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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## An Analytical Study of the Recognition of Silent Letters in the Pronunciation of English Words by Baghdadi Arabic Speakers

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| ABSTRACT

The phonetic system in English differs to some extent from that of Arabic. Novice Baghdadi Iraqi speakers encounter numerous challenges in pronouncing English words as a result of this. As an illustration, it is common to hear English learners articulate "assign" /ə'saɪn/ as / ə'saɪgn / or "kneel," / ni:l/ as /k ni:l/. The objective of this study is to detect prevalent distortions in the pronunciation of silent letters in English words among Baghdadi Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The methodology employed in this analysis was a qualitative descriptive study. Utilizing purposive sampling methods, a sample of 5 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) novices was chosen from the 1st level of the English Department, Dijlah University, Iraq. These learners were categorized as novice high-level learners (beginners). Analytically descriptive methodology was employed to analyze the data obtained from tests. The findings of this study indicate that EFL novices make errors when pronouncing words that include silent letters such as b, c, d, g, gh, h, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, th, and w. The writers examine three positions of the silent letters in words (beginning, medial, and final), and, by that understanding, it becomes feasible to create valuable instructional resources and teaching techniques to address this matter.

| KEYWORDS

Silent Letters; mispronunciation; EFL Novices; Baghdadi Iraqi.

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### 1. Introduction

Beginning language learners' L1 often influences their second language production (Muriungi, P., Mukuthuria, M., & Gatavi, 2011). Baghdadi Arabic-speaking EFL beginners who learn English say English words with the Arabic sound system. For example, we often hear beginner English learners speak "know" [noʊ] with "[knoʊ]" or "height" [haɪt] with "[haɪgt]." Language interference is initially observed in second language acquisition (negative interlingua transfer). Interference usually causes mistakes (Antrim, 2008). This study explains sound system interference from Arabic (L1) to English (L2). They are largely concerned with English silent letter pronunciation. What silent letters are mispronounced, and how?

Learning a foreign language requires perfect pronunciation, which is difficult. English is a foreign language, so learning it takes time. Pronunciation has long been regarded vital to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). To grasp the phonological system of English as a foreign language (EFL), accuracy and full knowledge are essential. EFL learners can improve their English communication with this awareness (Tuan, 2010). However, many EFL learners still struggle to pronounce English word sounds correctly. A similar situation exists with EFL Arabic speakers. While learning English, people struggle with pronunciation. Several studies (Al-Hamzi et al., 2021; Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989; Ababneh, 2018; Jabali and Abuzaid, 2017; Hassan, 2014) have found that some language speakers struggle to pronounce foreign sounds. In his paper "Comparative Linguistics," Alkhuli (2000) related that to Arabic and English sound system differences.

Thus, pronunciation is now an essential part of teaching English as a second language. EFL students may struggle. One has trouble pronouncing English words. Baghdadi EFL novices struggle to pronounce several English terms because they hear them differently from their written forms.

Ababneh (2018) and Taqi et al. (2018) state that teaching pronunciation to EFL Arabic-speaking learners is tough. English spelling is erratic, which makes pronunciation difficult. The sentence shows that the difference between word pronunciation and writing is a problem. Since English is not a phonetic language, we cannot pronounce words as they are written. Term spelling and pronunciation are unrelated. Consider the wrong pronunciation of the letters "l" in "talk" and "w" in "write." To avoid confusion, pronounce "talk" and "write" as / wɑ:k / instead of /talk/. Additionally, "write" should be pronounced /raɪt/, not /wraɪt/. Silent letters are visible but unpronounced.

Silent letters are letters that are spelt but not spoken. Podhaizer (1998) defines silent letters as letters that are not heard when making their "usual" sound in a word. Silent letters cause English words to be spelt and pronounced differently. EFL newbies may miss letters while writing a word they have not heard uttered. When speaking in class, novices who have seen a word written down may pronounce a silent letter.

This finding is important because hundreds of English words with silent letters disrupt listeners' comprehension when audible. Knowing Baghdadi's initial learners' mistakes will help English teachers determine which silent letters need extra instruction. The results of this study can also be used to create English pronunciation course materials for Baghdadi EFL learners, particularly for silent letter pronunciation.

## **2. Language of the Learner**

A helpful assessment tool for second language learning is the learner's own language. "The language that students produce when they are asked to use L2 orally or in writing" (Ellis, 2015) is how the learner's language is defined. Errors in the learner's language are indicative of knowledge gaps (Muriungi, P., Mukuthuria, M., & Gatavi, 2011). The rules or formulae used to construct them are systematic and predictable, regardless of how different they are from the target language. Some pronunciation mistakes are common among second language learners; for example, they may mispronounce words or use an incomplete sentence. Another error is caused by their attempts to generate a second language using their first language awareness. Transfer errors describe these mistakes.

### **2.1 Errors Analysis**

Error analysis was pioneered in 1970 by SP Corder and colleagues in the field of second language acquisition. An alternate behavioural approach to contrast analysis, error analysis compares and contrasts the ways in which first- and second-language learners make mistakes (Kho, 2011). The analysis of errors shows that it is impossible to forecast which errors will occur. Learners make specific mistakes when they try to infer new language norms, according to the error study. Supporters of error analysis classify mistakes as either systematic or unsystematic. Typologies of errors are frequently developed by them. According to Ellis (2015), there are multiple primary categories of errors, including omissive, additive, substitutive, and word order related. Another way to categorise them is by the degree to which the mistake is apparent; some are more obvious than others; for example, "I thirsty" is an overt error, while others are more subtle and only apparent in certain contexts. There are several ways to categorise mistakes based on the level of language they occur at: phonological, lexical, syntactic, and so on. One way to evaluate them is by how much they impede communication. For example, whereas local faults do not affect understanding speech, global errors do. Since it does not alter the meaning, the usage of "I thirsty" in the above example may be considered a local error. The study of how to deal with mistakes in language instruction is strongly tied to errors analysis. The study of mistakes is currently highly pertinent to research on pedagogical approaches.

### **2.2 Interlingual transfer (Interference)**

There is a general concept of transferring past experiences into future learning (Ellis, 1992). The last thing that needs to happen for there to be positive transfers is for the last thing to be able to be properly applied to future learning, which occurs when past knowledge makes learning easier. Conversely, negative transfers do occur when one piece of information gets in the way of another's acquisition of new knowledge. When previously learnt information gets in the way of new information, as in the examples given, we say that there is interference. The last bits get transferred to the things that were learnt improperly.

An American linguist named Larry Selinker coined the term "interlingua transfer" (sometimes spelt "interlanguage transfer") to describe a second language learner's system of intermediate grammar. Interlanguage is thought to be systematic and can be viewed as a learner's hypothesis about L2. It is possible that the learner's L1 influences the creation of interlanguage (Dwinastiti, 2017, &Smith, 2013).

The most common mistake made by second language learners, according to Lekova (2010), is interlingua transfer. In the first stages of learning a second language, there is a high likelihood of interference, or interlingual transfer, from the mother tongue. During the initial stages of language acquisition, students are only allowed to concentrate on the L1 language framework until they have a solid grasp of the L2 system. Students often use words like "sheep" instead of "ship" or "book of Ali" instead of "Ali's book." Negative interlingual transfers might be the cause of all of these transfers.

There is a distinction between intralingual and interlingual transfer. When a learner begins to internalise aspects of a new system from their second language, this process is called intralingual transfer. Learners' prior experiences start to assimilate the target language structures as they progress in a second language. Expressions like "Do they can dance?" demonstrate negative intralingual transfer, also known as overgeneralisation. Alternatively, "I goed last week."

The consequences of L1, or mother tongue, on second language acquisition can be detrimental. Universally marked languages are more difficult to learn and frequently interfere with L1 communication than unmarked global languages (Parker & Riley, 2000). Mistakes in second language proficiency can occur when learners "know too much" about their first language (Fromkin et al., 2018). The reason being they might assume that some L1 rules are applicable everywhere. Consequently, their knowledge of L1 is likely to influence the L2 they produce, which can contain inaccuracies.

### **2.3 Language-Based Factors Influencing Second-Language Acquisition**

#### **a) Markedness**

The overarching argument is that certain elements are either universal or present in the vast majority of languages, while others are either particular or found in just a small number of languages. Following Chomsky's Universal grammatical, unmarked items (very abstract grammatical features that do not vary from language to language) will be transmitted in L1 transfers until they are marked, and things will not be transferred conveniently after L1 is marked.

#### **b) Language and Cultural Distance**

Similarly, learners of related languages may benefit greatly from the abundance of shared resources available to them, such as almost identical vocabulary or translations. Students must rely on their knowledge of L2 in relation to L2 types or usage as linguistic inequality increases. The amount of transfers is obviously affected by the language barrier. If L1 and L2 are correlated, then there will be a positive transfer (Corder, 1981). People would pick up a second language more quickly if their native tongue is formally identical to the target language, as opposed to situations when the two languages are very different. Aljomaely, R. A. . (2024). Cultural distance, in addition to linguistic distance, may play a substantial role in determining how easy or difficult it is to learn. While students try to learn a language in a similar or identical cultural environment, they will likely find some parts to be suitable and feel more at ease with the learning process. On the other hand, they will likely encounter more challenges while learning a second language whose background is different from their first. The change in meaning is likely to occur.

#### **c) L2 Proficiency**

According to Derakhshan and Karimi (2015), second language proficiency is a determining factor in the transfer rate. Learners are more likely to switch from a more proficient language to one they are less proficient in. Negative transfers are the most common result of poor second language competency, according to Figueredo (2006), while positive transfers, such as the use of cognitive language, are present at high levels of ability. The link between L2 capacity and transfer is complex. Competence has a direct impact on the likelihood of language transfer, regardless of the route of cause.

### **2.4 Silent Letters in English**

Silent letters were described by Carney (2012) as letters that are either not uttered or minimised in order to make spoken English more appropriate. Most of the time, it's there in spelling but cut down or eliminated in actual speech. Here are a few instances of English silent letters:

letters			
A	Magically, tragically, basically, aisle, aesthetes		
B	Crumb, plumb, dumb, Subtle, debt, Doubt, Womb, Tomb		
C	Scene, muscle, Scenario, descend, Abscess, scissors, obscene, crescent.		
D	ledger, bridge, Wednesday, sandwich		
E	Kite, debate, excite, desire, breathe, plaque.		
G/GH	Assign, campaign, Foreign, reign, High, though, drought, weight, align, gnaw, gnash		
H	Anchor, Archive, when, Borough, exhaust, Ghost, hour, Vehicle, heir, While, honor, Hannah, Cough, laugh.		
I	Parliament		
K	Knack, Kneel, Knowledge, knight, Knoll, Knave, knife		
L	Should, Balm, Stalk, walk, half, Chalk, folk, Behalf, psalm, salmon.		
M	mneme		
N	Column, condemn, autumn, hymn, damn.		
O	people, <i>tough enough</i>		
P	Coup, receipt, pneumonia, cupboard, psychology, corps, psychotic, pseudo, raspberry		
Q	<i>lacquer</i>		
R	teacher, park, there, murder		
S	Viscount, bourgeois, debris, island, isle		
T	Hustle, whistle, ricochet, valet, mortgage, soften, moisten, buffet. asthma		
U	Guise, circuit, guitar, guitar, tongue, guide, vague, guard		
W	Wrestle, playwright, wrist, wrong, sword, who, <i>wring, two</i> , answer.		
Z	Rendezvous, laissez-faire		

Since this study is about the mistakes produced by first-year students in the English Language Department at Dijlah University when pronouncing words with silent letters, the researcher used error analysis to examine the aforementioned pronunciation issues. The purpose of this study was to determine the most common ways that the silent letters "c," "w," "b," "p," "th," "h," "k," and "g" are mispronounced, in light of the issue described earlier.

"n," "m," "l," "d," "gh," "s," and "t" as taught to Baghdadi English as a foreign language (EFL) students.

### 3. Methodology of the study

In this analytical descriptive-qualitative study, EFL beginners are the subjects of analysis. Participants in this research were first-semester English majors at Dijlah University in Iraq. They fall under the category of novice high-level learners (beginners) in general. They seem to make mistakes in L2 writing and pronunciation as novice high-level learners. Fifty freshmen were deliberately chosen for this study; they vary in terms of academic achievement and English proficiency. All participants were chosen using the following criteria in order to account for the various variables: gender, exposure, age, motivation, and English competence.

- a) The individuals who took part were all Iraqi, studying English as a foreign language (EFL) at Dijlah University. There were thirty men and twenty females, hailing from various areas of Baghdad, and they all spoke Arabic.
- b) Every single one of the participants was a first-semester student in 2023–2024.
- c) Non-native English speakers were not present in any of the participants' backgrounds, and none of them had ever visited an English-speaking country.
- d) We are all looking forward to improving our speaking skills and sounding more like native speakers when we participate.

This study will describe the ways in which students from Arabic sound systems interfere with English pronunciation and the linguistic factors that contribute to this interference. The research tool was a test that measured how people pronounced words that contained the silent letters "c," "w," "b," "p," "th," "h," "k," "g," "n," "m," "l," "d," "gh," "s," and "t."

A test was one of the tools used to collect the data. The best way to find out whether EFL beginners have really grasped the material is to give them a test. They were also given a pronunciation test to see if they had any trouble pronouncing English terms with silent letters.

After collecting data, the researcher started analysing it using a descriptive and analytical approach. Another way of looking at it is that the researchers frequently detailed the information they obtained. There are four stages to data analysis: finding mistakes, describing them, explaining them, and finally, evaluating them.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

##### a) Analysis of the mispronunciation of the Silent Letter "b" in (Table 1).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	The total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	Subtle	40	50	/sʌb.təl/
	debt	30	50	/dɛbt/
	Doubt	20	50	/dʊbt/
Final	Crumb	30	50	/krʌmb/
	plumb	20	50	/plʌmb/
	dumb	40	50	/dʌmb/
	Womb	50	50	/wu:mb/
	Tomb	50	50	/tu:mb/

Participants had to say eight words that had the silent letter 'b' in them. "Crumb," "plumb," "dumb," "subtle," "debt," "doubt," "womb," and "tomb" are the terms in question. When the silent letter 'b' is in the middle of words like 'doubt' or 'debt,' the majority of respondents pronounced the letter 'b' even though it should be quiet. They typically make the /b/ sound and conceal the /t/ sound when the word 'subtle' contains the silent letter 'b' followed by a 't.' For instance, they might say /sub/ instead of /det/. Nevertheless, there were a handful of responders who correctly pronounced 'womb.' When a word ends with the letter 'b' and 'm' comes before it, they slip the letter 'b' /wom/. As a result, the course materials need to be more careful with the pronunciation of words like "doubt," "climbing," "combing," and "bombing," which sound similar to the mortgage and plumbing phrases.

##### b) Mispronunciation of the silent letter "c" in (Table 2).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	The total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	Scene	40	50	/skɛn/
	Muscle	50	50	/mʌs.kəl/
	Scenario	0	50	-
	Descend	30	50	/dɪ'sɛnd/
	Abscess	20	50	/ 'æbs.sɛs/
	scissors	40	50	/ 'sɪs.əz
	obscene	30	50	/ əbs.ki:n/
	crescent	45	50	/ 'kres.kənt/
Final	-	-	-	-

Eight terms containing the silent letter c were given to the participants to pronounce. "Scence," "muscle," "scenario," "descend," "abscess," "scissors," "crescent," and "obscene" are the words in question.

Most respondents messed up pronouncing the silent letter "c." according to the findings of the pronunciation test. For instance, when asked to pronounce "muscle," every single responder got the word mixed up. Every single respondent correctly articulated the sound /c/ or /k/ when pronouncing the letter 'c,' as in /maskl/. When the words "scene," "crescent," and "scissors" were spoken, an identical problem occurred. 'C' seemed to be pronounced brightly by the majority of respondents in this scenario. Though the silent letter 'c' did not sound when it came before the letter 'k,' there was no mispronunciation of any letter. Instructors might consider words like "conscience," "scissors," "muscle," "scene," and "fluorescent" that share the silent letter 'c.'

##### c) Mispronunciations of the Consonant Letter "d" in (Table 3).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	Bridge	50	50	/brɪ.dɪʒ/
	Wednesday	50	50	/wenz.deɪ /
	ledger	50	50	/ 'led. ʒə/
	Sandwich	50	50	/ sənd.wɪdʒ/
Final	-	-	-	-

Four words, one of which was a silent "d," were uttered by the participants. The phrases "ledger," "bridge," "Wednesday," and "sandwich. Evident from the respondents' pronunciation, the silent letter 'd' was the most commonly mispronounced sound, especially in words like 'sandwich' and 'Wednesday.' Novices would just silently say the letter 'd' when pronouncing these phrases, such as /saend.wɪdʒ / or / wenz.deɪ /. On the other hand, a small number of respondents misspell "d" when they say "bridge." Words like "handsome" and "ledger" have a silent "d." that is typically spoken clearly by beginner learners; therefore, it's important for instructional materials to account for this.

**d) | Mispronunciations of the Silent Letter "g" in (Table 4).**

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	The total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	gnash	40	50	/gnæʃ/
	gnaw	30	50	/gnoʊ/
Medial	Assign	30	50	/ ə 'saɪgn/
	campaign	50	50	/ kæm 'peɪgn/
	Foreign	40	50	/fɔrɪn 'fɔrɪgn/
	reign	35	50	/ reɪgn/
	align	38	50	/ ə 'laɪgn/
	though	43	50	/ðəʊg/
	High	40	50	/ haɪg/
	Drought	50	50	/ draʊgt/
	weight	40	50	/ weɪgt/
Final	-	-	-	-

Each respondent is required to enunciate the silent 'g' sound in six separate words. The terms "assign," "campaign," "foreign," "reign," "align," "gnat," and "gnash" are all within this class. The majority of people who took part in this survey pronounced the silent letter 'g' incorrectly before 'n,' whether it was the first or last word. They have a tendency to articulate the /g/ sounds with clarity, such as /gnat/ and /kaɪmpeɪgn/. Hence, the gathered teaching resources should also center on the silent letter 'g' and how to pronounce it. While teaching pronunciation, the words "assign" and "gnat" might have equal emphasis.

Respondents would silently pronounce the letter 'gh' in four different words. Words like "high," "though," "drought," and "weight" are included here. Most respondents are unable to pronounce words with the silent letter 'gh' either at the beginning or the end, according to the statistics. Their tendency to pronounce the silent letter "gh" as the /g/ sound causes them to make pronunciation mistakes like /haɪg/ or / ðəʊg /, as demonstrated in the table above. So, students should have more opportunities to practice pronouncing words with the silent letter 'gh' either in the middle or at the end of them in the course materials.

**e) Pronunciation errors specific to the silent letter "h" in (Table 5).**

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	The total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	heir	45	50	/ heə /
	honor	30	50	/ hɒnər /
Medial	Anchor	40	50	/ æk.hɒr/
	Archive	50	50	/ ɑrʃ i:v/
	when	0	50	0
	Borough	50	50	/ bʌrɒ.geh/

	exhaust	28	50	/ ɪgz.hɔːst/
	Ghost	30	50	/ghəʊst/
	Vehicle	33	50	/vɪ.hɪ.kəl/
	While		50	
Final	Hannah	20	50	/'hænə/
	Cough	35	50	/ kɒgh/
	laugh	30	50	/lɑːgh/

It is expected that the respondents will pronounce the fifteen words that have the silent letter "h." You can find them as follows: "Anchor," "Archive," "laugh," "when," "when," "exhaust," "heir," and "honor." Words like "Ghost," "Vehicle," "Borough," "heir," "while," "cough," and "Hannah" exist. When asked to pronounce words like "heir" or "honor," the majority of respondents tended to use the silent 'h,' particularly if it was the first letter following the 'o.' They would be unable to properly pronounce words that had the silent letter "h" under these circumstances. Despite this, the /heə/ or /hɒ.nə/ pronunciation mistakes occurred because the sound {h} was really delivered. In contrast, there were a few respondents who correctly identified examples of sounds like / 'vɪ.əl / and / æ.əl.kə /, where the 'h' is either immediately following a consonant or at the very end of the word. As a result, students need additional practice pronouncing the silent 'h' letters, especially when they are the first letter of words that begin with the letter 'o.' "

#### f) Mispronunciation of the silent letter "k" in (Table 6).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	Knack	40	50	/knæk/
	Kneel	30	50	/kni:l /
	Knowledge	45	50	/ knɒ.ɪdʒ/
	knight	40	50	/ knaɪt/
	Knoll	45	50	/ nəʊl/
	Knave	50	50	/kneɪv/
	knife	30	50	/ knaɪf/
Medial	-	-	-	-
Final	-	-	-	-

There are seven terms that incorporate the silent 'k' that the respondent is required to say. The terms that are being used are as follows: knife, knack, knee, knowledge, knight, knot, and knave. There was a significant majority of responders who did not correctly enunciate the silent letter 'k'. It seems that they are able to accurately pronounce the silent 'k,' which can lead to pronunciation problems such as /knaɪf / or /kni:l /. Therefore, the gathered instructional materials would demonstrate the proper way to pronounce word constructions that contain the letter 'kn,' such as the words " Knoll," "knowledge," and "knight."

#### g) Mispronunciations of the silent letter "l" in (Table 7).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	The total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	Should	35	50	/ ʃɔld/
	Balm	40	50	/ bɑːlm/
	Stalk	40	50	/ stɔːlk/
	Walk	25	50	/ wɔːlk/
	Half	20	50	/hɑːlf/
	Chalk	25	50	/ tʃɔːlk/
	Folk	35	50	/ fɔːlk/
	Behalf	20	50	/bɪ.hɑːlf/
	psalm	35	50	/ sɑːlm/
	salmon	45	50	/ sæl.mən /
	Final	-	-	-

The silent letter "l" appears in ten words, and responders are required to pronounce it. The silent letter "l" is spoken in the following terms: "should," "Balm," "Stalk," "walk," "half," "Chalk," "folk," "Behalf," "psalm," and "salmon." / sælˈmən / or /hɑ:lɪf/ are examples of pronunciation errors caused by their apparent clear pronouncing of the sound /l/, according to the data recorded. Given that the respondents made numerous mistakes, the teaching materials also need to emphasize how to pronounce the silent letter "l."

**h) Mispronunciation of the silent "m" in (Table 8).**

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	mneme	50	50	/mnemɪ /
Medial	-	-	-	
Final	-	-	-	-

'Mneme' is a phrase that comprises the silent letter 'm' and is intended to be uttered by the responses. There was not a single respondent who correctly pronounced the silent letter 'm.' They enunciate the 'm' sound in a clear manner, which leads to problems in pronunciation, which can be written as /mnemɪ / . Despite the fact that a number of respondents struggle with the pronunciation of the silent letter 'm', there is no requirement to devote a great deal of time to practicing the silent 'm.' Because of this, the silent letter 'm' is not used very often in the English language.

**i) Mispronunciation of the silence "n" in (Table 9).**

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	-	-	-	-
Final	Column	45	50	/ kɒl.əmɪn/
	condemn	40	50	/ kən.demɪn/
	autumn	50	50	/ ɔː.təmɪn/
	Hymn	40	50	/ hɪmɪn/
	damn	50	50	/ dæmɪn/

The silent letter 'n' is included in five of the words that the respondents would attempt to pronounce. "autumn," "column," "damn," "hymn," and "condemn" are the names of these words. All of the responders, according to the information that was gathered, clearly pronounced the silent letter 'n.' Additionally, they have some difficulty pronouncing the silent letter "n," particularly when it is at the end of a word and accompanied by the letter "m." For this reason, teaching materials ought to place an emphasis on the habit of silently pronouncing the letter 'n.'

**j) Mispronunciation of the silent letter "p" in (Table 10).**

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	pneumonia	50	50	/ pɪnjuːˈmæʊ.ni.ə/
	psychology	50	50	/ ˈpsaɪˈkɒl.ə.dʒi/
	psychotic	45	50	/ ˈpsaɪˈkɒt.ɪk/
	pseudo	40	50	/ ˈpsjuː.dəʊ/
Medial	receipt	40	50	/ rɪˈsiːtriːˈsiːpt/
	cupboard	35	50	/ ˈkʌp.bəd/
	corps	40	50	/ kɔːrps/
	raspberry	45	50	/ rɑːzpbɹi/
Final	Coup	40	50	/kup/

There were nine terms that contained the silent letter 'p' that was brought up by the respondents. "Coup," "receipt," "pneumonia," "cupboard," "psychology," "corps," "psychotic," "pseudo," and "raspberry" are some of the phrases that fall under this category. On the basis of the data that was collected, the majority of respondents were inaccurate in their pronunciation of the silent letter 'p' at the beginning, middle, or end of a word. These individuals have a preference for clearly pronouncing the /p/ sound, which



can result in pronunciation problems such as / rɪ.'si:pt/, / kʌb.pud/, or /kup/. Consequently, the teachers should have more opportunities to practice pronouncing the silent letter 'p' at the beginning, middle, or end of a word or part of a word.

#### k) Mispronunciation of the silent letter "s" in (Table 11).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	Viscount	50	50	/vaɪs.kɑʊnt/
	island	30	50	/aɪs.lænd/
	isle	40	50	/aɪsl/
Final	Bourgeois	50	50	/bɔ:ʒ.wɑ:s/
	debris	45	50	/deɪ.bri:s/

There are five terms that have the silent letter's,' which the respondent would pronounce during the quiz. The terms "Viscount," "bourgeois," "debris," "island," and "isle" are the ones in question. The majority of respondents, depending on their pronunciation, are inaccurate in their pronunciation of the silent letter's' either in the middle of the term or at the conclusion of a word before the letter 'l.' It seemed as though respondents were able to articulate the letter "s" in a straightforward manner, such as in the pronunciation of the words /aɪsl/and /aɪsland/. Consequently, when it comes to the composition of instructional content, the teachers ought to receive further instruction in the pronunciation of the silent letter's.'

#### l) Mispronunciation of the silent letter "t" in (Table 12).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial		-	-	-
Medial	Hustle	30	50	/hʌs.təl/
	Whistle	25	50	/wɪs.təl/
	Mortgage	40	50	/mɔ:t.gɪdʒ/
	Soften	30	50	/sɒf.tən/
	moisten	50	50	/mɔɪ.stən/
	asthma	50	50	/æsθ.mə/
	Final	ricochet	45	50
	valet	30	50	/væl.ɛt/

The reply was required to speak eight different phrases, one of which being the silent letter "t." "Hustle," "whistle," "ricochet," "valet," "mortgage," "soften," "moisten," "buffet," and "asthma" are the five terms that describe these symptoms.". It was observed that the majority of respondents made mistakes in their pronunciation of the silent letter 't,' particularly when the silent letter 't' is located at the conclusion of the word (for example, /væl.ɛt/). When it comes to pronouncing the letter 't' in the middle position, a significant number of respondents have made mistakes, such as /mɔɪ.stən/ and /wɪs.təl/. As a result, the prepared instructional materials need to include additional training on how to pronounce the silent letter 't' in the middle of the word. This is because the silent 't' located in the final position is quite uncommon.

#### m) Mispronunciation of the silent letter "w" in (Table 13).

Position of the letter	words	Error Count	total number of participants	Inaccurate Pronunciation by Students
Initial	Wrestle	40	50	/wres.təl/
	wrist	35	50	/wɪrɪ.st/
	wrong	25	50	/wrɔ:ŋ/
	sword	30	50	/swɔ:d/
	who	25	50	0
	wring	35	50	/wɪrɪŋ/
	Medial	Playwright	30	50
Two		0	50	0
answer		40	50	/ɑ:ns.wər/
Final	-	-	-	

There were nine terms that had the silent letter 'w' that was provided by the reply. "Wrestle," "playwright," "wrist," "wrong," "sword," "who," "wring," "two," and "answer" are the terms that correspond to these particular terms. The respondents appeared to have a

strong pronunciation of the letter 'w' both at the beginning (for example, /wres.təl/) and in the middle (for example, /plei.wraɪt/). On the other hand, when the silent 'w' is followed by a word, none of the respondents have any disagreements with it. As a result, the content of the instructional material should place an emphasis on the proper pronunciation of the silent letter 'w' when it is in the initial and middle positions of the word.

From the aforementioned findings, the researcher concluded that Baghdadi Iraqi EFL novices mispronounced words with silent letters "c"; "w." "b"; "p"; "th"; "h"; "k"; "g"; "n"; "m"; "l"; "d"; "gh"; "s"; "t." Types of EFL rookie errors: Most EFL beginners mispronounce "doubt" and "Wednesday." Pronounce them incorrectly as /daʊbt/ and /wɜdnɪzdeɪ/ instead of /daʊt/ and /wenz.deɪ/. Some pronunciation problems cause the terms "gnaw" and "drought" to be pronounced / gnæw / and /draʊt/. The intended pronunciation of "gnaw" and "drought" are / nɔː / and / draʊt /. The words "soften" and "knave" are mispronounced as /softən/ and /kneɪv/ instead of the true pronunciation (/ sɒf.ən / and / neɪv /). Some pronunciation problems committed by EFL newbies when pronouncing the various terms are included in tables for each silent letter.

## **5. Discussion**

After the inquiry, the researcher found that Baghdadi Iraqi EFL beginners mispronounced silent-letter words. Novice English speakers were uninformed and uncontrollable. They hardly cared how to pronounce English words. The researcher found certain incorrect terminology used by novices. Debt, scissors, handsome, reign, high, hour, knock, parliament, mneme, autumn, pseudo, isle, whistle, asthma, and wrist are examples. These words use silent "c"; "w." "b"; "p"; "th"; "h"; "k"; "g"; "n"; "m"; "l"; "d"; "gh"; "s"; "t" letters. The researcher discovered that the EFL beginners were unaware of what went wrong when he tested them. They also didn't realize they needed to evaluate and correct their pronunciation.

In this case, mother tongue effects cause learning errors. Not all pronunciation errors were intentional. Novices mispronounce silent-letter phrases for many reasons. Less exposure to English Listening Vocabulary, less knowledge of English phonemic transcription, and more inclination to mispronounce words. Fourth is apathy toward English pronunciation. Fifth, instructors' lack of interest in teaching listening skills, then lack of time to practice English vocabulary and pronunciation, and finally lack of knowledge to train novices in English pronunciation (Mahaputra, 2017).

In the final analysis, EFL newbies are randomly guessing and only partially aware of the rules when they make such blunders. Due to their inability to master some rules, they miss them. Beginner EFL learners cannot describe how errors occur. They cannot fix them even if lecturers bring them out. These errors also occurred when EFL novices identified the erroneous rule AlJumaily, R. A., & AlMuselhy, A. A. H. (2024). They recognize the rule of phonological symbols in pronunciations yet may mispronounce words. They could not analyze or rectify mistakes. The learner may have made an inaccurate assumption about the target language. Instances include "debt" and "womb." To pronounce "debt" correctly, use / det / and / wu:m / for "womb." EFL beginners made silent "b" mistakes despite knowing the guideline. The researcher corrected pupils' faults by testing them. They mispronounced "debt" and "womb" since they didn't know the second language's phonological system and were influenced by their native sound system. When the researcher tested their pronunciation skills, most EFL novices made mistakes with "debt" and "womb." It took practice to pronounce the incorrect forms as /debt/ and /wu:mb/ correctly. Other terms were "muscle" and "yacht." Some EFL beginners mispronounced these terms. EFL learners often mispronounce the word "muscle" as [maskl] instead of /masl/.

According to the data above, Baghdadi Iraqi EFL novices had trouble pronouncing a word correctly and using the right phonological words as ordered. Actually, they knew how to pronounce the terms. Due to the surrounding sound, the words were mispronounced. The professor tried repeating terms and letting beginners fix them. The EFL beginners understood language function in the correct phonological rule, but they still made mistakes when pronouncing words.

Thus, L1 greatly influences second language learning. Language learning is usually ongoing. It is usually a series of transfers that might help or hurt second language acquisition. Language conversion is a real process that should be considered when learning a second language (Selinker & Gass, 2008). In Chomsky's Universal Grammar, the environment (the grammar's abstractness) is transferred before labelling. This implies slow L1 language transmission. Many Iraqi EFL novices' mistakes due to L1 (Arabic) interference involve L2 structures. Second language learners' pronunciation styles are examined in this study.

The analysis shows L1 interference in L2 acquisition. Most responders clearly pronounce English silent letters, while L1 sounds are active in L2 pronunciation, suggesting interference. EFL involves actual mastery and beautiful knowledge of English's phonological system. Good awareness helps EFL learners speak English fluently (Tuan, 2010). All in all, many EFL learners struggle to pronounce English sounds correctly. Arabic-speaking FEL students are vulnerable. While learning English, they struggle with pronunciation. Many research (Kharma and Hajjaj 1989; Ababneh 2018; Jabali and Abuzaid 2017; Hassan 2014) found that certain language speakers are reluctant to appropriately pronounce foreign sounds that are not in their home language.

Respondents received Arabic mother tongue and constructive criticism on copying and repetition. Habits affected L2 learning. Because of this, respondents used L1 language patterns. Habits and L2 learning develop new habits. L1 seems to have hampered L2 acquisition. Another hypothesis suggests that students can use the L2 sound environment more easily if L1 and L2 have similarities. All fifty respondents constructed L2 interim rules using their L1 expertise, resulting in several L2 pronunciation problems.

EFL Arabic-speaking learners in Iraq have many English pronunciation problems, especially with silent letters. It comes from Arabic and English sound system differences. Arabic is spoken in parks, schools, streets, markets, and practically all other sites in Iraq. Arabic features twenty-eight consonants and three pairs of short and long vowels, according to Ababneh (2018). Since letters represent sounds orthographically, both phonemes are similar. Most Arabic speakers pronounce words as they are orthographically expressed because symbols and sounds match.

In contrast, English has 20 vowels, diphthongs, and 24 consonants. 26 letters represent all English phonemes (Ababneh, 2018; Taqi et al., 2018). Each phoneme can be represented in different ways; therefore, English symbols and sounds are not matched. A single letter in English can be presented in different sounds, such as "care" and "cautions," whereas Arabic letters closely match their phonemes, so most of its words are written in the usual orthographic form (Tushyeh, 1996). Different L1 and L2 configurations increase L2 error risk. Error detection doesn't require skill assessment. Errors help teachers discover effective teaching approaches. Because of this, teaching English to beginners will involve mistakes.

This study focuses on L1 sound system interference in L2 pronunciation acquisition. To construct a verbal answer in L2, respondents used different sound structures from their L1, resulting in L2 pronunciation problems. The responders estimated L2 silent letter sounds and made other alterations. L2 learners modify their L2 speech responses to L1 sounds due to speech output gaps. The L2 pronunciation study shows how much L1 influences L2 answers (Alkhuli, 2000& Hassan, 2014). Therefore, the sound structure L1 may affect the pronunciation of silent letters L2. The fifty respondents linked the L2 sound system to their L1 pronunciation comprehension since L1 is their primary language talent. In order to link L2 to L1, they postulated the similarities and differences between the sound systems. L2 becomes less proficient than L1, causing mispronunciations. Other respondents found it difficult to coordinate their L2 sound system entity awareness. Organization and accumulation are very different in awareness.

The L1 sound system also helps respondents respond in the target language. The target language is foreign; hence, there are pronunciation issues. The L1 and L2 sound systems include pronunciation problems in L2, a noteworthy finding. This affects teaching and learning. Understanding L1 sound system structure and L2 pronunciation faults helps teach and learn. Instructors would anticipate and address target language faults. Beyond L1 distractions, instruction techniques and L2 challenges may have caused learners' mistakes. EFL novices from Baghdadi, Iraq, will struggle with English Almuselhy, A. A. H. (2024); hence, an Arabic/English contrastive study should be used to teach English pronunciation. Start by checking for L1 interference when teaching L2 pronunciation. While learning English, EFL beginners use Arabic. Thus, students must create a more formal English sound system that is akin to Arabic. Oral sampling is the main L1 problem treatment. Additionally, behaviorist L2 pronunciation activities can improve accuracy. Thus, knowing English silent letters helps pupils understand Arabic and English sound systems. Cognitively, interference allows pupils to hypothesize about L2 language rules using L1 awareness. The learning approach is supported by these hypotheses and adjustments. Students repeatedly reconstruct and change their ideas to confirm them. Identifying and resolving mistakes is a way to improve L2 pronunciation.

## 6. Conclusion

The study's findings showed that Baghdadi Iraqi EFL beginners stumbled over the pronunciation of English words with silent letters. Words with the silent "c"; "w." "b,"; "p,"; "th,"; "h,"; "k,"; "g,"; "n,"; "m,"; "l,"; "d,"; "gh,"; "s"; and "t." were found to have the most common pairs of pronunciation mistakes made by EFL novices.

According to the findings of the tests given to Iraqi EFL beginners, the students made an interference error because their mother tongue or first language had an impact. How well students did when asked to pronounce English words with silent letters depended on their first language acquisition, accent, culture, and dialect. Several suggestions are offered below as a result of this inquiry. As a first step, those who read or teach English as a second language should begin using the rule pattern when they mention or say words containing silent letters. One of the ways to get past the mistakes that beginners make when speaking is to do this. Teachers should model proper word pronunciation for their students to follow because, by nature, students mimic their teachers. The second piece of advice is to get EFL students to focus on how they pronounce things by having them attempt to use silent letters. Most people, when they first begin learning English, pay little attention to pronunciation in favor of focusing on vocabulary and grammar. This is why it's important to stress the importance of pronouncing English words to beginners. People who lack proper pronunciation skills tend to make more mistakes and internalize more unfavorable habits the longer they speak English. They will improve their spoken input by paying close attention to pronunciation since they will become accustomed to the correct way of

pronouncing words when they become familiar with them, which will minimize the error in pronouncing words and automatically raise their speaking ability to an excellent level. The final avenue is open to them for future researchers interested in this area. They might construct a novice hypothesis based on the study's findings, or they could use the same research design technique (including error analysis) to look at other silent letters.

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