

## ***Difficulties Faced by Iraqi EFL College Students in the Area of English Syllables***

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In most languages, in general, and in English , in particular, we do not speak each sound separately from the other sound; rather , we combine sounds into groups or syllables to form words which in turn form utterances.

This research tries to shed the light on the notion of syllable and tries to infer the main difficulties that may face Iraqi students in this specific area.

This research aims at investigating Iraqi EFL learner's performance in the area of English syllables at recognition and production levels, so as to know the difficulties faced by them in this area, and investigating Iraqi instructor's opinions in the same area in order to limit the difficulties faced by Iraqi student.

To achieve the aims of the study , a hypothesis has been posed as follows: "Iraqi EFL college learners face difficulties in the area of English syllables". To verify a hypothesis, a sample of fifty students (test sample) are chosen randomly from the third year, department of English, University of Diyala. Another sample is consist of twenty instructor (questionnaire sample) from the college of education and the college of basic education, University of Diyala.

Two instrument are used in this research, the first one is the test and the second is the scaled questionnaire.

In the light of the above procedures, relevant conclusions are drawn and a number of recommendations and suggestions are put forward.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The Problem and its Significance**

First of all there are the sounds .these are of two types, vowels and consonants. Vowels and consonants perform different functions in the syllable. Each syllable has a vowel at its center and the consonants surround the vowel, preceding it and cutting it off .(Kenworthy,1987:9)

Crystal(2003:447) defines a syllable as a unite of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word. The notion of syllable ,in short , is very real to native speakers , and is often used in a quasi –technical sense in everyday conversation. Rubba (2000:1) indicates that syllables are units that can be cat up from words .Syllables don't serve any meaning ,signaling function in language ,they exist only to make speech easier for the brain to process. A word contains at least one syllable. Gimson (1980:55) points out that the syllable stands at a higher level than that of the phoneme or sound segment of which it is made up.

The notion syllable has played a great role and considers the main factor that facilitate the studying of suprasegmental features i.e intonation and stress. Roach(2000:78) states that analyzing syllable structure can be useful to foreign learners of English . Obviously there are many more limitations on possible combinations of vowels and consonants, but an understanding of the basic structures described here will help learners to become aware of precisely what type of consonant cluster presents pronunciation problems . Most learners find some English clusters difficult , but few find all of them difficult.Al-Hamash(1985:100) argues that sound features of English that do not exist in the students native language (e.g. Arabic) are likely to cause the most difficulty .They should receive the bulk of the teacher's attention . For example , Because Arabic never permits

the clustering of more than two consonants clusters in words like **spring**, **children**, **explain**, **text**, and **prompts** may be difficult for Arabic –speaking students. Sesnan (1997) summarizes the problem saying that " when you hear a new language and someone ask you to write down what you hear, the biggest difficulty you have is in knowing where to put the breaks between words .Sentences are usually clear enough ; there is a pause for breath. Words , on the other hand ,are not clearly separated in speech .Therefore, this study tries to answer the following question:

Whether the students are able to recognize and produce English syllables in the same degree of understanding? And,  
What are the main difficulties the students may face in this specific area?

### ***1.2 Aims of the Study***

The study aims at :

1. investigating Iraqi EFL learners' performance in the area of English syllables at recognition and production levels, so as to know the difficulties faced by them in this area.
2. investigate Iraqi instructors opinions in the area of English syllables in order to limit the difficulties faced by students.

### ***1.3 Value of the study***

The current study is expected to be of value to:

- 1.Iraqi EFL college students at the college of education , Department of English to pinpoint the difficulties in the area of English syllables , and
- 2.teachers of English to devise the essential methods and techniques that may help them overcome the difficulties in this specific area.

### ***1.4 Limits of the study***

This study is limited to :

- 1.Third year EFL students of the College of Education, University of Diyala, for the academic year (2009-2010)
- 2.Instructors of English from the College of Education and the College of Basic Education, University of Diyala.

## ***1.5 Hypothesis***

It is hypothesized that Iraqi EFL college learners face difficulties in the area of English syllables.

## ***2. Theoretical Background***

### ***2.1 Definition of the Syllable***

Ladefoged (2006:242) define a syllable as the smallest possible unite of speech .Every utterance once must contain at least one syllable .It is convenient to talk of speech as being composed of segments such as vowels and consonant , but these segments can be observed only as aspects of syllables.

To provide a precise definition for a syllable is not , in fact , an easy task to handle (Abercrombie ,1987 ; Anderson ,1974; Hyman ,1975; Roach,2000; Crystal,2003). It is a foregone conclusion that no single theory is non-questionable or perfect ; inadequacies are always there . However ,theories based on phonetics include : (i) the prominence for sonority theory ; (ii) the chest –pulseor (motor) theory; (iii) the aperture theory; and (iv) the tension theory. Concerning this study much focus will be devoted to the first two theories since they are the most prevalent ones among the others.

### ***2.2 The Nature of the Syllable***

The Syllable is fundamentally important unite both in phonetics and in phonology .Roach (2002:76) states that phonetically ,we can observe that the flow of speech typically consists of an alternation between vowel –like states and consonant –like states where some obstruction to the air flow is made .Phonologists are interested in structure of the syllable since there appear to be intersting observations to be made about which phonems may occur at the begining , in the middle and at the end of syllables .

Ladefoged (2006:242) idicates that we can say that there are two types of theories attempting to define syllables. First, there are theories in which the definitions are in terms of

properties of sounds, such as sonority (acoustic energy) or prominence (some combination of sonority, stress and pitch). Second, there are theories based on the notion that a syllable is a unit in the organization of the sounds of an utterance. There are several theories in both phonetics and phonology which have tried to clarify matters phonetic approaches attempt to provide a definition of the syllable valid for all languages. Phonological views of the syllable, focus on the ways sounds combine in individual languages to produce typical sequences. Crystal (2003:448).

Phonetically speaking, the first theory tries to define a syllable in auditory terms the prominence theory, according to Crystal (*ibid*) is a string of sounds some are intrinsically more sonorous than others and that each peak of sonority corresponds to the center of a syllable. The peaks are best illustrated by vowels, which have the greater carrying power. Jones (1969:56) states that when a consonant is immediately followed by a vowel, it is usually not syllabic, since the vowel has the greater inherent sonority. However, a consonant in this position is sometimes given extra prominence by increasing its length, it may thus become syllabic. Second theory is the pulse or motor theory. Gimson (1980:52) states that this theory is concerned with the muscular activity controlling lung movement which takes place during speech and which is capable of being investigated by experimental methods. It is claimed that in any utterance there are a number of chest pulses, accompanied by increases in air pressure, which determine the number of syllables uttered. Such a theory suggests that the syllable rather than the sound is the basic unit of speech, consonantal sounds acting typically as the onset and closure of the syllable, while vowel sounds are nuclear to the syllable and rather the chest pulse audible.

Phonologically, Lass (1998:250) says that the phonological syllable might be a kind of minimal phonotactic unit, say with a vowel as a nucleus, flanked by consonantal segments or legal

clusterings or the domain for stating rules of accent, tone, quantity and the like. The phonetic syllable then is a performance unit whose entire reality is phonetic; the phonological syllable is a structural unit, perhaps with non-phonetic properties as well. Phonological views of the syllable focus on the ways sounds combine in individual languages to produce typical sequences.

### ***2.3 The Structure of English Syllables***

Syllables have internal structure, they can be divided into parts. The parts are onset and rhyme; within the rhyme we find the nucleus (peak) and coda. Not all syllables have all parts; the smallest possible syllable contains a nucleus only. A syllable may or may not have an onset and a coda. Rubba(2000:1) define an onset as the beginning sound of a syllable; the ones preceding the nucleus. These are always consonants in English. The nucleus a vowel in most cases. Onsets are not obligatory in English syllables. There may, therefore, be syllables having no onset; they immediately begin with the syllabic element. The syllable is then said to have a zero onset. The onset may consist of two consonants. This constitutes what is called a consonant cluster.

Initial two-consonant clusters are of two sorts in English; one sort is composed of /s/ followed by one of a set of about 11 consonants; examples of such clusters are found in words such as sting /st / sway / swe /. The /s/ in these clusters is called the pre-initial consonant and the other consonant /t,w/ the initial consonant. The other sort begins with one of a set of about 1-3 consonants followed by one of a set /l ,r,w,j/ as in play /ple /, try /tr /, quick /kw k/ ,few /fju: / We call the first consonant of these clusters the initial consonant and the second the post-initial. When we look at three-consonant clusters we can recognize a clear relationship between them and the two sorts of two-consonant cluster described above; examples of three consonant initial clusters are : split / split/ stream , / strhm /. If we come to the centre of the syllable we find nucleus or peak, which is the same, "which means the centre of the syllable and it

is normally a vowel ,but it is possible for a consonant to act as a peak instead "(Roach.2002:55).

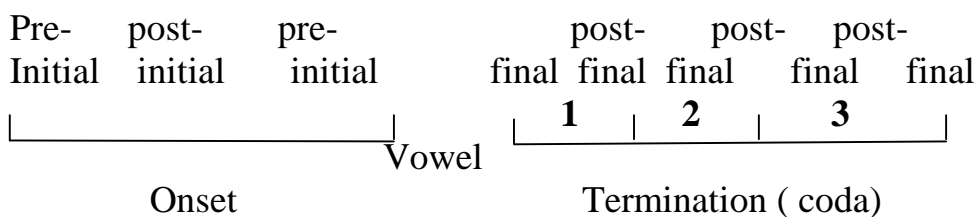
Now if we come to the final consonant cluster in the syllable, we find a coda or termination which means the consonant or sequence of consonants that follows the peak (Giegerich,1992:139) The central part of a syllable is almost always a vowel and if the syllable contains nothing after the vowel it is said to have no coda "zero coda".Some languages have no codas in any syllables .The total number of possible codas in English is vary large-several hunderd. (Roach, 2002 :14)

In fact, it is possible to find four consonant at the end of a word. When there is one consonant only .this is called the final consonant . Any consonant may be final consonant except / h ,r , w , j / . Concerning two consonant cluster, we have two kinds, the first being a final consonant preceded by a pre-final consonant and the other ,final consonant followed by a post-final consonant . / m ,n , , , s/ a small set form a pre-final consonants e.g / b mp / bump, / bent / bent. etc. The post final consonant form a small set: / s, z , t , d , / e.g bets / bets/ , beds / bedz/ etc.

Also, in two consonant cluster , we find two types . The first is pre-final plus final plus post-final e.g helped /helpt/. The second type shows that more than one post-final consonant can occur in a final cluster : final plus post-final 1.plus post final 2.e.g/fif s/ fifts.

Concerning the four consonant cluster, it can be analysed as consisting of a final consonant preceded by a pre-final and followed by post-final 1.and post-final 2.e.g.twelfths / tweif s /.

Finally ,by the following digram we may describe the English syllable as having the following maximum phonological structure.





There is one exception to the rule that a syllable must have a vowel as its nucleus. This occurs when a certain vowel like consonant-/l/, /r/, or a nasal-act as the center of the syllable, as in bottle . The syllabic consonant is shown by a small vertical mark beneath the symbol. (Crystal, 2004:246)

#### **2.4 Strong and Weak Syllables**

English syllables divided into two types, strong and weak. This feature is not in English language only but in many other languages. Crystal (2004: 247) states that strong (or full) forms are used when the word is said in isolation or is being emphasized. Weak forms are normal in connected speech: peripheral vowels (those which are articulated towards the edge of the vowel area in the mouth) are replaced by those of more central quality, and some consonants may be elided. Weak forms are sometimes represented in writing, though not usually very accurately.

The prominence of sounds may be due to inherent sonority(carrying power) to length or to special intonation or stress or to combination of these. Thus, in every sentence there is a kind of undulation of prominence which is easily perceived by the hearer. This undulation may be visualized as a wavy line with peaks (denoting maxima of prominence) and troughs (denoting minima of prominence). It is generally quite easy to count the number of peaks of prominence in a word or phrase.

Roach(1988:63) defines a weak syllable as the one that can only have four types of center:

1. the vowel "schwa"
2. A close front unrounded vowel in the general area of i: and
3. A close back rounded vowel in the general area of u: and u
4. A syllabic consonant

The vowel of a weak syllable tends to be shorter of lower intensity and different in quality, is less loud and has a vowel that can not occur in strong syllables.

## **2.5 Description of Studies reviewed**

### **2.5.1 Al-Rubay'i (2004)**

The mastery of the sound system of English constitutes a major problem of the Iraqi speakers whether of Arabic or Turkman. At the heart of this problem is the segmental phonemes, the major sub- system of the English sound system which is the concern of this study.

As the differences between these three languages are expected to raise problems to learners, they are taken into account because they form the biases for achieving the latter, i.e., the practical side. Accordingly, this study aims at:

1. Identifying the difficulties faced by both monolinguals and bilinguals in learning phonological aspects of English, and
2. Finding out whether the third language has any influence, positive or negative, on the learners' performance in the foreign language.

Consequently, it is hypothesized that there is no statically significant difference between the achievement of both monolingual and bilingual Iraqi learners of English in the area of English pronunciation.

### **2.5.2 Hindi (2007)**

The objective of this study were :

1. investigating EFL college students performance in the handling English morpho –phonemic constructions,
2. identifying areas of difficulty which the learners of English face in producing morpho- phonemic construction , and
3. suggesting remedial work for the alleviation of these difficulties.

It was hypothesized that EFL college students face difficulty in the handling of English morpho –phonemic constructions.

There are two types of test written and oral. Concerning the written one ,(58)students took part in it. As far as the oral test is concerned ,(14)students participated and read while recording

their voices on tape. The students of both types of test were from the third stage, college of education ,university of diyala .

The major findings of this study were :

1. EFL college students are not aware of the fact that when processes of suffixation occur, a change in pronunciation of the base or the affix happens.
2. Students are not aware of the fact that stress changes its position when processes of suffixation occur .
3. Students face difficulty in pronouncing as well as transcribing the changing vowel sound in allomorphs.
4. Student's performance in pronouncing as well as transcribing the (s) plural suffix is relatively good when compared with their performance in other tasks.
5. Students face difficulty when transcribing and pronouncing the changing vowel sounds in irregular verbs.

### **2.5.3 Ahmed (2008)**

This study aims at describing the effect of suffixes on English word accentual patterns setting some rules which show such effect. Therefore , it is hypothesized that when a suffix is added to a stem (or root), the accented syllable in the stem frequently shifts. More strictly, suffixes are hypothesized to influence accent.

In order to examine the validity or the invalidity of the hypothesis the following procedures have been adopted:

1. Describing the syllable in English, its structure and the different theories used to identify it.
2. Describing accent in English , its functions, degrees, types and some rules for accent placement in simple and compound words.
3. Describing some metrical perspective as a theory of accent.
4. Presenting some rules ,accompanied with examples ,which show the influence of suffixes on English word accentual patterns.

It has been concluded that suffixes have noticeable various impacts on accents placement within words . In compliance with the conclusions reached some recommendations that are of much

concern for English language learners and teachers have been made.

### ***2.6 Discussion of the Studies Reviewed***

All studies reviewed deal with the study of English syllables in one way or another .The first study tries to provide that the mastery of the sound system of English constitutes a major problem for the Iraqi speakers whether of Arabic or Turkman. Hindi (2007) tackles English morpho –phonemic constructions in order to identify the areas of difficulty which learners of English face in producing such constructions and to suggest remedial work for the alleviation of these difficulties .Ahmed (2008) tries to describe the effect of suffixes on English word accentual patterns setting some rules which show such effect.

As far as the samples in the studies reviewed , Hindi's sample consist of (112) subjects randomly chosen from the third year, department of English ,college of education , university of Diyala. Forty of them represent pilot study, where as the other (72) subjects are divided into tow parts ,fifty eight of them were assigned to have the written test, while the remaining (14) had the oral test. Ahmed (2008) deals with a theoretical part without a test. The sample of the subjects of Al- Rubya'i (2004) is (15) bilingual (L1 Turkman) and (15) monolingual in Diyala University, College of Education, Department of English. In the present research, the sample consist of (70) subjects ,twenty of them represent pilot study and the other (50) subjects represents the main study sample in addition to (20) instructors who represent the questionnaire sample.

The study of Ai- Rubya'i covers theoretical as well as practical aspects. The theoretical side includes establishing a description and distribution of English consonant, vowel, diphthong and triphthong phonemes; Arabic consonant, vowel and diphthong phonemes; and finally Turkman consonant and vowel phonemes .Our concern in Ahmed's study(2008) is chapter two where the writer has shown that the syllable is a major

gradient of phonological generations. Several viewpoints are agreed that the syllable is crucial in defining phonotactic patterns well formed sequences of segments, in particular of consonants and vowels. Hindi (2007) deals with the analysis and classification of the phonological factors which affect the appearance of phonemes .

All in all ,the studies reviewed above contribute to the present research ,albeit to different approaches dealt with.

### **3. Procedures**

#### **3.1 Population & Sample**

The population refers to any set of items ,individuals ,etc . which share some common and observable characteristics and from which a sample can be taken. (Richards . et al ,1992:282) . The population of this research comprise specialists instructors in English departments in the college of education and college of basic education for the questionnaire and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students ,department of English , college of education at the university of Diyala for the academic year (2009 – 2010).

Sampling as defined by al- Samawi (2000:112) is selecting a number of individuals to represent the population. Berg ( 2004 :34) stats that the logic of using a sample of subjects is to make interferences about some larger population from a smaller one (a sample). Johnson (1997 :123-124)adds that "the larger the sample, the more reliable your data will be".

The choice is intentional in the two samples ( the sample of the questionnaire and the sample of the test). The choice of the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage students is intentional since the students were expected to have studied phonetics and phonology for two previous years .The population comprise (70) Iraqi EFL students distributed over three sections A, B, C as shown in table (1). Fifty students were chosen randomly to represent the main study sample and other twenty students represent the pilot administration.

**Table (1)**  
**A Description of the Population of the test**

College	Third Year sections	No. of students	Population	Sample
Education	A	45	143	50(main)
	B	45		20(pilot)
	C	53		

### ***3.2 The Instruments of the Study***

To achieve the aim and to verify the hypothesis , it has to tape both types of know ledge : recognition and production from different points of view ,Instructors and students .For this purpose, a questionnaire and an achievement test were constructed by the researchers .

#### ***3.2.1 Description of the Questionnaire***

In order to fulfill the aim of the research which is "Iraqi EFL college students face difficulties in the area of English syllables " ,a questionnaire was constructed by the researchers. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:1) .Questionnaires have many advantages in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort as other research instruments and they have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data.

Johnson (1997:124) states that there are many types of questionnaires includes open ended questions, two way questions (those that require choosing one of two alternatives), multiple – choice questions, or questions requiring a specific answer.

Rating scales questionnaire is the format that used in this research. A strength of this type is that it elicits responses to specific question in the form of scaled, quantifiable data which can then be subjected to powerful statistical analysis

(Batchman &Palmer,1996:243). In the scaled questionnaire or (attitude questionnaire ), people can show how strongly they agree or disagree with the items of the questionnaire ,i.e., there is a graduation in attitude.

The questionnaire of this research represents twelve items that suppose to cover the area of English syllables. All the items have three rating scales:

- a. all the students will
- b. few of them will
- c. none of them will

**Table (2)Items of the Questionnaire**

Items	all the students will	few of them will	none of them will
1.analyze English word into syllables . 2.recognize the possible combination of vowels and consonants. 3.unders the internal structure of English syllable . 4. identify the different parts of the syllable. 5.distinguish between onset and rhyme. 6.distinguish between onset and coda. 7.recognish the parts of the rhyme (nucleus and peak) . 8.notice that not all syllables have all parts. 9.identify the meaning of consonant cluster. 10.identify the meaning of syllabic consonant. 11.recognize the difference between strong and weak syllables. 12.become aware of precisely what type of consonant cluster presents pronunciation problems.			

### 3.2.2 Description of the Test

It was necessary to develop a test for the purpose of this research. An achievement test of five tasks is constructed. The test as it appears in appendix (2), consists of five tasks. The total number of items in the test is (25). Two of the tasks (one and three) are recognition tasks, the other being production (two, four, and five ). In task one the students are asked to recognize the number of the syllables in each word. It is multiple choice task. While in task two the students are asked to give the onset and the coda for each word. In task three, the students are asked to recognize between strong and weak syllables. Task four is about syllabic consonants and task five is about consonant clusters.

#### *The Final Version of the Test*

##### Part One

How many syllables are in the following words?

a. 1    b.2    c.3    d.4

1. game .....
2. question .....
3. pattern .....
4. vertical .....
5. misunderstood .....

##### Part Two

Identify the onset and the coda in each of the following syllables.

Ex: bar = /b/ is the onset

1. fill                      .....
2. run                      .....
3. key                      .....
4. am                      .....
5. sat                      .....

##### Part Three

Recognize between strong and weak syllables in each of the following words :

Ex: open = the final position with a coda is weak

1. better .....



2. card .....
3. happy .....
4. time .....
5. sharpen .....

**Part Four**

Determine the syllabic consonant in each of the following words :

Ex: bottle = the final /l/ is syllabic

1. cattle .....
2. struggling .....
3. national .....
4. particular .....
5. ribbon .....

**Part Five**

Identify the consonant clusters in each of the following words :

Ex: bonds = the consonant cluster here is /ndz/

1. string .....
2. helped .....
3. next .....
4. smoke .....
5. texts .....

**3.3 Face Validity**

The most important quality to consider when selecting or constructing an evaluation instrument is validity. The validity of any examination or test procedure may be broadly defined as "the extent to which a test measures what is suppose to measure "(Heaton, 1975:135). In other word, it is the degree to which the test actually measures what it is intended to measure (Brown, 1987:221).

Face validity refers to "the way the test looks to the examinees, test administrators, educators and the like (Harris, 1969:7). Moreover, Ingram (1977:18) defines face validity as "the surface credibility or public acceptability".

Accordingly, face validity is achieved by exposing the test to a jury of experts\* in linguistics and ELT. They were asked to point out their remarks and suggestions for modifications concerning the suitability of the items of both (questionnaire and test). The jury have agreed that instrument's procedures are suitable except for some modifications which have been taken into consideration.

### ***3.4 The Pilot Administration of the Test***

Before conducting the final version of the test, it is preferred to run a pilot test and to revise it according to the results of the test. To Tuchman (1972:197) pilot testing is "an attempt to determine whether the test items pass the desired qualities of measurement and desciminability". Pilot study ,as stated by Harris(1969:25) involves "trying out the test material on a group similar to that for whom the best is being designed".

Results of pilot study can be good indicator for making any necessary modifications for the final version of the test.

In order to conduct a pilot study, 20 students were randomly chosen from the third year, department of English, college of education. The findings of the pilot study reveled that the time required to complete the five tasks of the test rang between (40 -50) minutes .

### ***3.5 Item Analysis***

After the students answer- sheets were corrected, they were arranged according to their score from high to low. Carroll & Hall (1985:115) state that item responses which are answered by students correctly should be put in a descending order from the top to the bottom.

Anastasia & Urbina (1988:172) state that familiarity with the basic concepts and techniques of item analysis , like knowledge about other phases of test construction, can help test users in their evaluation of published test.

#### ***3.5.1 Item Difficulty Level***

Item difficulty (hence forth DL ) is one component of item analysis and it is necessary because as Baker (1989:54) states "it

permits the identification of items which are too difficult or too easy, or which fail to discriminate strongly enough between candidates".

DL is considered acceptable if it is ranged between 0.20% -0.80% (Ebel,1972:200). After the application of item difficulty formula, it was found out that it ranged between (0.30- 0.72).

### **3.5.2 Item Discriminating Power**

Item discriminating power (hence forth DP) refers to "the degree to which an item differentiates correctly among test takers in the behavior that the test is designed to measure" (Anastasia & Urbina, 1988:179) .Ebel (1972:202) considers the DP of items acceptable if it is 0.30 and above . Accordingly, the DP of the items is acceptable since it ranges between (0.30-0.82).

### **3.6 Reliability**

Brown (1987:220) states that a reliable test is a test that is consistent and dependable. He adds (ibid) that if you give the same test to same subjects or match subjects on two different occasions, the test itself should yield similar results. Valette (1967:30) believes that reliability of a test is the consistency of the examination scores. In other words, reliability is concerned with the accuracy of the test.

In order to estimate reliability , a test – retest method is used. Accordingly, a test is considered reliable when there is a correspondence between the two applications or there is just a little difference. A sample of 20 students was randomly chosen from the third year College of Education, English Department. The test papers are distributed among the students who are told to read the items carefully in a normal speed. All students smoothly answered all items within the time allotted.. The period between the two applications is two weeks and when Person correlation coefficient using, it is found that the correlation coefficient is 0.84. This correlation coefficient is considered acceptable according to Carroll & Hall (1985:118). Thus, the reliability of the test is established.

### 3.7 Scoring Scheme

Al- Hamash et al (1982:23) assert that for the purpose of objectivity and reliability ,an accurate scoring scheme should be developed for the whole test. Each item was marked as either correct or incorrect. Four marks were given for the correct answer of each item and zero for the wrong one. Leaving any item by the testee was also given zero. Since the test consists of (25) items, the highest mark for the whole test is (100) and for each task( 20).

### 3.8 Statistical Methods

The following statistical methods were used in the present study:

1.The standard deviation is estimated by applying the following formula :

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{(\sum X - X)^2}{N}}$$

( AL – Bayati & Athnacyus, 1977 ,162)

2. Pearson correlation coefficient formula was used to find out the reliability of the test.

$$R = \frac{N \cdot \sum x \cdot y - (\sum x) (\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N \cdot \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2] [N \cdot \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

(Glass& Stanley ,1970:114)

3.T-test formula for one sample is used:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X} - M}{S / \sqrt{n}}$$

( Madsen, 1983:170)

### 3.9 Overall Performance

In order to investigate the hypothesis of the study which reads " Iraqi EFL college learners face difficulties in the area of English syllables " . The responses of the subjects were investigated by using the mean and the theoretical mean formula. The mean score of the subjects was (54.44) compared with the theoretical mean (50).After using that –test formula for one sample , the computed t-value with the tabulated done . The computed –value is lower than the tabulated one .Accordingly , the hypothesis is verified.

**Table (3) : Weighted Mean of the Questionnaire item**

Item (No)	all the students will	few of them will	none of them will	Weighted Mean
1	14	4	2	10%
2	8	8	4	20%
3	6	6	8	40%
4	8	8	4	20%
5	6	2	12	60%
6	2	6	12	60%
7	2	4	14	70%
8	10	4	6	30%
9	12	4	4	20%
10	6	4	10	50%
11	4	6	10	50%
12	2	4	14	70%

### 3.10 Performance According to subjects

The overall performance of subjects are illustrated in table(4) below .The result of the students shows that thirty one students passed the cutting point namely (50%) which means that the subjects who score (50) out of (100) is said to have satisfied the criteria .The subjects namely( 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 34, 38, 48 ) have got the successful score of 50 plus.

**Table (4) Statistical Analysis of Subjects' Performance in the test**

No.	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Total
1	16	13	12	12	20	73
2	20	5	8	16	20	69
3	12	10	9	16	20	67
4	20	5	12	12	12	61
5	20	4	8	5	20	57
6	16	12	17	12	20	77
7	20	6	8	5	20	59
8	16	20	4	5	20	65
9	16	13	12	8	12	61
10	16	5	8	8	20	57
11	12	14	16	12	17	71
12	20	14	16	17	16	83
13	20	20	13	8	16	77
14	4	10	9	12	20	55
15	12	13	16	16	20	77
16	16	8	16	12	5	57
17	20	8	8	12	9	57
18	16	8	16	5	20	65
19	20	13	12	12	16	73
20	20	13	12	16	20	81
21	16	5	4	16	20	61
22	16	20	12	16	13	77
23	8	8	13	16	12	57
24	20	20	13	12	20	85
25	16	5	16	12	12	61
26	16	8	13	12	12	61
27	12	8	4	9	4	37
28	12	12	8	8	5	45
29	8	8	12	5	0	33
No.	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Total
30	12	6	9	12	12	51
31	8	5	12	4	0	29
32	20	4	0	5	0	29
33	20	6	4	8	5	43
34	20	16	4	12	5	53
35	16	0	5	8	20	49
36	4	8	12	12	5	41
37	12	5	12	8	0	37
38	16	5	12	12	8	53
39	20	8	4	5	4	41
40	16	0	4	4	5	29
41	16	5	4	12	0	37
42	16	12	5	4	0	37

43	12	8	8	8	9	45
44	16	5	4	8	12	45
45	16	0	8	5	4	33
46	12	5	8	4	16	45
47	8	7	12	8	4	39
48	12	20	5	4	12	53
49	8	8	8	9	12	45
50	8	5	8	4	4	29

**Table (5) Statistical Analysis of test items**

No.	mean	Percentage	Type of the question
Part one	14.8	29.6%	How many syllables are in the following words?
Part Two	8.92	17.84%	Identify the onset and the coda in each of the following syllables.
Part Three	9.5	19%	Recognize between strong and weak syllables in each of the following words
Part Four	9.66	19.32%	Determine the syllabic consonant in each of the following words
Part five	11.56	23.12%	Identify the consonant clusters in each of the following words :

\*The jury of experts consist of the following members whose names are arranged alphabetically:

- 1.Aasem Aboud Zbar (Ph.D) College of Basic Education, University of Babel.
- 2.Amthal Mohammed Abbas (Ph.D) College of Education, University of Diyala.
- 3.Ana'am Yosif (Ph.D) College of Basic Education, University of Diyala.
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#### ***4. Conclusions, Recommendations & Suggestions for Further Research***

##### ***4.1 Conclusions***

The conclusions of this research divided into two branches , the first one related to the results of the test and the second related to the questionnaire.

##### ***1. Test's Results***

After Presenting the difficulties faced by students of Diyala University in understanding English syllables , the researchers considered the weighted mean of 8.92 as a difficult topic . Consequently three topics were considered to be difficult as it is shown in table (5).

Conclusions remarks can be clearly pointed out as follows:

**a.** Part Two of the test which refers to (Identify the onset and the coda in each of the following syllables) constitute the most difficult topic for the students. It got a weighted mean (8.92).

**b.** Part three of the test which refers to (Recognize between strong and weak syllables in each of the following words) constitute the second difficult topic for the students . It got a weighted mean (9.5).

**c.** part four of the test which refers to (Determine the syllabic consonant in each of the following words) constitute the third difficult topic for the students . It got( 9.66).

**d.** Thirty subjects are able to pass the criteria adopted for acquisition , and other six subjects are very close to the cutting point.



## **2. Questionnaire Results**

Conclusion remarks , related to questionnaire results can be clearly pointed out as follows:

**a.** Item number(7) and item number (12) which refer to (recognize the parts of the rhyme (nucleus and peak) and (become aware of precisely what type of consonant cluster presents pronunciation problems) gain the most negative opinions from instructors. They got (70%) for both.

**b.**Item number(5) and item number (6) which refer to (distinguish between onset and rhyme) and ( distinguish between onset and coda) gain the second negative opinions from instructors. They got (60%) for both.

**c.**Item number (10) and item number(11) which refer to (identify the meaning of syllabic consonant ) and ( recognize the difference between strong and weak syllables) gain the third negative opinions from instructors . They got (50%) for both .

## **4.2 Recommendations**

On the bases of the conclusions of the present research , a number of recommendations can be put forward:

**a.** Teachers are recommended, while teaching English syllables, to use laboratories rather than just providing them with rules. Besides, learners should be adequately enabled to properly use dictionaries , So that they could easily get how each word is pronounced .

**b.** Each time the teacher introduces a new vocabulary item , it is important to consider spelling and pronunciation. With regard to pronunciation, stress and unstressed syllables are equally important.

**c.** What students really need , as the researchers recommend , is a concentration on pronunciation . When students find themselves obliged to speak , they will gradually learn to improve themselves and acquire native like pronunciation ,Whenever they encounter a new word.

## **4.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

The researchers have the following suggestions :

- a. An experimental study can be conducted to investigate the effect of training students in morpho-phonemic constructions on their pronunciation performance .
- b. It is suggested to study how prefixes affect the pronunciation of English words.

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