

An Investigation of The Pronunciation Problems of English Words Containing Silent Plosive Sounds among The Jordanian EFL Learners

Hamza Mohammed Saleh Aliswed

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, 21300 Kuala
Nerus, Malaysia

Email: hamza.m.aliswed@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study investigates the pronunciation problems of English words containing silent plosive sounds experienced by Jordanian EFL learners. The corpus is designed to investigate the existence of the pronunciation problem of silent plosive sounds among Jordanian EFL learners, examine the influence of the interference of the mother language on the pronunciation of the silent plosive sounds, and demonstrate the teachers' perspectives to overcome the pronunciation problems among the Jordanian EFL learners. The subjects for the study were thirty participants; twenty-five students from Irbid National University and five lecturers from the same university and from Jerash Private University. To analyse the data, the current qualitative study employed thematic analysis approach. The instruments used to generate data for this study were audio-visual material (recording) and interview (semi-structured interview). The findings of the study revealed that the Jordanian EFL learners had pronunciation problems with English words containing silent plosive sounds. The study concluded that factors such as shyness, motivation, lack of exposure to the target language, ways of teaching, complicity of the English language pronunciation, lack of effective activities, untrained teachers, and interference of the mother language militate against the Jordanian EFL learner's competence in English language pronunciation.

Keywords: Pronunciation Problems, EFL Learners, Silent Plosive Sounds, Mother Language Interference.

Introduction

The English language is the most important language to be mastered by all people around the world, as it has become the most usable international language for millions of people. Furthermore, the most noticeable feature of the English language proficiency is good pronunciation. According to Gilakjani (2012) "intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence" (p.119). In Jordan, the English language is used

as a foreign language after the mother language, Arabic. As non-native speakers of the English language, Jordanian EFL learners encounter many problems. One of the main observed problems is English pronunciation. Yet, there are many factors that make it actually a problem for them to master the English pronunciation. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the Jordanian EFL learners have pronunciation problems with English words containing silent plosive sounds because of the interference of the mother language.

Many studies tackled the pronunciation problems encountered by native speakers. Furthermore, many other researchers tackled with pronunciation problems faced by Arab learners. Due to the dearth of studies that paid attention to the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds in Jordan, the current study is considered important because it explores the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/ by the Jordanian EFL learners, examine the impact of the interference of the mother language, and the perspective of the English language teachers on how to overcome the pronunciation problems. In light of the aforementioned information and for the sake of clarity, the researcher poses the following three study questions

1. To what extent do Jordanian EFL learners face pronunciation problems in pronouncing English words that contain silent plosive sounds?
2. How does the interference of the mother language aggravate the pronunciation problems of the Jordanian EFL learners in pronouncing English words with silent plosive sounds?
3. What are the teachers' perspectives to overcome pronunciation problems faced by the Jordanian EFL learners in pronouncing English words containing silent plosive sounds?

Problem Statement

Mastering the English language pronunciation is not an easy task for the Jordanian EFL learners, especially when they are lacking the suitable environment to be in touch with native speakers. Moreover, the lack of phonological awareness of the sound system of the target language escalates the pronunciation problem. In Jordan, the only avenue for the Jordanian EFL learners to understand and master the English language pronunciation is the classroom. In English language classrooms in Jordan, the majority of the English language teachers used to focus on reading, writing, and grammar. On the other hand, the English pronunciation skill does not receive as much attention or be delivered perfectly to students as other skills. According to Naser and Hamzah (2022), "pronunciation is still a main challenge that faces Arab speakers of English, including Jordanians, due to many factors, including mother tongue and some other factors related to phonological differences" (p.150). The lack of knowledge of the phonological awareness of the differences between the sound systems of the mother language and the target language originates the pronunciation problem of the silent plosive sound. According to Al-Shuaibi (2018), "unlike English, the Arabic system of writing is very regular in spelling-to-sound consistency. On the other hand, the English system of writing is inconsistent in spelling-to-sound in many of its words" (p.97). Based on the inconsistency of the sound system of the target language, the Jordanian EFL learners used to apply the phonetic rules of their Arabic language, which are regular in letters (graphemes) to sounds (phonemes) to their English language pronunciation. According to El-Imam (2004), "complex systems like English or French are characterized by lack of correspondence between the spellings and their phonetic realizations" (p.31).

In conclusion, many previous studies have been undertaken to investigate the pronunciation problems encountered by Arab learners of the English language. Yet, there are very few studies that dealt with the pronunciation problems of the silent plosive sounds. Moreover, there are very few studies which have proposed specific ways to overcome the pronunciation problem of the silent sounds, including (Awad, 2010; Al-Shuaibi, 2018). Notably, the earlier studies have not adequately addressed the pronunciation problem of the silent plosive sound. The aim of this study resides in exploring the pronunciation problems in pronouncing English words with silent plosive sounds, and examine the impact of the interference of the mother language on the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds. In addition, the current study explores the teachers' perspectives to overcome the pronunciation problem of English words that contain silent plosive sounds.

Related Works

Pronunciation has always been a serious topic of discussion among English language learners. Many Arab researchers have conducted researches in the field of pronunciation that encounters Arab EFL learners, including (Awad, 2010; Hago and Khan, 2015; Ababneh, 2018; Ahmad, 2011; Bayoumi et al., 2013; Jabali and Abuzaid, 2017; Hameed et al., 2022). However, there are very few studies conducted in the pronunciation area that address the pronunciation problems that encounter Jordanian EFL learners, including (Awad, 2010; Kalaldeh, 2016; Ismael et al., 2015). In this literature review, the researcher includes three of the most prominent studies that were conducted in the area of pronunciation problems. These studies dealt with the pronunciation problems encountered by Arab EFL learners in pronouncing English words with silent letters.

Al-Hamzai and Musyahda (2022) explore the mispronunciation of English words with silent letters by Yemeni EFL novices. Furthermore, the study investigates how Yemeni EFL novices are influenced by the sound system of their mother language. The researcher concludes that the Yemeni EFL novices have pronunciation problems in pronouncing English words containing silent letters. Moreover, the researcher stated that there are many factors behind the mispronunciation of the silent letters. Misunderstanding the phonetic rules of the English language, lack of exposure to the English language, lack of interest by the English language students, and lack of interest by English language lecturers to focus on the listening skill are the main factors behind the escalation of the pronunciation problem of the silent letters. The researcher added that the lack of accurate knowledge resulted from the aforementioned factors. Finally, the researcher suggested that English language lecturers are typical models that are imitated by their students. So, English language lecturers should pay attention to their pronunciation, which would be reflected positively on their students. Furthermore, the study suggested that English language lecturers should direct their students toward the proper pronunciation of English words containing silent letters.

Al-Shuaibi (2018) investigates the pronunciation problems of the graphophonemic words that face Arab EFL learners. Furthermore, he explores how Arab EFL learners articulate English silent graphemes and attempt to establish some tactical guidelines to assist the EFL learners in resolving the mispronunciation problem. According to Al-Shuaibi (2018), "unlike English, the Arabic system of writing is very regular in spelling-to-sound consistency. On the other hand, the English system of writing is inconsistent in spelling-to-sound in many of its words" (p.97). The researcher mentioned that the dissimilarity between the sound systems of the mother language and the target language is the main reason behind the mispronunciation of the graphophonemic words. Unlike the Arabic language, the inconsistency of the sound

system of the English language, which is irregular in spelling to sound consistency. On the other hand, the sound system of the Arabic language is regular in spelling-to sound consistency. Therefore, Arab EFL learners frequently attempt to change the segment sequences to match their mother tongue's pronunciation rules.

Awad (2010) explores how Arab EFL learners' pronunciation is influenced by the English orthographic system. The researcher mentioned that Arab EFL learners overstate depending on the visible representation of graphemes in their mother language. Arab EFL learners often try to overcome the pronunciation problems by using an uncertain orthography system to decode the sound system of the target language. As a result, this causes pronunciation problems when pronouncing distorted sounds or words. The researcher insisted on the idea that inconsistency between the mother language and the target language is the main reason behind the mispronunciation of Arab EFL learners.

The current study presents an empirical investigation of the pronunciation problem that encounters Jordanian EFL learners with English words containing silent plosive sounds in Jordan. As a way to highlight the pronunciation problem that faces the Jordanian EFL learners with the silent plosive sounds, the researcher examines whether the interference of the mother language affects the Jordanian EFL learners' pronunciation, and what other factors aggravate the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds. Furthermore, the study explores the teachers' perspectives to overcome the pronunciation problem that faces the Jordanian EFL learners with silent plosive sounds.

Methodology

In the attempt to answer the study questions, the researcher employed a qualitative case study since the collected data is in the form of utterances, which include the students' pronunciation errors. According to Noor (2008), the case study "is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence" (p.1602). The participants of the study are third- and fourth-year learners of the English Department at Irbid National University, and two lecturers of phonetics and phonology from the same university, and three lecturers from Jerash Private University in the academic year 2022-2023, second semester. Moreover, the total number of participants in this study was 30. Five participants were English language lecturers, and 25 of the participants were students. According to Creswell (2014), "it is typical in qualitative research to study a few individuals or a few cases. This is because of the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture" (p.231). The participants were selected by using purposeful sampling. According to Creswell (2014), "in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (p.228).

As a way to facilitate the data collection process, the researcher employed audio-visual materials (recording) and interviews (semi-structured interviews) as two instruments of the current study. The audio-visual materials used to record the students' pronunciations while pronouncing English words and sentences with silent plosive sounds. The researcher interviewed five lecturers from the English departments using semi-structured interviews. The researcher gained information from the participant that helped in addressing the study questions.

After the data had been collected, the researcher started to analyze and summarize the data to get a deep understanding of the pronunciation problems of the silent plosive sounds. To analyse the data, the present qualitative study employed the thematic analysis approach. Six

analytical steps were employed. These included getting to know the data, creating codes, creating themes, evaluating themes, identifying and labeling themes, and composing a report.

Findings

The study involved 25 Jordanian EFL learners enrolled in the third and fourth years at Irbid National University and five lecturers of phonetics and phonology in the same university and in Jerash Private University in Jordan. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent the Jordanian EFL learners face pronunciation problems in pronouncing English words with the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/, how the interference of the mother language influences the Jordanian EFL learners' pronunciations, and the teachers' perspectives on the pronunciation problems faced by the Jordanian EFL learners in pronouncing English words containing silent plosive sounds.

The Analysis of the Pronunciation Test

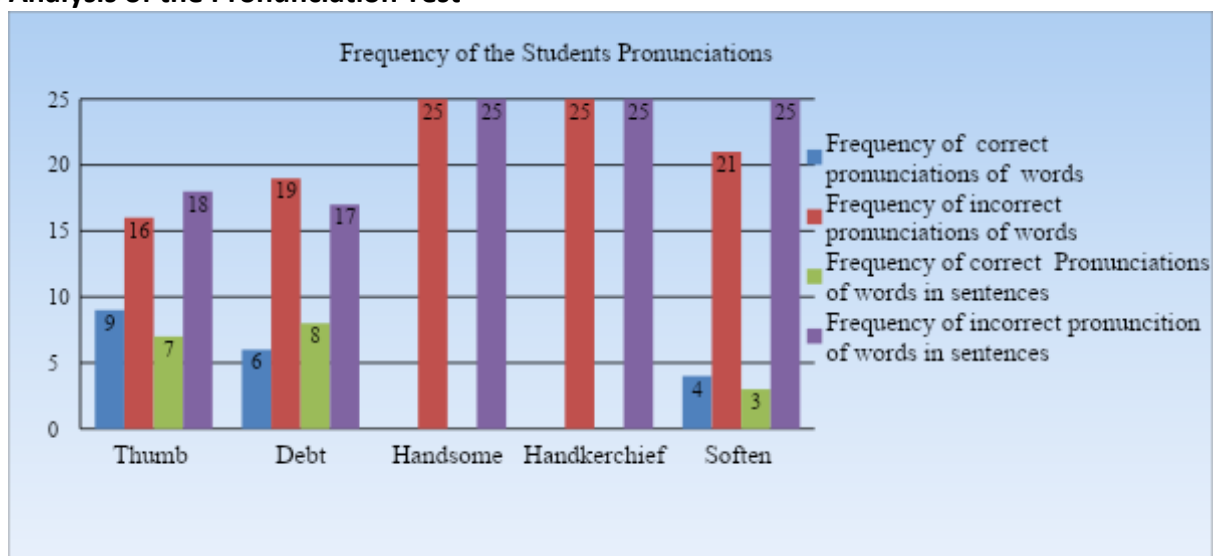


Figure 4:1: The Students' Findings in the Pronunciation Test.

Based on the above figure, it showed the 25 Jordanian EFL learners' pronunciations of the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/. The students were asked to pronounce the three silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/ in words and sentences. As shown in the above graph, the majority of Jordanian EFL learners failed to pronounce these sounds. Particularly, the graph showed that the Jordanian EFL learners failed to pronounce the silent plosive sounds when they came as words. Similarly, the Jordanian EFL learners failed to pronounce these silent plosive sounds when they came in sentences.

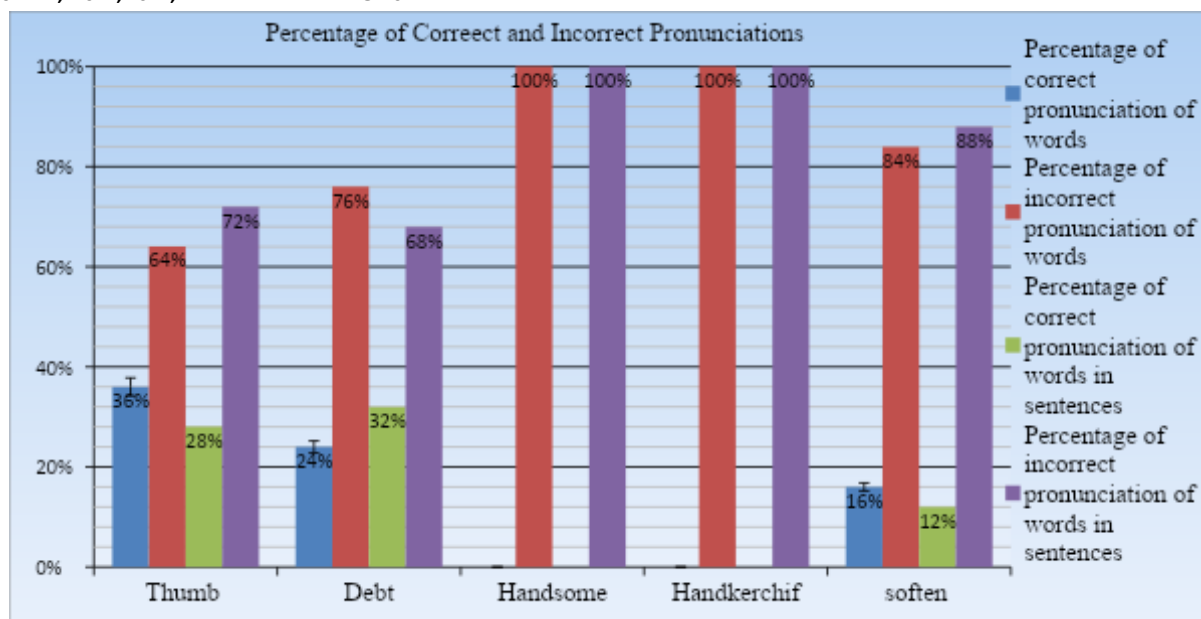


Figure 4:2: The Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Pronunciations of the Three Silent Plosive Sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/.

According to the above figure, it showed the percentage of correct and incorrect pronunciations of the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/ by the Jordanian EFL learners. Furthermore, the figure showed that the percentage of the incorrect pronunciation of the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/ in words and sentences is higher than the percentage of the correct pronunciation of the same silent plosive sounds. Particularly, the figure showed the percentage of the correct and incorrect pronunciations of the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/ in two cases: when these sounds came in words, and when these sounds came in sentences. Firstly, when these silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/ came in words, it showed that in the word 'thumb' 64% of the students mispronounced the silent plosive sound /b/ whereas 36% pronounced it correctly, regarding the word 'debt' 76% of the students failed to pronounce the silent plosive sound /b/ whereas 24% of the students pronounced it correctly, the words 'handsome' and 'handkerchief' 100% of the students failed to pronounce the silent plosive sound /d/, finally, the word 'soften' 84% of the students failed to pronounce the silent plosive sound /t/ whereas 16% of the students pronounced it correctly. Secondly, when these silent plosive sounds came in sentences, it showed that the word 'thumb' 72% of the students failed to pronounce the silent plosive sound /b/ correctly, whereas 28% of the students pronounced it correctly, the word 'debt' 68% of the students mispronounced the silent plosive sound /b/ correctly, whereas 32% pronounced it correctly, regarding the two words 'handsome' and 'handkerchief', the students mispronounced them as if these silent plosive sounds are not silent. Finally, regarding the word 'soften' 88% of the students failed to pronounce it, whereas 12% of the students pronounced it correctly.

The Analysis of the Lecturers' Interviews

To get a deep understanding of the pronunciation problems that face Jordanian EFL learners, the researcher interviewed five lecturers of phonetics and phonology from the English departments: two lecturers from Irbid Private University and three lecturers from Jerash Private University. The researcher interviewed the lecturers to get their perspectives on how

the Jordanian EFL learners can overcome the pronunciation problems of English words containing the silent plosive sounds /b, /d/, and /t/.

The interviewees' perspectives were based on their evaluation of the Jordanian EFL learners' perspectives and attitudes toward the pronunciation problem that they faced with English words containing the silent plosive sounds /b, /d/, and /t/. Thus, the researcher placed great value on the qualitative data gained by the interviewees since it helped him broaden his ideas and comprehend the topic of the study.

Based on the analysed data, the researcher found that the reasons behind the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds were classified into internal and external factors.

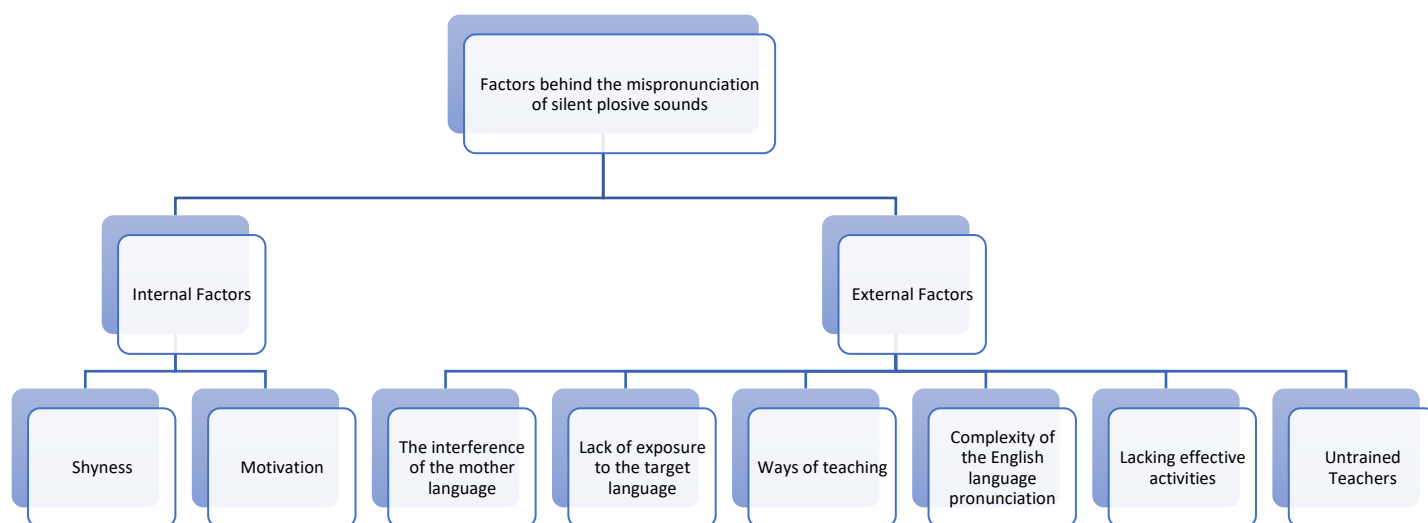


Figure 4:3: Thematic Findings for the Interviewees Responses

Internal Factors

Shyness

Only the first interviewee stated that shyness is one of the main factors behind the mispronunciation of the English words with the silent plosive sounds /b, /d/, and /t/. According to Amoah and Yeboah (2021), "shyness is portrayed by an emotion which translates to the feeling of agitation, uneasiness, or awkwardness experienced by people when doing something, engaged in a conversation, or approached by other people, especially in new environments or with people unfamiliar to them" (p.59). The interviewee added that since the majority of the Jordanian EFL learners lacked accurate knowledge about the phonetic rules of the target language, the psychological factor of shyness formed in them as a lack the self-confidence, which leads them to be unable to engage in any conversation to convey their message properly. Furthermore, the feeling of being too shy to commit errors in pronunciation is the main factor that influenced the Jordanian EFL learners negatively.

Motivation

The second interviewee stated that one of the main factors that influenced the pronunciation of the Jordanian EFL learners was a lack of motivation. According to Cholish et al (2021), "the other factor that may contribute to the students' English pronunciation is the internal motivation" (p.278). Furthermore, the interviewee added that motivation is the internal

motive that encourages the Jordanian EFL learners to have an effective role in the process of teaching and learning pronunciation. According to Smit (2002), “students’ achievements in the pronunciation module is positively influenced by the factor of the motivation in pronunciation construct” (p.102). Moreover, the interviewee mentioned that it is possible that learners’ internal feelings and the desire to conform to what they perceive as desirable and ideal are the only things that could genuinely have an impact on how well learners modify their pronunciation.

External factors

The interference of the mother language

The first and fourth interviewees mentioned that the main important factor behind the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds by the Jordanian EFL learners is the interference of the mother language. According to Pourhosein et al (2020), “learner’s first language is an important factor to account for foreign accents and affects the pronunciation of the target language” (p.107). The interviewees added that the interference of the mother language happened because of a lack of accurate knowledge about the sound system of the target language. Furthermore, they added that because of the complicity of the sound system of the target language, Jordanian EFL learners keep depending on the phonetic system of their mother language. According to Almuslimi (2020), “in Arabic, there is a strong relationship between the phoneme and the grapheme, but in English, there is only a poor relationship between the morpheme and the grapheme. While each sound in Arabic is presented in one single morpheme, it occurs in English that a grapheme is silent and not pronounced” (p.58). So, the dissimilarities between the sound systems of the mother language (Arabic) and the phonetic rules of the target language (English) caused misunderstanding for the Jordanian EFL learners, and therefore, this led to the mispronunciation problems.

Lack of exposure to the target language

The first, third, and fifth interviewees stated that one of the most important factors behind the pronunciation problems of the silent plosive sounds was the lack of exposure to the target language. According to Pourhosein et al (2020), “exposure relates to the length of time that the learners live in a target language environment. It does not matter what country the learners stay in; it depends on how much they use English in their daily life. The more they spend their time listening and speaking English, the better their English pronunciation will be” (p.108). Furthermore, the interviewees added that the lack of practice of the pronunciation skill of the target language with native speakers helped in escalating the pronunciation problem. Speaking and listening skills are important for Jordanian EFL learners to enhance their English language pronunciation. According to Tergujef (2012), “ear training is seen as a part of pronunciation practice due to the close relationship of speech perception and speech production” (p.39). The interviewees mentioned that the Jordanian EFL learners should keep in touch with native speakers, or if it is not available, they should create their own English-speaking environment to improve their pronunciation.

Ways of Teaching Pronunciation

The first and fifth interviewees mentioned that the other factor behind the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds is using traditional ways of teaching English pronunciation to Jordanian EFL learners. They added that the English language teachers used inappropriate ways of teaching pronunciation since they used to have the role of being dominators in the

classroom while the Jordanian EFL learners as recipients of the knowledge. According to Cavus (2016), “an intelligent educational system is such a system that can adapt itself to the learning environment by changing the teaching methods to best suit the learner’s abilities” (p.367). The English language teachers did not use to give the Jordanian EFL learners free space in the classroom to be engaged in the real discussion to express their ideas, which would have a positive impact on the learners’ performance. Moreover, they mentioned that the English language lecturers were supposed to use more interactive materials that attract the learners’ attention and let them be engaged in the process of teaching pronunciation. Technological tools would help the lecturers simplify the process of explaining the sound system of the target language, which would be reflected positively on the learners’ performance.

Complexity of the English Language Pronunciation

The first and fourth interviewees stated that the complexity of the target language was considered an important factor behind the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds. They added that Jordanian EFL learners used to depend on the sound system of the mother language in case they faced pronunciation problems with the sound system of the target language. The inconsistency of the sound systems of the mother language and the target language escalated the pronunciation problem among the Jordanian EFL learners. According to Almuslimi (2020), “in Arabic, there is a strong relationship between the phoneme and the grapheme, but in English, there is only a poor relationship between the morpheme and the grapheme. While each sound in Arabic is presented in one single morpheme” (p.58). Furthermore, lacking accurate knowledge about the main differences between the phonetic rules of the mother language and the target language helped in emerging the pronunciation problem.

Lacking Effective Activities

The fifth interviewee stated that lacking effective activities is another factor that caused mispronunciation in English words with the silent plosive sounds. They added that the design of the English language materials lacked effective activities that are appropriate for the Jordanian EFL learners’ culture. Furthermore, having attractive and interactive activities that are taken from the real life of the learners would enrich their pronunciation skills.

Untrained Teachers

The fifth interview mentioned that the Jordanian EFL learners faced pronunciation problems with English words containing the silent plosive sound because the English language teachers lacked the accurate skills to teach the English pronunciation. Moreover, the interviewee added that the untrained teachers used to ignore focusing on pronunciation skills. Applying comprehensive training courses would help in ensuring the competency and professionalism of the English language teachers would be reflected positively on the learners’ performance. Furthermore, the continuity of providing Jordanian English teachers with advanced professional development workshops seeks to ensure the continuous advancement of their English language skills.

Discussion

Discussion of the pronunciation test

Table 5.1

The Frequency and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Pronunciations of the Students in Pronouncing the Silent Plosive Sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/.

Words	Frequency of correct pronunciation		Frequency of incorrect pronunciation		Percentage of correct pronunciation		Percentage of incorrect pronunciation	
	Words	Sentences	Words	Sentences	Words	Sentences	Words	Sentences
Thumb	9	7	16	18	36%	28%	64%	72%
Debt	6	8	19	17	24%	32%	76%	68%
Handsome	0	0	25	25	0%	0%	100%	100%
Handkerchief	0	0	25	25	0%	0%	100%	100%
Soften	4	3	21	22	16%	12%	84%	88%

Based on the above table, which summarizes the findings of the pronunciation test of 25 Jordanian EFL learners, the researcher found that almost all the Jordanian EFL learners committed errors in pronouncing English words with the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/. Thereby, after analyzing the collected data, the findings showed that 16 students mispronounced the silent plosive sound /b/ in the word thumb, whereas 18 students failed to pronounce the same silent plosive sound in the word thumb when it came in a sentence, in the word debt 19 students mispronounced the silent plosive sound /t/ whereas 17 students failed to pronounce the same silent plosive sound in the word debt when it came in a sentence, in the words handsome and handkerchief, 25 students failed to pronounce the silent plosive sound /d/: similarly, 25 students mispronounced the same silent plosive sound in the same words when they came in sentences. Finally, regarding the word soften, 21 students failed to pronounce the silent plosive sound /t/, whereas 22 students mispronounced the same silent plosive sound in the word soften when it came in a sentence. Based on the aforementioned findings of the pronunciation test of the Jordanian EFL learners with English words containing silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/, it is time to respond to the initial questions that were put forth at the beginning of the study.

QR1: To what Extent do Jordanian EFL learners face pronunciation problems in pronouncing English words that contain silent plosive sounds?

This current study asserts the idea that English pronunciation remains a major problem for Arab EFL learners, particularly the Jordanian learners. The interference of the mother language and many other factors are the main factors behind appearance of the pronunciation problems among Jordanian EFL learners. According to Naser and Hamzah (2022), "pronunciation is one of the most difficult areas to learn or to teach in Jordanian context. In this regard, several Jordanian researchers concluded that EFL students of the Jordanian universities still pronounce wrongly and face pronunciation difficulties" (p.156).

The findings of the analysed data showed that the majority of the Jordanian EFL learners who were involved in the study committed pronunciation errors in pronouncing the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/. Furthermore, the findings of the pronunciation test showed a high percentage of pronunciation errors in pronouncing the selected words in the study. The percentage showed that 64% of the students mispronounced the silent plosive sound /b/ in the word thumb, 76% of the students failed to pronounce the same silent plosive sounds, and

100% of the students mispronounced the silent plosive sound /d/ in the words handsome and handkerchief. Finally, 84% of the students failed to pronounce the silent plosive sound /t/ in the word soften.

All in all, based on all these details and in alignment with the posed question of the study, the researcher agrees to a great extent that the pronunciation of the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/ is still a big challenge for Jordanian EFL learners.

Discussion of the Lecturers' Interviews

The aim of the interview with lecturers is to gain points of view to have a deep understanding of the pronunciation problems that faces the Jordanian EFL learners with English words containing the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/.

Based on the findings of the interviews, the lecturers stated that the pronunciation problem emerged because of two aspects. These are the students' side and the lecturers' side. Moreover, the researcher classified these factors into internal and external factors.

Concerning the internal factors, the lecturers mentioned that shyness was the first internal factor that influenced the pronunciation of the Jordanian EFL learners. Moreover, they added that shyness is a psychological factor that emerges when Jordanian EFL learners lack the knowledge of the phonetic rules of the sound system of the target language, and this leads to a lack of self-confidence to be engaged in any conversation with others. The interviewees recommended that the lecturers should reduce the anxiety among the Jordanian EFL learners by using different effective methods of teaching that enhance the students' performance and engaging them in a real environment to break their barriers of being shy. Secondly, the interviewees mentioned that the Jordanian EFL learners lacked motivation that encouraged them to be involved in the process of learning the pronunciation skill. According to Zidane (2022), "psycholinguistics stresses on the idea that positive feedback is crucial to increase the students' intrinsic motivation. They have to be provided with appropriate feedback in order to boost their intrinsic motivation" (p.222). Furthermore, the interviewees asserted on the point that lecturers should foster the learners' motivation to be reflected positively on their performance.

Concerning the external factors, firstly, the interviewees mentioned that the most important factor behind the pronunciation problem of the Jordanian EFL learners' is the interference of the mother language. Furthermore, they added that the lack of accurate knowledge about the sound system of the target language let the students rely on their mother language to overcome any pronunciation problems that might face them. Secondly, the interviewees asserted that lacking exposure to the target language is a very important factor behind the pronunciation problem of Jordanian EFL learners. Moreover, they added that having a good environment to practice the English pronunciation with native speakers is a crucial factor that lets learners overcome any pronunciation problem they might face in the future, which is not available for Jordanian EFL learners. The interviewees asserted the idea that the learners should be properly exposed to the pronunciation skills of the target language to enhance their performance. Thirdly, the interviewees mentioned that the way of teaching pronunciation is a very important factor that guides the learners to the right path when using the target language. The interviewees mentioned that escalation of the pronunciation problem emerged because of using traditional ways in teaching pronunciation in which the teacher works as the sender and the student as the recipient of the information without giving the students free space to be engaged in real conversation to express their thoughts. According to Alzboun et al (2017), "the teacher's role should be changed from a dominator into a

provider, assistant, facilitator, and consultant who is able to use a variety of effective strategies in carrying out real life activities” (p.131). Moreover, the interviewees stated that the majority of the English language teachers used to focus on grammar and ignore pronunciation skills. According to Zidane (2022), “the lack of the speaking activities caused the absence of the students’ participation. This was due to some teachers’ lecturing methods” (p.212). Next, the interviewees mentioned that the complexity of the sound system of the target language was considered another important factor behind the pronunciation problem of the Jordanian EFL learners.

Furthermore, they added that the inconsistency of the phonetic rules of the target language lets students depend on the phonetic rules of their mother language. According to Almuslimi (2020), “in Arabic, there is a strong relationship between the phoneme and the grapheme, but in English, there is only a poor relationship between the morpheme and the grapheme. While each sound in Arabic is presented in one single morpheme” (p.58). Then, the interviewees stated that lacking effective activities was a very significant factor that influenced the students’ pronunciation. They added that the English language materials were supposed to have practical activities that are taken for the learners’ environment, which would attract the learner’s attention and engage them in such activities. The interviewees recommended that the curriculum designers should include more interactive activities about the pronunciation skills that are taken from Jordanian culture at different levels (primary, elementary, and secondary grades) to improve the learners’ performance. Finally, the interviewees mentioned that untrained teachers helped with aggravating pronunciation problems. They added that the majority of the English language teachers used to focus on grammar and ignore the pronunciation skill. This happened because they lacked the accurate ways of teaching pronunciation, and they had poor performance because of their lack of exposure to the target language. The interviewees recommended that English language teachers should have comprehensive training courses that seek their competency of the target language. Moreover, professional development workshops would help them enhance their progressive advancement in language and skills.

In conclusion, based on the above details of the lecturers’ interviews about their perspective about the pronunciation problem of the Jordanian EFL learners with English words with the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/, it is time to answer the posed questions of the study.

RQ2: How does the interference of the mother language aggravate the pronunciation problems of the Jordanian EFL learners in pronouncing English words with silent plosive sounds?

Based on the findings of the pronunciation test, it has been proven that the interference of the mother language influenced the students’ pronunciation. In addition, there are many other factors that help in aggravating the pronunciation problems among Jordanian EFL learners. The high percentage of incorrect pronunciation in the pronunciation test showed that the Jordanian EFL learners depended on their mother language to overcome their lack of knowledge about the phonetic rules of the sound system of the mother language. Furthermore, lacking the phonetic rules of the target language because of the inconsistency of the target language graphemes to phonemes, the Jordanian EFL learners applied the phonetic rules of their mother language (Arabic), which are regular in graphemes and morphemes.

RQ3: What are the teachers' perspectives to overcome the pronunciation problems faced by the Jordanian EFL learners in pronouncing English words containing silent plosive sounds?

Based on the findings of the interviewees' perspectives, the researcher concluded that there are internal and external factors that influenced the Jordanian EFL learners in pronouncing English words with the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/. The internal factors include shyness and motivation, whereas the external factors include the interference of the mother language, lack of exposure to the target language, ways of teaching pronunciation, the complexity of the English language pronunciation, lacking effective activities, and untrained teachers.

To overcome the factors behind the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds, the interviewees suggested some points. Firstly, concerning the internal factors, to overcome shyness, the interviewees mentioned that the lecturers should give the students free space in the classroom to be engaged in conversation. Furthermore, Jordanian EFL learners should be encouraged to express their thoughts to break their barriers. Secondly, concerning motivation, the interviewees asserted that motivation is a very effective factor that encourages the students to have a crucial role in the process of teaching and learning, which would be reflected positively in their performance. Concerning the external factors, firstly, the interviewees stated that to overcome the interference of the mother language, the English language teachers should teach the learners about the similarities and differences of the sound systems of the mother language and the target language. Secondly, lack of exposure to the target language. The interviewees recommended that with the availability of advanced technology, the Jordanian EFL learners should use the available resources to create their own English language environment to practice the language. They added that the more learners are exposed to listening and speaking skills, the better their pronunciation will be. Then, in terms of ways of teaching pronunciation, the interviewees mentioned that English language teachers should use appropriate methods of teaching pronunciation. They added that teachers should use more effective technological tools to attract the learners' attention. Using interactive materials such as videos and pictures would help the learners be engaged and interact in the pronunciation session. Next, the complexity of the English language pronunciation. The interviewees stated that English language teachers should teach their learners the right phonetic rules of the target language. Moreover, the teachers should teach the learners about the similarities and differences between the sound systems of the target language and the mother language. After that, lacking effective activities, the interviewees mentioned that the designers of the English language materials should enrich the materials with more interactive activities that are taken from the learners' environment, which would enhance the learners' pronunciation. Finally, for untrained teachers, the interviewees mentioned that the English language teachers should balance between all the English language skills. Moreover, English language teachers should apply for comprehensive training courses that enrich their knowledge and skills. The professional development workshops would help the teachers have progressive advancement in their language and skills.

Conclusion

This current study mainly explores the difficulties that Jordanian EFL learners encounter pronunciation problems with English words containing the silent plosive sounds /b/, /d/, and /t/, the influence of the mother language on the Jordanian EFL learners' pronunciation of

English words containing the silent plosive sounds, and the perspectives of the Jordanian teachers on the pronunciation problems encountered by Jordanian EFL learners with English words containing silent plosive sounds.

The study revealed that English pronunciation is still a very important problem for Arab EFL learners, particularly Jordanian EFL learners. According to Naser and Hamzah (2022), "pronunciation is one of the most difficult areas to learn or to teach in the Jordanian context. In this regard, several Jordanian researchers concluded that EFL students of the Jordanian universities still pronounce wrongly and face pronunciation difficulties" (p.156). Furthermore, the study showed that the majority of the participants had a high percentage of pronunciation errors in pronouncing the silent plosive sounds, which means that Jordanian EFL learners have problems with the silent plosive sounds. The study has proven that the interference of the mother language is considered the main factor behind the mispronunciation of the silent plosive sounds. Moreover, factors such as shyness, motivation, lack of exposure to the target language, ways of teaching pronunciation, complexity of the English language pronunciation, lacking effective activities, and untrained teachers helped in aggravating the pronunciation problems among the Jordanian EFL learners.

The study showed that English language teachers believe in the importance of exposure to the target language to master the pronunciation skill. This can be achieved by practicing the English language with native speakers if it is available or by encouraging the Jordanian EFL learners to create their own English environment to enhance their pronunciation skills. Moreover, the classroom is the only place where Jordanian EFL learners practice their English language pronunciation. So, more effective activities in their materials should be used to enrich the Jordanian EFL learners about the phonetic rules of the sound system of the mother language and the similarities and differences between the mother language and the target language. The English language teachers should use appropriate methods of teaching pronunciation and technological tools that help the learners be involved and interacted positively in the classroom. Furthermore, having trained teachers with comprehensive training courses would help in teaching all the English language skills proficiently at the same time.

This current study has certain limitations because of the specific circumstances under which it was carried out. This study is restricted to Jordanian EFL learners enrolled in the third and fourth years of studying at Irbid National University. Furthermore, the study is restricted to three silent plosive sounds. Additionally, five English-language lecturers are involved in this study. According to Altamimi (2015), the four domains of the English language are writing, reading, listening, and speaking. In the current study, speaking will be the main focus.

In light of the study's findings, some recommendations are proposed as follow: Firstly, due to the dearth of studies that have dealt with the pronunciation problems of silent sounds, silent sounds should be the focus of future researches. Secondly, it is highly recommended that future studies focus on the competency of teaching English pronunciation by English language teachers in Jordan. Then, to have a comprehensive understanding of the pronunciation problems, future studies should include participants from different levels of schools: primary, elementary, secondary, and other departments. Lastly, future studies should explore other internal and external factors behind the pronunciation problems among Jordanian EFL learners.

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