

PHONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO
SPEAKERS OF BAGHDAD ARABIC

by

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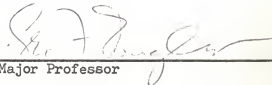
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 "A language is a system of habit patterns associated with meaning. It may be dealt with as a code, i.e., made up of signals which may be combined in various ways to carry information."¹

1.2 The process of learning a language, then, is one of acquiring as habits the patterns that make up the language and associating them with their respective meanings. A student learning English as a foreign language, then, does not make mistakes entirely at random; many of his mistakes are the result of transferring the speech habits of his native language into English. This is exactly what the Baghdadi student does when he starts learning English. "The basic problems arise not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new language themselves but primarily out of the special 'set' created by the first language habits."²

1.3 It is not necessarily the student's fault if he is unable to control the English sound system. The problem may often be traced to inadequacies in the materials and in the preparation of the teacher. "Before any of the questions of how to teach a foreign language must come the much more important preliminary work of finding the special problems arising out of any effort to develop a new set of language habits against a background of different native language habits."³

1.4 The most important thing in the preparation of teaching materials is to compare and contrast the native and the foreign languages

in order to find the hurdles that really have to be surmounted in teaching; we can predict the places where the student will have difficulty and define the nature of the problems. Therefore, writing a textbook without having previously compared the two systems involved, will be soon considered out of date.

1.5 The gap between English and Baghdad Arabic from the viewpoint of contrastive analysis is still unbridged. There are, of course, studies in descriptive analysis of general Arabic including Baghdad Arabic, but a contrastive English/Baghdadi analysis on the phonological level has not yet been made. Wallace M. Erwin presents an outline of phonology, morphology and syntax of colloquial Iraqi Arabic.⁴ Haim Blanc's attempt to describe Baghdad Arabic is mainly a structural description of the subdialects spoken in Baghdad, with comparisons with other dialects of the Mesopotamia area.⁵ Ferguson in his remarks on Van Wagoner's analysis of Baghdadi vowels, tries to prove that Baghdad Arabic has five vowel phonemes, while Wagoner's analysis states that Baghdad Arabic has only three vowels. Both linguists consider the length of the vowels phonemic.⁶ A selected bibliography in General Arabic edited by Harvey Soblem⁷ gives consideration to political boundaries rather than dialectal ones. N. Yushmanov's structural study of the Arabic language⁸ deals concisely with the position of the Arabic language among the Semitic languages, with the relation of Classical Arabic to various modern dialects, and a significant treatment of phonology and grammar of General Arabic. Walter Lehn and William Slager⁹ attempt to apply the findings of linguistics to teaching English to speakers of other languages. They, especially, apply the results of modern analysis of English and Egyptian Arabic to the teaching of English as a foreign

language to speakers of Egyptian Arabic. They place emphasis on the concept that teaching English as a foreign language should be established on the principle that materials for effective instruction in a foreign language must be based on the findings of a contrastive study of the student's language and the foreign language. This is essential in helping to identify which sounds or grammatical patterns will be difficult for the learner.

1.6 This paper is based on such a contrastive study with English as the target language and Baghdad Arabic as the native language; the analysis is on the phonological level, and it is in this sense that the findings of this study can be claimed to be adapted for speakers of Baghdad Arabic beginning to learn English. "The requirements of such adaptation can be met only by basing the material on a detailed contrastive study of spoken English and spoken Arabic."¹⁰ Therefore, this paper will discuss the basic difficulties in articulation that the Baghdadi student meets in the process of learning English, and provide a basis for effective, efficient lesson materials for him. At the same time, we will give great attention to the principles on which the materials and information are based, so that the analysis can be the means through which the Baghdadi teacher of English and his student become more accurately aware of the common sources of difficulties, as well as the precise formal devices for solving them.

CHAPTER 2

INVENTORY OF CONSONANTS OF ENGLISH AND BAGHDAD ARABIC
AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION

2.1 Consonants are classified according to place and manner of articulation. The consonant phonemes of English and Baghdad Arabic may be tabulated as follows:¹¹

Chart 1

2.11 English

Stops	voiceless	p ✓		t ✓	k ✓
	voiced	b ✓		d ✓	g ✓
Fricatives	voiceless		f ✓	s ✓	š ✓
	voiced		v ✓	z ✓	ž ✓
Lateral				l ✓	
Retroflex				r ✓	
Nasals		m ✓		n ✓	ŋ ✓
Semivowels		w ✓		y ✓	h ✓

Chart 2

2.12 Baghdad Arabic*

Stops	voiceless			t	ṭ	k	q
	voiced	b		d	ḍ	g	
Fricatives	voiceless	f	θ	s	š	x	ʕ
	voiced	ð	ð̣	z	ẓ	ġ	ʕ̣
Lateral				l			
Nasals		m		n			
Flap				ṛ			
Semivowels		w			y	h	

*The consonant phonemes / ʔ ṭ ṛ ġ q ʕ ʕ̣ / are used by Wallace M. Erwin in his book A Short Reference Grammar of Iraqi Arabic. He does not mention /d/, posited by Blanc and Yushmanov.

2.13 Contrastive Consonant Phoneme Inventory

As indicated by the charts, 1 and 2, the consonant systems of English and Baghdad Arabic are similar, with the numerical difference that English has twenty-two consonant phonemes, while Baghdad Arabic has twenty-seven. The difference is accounted for by the fact that English lacks the dental voiced fricative /ð/, the alveolar stop pair /ṭ, ḍ/, the velar fricative pair /x, ġ/, the alveolar flap /ṛ/, the uvular voiceless stop /q/ and the pharyngeal fricative pair /ʕ, ʕ̣/, but does have /p, v, r, ŋ/, lacking in Baghdad Arabic.

2.2 The Baghdad Arabic consonants lacking counterparts in English are relatively unimportant in the Baghdadi speaker's learning of English since he will not need them; therefore, beyond noting in passing that care must be taken to see that he does not substitute Baghdadi /ð/ for

English / ʒ /, they will not be discussed here. The main predictable problems center around English / p, v, r, ʒ / which have no counterparts in Baghdad Arabic.

2.3 Articulation of English Consonants

The consonant phonemes in English which have counterparts in Baghdad Arabic should not be difficult for the Baghdadi to produce in isolation. There are phonetic details, however, in their articulation in the stream of speech, which the Baghdadi must control if he is to achieve a mastery of the English sound system.

2.31 Stops

The Baghdadi learner can usually employ his Arabic articulation for the English stops / t, k, b, d, g / with satisfactory results. Predictable problems of articulation and discrimination in the stop series are associated with / p /, for which the Baghdadi speaker will tend to substitute / b /. Since he uses the sound [p] in such borrowed words as pasha 'lord' and pacha 'cooked lamb's head', the articulation of / p / in isolation should be no problem. The problem is to get him to distinguish consistently and accurately between English / p / and / b /. Both consonants / b / and / p / "are made in the same place (between the lips) and in the same manner (by closing the lips), . . . but [b] is pronounced with vibration of the vocal cords, and [p] without vibration. We may say that [b] is the voiced counterpart of [p]." ¹²

2.32 The following is a simplified description of / p / and its distribution:

/ p / is a voiceless bilabial stop.

Distribution: Initial position-aspirated. pin

Final position-aspirated, unaspirated or

released. pep

Syllabic-initial before unstressed vowels-

aspirated. happen

After initial / s / - unaspirated. spin

Before another stop-unreleased. pepped

2.33 The student will require drill to establish habits of discrimination between / p / and / b / in initial, medial, and final positions:

pit - bit

repel - rebel

nip - nib

pet - bet

simple - symbol

sup - sub

pat - bat

rumple - rumble

cap - cab

2.4 Fricatives

Fricatives in Baghdad Arabic, whether voiced or voiceless, may occur in initial, medial, and final position. Since the fricative systems of the two languages are similar, with the difference mentioned in 2.13, it should not be difficult for the Baghdadi student to produce the English fricatives / f, θ, ð, s, š, z, ž /. The predictable problem of discrimination and articulation in the fricative series is associated with / v /.

2.41 Since the Baghdadi speaker uses [v] in such borrowed words as narvas 'he upset (someone)', nervis 'nervous', he should be able to produce English / v / in isolation with little trouble. English / v / is the voiced labiodental fricative made like Baghdadi and English / f / but with the addition of voice. It is the same in all positions,

e.g. vat /væt /, oven /əvən/, and have /hæv/. The problem is to get the student to discriminate between the English /v/ and the /f/ which he usually substitutes for /v/.

2.42 A drill like the following is usually helpful in establishing the contrast:

vast - fast	saver - safer	have - half
vat - fat	hover - huffer	leave - leaf
vase - face	server - surfer	serve - surf
vine - fine	service - surface	five - fife

2.5 Retroflex

/r/ is formed variously in American English by slightly changing the position of the tongue. The /r/ in American English is usually accompanied by some slight 'protrusion' of the lips, and it is generally frictionless. "Before vowels, /r/ is a vowel-like glide. In post-vocalic position we substitute either a vowel for the r, or delete it entirely."¹³ We must note that some dialects in English do not substitute the vowel for the /r/, but preserve the strong post-vocalic retroflex /r/ as in General American and Midwest.

2.51 /r/ is the voiced alveolar retroflex. Though the characteristic 'American r' is formed in various ways in different dialects and idiolects, Francis describes the classic way of realizing this phoneme as follows:

The sides of the tongue are against the back teeth, as for [ŋ]; the front is lowered considerably; the blade and tip are turned upward and withdrawn a bit toward the back of the mouth (hence the term retroflex, or "bent back"); the tip points to the extreme back of the alveolar ridge where it joins the palate, considerably back of the position of contact for the alveolar consonants [t], [d], and [n]. The separation between the tongue tip and the alveolar ridge is about one-eighth to one-quarter inch.¹⁴

2.52 The sound described above appears in initial and inter-vocalic positions, and between an initial consonant and following vowel, as in red [rɛd], brown [braʊn], very [veri] and thread [θrɛd].

2.53 As indicated by the two charts, both English and Baghdad Arabic / r / are phonetically similar in being alveolar, but care must be taken to see that the students do not substitute the flap [ɾ] for retroflex [ɻ]. "Among words in which [r] follows a vowel, we hear car [kar] without the intermediary sound, and care [kɛər] with it."¹⁵ The deliberate insertion of [ə] in the case just described will usually help the student to produce [r] which sounds American. The student may then be given drill beginning with items with [r] in final position thence to medial position and initial position, and finally to post-consonantal pre-vocalic position:

care	very	raise	praise
rare	rarer	rise	train
fair	carve	rate	great
clear	serve	rank	friend

2.6 Lateral

Though there is no predictable problem in producing / l /, yet it seems necessary to discriminate between the light [l] and the dark [ɫ] allophones, and their distribution in both languages. The / l / in English possesses two clearly distinguishable allophones, commonly referred to as light or clear [l] and dark [ɫ]. The light [l] is the sound Americans make when / l / precedes a front vowel, as in leave, lit, land, or is followed by / y / as in value. "It possesses

the quality or resonance of a front vowel."¹⁶ When it possesses the quality and resonance of a back vowel it is called dark and transcribed phonetically as [ɫ]. "The degree of lightness or darkness is actually a relative one."¹⁷ In Southern, British, and Eastern English / l / before front vowel, particularly a high front vowel, is clear. In General American most [ɫ]'s are dark, except those in initial position before front vowels, e.g. "leave", and medially between front vowels, e.g. "feeling."

2.61 "The English / l / is typically produced with the tip of the tongue touching the alveolar ridge, the mid-part curving downward, and the back raised. The resulting schwa-colored / l / causes any English vowel before / l / to have an off-glide in the direction of mid-central."¹⁸

2.62 Baghdad Arabic also has both [ɫ] and [ɫ̄], but in contrast with English, uses the [ɫ] almost exclusively in all positions. [ɫ̄] is found only in such words as the name of God, Allah [ʔallah], and after certain consonants, especially / ʔ, ʒ, ʂ /, when these consonants are accompanied by / a / or are not accompanied by any vowel.

2.63 It seems, then, that the Baghdadi student can employ his native articulation for the English / l /, but it would be very helpful if he were reminded to use the [ɫ̄] he uses daily in such words as Allah, galub, and glob in all positions except initially before front vowels and between front vowels. Drill beginning with dark [ɫ̄] after back vowels, thence to dark [ɫ̄] after central vowels, and finally to dark [ɫ̄] after front vowels leads to proper production of the General American / l /, and its effect on the preceding vowel.

1. bull	malice	veil
goal	bulky	tell
mule	malady	kill
fool	children	bell

2. Contrast English post-vocalic / l / with its Baghdadi counterpart.

keel - keel shall - shall
 feel - feel fool - fool

2.7 Nasals

The Baghdadi student should have no difficulty in the articulation of English nasals / m, n^h/, since they are essentially the same as their Baghdadi counterparts, but he will have a problem in producing the English consonant / n / in isolation. The sound [ŋ] is phonemic in English, but in Baghdad Arabic it occurs only as a positional variant of / n / before [g] and [k] as in mungar [mungar] 'beak', and inkiser [inkisar] 'it is broken'.

2.71 The consonant / ŋ / is "a lingua-velar, non-fricative, nasal continuant. It is made by raising the back of the tongue into contact with the open velum, and sending the vocalized breath stream through the pharynx and through nasal passages. The acoustic quality of [ŋ] differs considerably from that of [m] and [n] because of the fact that the mouth cavity is completely eliminated as a resonator."¹⁹

/ ŋ / is spelled (1) with n before a pronounced [k] in the same syllable, and before [g] initial in the succeeding syllable, as in link, and angry, and (2) with ng as in thing.

2.72 English /ŋ/ occurs at the middle and ends of words, but never at the beginning. Since the spelling is so inconsistent, one will need to give special attention to the identification and analysis of the sound. "The difficulty is often complicated by muscular tension, which often closes the velum before the release of the tongue. Proper timing of the muscular movements for [ŋ] and [ŋg] is therefore important, and these must be more relaxed when [ŋ] is not to be followed by [g] or [k],"²⁰ as in

ran	rang	rank	mingle
sin	sing	sink	finger
thin	thing	think	Rangoon

2.8 Consonant Clusters

According to Hill, a "cluster is a sequence of two or more phonemes of the same class without the intervention of a phoneme of another class. The phoneme types which cluster are supersegmental phonemes and consonants."²¹ In this paper I will discuss only some of the consonant clusters which cause serious trouble to the Baghdadi student.

2.81 English employs combinations of /s/ plus /p, t, k/ which are called "post junctural and prevocalic"²² clusters. This group would be ordinarily discussed as initial. In this position, the occurrence will be as follows:

- / sp- / spy, / spl- / splash, / spr- / spring,
- / st- / star, / str- / street, / sk- / school,
- / skr- / scream.

2.82 The above consonant clusters have no counterparts in Baghdad Arabic, therefore, they may cause the Baghdadi student a great deal of trouble. The Baghdadi learner is used to having a vowel either before or after / s / followed by / p, t, k / as in / istara / 'a curtain', / aspanya / 'Spain' and / sikala / 'woodyard'. Thus, he will pronounce the above English consonant clusters similar to the Baghdadi, and according to his habit pattern he says:

/ ispuwn / for 'spoon', / sitriyt / for 'street', and
/ iskuwl / for 'school'.

2.83 From initial clusters we will pass to a final group known as "post vocalic, prejunctional clusters."²³ Our clusters will be the same previous 1-2 clusters with the addition of a third consonant, which can be / s /, and after / p / or / k / can also be / t /. The 1-2 consonant clusters in final position are:

/ -sk / 'risk', 'ask', / -st / 'list', 'fist', and / -sp / 'lisp', 'grasp', and by adding the third consonant the group will be / -sks / 'risks', 'asks', / -skt / 'risked', 'asked', / -sps / 'lisps', 'grasps', / -spt / 'lisped', 'grasped', and / -sts / 'lists'.

2.831 Consonant clusters of 2.83 will not be difficult in final position, but the problem will be one of articulation and discrimination after adding the third consonant. This addition of / -s / or / -t / will be accompanied by / i / after the 1-2 phoneme clusters according to the Baghdadi student habit pattern. Thus, he uses / æskis / for / æsk / and / æskit / for / æskt /. To avoid this problem, it may be helpful to drop the second consonant of 1-2 clusters after adding the third consonant, especially / t /. "For instance, the colloquial form

almost universally used for asked is /æst/, with loss of /k/.

Similarly, lists is often reduced to /lís+s/, or /líst+z/.

Even in other clusters which have not been thus reduced, breaking up the cluster with a juncture is common, as in /lís+ps/ or /lísk+ps/."²⁴

2.82 For both the initial and final clusters, the phonetic statement with a short imitation drill like the following, and an occasional reminder when inappropriate spelling pronunciation is encountered, should suffice:

1. spring	street	score
splash	string	scout
sport	stone	school
spin	stack	sky
spear	still	scream
2. ask	risk	grasp
asks	risks	grasps
asked	risked	grasped

2.9 Semi-vowels

'Semivowels' is not a term which indicates articulation, but it is rather a term of distribution. Thus, a line was drawn above 'semivowels' in consonant charts 1 and 2 mentioned above. "From an articulatory viewpoint, /w, y, h/ are similar to fricatives, but from a distribution viewpoint, it is more convenient to class them separately. In pre-vocalic position in the same syllable with following vowel, they function like consonants; but in post-vocalic position in the same syllable with preceding vowel, they function as vocalic off-glides."²⁵ Accordingly, /r/ could be placed in either category, or both. In chapter 3,

under the analysis of 'vowels', semivowels will be discussed in more detail.

CHAPTER 3

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF VOWELS OF ENGLISH AND BAGHDAD ARABIC

3.1 English Vowels

Vowels are classified according to position of highest part of the tongue during articulation. The vowel phonemes of English may be tabulated as follows:²⁶

Chart 3

3.11

		<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>	
Lips open - - - to lips spread Mouth open - - - to mouth closed	High	i	ɪ	u	lips rounded Mouth closed
	Mid.	e	ə	o	- - - to - - - to - - -
	Low	æ	a	ɔ	Lips unrounded Mouth open

3.12 The nine vowel phonemes of English combine with the semivowels / w, y, h / "to form the 'gliding' vowel nuclei so characteristic of English and traditional diphthongs / ay oy aw /. With reduction of stress all may undergo modification in quality in the direction of

central so that in unstressed syllables they frequently are morphophonically replaced by / i / or / ə /.²⁷ As shown in chart 3 above, the front vowels are made with lips spread, the back vowels with lips rounded, and the central vowels take neutral position.

3.13 The analysis of simple vowels plus semivowels / w, y, h / allows us twenty-seven complex vocalic nuclei in English, plus the nine simple vowels already taken up, making a total of thirty-six possible syllabic nuclei available in the over-all pattern.

3.14 Examples of all occurrences of complex nuclei with / w, y, h /.

3.141 With / y /

/ i y / as in be, me, see, keep, eat.

/ e y / as in day, bay, pay, gate, name.

/ æ y / as in certain Southern pronunciations of I, half.²⁸

/ ə y / as in first and bird as heard quite typically in certain parts of New York City.

/ a y / as in night, my, sight, fly, right.

/ u y / as in push in certain Southern and Western dialects.²⁹

/ o y / as in boy, joy, coin.

/ ɔ y / as in time, life in northern Eastern Sea-board dialects and in Ireland.³⁰

3.142 With / w /

/ i w / as in mew, few.

/ e w / as in house, out in Southern Coastal dialect.

/ æ w / as in how, now, cow in most Southern-west speakers.

/ ə w / as in go, no, so in Eastern Central dialect.

/ ɪ w / as in food in most Central dialects.

/ aw / as in house, about, now in Northern and Western speech.

/ uw / as in food, moon, spoon.

/ ow / as in go, so, no, boat, in most of the United States.

/ɔw/ as in the pronunciation of 'you all' as a one-syllable utterance in many Southern dialects.³¹

3.143 With / h /

/ ih / as in idea.

/ eh / as in yeah.

/ æh / as in past and grass.

/ əh / as in girl and murder.

/ ah / as in calm and palm'.

/ uh / as in poor and sure.

/ oh / as in law and saw, New York dialect.

/ɔh / as in bought, caller.

3.2 Baghdad Arabic Vowels

Ferguson says, "Actually in Baghdad Arabic there are five vowel phonemes, a, e, i, o, u, all of which occur short and long (= double) except that short e and o are extremely rare."³² The vowel phonemes of Baghdad Arabic may be tabulated as follows:

Chart 4

3.21

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>	
Lips rounded	i	-	u	Lips unrounded to lips rounded to to to to
Mouth closed	e	-	o	
Mouth open	-	a	-	

3.22 While Ferguson deals with length as phonemic in Baghdad Arabic, it seems that it is more in consonance with phonological facts and more convenient pedagogically to account for long syllables in Baghdad Arabic as complex vowel nuclei, i.e., made up of cardinal vowel plus semivowel off-glide, rather than vowel plus length.

3.23 The combination of Baghdad Arabic vowels with the semivowels / w, y, h / forms complex vowel nuclei, but the glides are not so obvious as those in English. Baghdad Arabic has three diphthongs [ay, oy, aw] similar to those of English, while classical Arabic has only [ay] and [aw], according to Yushmanov.³³ This is not of significant importance here, since the Baghdadi student already has / oy / in his language as in / boyah / 'paint', and therefore there would be no predictable problem in this respect.

3.24 The vowels / i, a, u /, which are the only vowel phonemes in classical Arabic, are marked by glottal stop, after juncture or

in syllable initial position, as in [læʔiyɪm]. Back vowels / u, o / are made with lip rounding, front vowels / i, e / with lip spreading; the lip action in both cases is progressively less important from high to low, while with / a / it is neutral.

3.3 Contrasts of English and Baghdadi Vowel Systems

It is convenient to illustrate the contrasts between the English and Baghdadi vowel systems in a simplified scheme of one English speaker's vowels beside those of one Baghdadi speaker.

English³⁴

/ iy / 'beat'	/ i / 'pretty'	/ uw / 'boot'
/ i / 'bit'		/ u / 'put'
/ ey / 'bait'	/ ə / 'but'	/ ow / 'boat'
/ e / 'bet'		/ ɔh / 'bought'
/ æ / 'bat'	/ a / 'bot'	

Baghdad Arabic

/ iy / <u>feel</u> 'elephant'	/ uw / <u>shoof</u> 'look v.'
/ i / <u>fill</u> 'loose'	/ u / <u>ful</u> 'a kind of flower'
/ ey / <u>fay</u> 'shade'	/ ow / <u>lom</u> 'blame'
/ e / <u>bet</u> 'house'	/ o / <u>shof</u> 'vision,' or 'look n.'
/ ah / <u>fas</u> 'an ax'	
/ a / <u>kitab</u> or <u>ktab</u> 'book'	

3.4 The English Vowels /æ i ə/

As this scheme indicates, English requires three discriminations which the Baghdadi speaker does not have, /æ i ə /. In general, then, the main predictable problems of the Baghdadi learner in controlling the

English vowel system are in producing the low front vowel /æ/, (digraph) the high central vowel /ɪ/ (barred 'eye'), and the mid-central vowel /ə/ (schwa).

3.5 The Vowel /æ/

/æ/ is a low, front, lax and unrounded vowel. [æ] for most Americans is the lowest front vowel. The tongue blade is slightly lower in the mouth and somewhat retracted from the position of [ɛ]. It is commonly considered a lax vowel, although a clearly tense variety of the sound exists in all parts of the United States. /æ/ is a tenser sound in all positions where a lengthened vowel can occur. The lips and mouth usually are more open than for any other front vowel.³⁵ /æ/ is spelled with the letter a as in add, back, cat. Other spellings for this phoneme are: ai as in plaid, au as in laugh, and i as in meringue. /æ/ appears in initial and medial positions of words.

3.51 The substitution of a short or long [e] or [a] for /æ/ is found in the speech of Baghdadi students. Learning to achieve an acceptable sound takes considerable ear training and practice. It is most easily achieved by allowing the articulators to assume a position between /e/ and /a/, making sure that they result in a lax vowel.³⁶

3.52 Subsequent drilling contrasting /æ/, a/, and /æ/, e/ will help establish acceptable articulation habits for /æ/.

<u>/æ/</u>	<u>/a/</u>	<u>/æ/</u>	<u>/e/</u>
bat	bot	pan	pen
pat	pot	lad	led
hat	hot	lass	less
sat	sot	back	beck

3.6 The Vowel /ɪ/

"The high central vowel, / i /, has as its allophones various unrounded high and high mid-central vowels, variants of [ɪ], [i̠], [ɪ̠], and [ɪ̠̠]." ³⁷ The 'barred eye' / i / "occurs very frequently in all varieties of English in stressed as well as unstressed position." ³⁸ It is produced with the tongue's highest position nearer the center of the mouth rather than nearer the front. "The middle of the tongue takes a high position and the lips in neutral, rather than spread, position. It can be heard in such words as sister, [children, pretty] when the / i / sound is centralized and the lips in neutral position . . ." ³⁹ between the slightly spread / i / and the slightly rounded / u /. Usually the central high vowel / ɪ / is not easily distinguished from the front high vowel / i /, except when we notice its relaxed lips and its centralized neutral position. It should be remembered that / ɪ / may not appear in some idiolects nor in certain regional dialects of America, but many speakers use it in both syllables of the word children /čɪldrɪn/. The unstressed / i / may be heard more commonly in such words as parted and horses /-ɪd/, /-ɪz/, in the word can when in such a phrase as 'I can do it' / kɪn/. ⁴⁰

3.61 As the Baghdadi vowel system lacks / ɪ /, the Baghdadi student will tend to substitute the high front vowel / i / in the place of the high central vowel / ɪ / in English. This predictable problem may be avoided if we help the student to distinguish weak or unstressed form of the pronouns him and them. The high central vowel / ɪ / will be distinguished from the high front vowel / i / if I told him to come is

contrasted with I told 'em to come. The high front vowel is used in the first, and the central high vowel in the second. / i / also contrasts with / ə / in just as I came in, with the just man; the first just (adv.) has high central vowel / i /, while the second just (adj.) has the mid-central vowel / ə /. It also contrasts with / e / in the word jest (v.) and with the / i / in "gist" (of the story).

3.62 The following sequences will help the student to discriminate and articulate the English / i / properly:

just a minute (adv.) / jɪst /
a just man (adj.) / jəst /
you jest (v.) / jest /
the gist of the story (n.) / jɪst /

3.7 The Vowel / ə /

/ ə / is the lax central vowel that occurs stressed in initial and medial position in such words as up, cut, dozen, mother. It is also an exceedingly common vowel in unstressed position in all dialects of American English.⁴¹ "It is probably best described as a sound made with the articulators in neutral position, with neither spread nor rounded lips, and with the tongue neither forward nor back . . ." ⁴²

3.71 Although [ə] is not phonemic in Baghdad Arabic, it does occur in such forms as [ləlbət] 'to the house' where / le- / 'to' becomes [jə-] when prefixed to / -bet / 'house'. Since the Baghdadi does use this sound, it should not present new difficulty for him in producing it in isolation; in the stream of speech, however, he frequently substitutes / a / for / ə / in English, in stressed syllables, e.g., / bət / for / bet /.

3.72 Drill beginning with / ə / unstressed in all positions leading to drill with / ə / stressed in initial and medial positions, and thence to drill contrasting / ə / with / a / is usually effective.

about

comical

sofa

up

above

but

bot

CHAPTER 4

PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 It should be remembered that this paper is not concerned with classifying words in isolation but exclusively "with these items as they occur in live utterance carrying on conversations--with the practical function of language."⁴³ Hence, teaching consonants and vowels within appropriate intonation and rhythm units is probably more effective than teaching them in detail in isolation, particularly if we keep in mind that the student tends to transfer the structural forms, and pronunciation system, including stress and rhythm, of his native language to the foreign language, and that this is apparently the main problem.

4.11 Accordingly, the English teacher should know that accurate production of sounds, intonation, and structural forms must come first and become automatic. This has to be achieved before the student is ready to devote his main attention to increasing his vocabulary. Robert Lado significantly points out that "sounds have no meaning in themselves; they merely serve to express or identify a unit or pattern which in turn has meaning. As a result, teaching perception precedes teaching the meaning. The student is asked to identify the sound or pattern he hears. This can best be done by comparing one sound or pattern with another."⁴⁴

4.12 In short, in teaching English to Baghdadi students, the teacher should employ the results of the contrastive analysis indicated in chapters 2 and 3 following these five stages:

1. Recognition of the significant sounds and structures of English.
2. Imitation until the student can produce the sound structure.
3. Repetition until the student can produce the sound structure accurately without the model.
4. Variation of patterns so that the student can substitute elements appropriately.
5. Selection of patterns and elements so the student can respond appropriately to situations in communication.

4.13 "The function of the teacher is to present the patterns in examples, acting as a 'live model' for the student to imitate repetitively, to diagnose and remedy student difficulties, to motivate and evaluate."⁴⁵ These "patterns in examples" should be spoken by the teacher, and the students listen to these examples and then repeat them imitating the teacher. It is possible to use tape recorders and record players for effective teaching of English. The combination of listening and repeating is the most basic important step of all exercises.

4.2 The teacher needs at least to know that certain "aspects of meaning do change, however, if we alter the succession of type of pitches in pronouncing a whole . . ."⁴⁶ utterance. 'They are listening,' for instance, is a statement if the voice drops at the end, but it is a question if the pitch goes up. It is these significant levels and changes of pitch, stress, and junctures that make up the intonation of an utterance. These meaningful intonation features are known as suprasegmental phonemes which "are important in helping students understand why we group words as we do and how it happens that writing produced by the unwary is often ambiguous."⁴⁷ The pitch of the voice of the speaker, high, mid or low, depends on the length of the vocal

cords and the degree of their tension and constitutes the speech melody. Stress is "the structural degrees of relative loudness upon which syllables are uttered."⁴⁸ Juncture is the "transition between sounds or between sound and silence in speech."⁴⁹ It shows us how we get from one stretch of utterance into another or how we complete utterances and start others.

4.21 In short, the suprasegmentals in English are as follows:

a. Five stresses related to each other:

// / overloud (reserved for situations of special emphasis
or emotion)

/ / / primary

/ ^ / secondary

/ \ / tertiary

/ v / weak (usually unmarked)

b. Pitch, four levels related to each other:

/ 1 / low

/ 2 / mid

/ 3 / high

/ 4 / extra high (reserved for "overloud" situations)

c. Four junctures:

1- Three terminal junctures which signal the ends of intonation patterns:

/ ↓ / falling terminal

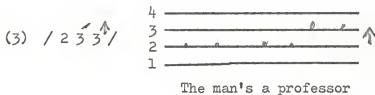
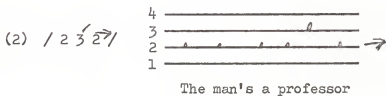
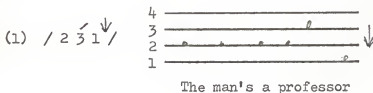
/ ↑ / rising terminal

/ → / sustained terminal

2- One internal open juncture / + /

4.22 The typical intonation contour begins on pitch level / 2 /, continues on that level until the last lexical stress syllable, when the pitch rises to / 3 / as that syllable receives the primary / ' / stress, then: (1) falls to PL / 2 / and the voice volume fades to zero through a falling pitch; or (2) falls to PL / 2 / and the voice volume fades to zero on a sustained pitch level; or (3) stays on PL / 3 / and the voice volume fades to zero through a rising pitch.⁵⁰

4.23 The contours explained above are commonly illustrated as follows:



4.24 The teacher should keep in mind that it is necessary for the student to concentrate on the changes while continuing to use the desired rhythm and intonation pattern.

FOOTNOTES

¹Leo F. Engler, unpublished lecture (Manhattan, Kansas: K.S.U., summer 1965).

²Charles C. Fries, "Forward," Linguistics Across Cultures, by Robert Lado (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1957).

³Ibid.

⁴A Short Reference Grammar of Iraqi Arabic (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 1963).

⁵Communal Dialects in Baghdad, Harvard Middle Eastern Monograph Series (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964).

⁶Charles A. Ferguson, review of Van Wagoner's Spoken Iraqi Arabic, Word VII (1951), p. 277.

⁷Arabic Dialect Studies: A Selected Bibliography (Washington D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics of Modern Language Association and the Middle East Institute, 1962).

⁸The Structure of the Arabic Language, tran. by M. Perlman (Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics of the Modern Language Association of America, 1961).

⁹Learning English (Cairo, U.A.R.: The American University at Cairo Press, 1961).

¹⁰Lehn and Slager, p. iv.

¹¹cf. Leo F. Engler, Problems in English/German Contrastive Analysis, unpub. diss. (Austin, Texas, 1962), p. 3.

¹²Clifford H. Prator, Manual of American English Pronunciation (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1957), p. 64.

¹³Arthur J. Bronstein, The Pronunciation of American English (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), p. 117.

¹⁴Nelson W. Francis, The Structure of American English (New York: The Roland Press Company, 1958), p. 86.

¹⁵Prator, p. 84.

¹⁶Bronstein, p. 125.

- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Engler, p. 8.
- 19 Wise, p. 131.
- 20 Charles Kenneth Thomas, Phonetics of American English (New York: The Towland Press Company, 1958), p. 83.
- 21 Archibald A. Hill, Introduction to Linguistic Structure: From Sound to Sentence in English (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1958), p. 69.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid., p. 77.
- 24 Ibid., p. 78.
- 25 Engler, p. 10.
- 26 cf. Bronstein, p. 141, and also Engler, p. 10.
- 27 Engler, pp. 10-11.
- 28 See Henree Lee Smith, Linguistic Science and Teaching of English (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 30.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p. 31.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ferguson, p. 277.
- 33 N. V. Yushmanov, The Structure of the Arabic Language, trans. Perlman M. (Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics of the Modern Language Association of America, 1961), p. 13.
- 34 Engler, p. 12.
- 35 cf. Bronstein, p. 154.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 156-57.
- 37 Francis, p. 140.
- 38 Smith, p. 24.
- 39 Bronstein, p. 148.
- 40 Ibid., p. 149.

⁴¹Francis, p. 103.

⁴²Bronstein, p. 179.

⁴³Robert Lado, Language Teaching (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1964), p. 32.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 80.

⁴⁵See my fn. 1 above.

⁴⁶Francis, p. 114.

⁴⁷"Terms in Phonemics," by George P. Faust, Readings in Linguistics, ed., Harold B. Allen (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958), p. 73.

⁴⁸Smith, p. 36.

⁴⁹Lado, p. 217.

⁵⁰See my fn. 1 above.

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PHONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO
SPEAKERS OF BAGHDAD ARABIC

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Although there have been many studies in descriptive analysis of the English language and Baghdad Arabic, a contrastive English/Baghdadi analysis on the phonological level has not yet been made. The purpose of this report is to provide such a contrastive analysis to point out and discuss the basic problems in articulation and intonation patterns the Baghdadi learner encounters when he starts learning English. It is also an attempt to demonstrate the application of linguistics in the development of more effective and efficient language teaching methods and materials.

First the phoneme inventories and phonotactics of the two languages are contrasted in order to find the salient areas of predictable pronunciation problems of the Baghdadi approaching English. The phonetic details and allophonics of these problem areas are then examined to determine the precise nature of the habit pattern conflicts predicted. On the basis of this information, appropriate drills and pedagogical devices are suggested for meeting each problem in the classroom.

The consonant systems of English and Baghdadi are found similar, with the difference that English lacks / ṭ ḍ ʃ x ǰ ʁ q ʒ ʒ / but does have / p v r ɲ / lacking in Baghdadi. As for the vowel phonemes, the scheme used in this study indicates that English makes three discriminations / æ ɪ ə / that the Baghdadi speaker does not have. English consonant clusters / sp-, spl-, spr-, st-, str-, sk-, skr- /, in initial position, and / -sps, -spt, -sts / in final position are predictable problems in the process of teaching English to Baghdadis.

In addition to the drills suggested, a discussion of pedagogical considerations and a bibliography are included.