
Common Error Identification in Pronouncing Silent Letters in English Words by EFL Novices

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ABSTRACT

In English, the sound system is somewhat distinct from Arabic. Yemeni Novices have many difficulties pronouncing English terms owing to this. For example, we often hear English learners pronounce "sight [sait]" with "[saig]" or "know," [nəʊ] with "[knəʊ]." This study is concerned with identifying widespread errors in the pronunciation of silent letters in English words among Yemeni EFL learners. Qualitative descriptive study was used in this investigation as a methodology. With the aid of purposive sampling techniques, a sample of 5 EFL novices was selected from 1st level of the English Department, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University, Yemen, which was classified into a group of novice high-level learners (beginners). Analytically descriptive method was used to analyze the data after they were collected through tests. The result of this study showed that in pronouncing words containing the silent letters like b, c, d, g, gh, h, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, th, and w, the researcher finds errors made by the EFL novices. The authors analyze three positions of the silent letters in the words (initial, medial, and final position) and by understanding this; it would be possible to develop useful instructional materials and teaching strategies to target this issue.

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1. Introduction

The production of a second language by beginners is often influenced by their native or their first language (L1) (Muriungi, P., Mukuthuria, M., & Gatavi, 2011). Yemeni Arabic-speaking EFL novices who study English also say English terms while speaking English with the Arabic sound system. For example, we often hear beginner English learners say "know" [nou] with "[knou]," or "height" [hait] with "[haigt]." This phenomenon is called language interference in the study of second language acquisition, first into the second language acquisition (negative interlingua transfer). Interference typically leads to errors (Antrim, 2008). This research will explain the sound system's interference in Arabic (L1) into English (L2). They were mostly regarding the pronunciation of silent letters in English. More specifically, which silent letters are generally mispronounced and how these errors occur.

When learning a foreign language, mastering the proper pronunciation of it is essential, but is not an easy mission. Because English is a foreign language, it takes a long time to become proficient in it. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), the study of pronunciation has long been considered an essential component of the process of teaching English to those who are learning the language. Because of this, mastering

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the phonological system of English as a foreign language (EFL) needs a high level of accuracy as well as a thorough understanding. This type of awareness aids EFL learners in achieving their ideal and well-spoken English contact (Tuan, 2010). However, a number of a foreign language (EFL) learners still experience problems in obtaining an accurate or proper pronunciation of sounds inside English words. The same is true for EFL Arabic-speaking learners. While learning the English language, they continue to face difficulty with pronunciation. According to a number of previous research (Al-Hamzi et al., 2021; Kharma and Hajjaj 1989; Ababneh 2018; Jabali and Abuzaid 2017, Al-Hamzi, 2021; Hassan 2014), certain language speakers are hesitant to accurately pronounce foreign sounds. That, according to Alkhuli (2000), in his study entitled "Comparative Linguistics," can be linked to the disparities in sound systems between Arabic and English.

As a result, the study of pronunciation has emerged as a critical component of the process of teaching English as a second or foreign language. During the learning process, EFL learners may encounter difficulties. One of these is having problems pronouncing English words correctly. The pronunciation of many English terms in Yemen is difficult for EFL beginners to master since the words they have heard or spoken are often different from their written versions.

It has been explained by Ababneh (2018) & Taqi et al. (2018) that teaching pronunciation to EFL Arabic-speaking learners is extremely challenging. The issues arise as a result of the irregular spelling of the English language, which provides inadequate direction for its pronunciation. It is evident from the statement that the disparity that exists between the pronunciation of words and the writing of those words presents a particular issue. We have a difficulty since English is not a phonetic language, which means that we do not pronounce a word in the same manner that it is written. No relationship exists between the spelling and pronunciation of the term. Take, for example, the letter "l" in "talk" and the letter "w" in "write", which are both pronounced incorrectly. In order to avoid confusion, the words "talk" and "write" should be pronounced as /wɑ:k/ rather than /tɑ:k/. In addition, the word "write" should be pronounced as /raɪt/ rather than /wraɪt/. The phenomenon of silent letters refers to letters that are not pronounced but are nonetheless visible.

When a letter is omitted in pronunciation and present in spelling, it is referred to as a silent letter. According to Podhaizer, (1998), silent letters are letters that are not heard when forming their 'usual' sound in a word and are designated as silent. It is undeniable that silent letters cause a discrepancy between how a word is spelled and how a word is pronounced in the English language. It is possible that when EFL novices have just heard a word and attempt to write it, they will leave out a letter since they did not hear the letter pronounced. The novices who have seen a word written down may also attempt to pronounce a silent letter when speaking in class.

This research, by the way, is significant because hundreds of English words containing silent letters, when sounded, will significantly disturb the listener's understanding. By knowing the errors that beginner learners often make in Yemen, it will be easier for English teachers to map which silent letters need to be given more teaching and which do not. Furthermore, this study's results can be used to make teaching materials for the English pronunciation course following Yemeni EFL learners' context, especially regarding the pronunciation of silent letters.

3.2 *Learner's Language*

The learner's language is valuable as a testing material surrounding the acquisition of L2. The learner's language is described as "the language that students produce when they are asked to use L2 orally or in writing" (Ellis, 2015). The learner's language is very likely to contain errors, which represent gaps in the learner's knowledge (Muriungi, P., Mukuthuria, M., & Gatavi, 2011). Errors are systematic and predictable to shape rules or formulas, even if they are distinct from the target language. Some errors are widespread in the pronunciation of L2 learners, for example, losing part of a sentence or overgeneralization, whereas another error, triggered by their efforts in generating L2 by using their L1 awareness. These errors are considered transfer errors.

3.2 *Errors Analysis*

In the Second Language acquisition in 1970, SP Corder and his colleagues began the error analysis area. Error analysis is an alternative to contrast analysis, a behavioral method in which linguists use structured differences between first and second language students to evaluate errors (Kho, 2011). Analysis of errors reveals that specific errors cannot be predicted. The error study's key result is that certain errors are triggered by the learner's attempts to infer new rules of language. Error analysis adherents differentiate between systematic and unsystematic errors. They often develop typologies of errors. Errors can be classified according to several basic

types: omissive (omission), additive (addition), substitutive (substitution), or related to word order (word order) (Ellis, 2015). They can also be classified based on how noticeable the error is: overt (overt) like "I thirsty" and covert (dim), which is only visible based on context. Errors can also be classified according to language level: phonological errors, vocabulary or lexical errors, syntactic errors, and so on. They can be judged according to the degree to which they interfere with communication: global errors make speech difficult to understand, while local errors do not. In the example above, "I thirsty" could be classified as a local error because it doesn't change the meaning. Errors analysis is closely related to the study of handling errors in language teaching. Currently, the study of errors is very relevant for research on teaching methodology.

3.2 *Transfer interlingua (Interference)*

The transfer of previous experience into the next learning is a general concept (Ellis, 1992). Positive transfers take effect as prior knowledge facilitates learning - in other words, when the last things can be adequately applied to future learning. On the other side, negative transfers exist as prior information interferes with the next learning. The above is considered interference, in which past knowledge interferes with future learning – the last pieces are transferred to the items learned incorrectly.

Interlingua transfer (interlanguage transfer), a term first used by an American linguist, Larry Selinker, is an intermediate grammar or a linguistic system created by L2 students. The form of interlanguage can be seen as a learner's hypothesis about L2 and is believed to be systematic (Parker & Riley, 2000). The learner's first language (L1) may influence interlanguage formation (Dwinastiti, 2017, & Smith, 2013).

Lekova, (2010) suggests that interlingua transfer is the leading cause of error for all L2 learners. The first stage of acquiring a second language is vulnerable to interlingual transfer from the mother tongue or generally recognized as interference. Until mastering the L2 system well, the L1 language is the only previous linguistic framework that students may focus on in the early learning period. So, it is not unusual when students say "sheep" for "ship" or "book of Ali" instead of "Ali's book." All such transfers may be due to negative interlingual transfers.

The interlingual transfer is different from the intralingual transfer. Intralingual transfer occurs when learners start to get some parts of the new system from the second language. As learners move forward in a second language, their previous experiences begin to incorporate the target language structures. Negative intralingual transfer (overgeneralization) can be seen in expressions such as, "Do they can dance?" or "I goed last week."

L1, or mother tongue, can cause negative effects in the acquisition of a second language. Languages that are categorized as universally marked are more challenging to learn and often cause L1 interference than those classified as unmarked universal (Parker & Riley, 2000). Foreign language students can make mistakes in L2 because they "know too much" about their L1 (Fromkin et al., 2018). This is because they may think that specific rules in L1 are universally applied. As a result, the L2 they produce can contain errors, which are very likely to be affected by their knowledge of L1.

3.2 *Language-Based Variables Affecting the Transfer of L1 to L2 Acquisitions*

a) *Markedness*

The broad claim is that universal or present features in most languages are considered unmarked, while those that are specific or only found in some languages are called marked. In L1 transfers, unmarked items (very abstract grammar properties that do not vary from language to language) will be transferred until items are marked, according to Chomsky's Universal Grammar, and items will not be conveniently transferred when L1 is marked.

b) *Language and Cultural Distance*

Related languages also have a ton in common (for example, almost identical vocabulary or translations), and this can be of great help to learners. Meanwhile, as a language has more inequalities, students have to depend on their awareness of L2 in terms of use or L2 types. The language gap clearly has an impact on the number of transfers. Corder, (1981) stresses that there would be a positive transfer where there is a correlation between L1 and L2. If the mother tongue is formally identical to the target language, students would be able to learn L2 quicker than where L1 is far different from L2. Apart from language distance, the cultural distance may also significantly influence the ease or complexity of learning. If learners attempt to study another language with the same or comparable cultural context, they can undoubtedly find certain aspects that are appropriate and

will feel relaxed in learning; they find that L2 has a different cultural background from the L1 culture have more difficulties. The semantic transformation is probable.

c) L2 Proficiency

Derakhshan & Karimi, (2015) reveals that L2 ability is a deciding factor shaping the transfer rate: learners are more inclined to transfer from a language in which they are more qualified to a language in which they are less skilled. The connection between low L2 competence and transfer mainly relates to negative transfers, whereas Figueredo, (2006) suggests that positive transfers, such as utilizing cognitive language, exist at high ability levels. L2 capacity-transfer relationship is complicated. Regardless of the path of causation, competence directly influences the probability of language transfer.

3.2 *Silent Letters in English*

Carney, (2012) defined silent letters as letters not pronounced or minimized for more suitable spoken English. Often present in spelling but reduced or removed in real expression. Examples of silent letters in English are as follows:

- A – musically, physically, artistically, critically, logically
- B - plumber, lamb, comb, dumb, debt, limb, doubt, numb, climb
- C – scissors, conscious, acquire, crescent, fascinate, muscle, descend
- D – sandwich, handkerchief, handsome, hedge, wedge
- E – age, plaque, breathe, Wednesday, hate, clothes
- G/GH – though, sign, align, campaign, alight, design, gnaw, high, align, light, reign, resign
- H – honest, choir, mechanic, exhaust, when, ghost, what, heir, why, hour, thyme
- I - business
- K – know, knee, knead, knight, knell, knit, knickers, knob, knife
- L – chalk, calf, walk, calm, half, folk, psalm, half, salmon, almond, talk
- M – mnemonic.
- N – condemn, hymn, autumn, damn, column
- O – opossum, sophomore, colonel
- P – cupboard, psychology, corps, receipt, psychotic, coup, raspberry, pneumonia, pseudo
- R – finger, garden, here, butter
- S - debris, isle, aisle, island, bourgeois
- T – listen, fasten, asthma, match, ballet, often, castle, witch
- U – guard, catalog, biscuit, colleague, vague, dialogue, tongue, guess, guitar, guest
- W – write, wrack, answer, whole, wrist, sword, wrench, two, whole
- Z – laissez-faire, rendezvous

In order to study pronunciation problems above, the researcher, thereby, conducted research by using error analysis since it is the study of errors made by the novices of English Language Department at Sana'a University in pronouncing silent letters containing in English words. Based on the problem mentioned above, this study aimed to identify the errors made in pronouncing silent letters "c"; "w." "b"; "p"; "th"; "h"; "k"; "g"; "n"; "m"; "l"; "d"; "gh"; "s"; "t" in English words by Yemeni EFL novices.

2. **Methods**

This study is descriptive qualitative of EFL novices. This study's respondents were first-semester students of the English Department, Faculty of Education, Mahweet, Sana'a University, Yemen. In general, they can be classified into a group of novice high-level learners (beginners). As beginner high-level learners, they appear to make errors both in pronunciation and writing in L2. Five novices who differ from each other in their English proficiency and academic attainment were purposively selected. To control for the different variables such as gender, exposure, age, motivation, and English proficiency, all of the participants were selected based on the following parameters:

- a) All the participants were Yemeni EFL Arabic-speaking learners (3 males and 2 females), who came from different Yemeni localities to study English at the English Department, Faculty of Education, Sana'a University.
- b) All the participants were enrolled in the 1st semester of the year 2019-2020.

- c) All the participants had never been to English-speaking countries and had no prior exposure to or contact native English speakers.
- d) All of the participants look forward to speaking skillfully and being like those native speakers of the language in their pronunciation.

Since this is descriptive research, it will explain how students interfere with the English pronunciation from the Arabic sound system and the linguistic reasons behind it. The instrument used to gather the data was a test for pronouncing terms with silent letters "c"; "w." "b"; "p"; "th"; "h"; "k"; "g"; "n"; "m"; "l"; "d"; "gh"; "s"; and "t."

The data was gathered using a test among other methods. A test is often regarded as the most effective method of determining how well EFL novices comprehend the information they have been studying. Pronunciation test was also obtained to determine their pronunciation difficulties while pronouncing English words containing silent letters.

When the data was gathered, the researcher began to evaluate the data, employing an analytically descriptive technique of analysis. Alternatively, to put it another way, the researchers detailed the information they obtain on a regular basis. Data analysis consists of four steps: identifying errors, describing those errors, explaining errors, and evaluating those errors.

3. Results and Discussion

3.2 Results

- a) Description of the Mispronunciation of Silent Letters Errors in Pronouncing the Silent Letter "b"

Table 1. Mispronunciation of Silent Letters Errors in Pronouncing the Silent Letter "b"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	bomber	5	5	{bɒmbə}
	plumber	5	5	{plʌmbə}
	debt	4	5	{dɛbt}
	subtle	5	5	{sʌbtl}
	doubt	5	5	{daʊbt}
Final	womb	3	5	{wʊmb}
	dumb	3	5	{dʌmb}
	lamb	4	5	{læmb}
	jamb	2	5	{dʒæmb}
	climb	3	5	{klaɪmb}

Ten words containing the silent letter 'b' had to be pronounced by the respondents. These words are 'climb', 'womb', 'debt', 'dumb', 'plumber', 'doubt', 'bomber', 'subtle', 'lamb', and 'jamb'. The analysis shows that when the silent letter 'b' is in the middle of words such as 'bomber' and 'plumber,' most respondents pronounced the letter 'b,' which should be silent or not pronounced. In the case of the silent letter 'b' followed by a 't' as in 'debt', they tend to pronounce the {b} sound and hide the {t} sound (for example, pronounce {deb} instead of {det}). Similar problems occur with the word 'plumber,' where the letter 'b' is preceded by the letter 'm.' All respondents pronounced the sound {b} ({plambə}) clearly, which resulted in an error. However, a few respondents did not make an error when they pronounced the word 'climb.' They slip the letter 'b' {klaɪm} when the letter 'b' is at the end of a word which an 'm' precedes. The instructional content should consequently be more cautious of the pronunciation of terms analogous to 'debt' and 'plumber' arrangements such as 'doubt,' 'climbing,' 'combing,' or 'bombing.'

- b) Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "c"

Table 2. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "c"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	ascent	3	5	{ə'skɛnt}
	scissors	4	5	{skɪzəz}
	black	0	5	{blæsk}
	muscle	5	5	{mʌskl}
	yacht	5	5	{jækt}

	fascinate	2	5	{fæskəneɪt}
	obscene	2	5	{ɒbskɪn}
	scene	2	5	{skɪ:n}
	scenario	3	5	{skɪ:næriə}
	fluorescent	2	5	{flɒ:reskɪnt}
	crescent	3	5	{kreskɪt}
Final	-	-	-	-

There were eleven terms with the silent letter c that the respondents must pronounce. These words are 'ascent', 'scissors', 'black', 'crescent', 'fluorescent', 'obscene', 'muscle', 'fascinate', 'yacht', 'scenario', and 'scene'. Based on the respondents' pronunciation results, most respondents made errors when they pronounced the silent letter "c." For example, when respondents pronounced "muscle," they all confused the term. All respondents clearly pronounced the letter 'c' - for example, {maskl}, with sound {c} or {k}. The same issue arose when the words 'scene,' 'ascender,' 'scissors,' and 'yacht' were pronounced. In this situation, most respondents appeared to pronounce brightly the letter 'c' (e.g. {skin}, {askændər}, {skɪzəz}, {yak}). However, when the silent letter 'c' appeared before 'k,' no failure happened in pronouncing a letter (the letter 'c' didn't sound). Therefore, the instructor shall reflect on terms of the same silent letter 'c' as the words 'muscle,' 'scene,' 'fluorescent,' 'scissors,' 'conscience' and "yacht" while compiling teachings about the pronunciation of the silent letter 'c.'

c) Errors in Pronouncing the Silent Letter "d"

Table 3. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "d"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	fudge	4	5	{fʊ(d)dʒ}
	bridge	4	5	{brɪ(d)dʒ}
	handsome	4	5	{hændsʌm}
	Wednesday	5	5	{wɛdnɪzdeɪ}
	handkerchief	2	5	{hændkɜ:ʃɪf}
Final	-	-	-	-

Respondents pronounced five words, including a silent letter 'd,' These words are 'fudge,' 'bridge,' 'handsome,' 'Wednesday,' and 'handkerchief.' Based on the respondents' pronunciation, it was obvious that most respondents committed errors with the silent letter 'd' particularly when 'd' was used in terms like 'fudge' and 'Wednesday.' When these terms were pronounced, novices simply spoke a silent letter 'd' (for example, {fud}, {wɛdnɪzdeɪ}). However, for the word 'bridge,' some respondents slip the letter 'd'. A few respondents did not pronounce the {d} sound specifically with the term 'handkerchief.' This is because the letter 'd' is automatically silent when between 'n' and 'k.' Thus, teaching materials must be built to anticipate errors of pronunciation such as 'Wednesday and Fudge' because the silent 'd.' which is usually pronounced clearly by novice learners.

d) Errors in Pronouncing the Silent Letter "g"

Table 4. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "g"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	gnarl	4	5	{gɑ:rl}
	gnat	5	5	{gnæt}
	gnash	4	5	{gnæʃ}
Medial	-	-	-	-
Final	sign	5	5	{saɪgn}
	cologne	5	5	{kɒlʊgn}
	align	4	5	{ə'laɪgn}
	campaign	4	5	{kæmpaɪgn}
	design	4	5	{dɪzaɪgn}

Eight words are containing the silent 'g', which the respondents must pronounce. These words are 'sign', 'cologne', 'align', 'campaign', 'design', 'gnarl', 'gnat', and 'gnash'. Most of the respondents in this study made an error in pronouncing the silent letter 'g' before 'n' in either the first or last word position. They tend to pronounce

clearly the {g} sounds (eg {gnat} and {kæmpeɪn}). Therefore, the instructional materials collected must also concentrate on pronouncing the silent letter 'g.' Pronunciation instruction can stress the same terms as 'align,' 'gnat,' or 'sign.'

e) Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "gh"

Table 5. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "gh"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	sight	4	5	{saIgt}
	right	4	5	{raIgt}
	drought	5	5	{draugt}
Final	weigh	4	5	{weigt}
	high	3	5	{haIgh}
	sigh	4	5	{saIg}

Six terms include the silent 'gh' the respondent would pronounce. These words are 'sight', 'right', 'drought', 'weigh', 'high', 'sigh'. Based on the data obtained, most respondents cannot pronounce the silent letter 'gh' at the end or middle of a word. As shown in the table above, they prefer to pronounce the silent letter "gh" as the {g} sound, resulting in {haig} or {saig} pronunciation errors. Thus, the teaching material should provide more practice to the pronunciation of the silent letter 'gh' in the middle or at the end of words.

f) Errors in Pronouncing the Silent Letter "h"

Table 6. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "h"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation	Notes
Initial	hour	5	5	{haur}	
	honorable	5	5	{hnərəbl}	
	hourglass	5	5	{həɔrglæs}	
Medial	echo	0	5	{I:ko}	Sometimes make errors
	scheme	0	5	{skɜ:m}	Sometimes make errors
	technique	0	5	{ti:kni:k}	Sometimes make errors
	school	0	5	{skɔ:l}	Sometimes make errors
	chemical	0	5	{tʃɪmɪkl}	Sometimes make errors
Final	ache	0	5	{eɪtʃ}	Sometimes make errors
	monarch	0	5	{mɒnətʃ}	Sometimes make errors
	loch	0	5	{lɒtʃ}	Sometimes make errors

There are eleven words that contain the silent letter "h" that the respondents ought to pronounce. They are 'ache,' 'monarch,' 'loch,' 'echo,' 'chemical,' 'scheme,' 'school,' 'technique,' 'hour,' 'honorable,' and 'hourglass.' Based on data gathered, most respondents tended to pronounce the silent letter 'h,' mostly if the 'h' was the first letter of the word after the 'o.' In such cases, they could not pronounce the terms containing the silent letter "h" correctly. However, the sound {h} was pronounced, which results in the pronunciation of the {haʊə} or {hɑ:nərəbəl} errors. On the contrary, some respondents did not make errors, such as {mɒnək} and {sku:l}, where the 'h' is in the center after the consonant or at the end of the word. The instructor should therefore give the pronunciation of the 'h' silent letters more practice, particularly when the 'h' functions as the initial letter of a word following the 'o.'

g) Errors pronouncing the silent letter "k"

Table 7. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "k"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	knack	5	5	{knæk}
	knee	4	5	{kni:}
	knight	4	5	{knaIt}
	knob	5	5	{knɒ}
	knuckle	5	5	{knʌkl}
Medial	-	-	-	-
Final	-	-	-	-

Five terms include the silent 'k' that must be said by the respondent. 'Knack,' 'knee,' 'knight,' 'knob,' and 'knuckle' are the terms. The silent letter 'k' was not correctly pronounced by most of the respondents. They appear to precisely pronounce the silent 'k' and trigger pronunciation errors such as {knæk} or {kni:}. Consequently, the collected teaching materials would illustrate the practice of pronouncing word structures including 'kn' such as 'know,' 'knife,' and 'knight.'

h) Errors pronouncing the silent letter "l"

Table 8. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "l"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	calm	5	5	{ka:lm}
	salmon	4	5	{sælmən}
	folk	5	5	{fɒlk}
	talk	4	5	{tɔ:lk}
	walk	4	5	{wɔ:lk}
	could	4	5	{kɔld}
	should	4	5	{ʃɔld}
	would	4	5	{wɔld}
	half	5	5	{hælf}
	calf	5	5	{kælf}
Final	-	-	-	-

Ten words include the silent letter 'l,' which must be pronounced by the respondents. These terms are "calm," "salmon," "folk," "talk," "walk," "could," "should," "would," "half," "calf." Most of the respondents is incorrect in pronouncing the silent letter 'l.' Based on the collected data, and they appear to clearly pronounce the sound {l}, which results in pronunciation errors such as {sælmən} or {hæ:lf}. The instructional material must also stress pronouncing the silent letter "l" since the respondents created several errors.

i) Errors pronouncing the silent letter "m"

Table 9. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "m"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	mnemonic	5	5	{mnImɒnlk}
Medial	-	-	-	-
Final	-	-	-	-

One term incorporates the silent letter 'm' to be pronounced by the respondents, namely 'mnemonic.' All the respondents were wrong in pronouncing the silent letter 'm.' They pronounced the 'm' sound clearly and result in errors in pronunciation (mnemonics). While several respondents make errors in pronouncing the silent letter 'm,' there is no need to give a lot of practice to the silent 'm.' That's how the silent letter 'm' is seldom used in English.

j) Errors in pronouncing the silence "n"

Table 10. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "n"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	solemnity	5	5	{sɒlmnɪtɪ}
Final	autumn	5	5	{ɒtəm̩n}
	column	5	5	{kɒləm̩n}
	damn	5	5	{dæm̩n}
	hymn	5	5	{hɪm̩n}

Five terms include the silent letter 'n' that the respondents would pronounce. They are 'autumn,' 'column,' 'damn,' 'hymn,' and 'solemnity.' Based on the data gathered, all respondents clearly pronounced the silent letter 'n.' They also have some difficulties in saying the silent letter "n" especially when it is at the end of a word and accompanied by "m." Therefore, instructional resources should stress the silent letter 'n' pronouncing practice.

k) Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "p"

Table 11. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "p"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	pneumatic	5	5	{pnumætɪk}
	pneumonic	5	5	{pnju:mɒnɪk}
	pseudo	5	5	{psju:dəʊ}
	psychiatrist	5	5	{psalkælətrɪst}
	psychiatry	5	5	{psalkælətri}
	psychotic	5	5	{psalvɒtlɪk}
Medial	receipt	5	5	{rɪsi:pt}
	cupboard	3	5	{kʌp(b)əd}
Final	coup	4	5	{kʊp}

Nine terms included the silent letter 'p' pronounced by the respondents. These terms include 'pneumatic,' 'pneumonic,' 'pseudo,' 'psychiatrist,' 'psychiatry,' 'psychotic,' 'receipt,' 'cupboard,' and 'coup'. Most respondents were incorrect in pronouncing the silent letter 'p' at the beginning, middle, or end of a term based on data obtained. They prefer to pronounce the {p} sound clearly and trigger pronunciation errors like {pnu:mæ nɪ k}, {rɪ si: p}, or {kʌp}. Therefore, the instructors shall have more practice of pronouncing the silent letter 'p' at the beginning, middle, or end of a part of a word.

l) Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "s"

Table 12. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "s"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation	Notes
Initial	-	-	-	-	-
Medial	island	4	5	{aɪslənd}	In the middle of the term before 'l.'
Final	aisle	4	5	{aɪsl}	At the end of a word before 'l.'

isle	5	5	{aɪsl}	At the end of a word before 'l.'
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Three terms include the silent letter 's,' which the respondent would pronounce. They are 'aisle,' 'island,' and 'isle.' Depending on the respondents' pronunciation, most respondents are incorrect to pronounce the silent letter 's' either in the middle of the term or at the end of a word before 'l.' Respondents seemed to say the letter "s" clearly, e.g. {island} and {aɪsl}. Therefore, when writing instructional content, the instructors should have more instruction in pronouncing the silent letter 's.'

m) Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "t"

Table 13. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "t"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	apostle	4	5	{əpɒstl}
	jostle	3	5	{dʒɒstl}
	bristle	4	5	{brɪstl}
	fasten	5	5	{fæstən}
	glisten	4	5	{glɪstn}
	moisten	4	5	{mɔɪstn}
Final	beret	5	5	{berɪt}
	Chevrolet	4	5	{tʃɪvrələt}
	depot	5	5	{depəʊt}

Nine terms included the silent letter 't' the respondent had to pronounce. They are 'beret,' 'chevrolet,' 'depot,' 'apostle,' 'jostle,' 'bristle,' 'fasten,' 'glisten,' 'moisten.' Most respondents were incorrect when they pronounced the silent letter 't,' particularly when the silent letter 't' is at the end of the term (e.g. {dɒpɒt}). Many respondents have made errors when pronouncing 't' in the middle position (e.g. {fasten}, {glisten}). Thus, the prepared teaching materials must have more instruction in pronouncing the silent letter 't' in the middle of the word, as the silent 't' in the final position is very rare.

n) Errors in pronouncing the Silent Letters "th"

Table 14. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "th"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	-	-	-	-
Medial	asthma	5	5	{æsðmə}
	isthmus	4	5	{ɪsðməs}
Final	-	-	-	-

The respondents must utter two terms with the silent letter 't.' They are 'asthma,' 'isthmus.' Most respondents have tended to pronounce the silent letter 'th' clearly, which causes incorrect pronunciation (e.g. {asthma}). Therefore, formal instructional resources are in need to include any further instruction in pronouncing the silent letter 'th' since the learners cannot usually pronounce it well.

o) Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "w"

Table 15. Errors in pronouncing the silent letter "w"

Position	Words	Number of Errors	Total of Respondents	Students' Incorrect Pronunciation
Initial	who	4	5	{whu}
	whose	5	5	{whuz}
	wreck	5	5	{wrek}
	wrest	4	5	{wrest}
	write	4	5	{wrait}
Medial	sword	1	5	{swɔ:rd}
	answer	4	5	{ænswə}

	playwright	4	5	{pleiwrait}
	awry	4	5	{Ə'wrai}
Final	shadow	0	5	{ʃædow}

There were ten terms that included the respondent's silent letter 'w.' These terms are 'awry,' 'answer,' 'playwright,' 'sword,' 'who,' 'whose,' 'wreck,' 'wrest,' 'write,' 'shadow.' Respondents seemed to sound the 'w' brightly (e.g. {write} or {whose}) and in the middle (e.g. {answer}). However, when the silent 'w' ends with a word, all respondents have no issue with it. Therefore, the instructional content shall stress the habit of pronouncing the silent letter 'w' while in the word's initial and middle positions.

Based on the findings shown above, the researcher concludes that the Yemeni EFL novices made errors pronouncing the words containing silent letters "c"; "w." "b"; "p"; "th"; "h"; "k"; "g"; "n"; "m"; "l"; "d"; "gh"; "s"; "t." The forms of EFL novices' errors are: In words "doubt," "yacht," and "Wednesday," most pronunciation errors made by EFL novices. They pronounce them as /daubt/, /jækt/, and /wɛdnɪzdeɪ/ instead of the correct pronunciation /daʊt/, /jæt /, and /wɛznɪzdeɪ/. Similarly, some pronunciation errors made while pronouncing the words "gnat," and "drought," so they are incorrectly pronounced as /gnæt/, and /draugt/. Meanwhile the intended pronunciation of "gnat," and "drought" are /næt/, /draut/. Then, in pronouncing the words "fasten," and "knee" the words are pronounced as /fæstən/, and /kni:/ instead of the correct pronunciation, which are /fæsən/, and /ni:/. In addition, some pronunciation errors made by EFL novices when pronouncing the words "calm," "mnemonic," and "column." They pronounce the letters "l," "m," and "n" clearly. Instead of the correct pronunciation /ka:m/, /nɪmənɪk/, and /kələm/ respectively, some of them pronounce /ka:lm/, /mnɪmənɪk/, and /kəlɛmn/. Also, in words like "pseudo," "island," "asthma" and "whose" some of novices pronounce /psju;dəʊ/, /aɪslænd/, /æsdəm/, and /whuz/ instead of the correct ones /sju;dəʊ/, /allənd/, /æsmə/, and /huz/.

3.3 Discussion

Following the completion of the investigation, the researcher discovered that the Yemeni EFL novices made some errors in pronouncing words containing silent letters. This occurred when novices were ignorant and out of control while pronouncing English words. In most cases, they did not pay attention to how to properly enunciate the English words. The researcher discovered some terms that were improperly spoken by the novices. These terms include, for examples, debt, scissors, handsome, sign, sight, hour, knee, calm, mnemonic, autumn, pneumatic, island, apostle, asthma, and who. These words are engaged in the silent "c"; "w." "b"; "p"; "th"; "h"; "k"; "g"; "n"; "m"; "l"; "d"; "gh"; "s"; "t" letters of the alphabet. When the researcher did the test to find out what went wrong, it turned out that the EFL novices were completely unaware of what had gone wrong in the first place. Furthermore, they were not completely aware of the need of evaluating and correcting their pronunciation.

In this situation, errors are phenomena connected to the effect of the mother tongue in learning process. Pronunciation errors that happened were not exclusively intended by learners. They are various factors why novices inaccurate to pronounce the terms containing silent letters. The first one is the lack of exposure to English Listening Vocabulary; the second is the lack of understanding English phonemic transcription, the third is the tendency of generating the incorrect sound of the supplied words. The fourth is the lack to desire in mastering English pronunciation. The fifth is the lack of interest by the instructors to provide focus on listening skills, then, lack of required time hour to practice English vocabulary and pronunciation and the final is the lack of sufficient knowledge by the teachers to train the novices in English pronunciation (Mahaputra, 2017).

In conclusion, in making such errors, the EFL novices are at the stage of random guessing in which they dimly aware of the rules. They do not notice the presence of some rules because they have not mastered them. The EFL novices themselves cannot explain how the errors take place. They cannot rectify them even if the lecturers point them out. Furthermore, these errors occurred when the EFL novices had identified a rule, but it was the wrong one. They completely know the rule of phonological symbols in pronunciations; however, they may be incorrect in pronouncing the words. They were also unable to assess and fix the errors. This can happen when the learner had established an incorrect hypothesis about the target language. Let us consider the instances; those are the words "debt" and "womb". The correct phonology of the word "debt" should be /dɛt/ and /wʊm/ for the term "womb". Despite the fact that they were aware of the guideline, EFL novices continued to make errors with the silent "b". It can be demonstrated when the researcher corrected the students' errors by testing them. They showed incorrect pronunciation of the terms "debt" and "womb" since they lacked knowledge regarding the phonological system of the second language and affected by the sound system of their native

language. As a result, when the researcher assessed them on their pronunciation skills, he found that most EFL novices made errors while pronouncing the terms “debt” and “womb”. The incorrect forms were pronounced as [d3bt] and [wumb], respectively, and this required a few practices before getting the proper pronunciation. “muscle”, and “yacht” were two of the other terms. There were a few instances where these terms were mispronounced by the EFL novices. When it comes to the word “muscle”, EFL novices have a tendency to use [mʌskl] instead of the right sound /mʌsl/. Meanwhile, they pronounce the term “yacht” as [jækt], or [jæst] depending on their dialects.

According to the numbers shown above, Yemeni EFL novices had difficulty pronouncing a specific word with the correct pronunciation and suitable phonological terms in the correct order. Actually, they were aware of how to properly pronounce the terms. The words were mispronounced as a result of the nearby sound, which they attribute to the proximity of the sound. Some attempts had been made by the lecturer, including the practice of pronouncing the terms again and allowing the novices to fix the fault on their own initiative. The findings revealed that the EFL novices understood the rule of language function in the appropriate phonological rule, but they continued to make errors while pronouncing the words in the proper phonological rules.

In this way, second language acquisition is strongly affected by the native language (L1). Language learning is seldom a one-time occurrence. More commonly, it is a sequence of transfers over time and can have either a beneficial or detrimental effect on second language acquisition. It is well known that language conversion is a significant and actual process that should be taken into account while attempting to learn a second language (Selinker & Gass, 2008). According to Chomsky's Universal Grammar, the environment (the highly abstract nature of the grammar) would be transferred before labelling is added. This implies language items that are not quickly transmitted from the L1. In this respect, many of the errors EFL novices in Yemen create because of L1 (Arabic) intervention tend to do with structures in L2 (English).

This study offers opinions and observations on the pronunciation styles of second language learners. Results from the analysis indicate that L1 interference exists in L2 acquisition. L1 sounds are active in pronunciation in L2, as though there was apparent interference from L1 to L2 (most respondents clearly pronounce individual silent letters in English). In this regard, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) requires real mastery and pretty knowledge of its phonological system. Such good awareness helps EFL learners achieve their ideal and well-spoken English contact (Tuan, 2010). Still and all, a significant number of EFL learners confront difficulties in getting the accurate or correct pronunciation of sounds in English words. FEL Arabic-speaking learners are not immune. They still encounter pronunciation difficulties while learning the English language. Many earlier studies conducted by (Kharma and Hajjaj 1989; Ababneh 2018; Jabali and Abuzaid 2017; Hassan 2014) indicated that specific language speakers are reluctant to correctly pronounce unfamiliar sounds that do not exist in the sound system of their native language.

Mother tongue (Arabic) and constructive corrections in the right imitation and repetition have been supplied to respondents. L2 learning was thereby affected by habitual practices. Because of this, the respondents adopted linguistic patterns from their L1 language. Habits interact with L2 learning, and new habits are created. It is as if L1 interfered with the L2 acquisition. Another hypothesis supports the notion that if there are parallels between L1 and L2, students can utilize the L2 sound environment with ease; rather than where there are variations. Each of the five respondents had created their own L2 interim rules using their L1 experience, resulting in multiple L2 pronunciation errors (B. Smith, 2007; Ellis, 2015; Gast, 2013; James, 1980; Alkhuli, 2000).

A diversity of English pronunciation difficulties is particularly noticed among EFL Arabic-speaking learners in Yemen, especially in pronouncing English silent letters while using English. It finds its base in the variations found in the sound system of both Arabic and English languages. Arabic in Yemen is a language dominantly used in contact in nearly all parts of life and all areas: parks, schools, streets, markets, etc. Ababneh (2018) stated that Arabic has three pairs of short and long vowels and twenty-eight consonants in its sound system. The resemblance of letters and sounds is evident in both phonemes as letters symbolize them orthographically. Besides, there is a matching between symbols and sounds that denotes that most speakers whose native language is Arabic articulate the words as they are orthographically represented.

On the contrary, in its sound system, the English language has 20 vowels, diphthong sounds, and 24 consonant sounds. All English phonemes are symbolized in 26 letters (Ababneh, 2018 & Taqi et al., 2018). Additionally, there is no matching between English symbols and sounds; each phoneme can be represented in many ways. Furthermore, one issue regarding English is that a single letter might be presented in various sounds; i.e., “care” and “cautions,” whereas letters of Arabic language closely match its phonemes; this makes it different from English that the majority of its words are written in the usual orthographic form (Tushyeh, 1996).

The L1 and L2 arrangements are different, which raises the possibility of errors in the L2. Catching errors doesn't involve evaluating or labeling competence. Errors, in particular, will help teachers explore successful methods of teaching. Because of this, errors can be expected when teaching English to inexperienced novices.

The primary concern of this study is L1 sound system interference in L2 pronunciation acquisition. This study showed that respondents used different sound structures from their L1 to produce a speech response in their L2, resulting in pronunciation errors in L2. The respondents took various changes, such as estimating the sound of the silent letters in L2. Gaps in speech output of L2 learners cause them to adapt their L2 speech responses to approximate sounds heard in their L1. The L2 pronunciation study reveals how deeply respondents' L2 answers are affected by their L1 (Alkhuli, 2000 & Hassan, 2014). Hence, it might be assumed that the sound structure L1 interferes with the pronunciation of the silent letters L2. The five respondents related the L2 sound system to their understanding of the pronunciation of the L1 sound since L1 is their principal language skill. In an attempt to link L2 to L1, they hypothesized the parallels or disparities between the L2 and L1 sound systems. The effect is to bring L2 below L1's competence, creating several mispronunciations. Some other respondents reported that it was challenging to organize their awareness about the L2 sound system entities. There is a significant awareness difference between accumulation and organization. Respondents also depend on their L1 sound system to elicit responses in the target language. As the target language is a foreign language, there are several pronunciation errors.

A significant finding of this analysis is that the L1 and L2 sound systems have pronunciation errors in L2. This has consequences for teaching and studying. An awareness of the L1 sound system structure and L2 pronunciation errors can aid in teaching and learning. The instructors would anticipate potential errors in the target language and establish techniques to confront them. Other failures than an L1 distraction, instruction methods, and difficulties with L2 may have triggered the errors learners made. Recognizing that Arabic language, as Yemeni EFL novices' first language, will obstruct English learning, an Arabic/English contrastive study should be applied in the teaching of English pronunciation. Starting with observing if L1 interference is occurring when teaching L2 pronunciation. EFL novices employ their L1 (Arabic) while making their L2 (English). As a result of which, Students must develop a more formal English sound system, which is somewhat different from or similar to the Arabic sound system. The primary treatment for L1 disorders is focused on oral sampling. Besides, additional drills on L2 pronunciation can help stimulate accurate pronunciation responses from a behaviorist perspective. Consequently, learning silent letters in English is necessary to boost students' understanding of the variations between Arabic and English sound systems.

In cognitive perspectives, interference can be interpreted as a mechanism in which students use their learned L1 awareness to hypothesize regarding L2 language rules. These hypotheses and their corrections may be viewed as proof of the learning method. Learners restructure and modify their concept over and over to verify it. Therefore, fixing errors and identifying inaccuracies is a technique to create an effective L2 pronunciation.

4. Conclusion

Based on the result analysis, the researcher found that the Yemeni EFL novices made errors while pronouncing English words containing silent letters. Seeing the data can indicate that the major pronunciation errors among EFL novices was identified in words containing the silent "c"; "w." "b"; "p"; "th"; "h"; "k"; "g"; "n"; "m"; "l"; "d"; "gh"; "s"; "t."

Based on the test results provided to EFL novices in Yemen, the researcher believes that the students committed an interference error owing to the effect of other languages; first language acquisition or mother tongue. First-language acquisition of students with dialect, accent, and culture affected their performance while pronouncing English words with silent letters. Based on this investigation, several ideas are made as follows. First, English teachers/readers as the role model in the pronunciation aspect may start utilizing the rule pattern while mentioning or uttering English words with silent letters. This is one of the methods to overcome the errors of novices speaking words. The novices' nature imitates their instructors, and therefore as an example, teachers should exhibit the right manner to pronounce words. Second, EFL novices may be instructed to try to pronounce English words with silent letters to make them conscious of word pronunciation. The reason to urge novices to pronounce English words is that when they start studying English, most of them overlook pronunciation - instead, they focus on grammar and vocabulary. The longer people speak English without correct pronunciation expertise, the more errors they make and the more negative habits they store in their thoughts. Paying attention to pronunciation will actually help them enrich spoken input because when they become familiar with the word, they become accustomed to the correct way of pronunciation, minimize the error in pronunciation of words,

and their speaking ability will automatically be an excellent level. The last thing they can explore for other persons who wish to continue studying this research subject. They may undertake research to examine additional silent letters using the same technique to research design, including error analysis, or they may build novice theory regarding findings on this study.

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