectives of this study determine the following research queries to be sought:

1. What do you think would be the most important contributing factors to pronouncing English vowels and consonants incorrectly for Libyan undergraduate English learners?
2. Which English vowel and consonant does this group of learners obtain for which pronunciation thrust the greatest difficulty?
3. What are the characteristic patterns and types of pronunciation errors observed in the English speech of these students?

### 1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The focus of this research is the English pronunciation errors of second and third-year Libyan undergraduates studying at Derna University's English Department in the academic year 2022-2023. This study focuses on the erroneous production of vowels and consonant sounds. Although

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the result of this study might be helpful, the limited context of the sample, which consists of ten students from a single institution, may not be applicable across all contexts involving Libyan ESL learners. The English language observations encompass qualitative data drawn from recorded speech and observation.

### 1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

Pronunciation: As Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) explain, the pronunciation of any language involves 'the production of meaningful sound in two ways. First, it serves as the production and reception of speech sounds. Secondly, it acts as a means to convey meaning in a given utterance.

Error: An error, in the terminology of Brown (1987), is connected with the departure from a language's norms in a language which determines the degree of the error and a system gap between the user's operational model of the language and how the language works.

English Consonants: A consonant is defined as a speech sound that is produced with a complete obstruction or narrow constriction to an airstream within the vocal tract (Scarcella & Oxford, 1994).

English Vowels: A vowel is a segmental speech sound which is produced with comparatively unrestricted constriction of the airflow in the oral cavity (Scarcella & Oxford, 1994).

### 1.7 Structure of the Study

The research is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter: the introduction, the significance and problem statement, objectives, questions, scope and limitations, and the operational definitions are given. In the second chapter: a discussion on error analysis in the English language, vowels and consonants, and their phonological features has been provided. In the third chapter, the methodology is discussed: the subjects of research, data collection tools, and data processing methods. The fourth chapter analyzes data and discusses the result. In the fifth chapter, the study is concluded. Recommendations are provided on strategies used for teaching and suggestions for further research.

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## 2.0 Introduction to Literature

This chapter aims to capture the scope of English pronunciation, its description, constituents' vowels and consonants, and typical errors in second language acquisition, error types as well as their rectification approaches. Additionally, it contextualizes the present study facing English language learners especially Arabic speakers as a second language within previous studies of English language learners' pronunciation problems.

## 2.1 Defining Pronunciation

Pronunciation is an important skill in language competence. As Cook cited in Gilakjani, (2016) noted, it is the motor skill of producing English phonemes, a learned behavior through practice and correction, specifically aimed at L1 interference. He stressed the pronunciation's communicative aspect and gives it a more general definition as production of sounds that carry meanings. In a wider sense, Paulston and Burder (1976) understood pronunciation as the making of a sound system, which enables effective communication from the perspective of a speaker and a listener. More definitional in nature, Otlowski (1998) claimed 'pronunciation' is the accepted or standard form of articulation of a word. Richards and Schmidt (2002) gave a more direct definition saying it is the method of producing certain speech sounds. The explanations above illustrate the dual aspects of sound production or form and effective communication as intelligibility.

## 2.2 English Vowels, Diphthongs, and Triphthongs

An English vowel involves the production of the sound that a person makes with an open tract vocal and the air flowing freely from the lungs into the mouth with modification by the tongue and lips (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2011; Yule, 2014). Ambalegin and Suryani (2018) added that producing a vowel entail changing the positions of the mouth and the tongue while keeping an uninterrupted flow of air except at the glottis. English vowels have also been categorized by their articulation features as closed vowels (e.g. /iː/ /ɪ/ /ʊ/ /uː/), mid vowels (e.g. /e/ /ə/ /ɜː/ /ɔː/), and open vowels (e.g. /æ/ /ʌ/ /ɑː/ /ɒ/) (Kelly, 2004).

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مجلة جامعة درنة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
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Diphthong is a combination of two vowel sounds that are articulated as a single smooth phoneme (Kelly, 2014). These are usually classified as the centering diphthongs (e.g. /ɪə//ˈʊə//ˈeə/), closing diphthongs that end in /ɪ/ (e.g. /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/) and closing diphthongs that end in /ʊ/ (e.g. /əʊ/, /aʊ/). Long vowels, which McMahon (2002) provides with a colon [:] as notation, differ from short vowels noted with no colon.

Triphthongs are higher-order vocalic glides that comprise a smooth and rapid succession of three different vowel sounds. Roach (2012) analyzed triphthongs to be sequences with five closing diphthongs followed by the schwa /ə/, providing examples like /eɪə/ (as in 'layer'), /aɪə/ (as in 'fire'), /ɔɪə/ (as in 'loyal'), /əʊə/ (as in 'lower'), and /aʊə/ (as in 'power'). Such forms of pronunciation are very often quite difficult for ESL students to master.

| The Front-Back Dimension | The High-Low Dimension | Lip Position |
|---|---|---|
| Front Back<br>Central | High Low Mid | Rounded |
| [ɪ]kit [ɑ:]lot<br>[ə]about<br>[ɛ]dress [ʊ]foot<br>[ɜr]nurse<br>trap [ɔ:]thought [ʌ]sturt<br>[æ]<br>[i:] fleece [o:]goat<br>[eɪ]face [u:]goose | [ɪ]kit [æ]trap [eɪ]face<br>[i:]fleece [ɑ:]lot [o:]goat<br>[ʊ]foot [ɛ]dress<br>[u:]goose<br>[ɔ:]thought<br>[ə]about<br>[ɜr]nurse<br>[ʌ]strut | [ʊ]foot<br>[ɔ:]thought<br>[o:]goat<br>[u:]goose |

Table 1 The anatomy of vowels (McMahon, 2002)

### 2.3 English Consonants

Fromkin et al. (2011) Noted that consonants are speech sounds which are produced as a result of considerable constriction or complete closure of the vocal tract which cuts off the airflow from the Macmillan (2011). English consonants are segmental phonemes within a syllable (Low, 2015). The rest of the characteristics are the features that distinguish them are place of articulation, manner of articulation voicing. A voiced consonant indicates vibration of the vocal folds to

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produce sound while a voiceless consonant sound is produced without vibration, in which case air is allowed to flow freely through the widely opened vocal folds (Yule, 2014). According to Low (2015), British English has 24 consonant phonemes: fifteen voiced consonants such as /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /z/, /m/, /n/, /l/, /r/, and nine voiceless /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /s/, /h/.

| Consonants | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| /p/ | pin | /f/ | fan | /h/ hello |
| /b/ | bin | /v/ | van | /m/ more |
| /t/ | to | /Θ/ | think | /n/ no |
| /d/ | do | /ð/ | the | /ŋ/ sing |
| /k/ | cow | /s/ | sun | /l/ live |
| /g/ | got | /z/ | zoo | /r/ red |
| /tʃ/ | church | /ʃ/ | she | /j/ yes |
| /dʒ/ | judge | /ʒ/ | measure | /w/ wood |

Table 2 The consonants (Low,2015)

**2.4 Review of Previous Studies on the Pronunciation Errors of Arabic English Learners**

Many researchers have conducted their studies on the mistakes committed by Arab learners while learning English as a second language or foreign language, such as Kharma & Hajaj (1989), Avery & Ehrlich (1992), Binturki (2008), and Ahmad (2011) and some others. The results of these studies revealed that Arabic learners of English are hardly able to pronounce certain consonants sound correctly.

for example, the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/, the Palato-alveolar affricates /ʧ/,, the Palato-alveolar affricates /ʒ/, and labio –dental fricatives /v/, do not have counterparts in the Arabic consonantal

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العدد السادس
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system are not normally realized by Saudi students, consequently these are often replaced by the sounds /b/,/ʃ /, /ʤ /, and /f /respectively.

The alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ are not the cause of major obstacles, but they are pronounced by Saudi students as inter-dental, rather than alveolar plosives. They have observed that the velar nasal /ŋ/, which is a single consonant represented in English writing by two letters (-ng), is also mispronounced by many Saudi students.

The students pronounce the word (heating = /hi:tiŋ/) as /hi:ti-n-g/, (visiting =visitiŋ/) as /visiti-n-g/ etc... They also maintained that Arabic learners of English have many problems when dealing with English vowels. since English has different number of vowels, two types of difficulty are identified. First, certain diphthongs are replaced by other sounds due to L1 interference for example, /eə/---/eɪ / ;/ʊə /---/u: / ;/ɪə /--/ ɪ:/; and /əʊ /--/ɔ: /. Second, the distinction between certain pairs of vowels as in /ɪ / and /e/ as in *sit* and *set*; /ʌ / and /ɒ / as in *luck* and *lock* ;/əʊ / and /ɔ: / as in *coat* and *caught*.

Brown (2000) found that second language learners face some difficulties because their L1 affects their L2 learning especially in adulthood, and this effect is caused by L1 transfer, which can be a significant source of errors for L2 learners. Nunan and Carter (2001) also stated that L1 has its influence on L2 pronunciation. In cases where L1 and L2 rules are dissimilar or in conflict, errors are expected to be committed by L2 learners. All these exemplify the transfer between L1 & L2 in language learning. So, many Omani EFL learners tend to use /p/ as /b/, other use /f/ as/v/ (fine/vine), /ʃ/ for /ʧ/, (sheep/cheap) and /ʤ/ for /g/ (jaraj /garage). In different Arab countries, there are different studies of pronunciation problems and the influence of L1. The results of these studies indicated that consonant sounds such as /p/ and /b/,/s/ and /Ɵ/,/z/ and /ð/,/ʃ/ and /ʧ/ are confusing to pronounce for many Arabic EFL learners (Altaha, 1995; Binturki, 2008, Hameed & Aslam, 2015).

Many approaches related the difficulty in foreign languages pronunciation to the differences between the native language and second language. Lado (1957) states that an adult speaker of a language cannot easily pronounce language sounds of another language even though he/she has no speech impediment.). Kreshen (2013) argues that, if the structures of the two languages are

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distinctly different, high frequency of mistakes could be predicted to occur in L2. The differences in L1 sound system and that of L2 system will mutually influence one another Flege et al. (1995). The native language plays significant role in English pronunciation though there may be other factors. Students, whose L1 sound system differs significantly from English sound system, are likely to face greater difficulty when learning English as a second language. Fries (1945) related L2 accuracy in English to the priorities of controlling the sound system of English .Avery & Ehrlich (1992) pointed out that the sound system of the native language can influence the students pronunciation of English in different ways, mainly when a learner encounters sounds in English that are not part of the sound system of learners native language.

A number of Arab researchers have conducted research in the area of pronunciation. Ahmad (2011), for example, investigates the consonants errors that Saudi learners of English commit in their pronunciation. The researcher uses a laptop and a microphone to record different Saudi speakers from different regions in Saudi Arabia pronouncing different words which have the sounds in question. Those speakers have taken any training courses in learning English pronunciation. The researcher finds that Saudi learners encounter many difficulties in learning English consonants like /p/, /d/,/v/,/ʧ/,/ʒ/, and /ŋ/ and he recommends that IPA symbols should be practiced in every English class to introduce students to the perfect English pronunciation.

Dalton (2002) stressed that pronunciation is the "Cinderella of language teaching" when compared to other skills and components like grammar and vocabulary. Teaching proper pronunciation most often is not emphasized as a grammar and vocabulary because many Arab teachers lack adequate phonetic skills or they simply consider other skills of English language to be more important. Therefore, many learners acquire sufficient grammar and vocabulary skills, but they will not be able to carry on with normal conversations due to difficulties in pronouncing many English words. Also, many Arab learners of English have deep ingrained problems which they resist to change even with long exposure to English native speaking conversations, The issues are more complicated by their teachers making fossilized pronunciation errors that they pass onto their students. Another problem is the direct transfer and interference from Arabic into the second language of English.

المجلد الثالث
العدد السادس
سبتمبر 2025

مجلة جامعة درنة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
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As English become international language, there are some people learn and speak English. In this global era, they can easily communicate with people around the world by using internet that becomes one reason they have to master English as tool that can make them to communicate easier.

According to Brown (2005) as citied in Yostanto (2007), the goal of the language learners is to make sure that they can communicate what they have in mind effectively; they have to be understood when they are uttering the words. From that statement we know that pronouncing words becomes one of the important things for speakers to be understood by other people when communication occurs. In this case, pronunciation is crucial.

Islamiyah (2012) found that there are some errors made by the learners while producing English sounds. Islamiyah added that those errors may be caused by two reasons. The first reason is caused by the effect of their first language, and the other reason is that the students have no complete understanding in the variation of English sounds.

Kelly (2014) explained that the study of pronunciation consists of two fields, which are phonetic and phonology. Phonetics and phonology are related, dependent fields for studying aspects of language. Phonetics is the study of sound in speech; Phonology is the study (and use) of sound patterns to create meaning.

The students, of course, will make errors or mistakes in speaking activities, especially in pronouncing the words. The different system of language could make students make errors and mistakes. The analysis of students' pronunciation error, in learning English as a foreign language, needs to be done. It should be important to distinguish between errors and mistakes. According to Corder (1974) errors are typically produced by people who do not yet fully command some institutionalized language system; true errors are marker of the student's competence. An error is noticeable grammar from the adult grammar of native speaker, reflecting the inter language competence of the learners Brown and Douglas (1980).In simple words, it could be concluded that errors refer to failure in using the system of language correctly. It is caused by the lack of the students' competence, knowledge and comprehension.

Hashemin & Soureshjani(2011) study the difficulties of Iranian EFL learners in phonology and pronunciation. To achieve the goal of the study, the researcher selected three male participants

مجلة جامعة درنة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
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from different levels of language proficiency: beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels from Sadi Institute. The participants were provided with three lists of decontextualized words, some phrases, and a couple of sentences. In addition, three reading passages are taken from authentic sources. The study was divided into four phases recorded for the purpose of further analysis. After analyzing the data, the results show that the most frequent errors among Persian –speaking learners were at the level of segmental features as in producing the following sounds: /ɪə/, /æ/, /ɑ:/, /ʊ/, /aɪ/, /ɪ/, /w/, /ð/, in addition to facing difficulties in placing the word stress and sentences stress. Intonation was flat for almost every sentence in the passage, even for the questions, Finally, the researcher suggests implications for both theoretical and practical applications; they claim that more research must be conducted with a larger sample of Farsi speakers of English. Also, it is suggested that researchers can use the findings of the study as an acceptable model to assist both L2 learners and teachers in English learning and teaching.

## 3.0 Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the prevalent pronunciation mistakes made by Libyan ESL learners. The methodology for this study was based on descriptive error analysis which aims to consider errors within a frame of explanation by describing, categorizing, and analyzing their features. The sample of the study comprised ten undergraduate English students from Derna University, Libya, in the 2022-2023 academic year. These students were selected by purposive sampling, specifically targeting second- and third-year students who have completed the Pronunciation course. This established a phonological training baseline. The sample included both male and female students, but lacked systematic segmentation according to academic performance, gender, or accent. The findings are not applicable to other Libyan ESL learners because of the limited sample size (n=10) and specific context; yet they offer significant insights into the persistent pronunciation challenges observed at Derna University.

المجلد الثالث
العدد السادس
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مجلة جامعة درنة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
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### 3.1 Data Collection

Data gathering was done mainly through two methods which included participant observation and recording. The students were instructed to perform two organized tasks: reading selected passages aloud and engaging in brief dialogue-based conversations. The texts were derived from established ESL pronunciation manuals, including English Pronunciation in Use (Cambridge University Press), to provide comprehensive coverage of English vowel and consonant phonemes. Although these materials were not officially tested via pilot testing, they were evaluated by two English instructors for appropriateness and consistency with prevalent ESL difficulties in Libya.

Descriptive error analysis is the main approach to the core processes of data analysis. The classification and analysis of pronunciation errors was based on the error analysis approach developed by Corder (1974) and supported by the theory of language interference developed by Selinker (1972). Errors were classified by phoneme type (vowel/consonant) and then by error type: substitution, deletion, distortion, and addition. Possible causes of errors were explained through the perspective of first language interference, phonological transfer, or evolutionary approximations.

The speech errors were recorded and later transcribed, first orthographically and then phonetically, capturing all the segments with errors. Each error in pronunciation was documented and classified as per some phonological principles and some error analysis models (in parenthesis, some references who are not named in the document, but are known for their theories of errors analysis which are taken from some relevant references). Errors were defined based on the class of phoneme involved, which is either vowel or consonant, the type of error made, such as one sound being substituted for another, some sound being omitted, some sound being distorted, or some incorrect sound being added, and where justifiable, the reason for the error, such as interference from the first language, rule overgeneralization of the second language, or simply difficult sounds in a second language. It was also important to mention the number of times particular types of errors and phonemes perceived as problematic were likely to occur to indicate dominant patterns of difficulty that pre-exist the quantitative data stated in the abstract - 150 errors related to the vowels whereas 75 were with the consonants.

المجلد الثالث
العدد السادس
سبتمبر 2025

مجلة جامعة درنة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
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Throughout the study, ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and they were told that their participation was voluntary and private. All records and data analysis did not include the names of the students. To minimize observer bias, the researcher maintained a quiet presence during recording sessions and made sure that students were not graded or evaluated based on how much they participated in the study.

## 4.0 Findings and Discussion

The decoding of the audio-recorded data and observation notes showed a substantial amount of pronunciation mistakes pertaining to the speech of the 10 participating Libyan students. As noted in the abstract of the research, one of the main components of this investigation was that students struggled significantly more with the production of English vowel sounds as opposed to English consonants. In this case, the study documented not less than 150 cases of incorrect vowel pronunciations within the dataset; in comparison, about 75 cases of consonant pronunciation errors were noted on the dataset (figure 1). This data imbalance indicates that English vowels form a more important and troubling problem for this cluster of Libyan learners.

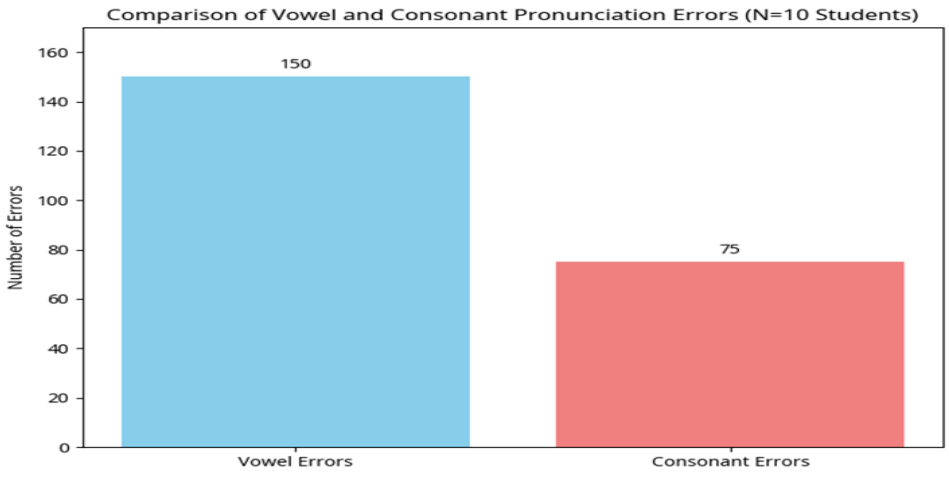


Figure 1: Comparison of Vowel and Consonant Pronunciation

المجلد الثالث
العدد السادس
سبتمبر 2025

مجلة جامعة درنة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
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The systematic observation of the errors yields repeating patterns which, in some cases, correspond to problems noted in the research for Arab students studying English. An example of this includes the majority of errors concerning vowel and diphthong sounds being monophthongs as well as specific ones being incredibly difficult to pronounce such as /ɪ/, and /iː/, /æ/, and /ɑː/, along with high degree of difficulty with diphthongs and triphthongs that are less represented or shape differently to Arabic. The overwhelming majority of errors being made regarding vowels illustrates the greater difficulty present in the English language in comparison to Arabic.

Thus, the grouped bar chart Figure 2 illustrates the comparative frequency of vowel and consonant errors across the 10 participants. As shown, all students made more vowel errors than consonant ones, highlighting a consistent pattern of difficulty in this phoneme category. This visual confirms the need for focused instruction on vowel articulation.

The information presented in the chart indicates that all students, without exception, tended to make more vowel errors than consonant errors which implies that English vowels seem to be a major concern for these learners. D and E's results seem to be particularly problematic across both error types, with Student D having the highest number of vowel errors (30) and Student E having the highest number of consonant errors (15). This implies these students may require additional targeted support.

Also, Students G, H, and I have the lowest error counts overall, with Student G having the fewest consonant errors (2) - the best result out of all the students. Excluding students with no errors, the average vowel error count (16.5 per student) is more than double the average consonant error count (7.9 per student), indicating that not only do these learners struggle with these sounds but there is an overwhelming imbalance in the amount of difficulty presented by vowels and consonants.

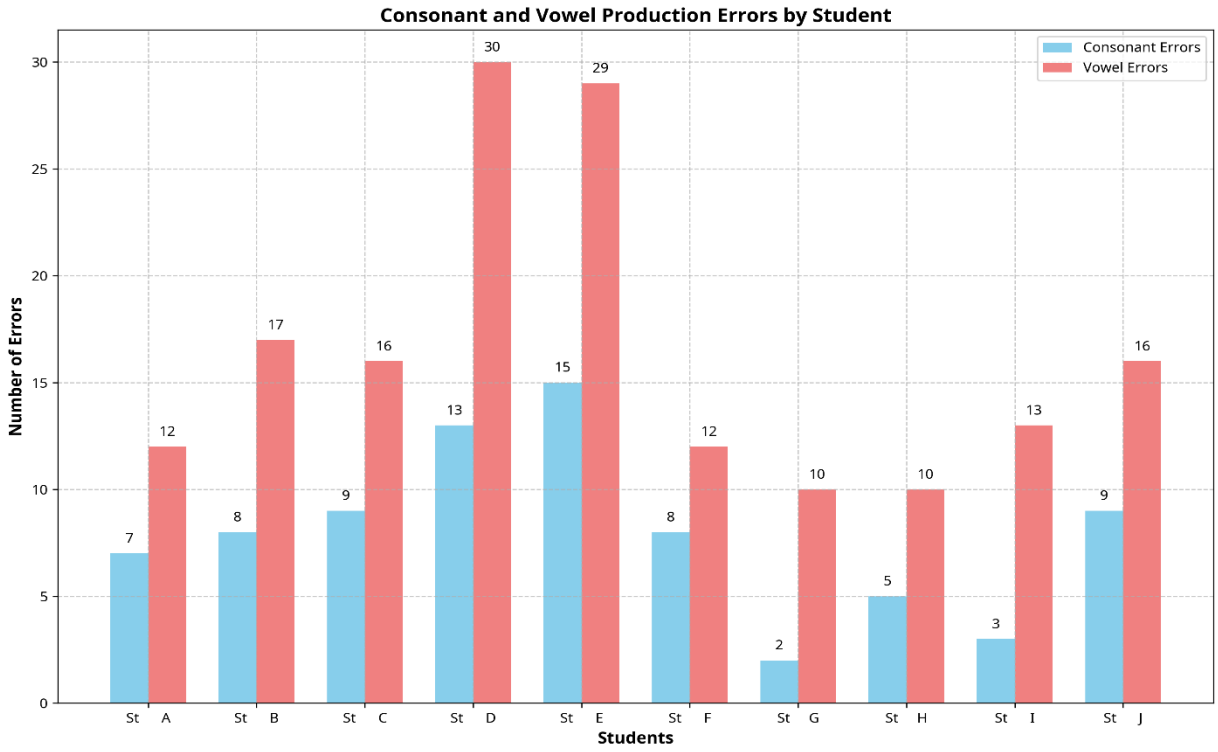


Figure 2: Students' errors of production in vowels and consonants.

Paying attention to vowel inaccuracies, as per figure 3 shows quite explicitly the hierarchy of errors:

The most significant issue was with the schwa sound /ə/, exhibiting a 92% mistake rate, succeeded by /ɔ:/ at 88% and /ɪ/ at 84%. These vowels present challenges owing to their absence or restricted equivalents in Libyan Arabic. The schwa /ə/ is absent in Arabic phonology, complicating students' ability to recognize and articulate it in unstressed syllables. Likewise, the vowel inventory of Libyan Arabic is more restricted and does not include the tense-lax distinctions present in English, leading to confusion between /ɪ/ and /i:/, as well as /ae/ and /ɑ:/. Together, these three sounds constitute almost half of all errors on vowels, indicating that they may be prioritized in teaching pronunciation.

However, on the other end of the spectrum, several vowels sound such as /u:/ and /əʊ/ show no or minimal errors, scoring only one (4% error rate) each. Quite remarkably, six vowel sounds including triphthongs /aɪə/ and /əʊə/ make no errors at all which suggests these are either over mastered or oftentimes not featured in the assessment materials.

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سبتمبر 2025

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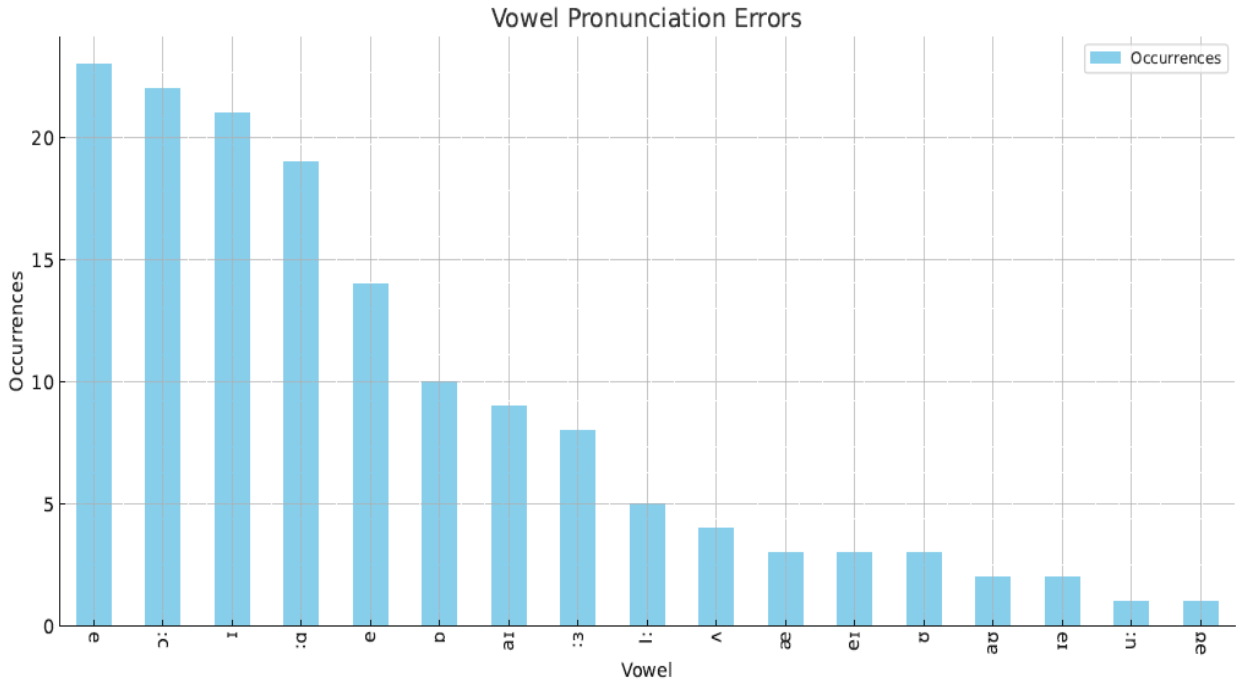


Other noteworthy facts are that mid-range vowels /e/ with (14 occurrences, 56% error rate) and /ɑ:/ with (19 occurrences, 76% error rate) represent secondary tier of difficulty which would benefit from additional targeted instruction after the most problematic sounds have been addressed.

Figure 3: Occurrence of vowel pronunciation errors

Disregarding the previously discussed phenomena and looking at the severity of errors and challenges with consonant pronunciation, the non-phonemic syllable does contain phonemic consonant errors as shown in Figure 4. Focusing on the highest results of errors combined with the highest occurrence counts, the consonant /t/ stands out dramatically with 35 occurrences (60% error rate), meaning this signifies nearly half of all consonant errors. This is followed by /f/ with 12 occurrences (57.1% error rate) and /dʒ/ with 10 occurrences (47.6% error rate). The disproportionate difficulty with /t/ suggests a specific articulatory challenge that first language interference may cause.

Many consonants show no errors at all including /b/, /k/, /g/ , /m/, /z/, /ŋ/, /θ/, /ð/ and /ʒ/. This phenomenon is the case where it seems satisfactory for some children whereas it is not for others.

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العدد السادس
سبتمبر 2025
مجلة جامعة درنة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية
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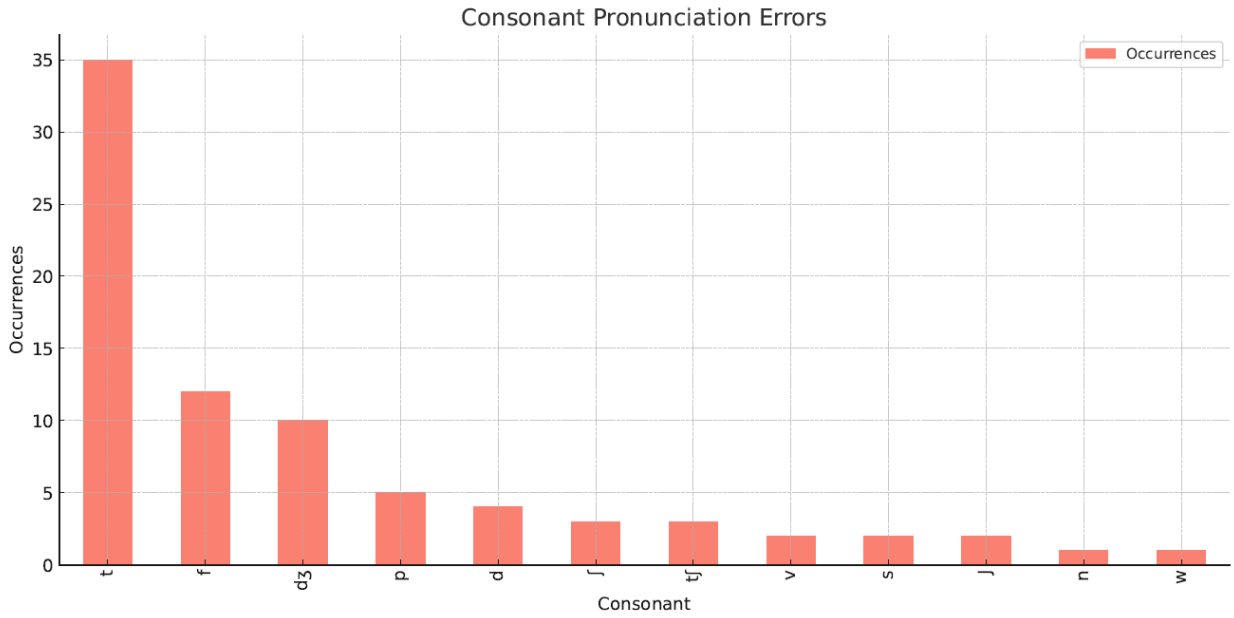
This binary pattern – where some have strikingly challenging contrasts while others ease up completely – is less conspicuous as that seen with errors when it comes down to vowels reveal a more graduated distribution of the challenge in different areas.

The data further suggests that the manner of articulating these movements might be susceptible to a great number of errors, demanding more in specialized focus in training such as in correcting




pronunciation for plosives and also affricates such as with /p/, /\t/, /d/ and /tʃ/, /dʒ/.

Figure 4: Occurrence of Consonant pronunciation errors

### 4.1 Results

The data analysis elucidated the trends in articulatory errors within the participants, the results indicate an evident imbalance in learners' attainment of English phonemes, particularly in the higher proportion of difficulty with vowels as compared to consonants. Therefore, the instructional focus should address the most difficult vowel sounds: schwa, /ɔː/, and /ɪ/ designated as supposed with some other consonants like /t/ and the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. /t/ exhibited the highest frequency of errors. In Libyan Arabic, /t/ is frequently articulated as a dental plosive instead of the alveolar plosive employed in English. This articulatory discrepancy leads to frequent tongue

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misplacement during phonation. Moreover, affricates such as /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ are frequently substituted or deformed owing to their unfamiliar configuration in Arabic.The data indicates that in comparison to other students, those with elevated error rates might benefit from targeted phonetic intervention regarding underlying persistent challenges in accurate speech output.

A noteworthy gender-based distinction was also observed, where male students outperformed female students concerning English sound understanding. This difference could be due to different levels of exposure to and participation in oral English activities. Some Libyan classrooms may make it easier or more comfortable for boys to practice speaking. Cultural factors may also affect how confident people are when they speak English in public. For example, female students may feel more shy in formal or mixed-gender settings. Also, some of the male participants said they used English-language media more outside of class, which could help them hear and reproduce sounds better. These results show that Libyan ESL programs should focus on teaching the most difficult phonemes, like the schwa /ə/, /ɔ:/, and /ɪ/, through targeted classroom activities. Teachers can use the following methods:

- Shadowing exercises, in which students listen to and repeat audio from a native speaker in real time to work on rhythm and stress.
- Minimal pair drills help students learn to tell the difference between vowel and consonant sounds that are similar (for example, "bit" and "beat").
- Phonetic transcription using IPA: to help people become more aware of how sounds are made and how they are pronounced.
- Mirror exercises: to help students see where their tongue and mouth are.

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**5.0 Recommendations for Future Research**

Building upon the report results, the following recommendations are made concerning students, educators, and further researchers:

For educators, it is necessary to pay more attention to students' pronunciation skills during the entire teaching process. Teachers must design English activities that promote students' participation and enhance their communicative proficiency. Furthermore, the instructors should apply different methods aimed at fostering the students' pronunciation skills through reading and listening materials. They should use interactive pronunciation activities like shadowing and repetition drills, tongue twisters and rhythm practice, apps and online IPA tools, peer correction sessions, and phoneme games. These strategies can assist students learn how to make the right sounds in a more interesting and memorable way. Teachers could also think about setting out some time in each lesson to fix the most common mistakes that students make when they speak.

For students, to enhance their skills in pronunciation, marked and regular practice is required. Routinely listening to and watching authentic English content with particular attention paid to its phonological aspects will lead to better pronunciation attainment. Students can improve their pronunciation by regularly engaging with authentic English media, including BBC Learning English, TED-Ed, and ESL podcasts such as Luke's English Podcast. News networks such as Al Jazeera English or CNN. YouTube content produced by pronunciation coaches (such as Rachel's English and Speak English with Vanessa). They should also use resources such as online dictionaries (Cambridge and Oxford) that include audio functions. Speech recognition apps (such as Google's Pronunciation Tool). Self-recording and replaying to monitor progress.

For other researchers pronouncing pertaining to errors on pronunciation, especially on vowels and consonants need more deliberation. Future research could build on this study by looking at pronunciation mistakes at different Libyan universities and considering the different regional dialects. Also, they can benefit from looking into how gender, education level, and exposure to media affect pronunciation skills. Another thing to consider is doing mixed-method studies that use both audio analysis and interviews or surveys to find out how learners feel about and think about pronunciation instruction.

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### 5.1 Conclusion

This study looked at the most common mistakes Libyan undergraduate students at Derna University made when speaking English, focusing on how they made vowels and consonants. There were 255 pronunciation mistakes, 150 of which were vowel errors and 75 of which were consonant errors. This shows that pronunciation is still a key problem for these learners when it comes to learning a second language. Not only do these results match trends seen in earlier research of Arab ESL learners, but they also show that Libyan Arabic has its own set of problems since its phonological system is a little different from other Arabic dialects in terms of sound structure and articulation patterns. The study found that vowel mistakes were more common and caused greater problems, especially the schwa /ə/, the long vowel /ɔː/, and the short vowel /ɪ/. These sounds don't exist in Arabic or are quite different in quality and placement, which makes it hard to understand and say them correctly. For instance, the schwa /ə/ was regularly replaced with stressed vowels that people were more used to, and the difference between /ɪ/ and /iː/ was often missed. These mistakes are the result of a mix of first language interference, not enough focus on teaching, and not enough exposure to how fluent English speakers talk. Even though consonant errors were less common, sounds like /t/, /dʒ/, and /f/ were often mispronounced because of how they were pronounced in Arabic. Because these mistakes happen so often, it seems like there has to be more focused and useful pronunciation teaching, especially when people are talking to each other in real life.

To solve these problems, it is very important that universities officially incorporate modules that focus on pronunciation to their ESL programs. These kinds of modules should focus on the most common difficulty areas, including interactive IPA-based instruction, and use digital pronouncing tools like AI-driven apps to give tailored feedback. Also, phonological awareness training, which includes activities on stress, intonation, and articulation, should be a part of all language classes, not just one. These tactics can greatly improve Libyan pupils' phonetic skills and make them better at communicating in English overall.

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