

English Pronunciation Difficulties Among Iraqi Learners: Patterns, Causes, and Pedagogical Implications.

By: Asst. Prof. Dr. Hayder Ali Abdulridha Alzubaidi &

Asst. Lect. Mohammed Hussein Mayod.

Abstract

This research examines the major pronunciation difficulties encountered by Iraqi university students learning English. A sample of fifty undergraduates from Kut University was assessed through a reading task, a set of minimal-pair items, and a brief free-speech activity. The collected data were analyzed to identify errors at both the segmental level—individual consonants and vowels—and the suprasegmental level, including stress and intonation. The findings reveal persistent problems such as the confusion between /p/ and /b/, substitution of /v/ with /f/, and the replacement of interdental sounds /θ/ and /ð/ with alternatives like /t/, /d/, or /s/. Students also showed inaccuracies in vowel length and quality, a tendency to simplify consonant clusters, and occasional deletion of final consonants. Moreover, misplaced word stress and limited control of English intonation patterns were evident. These difficulties appear to stem from first-language interference, restricted exposure to authentic English, and limited systematic pronunciation training. The study recommends incorporating explicit phonetic instruction and more structured practice to support clearer and more confident speech.

Keywords: Iraqi learners, English pronunciation, segmental difficulties, suprasegmental features, L1 influence