

A study of the Distributional Peculiarity of /l/ Allophony for Advanced Iraqi Girl Students at Teachers preparatory Institute

A Contrastive Experimental Analysis

Haifa Adnan Salman Al-kanaan

Preparatory Institute, Mosul - Iraq.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to argue that not all learners' errors in L2 are necessarily the result of their L1 interference. In fact, many of these errors may be attributed to reasons other than the make-up of their L1. This argument is applied to the advanced Iraqi student teachers' (AIST) errors in the distributional allophony of /l/. The results obtained show that the learners' errors are the result of:

- Analogy, i.e. applying L2 patterns into areas in which they cannot be applied.
- Habitual mistakes; those which are so strongly fossilized from an early age that cannot be easily corrected later.
- Systematic resistance to L1 patterns which correspond to L2 ones.
- Vocabulary problems resulting in whole-word mispronunciations.

Such reasons and others are found to be behind learners' errors as regards this allophony, which in the light of the study is meant to analyze the subjects' performance of a chosen material depending on the contrastive analysis (CA) results. The study also presents suggestions to solve some of these problems.

The experimental procedures are carried out depending on the voluntary participation of the fifth-year students, Dept. of English in the Teacher Training Institute/ Nineveh of the academic year 2012-2013.

دراسة تحليلية مقارنة في أخطاء طالبات قسم اللغة الانكليزية في معهد اعداد المعلمات/ نينوى في التنوع اللفظي لصوت /l/ في لهجة RP

هيفاء عدنان سلمان الكنعان

معهد اعداد المعلمات، موصل – العراق.

المستخلص

تفترض الدراسة أن الأخطاء في L2 لا تعزى كلها بالضرورة الى التداخل مع L1، بل قد تنسب هذه الأخطاء الى أسباب أخرى تختلف تماما عن تركيبة اللغة الاولى، وقد طبق اختبار صحة الفرضية على الأخطاء التي تقع فيها طالبات معهد اعداد المعلمات فيما يخص الاختلاف التوزيعي لـ /l/ clear and dark variants .

هذا وقد اشارت النتائج الأولية الى أن أخطاء الطالبات قد تعزى الى:

- القياس، أي تعميم تطبيق قاعدة من L2 على أنماط أخرى لا تقاس عليها.
- أخطاء مترسخة منذ الصغر يصعب تغييرها في مرحلة متقدمة من تعلم اللغة.
- الامتناع الممنهج عن تطبيق أنماط من L1 على أنماط تماثلها من L2.
- الجهل بالمفردة اللغوية المؤدي الى الخطأ في لفظها عموما.

هذه الأسباب وغيرها التي تمت الاشارة اليها في الدراسة، تقف وراء أخطاء الطالبات فيما يخص هذا التنوع اللفظي، وعليه كان هدف الدراسة اختبار أداء الطالبات في مادة مختارة لإثبات صحة الفرضية، وقد اعتمدت اجراءات الاختبار على مشاركة طالبات المرحلة الخامسة من قسم اللغة الانكليزية في معهد اعداد المعلمات/ نينوى للعام الدراسي ٢٠١٢-٢٠١٣.

1. Introduction:

It has been argued that foreign-language learners' errors are due to the make-up of their native language. This argument which has roots in the studies of Whorf and Fries, and later Lado [1] has no longer had a solid basis in the experimental studies based on comparing the structures of the native and the foreign languages [2].

This has been applied to the learners' errors in the pronunciation of the RP /l/ variants: /l/ and /ɫ/. Analyzing these errors, it has been found that most of them have no parallel in the learners' native language, and even if the two allophones have a similar distribution in some positions, the learners show a remarkable avoidance of the foreign patterns which show similarity to their native ones. Delving deeply into these errors, some are found to be analogical, others due to a new material which is not deeply enough fossilized. The exposure to other English accents is also found to be one of the main reasons behind the learners' pronunciation disorders as far as this allophony is concerned.

1. The Allophonic Status of /l/ in English and Arabic

1.1 The Nature of the Lateral Phoneme

Before dealing with the two realizations of /l/ in English and Arabic, a note should be given on the nature of this phoneme. In both languages, /l/ is considered as a lateral consonant, i.e. one in which the air passing through the mouth does not go - as usual - through the Centre; instead, there is a firm central obstruction made by the tongue-tip and the alveolar ridge, and the air escapes over the sides of the tongue, [3-7].

This production of the sound holds true whether it is clear or dark, except that in the latter case, valorization is involved as a secondary articulation (see 1.2).

As for the point of articulation, the two languages give different names to the phoneme: in English, it is alveolar, in the production of which the tongue-tip is held against the alveolar ridge. In Arabic, it is "thalaqi" (ثَلَقِي), i.e. produced with the tongue-tip against the teeth-gum, and this is why it is called denti-alveolar by some Arab phoneticians, [8]. Nevertheless, this difference does not affect its acoustic qualities.

1.2 The Positional Variants of /l/

The phonetic positional status of the voiced alveolar lateral is an RP self-contained feature. The one referred to as syllabic-initial, i.e. used pre and intervocalically, and phonetically transcribed as [l̥], is said to be **clear**. This variant is pronounced with the body of the tongue raised towards the hard palate and the tongue-tip held against the alveolar ridge giving a front vowel resonance, as in *lot*, *valley*, *fill in*. The other is preconsonantal and syllable-final, phonetically transcribed as [ɫ], and is said to be **dark** or **velarized**. This variant is pronounced with the back of the tongue raised towards the soft palate to the same position as for a close back vowel as in *battle*, *salt*, [9-12].

This suggests that the difference in quality between [l̥] and [ɫ] is attributed to the part of the tongue raised (i.e. front or back) rather than to the tip. As the front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate, [l̥] is said to have a secondary articulation, represented by the palatalization. In the same way, the [ɫ] is said to have a secondary articulation, represented by raising the tongue- back (velum), i.e. valorization, [13, 14].

The following table shows this relationship still further:

Table I
Primary and secondary articulations of [l] and [ɫ]

	Clear /l/	Dark /l/
Primary	Alveolar	Alveolar
Secondary	Palatalized	Velarized

It should be mentioned, at this point, that another allophone of /l/ is found in words like *plot* /plot/ and *clue* /klu:/, and which is referred to as devoiced /l/, transcribed phonetically as [l̥]. This allophone helps, to a certain degree, to distinguish between *plot* and *blot*; *clue* and *glue*, [15, 16]. However, this allophone is excluded from the present study for the following reasons:

1. No distinction, based on such an allophony, is found in Arabic. Hence, no point is found of including it in CA.
2. The learners are completely ignorant of [l̥] and its phonological rules. So, no valid results can be obtained in this respect.

1.3 The Allophonic Status of /l/ in Arabic

1.3.1 Standard Arabic (SA)

In Arabic, the phoneme /l/ occurs in both its clear and dark forms; yet, they are distributed differently in English.

1.3.1.1 The Definite Arabic Article

The phoneme /l/ has the following rules when pronounced in the definite article (ال) = (the)

- 1- Dark (Velarized) **مفخمة** /mufaxxama/
- 2- Clear **مرققة** /muraqqaqa/
- 3- Assimilated **مدغمة** /mudḡama/, [17].

1- Dark (Velarized):

This appears in the pronunciation of words as in *Allah*, if preceded by one of the short vowels /u/ and /a/, as in /juʔtikumu

llaahu ʔadʒran ḥasana/ (الفتح: ١٦) "يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا"

/inni ʕabdullaah / (مريم: ٣٠) "إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ"

/ḥasbijallaah/ حسبي الله

But note:

/bismillaah/ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ

/walillaahi maafi ssamaawaati wa maafil ʔarḍ/

"وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ" (النجم: ٣١)

As such, it can be noticed that there are two pronunciations of the word "Allah", and the following example illustrates further these two pronunciations:

"يَنْسُ مَثُلَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ" (الجمعة: ٥)

/biʔsa maʕalul qawmi illaḍiina kaḍḍabu bi ʔaajaati llaahi wallaahu laa jahdi lqawma ḍḍaalimiin/

C D

To sum up, when the word "Allah" is preceded by the short vowel /i/, it is no longer velarized, and a clear /l/ is pronounced instead.

2- Clear:

Except for that in (1), /l/ in the definite article in Arabic is pronounced clear in:

/ʔalḥamdu lillaahi rabbi lḥaalamiin/

"الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ" (الفاتحة: ٢)

/walqamari ʔiḍaa talaahaa/

"وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا" (الشمس: ٢)

/qul ʔaʕuðu birabbil falaq/

"قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ" (الفلق: ١)

The /l/ in the above examples is called /qamarijja/ (قمريّة) as in /ʔalqamar/ (the moon), and it is pronounced before the following consonant sounds: /b, ʁ, ħ, dʒ, k, w, x, f, ʕ, q, m, h/, which are represented in Arabic by the sentence: /ʔibʁi ħadʒdʒaka waxif ʕaqiimahu/ ابع حجك وخف عقيمه

3- Assimilated:

The SA /l/ is assimilated to the next sound if it is followed by one of the following 13 consonant sounds /t, ʔ, ʕ, ʁ, r, t, z, d, ð, n, d, s, ð, ʃ/, [18]. As in:

/ʔatʔajr/ الطير	/ʔaəəawaab/ الثواب	/ʔaʕʕabr/ الصبر
/ʔarraʃiid/ الرشيد	/ʔatʔariq/ الطارق	/ʔaððuhr/ الظهر
/ʔadðaaalliin/ الضالين	/ʔannadʒm/ النجم	/ʔaddiin/ الدين
/ʔassajf/ السيف	/ʔaððiʔb/ الذئب	/ʔaʃʃaat/ الشاة

This case acts in accordance with the one referred to as "**contextual elision**", which is practiced in rapid, casual English speech. However, this elided /l/ is called /ʔaʃʃamsijja/ in Arabic as in /ʔaʃʃams/ (the sun).

1.3.1.2 The Non-definite (post or intervocalic /l/)

The non-definite /l/, i.e. the one which comes post or intervocalically, can also be dark, clear or assimilated. According to [19], it is dark when occurring in the neighbourhood of one of the velarized consonants: /ʕ, ʔ, ð/, and followed by the short Arabic vowel /a/, which corresponds to (ا) الفتحة /ʔalfatħa/ in the Arabic sound system; for example,

" وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَٰكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ " (النساء: ١٥٧)

/wamaa qataluuhu wa maa ṣalabuuhu walaakin ʃubbiha /
lahum

C

D

C

C

" سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ " (المسد: ٣)

/sajaṣla naaran ḏaata lahab/
D C

" سَلَّمَ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ " (القدر: ٥)

/salaamun hiḥatta matlaḥ ilfadʒr/
C D C

" فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا " (الكهف: ١٥)

/fa man ʔaḏlamu mimman iftara ṣala llaahi kaḏiba/
D C

This /l/ is assimilated in the same way as the definite one, but mostly when followed by /r/, as in:

/ʃirraḥiman/ صل رحما

" وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَرْحَمُهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا " (الاسراء: ٢٤)

/wa qurraḥbi rḥamhumaa kamaa rabbajaani ṣaḥiira/, [17].

It should be made clear that this pronunciation matches the contextual one practiced in *already* and *alright*; yet, this process is a characteristic of rapid, casual speech in English, [20]. SA, on the other hand, has no rapid, casual speech; with all speech samples are phonologically rule-governed.

1.3.2 Iraqi Arabic (IA)

In IA, both varieties of /l/ are produced; yet, they are distributed differently from those of the SA. Occasionally, they are distinctive in some south-eastern Iraqi accents, as in [xaali]

for *empty*, and [xaati] for my maternal uncle. Because of this distinctiveness of the two realizations of the phoneme in some Arabic dialects, [21] suggested regarding the velarized /l/ as an independent phoneme in both SA and some colloquial arabic dialects.

Nevertheless, IA distribution of the two allophones is different from that in RP, and it is hard to determine exactly which variant occurs in final positions depending on, at least, one Iraqi dialect. For example, in the middle and the northern parts of the country, a clear variant of /l/ is heard at the end of words such as [baʔal] for *hero* and [bəʔəl] (a loan word) for *bottle*. On the other hand, the dark variant of the phoneme can be heard at the end of the same words in some southern accents. However, many Iraqi dialects agree on a clear variant of /l/ at the end of such words as /qaal/or /gaal/ *he said*, /su'ʔaal/ *a question*, [22].

2. The Allophonic Distribution of English /l/ as Compared to that of Arabic

In this section, the reader is always referred to Tables IV and V which shed light upon the similarities and differences between the languages compared as for the pronunciation of /l/.

Table II
Clear /l/

	Initial	Prevocalic	Intervocalic	Pre-/j/	Preconsonantal	Final
Eng.	+	+	+	+	-	-
SA IA	+	+	+	+	+	+

Table III
Dark /l/

	Initial	Pre-vocalic	Inter-vocalic	Pre-/j/	Post-vocalic	Preconsonantal (assimilated)	Final
Eng.	-	-	-	-	+	+	-
SA IA	-	+	+	-	±	+	±

(+) means that the accent does possess the variant in the given word position; whereas, (-) means that the accent does not. (±) means that both variants can be found.

2.1 Clear /l/

As it can be seen in Table II, the clear variant of the RP phoneme is similarly distributed as that of SA and IA in four positions: initial, prevocalic, intervocalic and pre-/j/.

2.1.1 Initial Position

Initially, a clear /l/ is always heard by an RP speaker; for example, *let*, *look*, *little*. Similarly, a clear /l/ is found to be pronounced in all instances in both SA and IA in this position; for example, /lawn/ *colour*, /liʃ/ *thief*, /ləj/ *night*, /laa/ *no*.

2.1.2 Prevocalic Position

Apart from its being pronounced initially in a syllable, a clear /l/ is pronounced before vowels in all word positions in English as in *play*, *slim*, *clown*. In SA and IA, the same thing is largely true and the examples are evenly many; for example, in SA, words such as the following can be found: /ikliil/ *veil*, /jatlui/ *he recites*, /ʔaʕlam/ *I know*. In IA, the following words can be found: /klaab/ *dogs*, /ʔaʕlaam/ *flags*, /blook/ (a loan word)

block, /ʕimlaaʔ/ *dictation*, /ʔaqli/ *I fry*, /ʕiqle:t/ or /ʕukle:t/ *chocolates*.

2.1.3 Intervocalic Position

Intervocally, a clear variant is pronounced in the RP type of English; as for example in *valley*, *below*, *villain*. A clear /l/ is also pronounced in both SA and IA. In SA, words like the following are found: /ʕala/ *on*, /ħallaʔ/ *barber*, /maalik/ *owner*, /jaluum/ *to blame*. In IA, it is found in a number of loan words such as /galan/ *gallon*, /ke:lo/ *kilo*, /baaloon/ *balloon*, /kulera/ *cholera*.

2.1.4 Pre-/j/ Position

In RP, a clear /l/ is always pronounced before the palatal approximant /j/, [23]; as for example in *million*, *will you?* Again, a clear /l/ is also pronounced in this position in both SA and IA, and the following are some examples: /ʔaljan/ *softer*, /kilja/ *kidney*, /ħilja/ *jewelry*, /qalja/ (Mosuli dish), /daalja/ (a female name), and some loan words like /biljaard/ *billiards*, /maljoon/ *million*.

2.1.5 Preconsonantal Position

It has previously been stated that /l/ is velarized by RP speakers in preconsonantal positions as in *build*, *salt*, *pulled*. In contrast to this distribution, a clear /l/ is always found to be pronounced in this position in SA as for example in /ʕalka/ *chewing gum*, /fulk/ *ship*, /silk/ *wire*, /kalb/ *dog*, /xuld/ *immortality*/ *mole*.

2.1.6 Word-Final Position

Arabic is also found to contradict English in the pronunciation of /l/ in word-final position. In RP, a dark variant of /l/ is used in such a position unless it is followed immediately

by a word beginning with a vowel or /j/. SA, however, insists on a clear variant of the phoneme in all instances; as for example in /xajl/ *horses*, /majl/ *tendency*, /kul/ *all* or *eat*, /qifl/ *lock*, /buxl/ *stinginess*. The same thing is true in IA, except that a dark variety of the phoneme can be heard in some south and south-western Iraqi accents, as in [xaɫ] *vinegar*; [xaat] maternal *uncle*; [gaat] *he said* [burtuʕaat] *oranges*; [buʕat] *onion*.

2.2 Dark (Velarized) /l/

As it has been mentioned earlier, speakers of RP velarize /l/ in preconsonantal and final positions as in *called*, *hills*, *ill*, *battle*. In Arabic, on the other hand, both variants of the phoneme can be pronounced in preconsonantal positions, as in /ʔaɫlaqa/ *he shot*, /jaʕla/ *to burn*; but note, /ʔaslama/ *he became Muslim*, /ʔamlas/ *hairless*.

But there is a partial agreement between English and Arabic as for the occurrence of a dark /l/ in a final-word position. As mentioned before, some accents of spoken IA have a dark variant of /l/ in some words as those mentioned in (2.1.6).

In view of the above discussion, it can be said that Arabic matches English more in positions where a clear variety of the phoneme is produced. This is mostly related to the Arabic phonological rule which states that the Arabic /l/ is originally clear unless it is followed by /ʕ, ɾ, ʔ/ (or by the short Arabic vowel /a/ which is equivalent to the diacritic (◌َ) (fatha), as in "Allah") (See 1.3.1.2).

3. The experiment

Considering this distributional CA between English and Arabic, a test on the production level has been conducted by the researcher, the purpose of which is to study how such similarities

and differences that can affect the AISTs' performance regarding this allophony.

3.1 The Test

The test takes the form of sentences which include words with the following positional variants of /l/:

- 1- Initial.
- 2- Prevocalic.
- 3- Intervocalic.
- 4- pre-/j/.
- 5- preconsonantal.
- 6- Final.

(See Appendix 1) for each of these six stimulus items, three examples were provided. That is, for each tested variant three different words were to be read, for a testee may pronounce a sound satisfactorily in a word but not in another. Hence, the overall percentage of the testee's performance in one item was dealt with.

On the whole, then, the tested material was included in a total of 18 sentences (See Appendix 2). The subjects were totally ignorant of the main purpose of the test to prevent them from coming up with views that may colour their responses and hinder them from reading naturally in the test [24].

As such, each student will have a mark of 18 in all stimulus items, and as the number of the subjects is 20, the total score of all students in each item is 20. Eventually, the total percentage of each item will be obtained by using the following formula:

$$N \times 3 = 60$$

$$SS \times 100/60 = \%$$

Where N = the number of the subjects.

SS = the subjects' scores in each stimulus item.

3 = the number of the tested words in each item.

3.2 The Subjects

The test was administered to a total of 20 female students from the fifth stage of the Dept. of English, Teacher Training Institute/Nineveh of the academic year 2012-2013.

3.3 Recording Procedures

The test was administered individually, and the samples were recorded to be analyzed later. Mention may be given here that the institute lacks a sound-treated room, so, the speech samples were recorded in an isolated classroom during lecturing time. As the subjects were allowed individually into the testing room, leakage of the test material was avoided.

4. The Test Results

In this section, the subjects' performance in the aforementioned positional variants of /l/ is discussed. The reader is always referred to Appendices 3 and 4 for scores and percentages.

4.1 Initial /l/

In this item, the subjects had to read sentences including *last*, *luck* and *long*. The point was to see if they would pronounce them with a clear variety of the phoneme. The results were as follows:

- 1- A clear /l/ was heard in as much as 78% of the subjects' overall performance. The subjects were able to score 17 out of 20 under *last* and *long*, but 13 under *luck*.
- 2- A dark /l/ was heard in 20% of their performance.

Below, the subjects' scores expressed as percentages:

	Last	Luck	Long	Total Percentage
Clear	85%	65%	85%	78.33%
Dark	15%	35%	10% -	20%

(-) A word was skipped by a subject

4.2 Prevocalic /l/

The following can be noticed in the subjects' performance of the /l/ variant before vowels in *floods*, *clock* and *English*:

- 1- A clear variety of the phoneme was heard in 83% of the subjects' performance in this item.
- 2- Eventually, a dark variety of the phoneme was heard in 15% of the whole performance.

As such, the total percentages in this category were as follows:

	Floods	Clock	English	T.P.
Clear	80%	75% ⁻	95%	83.33%
Dark	20%	10%	5%	15%

(-) Again, another word was skipped by a subject in this item.

4.3 Intervocalic /l/

A clear /l/ was supposed to be heard by the subjects in *feelings*, *followed* and *holiday*. Surprisingly, the following was noticed:

- 1- A clear /l/ was heard in only 31% of the subjects' performance in this item.
- 2- Accordingly, a dark /l/ was heard in as much as 68% of their performance.

This makes the percentages of the subjects' performance in this item as follows:

	Feelings	Followed	Holiday	T.P.
Clear	30%	30%	35%	31.66%
Dark	70%	70%	65%	68.33%

4.4 Pre-/j/ /l/

A clear /l/ was supposed to be pronounced here as it is so in the phonological system of both languages.

However, the subjects' performance was as follows:

- 1- A clear variety of /l/ was heard in 19 out of 20 occurrences of both *million* and *failure*, but, surprisingly, 14 for *billions*.
- 2- A dark /l/ was heard in 8 out of 20 occurrences of these words.

Hence, the percentages obtained here are as follows:

	Million	Failure	Billions	T.P.
Clear	95%	95%	70%	86.66%
Dark	5%	5%	30%	13.33%

4.5 Preconsonantal /l/

In preconsonantal positions, the subjects had to velarize /l/ in the following words: *belt*, *filled* and *already*. The results were as follows:

- 1- A dark /l/ was heard in the pronunciation of all subjects in *belt*, 19 in *filled* and 1 in *already*
- 2- A clear /l/ was heard in 10% of the subjects' overall performance.
- 3- 13 subjects assimilated the /l/ regressively in *already* producing /ɔ:'redi/.

The percentages obtained in this item were as follows:

	Belt	Filled	Already	T.P
Dark	100%	95%	5%	66.66%
Clear	-----	5%	30%	11.66%
Assimilated	-----	-----	65%	21.66%

4.6 Final /l/

In a final-word position, a dark /l/ had to be produced for the one in *school*, *Paul* and *steal*. However, the subjects' performance was as follows:

8 out of 20 subjects were able to velarize /l/ in *school*, 17 in *Paul*, but 20 in *steal*. This suggests that a clear /l/ was pronounced by most of the subjects for the (l) in as familiar word as *school*. Eventually, the percentages can be explained as follows:

	School	Paul	Steal	T.P.
Dark	40%	85%	100%	75%
Clear	60%	15%	-----	25%

5. Discussion

The following is a further discussion of the test results:

- 1- It has been stated that a clear /l/ is pronounced in all instances in an initial-word position in both SA and IA. Nevertheless, a dark /l/ was heard in as much as 20% of the subjects' performance in this item. In fact, *luck* /lʌk/ demonstrated the highest percentage, i.e. 35%, followed by *last* /la:st/, in which a dark variety was heard in 15% of the whole percentage. The results of the CA made between English and Arabic provide no good reasons for the subjects' production of a dark variety of the phoneme in this position. But phonetically speaking, it can be said that as /ʌ/ and /a:/ are open vowels, with a back resonance – especially for that in /a:/ – they seem to have affected the pronunciation of /l/ in some subjects, (see 1.2). IA has some loan words in which a dark variety of /l/ is pronounced before such vowels, as in [bɑ:tʌ] *bale*, [gʌ:tə] *glass*. As such, it can be suggested that a dark variety was produced in this position by way of over-extension and analogy.
- 2- A clear /l/ had to be produced in prevocalic positions, and this RP rule goes in accordance with the one in both SA and IA. The subjects were able to score 50 out of 60 in this item. In a

way this is an achievement, but still there is the question why was a dark /l/ pronounced in 15% of their performance? If the percentages are investigated still further, it can be noticed that 20% was scored under *floods* /flʌdz/, 10% under *clock* /klɒk/, and 5% under *English* /ɪŋɡlɪʃ/. As compared to /ɒ/ and /ɪ/, /ʌ/ is a much more open vowel, and that might have affected the way they pronounce it. That is, they produced it with a more open back vowel quality.

- 3- The most striking results are those obtained in the intervocalic category. A clear /l/ was supposed to be heard in this position, but this was heard in only 31% of their performance. It has been stated that Arabic matches English in using a clear /l/ in such a position, (see 2.1); nevertheless, there were 41 occurrences of a dark /l/ in *feelings* /'fi:lɪŋz/, *followed* /'fɒləʊd/ and *holiday* /'hɒlədeɪ/ for no obvious reason except for that related to the subjects' extensive exposure to different English accents, with such pronunciations of /l/, through the mass media. Personal experience has also shown that the Iraqi EFL students overgeneralize their pronunciation of the dark /l/ in words like *real* /rɪəl/, *kill* /kɪl/ and *fall* /fɔ:l/ into the pronunciation of the /l/ in *really* /'rɪəli/, *killer* /'kɪlə/, and *falling* /'fɔ:lɪŋ/, and that's why the /l/ in the words in question was dark in most of the subjects.
- 4- Although a clear /l/ is produced before the palatal approximant /j/ in all instances in Arabic, a dark /l/ was heard in as much as 13% of the subjects' performance in the pronunciation of *million* /'mɪljən/, *failure* /'feɪljə/ and *billions* /'bɪljənz/. A large proportion of this percentage goes to *billions*, and such an inconsistency may be related to the fact that the subjects might have not come across *billions* as they might for *million* and *failure*. At this point, the study verifies

Lado's assumption [25] that a difficulty might be attributed to the word itself, and that such a pronunciation problem may not be one of mastering the sound system but plainly a matter of not knowing how the word is pronounced.

- 5- In the preconsonantal position, a dark /l/ was heard in only 66% of the subjects' performance. A large proportion of this percentage goes to *belt* /belt/ and *filled* /fild/. As for *already* /ɔ:l'redi/, the situation was totally different: most of the subjects assimilated the dark /l/ into the following /r/ producing /ɔ:r'redi/. It was assimilated in as much as 65% of their whole performance. Earlier in this paper, it has been stated that in Arabic the (ل) in a word like (الرشيد) becomes /r/ due to the effect of the following /r/, [26]. This type of assimilation is called regressive because it works backwards, i.e. /r/ replaces the preceding /l/. This is a kind of positive interference that has been retired to undeliberately by the subjects; one which, if made use of properly, can introduce the learners to an important characteristic of the English rapid casual speech, and hence, train them not to avoid L1 patterns that show similarities to L2 ones.
- 6- Another striking form was registered in the pronunciation of such a frequently used word as *school* /sku:l/: most of the subjects insisted on a clear variety of /l/ at the end of. In fact, *school* represents one of the most stubborn hearing difficulties for the Iraqi EFL learners. Personal experience has shown that the learners keep pronouncing it with a clear /l/ even though they are often corrected by the teacher. In summary then, this is one of the learners' errors whose roots cannot be predicted easily by the teachers, given that the latter themselves may pronounce it this way. As such, the study corroborates Mackey's note [2] that some mistakes in EFL may be related

to the order and rate of intake. That is, when the learners apply a phonological rule to a certain word but not to another with the same qualities, then the problem is concerned with the confusion that may result from parts of the language that are not deeply ingrained. This explains why *school* was pronounced with a clear /l/, but *Paul* and *steals* with a dark one.

6. Conclusions

In view of the above discussion, it can be stated that not all the errors made in L2 are due to the learners' make-up of their L1. In fact, some of these errors have no source in the learners' L1, and they can simply be attributed to:

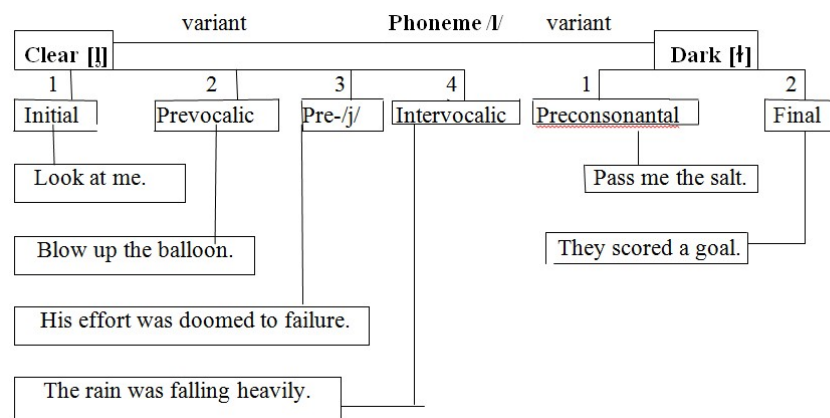
- 1- Over-extension, i.e. applying, by analogy, L2 patterns into inapplicable areas.
- 2- The exposure to different English accents which works differently from the one adopted as a standard in teaching EFL.
- 3- Systematic avoidance of L1 patterns that correspond to L2 ones.
- 4- Ignorance of word which results in mispronouncing it.
- 5- Confusion of language parts whose result is applying an L2 phonological rule to a word but not to another.
- 6- Falling short of the appropriate model, in the form of the teacher, over years of studying EFL, and this is one of the main reasons behind the learners' ingrained errors.

As such, the study refutes Shani's statement [27] that "the major source of difficulty and error in a foreign language is interference from the native language of the learner".

7. Suggestions

The distributional peculiarity of /l/ for the Iraqi EFL learners has never been one of the prime concerns for the Iraqi teacher since this confusion does not affect the required general intelligibility. Rather, the learners are mostly asked to master the phonemes which make difference in meaning. Nevertheless, the learners who are supposed to be EFL teachers in future are obliged to get hold of it, and the following are suggested remedies to the problem:

- 1- To start, the teacher may find it more helpful to use illustrations or diagrams instead of writing detailed rules. The following illustration can be used as a visual aid pinned to the wall or the board:



- 2- Carefully chosen material with as many examples as possible of this allophony can be given to read by the students, and the teacher checks their mistakes in this only aspect. The following is an example from Patersons' *Robbery at Foxwood* [28].

They followed the fading tracks for another mille down a steep hill. The road on the opposite side of the valley stretched before them llike a ribbon in the moon llight. They passed a rather creepy llooking cottage and crossed a rickety olld bridge, lleaving the gurglling stream behind them as they made their way up the winding llane on the other side of the valley. Halfway up the hill Harvey spotted a scarecrow at the top. 'Scarecrows see everything,' he said. 'If the robbers have passed this way he ll tell us which way they went.'

- 3- In rapid casual speech, contextual elision of /l/ is practiced natively on a large scale. The Arabic assimilated /l/, discussed in (1.3.1.1 and 2), can be made use of to consolidate such a habit in the learners, and they must be reminded that learning a language does not only mean learning the citation forms (i.e. dictionary forms) of the words; rather, it means learning long utterances with all the characteristics of the casual speech, such as elision, assimilation, linking, etc.
- 4- To avoid confusion with the other parts of L2, the teacher can use a phrase like but note to show exceptions; for example,
- You ll do it.
 - But note: Will you come? (followed by /j/)
 - He was saved by the bell.
 - But note: She rang the bell of the door. (followed by a vowel)

In these examples, the students will know when and when not they can use a clear /l/ in a final-word position. Moreover, the following pairs can be practiced inside the class to solve the problem of extending the pronunciation of the final dark /l/ to adjoined suffixes even though they begin with a vowel:

Dark → Clear	Dark → Clear
small	smaller
full	fully
sail	sailor
will	willing
kill	killer
fall	fallen
school	scholar
smell	smelly
fool	foolish
Bill	Billy
tall	tallest
real	really

5- It has been stated that /l/ allophony is an RP self-contained identity. As such, the learners should always be encouraged to hear more of the BBC type of English, and reminded that other English accents cannot be of much help to get hold of this allophony. CDs of the BBC classic mini-series or films can be passed around by the students to watch at their leisure.

This will positively add to their listening, and eventually, speaking skills. The following are some suggested ones:

- a. Dickens's *Oliver Twist* / *Bleak House*
- b. Austen's *Emma* / *Pride and Prejudice*
- c. Bronte's *Jane Ayre* / *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* / *Wuthering Heights*
- d. Gaskell's *North and South* / *Wives and Daughters*

This is not to mention, of course, the BBC TEFL series and the hourly news broadcasted by the main channel. And the more they listen, the more their pronunciation will improve.

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