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**Investigating the Effects of the Mother Tongue (Arabic Language) on EFL
Students' Pronunciation:
The Case of Second-Year English Language Students at Ecole Normale
Supérieure (ENS) Ouargla**

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Dedications

We dedicate this humble work to our beloved families, whose endless love, support, and encouragement have always been our greatest source of strength.

To our teachers and supervisors, thank you for your guidance, patience, and valuable advice throughout this journey.

To our friends and everyone who stood by us during the difficult moments, your support meant more than words can express.

Finally, we dedicate this work to all students who strive for success and never give up on their dreams.

Maroua Hebbal & Lina Bouloudene

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of the mother tongue (Arabic language) on the pronunciation of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, with particular reference to second-year students at ENS Ouargla. Despite years of formal instruction, many EFL learners continue to experience persistent pronunciation difficulties that hinder effective oral communication. These difficulties are often attributed to negative transfer from the learners' mother tongue, especially at the phonological level. The present research aims to identify the most recurrent pronunciation errors and to examine the extent to which Arabic phonological features interfere with the production of English sounds. Adopting a descriptive and explanatory research design, the study relies on data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a purposive sample of students. It is hypothesized that Arabic exerts a significant influence on learners' pronunciation, particularly in the articulation of sounds that have no equivalent in Arabic. The findings provide valuable insights into cross linguistic interference and contribute to the development of more effective pronunciation teaching strategies in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: EFL learners, pronunciation, Arabic interference, phonological transfer, ENS Ouargla

التحقيق في تأثير اللغة الام (العربية) على نطق طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

دراسة حالة طلبة اللغة الانجليزية السنة الثانية بالمدرسة العليا للأساتذة بورقلة

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تأثير اللغة الام (العربية) على نطق متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على طلبة السنة الثانية في المدرسة العليا للأساتذة بورقلة. فعلى الرغم من سنوات من التعليم الرسمي، لا يزال العديد من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يواجهون صعوبات مستمرة في النطق تعيق التواصل الشفهي الفعّال. وغالبًا ما تُعزى هذه الصعوبات إلى التأثير السلبي للغة الأم لدى المتعلمين، خاصة على المستوى الصوتي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد أكثر أخطاء النطق شيوعًا، وفحص مدى تأثير الخصائص الصوتية للغة العربية على إنتاج الأصوات الإنجليزية. وتعتمد الدراسة على منهج وصفي تفسيري، حيث تستند إلى بيانات يتم جمعها من خلال استبيان منظم يُوزع على عينة قصدية من الطلبة. وتفترض الدراسة أن اللغة العربية تمارس تأثيرًا ملحوظًا على نطق المتعلمين، لا سيما في نطق الأصوات التي لا يوجد لها مقابل في اللغة العربية. و تسهم نتائج الدراسة في تقديم رؤى قيّمة حول التداخل اللغوي، وأن تساهم في تطوير استراتيجيات أكثر فعالية لتدريس النطق في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

كلمات دلالية: متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، النطق، التداخل اللغوي العربي، الانتقال الصوتي، علم الأصوات الإنجليزي، المدرسة العليا للأساتذة بورقلة

**L'Investigation de l'Influence de la Langue la langue maternelle (l'arabe) sur la
Prononciation des Étudiants EFL :
Cas des Étudiants de Deuxième Année à l'ENS d'Ouargla**

Résumé

Cette étude explore l'influence de la langue maternelle (l'arabe) sur la prononciation des apprenants de l'anglais langue étrangère (EFL), en prenant comme cas les étudiants de deuxième année à l'École Normale Supérieure d'Ouargla. Malgré plusieurs années d'enseignement formel, de nombreux apprenants continuent à rencontrer des difficultés persistantes de prononciation qui entravent une communication orale efficace. Ces difficultés sont souvent attribuées au transfert négatif de la langue maternelle des apprenants, notamment au niveau phonologique. La présente recherche vise à identifier les erreurs de prononciation les plus récurrentes et à examiner dans quelle mesure les caractéristiques phonologiques de l'arabe interfèrent avec la production des sons anglais. Adoptant une approche descriptive et explicative, l'étude repose sur des données recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire structuré administré à un échantillon raisonné d'étudiants. L'étude émet l'hypothèse que l'arabe exerce une influence significative sur la prononciation des apprenants, particulièrement dans l'articulation des sons qui n'ont pas d'équivalent en arabe. Les résultats devraient fournir des perspectives précieuses sur l'interférence interlinguistique et contribuer au développement de stratégies plus efficaces pour l'enseignement de la prononciation dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère.

Mots-clés: Apprenants EFL, prononciation, interférence de l'arabe, transfert phonologique, phonologie anglaise, ENS Ouargla.

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List of Abbreviations

- **APA:** American Psychological Association
- **ENSO :** École Normale Supérieure de Ouargla
- **EFL :** English as a Foreign Language
- **FL :** Foreign Language
- **H :** Hypotheses
- **H0:** Null Hypothesis
- **H1:** Alternative Hypothesis
- **KMUO :** Kasdi Merbah University - Ouargla
- **L1 :** First Language
- **L2 :** Second Language
- **MSA:** Modern Standard Arabic
- **Q :** Question
- **SL :** Second Language

General Introduction

Overview

Pronunciation plays a crucial role in mastering English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it directly affects learners' intelligibility and communicative competence. Despite years of studying English, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulties in producing accurate pronunciation. One of the main factors behind these difficulties is the influence of the learners' first language (L1).

In the Algerian context, Arabic is the dominant mother tongue, and its phonological system differs significantly from that of English. These differences often lead to negative transfer, where learners apply Arabic pronunciation rules to English. As a result, students may struggle with certain English sounds, stress patterns, and intonation. At the level of higher education, particularly at ENS Ouargla, second-year EFL students are expected to demonstrate a relatively advanced level of oral proficiency. However, noticeable pronunciation errors still persist. This situation raises important questions about the extent to which Arabic influences learners' pronunciation and the nature of the difficulties they encounter.

Statement of the Problem

Although EFL students at ENS Ouargla receive formal instruction in English, many of them continue to exhibit persistent pronunciation errors. These errors may negatively affect their oral communication and overall language performance. The problem lies in the possible interference of Arabic phonological features, which may prevent students from accurately producing English sounds. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how and to what extent Arabic influences the pronunciation of second-year EFL students.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

- identify the most common pronunciation difficulties faced by EFL students. .
- analyze the types of errors resulting from phonological transfer.
- explore the relationship between L1 interference and pronunciation performance.
- suggest pedagogical implications to improve students' pronunciation.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- To what extent does Arabic influence EFL students' pronunciation?
- What are the most common pronunciation errors made by Second-Year English language students?

Which English sounds are most affected by Arabic interference?

Hypotheses

In regards of the above research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated :

- (H0) : Arabic has no significant influence on EFL students' pronunciation
- (H1) : Arabic has a significant negative influence on EFL students' pronunciation, leading to noticeable pronunciation errors.

Rationale of the Study

This study is motivated by the need to better understand the challenges faced by EFL learners in mastering pronunciation. In the Algerian context, limited attention is often given to pronunciation compared to other language skills. By investigating the role of Arabic interference, this research seeks to highlight an important factor affecting learners' performance.

The findings of this study may help teachers become more aware of learners' difficulties and adopt more effective teaching strategies. It may also contribute to improving pronunciation instruction and enhancing students' communicative competence.

Research Design (Methodology)

This study adopts a descriptive and explanatory research design. It aims to describe the pronunciation difficulties experienced by EFL students and explain them in relation to Arabic language (mother tongue) interference.

The study will be conducted using a quantitative approach, where data will be collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a purposive sample of second-year EFL students at ENS Ouargla. The collected data will be analyzed to identify patterns of pronunciation errors and their possible causes.

Expected Results

The study is expected to reveal that Arabic has a significant influence on EFL students' pronunciation. It is anticipated that learners will exhibit noticeable difficulties in producing English sounds that do not exist in the Arabic phonological system, such as /p/, /v/, and certain vowel contrasts.

The findings are also likely to show that many pronunciation errors result from negative phonological transfer, where students unconsciously apply Arabic sound patterns to English. These errors may include sound substitution, mispronunciation of consonants, incorrect stress placement, and intonation patterns.

Furthermore, the study may indicate that despite formal instruction, students still lack sufficient exposure to authentic pronunciation practice. This could explain the persistence of pronunciation difficulties among second-year students.

Overall, the results are expected to confirm the existence of cross-linguistic interference and highlight the need for more focused pronunciation teaching strategies in EFL classrooms.

Limitations

- It focuses only on second-year students at ENS Ouargla, which may limit the generalizability of the results.
- The sample size may be relatively small.
- The study relies mainly on a questionnaire, which may not fully capture actual pronunciation performance.
- Time constraints may limit deeper experimental analysis.

Structure of the Dissertation

This study is organized into three main chapters, in addition to a general introduction and a general conclusion. The general introduction displays the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the hypotheses, the objectives, the rationale, and an overview of the research methodology.

The first chapter provides the theoretical foundation of the study. It reviews key concepts related to pronunciation in EFL contexts, including phonology, pronunciation teaching, and factors affecting pronunciation learning. It also examines the notion of cross-linguistic

interference, with a particular focus on the influence of Arabic on English pronunciation. Furthermore, it highlights the main differences between Arabic and English phonological systems and their impact on learners' performance.

The second chapter describes the research design adopted in this study. It presents the participants, sampling technique, and research setting. It also explains the data collection tools, namely the questionnaire (and any additional instruments if used), and outlines the procedures followed in collecting the data. Finally, it discusses the methods used for data analysis.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. It presents the results in a clear and organized manner, followed by a detailed discussion in relation to the research questions and hypotheses. It also interprets the findings in light of the previous studies discussed in chapter One.

Finally, the general conclusion summarizes the major results of the study, highlights its pedagogical recommendations, acknowledges its limitations, and offers suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Introduction

Generally, the pronunciation is thought to be one of the most important components in learning English as Foreign Language (EFL). It has an important role in oral communication as learners need to have clear and accurate pronunciation in order to express themselves effectively and interact successfully with others. Even if learners have good command of grammar and vocabulary, if they have pronunciation problems which prevent others from understanding what they are saying, communication can still be unsuccessful. This is why, in the field of language teaching and learning, pronunciation has become a central concern.

In EFL settings, the pronunciation of learners is strongly influenced by their mother tongue. Learners carry over sound patterns, stress rules, rhythm and intonation from their first language into the target language. This is commonly referred to as mother-tongue-interference or language transfer. Interference may positively support learning when the two languages are similar but may negatively affect pronunciation when the sound systems differ greatly.

For most EFL learners in Algeria, Arabic is their first language. Arabic and English are from different language families and have different phonological systems. Thus, Algerian learners find it difficult to pronounce some sounds and sound patterns of English. Arabic lacks some English consonants and vowels, and this causes learners to replace unfamiliar English sounds with similar Arabic sounds. Also, learners may transfer Arabic stress patterns and pronunciation rules when speaking English. As a consequence, many Algerian EFL learners face problems of intelligibility, fluency and oral communication.

Pronunciation has been a focus of many linguists, researchers and language teachers because pronunciation problems may affect the learners' academic performance, confidence and participation in communication. In modern language teaching, the teaching of pronunciation is directed towards intelligible and comprehensible speech instead of native-like accent.

The present chapter reviews theoretical and empirical literature on pronunciation in EFL learning. The present study discusses pronunciation, the importance of pronunciation, the difference between phonetics and phonology, mother tongue interference, the Arabic phonological system, the most common pronunciation difficulties faced by Arabic-speaking

learners, factors affecting pronunciation learning, pronunciation teaching methods, previous studies, and the theoretical framework of the present study.

What is Pronunciation?

Pronunciation is the way you say the speech sounds of a language. It includes the pronunciation of consonants and vowels and suprasegmental features like stress, rhythm, intonation, connected speech and pitch. Pronunciation is an important component of oral communication because it directly affects intelligibility (Kelly, 2000). However, learners who cannot pronounce words accurately may have communicative problems even if they have enough knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

Harmer (2007) continues by explaining that pronunciation is not only the production of isolated sounds. Rather it contains the interaction of sounds in connected speech. A speaker therefore has to know how to use stress, rhythm and intonation patterns in order to be able to communicate meaning. Therefore, pronunciation consists of segmental features like consonants and vowels and suprasegmental features such as intonation and stress.

Intelligibility is very closely tied to pronunciation. Intelligibility is the extent to which spoken language can be understood by listeners. Pronunciation in language learning is not about sounding exactly like a native speaker but about speaking clearly enough so that others can understand you. Modern ways of teaching pronunciation focus on communicative effectiveness and comprehensibility rather than on imitation of native speakers.

The social interaction of pronunciation is also part of identity. The way people pronounce words may be a reflection of their linguistic background, regional identity, educational level or social environment. In foreign language learning, pronunciation may affect the listener's perception of the speaker's competence and confidence.

Connected speech is another important aspect of pronunciation. In natural communication, speakers do not pronounce words one by one; sounds are connected together. Processes such as assimilation, elision, linking and reduction are often seen in spoken English. Learners who focus only on individual sounds might still find real spoken English hard to understand.

Moreover, pronunciation is something that people get better at over time. It does not just happen at once. People get better at pronunciation when they hear it a lot and practice

speaking. They also get better when they listen to others and talk to them. Learners of English improve their pronunciation when they hear people speaking English and when teachers or others tell them how to say things correctly.

For people learning English in a non English speaking country, pronunciation is one of the hardest things to learn. This is because you have to be able to control the muscles in your mouth and throat to make the right sounds. You also have to know what the sounds are supposed to sound like in English. So pronunciation is an important part of learning a language. It should not be something that teachers think about after they have taught other things. English language learners need to practice pronunciation all the time to get it right. Pronunciation is just as important, as other parts of the English language.

The Importance of Pronunciation in EFL Learning

Pronunciation is really important for people who are learning English as a language. This is because it affects how well they can talk to others. When we want to communicate with someone, it is not about knowing the right words and grammar. We also need to be able to say the words in a way that the other person can understand. If someone says a word incorrectly they might get misunderstood even if they know a lot about the language.

Gilakjani said in (2012) that pronunciation is necessary for people to communicate effectively. It helps people say what they mean clearly and participate in conversations. If someone pronounces a word incorrectly the person listening might not understand what they are trying to say. This can stop the conversation in what we call a language breakdown and make people feel frustrated. Pronunciation in EFL learning is crucial because it helps English as foreign language learners to express their thoughts and ideas in a manner. The importance of pronunciation in EFL learning cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts the ability of these learners to communicate effectively.

One of the functions of pronunciation is to help people understand each other better. This is especially true when people from different countries communicate in English. In these situations, clear pronunciation is more important than sounding like a speaker.

Good pronunciation also helps learners feel more confident and motivated. When students think they can't say words correctly they might avoid speaking up because they're afraid of making mistakes or getting laughed at. This can make them less likely to join in

class discussions and get chances to practice speaking. On the other hand learners who have better pronunciation tend to feel more confident and willing to communicate. They are more likely to practice their speaking skills and participate in class. Pronunciation is key to being understood and clear pronunciation helps people communicate effectively.

Pronunciation is also important in school and at work. In a lot of classrooms and offices people have to talk to each other in English. If we do not say words correctly it can make it hard for us to give presentations, do well in interviews and have good conversations with other people. When we say words clearly we can get our point across and make sure everyone understands what we are saying.

Nowadays teachers think that pronunciation is a part of being able to communicate well in English. Some teachers, like Celce-Murcia and others said in 2010 that being able to communicate in English means we need to be good at grammar and knowing what to say in different situations, and being able to have a conversation and being able to fix mistakes when they occur.. Pronunciation affects all of these things. Pronunciation is a part of English communication and it helps us with our grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

Mother Tongue Interference

When people learn a language, their native language can affect how they learn. This is called mother tongue interference. It is also known as language transfer or first-language transfer.

Learners often use habits from their language when speaking a new language. They rely on sounds and grammar.

According to Odlin (1989) language transfer happens because learners use what they already know about language. Their previous language knowledge, Hinders their learning.

The transfer can be good or bad. Good transfer happens when the two languages are similar. For example pronunciation might be easier if it is similar to their language.

Bad transfer happens when the languages are different. This can cause mistakes, and makes learning harder. Mother tongue interference often causes problems with pronunciation. This is because speech habits, from their language are hard to change.

The way people speak their language can affect how they say words in a new language. This includes:

- Consonant production.
- Vowel production.
- Stress patterns.
- Rhythm.
- Intonation.
- Syllable structure.

People who speak Arabic as their first language often use its sounds when they speak English. For example, Arabic does not have some of the sounds that English has, so people who speak Arabic may use Arabic sounds instead of the correct English sounds such as replacing the non-existing /p/ sound in Arabic with /b/ sound, in English words with the /p/ sound (popular example is pronouncing the word “Pepsi” as “bebsi”).

This can also happen with the way people stress and intone words. People who speak Arabic may use stress and intonation patterns when they speak English, which can make it hard for others to understand them.

The idea that our native language influences how we learn a new language is related to something called the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. This was proposed by Lado in 1957. He said that the differences, between our language and the language we are trying to learn are likely to cause problems.

People who study how we learn languages say that it is natural for our native language to influence how we speak a language. However if teachers are aware of this influence they can help people who are learning a language by identifying the problems they are having and creating lessons that will help them pronounce words correctly. The mother tongue interference is important to consider when teaching the target language.

The mother tongue interference can affect the way people speak and is something that researchers are studying to help people learn languages, and to help teachers teach languages, and to understand how it affects the way people speak.

In Algeria Arabic has an effect on how people speak English. This is because people in Algeria mostly hear Arabic every day so when they speak English it sounds like Arabic.

The problems people have with speaking English are because of the language they grew up with, which's Arabic. We should think of these problems as a part of learning a new language rather than thinking the person is not trying hard enough or is not good at English. Arabic interference is a part of this and it affects English pronunciation.

The Arabic Sound System

Arabic has a phonological system which is rather different from English. Such differences pose challenges for Arabic speech learners to learn the English pronunciation.

Arabic has emphatic consonants /s/, /d/, /t/ and /z/ that are not present in English. These sounds have secondary articulation and create pronunciation patterns that are not found in English.

There are also some consonants in English that do not exist in Arabic, such as /p/ and /v/. Arabic speakers are not familiar with these sounds and tend to replace them with the closest Arabic equivalents.

For example, /b/ may be replaced with /p/, /f/ may be replaced with /v/.

Arabic and English also have different vowel systems. English has a rich inventory of vowels, including:

Short vowels, long vowels, diphthongs.

Arabic has less vowel contrasts than English. Thus, Arabic speakers may have difficulty distinguishing between similar English vowels such as:

- /ɪ/ and /i:/.
- /æ/ and /ʌ/.

- /v/ and /ɔ:/.

There is another main difference in the syllable structure. English has complex clusters of consonants at the beginning and end of words. Arabic syllable structures are generally less complex. English consonant clusters may be simplified by Arabic learners by inserting vowels.

There are also differences in stress and rhythm between the two languages. English is stress timed, Arabic has very different rhythmic patterns. Consequently, learners may misplace stress in English words.

Another area of difference is intonation patterns. English intonation often has grammatical and emotional meaning. Arabic intonation has different patterns.

English pronunciation can also be affected by the Arabic script. Learners may pronounce English words based on spelling because Arabic orthography is different from English spelling conventions.

For that, familiarity with the Arabic phonological system is essential since it helps to explain the systematic pronunciation problems of Algerian EFL learners. Knowledge of these differences can also help teachers to develop targeted pronunciation activities.

Frequent Pronunciation difficulties of Arabic EFL Learners

Arabic speaking learners of English tend to have some common problems with pronunciation. The difficulties are mainly due to the phonological differences between Arabic and English as we previously pointed.

One of the most common problems in pronunciation is the sounds /p/ and /v/. These phonemes do not exist in Arabic. Learners often replace /p/ as /b/ and /v/ as /f/.

For instance:

“park” can sound like “bark”, “very” can sound like “ferry”.

Changing the meaning of words through substitution of letters can affect intelligibility.

A further major problem is that of English vowels. In Arabic there are many vowel distinctions which are not present in English. Learners may confuse similar vowels or not produce the correct length of vowels.

Examples are confusion between:

“ship” and “sheep”, “full” and “fool”.

Also, Arabic learners may have difficulties with consonant clusters. English words like “street” or “asked” have clusters that are uncommon in Arabic. Learners may add extra vowels to ease of pronunciation.

For example:

“School” can be changed to “eschool”, “street” can be changed to “istreet”.

Another difficulty is the stress of words. The stress patterns of English are not predictable and may be different from the stress rules of Arabic. Intelligibility can be affected by stress placement.

Learners may also have difficulty with intonation and rhythm. English is a stress-timed language and has many reductions in connected speech, and the rhythm in Arabic is different.

Connected speech processes, such as linking, assimilation and elision, may also cause problems. Learners who pronounce each word separately may sound unnatural and may have comprehension problems during interactions.

Pronunciation difficulties are not about making sounds and speaking, EFL learners may also have trouble hearing the difference between sounds. If Arabic-speaking EFL learners cannot hear these sounds correctly, they will have a time saying them right.

These pronunciation problems show that Arabic-speaking EFL learners have trouble in a way. The difficulties that speaking EFL learners face are connected to the language they speak at home which is Arabic.

Factors Influencing Pronunciation Learning

There are many linguistic, psychological, social and educational factors that influence the learning of pronunciation. These factors determine the degree to which learners can develop accurate and intelligible pronunciation.

- Age

Age is often considered to be a major factor for pronunciation acquisition. It is generally assumed that the younger the learner, the more flexible they are in learning a new sound system. The Critical Period Hypothesis suggests children may develop more native-like pronunciation than adult learners.

But adults can improve their pronunciation a lot too, if they practice, are motivated, and have enough exposure.

- Motivation

Motivation has a great influence on learning pronunciation. These are motivated learners who want to communicate well and so practice speaking more and improve their pronunciation.

An interest in the target language community, integrative motivation, could positively influence pronunciation development.

- Exposure to English

When you listen to English regularly, it really helps you get better at pronouncing words. People who watch movies, listen to English music, or read English books, are more likely to get used to how English sounds, and how people stress certain words.

If you don't listen to English much, it can be harder to improve your pronunciation.

- Teaching Methods

How teachers teach pronunciation in class is really important. Good teachers should make students listen, speak, repeat words and get feedback on their pronunciation. They should also let students practice talking to each other.

If teachers don't focus on pronunciation students might not be able to communicate when they speak.

- Mother Tongue Influence

The language you speak at home can affect how you pronounce words. If your native language sounds similar to English, it might be easier to learn. If it's very different it can be harder.

For example, people who speak Arabic might start using different sounds when they speak English.

- Attitude and Anxiety

When it comes to learning English the way learners feel about the language and how anxious they get when they have to speak can really affect how well they pronounce words. If learners are scared of making mistakes they might not want to join in when it's time to talk in class.

If the classroom is a supportive place, learners will feel less anxious and they will be more likely to practice their pronunciation.

- Listening Ability

Being able to listen is also very important for learning how to pronounce words correctly. Learners who can tell the difference between sounds are more likely to say them the right way.

- Practice and Interaction

To get better at pronunciation learners need to practice speaking and talk to other people. English pronunciation gets better when learners repeat words and phrases, talk to each other, and get feedback from teachers.

These things show that learning pronunciation is not easy and it involves a lot of different things. English pronunciation is something that learners have to work on, it is not just something they can learn overnight. Learners have to think about their attitude toward English and their anxiety when they speak, and they have to practice listening and speaking every day. English pronunciation and anxiety are closely related. Learners have to find ways to reduce their anxiety and feel more comfortable when they speak English.

Pronunciation Teaching in EFL Classrooms

The goal of pronunciation teaching is to help students speak clearly and understandably. In today's EFL classrooms teaching pronunciation is a part of being able to communicate well.

In the past teachers would tell students to repeat what they said and practice it over and over. Students had to listen to speakers and try to say words the same way (imitation).

Now teachers think it is more important to help students talk to each other and be understood. The goal is not to sound like a native speaker, but to speak so that people can understand what you are saying.

Teachers use different ways to teach pronunciation, such as:

- Repetition and Drilling

When students repeat things, they get better at saying the sounds they are trying to learn. They might repeat words by themselves, with a group, or in a sentence.

- Minimal Pairs

Teachers use words that are similar like "ship" and "sheep" or "pat" and "bat" to help students hear the difference between sounds.

- Listening Activities

When students listen to real people talking, they get better at hearing how words are pronounced.

- Oral Practice

Students get to practice talking in class by doing things like role plays, discussions and presentations.

- Phonetic Transcription

Teachers might use symbols to help students see how words sound.

- Technology and Multimedia

There are tools that can help students learn pronunciation like language learning apps, online dictionaries and videos.

Pronunciation teaching should include both sounds and how they sound together. Students need to practice not only saying sounds but also how to stress words, and how to make their voice go up and down when they talk. Teachers should also tell students when they make mistakes and help them fix it.

Teaching pronunciation takes time and practice, students will not get better at it overnight. They will get better if they keep talking and listening to others. Pronunciation teaching is important in EFL classrooms, it should be a part of every class. Pronunciation teaching helps students learn how to communicate and that is the main goal of EFL classrooms.

Previous studies

Many people have looked at the problems Arabic speakers have when they try to pronounce English words. Most of these studies say that the differences in sounds between Arabic and English cause these problems.

Al-Shuaibi (2009) did a study in which he looked at how Saudi learners pronounce words. He found out that these learners have trouble with some consonants that are not used in Arabic like the sounds /p/ and /v/. Of saying these sounds they would say /b/ and /f/.

Rabab'ah looked at the communication problems that Arab learners of English have. He found out that when they have trouble pronouncing words it is harder for them to communicate and be understood. They have trouble with consonants and vowels. Also, with the stress and intonation of words.

Gilakjani (2012) said in that teaching pronunciation is very important for people learning English. He believes that pronunciation is a part of being able to communicate effectively.

Other studies have shown that the language people speak at home can affect how they pronounce words in English. Most researchers agree that Arabic speakers use the sound patterns they learn from Arabic when they speak English.

Many studies also say that teaching pronunciation is important. Researchers think that if learners are taught how to pronounce words they will be able to communicate better.

So, all these studies support the idea that Arabic-speaking learners have trouble with pronunciation because of the differences between Arabic and English.

The results of these studies are important for this research because they show how the sounds of Arabic can make it hard for people to pronounce words correctly.

Framework

This study is mainly based on two important ideas: language transfer and contrastive analysis:

The language transfer theory says that people use what they know about their language when they learn a new one. For example Odlin (1989) said in that people take things they know from their language and use them when they learn a new language especially when they come across things they do not understand.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was proposed by Lado in 1957. It says that when two languages are similar it is easy to learn, when they are different it is harder. If two languages are similar people can learn easily. If they are different people are more likely to make mistakes.

When it comes to pronunciation contrastive analysis helps us understand why people who speak Arabic have trouble with some English sounds.

For example:

- Arabic does not have the English sounds /p/ and /v/.
- English has complicated vowel sounds than Arabic.
- The way English syllables are structured and stressed is different from Arabic.

These differences are why people who speak Arabic make mistakes when they speak English.

So the idea behind this study is that people from Algeria who learn English have trouble, with pronunciation because of the way Arabic sounds work.

This idea helps us understand why people make pronunciation mistakes and how their first language affects how well they can communicate in English.

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed the basics of how pronunciation works, and how a person's mother tongue can interfere in their learning. It talked about what pronunciation is and why it is important and also explained the difference between the sounds systems of language and the rules of language. It went on to look at how Arabic sounds work, and how they're different from English sounds. These differences are the reason why people who speak Arabic have problems in acquiring good pronunciation when learning English as a foreign language. It also talked about the problems people have with pronunciation, what affects it, how well they learn it and how teachers can help them. It looked at what other studies have found out and the ideas that guide this research.

The next chapter will explain how we have conducted our Study.

Chapter 2 :Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted in the present study. It explains the methods and procedures used to investigate the effects of Arabic on EFL students' pronunciation. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, a descriptive and explanatory method was employed to describe and interpret the pronunciation difficulties experienced by learners.

The study was conducted with second-year students at ENS Ouargla. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, as the research specifically targets EFL learners who are expected to possess a certain level of English proficiency and pronunciation awareness.

To collect the necessary data, a structured questionnaire and a pronunciation tasks were used as the main research instruments. They were designed to gather information about students' pronunciation difficulties, their awareness of Arabic interference, and the challenges they face while pronouncing English sounds.

This chapter also presents the research design, participants, sampling technique, data collection tool, and the procedures followed in analyzing the collected data.

Research Variables

The present study involves two main variables: the dependent variable and the independent variable.

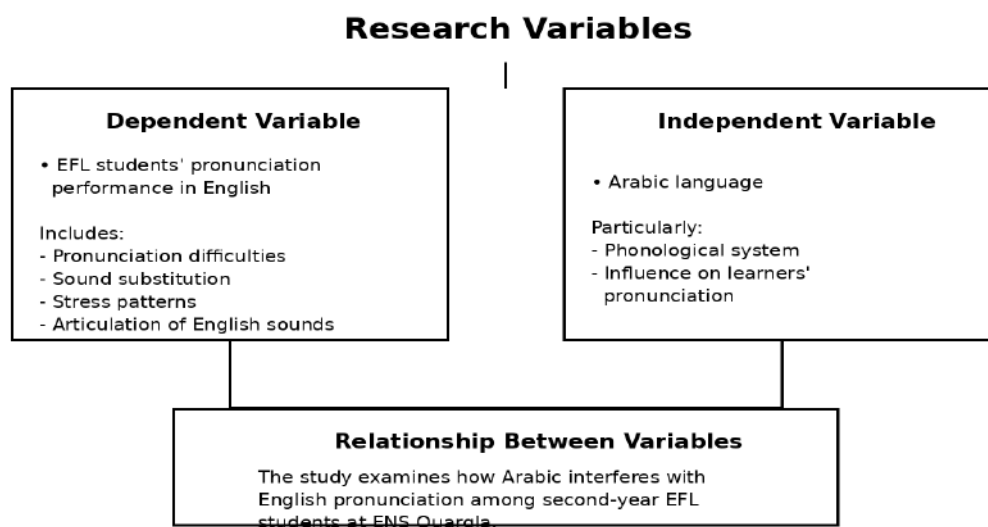
Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is EFL students' pronunciation performance in English. This includes pronunciation difficulties, sound substitution, stress patterns, and the articulation of English sounds.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study is the Arabic language, particularly its phonological system and its influence on learners' pronunciation.

The relationship between these two variables is examined in order to determine the extent to which Arabic interferes with the pronunciation of English among second-year EFL students at ENS Ouargla



The Target Population

This study took place at The Higher Normal School of Teachers of Ouargla , more precisely at the English department. The concentration was upon 2nd year English students, They were selected to meet certain criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time. The students were enrolled in the academic year 2025/2026. These students were selected because they already possess a relatively advanced level in English and have been exposed to pronunciation instruction during their studies.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, since the research specifically focuses on learners who are relevant to the objectives of the study.

Research Method

This study adopts a descriptive and explanatory research method. The descriptive method was used to describe the pronunciation difficulties faced by EFL learners, while the explanatory method aimed to explain these difficulties in relation to Arabic phonological interference.

The research relied on a questionnaire and a pronunciation task (observation) as a data collection tool. The questionnaire included different types of questions designed to gather information about:

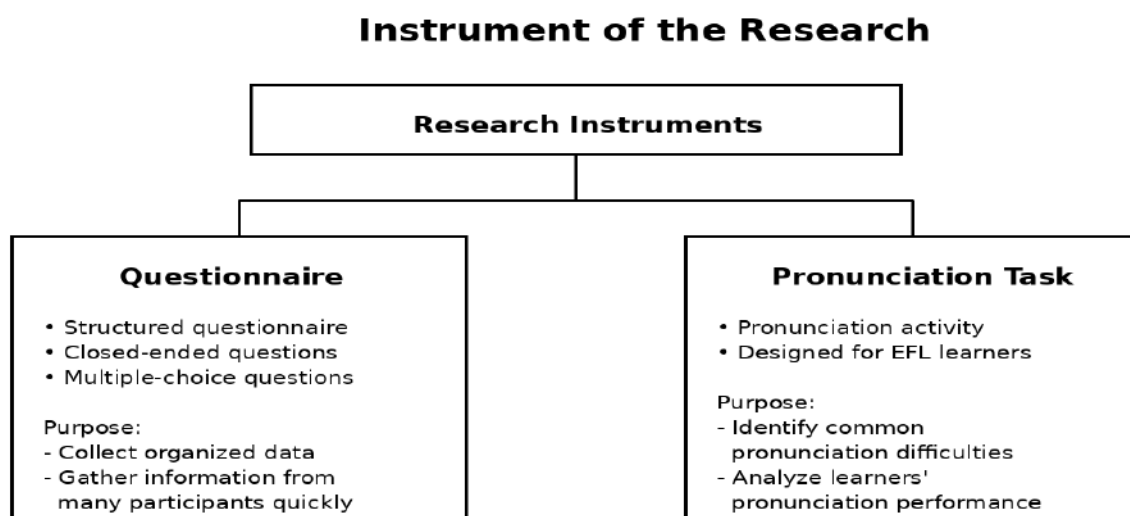
- students' attitudes toward English pronunciation.
- the pronunciation difficulties they face.
- the influence of Arabic on their pronunciation.
- problematic English sounds.
- students' awareness of pronunciation errors.
- exposure to English pronunciation practice.

Both closed-ended and multiple-choice questions were included in order to obtain accurate and organized data.

Instrument of The Research

The study relied on a structured questionnaire and a pronunciation task designed to identify common pronunciation difficulties among EFL learners. The questionnaire

is considered an effective research tool because it allows the researcher to collect data from a relatively large number of participants in a short period of time.



Importance of the questionnaire

The importance of the questionnaire lies in its ability to provide information about learners' experiences, perceptions, and pronunciation difficulties. It also helps identify the most common pronunciation problems related to Arabic interference.

Moreover, the questionnaire facilitates the analysis and interpretation of data through organized responses that can be easily compared and discussed. The sample consists of 21 students and the data obtained from their questionnaires were statistically analysed.

In addition to the questionnaire, a pronunciation task was administered to identify specific pronunciation errors related to Arabic phonological interference. The task focused on English sounds that are absent in Arabic and are commonly problematic for Algerian EFL learners.

Description of the Process

The research process began with identifying the main problem of the study, which is the influence of Arabic on EFL students' pronunciation. After reviewing previous literature related to pronunciation and language interference, a questionnaire was designed to investigate learners' pronunciation difficulties.

The questionnaire was administered to second-year EFL students at ENS Ouargla. The participants were asked to answer questions related to their pronunciation performance, their awareness of pronunciation challenges, and the possible influence of Arabic on English pronunciation.

The purpose of conducting this research was to better understand the pronunciation difficulties experienced by Algerian EFL learners and to explore the role of Arabic phonological transfer in shaping these difficulties. The collected data were analyzed in order to identify common patterns and provide explanations supported by the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter One.

Preparation of The Questionnaire

The questionnaire and the pronunciation task were carefully prepared in accordance with the objectives and research questions of the study. The questions were designed to be clear, simple, and directly related to the topic of pronunciation and Arabic interference.

Several aspects were taken into consideration during the preparation process, including:

- the students' level of English proficiency
- the clarity of the questions
- the relevance of the questions to the research objectives
- the balance between closed and open-ended questions

The questionnaire was divided into sections covering personal information, pronunciation difficulties, Arabic interference, and students' attitudes toward pronunciation learning and at the end we made a pronunciation task.

The Administration of the Questionnaire

The primary research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire and a pronunciation task administered to second-year EFL students at the École Normale Supérieure of Ouargla. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the influence of Arabic on learners' English pronunciation, combining both closed-ended questions and a pronunciation task in order to obtain comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data.

In terms of data collection, the questionnaire was distributed using a mixed mode approach. An online version was created using Google Forms and shared with students, while printed copies of the same questionnaire were also administered in person at the institution. This dual administration ensured wider participation and facilitated access for all students, regardless of their availability or access to digital platforms.

The instrument was organized into five sections. The first section gathered general background information about the participants, including gender, years of English study, and self-assessment of pronunciation level. The second section focused on pronunciation difficulties, exploring learners' perceptions of problematic sounds, the types of phonological interference experienced, and the perceived role of Arabic in shaping their pronunciation habits. The third section examined pronunciation learning practices outside the classroom and students' attitudes toward the importance of pronunciation instruction in EFL contexts. The fourth section included a diagnostic pronunciation task composed of two parts: a difficulty identification task and a sound production task targeting specific English phonemes commonly affected by Arabic interference. Finally, the fifth section invited students to provide additional suggestions and reflections on improving pronunciation learning.

The questionnaire proved to be effective in collecting relevant and detailed data for the study. The inclusion of both perception-based questions and a practical pronunciation task allowed for a more reliable triangulation of responses. Moreover, the second-year students demonstrated a high level of engagement and cooperation throughout the data collection process. Both in the online and paper-based administration, students responded seriously and thoughtfully to the items, particularly in the pronunciation task section, which contributed to the richness and credibility of the collected data. Their active participation ensured that the instrument successfully captured both their perceived difficulties and their actual pronunciation tendencies.

Overall, the questionnaire functioned as a valid and efficient tool for addressing the research objectives of the study.

Procedures of Data Collection

The data collection process for this study was carried out in several organized steps to ensure reliability and consistency of responses. First, the questionnaire was designed based on the research objectives, focusing on the influence of Arabic on EFL learners' pronunciation. It included five sections combining background information, perception-based questions, and a pronunciation task.

After finalizing the questionnaire, it was converted into an online form using Google Forms in order to facilitate quick and wide distribution among students. At the same time, printed copies of the same questionnaire were prepared to ensure that all participants could be reached, including those who might have limited access to or preference for digital tools and because of the pronunciation task, Researchers had to observe the students' performance .

The distribution phase was conducted at the École Normale Supérieure of Ouargla. The researcher personally visited the institution and administered the printed questionnaires to second-year EFL students. Clear instructions were provided before completion, and students were informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses. For the online version, the Google Forms link was shared with students, and they were encouraged to complete it within a specified time frame.

Participants completed the questionnaire individually, and the researcher ensured that all responses were collected in an organized manner. After collection, the responses from both the online and paper-based versions were compiled and prepared for analysis. This combination of digital and in- person administration helped maximize participation and ensured a sufficient and representative sample of second-year EFL students.

Limitations

Although the questionnaire proved to be an effective research instrument, several minor difficulties were encountered during its administration. One of the main challenges was related to time constraints, as it was not always easy to reach all second-year EFL students due to their different schedules and academic commitments. This required careful coordination in order to ensure that all participants had sufficient time to complete the questionnaire.

Another difficulty concerned the distribution process. While the use of Google Forms facilitated online access, some students experienced limited engagement with the digital version, which made it necessary to rely more on printed copies distributed in person at the École Normale Supérieure of Ouargla. This dual mode of administration, although beneficial for increasing response rates, required additional effort in terms of printing, organization, and collection of completed questionnaires. In addition, a small number of students initially found the pronunciation task section slightly challenging, as it required careful attention to phonetic distinctions. However, after brief clarification, they were able to complete it successfully.

The sample was limited to second-year EFL students at the École Normale Supérieure of Ouargla. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL learners in Algeria, as pronunciation difficulties and Arabic influence may vary across different levels, institutions, and learning contexts.

Time constraints restricted the possibility of conducting more in-depth oral interviews or extended classroom observations, which could have provided richer qualitative insights into learners' pronunciation difficulties.

The pronunciation task was limited to a small set of selected sounds. While these sounds are representative of common areas of difficulty influenced by Arabic, a broader phonetic range could have provided a more comprehensive analysis.

Despite these limitations, the study still provides valuable insights into the influence of Arabic on EFL learners' pronunciation and offers a solid basis for further research in this area.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a detailed description of the methodological framework adopted in this study. It began by outlining the research design and specifying the target population, which consisted of 21 second-year EFL students at the École Normale Supérieure of Ouargla. It then described the main research instrument, a structured questionnaire combining both closed-ended questions and a pronunciation task and an unstructured observation to observe students' performance in the pronunciation task, designed to investigate the influence of Arabic on learners' English pronunciation.

The chapter also explained the procedures followed during data collection, including the use of both Google Forms and printed questionnaires distributed in person at the institution. This mixed-method approach helped ensure broader participation and improved the reliability of the collected data. In addition, the difficulties encountered during the process were briefly discussed, highlighting minor challenges such as time constraints and variations in students' engagement with the online version.

Overall, the methodology adopted in this study proved to be appropriate and effective in addressing the research objectives. The combination of quantitative and qualitative elements within the questionnaire, along with the active cooperation of second-year students, contributed to the collection of valid and meaningful data for analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Results and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 21 second-year EFL students at the Higher Normal School of Ouargla (ENSO). The data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and a pronunciation task administered during the 2025/2026 academic year. The analysis employs a mixed approach, combining quantitative representation of responses through frequency counts and percentages with qualitative interpretation of participants' open-ended answers.

The chapter is organized according to the sections of the questionnaire. It begins with an overview of participants' general profiles, followed by findings on perceived pronunciation difficulties, Arabic interference, pronunciation learning practices, and the diagnostic sound production task. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the results in relation to the research questions and hypotheses.

Data Analysis

Participants' General Profiles

- Gender Distribution

Q 01 : What is your gender ?

Table 1 Gender Distribution of Participants

Gender	Number of Students	Percentage
<i>Male</i>	2	9.5%
<i>Female</i>	19	90.5%
<i>Total</i>	21	100%

As shown in Table 1, the sample comprised 19 female students (90.5%) and 2 male students (9.5%), accurately reflecting the composition of the second-year English cohort at ENSO, which is predominantly female.

- Years of English Study

Table 2 Duration of English Study

Q 02 : How many years have you been studying English ?

Duration of Study	Number of Students	Percentage
Less than 5 years	9	42.8%
Between 5 and 10 years	11	52.4%
More than 10 years	1	4.8%
Total	21	100%

Table 2 indicates that the majority of participants (52.4%, $n = 11$) had been studying English for between five and ten years, while 42.8% ($n = 9$) had studied for fewer than five years, and one student (4.8%) had studied for more than a decade. These findings suggest that the sample possessed a substantial degree of prior exposure to formal English instruction.

Self-Assessed pronunciation Level

Table 3 Self-Assessed Pronunciation Level

Q 03 : How would you evaluate your English pronunciation level ?

Level	Number of Students	Percentage
Excellent	2	9.5%
Good	11	52.4%
Average	7	33.3%
Weak	1	4.8%
Total	21	100%

The majority of participants (52.4%) rated their English pronunciation as good, while 33.3% considered it average, 9.5% assessed it as excellent, and one participant (4.8%) rated it as weak. This generally positive self-assessment is consistent with the advanced level expected of second-year teacher-training students at ENSO; however, it must be interpreted against the diagnostic pronunciation task results presented later in this chapter.

Perceived Pronunciation Difficulties

General Difficulties in Pronouncing English Words.

Table 4 Perceived Difficulties in Pronouncing English Words

Q 04 : Do you face difficulties in pronouncing English words ?

Response	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	6	28.6%
Maybe	10	47.6%
No	5	23.8%
Total	21	100%

As shown in Table 4, 28.6% of participants acknowledged experiencing pronunciation difficulties, while a further 47.6% expressed uncertainty (maybe). Only 23.8% reported no difficulties. These findings suggest that a substantial proportion of participants either experience or suspect pronunciation challenges, even within this advanced cohort.

Most Difficult Aspect of Pronunciation.**Table 5** Most Difficult Aspect of English Pronunciation**Q 05 :** Which aspect of pronunciation is the most difficult for you ?

Consonants	3	14.3%
Vowels	2	9.5%
Stress	8	38.1%
Intonation	6	28.6%
All of the above	2	9.5%
Total	21	100%

Suprasegmental features dominated participants' responses, with word stress identified as the most problematic aspect (38.1%) and intonation ranked second (28.6%). Consonant difficulties were reported by 14.3% of participants, followed by vowel difficulties (9.5%), while two participants (9.5%) reported difficulties across all categories. This distribution reflects the well-documented challenge that English stress-timing poses for Arabic speakers, whose L1 operates on a different rhythmic principle

Most Difficult English Sounds.

Table 6 *Most Difficult English Sounds as Reported by Participants***Q 06:** Which English sounds do you find most difficult ?

Sound	Number of Students	Percentage
/p/	2	9.5%
/v/	1	4.8%
/θ/	6	28.6%
/ð/	2	9.5%
Other sounds	10	47.6%
Total	21	100%

The interdental fricative /θ/ was identified as the most challenging sound by 28.6% of participants, consistent with its absence from spoken Algerian Arabic. Other difficult sounds — reported by 47.6% — included /d/, /t/, /dʒ/, the schwa /ə/, /tʃ/, /r/, and /æ/. These responses indicate that participants were aware of a range of phonological difficulties extending beyond the classically documented Arabic-English contrasts.

Awareness of Arabic Phonological Interference

Perceived Influence of Arabic on English Pronunciation.

Table 7 Participants' Perception of Arabic Influence on Their English Pronunciation

Response	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	6	28.6%
No	15	71.4%
Total	21	100%

Interestingly, 71.4% of participants denied that Arabic influences their English

pronunciation, while only 28.6% acknowledged such influence. This finding suggests a gap between participants' metalinguistic awareness and their actual phonological behavior, a pattern that the pronunciation task results discussed later in this chapter confirm.

Table 8 Frequency of Confusion Between English and Arabic Sounds

Q 08 : Do you often confuse English sounds with Arabic sounds ?

Response	Number of Students	Percentage
Always	9	42.8%
Sometimes	6	28.6%
Rarely	6	28.6%
Total	21	100%

A majority of participants (42.8%) reported that they never confuse English and Arabic sounds, while 28.6% acknowledged occasional confusion and an equal proportion reported rare confusion. The absence of any participant reporting constant confusion is noteworthy, given that the pronunciation task data suggest that interference does occur, at least for specific phonemes.

Substitution of English Sounds with Arabic Equivalents.

Q 09 : Do you replace certain English sounds with Arabic Equivalents ?

Table 9 Substitution of English Sounds with Arabic Equivalents

Response	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	4	19.1%
No	17	80.9%
Total	21	100%

Only 19.1% of participants admitted to replacing English sounds with Arabic equivalents, while 80.9% denied doing so. Among those who confirmed this practice, the reported substitutions were:

/ð/ replaced by /d/, /θ/ replaced by /t/, /p/ replaced by /b/, and /v/ replaced by /f/ — precisely the substitutions predicted by a contrastive analysis of the two languages' phonological systems.

Pronunciation Learning Practices

Independent Pronunciation Practice.

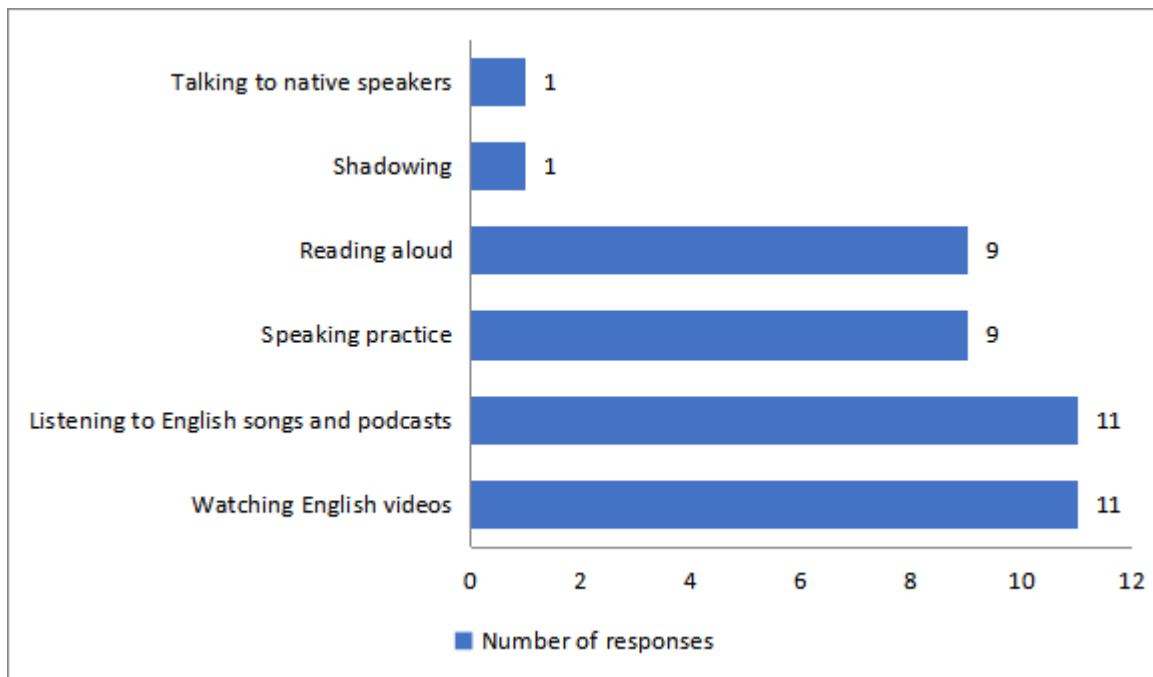
Table 10 Practice of English Pronunciation Outside the Classroom

Response	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	16	76.2%
No	5	23.8%
Total	21	100%

A substantial majority of participants (76.2%) reported practicing English pronunciation independently outside the classroom. The most frequently reported methods were listening to English songs and podcasts and watching English-language videos (both cited by 11 students, 52.4%), followed by reading aloud and speaking practice (both cited by 9 students, 42.9%). Only one student (4.8%) mentioned speaking with native speakers, and one mentioned shadowing

Q11: Which methods do you use to improve your pronunciation ?

Figure 1. Methods Used by Students to Improve Their Pronunciation.



As demonstrated in the bar chart, student's methods to improve their pronunciation vary from another, we find that 11 students choose listening to English songs and podcasts as their method (52.4%), another 11 students choose watching English videos as their method (52.4%), while 9 of them went for reading aloud and another 9 for practicing their speaking skills (42.9% each), lastly one student choose talking to native speakers as their way to get a clearer pronunciation using different online apps (4.8%), and one student added shadowing (4.8%).

Q 12 : do you think pronunciation is important in learning English?

Table 11 *Perceived Importance of Pronunciation in EFL Learning*

Response	Number of Students	Percentage
Yes	20	95.2%
No	1	4.8%
Total	21	100%

An overwhelming majority (95.2%) considered pronunciation important in EFL learning. Similarly, 90.5% (n = 19) believed that pronunciation should receive greater attention in EFL classrooms, while only two students (9.5%) held the contrary view. These attitudinal findings demonstrate strong student awareness of the value of pronunciation, even as the data on Arabic interference suggest that awareness does not automatically translate into accurate phonological production.

Q 13 : Do you believe pronunciation should receive more attention in EFL teaching?

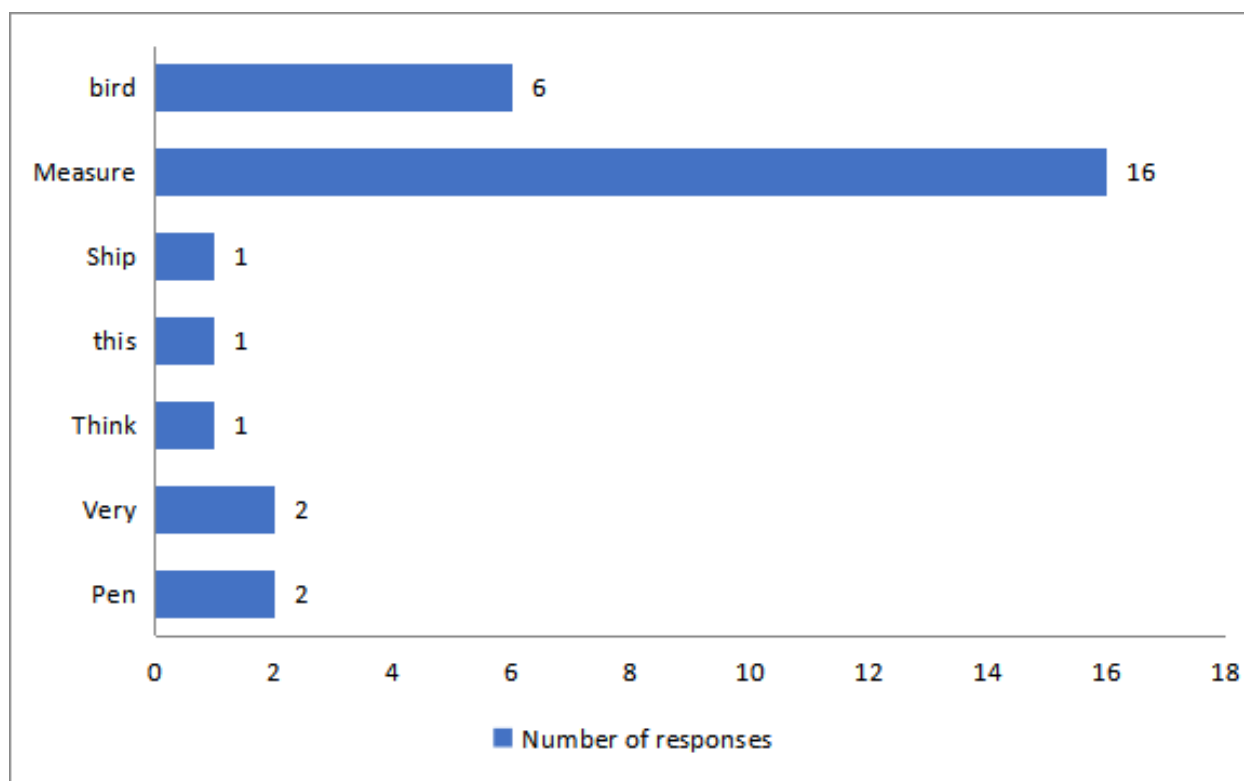
Table 12 : Students' belief in giving more attention to pronunciation in EFL teaching

Response	Rumber	Percentage
Yes	19	90.4%
No	2	9.6%

The table showed that most students believe that pronunciation should receive more attention in EFL teaching (19 students so 90.4%), while only two see that it shouldn't be as important in the EFL teaching as other language areas (9.6%).

Q 14 : Please indicate which of the following words are hard to pronounce?

Figure 2 : Words Identified as Most Difficult to Pronounce.



The chart reveals that the word *measure* — containing the voiced palatal fricative /ʒ/ — was the most widely perceived as difficult (76.2%), followed by *think* (38.1%) and *this* (33.3%). Sounds with direct Arabic equivalents, such as /ʃ/ in *ship*, were perceived as easier. These perceptual judgments broadly align with the sound substitution data and the observational pronunciation task results discussed below.

Q 15 : Choose the pronunciation you usually produce for the following words

Target Word	Target Pronunciation	Correct (n / %)	Substitution (n / %)
Pen	/pen/	20 (95.2%)	/ben/ — 1 (4.8%)
Very	/veri/	20 (95.2%)	/feri/ — 1 (4.8%)
Think	/θɪŋk/	18 (85.7%)	/tɪŋk/ — 3 (14.3%)
This	/ðɪs/	18 (85.7%)	/dɪs/ — 3 (14.3%)
Parking	/pɑːrkɪŋ/	19 (90.5%)	/bɑːrkɪŋ/ — 2 (9.5%)

Table 13 Participants' Sound Production Choices for Target Words

Table 13 presents participants' sound production choices for the target words. High accuracy rates were recorded for the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ in both pen (95.2%) and parking (90.5%), suggesting that advanced students are aware of this Arabic-English contrast at a cognitive level. Similarly, 95.2% selected the correct target for very (/veri/), with only one student substituting /f/ for /v/.

A more substantial error rate was observed for the interdental fricatives: 14.3% of participants substituted /t/ for /θ/ in think, and an equal proportion substituted /d/ for /ð/ in this. This pattern is consistent with the phonological characteristics of spoken Algerian Arabic, in which interdental fricatives are systematically realized as alveolar stops — irrespective of their presence in Modern Standard Arabic.

Student Perceptions on Improving Pronunciation

The final question on the questionnaire (Q 20) was an open-ended item that allowed students to respond freely. “In your opinion, what can help students improve their English pronunciation?” Because this question yielded descriptive qualitative data, a thematic analysis was conducted to group the 34 free-text responses into meaningful patterns. The answers emerged into four primary themes based on the specific strategies the second-year ENS students believe are most effective for mastering EFL pronunciation. An overview of these themes, along with how many students mentioned each strategy, is presented below in the table.

Table 14 Student Perceptions on Improving Pronunciation

Emerging themes	Student responses	Number	Percentage
1. Comprehensive auditory input & modelling.	• Listening to native speakers and proficient teachers. • Digital media exposure (Videos, podcasts...).	• 11 • 1	• 32.3% • 2.9%
2.Cognitive audio-oral techniques	• Active phonetic shadowing. • Auditory/ Visual reading aloud (in or outside the class).	• 6 • 5	• 17.6% • 14.7%
3.Communicative & tech-enhanced output	• Real world context, AI interaction & audio recordings. • Phonological drill exercises (minimal pairs).	• 8 • 2	• 23.5% • 5.9%
4.Lexical competence development	• Vocabulary acquisition for fluency optimization.	• 1	• 2.9%

The results retained from this question were analyzed thematically where we classified the students answers into four main themes according to the number of the similar answers. We are going to talk about each theme separately next:

Theme 1: Comprehensive Auditory Input and Modeling

The largest portion of responses (n=12, 35.2%) highlighted the critical role of receptive auditory exposure, with 11 students emphasizing listening to native speakers or proficient teachers, and 1 student favoring digital media like podcasts and videos. In

qualitative comments, students expressed that regular exposure to authentic English pronunciation is foundational for developing an accurate "ear" for the language. From an applied linguistics perspective, this heavy reliance on target language input reflects Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis. Second-year ENS students are acutely aware of the deep structural differences between Arabic and English phonology—such as English vowels that do not exist in Arabic (e.g., /ɪ/ vs /i:/) or missing consonant contrasts (e.g., /p/ vs /b/). By prioritizing highly proficient auditory models, these learners are attempting to "notice the gap" between their native speech habits and target language norms, using intensive input to consciously override negative L1 phonetic transfer.

Theme 2: Cognitive Audio-Oral Techniques

The second major pattern identified involves active, individual vocal training strategies, cited by 11 students (32.3%). Within this category, 6 students explicitly highlighted "shadowing" (real-time mimicry of audio), while 5 students favored reading aloud both inside and outside the classroom. The preference for these specific techniques suggests that students recognize that passive listening alone is insufficient to correct pronunciation errors caused by the mother tongue. Arabic and English utilize fundamentally different articulatory settings, rhythm types (Arabic is syllable-timed, whereas English is stress-timed), and word-stress patterns. Shadowing and reading aloud function as cognitive muscle-memory training. By physically forcing their vocal apparatus to keep pace with native speech rhythms, students are actively retraining their mouth and tongue muscles to break away from deeply ingrained Arabic phonetic movements.

Theme 3: Communicative and Technology-Enhanced Output

Ten students (29.4%) focused on active output practice. Of these, 8 students emphasized practicing English in real-world contexts, public speaking, using AI conversational tools, and recording their own voices. An additional 2 students specifically mentioned practicing "minimal pairs" (e.g., three vs. tree or fan vs. van). The inclusion of minimal pairs indicates a very specific, conscious effort to target Arabic interference. Because Algerian Arabic lacks certain English phonemes, learners frequently substitute them with the closest acoustic equivalent in their L1. Practicing minimal pairs shows that students recognize these specific phonological "blind spots" caused by their mother tongue. Furthermore, the use of modern technology—such as AI speaking partners and audio recordings—allows these future teachers to engage in autonomous, low-anxiety output modification, providing them

with immediate feedback to self-correct L1-induced pronunciation deviations before they become permanent habits.

Theme 4: Lexical Competence Development

Finally, 1 student (2.9%) noted that acquiring a broader vocabulary is essential for improving pronunciation. While this response represents a minority view, it highlights an important psycholinguistic connection between vocabulary depth and speech execution. When an EFL learner lacks lexical automaticity, their brain spends excessive cognitive energy searching for the right words, which directly degrades their phonetic performance and increases the likelihood of slipping back into native Arabic stress patterns and hesitant pronunciation.

Word and Sentence Pronunciation Task (Observation)

Word Pronunciation Task

The observational word pronunciation task required participants to read eight words aloud: mother, very, vegetable, comfortable, ship, sheep, school, and three. The task was administered in person, enabling the researchers to record students' phonological production directly.

The most frequent error observed involved the word *this*: 10 of 21 participants (47.6%) pronounced it as /dis/, replacing the voiced interdental fricative /ð/ with the alveolar stop /d/. Additionally, five participants (23.8%) pronounced *very* as /feri/, substituting /f/ for /v/, and five participants

pronounced *think* as /tɪŋk/, substituting /t/ for /θ/. These patterns confirm the self-report substitution data and provide direct observational evidence of Arabic phonological transfer in connected speech.

Overall, however, the majority of participants produced the target words with acceptable accuracy, suggesting that Arabic interference — while present and systematic — was not pervasive across the entire phonological system.

Sentence Pronunciation Task

The sentence pronunciation task was perceived as more demanding than the word-reading task. Participants were asked to read five sentences aloud: *Think before you speak;*

The ship is near the beach; Sheep live near the beach; Pronunciation is very important in English; and This is my mother and my brother.

Observable declines in accuracy occurred when the same phonemes that had been produced correctly in isolation appeared within sentence contexts. Participants showed increased hesitation, reduced fluency, and greater phonological inaccuracy in connected speech, consistent with the higher cognitive demands of simultaneous attention to pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and fluency. These findings suggest that learners' pronunciation competence, while adequate for isolated word production, remains fragile in conditions of connected speech

Purpose of the Pronunciation Task

The pronunciation task was designed to evaluate learners' ability to pronounce selected English words and sentences accurately. It aimed to identify common pronunciation difficulties among EFL learners, particularly those related to problematic English sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, and /v/, as well as stress patterns and vowel distinctions.

The task also helped the researchers observe learners' oral performance in a real classroom context. Through both the word-reading and sentence-reading activities, the researchers were able to analyze students' pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and possible instances of first language interference.

Moreover, the pronunciation task provided practical data that complemented the questionnaire and classroom observation, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of learners' pronunciation abilities and challenges.

Results of the Pronunciation Task Word Task Analysis

The pronunciation task revealed several pronunciation difficulties among the learners. The most common error was related to the pronunciation of the sound /ð/, as 10 out of 21 learners pronounced the word "this" as "dis". In addition, 5 learners pronounced "very" as "fery", replacing the sound /v/ with /f/. Similarly, 5 learners pronounced "think" as "tink", substituting the sound /θ/ with /t/

The findings indicate that some learners experienced difficulties producing English sounds that do not commonly exist in Arabic. However, these pronunciation problems were not observed among all participants, which suggests that the influence of Arabic on English pronunciation was limited rather than dominant.

Overall, the pronunciation task showed that while certain cases of first language interference were present, learners were generally able to pronounce many English words and sentences with acceptable accuracy.

Sentence Task Analysis

The sentence pronunciation task appeared to be more challenging for learners compared to the word-reading task. While many students were able to pronounce individual words correctly when read separately, they experienced more difficulties when producing the same words within complete sentences.

Learners showed hesitation, reduced fluency, and pronunciation inaccuracies during connected speech. This may be explained by the increased cognitive demand of reading full sentences, where students had to focus simultaneously on pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and fluency.

These findings suggest that learners' pronunciation performance improves in isolated word production but becomes weaker in continuous speech situations.

In conclusion, the pronunciation tasks helped evaluate learners' pronunciation abilities and identify common pronunciation difficulties. The results showed that some learners experienced problems with certain English sounds, especially /θ/, /ð/, and /v/. Moreover, students pronounced isolated words more accurately than complete sentences, which indicates that connected speech was more challenging for them. Therefore, these tasks supported the objectives of this research and provided useful data about learners' English pronunciation performance.

Discussion of The Results

The primary objective of this study was to examine the cross-linguistic phonological influence of the Arabic mother tongue (L1) on the English (EFL) pronunciation of second-

year students at the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) Ouargla. By matching quantitative percentages with qualitative data, this discussion section evaluates how native speech patterns interact with target sounds. The results confirm the primary research hypothesis (**H₁**), demonstrating that Arabic has a significant negative transfer on learners' pronunciation, particularly where phonetic structures differ.

Discussion of Students' Profiles and Linguistic Backgrounds

The questionnaire started by asking students about their backgrounds to get a better idea of their language skills. The data shows that 52.3% of the students have been studying English for five to ten years, which means they are at an advanced level and have already taken university courses in phonetics.

This background explains why 52.3% of the students think their English pronunciation is "good" and 9.5% think it is "excellent". It is common for future middle-school teachers at ENS to be very confident in their pronunciation skills because they think it is a part of their future jobs. However as the questionnaire shows later there is a difference between how students think they are doing and how they actually do on tests.

Discussion of Perceived Pronunciation Difficulties

The part of the questionnaire asked students about the problems they have when speaking English. Even though many students thought they were good at pronunciation 47.6% said they "maybe" have trouble pronouncing words and 28.5% said they definitely do. When asked what is hardest for them, 38.3% said it is the stress on words and 28.5% said it is the intonation while 14.2% said it is the consonants. Because English is a stress-timed language and Arabic is a syllable-timed language, transferring native rhythmic patterns creates a noticeable point of friction for Algerian learners.

This is important because it shows that advanced students at ENS think they have mostly mastered individual consonant sounds. They are still struggling with things like stress and intonation. English and Arabic have rhythms, which can cause problems for Algerian students learning English.

When asked which sounds are hardest for them 28.5% said it is the "th" sound and 47.6% said it is sounds like "d" "t" and the schwa. This shows that students know they have trouble with sounds that don't match Arabic phonetic categories.

Discussion of Learning Practices and Diagnostic Tasks

The data demonstrates an overwhelming consensus regarding pronunciation training: 95.2% of respondents stated that pronunciation is highly important in EFL learning, and 90.4% argued that it should receive far more attention in formal EFL teaching.

To measure actual performance against these attitudes, the diagnostic sound selections were analyzed:

The Bilabial Plosive Contrast (/p/ vs. /b/): On simple, isolated words, 95.2% of the students selected the correct target pronunciation for "pen" (/pen/), and 90.4% successfully chose the correct target for "parking" (/pɑ:rkɪŋ/). Only a small minority fell back on the voiced substitution (/ben/ at 4.8%; /bɑ:rkɪŋ/ at 9.6%). This high accuracy rate shows that at a passive cognitive level, advanced students are fully aware that the voiceless /p/—which is absent in Arabic—must not be replaced by /b/. However, as noted by Odlin (1989), cross-linguistic transfer often returns during rapid connected speech, meaning these errors are highly context-dependent.

The Labiodental Fricative Contrast (/v/ vs. /f/): Similarly, 95.2% of respondents correctly chose the target pronunciation for "very" (/very/), while only 4.8% substituted it with the voiceless labiodental fricative /fery/. Because /v/ does not exist in standard Arabic, learners often adapt their speech by defaulting to the closest native equivalent (/f/).

The Interdental Fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/ vs. /t/ and /d/): A different pattern emerged for the interdental fricatives, where 14.3% of the participants explicitly made errors, substituting them with alveolar plosives (choosing /tɪŋk/ instead of /θɪŋk/, and /dɪs/ instead of /ðɪs/). This specific finding highlights an important dialectal detail within the Algerian context. While Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) includes interdental fricatives, Algerian Arabic (the everyday spoken dialect) regularly replaces them with dental or alveolar stops [t] and [d]. Therefore, this 14.3% error rate stems directly from the phonological interference of the students' spoken dialect, which overrides target English sound structures.

Discussion of Student' Perceptions on Improving Pronunciation

The last part of the questionnaire asked students how they think they can improve their pronunciation. The answers fell into four main categories:

Listening to native speakers and good models: Many students said they need to listen to native speakers and good models to improve their pronunciation. This is because they know they need to hear the sounds of English to learn them.

Practicing speaking and listening: Students also said they need to practice speaking and listening to improve their pronunciation. They like to use techniques like repeating what they hear and reading loud.

Using technology to practice speaking: Some students said they want to use technology like apps and recordings to practice speaking English. This helps them get feedback and correct their mistakes.

Learning vocabulary: A few students said that learning more words will help them speak more smoothly. This is because when they know words they can focus on pronunciation.

Students Oral Performance in the Pronunciation Tasks

The pronunciation tasks provided valuable data about learners' pronunciation performance and helped identify some common pronunciation difficulties among EFL learners. The results showed that certain English sounds, especially /θ/, /ð/, and /v/, were difficult for some students, which may reflect a limited influence of the Arabic language on English pronunciation. The findings also revealed that

Learners performed better when pronouncing isolated words than complete sentences, indicating that connected speech was more challenging for them. Therefore, these tasks supported the aims of this research and contributed to a better understanding of the relationship between Arabic and English pronunciation among Algerian middle school learners.

Conclusion

This chapter presented and interpreted the findings of the study. The data consistently indicated that Arabic phonological features — particularly those characteristic of spoken Algerian Arabic — exert a measurable influence on the English pronunciation of second-year EFL students at ENSO. The most affected sounds were the interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, the voiced labiodental fricative /v/, and the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/. Performance was generally better on isolated word tasks than in connected speech, highlighting the fragility of phonological gains under increased cognitive load. These results confirm H1 and provide a solid empirical basis for the pedagogical recommendations offered in the General Conclusion.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- EFL teachers should devote dedicated class time to systematic pronunciation instruction, with particular attention to the English sounds most affected by Arabic phonological interference (/θ/, /ð/, /v/, /p/).
- Instruction should incorporate phonetic discrimination and minimal pairs exercises to develop learners' perceptual awareness of critical sound contrasts.
- Extended connected speech practice — including sentence reading, role-play, and discussion — should be integrated into pronunciation instruction to address the decline in accuracy observed in continuous speech contexts.
- Teachers should provide consistent, specific corrective feedback on pronunciation errors, helping learners to distinguish between target and non-target forms.
- Students should be encouraged to engage in independent pronunciation practice using audio materials, language learning applications, and self-recording tools.
- Future research should investigate the longitudinal development of pronunciation in this population, employ larger samples across multiple institutions, and incorporate broader phonetic range assessments to provide a more comprehensive account of Arabic-English phonological interference in the Algerian EFL context.

General Conclusion

The present study investigated the effects of Arabic on the English pronunciation of second-year EFL students at the Higher Normal School of Ouargla (ENSO), with the aim of identifying the nature and extent of Arabic phonological interference in learners' oral production.

The findings confirm that Arabic plays a significant role in shaping the phonological behavior of these learners, providing support for H1. Systematic errors were observed in the production of English sounds absent from or marginalized in spoken Algerian Arabic, particularly the interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, the voiced labiodental fricative /v/, and — to a lesser extent — the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/. Performance deteriorated in connected speech relative to isolated word production, indicating that Arabic phonological patterns reassert themselves under increased processing demands.

An important finding was the discrepancy between participants' self-assessment and their observed performance. While most students denied conscious interference from Arabic, the pronunciation task revealed systematic substitution patterns consistent with L1 transfer — particularly the replacement of /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/, patterns characteristic of spoken Algerian Arabic rather than Modern Standard Arabic. This underscores the importance of using direct observational measures alongside self-report instruments in pronunciation research.

These findings have several pedagogical implications. EFL teachers at institutions such as ENSO should devote explicit, systematic attention to the English sounds most commonly affected by Arabic phonological interference, drawing on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis to anticipate and address predictable difficulty areas. Instruction should include minimal pairs exercises, phonetic discrimination training, and extended connected speech practice — particularly at the sentence and discourse levels, where interference is most pronounced. Corrective feedback should be provided consistently and constructively to help learners notice and self-correct recurring errors before they become fossilized. Students, for their part, should be encouraged to engage in regular, autonomous pronunciation practice through media consumption, shadowing, and technology-enhanced tools. Developing learners' ability to monitor their own pronunciation — and to recognize the specific L1 patterns that interfere with target language production — is a critical component of long-term phonological development.

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Appendices

Appendix one (1)

Questionnaire for Second-Year English Students at ENS Ouargla

****Investigating the Effects of Arabic on EFL Students' Pronunciation:**

The Case of Second-Year Students at ENS Ouargla**

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of an academic research study that aims to investigate the influence of Arabic on EFL students' pronunciation. Your answers will remain confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

Please answer the following questions honestly and carefully.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Section One: General Information

1) Gender:

- Male
- Female

2)How long have you been studying English?

- Less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- More than 10 years

3) How would you evaluate your English pronunciation level?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Weak

Section Two: Pronunciation Difficulties

4. Do you face difficulties in pronouncing English words?

- Yes
- No
- maybe

5 Which aspect of pronunciation is the most difficult for you?

- Consonants
- Vowels
- Stress
- Intonation

6 Which English sounds do you find most difficult to pronounce?

- /p/
- /v/
- /θ/
- /ð/
- Other: _____

7 Do you think Arabic affects your English pronunciation?

- Yes
- No

8) How often do you confuse English sounds with Arabic sounds?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

9) Do you replace certain English sounds with Arabic equivalents?

- Yes
- No

. 10) If your answer is “Yes”, give examples:

Section Three: Pronunciation Learning

11) Do you practice English pronunciation outside the classroom?

- Yes
- No

12) Which methods do you use to improve your pronunciation?

- Watching English videos
- Listening to English songs or podcasts
- Speaking practice
- Reading aloud
- Other: _____

13) Do you think pronunciation is important in learning English?

- Yes
- No

14) Do you believe pronunciation should receive more attention in EFL classrooms?

- Yes
- No

Section Four: Pronunciation Task

Part One: Difficulty Identification

15) Please indicate whether the following words are easy or difficult for you to pronounce.

Word	Target Sound	Easy	Difficult
Pen	/p/	..	..
Very	/v/	..	..
Think	/θ/	..	..
This	/ð/	..	..
Ship	/ʃ/	..	..
Measure	/ʒ/	..	..
Bird	/ɜ/	..	..

Part Two: Sound Production

Choose the pronunciation you usually produce.

15. Pen

- /pen/
- /ben/

16. Very

- /veri/
- /feri/

17. Think

- /θɪŋk/
- /tɪŋk/
- /sɪŋk/

18. This

- /ðɪs/
- /dɪs/
- /zɪs/

19. Parking

- /pɑːrkɪŋ/
- /bɑːrkɪŋ/

20. In your opinion, what can help students improve their English pronunciation?

2Section Five: Pronunciation task

20) Task 01 : Read the following words aloud carefully. Pay attention to pronunciation

- **Mother**
- **Very**
- **Vegetable**
- **Comfortable**
- **Ship**
- **Sheep**
- **School**

21) Task 02 : Read the sentences aloud carefully. Pay attention to pronunciation

- Think before you speak.
- The ship is near the beach.
- Sheep live near the beach
- Pronunciation is very important
- This is my mother and my brother.

