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The Iraqi Student-Teachers' Pronunciation between the Restricted RP and the Widespread GA

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الملخص

تواجه طالبات معهد إعداد المعلمات/ نينوى جملةً من الصعوبات على صعيد لفظ الكلمات، من ضمنها عجزهن عن التطبيق الفعلي لكثير من المعلومات النظرية التي تخص اللهجة المعتمدة في برامج تعليم اللغة الإنكليزية في العراق والمسماة Received Pronunciation **. يعُزى هذا إلى تأثير النظام الصوتي للغة الأم من ناحية وكثرة سماع الطلبة للهجة إنكليزية أخرى أكثر شيوعاً في وسائل الإعلام من ناحيةٍ أخرى، ألا وهي** General American**. وعليه كان هدف هذه الدراسة التحقق من صحة هذه الاعتبارات. تتألف الدراسة من هيكل عملي ذي جانبين، تصف الجانب الأول منه التجربة المتمثلة باختبار للفظ الكلمات، ويصف الجانب الثاني منه تنظيم عملية الإجابة على استبيان بثلاث فقرات يعدّ مكملاً لخطوات البحث العملية. تعتمد قاعدة البيانات في هذه الدراسة على نماذج مسجلة من ثلاث عشرة طالبة من قسم اللغة الإنكليزية/ المرحلة الخامسة في معهد إعداد معلمات نينوى للعام الدراسي ٢٠٠٩–٢٠١٠ . أظهرت الطالبات المختبرات اقتراباً في لفظهن للّهجة الأميركية غير المعتمدة لتعليم لفظ اللغة الإنكليزية، ويعزى السبب في هذا الاقتراب إلى كثرة اطّلاع الطالبات على هذه اللهجة عبر وسائل الإعلام المختلفة والتي أصبحت مروجة للتأثير اللغوي الأميركي. إن كثرة اطّلاع الطالبات المختبرات على الإنكليزية الأميركية أدى بالنهاية إلى ترك الأثر الواضح في طريقة لفظهن للأصوات، وبالتالي للكلمات.**

Abstract

One of the difficulties encountered by the student teachers of the teaching-training institute/ Nineveh is the learners' inability to put into practice much of their theoretical knowledge as regards the model of pronunciation used (as a standard) in TEFL, i.e. RP. This is so because of the sound system operating in the learners' mother tongue (MT) on the one hand, and their frequent exposure to another predominant English accent, i.e. GA through the mass media, on the other. This study aims at verifying the validity of

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these considerations. It consists of a two-fold experimental design: the first is a word-pronunciation test conducted to test the proposed hypothesis; the second is a three-item questionnaire constructed to further verify the applicability of the hypothesis. The database for this study consists of recorded samples from 13 student teachers of the fifth year/ Department of English/ Teacher Training Institute- Nineveh of the academic year 2009-2010. The results of the study suggest that the student teachers show an approximation to GA in much of their performance though GA is not used as a standard of pronunciation in the TEFL programmers in Iraq. The findings show also that the Iraqi student teachers are aware of the importance of the mass media in developing their linguistic habits. The results obtained show that those learners are obviously exposed to a GA type of English through the mass media which serve as a vehicle of the American linguistic influence. This exposure to a natively spoken American English affects, to certain extent, the learners' phoneme realizations and, consequently, word pronunciations.

List of Abbreviations

RP	Received Pronunciation
GA	General American
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
MT	Mother Tongue
ILE	Iraqi Learners of English
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
US	United States
CA	Contrastive Analysis
IA	Iraqi Arabic
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
SA	Standard Arabic
MA	Mosuli Arabic
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BD	Baghdadi Dialect
N RP	Near Received Pronunciation
N GA	Near General American
N	Neither
L1	First Language

1. Preliminaries

In teaching a foreign language with many spoken forms such as English, it is very important to decide the model of pronunciation taught as a standard. Such a decision depends, for the most part, on the extent to which the learners are most exposed to the chosen model, (O'Connor, 1967:7). This is so because what is realized perceptually is in most cases reflected in production. For instance, if the Iraqi learners of English (ILE, henceforth) are mostly exposed to a natively spoken British English, they are more likely to adopt phoneme realizations and word pronunciations from there; reversely, if they are more exposed to a natively spoken American English, they are more likely to adopt phoneme realizations and word pronunciations from that accent.

The present study is mainly concerned with analyzing the Iraqi student-teachers' pronunciation of citation forms of English words to show its approximation to either of the English "reference accents,"(*) (Mc David, 1983:88) RP and GA.

1.1 The Problem

The problem characterized in this paper is concerned with the observation that the Iraqi student teachers show a marked deviation, on the pronunciation level; from the accent they should have an approximation to, i.e. RP. What can be observed, instead, is a marked approximation to another predominating English accent, i.e. GA.

As all graduates are assumed to initiate their practical lives as teachers of English, the problem is more persistent, for younger learners often adopt the pronunciation characteristics carried by their teachers.

1.2 The Hypothesis

The present paper aims at verifying the validity of the hypothesis: Iraqi student teachers of the Teacher-Training Institute/ Nineveh show an approximation to GA in most of their

(*) ***Reference Accents*** is a term employed by J.C. Wells, to refer to **RP** and **GA**, in his ***Accents of English*** Vol.1(1982)

performance though GA-as a standard of pronunciation- has no traditional roots in the TEFL programmes in Iraq.

1.3 The Significance

The study investigates such factors as:

1- The criteria that should be reconsidered in choosing the appropriate model of pronunciation for the above programmes.
2- The massive role of the mass media, represented mostly by TV, in developing pronunciation habits in the learners.

On the one hand, the study adopts the point of view that the choice of a certain model should take into account factors of vicinity or non-vicinity to the MT accent as this helps to overcome much of the difficulty encountered. On the other hand, the role of the mass media in building pronunciation habits in young learners cannot be overlooked. This is so, because through these media the learners are given the ample opportunity to be exposed to a natively spoken accent. It follows that if a certain model is mostly propagated for by means of these media, it stands a good chance to be adopted in the TEFL programmes.

2- RP VERSUS GA

In this section, light will be thrown upon the main differences between the two reference accents as regards the segmental phonemes.

2.1 Centring Diphthongs /ɪə,eə, ʊə/

RP has three centring diphthongs, i.e. glides that begin at a certain tongue position and terminate in a central position in the direction of / ə /. Figure 1 illustrates the most recent starting and ending points of these glides following Jones (1997:ix).

2.1.1 /ɪə/

The RP glide of this diphthong starts at a point a little closer than /ɪ/ and terminates in the direction of an in between close and open-mid variety of /ə/. In producing this diphthong, the lips change from slightly spread for the first element to neutrally open for the second. Examples: *here* /hɪə/, *ear*/ɪə/, *pierce* /pɪəs/.

2.1.2 /eə/

The glide of RP /eə/ starts at a point closely below cardinal vowel number [3] and moves in the direction of the aforementioned variety of /ə/. When producing this diphthong, the lips change from slightly

spread for the first element to neutrally open for the second. Examples: *swear* /sweə/, *scares* /skeəz/, *air* /eə /.

2.1.3 /ʊə /

The tongue glide of RP /ʊə/ begins from a little more back and closer to close-mid position than /ʊ/ and moves in the direction of / ə /. The lips change from rounded for the first element to neutrally open for the second. Examples: *sure* /ʃʊə/, *poor* / pʊə/, *endure* /ɪn*djʊə*/.

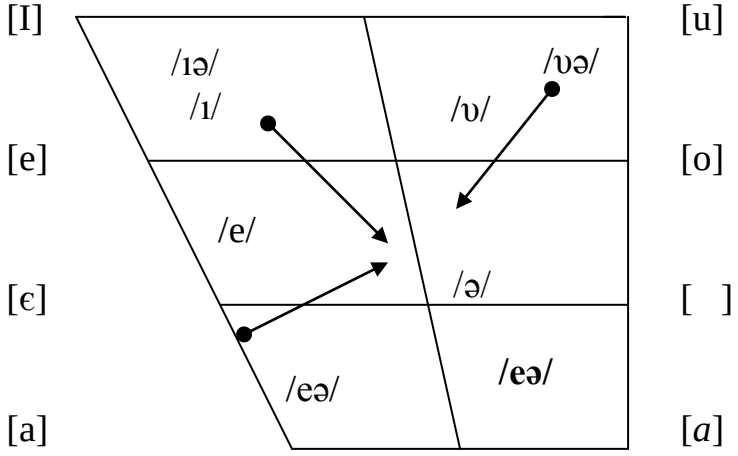

Fig. 1 The starting and the ending points of the RP centring diphthongs

It should be made clear that there is a progressive decline in the use of /ʊə/, and / :/ is increasingly replacing it, (Gimson,1981:66; Jones, 1997:ix).

2.2 GA Glides with /r/

As illustrated in Table I, GA lacks the RP centring diphthongs. Instead, it has glides with /r/ quality, i.e. monophthongs + /r/ (English Language Services, 1986:65). This is further confirmed by O'Connor (1973:170-72) who states that in rhotic accents, such as GA, (r) words are pronounced as /ɪ/ + /r/ as in *clear*, /e/ + /r/ as in *swear*, and /ʊ/ + /r/ as in *pure*. Accordingly, what are known as centring diphthongs in RP correspond to glides composed of a monophthong plus /r/ in GA.

Table I
Areas of difference and similarity between GA and RP at the level of sound segments

Examples	GA	RP
here	**/hır/**	**/hıə/**
bear	**/ber/**	**/beə/**
sure	/ʃʊr/	/ʃʊə/
told	**/tould/**	**/təʊld/**
aunt	**/ænt/**	**/*a:*nt/**
palm	**/p*a:*lm/**	**/p*a:*m/**
card	**/k*a:*rd/**	**/k*a:*d/**
father	**/f*a:*ðər/**	**/f*a:*ðə/**
spot	**/sp*a:*t/**	**/spot/**
dog	**/d *:g*/**	**/dog/**
bought	**/b :t/**	**/b :t/**
short	/ʃ **:rt/**	/ʃ **:t/**
floor	**/fl :r/**	**/fl :/**
news	**/nu:z/**	**/nju:z/**
look	**[lʊk]**	**[lʊk]**
valley	**[vælı]**	**[vælı]**
built	**[bılt]**	**[bılt]**
travel	**[trævł]**	**[trævł]**

2.3 RP/əʊ/versus GA/ou/

Another difference between RP and GA is in the realization of the diphthong in words such as *told, note, snow*. The RP */əʊ /* has its starting point at a central position, between close-mid and open-mid, and terminates in the direction of a closer point towards /ʊ/. In producing this diphthong, the lips change from neutrally open for the first element to slightly rounded for the second.

In GA, the conservative RP form of the diphthong, i.e. /ou/ is maintained. However, the starting and the ending points of the GA glide differ from those of the conservative RP glide (see Gimson, 1980:135). The GA glide of /ou/ starts at a position a little above cardinal vowel [6] and terminates in a closer area towards cardinal vowel [8], (O'Connor, 1973:166). In addition, /o/ is levelled to / :/ in

many parts of the country, including those where GA is spoken, such as New York city, the southern regions of Eastern New England, Middle Atlantic regions of the United States (US) and sporadically all over the country, (Bronstein, 1960:169). Consequently, it can be realized that the above glide is levelled with /o/ in areas where GA is spoken. Hence, / :/, /o/ and /ou/ are not phonemically distinctive from one another, and each substitute the other in many speakers of GA.

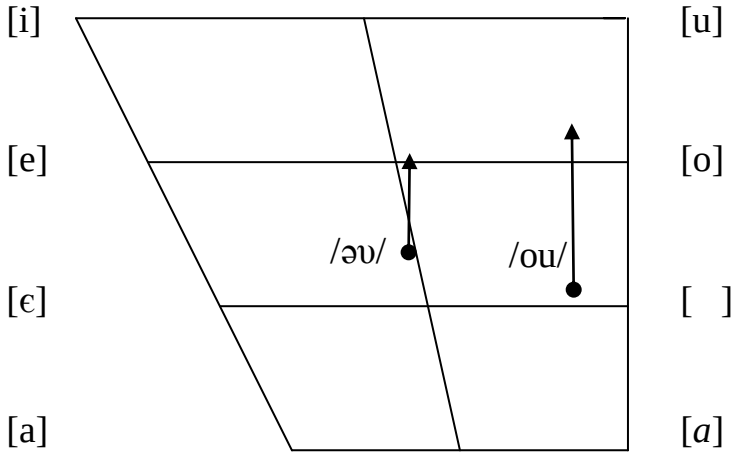

Fig. 2 Diagram illustrating the RP glide of /əʊ/and the GA glide of /oʊ/

2.4 Analogy versus Anomaly

In theTrans-Atlantic type of English, i.e. the English spoken in the US and Canada, some of the anomalies practised in the Cis-Atlantic type, i.e. the English spoken in England, are dealt with analogically. For instance, GA has one vowel sound in such words as *bad, ask, aunt, i.e.* the neutral fronted /æ/; whereas RP has two vowel sounds in such words, i.e./æ/ and /*a*:/; hence, /bæd/, /*a*:sk/ and /*a*:nt/. In addition, in GA, the long back /*a*:/ is extended to words like *spot, lot, father, cart.*

RP, however, has two vowels for the above words: /o/ and /*a*:/, (Rivers and Temperly, 1978:157; Jones,1997:x). In GA, the American quality of / :/ is used to represent the vowel sound in *dog, bought,*

court; whereas RP has two qualities for the vowel sounds in the above words: /o/ and / :/, (Rivers and Temperly, ibid).

The pre-consonantal spelled (l) in *palm* words is not pronounced in RP; rather, it serves to add length to the preceding vowel producing such pronunciations as /p*a*:m, k*a*:m, *a*:mz/,etc. In GA, spelling pronunciation is extended to the pre-consonantal spelled (l) in such words. Thus, pronunciations such as /p*a*:lm, k*a*:lm, *a*:lmz/are very common among the majority of American speakers, (Kokeritz, 1964:137).

2.5 Rhoticity versus Non-Rhoticity

Rhotic accents is a label given to the English accents in which the pronunciation of the pre-consonantal and final /r/ is retained. Among such accents are GA, General Canadian, and Irish. Conversely, in non-rhotic English accents, the pre-consonantal and final /r/ are dropped. Among such accents are RP, most accents of New Zealand, Australian, and Black English. Accordingly, the former accents are called r-full; whereas, the latter accents are called r-less, (Downes, 1984:114-15). In RP, the spelled (r) in such positions is taken as an indicator of a long vowel preceding it. Thus, the vowels in words like *card, short, shirt* are pronounced as /*a*:, :, ɜ:/, respectively. In the rhotic GA, the pronunciation of the spelled (r) is retained in such words. Hence, the vowel sounds in the above words are followed by a retroflexive /r/, phonetically represented as [ɹ], resulting in such pronunciations as / k*a*:rd, ʃ :rt, ʃɜ:rt/.

2.6 /j/ Distinction

Another area of difference between the two reference accents is represented by preserving or dropping /j/ after alveolar consonants. In other words, speakers with GA eschew the pronunciation of /j/ in such words as *tune, student, due*. Thus, the words are pronounced as /tu:n, stu:dnt, du:/ by those speakers. On another level, speakers with RP preserve the /j/ pronunciation in such words producing the following pronunciations: /tju:n, stju:dn̩t, dju:/,(Jones, 1972:358 and 1997:x).

2.7 The Allophonic versus the Less-Marked Differentiation of /l/

The final difference between RP and GA is the former's realization of the phonetic status of /l/. It is known that /l/ has a different

colouring in two cases in RP, (O'Connor,1967:71). The one which is used pre- and inter-vocalically is referred to as *clear* /l/, and transcribed phonetically as [l]. The other is used in pre-consonantal and final positions, and is referred to as *dark* /l/, transcribed phonetically as [ɫ]. In the r- full areas of the US (i.e. areas where GA is spoken), people use a dark variety of /l/ in all positions of words, (Bronstein, 1960:125).

3- The Learners' Anticipated Difficulties: A Comparative Study

This section is devoted to the explanation, by means of contrastive analysis (CA), of the difficulties that are likely to be encounterd by the ILE regarding any of the previously indicated areas. It should be made clear that another system of transcription will be used in this process to represent the Iraqi Arabic (IA) vowel

sounds. Thus, the following symbols are used in this process to represent the IA vowel sounds instead of their next IPA symbols.

TableII

The IA vowel sounds and their correspondent IPA Symbols

IA Symbols	**IPA Symbols**
/a/	/æ/
/aa/	/ɑ:/
/oo/	/ :/
/aw/	/əʊ/
/u/	/ʊ/
/uu/	/u:/
/i/	/ɪ/

Moreover, the following approximate consonantal phonetic representations are used for their next Arabic letters:

Table III
The phonetic consonantal representations of Arabic letters

Phonetic Representations	**Arabic Letters**
/ħ/	ح
/s/	ص
/ʕ/	ع
/x/	خ
/t/	ط
/q/	ق
/ð/	ظ

3.1 Centring Diphthongs versus Glides with /r/

It is generally agreed that /ɪə,eə,ʊə / have no equivalents in IA. Accordingly, they are expected to pose a problem for the ILE on the production level. What makes the problem more complicated is the frequent occurrence of such diphthongs before a spelled (r), which should be dropped in the RP sound system. Hence, ILE are likely to encounter two problems regarding the above diphthongs. *The first* is attributed to the diphthong itself which has no equivalent in IA; *the second*, to the spelled (r) which is pronounced by the majority of learners as part of the influence of their phonetically spelled MT.

The difficulty encountered, in the pronunciation of these sounds by the ILE, is attributed to spelling pronunciation, "which is encouraged by the fact that in his own tongue the Iraqi learner is not used to such a great discrepancy between

spelling and pronunciation as is found in English,"(Aziz, 1974:69). Hence, it is expected that the specialized Iraqi student teachers are liable to find difficulty in producing the RP centring diphthongs.

On another dimension, the American counterparts seem to be much easier to be produced by those learners as the glides are composed of a vowel plus /r/ quality. What is doubtful is the learners' ability to

ascribe the exact quantity to the vowel whose spelling representation may be misleading. That is, the vowel in /ɪr, er, ʊr/ may be pronounced as /i:r, e:r, u:r/.

3.2 RP /əʊ/ , GA /ou/ and IA /aw/

The RP diphthong /əʊ/ is equivalent to /aw/ in IA. The IA glide begins at the level of the IA short vowel /a/- represented by the diacritic (___) in the Arabic writing system- and moves in the direction of /w/. It differs from the RP diphthong in that the first element of its glide tends to be shorter than the first element of the RP glide, (Ken'aan, 1979:113). Examples:

[raaħaw] (Baghdadi dialect)	**"they went away"**
/ʃaafaw/ (B.D.)	**"they saw"**
/dʒawwi/(B.D.)	**"they came"**

Suffice it to mention that Standard Arabic (SA) has the same diphthong in words such as /lawn/, "colour"; /mawt/, "death"; /sawm/, "fasting", etc. Iraqi speakers tend to replace the long vowel /oo/ for the diphthong in the above words. Accordingly, such pronunciations as /loon/, /moot/, /soom/ are produced by those speakers. Hence, the RP diphthong is more likely to pose a problem for the ILE since there is a tendency in IA to monophthongize the SA diphthong, (Aziz, 1974:69). The GA /ou/, moreover, has no equivalent in IA , and it might be replaced by / :/ in most cases.

3.3 *Ask* and *Calm* Words in RP and GA

It has already been stated that GA speakers over-extend the American quality of /æ/ in *sat, rat, bat* to the vowel sound in such words as *ask, aunt, past*. RP, however, has two vowel sounds for the letter (a) in the above words: /æ/ and /*a*:/. The vowel sound in *aunt,* for instance, is one of many anomalies practised by RP speakers in which the spelled (a) is not pronounced /æ/ as the general rule dictates, e.g. *grass, after, answer, mask, dance, path, pass,* etc.

It has also been stated that the pre- consonantal spelled (*l*) in words like *calm, palm, alms* is not pronounced in RP: it is merely taken as an indicator of a long vowel preceding it. Consequently, the above words are pronounced as / k*a*:m, p*a*:m, *a:*mz/, respectively. GA speakers; however, retain the spelled form of /l/; hence, pronunciations like

/k*a*:lm, p*a*:lmz, *a*:lmz/ are common among many of these speakers (see 2.4).

The difficulty that may be encountered by the ILE as regards the RP /*a*:/ is two-fold: first, this long back vowel may be replaced by a quality between the two extremes, /*a*:/and /æ/; second, /*a*:/ in words like *palm, calm, car, mark* might possibly be pronounced as /*a*:+l/ and /*a*:+r/, as part of the influence of spelling conventions.

In this connection, Aziz(1976:255) believes that the difficulty in the realization of RP /*a*:/ for ILE lies in two essential points: the nature of the phoneme and its distribution. Thus, where /*a*:/ and /æ/ are distinctive in English, they are allophones of the Arabic phoneme /aa/ in Arabic.With respect to the distribution of the IA /aa/, Aziz (ibid) believes that the phoneme occurs in the vicinity of sounds which have no existence in English. It occurs after the glottal /ħ/, the plosive /ţ/, the pharyngeal /ʕ /, the uvular plosive /q/, the uvular fricative /x/ and the interdental velarized fricative /ð/. The exception reported by Aziz (ibid) is in the occurrence of an equivalent IA vowel to RP /*a*:/ after dark /l/ and /r/ as in /alaah/, and /raahib/, "monk". As such, /laa/ and /raa/ combinations of this sound may not pose any problem for the ILE, other combinations of the sound may do so.

As for the GA /æ / in *ask* words, which is closer than its RP counterpart, it can be said that such a quality of the vowel does not exist in most dialects of IA. To be precise, the neutral fronted /æ / can be heard in the speech of some Iraqi speakers who inhabit the south and the north western parts of Iraq, and those are mostly influenced by the Arabic accents of the neighbouring countries. For instance, Iraqi speakers of Mosuli Arabic (MA) have the same vowel for the underlined sounds in the following words: Eman /i:maan/ "a female name", /θmaani/ "eight", /waaħid/ "one".

3.4 GA /*a*:/ versus RP /o/

As already stated, the difference between GA and RP with regard to the vowel sound in *spot, clock, not* is in the pronunciation of (o) as /*a*:/ in the former and as /o/ in the latter. Generally speaking, it cannot be said that ILE do not have any difficulty producing the RP

/o/. But, if compared with the GA realization of the vowel of the above words, /o/ does not constitute much difficulty, except for the quantity of the vowel. That is, /o/ may be confused with / :/ as there is no phonemic distinction between them in IA. Examples: /foog/ or /fog/, " above"; /blook/ or /blok/ (a loan word), "stone or building"; /stook/ or /stok/ (a loan word) "out-dated, stored material". / :/ may not impose much difficulty for the ILE as it is pronounced in such words as /sindooq/ "box" (in MA), /telifoon/ "telephone", /radjoo/ "radio". In addition, the ILE are liable to be influenced by spelling conventions which determine the production of /o/ for the spelled (o) in the above words and this expected influence of spelling conventions on the learners' part have made the researcher refrain from considering them as decisive to assess the testees' performance.

3.5 Rhoticity versus Non- Rhoticity

The realization of the pre-consonantal and the final spelled (r) represents another problem faced by the ILE, including learners in specialized advanced stages. Being learners of RP type of English, those learners have constantly been instructed to avoid the pronunciation of the spelled (r) in such words as *fourth, war, court, shore,* etc. O'Connor (1967:9) states that in many English accents, including GA, the pre-consonantal and final (r) in words like the above "would be pronounced exactly like the consonant at the beginning of *red,* but in RP and various other accents the letter represents part of the basic vowel unit." He (ibid) maintains: " in RP, /r/ only occurs before vowels, never before consonants so words like *learn, sort, farm* do not retain /r/."

It has been stated that Arabic is, comparatively, a phonetically spelt language in which there is a one-to-one relation between the sound and the spelled form. Thus, what is referred to as the "regularity of fit,"(Lado, 1957:96) is a characteristic that distinguishes Arabic from the Cis-Atlantic type of English i.e.the English spoken in the British Isles, including RP. Accordingly, it is expected that the rhoticity practised by the GA speakers acts in accordance with the sound-spelling conventions of Arabic.

3.6 Retaining versus Dropping the /j/

In an earlier discussion, it has been stated that the difference between the English and the American pronunciation in such words as *tune, duty,* is the former's retention of the palatal approximant /j/, represented by the spelled (u), and the latter's dropping of the same phoneme. Retention or non-retention of /j/ by the ILE may depend, for the most part, on the learners' exposure to each of the two main English accents. It follows that the presence or absence of the glide in IA is not dealt with similarly, i.e. where in English, the retention or non-retention of /j/ could not be contrastive, it is sometimes so in IA. The following are some examples: /tjuub/ (aloan word) for "tapes" and /tuub/ for "repent!"; /sjuur/ for "laces" and /suur/ for "fence".

3.7 Clear and Dark Realizations of /l/ in IA

The final segmental difference between the two reference accents lies- as illustrated in Table I - in the simplified and the complicated realizations of the lateral phoneme /l/ in GA and RP, respectively. The ILE are not expected to have serious problems regarding the production of the clear and the dark varieties of the lateral phoneme /l/ as they both exist in IA. However, it cannot be said that the ILE are not facing problems in their realizations of the two variants of the RP phoneme. This is so, because the distribution of the allophones in IA is different from that in RP. For instance, in IA, it is hard to say exactly that this or that variety occurs in final positions depending on, at least, three dialects of the Arabic spoken in Iraq. For example, in BD, the clear variety of /l/ is heard at the end of words such as /batal/ *hero* and /butil/, (a loan word) *bottle*. The dark variety of the phoneme is used at the end of the same words in most of the dialects of Basrah; whereas, it is clear all along in MA. Nevertheless, there are words which many Iraqi dialects agree on a dark variety at the end of, such as /xaḷ/ for "vinegar" and /xaaḷ/ for "uncle"; and others which many Iraqi dialects agree on a clear variety at the end of, such as /gaal/ *he said* and /ʃaal/ (n.) *scarf,* (v.) *he carried* or *moved*.

4. The Experimental Design

In order to examine the underlying hypothesis and achieve the proposed objectives of this study, a two-fold experimental framework

was designed, The first was *a word-pronunciation test* consisting of citation forms of English words in which the RP pronunciation did not correspond with the GA one. The second was a *three-item questionnaire,* constructed to further verify the applicability of the proposed hypothesis. In addition, it investigated some points that were relevant to the scope of the study.

4.1 The Word-Pronunciation Test

The test conducted in the study makes full use of the results and expectations arrived at in the previous CA made between the IA, on the one hand, and the areas of difference between the two reference accents, on the other. Thus, only what was observed as posing a difficulty for the ILE concerning the accent adopted as a standard, i.e. RP, was included in the test. In other words, where in an area or another RP showed a vicinity to the MT accent, this or that area was excluded from the experiment. Generally, the aim of the test is to assess the production of the Iraqi EFL learners of a material which represents areas of difference between the two reference accents.

4.2 The Test Description

The tested material takes the form of a list of items. Each item represents an area of difference between RP and GA. In total, they are ten items, with each consisting
of four words representing the phoneme tested (see Appendix 1 for the list of the ten items). By providing four words for each item, the researcher follows Lado's statement (1961:86) that as a testee is expected to pronounce a sound satisfactorily in word but not another, it is more accurate to talk about the overall percentage of the testees' performance in one item.

This makes the whole tested material forty for each students. Four dummy words were added to the material to serve as a "lead-in"(Heaton, 1988:17) for the subjects. The dummy words were *soon, come, play, book*. They were heading the list of the forty items to give the testees the presupposition that the material dealt with is comparatively easy to handle. However, these four dummy words were excluded from the final analysis of the results.

As shown in Appendix1, the ten items were chosen to categorize the approximation of the subjects' performance under either RP or GA

word pronunciation. Eventually what was observed as approximating neither of the categories in question was put under N to stand for "Neither".

The forty words were re-arranged in the subjects' sheet and the headings were done with (as illustrated in Appendix 2). By doing so, the *double blind technique* was applied in testing the subjects' performance, which is a technique followed to keep the subjects in ignorance of the main purpose of the test: it is used to avoid eliciting responses based on false presuppositions about the main aim of the experiment on the one hand, and to prevent the subjects from coming up with views that may colour their responses, and consequently, hinder them from reading naturally in the conducted test, on the other, (Clark,1977:110-112). The selected test material consisted, for the most part, of monosyllabic words which, in turn, comprised the following syllable patterns (according to the RP phonemic distribution): ccv, vc, v, cv, cvc, ccvc, vcc, cvcc,cvc.

Seven words out of forty-four were disyllabic comprising the syllable patterns of: ccvc-cv, cvc-vc, v-cv-cc, cccv-cvc, cvc-cv, and cv-cv (for both *valley* and *follow*)

4.3 Scoring

The pronunciation of each investigated segment in any pronouced word equalled one mark put in the category the word approximated. Thus, the subjects had four marks in each single item; accordingly, the total number of marks in all items for each subject is (40).

4.4 Test Administration

4.4.1 Subjects

The test was administrated to a total of 13 female subjects from the fifth stage of the department of English, Teacher Training Institute/ Nineveh of the academic year (2009-2010).

4.4.2 Handling Recording Procedures, Leakage and Consultation

The test was administered individually. The samples were recorded in order to be investigated later. As the institute lacks the equipment required for a group test, such as a sound-treated room, all speech samples were recorded inside an isolated classroom during lecturing times. This procedure helped facilitate recording procedures and maintain recording clarity. Care was taken to avoid the leakage of the

test material; hence, consultation between the subjects who had already taken the test and those who were to take it was avoided. As for the questionnaire, the subjects were given sheets including items that are highly associated with the present study, and were asked to respond honestly to the questions asked.

4.5 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three questions (see Appendix 3), the purpose of which was to elicit the responses of the tested subjects to the following items:

1- Whether they had studied the pronunciation of English with the aid of natively pre-recorded tapes or not.
2- Whether they frequently listened to the BBC type of English via the mass media, cassettes, etc. or not.
3- Whether they enjoyed watching American or English movies, series,… etc.

For all items, the subjects were instructed to tick the box, which referred to their option. And, as it can be seen in (Appendix 3), the questionees were also required to tick the box which indicated the stage in which they listened to the natively pre-recorded material.

5. Results and Discussion

In this section, the subjects' performance in each stimulus item is investigated. The reader is always referred to Appendix 4 for scores and percentages.

5.1 Item 1 /ɪə / versus / ɪr /

The subjects' performance in this stimulus item was as follows:

a- 11 out of 52 scores were categorized under N.RP pronunciation of the diphthong in *weird*, *fierce*, *steer*, and *ear*.
b- The majority of the subjects pronounced the diphthong as a prolonged monophthong, i.e. /i:/ with or without /r/ quality. Their production of the prolonged monophthong plus /r/ was classified under N.GA word pronunciation. Thus, 37 scores were categorized under this category.
c- Other pronunciations of the above diphthong was classified under N. For instance, the following pronunciations were not tolerated as approximations to RP nor to GA: /wɪərd, fe:rs, stɪər, e:r/. Thus, 4 scores were classified under this category.

As such, the percentages of the subjects' performance in each category of this item were as follows:

Category	N.RP	N.GA	N
Percentage	21.15	71.05	7.69

5.2 Item 2 /eə / versus /er/

The subjects' performance was as follows:

a- 16 out of 52 scores were categorized under N.RP pronunciation of the diphthong in *hair, scares, bears* and *air*.

b- 31 scores were classified under N.GA word pronunciation as they pronounced it as a monophthong, prolonged or reduced with /r/ quality, i.e. /e:r,er/. Thus, the above words were pronounced as /he:r, her, ske:rz, skerz, be:rz, berz/. These pronunciations of the diphthong were classified under N.GA word pronunciation.

c- 5 scores were put under N as the subjects pronounced the RP diphthong with /r/ quality; the rest produced it as a prolonged monophthong with no /r/ quality.

The percentages of the subjects' performance in each category of this item were as follows:

Category	N.RP	N.GA	N.
Percentage	30.76	59.61	9.61

5.3 Item 3 /ʊə/, / :/ versus /ʊr/

The subjects' performance of this item was as follows:

a- 17 out of 52 scores were categorized under N.RP word pronunciation. It could also be noticed that most of the scores were of the subjects who pronounced the diphthong as / :/ in *poor, tours, moor* and *sure* producing such pronunciations as / p :, t :z, m :, ʃ :/.

b- The same number of scores was classified under N.GA because the diphthong was pronounced as a monophthong plus /r/. Thus, the words were pronounced as / pʊr, tʊr, mʊr, ʃʊr/.

c- Part of the influence of spelling conventions, most of the subjects pronounced the final (r) producing such pronunciations as /p r, t :rz, m :r, ʃ :r/. Thus, 18 scores were put under N category. As such, the

percentages of the subjects' performance in each category of this item were as follows:

Category	**N.RP**	**N.GA**	N.
Percentage	32.96	32.69	34.61

5.4 Item 4 /əʊ/, versus /ou/, / :/

The following can be noticed in the subjects' performance of this stimulus item:

a- 10 out of 52 scores were categorized under N. RP as *know, tone, don't*, and *go* were pronounced as /nəʊ, təʊn, dəʊnt, gəʊ/.

b- 31 scores were classified under N.GA as the words were pronounced as /n :, t :, d :nt, g :/. This tendency to replace /əʊ/ by / :/ on the part of the ILE is attributed to the use of the latter monophthong in IA for the former SA diphthong (as discussed previously). It follows that / :/ is used, together with the GA /ou/, in many parts of the US where GA is spoken.

c- 11 scores were put under N as the subjects' performance approximated neither RP nor GA phoneme realization.

Thus, the percentages of this stimulus item were as follows:

Category	N.RP	N.GA	N
Percentage	19.23	59.61	21.15

5.5 Item 5 /*a*:/ versus /æ / in *Ask* Words

In this stimulus item, the subjects' performance was as follows:

a- 29 out of 52 scores were put under N.RP as the vowel in *fast, glass, ask* and *dance* was pronounced as /*a*:/.

b- 22 scores were put under N.GA as the vowel in the above words was pronounced with a quality closer to the RP /æ/.

c- Eventually, one score was put under N as the testee retired to a quality in between the two extremes, and which mostly approximated the RP /ʌ/.

As such, the percentages of the subjects'performance in each category of this item were:

Category	N.RP	N.GA	N
Percentage	55,76	42.30	1.92

5.6 Items 6 & 8 Pre-consonantal and Final (r)

As Appendix 4 shows,

a- 25 out of 52 were put under N.RP word pronunciation of the words *bird, earth, turn* and *card*. Thus, /r/ was deleted and certain length was given to the preceding vowel producing such pronunciations as /bɜ:d, ɜ:θ , tɜ:n, ka:d/.

b- The same number of scores was put under N.GA, for the subjects pronounced the spelled (r) producing such pronunciations as /bɜ:rd, ɜ:rθ, tɜ:rn, k*a*:rd/.

c- As for item (8), 24 scores were put under N.RP as the subjects' pronunciation in this category approximated the RP realization of the final

(r). Hence, the words *door, picture, wire* and *fur* were pronounced as /d :, pɪktʃə, waɪə, fɜ:/, respectively.

d- 11 scores were put under N.RP word pronunciation as the final spelled (r) was pronounced in the aformentioned words.

As such, the persentages were as follows:

Category	N.RP	N,GA	N
Item 6	48%	48%	3.84
Item 8	46.15	21.15	32.69

5.7 Item 7 Pre-consonantal Spelled (l) in *Calm* Words

a- Part of their influence by spelling conventions, the student teachers were found to pronounce the spelled (l) in such words as *calm, palm, alms* and *balm*. It is common in RP that the spelled (l) in these words is an indication of a long vowel preceding it. As such, the words are pronounced as /k*a*:m,

b- p*a*:m, *a*:mz, b*a*:m/. Only 10 out of 52 scores were categorized under N.RP word pronunciation.

c- 27 scores were put under N.GA as the subjects restored the spelled (l). The restoration of (l) in *calm* words is practised by the majority of the American speakers (see Kokeritz, 1964:143).

d- What was categorized under N was the use of a light variety of /l/ for the spelled one. Thus, 15 scores were put under this category.

As such, the percentages in hand were as follows:

Category	N.RP	N.GA	N
Percentage	19.23	51.92	28.84

5.8 Item 9 /j/ Distinction

a- 31 scores out of 52 were put under N.RP category as the subjects' performance approximated the RP pronunciation of the spelled (u) in *student, tune, due* and *Tuesday.* Thus, the words were pronounced as /stju:dnt, tju:n, dju:, tju:zdeɪ/.

b- 12 scores were put under N.GA word pronunciation as /j/ was dropped in these subjects' pronunciations. However, this /j/ shedding which was practised by this group was not extended to the subjects' pronunciation of the word *Tuesday.*

c- Eventually, 9 scores were put under N as different pronunciations were given to the spelled (u)in the above words.

The percentages were as follows:

Category	N.RP	N.GA	N
Percentage	59.61	23.7	17.30

5.9 Item 10 The Allophonic and the GA Less-Marked Differentiation of /l/

In this item, the student teachers had to read the words *feeling, valley, follow* and *eleven.* Attention was paid to whether they would pronounce the (l) in the above words with a clear or a dark variety of the phoneme. The results were as follows:

a- 35 of 52 were put under N.RP as the testees pronounced the words with a clear variety of /l/.

b- The pronunciation of the above words with a dark variety of /l/ was heard in 29% of the subjects' performance in this item. Thus, 14 scores were put under this category.

c- The following pronunciations were given to the words in question: /fɪlɪŋ, vʊlɪ, fl :/, and hence were categorized under N.

As such, the percentages in this item were as follows:

Category	N.RP	N.GA	N
Percentage	67.30	26.92	5.76

6. Interpretting the Results of the Questionnaire

6.1 Question No. 1

In response to question no.1, none of the thirteen subjects answered that she had learned the pronunciation of English using some natively pre-recorded material during the intermediate EFL learning. It follows that the subjects have never been exposed to such a material before or after.

6.2 Question No.2

In response to this question, one of the subjects answered that she was a frequent listener to the BBC type of English on a short wave radio channel; whereas, the rest ticked the [No] box commenting that though they had heard of the existance of such a type of English, they never thought that they had an access to it through the mass media.

6.3 Question No. 3

The following can be noticed in the subjects' responses:

1- (9) subjects answered that had they but a chance to watch English movies or TV series, they would have done so. When asked how they could differentiate between an American or an English movie or TV series, they could not answer directly, and some of them responded that if they figured that the displayed material was a novel or an old fairy tale, they would consider it as an English one, and if not, it is an American. This was the majority's point of view. And when the researcher told them that this was not always the case, and that the type of pronunciation used could also make a difference, most of them made no comment.

2- (3) subjects favoured watching American movies and TV series, for they liked the action and suspense which mostly accompanied such material.

3- One of the subjects answered that she did not like to watch any.

7. Conclusions

This paper has led to the following findings:

1- According to the data in hand, it can be figured that there are adequate grounds for verifying the proposed hypothesis which dictates: Iraqi student teachers show an approximation to GA in much of their performance even though GA is not used as a standard of pronunciation in the TEFL programmes in Iraq. The results have shown that GA, as compared to RP, is easier to acquire by the ILE for reasons that are mostly connected with the former's vicinity to the learners' MT (as for spelling conventions). As such, the study corroborates Lado's assumption (1957:2) that elements which are similar to the learners' native language are comparatively simpler for him than those which are different.

2- The study has shed light upon the student-teachers' difficulty producing the centring diphthongs, i.e. /eə,ɪə,ʊə / and the phonemes /əʊ,*a*:, æ,ɜ:/. Thus, they resort to other pronunciations, which approximate the GA realizations of those phonemes. In other words, the absence of the above phonemes in IA has made the EFL Iraqi learners replace them by the following sounds: /e:r, i:r, ir, ur, u:r, *a*:r, ʌr, ɜ:r/.

3- Analyzing the data, the researcher has found that student teachers have had difficulty applying most of their theoretical knowledge of RP to most of their performance. It has been observed that the subjects' performance approximated RP in only four, out of ten, items representing areas of difference between the two reference accents. These four items are: **/*a*:/ versus /æ /in *ask* words, final (r), /j/ distinction** and **the phonetic status of /l/.**

4- On another level, the subjects' performance has shown a marked influence by the L1 accent, notably for the vowel type and length. This influence has been perceived in the subjects' production of some consonantal phonemes such as /r/ and /p/.

5- The Iraqi student teachers have also proved to be less frequently exposed to a natively spoken RP type of English, represented mostly by the BBC English. The interpretation of

the questionees' responses has shown that only **one** of the subjects sporadically listens to this type of English through the mass media.

Pronunciation is one of the most fleeting aspects in linguistic change: it is constantly in a state of flux. Hence, the researcher adopts the point of view that if such changes, in the accent dealt with, are not kept track of by the specialized learners who are prepared to be primary-school teachers of English, then another more wide-spread spoken English accent to which these learners are most exposed stands a better chance to think of as a standard.

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APPENDIX 1

The test material before being re-arranged
(The items represent areas where PP does not correspond to GA)
Items

1	2	3	4	5
/ɪə/	**/eə/,/er/**	**/ʊə/,/ :/-/ʊr/**	**əʊ/oʊ, :/**	***a:***
weird	hair	poor	know	fast
feirce	scarce	tours	tone	glass
steer	bears	moor	don't	ask
ear	air	sure	go	dance

6	7	8	9	10
Pre-consonantal (r)	**Pre-consonantal (l) in *calm* words**	**Final (r)**	**/j/ distinction**	**Marked and less-marked differentiation of /l/**
bird	calm	door	student	feeling
earth	palm	picture	tune	valley
turn	alms	wire	due	follow
card	balm	fur	Tuesday	eleven

Appendix 2
The subjects' sheet of the test material

Dear student,
Try to read the following words aloud after saying your name, stage, and the date of recording.

soon	come	play	book
weird	door	valley	ear
poor	feeling	steer	sure
know	fierce	don't	go
hair	tours	moor	card
fast	scarce	bears	dance
calm	tone	ask	student
bird	glass	turn	eleven
tune	earth	alms	balm
follow	Palm	wire	fur
tuesday	picture	due	air

Appendix 3

A Copy of the Constructed Questionnaire

Dear student,

Please read the following questions and tick the boxes which refer to your chosen answers. If you suggest other answers for some questions, write them next to the already-written ones. Please write your name on the other side of your copy.

1- Have you listened to a natively pre-recorded material in your study of the pronunciation of English?

Yes	No

If your answer is [Yes], in what stage?

Primary	Secondary	Institute

2- Are you a frequent listener to the BBC English?

Yes	No

3- What movies or TV series do you like to watch most?

English	American	None

If you have any other options, please add below:

Appendix 4
The Subjects' Scores in All Stimulus Items

Item	1			2			3			4			5		
	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N
Subjects' Scores/out of 52 for each item	11	37	4	16	31	5	17	17	18	10	31	11	29	22	1
Percentage %	21.15	71.5	7.69	30.76	59.61	9.61	32.69	32.69	34.61	19.23	59.61	21.15	55.76	42%	1.92
	6			7			8			9			10		
	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N	N RP	N GA	N
Subjects' Scores/out of 52 for each item	25	25	2	10	27	15	24	11	17	31	12	9	35	14	3
Percentage %	48%	48%	3.84	19.23	51.92	28.84	46.15	21.15	32.69	59.61	23.07	17.30	67.30	26.92	5.76