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**An Analysis of Algerian EFL Learners' Pronunciation Errors.**

**The Case of Fourth Year Pupils At Labidi Betta Middle School**

**Dissertation submitted to the Department of English Language and Letters as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Applied linguistics and ESP**

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## **Dedication**

This research work is dedicated to:

My dear parents, my real source of life, my cute sisters, my beloved husband and all my friends.

I appreciate their everlasting love, encouragement, and support and, without them, I couldn't accomplish this research work.

**FERIEL**

## **Dedication**

*In the name of Allah the most gracious the most merciful*

To the bright memory of my father who left fingerprints of grace on my life

It is said that all our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them, and you made me once believe that they can really come true, so to you I dedicate this work

To the protagonist in my life story; my mother

My brothers Khaled, Fathi and sisters Chaima, khadidja and Fatima

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All my teachers, my friends, my classmates or anyone who helped me, or cared for me, or wished me luck or just liked me once.

**Atika**

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## Abstract

This study is concerned with the identification, analysis and classification of pronunciation errors at the level of the vowel sounds: /ei/, /ai/and /i/ made by fourth year learners at Labidi Betta Middle School (2020/2021). These errors are attributed to two major sources the overgeneralization of English pronunciation rules and the interference of the French vowel sound system. The current study's aim is to assess the extent to which these sources affect learners' pronunciation. To answer the study's questions, an error analysis on the pronunciation of the target vowel sounds is done. The fieldwork is carried out using a descriptive analytical method with a voice recorder to collect spoken data. The results of the general procedure assert that the two pre-determined sources seem to have a significant impact on the pronunciation of the learners. The essence of this research is that published studies barely discussed the pronunciation of these three vowel sounds: /ei/, /ai/and /i/. To carry out this study, one major research instrument is deployed. A specialized voice recorder is used to collect spoken data from participants while reading a poem (for the overgeneralization of English pronunciation rules) and a list of sentences (for French pronunciation interference). After that, the Cambridge English Pronunciation Dictionary (16th ed.) is used to transcribe the targeted words (correctly or incorrectly articulated). The Online Larousse Dictionary is used to transcribe French words. As a result, the population is made up of fourth-year students from Labidi Betta Middle School. Owing to the large number of students and the limited time available, a sample of 12 participants out of 133 was selected. Moreover, the following two questions are to be answered:

- To what extent does overgeneralization influence learners' pronunciation of the vowel sounds: /ei/, /ai/and /i/?
- To what extent does french interference influence learners' pronunciation of the vowel sounds: /ei/, /ai/and /i/?

**Keywords :** Error Analysis, pronunciation errors, EFL, overgeneralization, interference.

## **List of Abbreviations**

CA	Contrastive Analysis
EA	Error Analysis
FL	Foreign Language
FLL	Foreign Language Learner
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MT	Mother Tongue
SL	Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SLL	Second Language Learner
TL	Target Language

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# *General Introduction*

## **1. Background of the study**

In our everyday life, the most common and easiest way to communicate is through speech. From time immemorial, people have always preferred speech to other means of communication to express their ideas and feelings and successfully interact in their communities. Any communication process requires that the speaker and the listener understand each other, otherwise it breaks down. One of the most important factors to ensure effective communication is good pronunciation without which communication is hard or even impossible. Having good knowledge of grammar and lexis is important, but a good pronunciation is essential and can even cover gaps in other aspects of language such as grammar. Good knowledge of grammar without understandable pronunciation does not ensure successful communication. It is very humiliating and frustrating for a non-native speaker with good grammar and lexis to be unable to communicate with a native speaker (Harmer, 2001).

Many language learners have understood the paramount importance of pronunciation and made it their ultimate goal, knowing that poor, heavy, unintelligible pronunciation hampers communication and can stand in their way towards success. The concept of good pronunciation does not necessarily refer to native-like pronunciation. Instead, it is synonymous with intelligible pronunciation, which scholars describe as pronunciation that can be interpreted by the listener without any special effort (Abercrombie, 1991).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

It is vital nowadays to learn languages, other than your mother tongue, because it allows us to stay up to date with the world and communicate with these languages. The language that people want to learn nowadays appears to be English, since it is the dominant language that invades every inch on the globe.

Learning a foreign language demands learning, or at least taking into account its aspects like syntax, pragmatics, semantics and pronunciation. The latter seems to be a significant aspect of any language. That is to say, in order to communicate in English, the following components are required: basic grammar (not necessarily complicated), simple vocabulary (not necessarily advanced), and a proper pronunciation. There is no such thing as simple or complex pronunciation, because it is either correct or incorrect. It is the distinctive pronunciation that makes the English language truly different from other languages. The latter is quite vague that it disallows most EFL learners from being



interpreted while communicating with native speakers or non-natives who have a strong command of the English language.

In Algerian schools, Many English pupils neglect the value of pronunciation in comparison to other aspects of the language such as vocabulary and grammar. It is absolutely undeniable that most English learners at Labidi Betta Middle School have certain pronunciation issues. While they communicate In English, they produce several phonological errors. They find it tough to learn pronunciation in certain ways, compared with other facets of language. They may be proficient in the target language's syntax, vocabulary, and pragmatics, but their poor pronunciation causes them to be misunderstood by their instructors and even peers who have decent pronunciation.

Following a survey ( March 2021), we discovered that fourth-year students had difficulty producing the following vowel sounds: /ei/, /ai/and /i/.These sounds are the ones that are the most mispronounced by the pupils at Labidi Betta Middle School- El oued. For example, they pronounce the word “ice-cream” as /,ɪs 'kri:m/ intead of /,aɪs 'kri:m/, “ capable” as /kapabl/ instead of /'keɪ.pə.bəl/. Some of these sounds are mispronounced because of over-generalization and some because of French interference. It seems that the effects of overgeneralization and interference are more common because students are not sufficiently exposed to the target language.

### **3. Aim of the Study**

The present study aims at identifying, analysing and classifying the pronunciation errors at the level of the vowel sounds /ei/, /ai/and /i/ made by Fourth Year learners at Labidi Betta Middle School These errors will be examined to decide the extent to which the overgeneralisation of the English pronunciation rules and the interference of the French vowel sound system contribute to the commitment of such errors.

### **3.Reasearch Questions**

Since EFL learners’ mispronunciation of some vowel sounds is the centre of this study, the following two questions are to be answered:

- To what extent does overgeneralisation influence learners’ pronunciation of the vowel sounds: /ei/, /ai/and /i/?

- To what extent does French interference influence learners' pronunciation of the vowel sounds: /ei/, /ai/and /i/?

#### **4. Research methodology**

To carry out this study, one major research instrument is deployed. A specialized voice recorder is used to collect spoken data from participants while reading a poem (for the overgeneralization of English pronunciation rules) and a list of sentences (for French pronunciation interference). After that, the Cambridge English Pronunciation Dictionary (16th ed.) is used to transcribe the targeted words (correctly or incorrectly articulated). The Online Larousse Dictionary is used to transcribe French words. As a result, the population is made up of fourth-year students from Labidi Betta Middle School. Owing to the large number of students and the limited time available, a sample of 12 participants out of 133 was selected.

#### **5. Structure of the Dissertation:**

The study at hand embodies two fundamental parts. The first one is theoretical, in which there are two chapters. The first chapter is about the English pronunciation system and it includes its definition, its features, including definitions of concepts like vowels, stress, syllables... The second chapter talks about Error Analysis and English Language Learning overview, including a focus on two error sources: overgeneralization of English pronunciation rules and the interference of French pronunciation. The practical part is the second major part of this study and it is devoted to data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the results as well as the General Conclusion, which entails the pedagogical implications and limitations of the study.

*Theoretical Part:*  
*English Pronunciation System*  
*and Error Analysis*

# *Chapter One : English Pronunciation System*

## **Introduction**

The first chapter will focus on pronunciation, including the definition of pronunciation as well as the aspects of pronunciation. Vowels and consonants are segmented features, while intonation and stress are supra-segmental features. Also, the English vowel system and the English language's pronunciation rules.

### **1. Definition of Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the production of sounds of a particular language. It can also be defined as the way people utter words. Effective pronunciation is an essential aspect of oral speech since it helps in the speaker's understanding. When openly discussing pronunciation, one must include word stress, sentence stress, and intonation since these are the most critical factors that contribute to fairly understandable spoken English.

Richard et al. (2002) define the word pronunciation as follows: 'pronunciation (also known as phonology) includes the role of individual sounds and sound segments, that is, features at the segmental level as well as supra-segmental features such as stress, rhythm and intonation' (p. 84). That is, proper pronunciation occurs naturally when all of the features, both segmental and supra-segmental, participate in the process.

According to Frazer (2000), speakers with correct pronunciation are easily understood even though they have other flaws. Others with poor grammar, on the other hand, struggle to be interpreted while being accurate in other aspects of language.

The production and perception of the significant sounds of a particular language in order to achieve meaning in contexts of language use. This comprises the production and perception of segmental sounds, of stressed and unstressed syllables, and of 'speech melody', or intonation. Also, the way we sound is influenced greatly by factors such as voice quality, speech rate and overall loudness. Whenever we say something, all these aspects are present simultaneously from the very start, even in a two-syllable utterances such as Hello (p. 87). In other terms, pronunciation includes all the features even though the words are quite plain.

## 2. Features of Pronunciation

In order to achieve intelligibility, all segmental and suprasegmental language characteristics must be fully considered since they are important components of accurate pronunciation. When learners are aware of and appreciate what these characteristics mean, they are well on their way to acquiring strong pronunciation.

### 2.1. Segmental Features of Pronunciation

#### 2.1.1. Phonemes

Crystal (2008) defines a phoneme as “the minimal unit in the sound system of a language” (p. 36). It is one of the smallest units of speech that make one word different from another word. For example, The difference between “pin” and “pan” depends on the vowel, i.e. the different phonemes /i/ and /æ/.

The English language has 44 phonemes, including 20 vowels and 24 consonants.

#### 2.1.1.1. Vowels

According to Roach (1991), vowels are speech sounds which cause no obstacle to the flow of the air when they are produced. Vowels in English are of three categories. There are monophthongs are single vowel sounds within a syllable, diphthongs are two vowel sounds combined within a syllable, and triphthongs are three vowel sounds combined within a syllable.

#### 2.1.1.1.1 Monophthongs

A monophthong (pronounced 'manəf,θaŋ/) is the most simple vowel tone. A monophthong, as the prefix "mono-" means, is a single tone (to which the root "-phthong" refers) inside a single syllable. The majority of these are short vowels. There are seven short vowel sounds which are /ə/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɪ/, /ʊ/ and /ɒ/, although there are five long vowel monophthongs as well, which are /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/ and /i:/.

### 2.1.1.1.2 Diphthongs

Diphthongs, according to Roach (1998), are sounds that comprise the movement or glide from one vowel to another, since diphthongs are the fusion of two pure vowels. According to Ramelan in Mustikareni (2013), diphthongs are classified into two types: closing and centering diphthongs. The closing diphthong is a diphthong sound in which the second vowel is closer than the first vowel when the tongue moves from the open vowel to the closer vowel, while the centering diphthong is a diphthong sound in which the second vowel is closer than the first vowels because the tongue moves towards the central vowel. English closing diphthongs, for example, are (/eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/, /əʊ/) and centering diphthongs are (/ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/) (Roach, 1998).

### 2.1.1.1.3 Triphthongs

Triphthongs are the most complex vowel sounds in English. They can be challenging to pronounce and much more difficult to identify. A triphthong is a glide from one vowel to the next and then to the third vowel, all produced rapidly and without interruption. The triphthongs are made up of the five closing diphthongs mentioned in the previous part, with schwa/ə/added at the end. Thus we get :

/eɪ/ + /ə/ = /eɪə/                      /aɪ/ + /ə/ = /aɪə/  
/ɔɪ/ + /ə/ = /ɔɪə/                      /aʊ/ + /ə/ = /aʊə/  
/əʊ/ + /ə/ = /əʊə/

### 2.1.1.2. Consonants

Phonetically, consonants are described by Crystal (2008:103) as sounds produced by a closing or narrowing of the vocal tract. The air will be fully or partly blocked if there is audible pressure at the edges of syllables singly or in sequences. Blake (2008:133) distinguishes consonants as sounds that are usually shorter in length than vowels and appear at the margins of syllables. In English, consonants are classified into two categories: voiced and voiceless.

### 2.1.1.2.1. Voiced and Voiceless Consonants

Crystal (2008), The sound is voiced when the vocal cords are stretched so tightly that they vibrate during the pronunciation of a sound such as the consonants /v/ and /d/. However, when there is no vibration in the vocal cords, a voiceless consonant is produced, such as the consonants/t/and/d/.

The following chart summarises what have been talked about above concerning phonemes.

ɪ READ	ɪ SIT	ʊ BOOK	u: TOO	ɪə HERE	eɪ DAY	John & Sarah Free Materials 1996	
e MEN	ə AMERICA	ɜ: WORD	ɔ: SORT	ʊə TOUR	ɔɪ BOY	əʊ GO	
æ CAT	ʌ BUT	ɑ: PART	ɒ NOT	eə WEAR	aɪ MY	aʊ HOW	
p FIG	b BED	t TIME	d DO	tʃ CHURCH	dʒ JUDGE	k KILO	g GO
f FIVE	v VERY	θ THINK	ð THE	s SIX	z ZOO	ʃ SHORT	ʒ CASUAL
m MILK	n NO	ŋ SING	h HELLO	l LIVE	r READ	w WINDOW	j YES

Figure 1. English phonemes (Steve, 2017)

## 2.2. Supra-segmental Features of Pronunciation

### 2.2.1. Stress

A huge number of scholars have discussed and investigated this subject extensively through the years. Stress, including rhythm and intonation, is a "suprasegmental or prosodic feature" in phonetics (Finch & Lira, 1982, p. 87).

Stress is precisely described in the Crystal dictionary (2008) as:



A term used in phonetics to refer to the degree of force used in producing a syllable. The usual distinction is between stressed and unstressed syllables, the former being more prominent than the latter (and marked in transcription with a raised vertical line, [ˈ]). The prominence is usually due to an increase in loudness of the stressed syllable, but increases in length and often pitch may contribute to the overall impression of prominence. In popular usage, 'stress' is usually equated with an undifferentiated notion of 'emphasis' or 'strength'. (p. 454).

It should be noted that multi-syllable words may contain more than one stress.i.e, primary and secondary stress. As a result, dealing with the stress of one-syllable words would be all too straightforward. However, he/she will encounter difficulties while attempting to recognise the stress in multi-syllable words.

In certain situations, the stress positioning can be easily anticipated without some effort. For eg, two-syllable words with the "schwa" sound, which is never stressed, in one of the syllables would immediately put the stress on the other syllable with no "schwa," such as the word "again." Since/ə/is always unstressed, the stressed syllable is/gen/.

### **2.2.2. Intonation**

Intonation and stress are inescapably related. In fact, it is difficult to separate them. They go hand in hand.Intonation is concerned about how we say something, not about what we say, and the way our voice rises and falls as we speak.In other words, the music of the language.

The Crystal dictionary (2008) defines intonation as follows:

A term used in the study of suprasegmental phonology, referring to the distinctive use of patterns of pitch, or melody. The study of intonation is sometimes called intonology. Several ways of analysing intonation have been suggested: in some approaches, the pitch patterns are described as contours and analysed in terms of levels of pitch as pitch phonemes and morphemes; in others, the patterns are described as tone units or tone groups, analysed further as contrasts of nuclear tone, tonicity, etc. The three variables of pitch range, height and direction are generally distinguished.(p.252)

Intonation serves a variety of linguistic functions. Its primary purpose is as a signal of grammatical structure, where it functions similarly to punctuation in writing, although with much more contrasts. Intonation may be used to label sentences, clauses, and other boundaries, as well as to distinguish between certain grammatical structures, such as questions and statements. A second role of intonation is to communicate personal attitude: sarcasm, puzzlement, anger, and so on can all be signaled by pitch contrasts, along with other prosodic and paralinguistic features. Other uses of intonation in language have been proposed, such as a way of signaling social background.

### **3. English Vowel System**

Since the present study aims at analysing the mispronunciation of only particular vowel sounds, the English vowel system should be talked about in details.

#### **3. 1. Vowel Sounds vs. Consonant Sounds**

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) establishes two kinds of segments, consonants and vowels. What defines these segments is the presence or the absence of a constriction in the vocal tract. In other words, if a sound is produced by some constriction in the vocal tract, it is a consonant. If it is produced without constriction, it is a vowel (Ogden, 2009). Collins and Mees (2003) explained it further by considering the involvement of a contact or near-contact between articulators. If there is such a contact, a consonant sound is produced, if there is no such contact, a vowel sound is produced.

The difficulty in identifying the articulation of these two sounds varies. Consonant sounds are simple to describe as long as we can feel what organs are involved. Vowels, on the other hand, are difficult to describe except in auditory terms since there is no actual contact between the speech organs (Cruttenden, 2014). Katamba (1989) consented to this point of view, “vowels are more difficult to describe accurately than consonants. This is largely because there is no noticeable obstruction in the vocal tract during their production” (p. 8)

Obviously, “vowel letters” are not the same as “vowel sounds,” and “consonant letters” are not the same as “consonant sounds.” In writing/spelling, letters are used; in speaking/pronouncing, sounds are used. The distinction of what a vowel is and what a consonant is holds further complications. The emphasis in the following discussions would be solely on vowels.

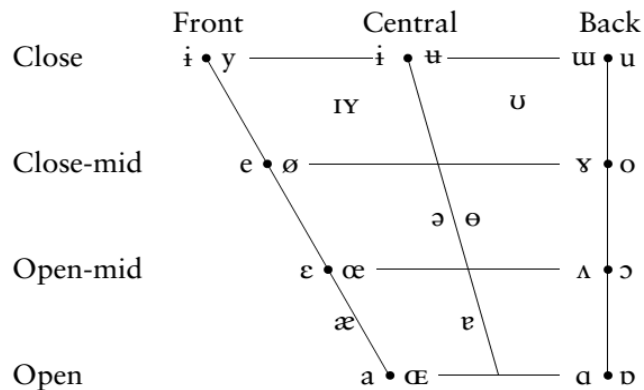
### 3 .2. Vowel Sounds

According to Crystal (2008), vowels are articulated when the air flows out of the mouth with no complete closure. “If air escapes solely through the mouth, the vowels are said to be oral ; if some air is simultaneously released through the nose, the vowels are nasals” (p. 517). This definition by Crystal is not this simple, neither is any definition given by other phoneticians or specialized experts. Many examples, definitions, and classifications were given in succession regarding the origin of the vowels, the various potential articulations with particular organs involved...

Any language has a certain number of vowels; for example, Japanese and Spanish have just five vowels. The general American language has fourteen to fifteen distinct vowels, while British English has twenty distinct vowels. (Ladefoged, 2001).

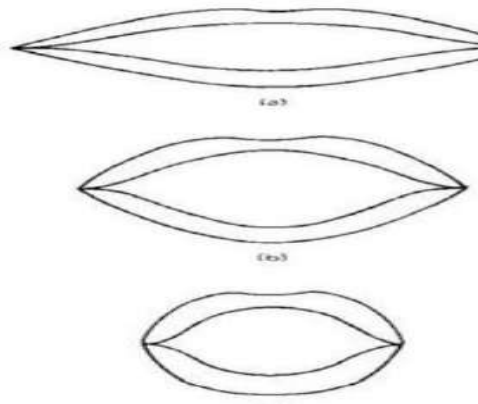
Several attempts were made to explain the articulation of vowel sounds. One of the very first ways that were used is “a two dimensional diagram representing the articulatory space: the vertical axis is tongue height, and the horizontal axis is tongue fronting...” (Collins & Mees, 2003, p. 22). By the nineteenth century, further efforts also resulted in a more precise representation of the articulatory aspect of the vowels. It was a set of “Cardinal vowels (CVs)” that are “... specially selected vowel sounds 20 which can conveniently be used as points of reference from which other vowels can be measured (Jones, 1956, p. 18).

In his dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, Crystal (2008) provided a diagram in which the primary CVs were placed. . It is shown in Figure2 (**see page 21**). There are sixteen CVs, eight of them are primary and the other eight are secondary. There are boundaries or limits that those vowels must not exceed, if one tries to produce a sound by exceeding those preidentified extreme lines, there will be a kind of air restriction, consequently, it will lead to the production of a consonant sound (Collins & Mees, 2003, pp. 23-24).



**Figure 2.** Cardinal vowels (Crystal, 2008, p. 66)

In figure 3, the three possible lip positions for different kinds of vowels are displayed. The production of vowels manifests no obstacle to the flow of air coming out of the lips but for each group of vowels, the lips, though always open, take three major positions.



**Figure 3.** Lip positions in vowel articulation : (a) spread ; (b) neutral ; (c) rounded (Clark & Yallop, 1995, p. 27)

The CVs in that quadrilateral are defined using both articulatory and auditory phonetics. Teachers consider it somehow complicated to make learners understand it and remember it with its details. According to McCully (2009), “what is crucial for the classification of vowels is the relative height and position of the tongue” (p. 111). This all depends on the lesson objectives, on the teaching materials and the overall academic aims.

Going back to Table 2, to further elucidate the symbols shown here, the simplified examples in Figure 3 are based on Ashby's version in 2011. The short vowels, the long vowels, the diphthongs are categorised altogether under the word 'vowel'.

### Vowel symbols

i:	see	/si:/	ʌ	cup	/kʌp/
ɪ	sit	/sɪt/	ɜ:	bird	/bɜ:d/
ɪ	happy	/'hæpi/	ə	about	/ə'baʊt/
e	ten	/ten/	eɪ	say	/seɪ/
æ	cat	/kæt/	əʊ	go	/gəʊ/
ɑ:	calm	/kɑ:m/	aɪ	five	/faɪv/
ɒ	got	/gɒt/	aʊ	now	/naʊ/
ɔ:	saw	/sɔ:/	ɔɪ	boy	/bɔɪ/
ʊ	put	/pʊt/	ɪə	near	/nɪə/
u:	too	/tu:/	eə	hair	/heə/
ʊ	situation	/sɪtʃu'eɪʃn/	ʊə	pure	/pjʊə/

**Figure 4. Vowel Symbols ( Ashby, 2011, n.p.8)**

In the English language there are fourteen vowel sounds, nine of them are short (/ɪ/, /i/, /e/, /æ/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /u/, /ʌ/, /ə/) and they are categorised by Jones (1956) as the primary set in the cardinal vowel chart. The other five vowels are long (/ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/, /i:/). Moreover, there are five closing diphthongs, where there is a glide towards a closer tongue position, which are (/eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/, /əʊ/) and three centring ones, where there is a glide towards a central tongue position, which are (/ʊə/, /eə/, /ɪə/).

## 4 . Pronunciation Rules

### 4.1. English pronunciation rules

The English pronunciation seems to have no simple consistent rules, the same letters are pronounced differently in different words, and there are cases of similar sounds that correspond

different spellings. Take for example the letter A. It can be pronounced /æ/ as in fan /fæn/, /eɪ/ as in make /meɪk/, /ɑː/ as in bar /bɑːr/, /eə/ as in mare /meə r/, /ɒ/ as in was /wɒz/, /ɔː/ as in ball /bɔːl/, /ɪ/ as in cabbage /'kæbɪdʒ/, and /ə/ as in petal /'pet.əl/

Now, here is another example of the letter O. This letter is pronounced /ɒ/ in dot /dɒt/, /ɔː/ in four /fɔːr/, /ʌ/ in oven /'ʌv.ən/, /ʊ/ in woman /'wʊm.ən/, /ɪ/ in women /'wɪm.ɪn/, /uː/ in who /huː/, /ɜː/ in world /wɜːld/, /əʊ/ in no /nəʊ/, /ə/ in control /kən'trəʊl/, and /wʌ/ in once /wʌnts/.

In the practical part of this research, pronunciation rules will be handled according to the specific sounds addressed. For each piece of analysis, a relevant rule will be presented.

## **4.2. The Overgeneralization of English Pronunciation Rules**

All what was discussed above might not be a part of a foreign learner's knowledge, some learners are more aware than others of the different aspects of pronunciation and the general rules governing speech. This lack of awareness may simply be a result of laziness on the part of the learners, since they find the rules overwhelming and abstract, so they prefer to adhere only to basic ones as long as listeners comprehend them completely.

It's a challenging task to match spelling and speech. It requires practice and effort to get accustomed to properly pronouncing the basic words. An EFL learner should not be unable to pronounce simple, familiar, and widely used words. Though this is absolutely essential, learners have a tendency to ignore what they find difficult and overgeneralize what they find easy. In terms of pronunciation, this leads them to make mistakes at the level of sounds. this issue of “overgeneralization” will be discussed further in the following chapter when the sources of EFL learners' errors are dealt with.

## **4.3. Alphabet Phonétique International (API)**

API is the French equivalent for the English IPA. It is a set of phonetic symbols used internationally for the transcription of French words.

[p] pile	[b] bateau	[t] tout	[d] deux	[f] fou	[v] va
[k] calme	[g] gâteau	[s] site	[z] zut	[ʃ] chocolat	[ʒ] genou
[ʁ] rue	[l] lit	[m] mode	[n] nez	[ɲ] agneau	[ŋ] parking

Figure 5. French consonant sounds (les consonnes Ashby, 2011, n.p.8)

## Voyelles

[a]	pas
[ɑ]	pâte
[e]	blé
[ɛ]	bête, lait
[i]	fil
[ɔ]	sol
[o]	beau, do
[u]	trou
[y]	mur
[ø]	bleu
[œ]	fleur
[ə]	renaître
[ɛ̃]	pain, fin
[ɑ̃]	blanc
[ɔ̃]	mont
[œ̃]	parfum

Figure 6. French vowel sounds (les voyelles)

## Semi-consonnes

[j]	yo-yo
[ɥ]	cuit
[w]	oui
[œR]	heure
[waR]	victoire

Figure 7. French semi-consonant sounds (Les semi-consonnes)



## **Conclusion**

This first chapter dealt with pronunciation. A definition of pronunciation was offered by a handful of linguists and academicians, followed by a discussion of the aspects of pronunciation. Vowel and consonant sounds are segmental properties, whereas intonation and stress are supra-segmental properties. Following that, the focus was switched to the study's central and most critical issue, which is the English vowel system. The last topic examined in part one was whether the English language's pronunciation rules are set

***Chapter Two:***  
***Error Analysis and English Language Learning***

## **Introduction**

The following discussion provides an overview of the definition, procedures, sources, and types of errors, with an emphasis on “the overgeneralization of English phonetic rules” and “the interference of French” in the overall learning process of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.

### **1.2.1. Definition of Error Analysis**

Error Analysis is a form of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors of learners, whether they are foreign language learners (FLL) or second language learners (SLL). Pit Corder, a British linguist, founded this theory in the 1960s as a reaction to the Contrastive Analysis (CA) theory. According to several scholars, the latter failed to adequately clarify and study learners' errors. Unlike CA, which focuses on predicting errors made by FLL or SLL, the primary goal of Error Analysis is to examine, describe, and analyze those errors. As a result, teachers may find it simple to identify language areas that need to be strengthened (Corder, 1967). In other words, error analysis is extremely beneficial in either foreign or second language acquisition because it allows teachers, syllabus designers, and textbook writers to identify problem areas.

In the mid-20th century, under the influence of behaviourist learning theory, errors were often viewed as the result of 'bad habits', which could be eradicated if only learners did enough rote learning and pattern drilling using target language models. (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 15)

Later on, it was established that errors and mistakes follow a pattern, and while some common errors are caused by the influence of the first language, this is far from the case for all of them (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Numerous theories have been developed to account for those errors. Contrastive analysis (CA) was one of the first techniques used to investigate the error's source. After a few setbacks, CA ceded the field to error analysis (EA), which was defined as "an enterprise born of the attempt to validate the predictions of contrastive analysis through the systematic collection and analysis of second-language learners' speech and writing" (Berns & Brown, 2010, p. 134). Based on this, in accordance with Saville-T (2006), EA is "the first approach to the study of SLA that involves an internal focus on learners' creative ability to construct language" (p. 37).

EA includes "a detailed description and analysis of the types of errors which the Second Language learners make" for Lightbown and Spada (2006) (p. 79). In his paper Corder (1981) delineated EA as "... a part of the methodology of the psycholinguistic investigation of language learning" (p. 35). In this regard, it is an experimental technique that reveals a great deal about the psycholinguistic processes that occur during the learning process.

As previously stated, the purpose of this research is to highlight the various pronunciation errors at the level of the vowel sounds /ei/, /ai/and /i/ made by English second language learners. In other words, errors are significant because they provide information about the current level of knowledge or skills that learners have acquired, and thus about what still needs to be acquired (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). For Selinker (1969) and Corder (1981), errors are quite significant (to teachers, researchers, and learners), whereas mistakes are not.

#### **1.2.1.1. Error vs. Mistake**

While one may believe that the terms error and mistake are interchangeable, i.e., have the same meaning, this is demonstrably incorrect, since each word conveys a distinct meaning. There is a set of definitions for errors and mistakes. A mistake, according to Corder (1967), is a performance error that is either a random guess or a slip. These errors occur as a consequence of learners failing to appropriately apply a known system, i.e. learners are aware of a certain rule in certain situations but fail to apply it. Errors are more significant throughout the learning process since they occur as a consequence of learners' ignorance of the proper language forms.

An error, according to James (1998), cannot be self-corrected, while mistakes can be self-corrected provided the deviation is pointed out to the speaker. Mistakes can occur as a result of normal psychological or physical factors such as tiredness, carelessness, a lack of concentration, or the experience of a strong emotion.

## **1.2.2. Procedures of Error analysis**

To carry out the process of analyzing errors, many researchers used a variety of procedures. Ellis (1997) makes a convenient example of a set of procedures that summarises the steps:

- a- Collection of a sample of learner language.
- b- Identification of errors.
- c- Description of errors.
- d- Explanation of errors.
- e- Evaluation of errors.

According to Corder (1981), the most crucial step is identifying and describing the errors, since success in explaining their occurrence is dependent on that initial step. This identification can be accomplished by comparing learners' erroneous products to the original products, i.e. what was said versus what should be stated (in the case of oral performance).

## **1.2.3. Sources of errors**

There are various different sources and reasons for errors that a FL or L2 learner may make when learning the target speech. A number of linguists and researchers have carried out several investigations to narrow up the sources of the errors of the learners. Richards provided in his 1970s research one classification of error sources. Richards (1970) focuses on three major error sources: interference errors, intralingual errors, and developmental errors.

### **1.2.3.1. Interference errors:**

Errors caused by using components from one language while speaking/writing in another. In other words, when learning the target language, the learner subconsciously refers to the language or languages he already knows and begins comparing the target language to the already-known language.

### **1.2.3.2. Intralingual errors:**

Errors reflect general rule learning features such as inaccurate generalization, insufficient rule application, and inability to learn conditions in which rules apply. This kind of error is further classified as follows:

#### **1.2.3.2.1. Overgeneralisation errors:**

Overgeneralisation errors occur when a learner produces a deviant structure or rule based on his knowledge of other structures or rules in the target language. For instance, a learner may pronounce the word 'minute' as /mɪnju:t/ rather than /mɪnɪt/ because he assumes that a 'u' is always pronounced /ju:/ as in 'cute' /kju:t/.

#### **1.2.3.2.2. Ignorance of rule restrictions:**

It is concerned with the application of rules to situations in which they are inapplicable. A suitable illustration is when a learner says, for instance, "she made me to leave" rather than "she made me leave". This kind of error occurs because the majority of verbs in English accept infinitival complements as in "she asked/wanted me to go" (Enam, n.d.)

#### **1.2.3.2.3. Incomplete application of rules:**

This kind of intralingual error occurs when a learner fails to apply the whole rule of a certain structure. (e.g. \*you like to eat? Instead of do you like to eat?)

#### **1.2.3.2.4. False hypothesis:**

False hypotheses develop when learners are unable to distinguish between target language structures. For instance, the usage of "was" as a past tense marker in "one day it was happened" instead of "one day it happened" (Enam, n.d.)

### **1.2.3.3. Developmental errors:**

Errors that arise when learners seek to form hypotheses about the target language based on a limited number of experiences. Hakuta and Cancino (1977) maintained in their book Trends in Second

Language that the majority of studies in the field of EA agreed on categorizing errors as interlingual or intralingual.

**a- Interlingual errors (Interference):** They are related to the mother tongue interfering with the process of learning a foreign language.

**b- Intralingual errors:** They are related to the foreign language being studied. Aspects of this foreign language can prompt students to make errors, either by overgeneralizing or simplifying.

#### **1.2.4. Types of errors**

It seems that classifying errors into types is of a great importance because it enables teachers to identify the particular areas in which students make errors. Types and sources can both be used simultaneously, but for the purposes of organization, types are tackled separately. Lee's classification in 1990 is instructive in this context. Lee defined four distinct categories of error types based on their linguistic level:

##### **1.2.4.1. Grammatical (morphosyntactic) errors:**

Grammatical errors are those that influence both the word structure and the sentence structure. That is, morphological errors occur at the word level, but syntactic errors occur at the sentence level. In other words, if a learner used the word 'fastly,' which means 'in a quick fashion,' he would have committed a morphological error since he failed to construct or derive the correct adverb, which is generally 'fast'. However, if he placed the subject after the verb in an affirmative statement, he would have committed a syntactic error, since in English sentence structure, the subject always precedes and never follows the verb in any affirmative sentence (Lee, 1991). These errors highlight the importance of grammatical accuracy in both oral and written communication, and they may impede effective communication.

##### **1.2.4.2. Discourse errors:**

This sort of error occurs when the learner lacks sufficient knowledge of the pragmatics and culture of the target language. This leads to the use of improper words and expressions that native speakers do not use in certain contexts. Discourse errors can also be defined as a learner's inability to understand the real communicative message intended by speakers (James, 1998). In other words, incorrect

interpreting of a specific utterance causes FL or SL learners to commit such an error. They rely on the observance of speaking and writing standards and reflect learners' cultural and pragmatic knowledge of language usage.

#### **1.2.4.3. Phonologically-induced errors:**

Errors produced at the level of segmental features (phonemes) and supra-segmental characteristics are referred to as phonological errors (stress and intonation). Making a phonological error seems to cause major communication problems since it affects intelligibility. Mispronunciation of a single sound may totally alter the communicated meaning. As a result, the more precise your pronunciation, the more easily you will be understood (Lee, 1990).

#### **1.2.4.4. Lexical errors:**

Lexical errors occur when a learner is unable to choose the appropriate words to construct a coherent phrase. That is, even though a phrase is grammatically correct, it is said to have a strange and unclear meaning since the FLL or SLL did not use the precise word or combination of words that is required to be used. This sort of error is often caused by overgeneralization (Lee, 1990). The use of the adjective 'serious' to characterize dangerous animals is an excellent example of a lexical error produced by overgeneralisation. The learner may say something like, 'Bears are serious animals.' In this context, the term 'serious' does not have the connotation of 'dangerous,' but the learner unintentionally generalised it to describe animals, resulting in a lexical error.

Two aspects of the research are explored in the following titles: overgeneralization of English phonetic rules and French interference.

#### **1.2.5. Overgeneralization of English pronunciation rule**

Merrill, Tennyson, and Posey (1992) define overgeneralization by distinguishing it from two other error classifications (undergeneralization and misconception). Overgeneralization, according to them, happens when a learner "incorrectly identifies some of the nonexamples as examples" (p. 70). Then they offered examples of misuse, one of which being the confusion between the words "late" and "lately."



Overgeneralization was thought to be a technique used throughout the process of first language acquisition by several other scholars (FLA). Littlewood (1984) provided examples of \*eated, \*putted, \*hitted, \*beated, \*sheeps and \*deers. These errors in the irregular past tense and plural form, according to him, are "... instances of the same process of overgeneralization that has been observed in first language acquisition" (p. 23).

Ambridge and Lieven (2011) acknowledged the importance of FLA in this context in their book *Child language acquisition*. They contend that overgeneralization errors are more frequent in the acquisition of children than in the acquisition of adults. This notion is supported by studies such as those conducted by Bowerman (1988), Pinker (1989), and Lord (1979) on the overgeneralization of intransitive verbs into transitive constructions. The example provided was children saying *\*the funny clown giggled mummy* instead of *mummy giggled*. The children in this case did not realize that the verb *giggle* cannot be used in the way they did because it is an intransitive verb. Overgeneralizing a transitive-only verb into an intransitive construction, on the other hand, is less common. Lord (1979) provided the following example of the use of the verb *lose*: children say *\*it lost* instead of *I lost it*. Researchers regard the pre-mentioned misconstruction as a kind of overgeneralization (*\*it lost*) looks like it can be used as an intransitive verb.

The errors in this section of the study are not predetermined or predicted, but the source is. Participants will be permitted to read a poem and the errors will be detected based on overgeneralization. It's done in the form of an error analysis. It is therefore used to describe and analyze participants' own speech contractions with regard to overgeneralization.

## **1.2.6. Interference of French**

### **1.2.6.1. Interference of the Mother Tongue**

Concerning the mother tongue's interference, it was increasingly neglected as focus was shifted away from the CA Hypothesis. Errors from the mother tongue in a foreign language are fairly infrequent and several studies have shown that they are less likely to occur than over-generalization and simplification.

Corder (1967) saw second language acquisition as an active hypothesis test on the learner's side, and when learners make an interference error, they are just hypothesizing that the new language is the

same as the native language. This may be accurate in certain cases, but for the great majority of people, this source is not universally relevant. According to Dulay and Burt's (1974a) study, there is evidence that such language transfer from the mother tongue is exceedingly rare.

When acquiring a "third language," the effect of one's first language might be reduced to a bare minimum. For a long time, it has been suggested that learning a third language is similar to learning a second, and "second language acquisition has become a cover term for acquisition after a first language has been learned. It often incorporates many different types of acquisition, including third, fourth, and so on. " (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 21). As a result, regardless of the number of languages beyond the first two, the final objective was SLA. According to Angelis (2007), "... studies on the acquisition of languages beyond the L2 are rarely mentioned and are mostly missing" (p. 4). The argument highlights one difficult problem. To be particular, in this research, multilingualism is defined as learning languages other than one's first or second language (Cenoz, 1997).

#### **1.2.6.4. Interference of French**

While EFL students may be unaware of these connections and overlaps between the two languages, this does not imply they do not exist. This French influence is still visible in several elements of language and pronunciation today. Throughout the learning process, learners instinctively make use of any prior information that may assist them in making sense of a new concept. When it comes to studying English, Arabic native speakers may draw parallels to French rather than Arabic, since the likelihood of matching comparable features is rather high.

While the native language may seem to be less important in the situation of multilingualism, if it shares a great deal with the languages being learnt, it may be more effective. Choroleeva (2009) concluded in her study of linguistic errors made by francophones studying English as a third language in a higher education institution that there are some inaccuracies at the phonological level when learners do not pronounce /h/ as in /həʊ'tel/, the "g" sound in "gn," or the plural "s," all of which are strongly related to the French influence.

One may claim that French interference occurs when learners are natural French speakers who are studying English. Without a doubt, this interference of the first language is more likely to occur when the two languages have a high degree of similarity. Whether consciously or subconsciously, when learners are learning a second language, they reflect on the languages they have already learned-at the

very least their mother tongue. When Arabic speakers study English, they reflect on Arabic and French. However, given that the English writing system is more similar to French (the alphabet, how words are written, from left to right, capital letters...), as are the sounds, the general rules of writing and spelling, the vocabulary used, and even the overall language looks more like French than Arabic, it's as if comparing Japanese to English. In other words, the mother language will be of little use save for acclimating to particular sounds.

In a nutshell, bilingualism can result in a high rate of errors due to the mother tongue. However, since multilingual learners make errors in all languages involved, the chance of transferring a first language decreases.

## **Conclusion**

The second chapter is dedicated to Error Analysis, started with a comprehensive exposition of the Error Analysis theory, followed by an explanation of the distinction between errors and mistakes. The next section discussed the types of errors as defined by Lee, Krashen, and Corder. Finally, the chapter discussed the importance of errors and the steps involved in doing an error analysis.

***Practical Part:  
Research Design and Methodology***

## **Practical Part: Research Design and Methodology**

### 2.1. Research Methodology

#### 2.1.1. Sampling and Participants

#### 2.1.2. Research Instruments

##### 2.1.2.1. The Poem

##### 2.1.2.2. The Reading Passages

#### 2.1.3. Research Setting and Procedures

### 2.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

#### 2.2.1. Analysis of the Data Collected from the Poem Recordings

##### 2.2.1.1. Analysis of the Data Collected from the Passages Recordings

#### 2.2.2. Discussion of the Results

##### 2.2.2.2. Further Comments

### General Conclusion

#### 1. Summary of major findings

#### 2. Pedagogical Implications

#### 3. Limitations of the Study

#### 4. Suggestions for Future Research

## **Introduction**

Since the aim of this study we conduct is to identify, analyze and classify the pronunciation errors made at the level of the following three vowel sounds: /ai/ /ei/ and /i/, many things will be present in this chapter starting from the research methodology which is about the sample population, research instruments, research setting and procedures. After that we will be dealing with the most important thing in this dissertation. i.e. data analysis and interpretation as well as the discussion of the results.

### **2.1. Research methodology:**

#### **2.1.1. Sampling and participants:**

The participants of the present study comprise a number of 12 fourth year pupils at Labidi Betta Middle School, El-Oued, for the academic year 2020/2021. The learners were selected randomly regardless of their gender, age, etc. Their acceptance was all what were worried about for it is an important condition for interviewing to take place. The reason behind choosing fourth year learners is the fact that they have been exposed to pronunciation lessons for three years at middle school. Another thing worth mentioning is that the subjects under investigation were not told about the aim of the study so that they can act naturally without any stress or hesitation that may be caused by focusing on correct and perfect pronunciation.

#### **2.1.2. Research instruments:**

To carry out this research, one instrument is going to be used which is recording the participants' production. Learners' speech samples are collected using a specialized voice recorder. Thus, the voice of 12 pupils is recorded while they are reading the poem and the sentences which contain words with the target vowel sounds. This process is considered as a very important and effective tool for it is an appropriate way to collect learners' real production of the vowel sounds under investigation. The aim of this recording is to look for the pronunciation errors that the pupils might made at the level of those vowel sounds. After being recorded, learners' speech is transcribed phonetically using Oxford Dictionary.

### 2.1.2.1. The poem

For the first section, in order to reveal how EFL learners overgeneralize rules of pronunciation for certain words, a poem written by Dr. Gerard Nolst Trenité (1870-1946) are employed. Gerard, also known under the pseudonym *Charivarius*, was a Dutch author and teacher whom is well-known in the English-speaking world for his classic poem “the chaos” (Goodreads, 2015). This poem demonstrates about 800 idiosyncrasies of English spelling and pronunciation. Gerard made use of this poem for the first time as an appendix in his textbook *Drop your foreign accent (1920)*. Obviously, the poem is used not as a whole in this study. A part of the poem is chosen and modified by adding or omitting certain words according to the purpose of the study.

**Table01: Targeted words with the participants pronunciation and the correction**

Words	Participants' pronunciation	Correction
Ration	/ rasjɔ̃ /	/reɪʃ(ə)n/
Nation	/ nasjɔ̃ /	/neɪʃ(ə)n/
Marriage	/ marjaʒ /	/mæɪrɪdʒ/
Foliage	/ fœljaʒ /	/fəʊɪdʒ/
Mirage	/miraʒ/	/mɪrɑ:ʒ/
Age	/æʒ/	/eɪdʒ/
Mint	/mɪnt/	/mɪnt/
Pint	/pɪnt/	/pɪnt/
Senate	/sunæt/	/sɪneɪt/
Sedate	/sudæt/	/sɪdeɪt/
Retain	/rutæn/	/rɪteɪn/
Britain	/brɪtæn	/brɪtən/
Steak	/stɪk/	/stɪk/
Library	/lɪbrari/	/laɪbrəri/
Finally	/finalɪ/	/fɑːnəli/
Ally	/ali/	/əlaɪ/



### **1.1.2.2. The Reading Passages**

For the second section, as an attempt to make sure that the participants' pronunciation is clearly influenced by the French vowel sound system, 11 sentences were used in which they carried 11 words. Each word, in turn, contained one of the three vowel sounds being worked on. Namely /ei/, /ai/ and /i/. So, there were 4 words containing the vowel sound /ei/, 4 words containing the vowel sound /ai/, and 3 words having the vowel sound /i/.

### **2.1.3. Research setting and procedures**

In order to meet the objective of the study and answer the research questions, the data need to be collected in an adequate way. In the present study, the only tool used for collecting data is the sample of recordings, as was mentioned before. This latter were done at Labidi Betta Middle School, El-Oued with a group of fourth year pupils (2020/2021). The participants were 12 (2 males and 10 female). They were put in one classroom and were recorded one by one at a specific time. The recording process was a little bit difficult for us because the participants did not have much free time which made it quite difficult to meet them regularly. Since silence is highly needed for the recording process to be successful, the researchers had to guarantee full silence before starting recording the participants, so the appropriate time for the recordings was when the other pupils were inside their classrooms. Each participant was given the sentences and the poem and asked to read them aloud so that the voice would be clear during the identification of errors. After that the fieldwork started to take place. Clear copies were printed and given to the participants, and they were told that reading those papers has to do with their speaking skill in general. If they were informed that the study is about "pronunciation accuracy of certain individual vowel sounds", they would have become more careful, more stressful and their readings would have taken a great deal of time. Besides, they were able to take a look at the papers before reading them if they wanted to. They were made at ease by telling them to speak casually just like the way they used to speak English in general. Furthermore, learners who felt a bit anxious or shy to read in front of the researcher or any other person were allowed to take the recorder along with the papers and sit isolated until the recording is done. As a matter of fact, being isolated does not mean permitting learners to take the recorder with them and read at home. All the reading that was done by 12

participants was with the presence of the researcher either next to the pupil being recorded, or just few meters away from those who preferred to read alone.

After collecting 12 tracks which represent the data to be analyzed, they were transferred to the computer for a clearer audio. Doing a mini-research about any possible specialized pronunciation software proved to be fruitless. It is true that there are so many types of software that can help with speaking but as far as our research goes, there is no such software that can play the recording, detect an error and transcribe it just the way it was mispronounced. Eventually, we ended up listening carefully with the headphones to each track separately and we used Cambridge English Dictionary University Press to transcribe. No transcription took place without listening more than one time to the targeted word being played. For the French transcriptions, Online Larousse Dictionary was used. The focus of the study is very much articulatory (individual vowel sounds) and it is worth mentioning that it is the *phonemic transcription* that was employed. During the process of analyzing and interpreting any articulation, the attention was paid to why a particular vowel sound was used instead of the correct one (using /ai/ instead of /i/ for example).

For the first section, the collected data are shown in the form of a table represents a comparison between the way learners pronounced the words in the poem and how they should be pronounced. Thereafter, the table was interpreted in the forms of graphs. Each graph was described and interpreted separately. While in the second section, the collected data are shown in the form of graphs representing the percentage of both correct and incorrect articulations of the given words. Thus, there are 11 graphs; each graph deals with one single word that is chosen intentionally from the 11 sentences, showing their pronunciation by the participants and it is followed by a detailed description and explanation of why participants articulated the target vowel sounds the way they did.

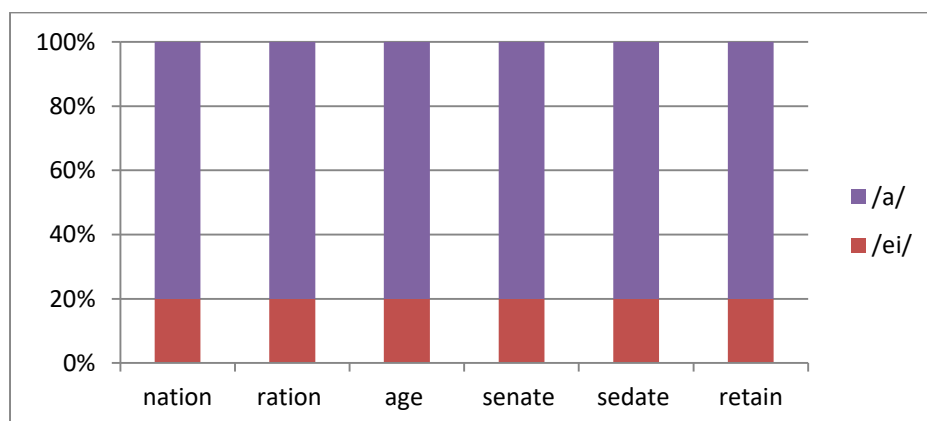
## **2.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

### **2.2.1. Analysis of the Data Collected from the Poem Recordings**

This is the first section in the practical part. It covers descriptions and analyses of the oral data collected from participants' readings of the poem. This data is displayed in the form of graphs for groups of words with the same vowel sounds. During data interpretations, reference is consistently made to the first factor in this study which is: the overgeneralization of English pronunciation rules.

## 1. Words with the vowel sound /ei/

Six words with the vowel sound /ei/ are analyzed in Figure 01. Two participants (20%) succeeded in pronouncing the words *nation*, *ration*, *age*, *senate*, *sedate* and *retain*, especially when dealing with the vowel sound /ei/ which is what we are concerned about. Actually, they pronounced the words as if they are dealing with a French word. For instance, instead of saying *nation* /neɪʃ(ə)n/, they said /nasjɔ̃/. The reason behind making such an error is that most of the words are an English modification of French words ‘*nation*, *ration*, *age*, *sénat*, *retenir*’, which is actually their origin. Hence, the use of those pronunciations by the participants reflects the interference of the French vowel sound system since they are pronounced this way /rasjɔ̃/, /nasjɔ̃/, /aʒ/, /sunæt/, /sudæt/, /rutæn/. On the other hand, ten participants (80%) mispronounced the words *nation*, *ration*, *age*, *senate*, *sedate* and *retain*, so what happened during their readings is an overgeneralization of the vowel sound that does not actually fit where it was articulated and consequently, causing the overgeneralization errors.



**Figure 8. Words with the vowel sound /ei**

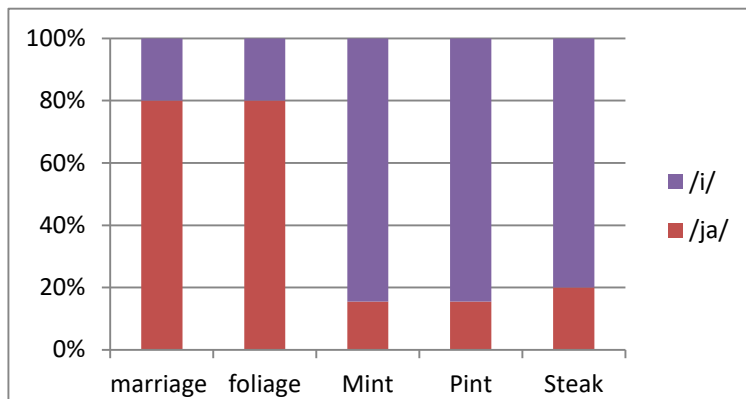
## 1. Words with the vowel sound /i/

The words “marriage” and “foliage” was pronounced in two different ways, the second syllable which carries the target vowel sound was pronounced correctly by only two pupils (20%) who might have seen the word before while the rest of them (80%) mispronounced it.

The majority of the participants pronounced the words marriage, foliage as /mɑrʒɑʒ/, /fɛljɑʒ/ instead of /mæriɪdʒ/, /fɔʃiɪdʒ/. That is to say, they articulated the combination “ia” as /ja/ instead of /i/. This pronunciation error is due to the overgeneralization of some pronunciation rules. However, the correct pronunciation of the syllable was exhibited by only (20%) of the participants .i.e. two out

of the whole number. The words mint, pint, and steak were pronounced correctly by the majority of the participants because they are used to the letter “i” which is, in this case, pronounced /i/ as it is pronounced in French, and there are those who couldn’t pronounce it in a correct way, so it is quite clear that the only interpretation is that the participants overgeneralised their

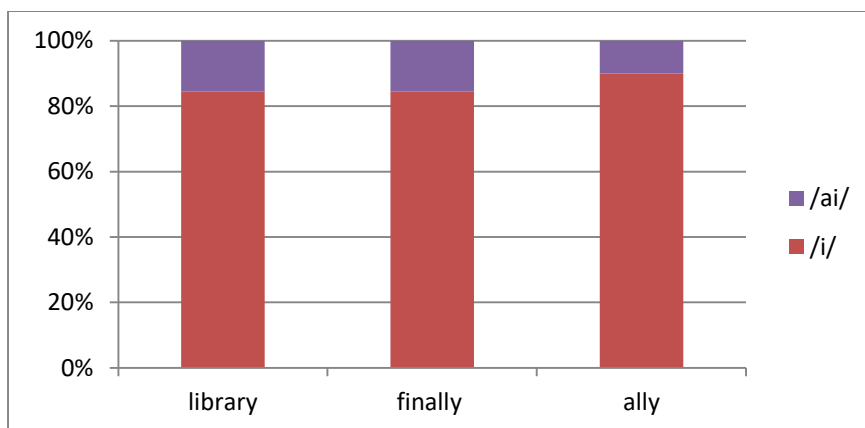
pronunciation in the previous words.



**Figure 9. Words with the vowel sound /i/**

### 1. Words with the vowel sound /ai/

For the words “library” and “finally”, the first syllable was pronounced accurately by 17% of the participants. While 83% pronounce it in a wrong way. Instead of saying /laɪbrəri/ and /faɪnəli/ they said /lɪbrəri/ and /fɪnəli/. So It should be noticed that the letter ‘i’ is never pronounced /i/ in English. So, producing the vowel sound /i/ rather than /ai/ was unclear, and there was no reason leading them to pronounce it that way. Therefore, the only reason behind making such a pronunciation error is the interference of the French vowel sound system. That is to say, the counterpart of the word “finally”, for instance, in French is “**finale**ment”. For the word “ally”, only one participant could pronounce it correctly. On the other hand, 90% of them failed to articulate it correctly by saying /ali/ instead of /əlaɪ/. The only interpretation that justifies such a pronunciation error is that the word ally is somehow uncommon among pupils of middle school. Hence, they may have never checked its pronunciation. Therefore, they generalized the usual pronunciation of the letter “y” as in “honey” “silly” for example, and applied it to pronounce the “y” in “ally”. So, it can be said that producing /i/ instead of /ai/ was due to the overgeneralization of pronunciation rules.



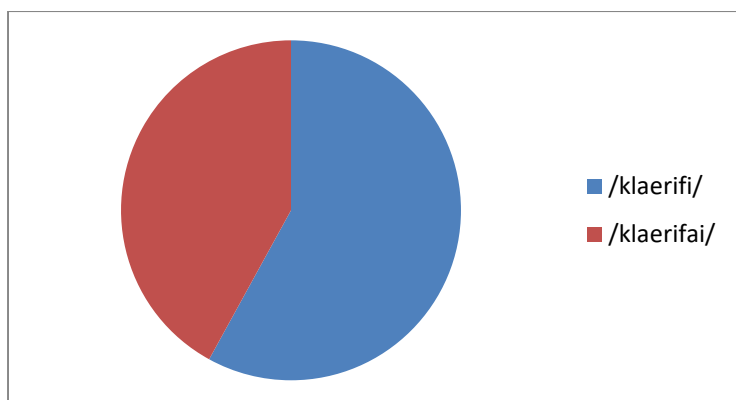
**Figure 10. Words with the vowel sound /ai/**

### 2.2.1.1. Analysis of the Data Collected from the List of Sentences Recordings

#### 1. The vowel sound /ai/

##### a. Clarify

The word “clarify” which consists of 3 syllables was pronounced differently in terms of the third syllable. Out of the 12 participants recorded, only 5 of them succeeded to pronounce the third syllable accurately. They pronounced the last letter “y” as /ai/ and therefore as it should be pronounced. However, the rest 7 participants .i.e. 58% failed to articulate the third syllable correctly. They said /klaerifi/ instead of /klaerifai/. This failure in identifying the correct articulation is mainly due to the interference of the French vowel sound system which affected the pronunciation of the word “clarify”. That is to say, in French there is the word “clarifier” in which the final letter is pronounced /i/. Etymologically speaking, the word “clarify” is taken from French “clarifier”



**Figure 11. Pupils’ articulation of the word “clarify”**

## b. Crime

The word “crime” which consists of 1 syllable was pronounced differently in terms of the vowel sound /ai/. Out of the 12 participants recorded, only 1 of them succeeded to pronounce it. They pronounced the letter “i” as /ai/ and therefore as it should be pronounced. However, the rest 11 participants .i.e. 91% failed to articulate the vowel sound correctly. They said /krim/ instead of /kraim/. This failure in identifying the correct articulation is mainly due to the interference of the French vowel sound system which affected the pronunciation of the word “crime”.

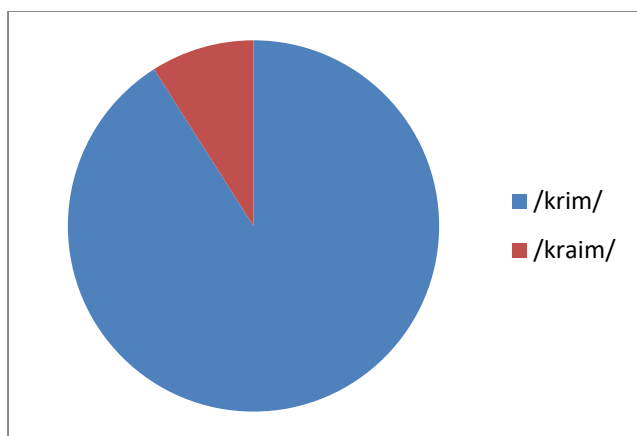


Figure 12. Pupils' articulation of the word “crime”

## c. Virus

The word virus went through two different pronunciations, 30% of the participants pronounced it as /vairəs / which is the correct pronunciation. However, the majority .i.e. 70% mispronounced the first syllable. They said /virys/ instead of / vairəs /, so 8 out of 12 participants articulated the first syllable as if they are dealing with a French word. Hence, it is quite obvious that the interference of the French vowel sound system influenced the pronunciation of the word “virus”.

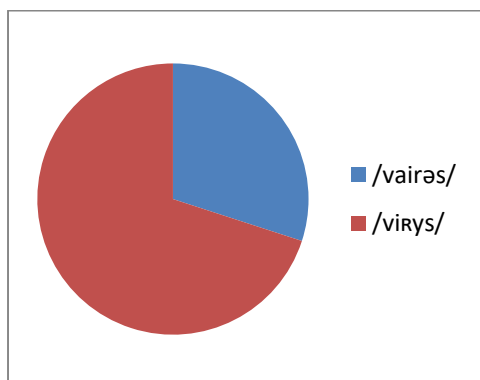
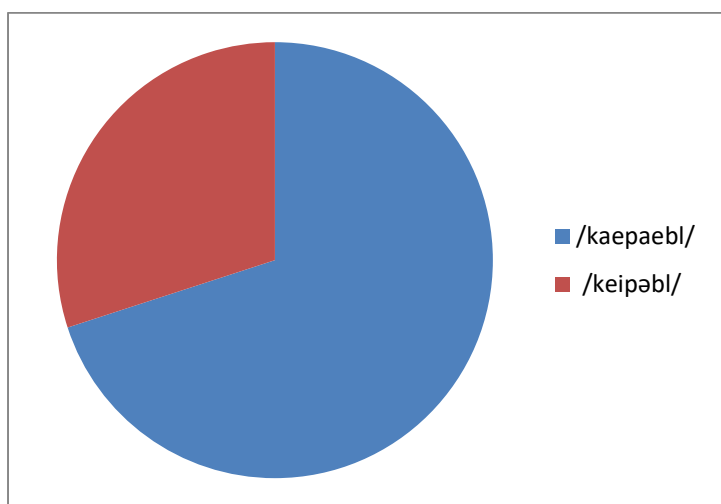


Figure 13. Pupils' articulation of the word “Virus”

## 2. The vowel sound /ei/

### a. Capable

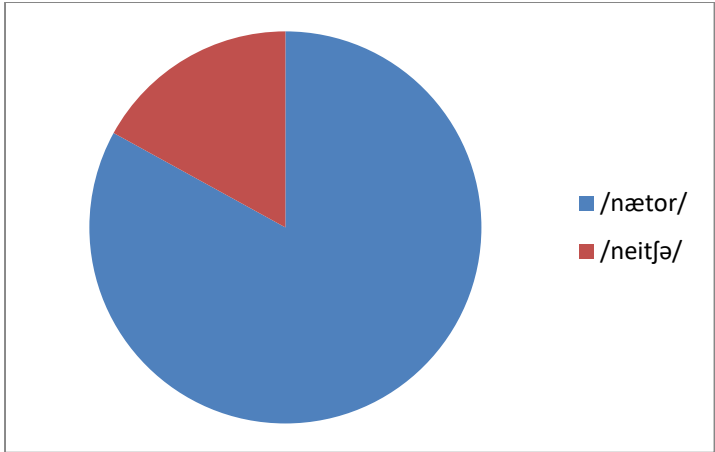
The word capable went through two different pronunciations, 30% of the participants pronounced it as /keipəbl/ which is the correct pronunciation. However, the majority .i.e. 70% mispronounced the first syllable. They said /kaepæbl/ instead of /keipəbl/, so 8 out of 12 participants articulated the first syllable as if they are dealing with a French word. Hence, it is quite obvious that the interference of the French vowel sound system influenced the pronunciation of the word “capable”.



**Figure 14. Pupils’ articulation of the word “capable”**

### b. Nature

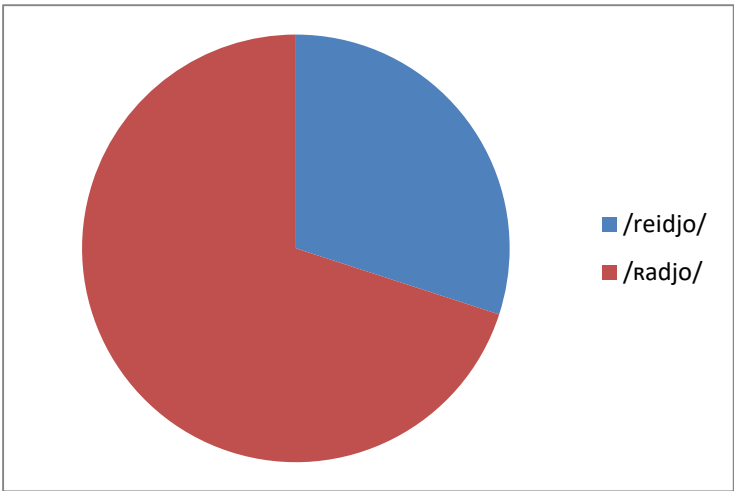
The word nature went through two different pronunciations, 17% of the participants pronounced it as /neɪtʃə/ which is the correct pronunciation. However, the majority .i.e.83% mispronounced the first syllable. They said /nætɔr/ instead of /neɪtʃə/, so 10 out of 12 participants articulated the first syllable as if they are dealing with a French word. Hence, it is quite obvious that the interference of the French vowel sound system influenced the pronunciation of the word “nature”.



**Figure 15. Pupils’ articulation of the word “nature”**

**c. Radio**

For the word “radio” only the second first syllable is discussed, the word was pronounced in two ways: /reɪdʒo/ and /radʒo/. As figure 06 shows, only three participants (30%) out of the whole number was able to give the correct pronunciation at the level of the first syllable. However, the rest of the participants (70%) mispronounced the letter “a” “radio” as it is pronounced in words like “map” or “can” which means that the interference of the French vowel sound system influenced the pronunciation of the word “radio”



**Figure 16. Pupils’ articulation of the word “Radio”**



#### d. Danger

The word “danger” which consists of 2 syllables was pronounced differently in terms of the first syllable. Out of the 12 participants recorded, 05 of them succeeded to pronounce the first syllable accurately. They pronounced the letter “a” as /ei/ and therefore as it should be pronounced. However, the rest 07 participants .i.e. 60% failed to articulate the first syllable correctly. They said /dãnzɛ/ instead of /deɪndʒə/. This failure in identifying the correct articulation is mainly due to the interference of the French vowel sound system which affected the pronunciation of the word “danger”. That is to say, in French there is the word “danger” in which the vowel is pronounced /ã/.

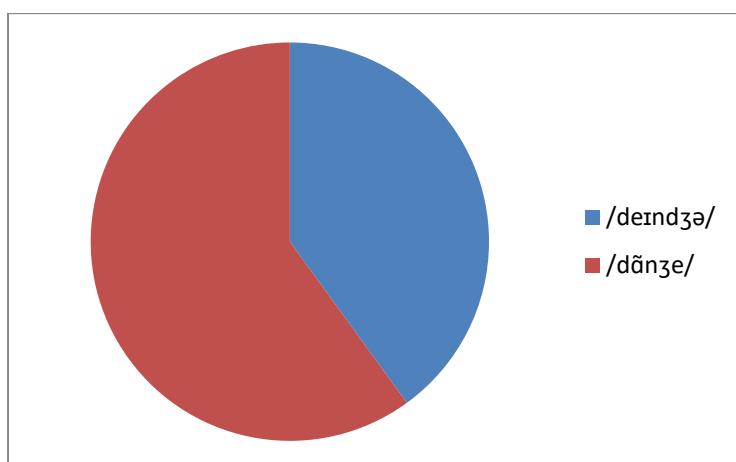
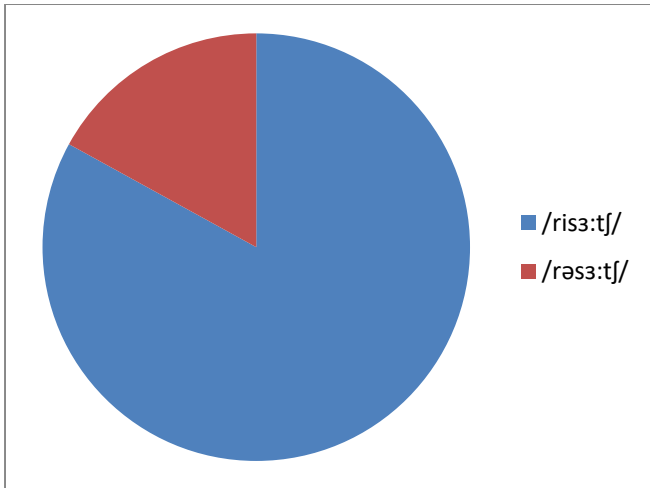


Figure 17. Pupils' articulation of the word “danger”

### 3. The vowel sound /i/

#### a. Research

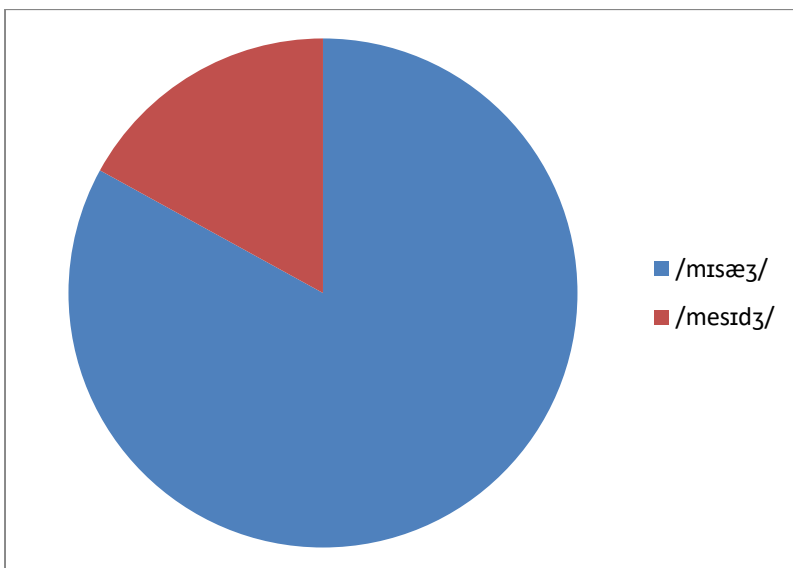
As figure 03 shows, most of the participants (83%) succeeded in pronouncing the first syllable of the word research, which is what we are concerned about; they said /ri/ not like the rest (17%) who pronounced the vowel e as a shwa, so they said /rə/ instead of /ri/. It is worth mentioning that among those 83%, we noticed that some participants pronounced the /tʃ/ sound as if they are dealing with a French word, so instead of saying /risɜ:tʃ/, they said /risɜ:f/. Apparently, the participants' pronunciation is influenced by the French vowel sound system.



**Figure 18. Pupils' articulation of the word "research"**

**b. Message**

For the word "message" only the second syllable is discussed, the word was pronounced in two ways: /mɪsæʒ/ and /mesɪdʒ/. As figure 06 shows, only two participants out of the whole number was able to give the correct pronunciation at the level of the second syllable. However, the rest of the participants (83%) mispronounced the letter "a" "message" as it is pronounced in words like "laggard" or "mange" which means that the interference of the French vowel sound system influenced the pronunciation of the word "message".



**Figure 19. Pupils' articulation of the word "message"**

### c. Experience

The word “experience” which consists of 3 syllables was pronounced differently in terms of the first syllable. Out of the 12 participants recorded, 07 of them succeeded to pronounce the first syllable accurately. They pronounced the first letter “e” as /i/ and therefore as it should be pronounced. However, the rest 05 participants .i.e. 40% failed to articulate the first syllable correctly. They said /ɛksperjās/ instead of /ɪkspɪrɪəns/. This failure in identifying the correct articulation is mainly due to the interference of the French vowel sound system which affected the pronunciation of the word “experience”. That is to say, in French there is the word “expérience” in which the first letter is pronounced /ɛ/.

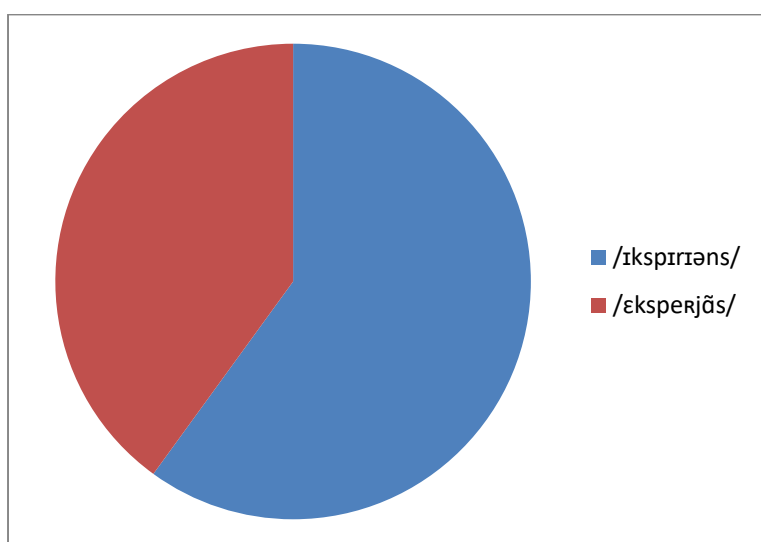


Figure 20. Pupils' articulation of the word “Experience”

### d. Intelligence

The words “intelligence” was pronounced in two different ways, the first syllable which carries the target vowel sound was pronounced correctly by 07 pupils (60%) who might have seen the word before while the rest of them (40%) mispronounced it. The minority of the participants pronounced the word intelligence as / ɛtɛlɪʒāns/ instead of /ɪntɛlɪdʒəns/. That is to say, they articulated the letter “i” as /ɛ/ instead of /i/. This pronunciation error is due to the overgeneralization of some pronunciation rules.

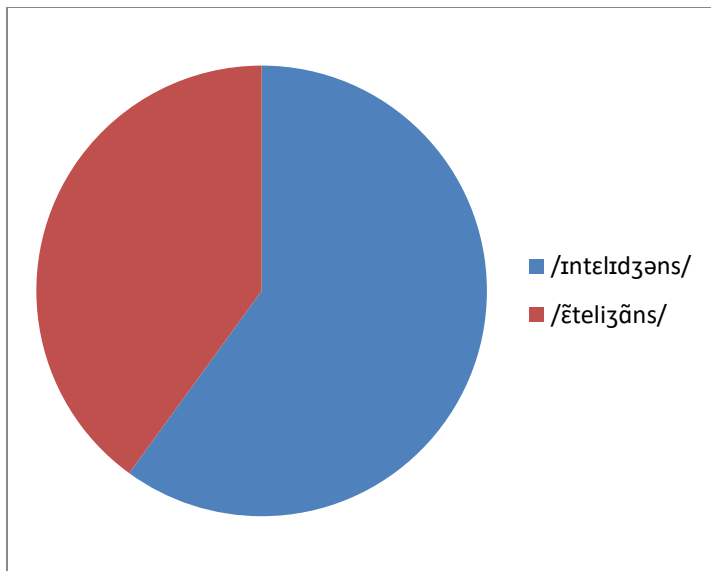


Figure 21. Pupils' articulation of the word "Intelligence"

### 2.2.2. Discussion of the results:

The previous section which dealt with the second part of the research (French interference) covered forty 25 words with numerous accurate/inaccurate articulations. The analyses and the interpretations were chosen as most likely rather than absolutely correct. Moreover, Participants may not be aware of the origins of words or, for some cases; they may not even know the word. Unawareness of the word itself or its etymology is not a condition that must be considered to figure out the source of the error. The interference is there because there is re-occurring evidence that proves it. Sub-consciousness plays a significant role in students' learning and this is one of the things that can be accounted for. In other words, even if learners know nothing about the words and their origins, most of them may have come across those words in French before learning them in English. *No one can tell how to pronounce an English word unless he has at some time or other heard it* (Walter William Skeat, 1835-1912). One thought directed to their interlanguage and they can sub-consciously make quick connections between the words at hand and already known words. This may not be the case for all of them but as the Figures show; the overwhelming majority have pronounced many words and made them sound just like French. Notwithstanding, during the analyses of certain vowel sounds, overgeneralization was investigated because it was also a likely source.

Although it is true that some pupils may have difficulty mastering the French language, this does not mean that they do not already have a good grasp on all aspects of the language, so what makes this interference very reasonable is that the French sound system is similar to that of English and far much easier and this is by no means arguable. The idea is that French letter/sound relations are not very complicated compared to English. This pronunciation simplicity in French looks intriguing for learners especially because the two languages share a long history that led eventually to a great resemblance in hundreds of words. This resemblance triggers the learners' French interlanguage concerning the effortless French pronunciation.

Students' individual performances were scrutinized to be able to figure out students' competencies in reference to themselves. There is no student who could pronounce all words correctly though. The previous statistics show to what extent this factor affected students' pronunciation. This is not a coincidence because even if we consider that there are those who know how to pronounce correctly and many of their articulations were slips of tongue, the overall estimate is going to drop but they will still be a majority compared to those who made the least number of errors/mistakes. Within the two passages provided, there is no targeted vowel sound that occurs once. All of them were mentioned two or three times. This repetition is not arbitrary. When a vowel sound is repeated in the passages and students enunciated it the same way in the two occurrences, this is a sign that we can rely on to prove that they are not just random mistakes. However, there were cases where students say the same word differently for the first and second (and third, if there is) occurrences. This was taken care of during the analysis, i.e. it was pointed out that when students pronounce the same vowel sound differently when it is mentioned again, one of their articulations is an error and the other is a mistake. It can be said that both are errors or both are mistakes. So, it can be seen as if learners know the pronunciation of the word but they just failed during the readings because of some extraneous variables like tiredness, carelessness or lack of concentration. This is one strong argument from which to consider their mispronunciations but if this was the case, why did they succeed to pronounce many/some of the words? Learners pronounce the words the way they think they are pronounced. There is hardly a possibility that learners know the pronunciation but then, decided not to pronounce correctly. As was explained in the procedures, learners have read wherever they felt at ease, next to the researcher or just a bit far, in an isolated place. This point enhances the eradication of some extraneous variables. All in all, after many precautions and attempts to get closer to the source of those errors, it is still a long journey to finally account for their exact source.

This part of research has dealt with the interference of the French pronunciation in learners' articulations of the English sounds /ai/, /ei/ and /i/. Only after this, we can take a look back at the aim and the research questions that were set for this section. First of all, the aim was to identify, analyze and classify the different pronunciation errors made by fourth year pupils at Labidi Betta Middle School, El-Oued. These errors were examined to decide to which extent an interference of the French sound system contribute to the commitment of such errors. All the analyses and interpretations that were conducted ultimately serve and fulfill the present aim. As for the first question "To what extent French interference influence learners' pronunciations?", it was obviously stated that French influence can affect their pronunciation greatly.

### 2.2.2.2. Further Comments:

In this study, the recording phase revealed some commonly-used words that the overwhelming majority of students mispronounce. Obviously, this does not mean that the rest of the words in the reading passages were all perfectly pronounced by each and every participant. The four chosen words are considered as basic vocabulary that is widely used in oral and written performances. These words consist of the vowel sounds that occurred more than once in the pieces of writing they were asked to read. The following Figures show the ways in which these words were articulated in each occurrence. These words are: *nation*, *ration*, *age*, *senate*, *sedate*, *retain*, *marriage*, *foliage*, *mint*, *pint*, *steak*, *library*, *finally*, *ally*.

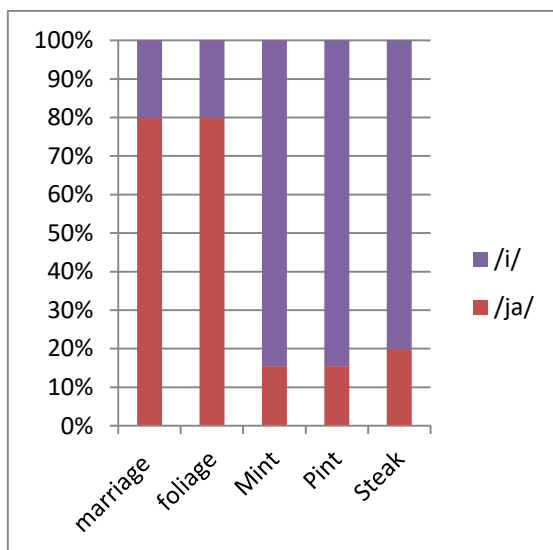


Figure 22. Participants' articulation of the vowel sound /i/

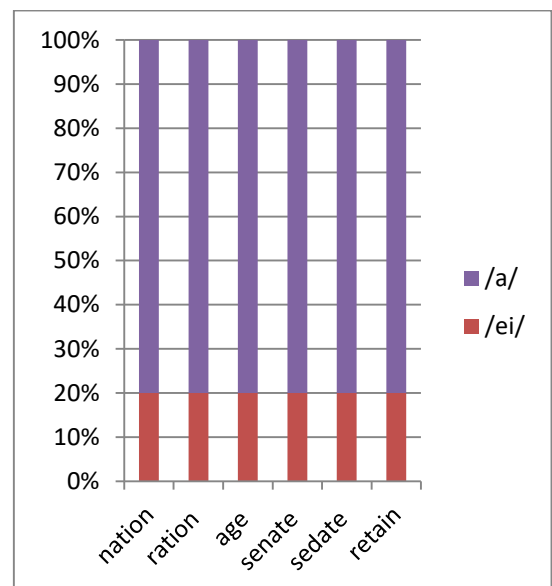


Figure 21. Participants' articulation of the vowel sound /ei/

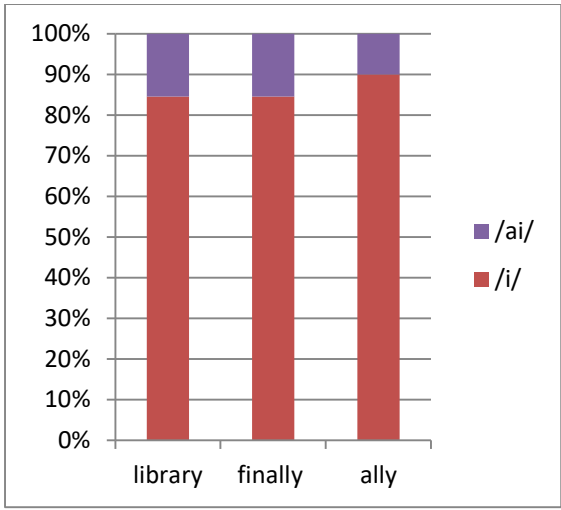


Figure 23. Participants' articulation of the vowel sound /ai/

# *General Conclusion*



## **General conclusion**

This study dealt with an analysis of Algerian EFL learners' pronunciation errors by giving a clear definition of pronunciation that was offered by a handful of linguists and academicians, followed by a discussion of the aspects of pronunciation vowel and consonant sounds. Moreover, this later dealt also with error analysis, starting with a comprehensive exposition of the error analysis theory followed by an explanation of the distinction between errors and mistakes. Last but not least, this research discussion the importance of errors and the steps involved in doing an error analysis.

## **1. Summary of Major Findings**

The present study was conducted to serve one major aim. This aim was to identify, analyze and classify the different pronunciation errors made by fourth year pupils at Labidi Betta Middle School; El-Oued at the level of the vowel sounds /ei/, /ai/and /i/.

The classification phase was directed to two sources: Overgeneralization of English pronunciation rules and an interference of French. It should be noted that before we began working on this thesis, we had made a test which was a kind of recordings through which we narrowed down the vowel sounds that are the most mispronounced by the learners. After we listened to the students' recordings, we hypothesized that 4<sup>th</sup> year EFL learners at Labidi Betta Middle School have difficulties in the production of the vowel sounds /ei/, /ai/ and /i/.

Based on this aim, students' and teachers' awareness about the nature of such errors will be raised resulting in a pedagogical procedure to eliminate their occurrence. This awareness along with the detailed analyses and results provided can be used as a reference for duplications.

The whole study was made up of two main parts. The first one was theoretical in which one chapter was devoted to a general introduction to pronunciation and its features with an emphasis on the overgeneralization of English pronunciation rules and an interference of French at the level of /ei/, /ai/ and /i/. The second chapter covered the fieldwork and its detailed procedures with the use of a voice recorder to gather the oral data. The data was in the form of audio recordings and the methodology was mainly a descriptive analysis. The results that were achieved from the identification and the classification of errors elucidated the great extent to which overgeneralization and interference influence learners' speaking accuracy. Despite any given limitations, the information that was gathered from this study was used to provide some useful pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research.

## 2. Pedagogical implication:

Speaking, writing and listening are taught in most colleges, but phonetics and pronunciation classes are not always part of the curriculum, and even when they are, they tend to be very basic (James and Smith, 2007). This research is of a huge importance at an academic level, and accurate pronunciation is one of the most important, yet somehow neglected, aspects of a learner's knowledge in an academic setting of learning English as a foreign language. Unfortunately, this aspect is not very well handled in the context in which the research was conducted. It is true that it aimed at identifying the errors and classifying them based on a careful analysis without focusing on providing remediation.

Actually, the steps that were carried out in this study are of crucial importance ones before deciding how to deal with the errors. This is not an assumption but a truth in the eyes of many researchers like *Corder* (1967) who claims that "a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found".

Teachers can adjust their teaching materials to deal with errors at such an advanced level or to attempt to minimize their occurrence starting from first year middle school pupils, and this can be done with paying more attention to **Phonetics** classes which makes the findings of this research act as a valid standpoint.

. Oral expression sessions also are important but teachers usually focus on fluency, listening skills and comprehension techniques. Accuracy is one secondary aim and that is what brings us back to the inevitable need for more **Phonetics** lessons along the years.

Moreover, the teachers' presentations will not be so much helpful with a lack of suitable equipment

.  
In sum, it would be very much handy for teachers to inform them of the errors resulting from overgeneralization and interference, allowing them to adjust their teaching materials in attempt to remediate the errors, to make the learners aware of the errors and their sources so that to shed light on the importance of pronunciation accuracy. Finally, this whole procedure can be applicable if teachers are to be provided with the right equipment.

### **3. Limitations of the study:**

As any other research, some difficulties and setbacks were encountered at some points in this study. Given the restricted time available, the fear of having a big number of participants because of (COVID19) in which grouping is not allowed especially at schools, so the sample was not large enough. Consequently, standardizing the findings on the whole population may look impractical.

Throughout the study, we referred to most of the mispronunciations as “errors” but this is not always true. Having integrated two or more word occurrences in the second part is not quite enough to confirm that learners are actually making errors not just mistakes, and this is a factor that should be taken into consideration.

Last but not least, the attempt to point out the sources of errors in this research was based on evidence. Though identifying the sources based on the type of error being made is a reasonable procedure, errors may result from other sources which might be involved (not necessarily overgeneralization and/or interference of French).

### **2.5. Suggestions for Future Research**

What we might suggest as researchers for future research pursuing a similar topic is that having more time and better circumstances will allow for the selection of a larger representative sample. Moreover, a focus can be directed only to one of the variables (overgeneralization or interference). As for the source of errors, it might be only asserted that a scrutinized analysis and a logical interpretation can be relied on because after all, the whole mental process is still an ambiguous area to be researched and measured.

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# ***APPENDICES***

# APPENDIX ONE: THE POEM

## The Chaos

Dearest creature in creation  
Studying English pronunciation  
Here is your ration, here is your nation  
You will hear in my verse  
Words like marriage, foliage, mirage and age

Mint, pint, senate, and sedate

\*\*\*\*\*

Just compare  
Retain and Britain  
Mind the latter, how it's written  
But be careful how you speak  
Say break and steak, but bleak and steak

\*\*\*\*\*

Though the differences seem little

We say alive but live  
And your pronunciation's ok  
When you say correctly  
Wind and mind  
River and rival  
Liberty and library

\*\*\*\*\*

Hear me say chalice but police and lice

Now first say sally with ally

Yea, ye, eye, I, ay, aye, whey and key

\*\*\*\*\*

Finally, which agrees with enough

Hiccough has the sound of cup

My advice is to give up!

## APPENDIX TWO: THE LIST OF SENTENCES

1. There are several ways to clarify water.
2. We won't go anywhere near the crime scene.
3. She is capable of anything.
4. This is your nature; you just don't know it yet.
5. How is your research going?
6. He has a lot of experience in these matters.
7. He is infected by a virus.
8. Danger isn't the problem.
9. Turn off the radio.
10. She typed a message to him.
11. I'm sure a woman with intelligence will shock you.

## Résumé

Cette étude porte sur l'identification, l'analyse et la classification des erreurs de prononciation au niveau des voyelles / ai /, / ei /et / i / réalisées par les élèves de quatrième année moyenne du CEM Laabidi Betta. Ces erreurs sont attribuées à deux sources majeures: une sur généralisation des règles de prononciation anglaise et l'interférence du système vocal vocalique français. En conséquence, cette recherche cherche à explorer la mesure dans laquelle ces sources affectent la prononciation des voyelles cibles par les élèves. Pour répondre aux questions de cette étude, une analyse d'erreur sur la prononciation des voyelles cibles est effectuée. Le travail sur le terrain est effectué selon une méthode analytique descriptive avec un enregistreur vocal pour collecter des données orales. Les analyses sont effectuées pour remplir le but principal de cette thèse. Les résultats établissent une preuve valable que les deux sources prédéterminées semblent avoir une incidence considérable sur la prononciation des apprenants au niveau de la voyelle cible. La signification de cette étude découle du fait que les études antérieures ont rarement abordé la prononciation de ces trois voyelles : / ai /, / ei /et / i / . Ainsi, grâce à cette étude, la sensibilisation à ces erreurs sera augmentée de sorte que les enseignants feront quelque chose pour réduire leurs occurrences.

## ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحديد وتحليل وتصنيف أخطاء النطق على مستوى أصوات الحروف / ei /, / ai /, و / i / التي قام بها تلاميذ سنة الرابعة متوسط بمتوسطة لعبيدي بته بالوادي. عزى رئيسيين: الإفراط في تعميم قواعد النطق باللغة الإنجليزية وتدخل نظام صوت العلة الفرنسي. بناء على ذلك، يسعى هذا البحث إلى استكشاف مدى تأثير هذه المصادر على نطق الطالب لأصوات حروف العلة المستهدفة. للإجابة على اسئلة هذه الدراسة، يتم إجراء تحليل الخطاء النطق على مستوى اصوات الحروف المستهدفة و المذكورة اعلاه. يتم تنفيذ العمل الميداني باتباع طريقة تحليلية وصفية مع مسجل صوت لجمع البيانات الشفهية. يتم تنفيذ التحليلات لتحقيق دلائل صحيح ا على أن المصدرين اللذين تم تحديدهما ا الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة. وتضع النتائج سابق يؤثران في نطق المتعلمين على مستوى حرف العلة المستهدفة إلى حد كبير. تنبع أهمية هذه الدراسة من حقيقة أن الدراسات السابقة نادرا ما تعالج مشكلة النطق الصوات الحروف الثلاثة المذكورة سابقا. لذلك، من خلال هذه الدراسة سيتم رفع الوعي بهذه الأخطاء بحيث يقوم المدرسون بعمل شيء لتقليل حدوثهم.