

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Teaching pronunciation

a case for a pedagogy based upon intelligibility

Abeer Kassem

2014

Aston University

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**Teaching Pronunciation:
A Case for a Pedagogy Based upon Intelligibility**

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Master of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the main aim of teaching pronunciation in second language acquisition in the Syrian context. In other words, it investigates the desirable end point, namely: whether it is native-like accent, or intelligible pronunciation. This thesis also investigates the factors that affect native-like pronunciation and intelligible accent. It also analyses English language teaching methods. The currently used English pronunciation course is examined in detail too. The aim is to find out the learners' aim of pronunciation, the best teaching method for achieving that aim, and the most appropriate course book that fulfils the aim.

In order to find out learners' aim in pronunciation, a qualitative research is undertaken. The research takes advantage of some aspects of case study. It is also supported by a questionnaire to gather data.

The result of this research can be regarded as an attempt to bring the Syrian context to the current trends in the teaching of English pronunciation. The results show that learners are satisfied with intelligible pronunciation. The currently used teaching method (grammar-translation method) may be better replaced by the (communicative approach) which is more appropriate than the currently used method. It is also more effective to change the currently used book to a new one that corresponds to that aim. The current theories and issues in teaching English pronunciation that support learners' intelligibility will be taken into account in the newly proposed course book.

Dedication

**To the dearest people to me,
To my Mother, Father, and Children**

**To all my family
I dedicate this work.**

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Context

This thesis focuses on the teaching of pronunciation in the English Department at Damascus University, Syria. It aims at bringing the Syrian context, and the course book which is currently taught in the English Department up-to-date with the English theories and pedagogies in the teaching of pronunciation. This is achieved by finding out learners' aim of pronunciation, the appropriate method to fulfil that aim, and the best course book that corresponds to learners' aim.

The context of this study is the teaching of English at Damascus University, Syria. There are many departments in the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Damascus University. One of them is the Department of English which is dramatically growing. Nowadays, there are more than 2500 students in the English Department. Students enrol in the English Department if their mark in the English subject in the Baccalaureate examination meets the mark set for admission in the English Department by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Due to the large numbers of learners in the current system, learners can hardly communicate with their tutors or participate in conversations and communicative situations. Some learners feel that their pronunciation is what puts them off because they lack self-confidence in the way they pronounce English. Scant attention is paid to pronunciation in the Syrian school curriculum in general and the university curriculum in particular.

In the English Department, the students follow a four-year programme in English. The syllabus includes literature, translation and linguistics. Courses for each year are taught for two terms, 12 weeks each. Every year, students take about 12 modules. The modules that deal with the teaching of pronunciation in the English Department are based upon two books. The first one is Al-Shehabi's (1998) ***General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English*** which is introduced to learners in the second year. It is mainly concerned with the teaching of individual English sounds. This book will be further discussed later (Please see chapter three, section 3.9 for description of the course, Appendix 1 for the contents of this book and Appendix 2 for an example from the book).

The second book is O'Connor and Arnolds' (1973) ***Intonation of Colloquial English***. This book is taught in the third year, and it limits itself only to the teaching of the attitudinal function of intonation. It is clear that students do not receive enough tuition, training and practice in pronunciation which is a basic English language field.

In order to decide the aim of teaching pronunciation, whether it is a native-like accent or simply an accent which can be understood by any listener, it is important to consider what this pronunciation will be used for. The graduates of the English Department at Damascus University may go into the teaching profession, or to managerial and administrative jobs. The graduates of the English Department will, therefore, mainly establish relationships with non-native English speakers rather than with native English speakers.

In the English Department at Damascus University, therefore, it must be admitted that the vast majority of the learners perceive no important benefit in approaching the performance of the native speaker. In this case, it may be that there is no need to progress beyond the level of being understood by other listeners. However, this may not be the case for those who are aiming at teaching careers in the English Department. For career purposes, they may aspire to native-like production of English. For such a purpose, they may continue their postgraduate studies in the United Kingdom. In other words, there are quite few learners who are going into teaching in the English Department and who might aspire to native-like production. On the other hand, there are learners who are going into other careers and who aspire to intelligibility. These ideas will be discussed later in detail in chapter two (pronunciation, intelligibility and native-likeness). Before any detailed discussion of pronunciation can be undertaken, it is necessary to look at the position of the English language in Syria.

1.2 The Spread of English

English has become an international language. It is spreading widely for many reasons (e.g. scientific, political, economic, social and academic). It is the most widely used language today. It is spoken as a first or a second/foreign language in many countries all over the world. According to Crystal (1995: 358), English is:

The main language of books, newspapers, sports, and air-traffic control, international business, and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international completions, pop music, and advertising.

Moreover, English has become the official medium of communication among speakers of diverse languages. English is also the official language in many parts of the world (Pennington, 1996: 10). Pennington (1996: 12) argues that: 'English has to function in what may be called 'un-English' contexts covering a very wide territory, and is used in a variety of domains – social, cultural, educational, media-related, administrative and literary. It is used primarily for international communication'.

Kachru (1992) argues that in recorded history there has never been a language to match the present global spread and use of English (Quirk and Widdowson, 1985; Kachru, 1986; Smith 1983). Crystal (1985) has estimated that as many as 2 billion people have some ability in English. Whether we accept Crystal's figure or not, it is certain that, whatever the total number, non-native users of English outnumber the native users.

The standard English language is a linguistic norm employed for formal purposes such as education, government and news media. However, as a result of the expansion of English, varieties of English such as Indian English, Syrian English etc., have developed and incorporated features of the local language(s). In acquiring English as a second language, argues Pennington (1996: 12), the divergences from the most generalized English standard often embody features from the speakers' mother tongue(s).

Nowadays, it is important to teach and learn English especially in a growing country like Syria. Moreover, learning English becomes crucial because there is a need to cope with all the

developments that take place in the world of trade, economics, commerce and education for which English is indispensable.

Despite the fact that lots of England's former colonies had become independent states by the mid-twentieth century, they retained the English language to serve various internal functions (Jenkins, 2003: 33). Therefore, the colonial past has an impact on English. It has been already placed as one of the world's main languages for international business and trade. In the postcolonial period, English has spread well to be used as a lingua franca by many countries (ibid).

According to Crystal (1995: 106), there are two factors that account for the present day world status of English. He argues that the first reason is the expansion of British colonial power, which peaked towards the end of the 19th century. The second reason is the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the 20th century. He further argues that it is the latter factor that continues to explain the position of the English language today.

According to Crystal (1997 as quoted in Jenkins, 2003: 35), there are many reasons that make the learner whose mother tongue is not English wish to learn it. These reasons are the following:

Firstly, there are historical reasons. Because of the legacy of British or American imperialism, the country's main institutions may carry out their proceedings in English. These include the governing body, government agencies, the civil service, the law courts, national religious bodies, the schools, and higher education institutions, along with their related publications.

Secondly, there are internal political reasons. English may have a role in providing a neutral means of communication between its different ethnic groups as it does, for example, in India. A distinctive variety of English may also become a symbol of national unity or emerging nationhood. The use of English in newspapers, on radio, or on television, adds a further dimension.

Thirdly, there are external economic reasons. The USA's dominant economic position acts as a magnet for international business and trade, and organisations wishing to develop international markets are thus under considerable pressure to work with English. The tourist and advertising industries are particularly English-dependent, but any multinational business will wish to establish offices in the major English-speaking countries.

Fourthly, there are practical reasons. English is the language of international air traffic control, and is currently developing its role in international maritime, policing and emergency services. It is the chief language of international business and academic conferences, and the leading language of international tourism.

Fifthly, there are intellectual reasons. Most of the scientific, technological and academic information in the world is expressed in English, and over 80 per cent of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English. Closely related to this is the concern to have access to the philosophical, cultural, religious, and literary history of Western Europe, either directly or through the medium of an English translation. In the most parts of the world, the only way most people have access to such authors as Goethe or Dante is through English.

Finally, there are entertainment reasons. English is the main language of popular music, and permeates popular culture and is associated with advertising. It is also the main language of satellite broadcasting, home computers and video games. In addition to these reasons, a further reason could be added (Jenkins, 2003). This reason is personal advantage/prestige since, in many cultures, the ability to speak English is perceived as conferring higher status on the speaker.

There has been a recent shift in the use of English so that non-native English speakers who use English for international communication exceed the native speakers (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997, as quoted in Jenkins, 2002: 83). Therefore, it is of no surprise the fact that English is now spoken by a considerably greater number of NNSs than NSs (Jenkins, 2002: 83). As a result, it has been suggested that it is better to promote both intelligibility and regional appropriateness in pronunciation among English as an international language (EIL) interlocutors, rather than either of the two most commonly adopted classroom models, namely Received Pronunciation and General American (ibid). The recent growth in using English as an international language (EIL) has resulted in change in learners' goals (Jenkins, 1998).

This has serious implications for English language teaching pedagogy. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the role of pronunciation and its aims within the ELT curriculum (ibid). It is also important to rethink about the question of which pronunciation models are most appropriate for classes aiming to prepare learners for interaction in EIL contexts, and to raise teachers' awareness of the issues involved (ibid). Intelligibility, therefore, receives a primary motivation and recommended as a

model (Please see chapter 2, section 2.4 about native-likeness and 2.7 about intelligibility).

Before going into detail in pronunciation, it is important to see students' motivation to pronouncing English fluently in the Syrian context. The next section will briefly introduce learners' motivation.

1.3 Students' Motivation

Motivation is intrinsic and extrinsic. Highlighting the difference between these two kinds of motivation in language learning, Williams and Burden (1997: 123) argue that:

Sometimes we do something because the act of doing it is enjoyable in itself. At other times we engage in an activity not because we are particularly interested in the activity itself, but because performing it will help us to obtain something else that we want...Very simply, when the only reason for performing an act is to gain something outside the activity itself, such as passing an exam, or obtaining financial rewards, the motivation is likely to be extrinsic. When the experience of doing something generates interest and enjoyment, and the reason for performing the activity lies within the activity itself, then the motivation is likely to be intrinsic.

The learners at the English Department can be described as highly motivated to learn and speak English fluently (from my own teaching experience as a teaching assistant at Damascus University and from my colleagues' experience). Students' motivation can be described as both intrinsic and extrinsic. The learners are intrinsically motivated because they would gradually like to speak and 'master' English as it is used more and more in their surrounding environment. Moreover, they are extrinsically

motivated since they are interested in learning English for financial advantages such as getting a better paid job.

This research attempts to find answers to certain questions and address certain issues in the Syrian context. The next section will present the research questions.

1.4 The Research Questions

This research aims at finding out answers to the following questions:

- What is the teaching goal of pronunciation in the context of second English language adult learners in the English Department at Damascus University?
- Are learners interested in intelligible pronunciation? If yes, what is the model to be adopted?
- Is the currently used pronunciation course book effective? Does it balance theory and practice? Does it take into consideration the role of segmental and supra-segmental features in effective communication?
- Is the currently applied teaching method (the grammar-translation method) effective? If not, what is the best alternative for teaching pronunciation to the grammar-translation method?
- What kind of alternative course or material needs to be proposed in case the current one fails to fulfill learners' aims of pronunciation?

The next section will introduce an overview about the chapters of the thesis.

1.5 Overview

This research aims at finding out learners' aims of pronunciation in the English Department at Damascus University, Syria. The learners are highly motivated intrinsically and extrinsically to learn the English language which is spreading both widely and internationally.

In the second chapter, the teaching goals: namely native-like accent and intelligible accent are discussed. As a native English reference model, the British English Received Pronunciation (RP) is chosen. The nature of RP and the choice of RP as a reference accent are discussed. The arguments for and against adopting RP as a reference model are presented. A discussion of intelligibility is presented. The factors that affect intelligibility, for example speaker factors and listener factors are presented. Intelligibility problems at the segmental level (such as sound substitution), and at the supra-segmental level (such as stress) are discussed. In addition, English as a lingua franca core including the core features and non-core features are explained. This will help as a background for finding out learners' aim of teaching pronunciation in the Syrian context. In addition, the method of pronunciation teaching is also significant. The methods are discussed in chapter 3.

In the third chapter, language teaching methods are considered. The most significant methods that are relevant to this thesis are the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method, the communicative approach, and the post-method approach. The grammar-translation method is the currently used teaching method in the English Department. The alternative methods of the grammar-translation method are offered in the light of the

aims of intelligibility or native-likeness. In other words, the possible alternatives are the audio-lingual method whose aim is native-like production and the communicative language teaching approach whose aim is intelligibility. In addition to these two methods, the post-method approach is discussed. The currently used course book in the English Department is described. This is meant to show that it is ineffective and there is an urgent need to reconsider it. This analysis will be the basis for suggesting a new course that fulfills learners' aim of pronunciation.

In the fourth chapter, the factors that affect pronunciation learning such as age and the critical period hypothesis, identity, and first language interference are discussed. These factors have negative impact on native-like aim of pronunciation. In addition, the positive influence of factors such as exposure, training and motivation is also explained. Because of the first language interference, a detailed contrastive analysis between Arabic (the mother language in Syria) and English is presented. In addition, the present situation of teaching pronunciation, the segmental features, the supra-segmental features, the bottom-up and top-down approaches to pronunciation are all presented and discussed.

In the fifth chapter, the methodology used in this research is discussed. The methodology used to answer the research questions is qualitative design that takes some aspects of case study supported by questionnaire.

In the sixth chapter, the results are discussed and analyzed to find out the answers to the proposed research questions. The results will show what is the learners' aim of pronunciation, what

is the best and most effective teaching method which fulfils that aim, and what kind of text book would be most appropriate.

In the seventh chapter, the newly proposed course book is tested to evaluate the effectiveness of the new syllabus. The practical application of the new course is evaluated with the participation of an experimental and a control group. In the experimental study, the experimental group participated in questionnaires to test the efficiency of the proposed syllabus.

Chapter eight is a conclusion. In the next chapter, both aims of pronunciation, namely: intelligibility and native-likeness (RP in this research) will be discussed.

Chapter Two

Pronunciation, Native-likeness and Intelligibility

2.1 Introduction

Despite the importance attached to it, pronunciation seems to be a neglected skill in many classrooms. For most of its history, language teaching has focused on written language (Kelly, 1969; Stern, 1983). Recently, scholars have started to focus on spoken language (for example, Brown, 1991; Pennington, 1996; Carter, 1997). In fact, language is not only a set of grammatical rules, but also a lively medium through which people interact and communicate.

in spite of a more recent focus on the spoken language and a focus on communication, pronunciation continues to be marginalised in many classrooms across the world (Derwing and Munro, 2005). Yet pronunciation is an important aspect of successful output and is part and parcel of learning a second language both productively (speaking) and receptively (listening).

According to Derwing and Munro (2005), empirical studies are essential to improving our understanding of the relationship between accent and pronunciation teaching. However, the study of pronunciation has been marginalized within the field of applied linguistics. As a result, teachers are often left to rely on their own intuitions with little direction. Although some instructors can successfully assist their students under these conditions, many others are reluctant to teach pronunciation.

There are two views to the status of pronunciation in language teaching (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 207). The traditional phonemic-based view and the broader discourse-based view comprising segmental, voice-setting and prosodic features. Pronunciation should be taught as part of the means for creating both referential and interactional meaning, and not merely as an aspect of the oral production of words and sentences (ibid).

According to Pennington and Richards (1986: 207), while pronunciation has in the past occupied a central position in theories of oral language proficiency, the view of pronunciation embodied in traditional approaches to language teaching trivializes its true nature. The goals of language teaching have changed under the impact of communicative views of language and interactive theories of language learning (ibid). Pronunciation has been traditionally viewed as a component of linguistic rather than communicative competence or as an aspect of accuracy rather than of conversational fluency. Comprehension-based approaches to teaching deemphasize the need for accurate production.

Morley (1991: 482) argues that in the last quarter century we have witnessed an enormous 'population explosion' in student numbers the world over, and especially in adult and near-adult learner groups. Stevens (1988) reported that estimates of the number of people in the world who use English for some purpose range between 750 million and a billion and a half. But, and of special interest, only approximately 300 million of them are native speakers (NSs), leaving a staggering number of non-native speakers (NNSs). With this turn of events has come new instructional demands in new situations and special attention is

needed more and more to carefully focused assessments of specific student needs and subsequent design of effective instructional programs (Morley, 1991). This has proved a special challenge for the planning of effective pronunciation programs (ibid).

2.2 Phonology and Pronunciation

Many scholars (Underhill, 1994; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994) have distinguished between the two terms phonology and pronunciation. Although these two terms may sound synonymous, it is important to distinguish between them in the pedagogy of second or foreign language teaching, as many people confuse the two terms. Burgess and Spencer (2000) point out the difference between them. Burgess and Spencer (2000: 191-192) argue that:

The phonology of a target language (TL) consists of theory and knowledge about how the sound system of the target language works, including both segmental and supra-segmental features. Pronunciation in language learning, on the other hand, is the practice and meaningful use of the target language phonological features in speaking, supported by practice in interpreting those phonological features in a target language discourse that one hears.

On the basis of this quotation, three important conclusions can be drawn from Burgess and Spencer's definitions. Firstly, Burgess and Spencer (2000: 192) state that the majority of language learners need to learn '*how to pronounce*' the sounds of the target language, rather than simply engaging themselves in learning in great details '*about*' those sounds. However, they admit that some language learners, especially those who would become teachers of the target language, do need to learn about the phonology of that target language. But for the vast

generality of learners of language for general purposes, knowledge of phonology as such will usually need to extend only to an ability to benefit from whatever phonemic script and word-stress marking are used in their dictionary.

Secondly, it can be said that learners need to learn both segmental features, i.e. sounds, and supra-segmental ones, i.e. stress, rhythm and intonation. It is not enough for learners to possess the skill of articulating segmental sounds, since they also need to master supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation such as: stress, intonation, rhythm, an acceptable degree of fluency, transactional and interpersonal skills, skills in taking short and long speaking turns, skills in the management of interaction and so on (Nunan, 1991: 7). Segmental and supra-segmental features, therefore, can be considered as completing each other.

Thirdly, according to the definition, it can be inferred that phonology and pronunciation seem to be complementary to each other. In other words, the possession of theoretical knowledge of sound system 'phonology' should be supported by putting theory into practice by the act of 'pronunciation'. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 3) define pronunciation as: 'the production of significant sound in two senses. Sound is significant because it is used as part of a code of a particular language. Sound is also significant because it is used to achieve meaning in contexts of use'.

These definitions establish the importance of possessing both the segmental and the supra-segmental features in successful communication. Therefore, learners in the specified context should possess both so that they can communicate effectively.

2.3 Teaching Goal: Native-likeness versus Intelligibility

One important decision teachers of a second language should set for their learners in the early stage of the teaching process is whether the learners need to achieve native-like or intelligible pronunciation. Levis (2005: 370) argues that: 'pronunciation research and pedagogy have long been influenced by two contradictory principles'. These are:

1. The native-likeness principle: The native-likeness principle advocates the acquisition of a native-like accent (Please see chapter 2, section 2.4 about native-likeness);
2. The intelligibility principle: The intelligibility principle holds that learners simply need to be understood when they speak (Please see chapter 2, section 2.7 about intelligibility).

In addition to native-likeness and intelligibility, some researchers suggest other goals for pronunciation in second language learning. For example, Pennington (1996: 220) argues that some goals for pronunciation may include fluency and accuracy. If someone speaks fluently but with many wrong sounds in his/her speech stream, s/he will sound unintelligible in the same way as someone who speaks with less fluency but with the right sounds. In both cases, the speaker will not be successful communicatively. Before the discussion of native-likeness and intelligibility details, the concepts of model, native-speaker and non-native speaker will be highlighted.

2.3.1 The Concepts of Model, Native and Non-Native Speakers

According to Kachru (1992: 48), when the term 'model' is discussed, it is necessary to distinguish between the use of this term in theory construction, for example, a model for linguistic description, and its use in pedagogical literature, where model is sometimes interrelated with method. Kachru (1992) argues that:

In pedagogical literature, the term 'model' is used in two senses: First, in the sense of acceptability, generally by the native speakers of a language; second, in the sense of fulfilling codified prerequisites according to a given 'standard' or 'norm' at various linguistic levels. In this sense, then, we may say that a model provides a *proficiency scale*. This scale may be used to ascertain if a learner has attained proficiency according to a given norm. The term 'norm' is again used in two senses: in one sense it entails prescriptivism, and in another it entails conformity the usage of the majority of native speakers, defined statistically.

In addition, the question of a model is also related to the question of language spread (ibid: 50). In English, when one talks of a model, the reference is usually to two well-documented models, namely Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). Non-native speakers of English often aim at a close approximation of these models (ibid: 50).

According to Davies (1991), the first recorded use of *native speaker* was the following: 'The first language a human being learns to speak is his *native language*; he is a *native speaker* of this language' (Bloomfield, 1933: 43). The indisputable element in the definition of *native speaker* is that a person is a native speaker of the language learnt first (Cook, 1999: 187). Later-learnt languages cannot be described as native languages, by

definition. In other words, an individual is a native speaker of the L1 learnt in childhood, called by Davies (1996: 156) the 'bio-developmental definition'. According to Cook (1999: 185), being a native speaker in this sense is an unalterable historic fact. This means that individuals cannot change their native language any more than they can change who brought them up.

Many modern sources have echoed this definition such as *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (McArthur, 1992) and the corpus-based *Collins COBUILD English Dictionary* (1995). This core meaning of *native speaker* is often supplemented by detailing the non-developmental characteristics that they share (Davis, 1991). Stern (1983) argues that native speakers have the following characteristics:

1. a subconscious knowledge of rules;
2. an intuitive grasp of meanings;
3. the ability to communicate within social settings;
4. a range of language skills;
5. creativity of language use.

The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (Johnson & Johnson, 1998) adds the characteristic of (6) identification with a language community. Davies (1996: 154) adds the following characteristics:

7. the ability to produce fluent discourse;
8. knowledge of differences between their own speech and that of the 'standard' form of the language;
9. the ability 'to interpret and translate into the L1 of which she or he is a native speaker'.

A number of scholars have started to argue that when English is used for international communication, that is among speakers from a wide range of international settings, then it cannot have 'non-native speaker' (Jenkins, 2003: 80-1). English as an international language (EIL) is used mainly among speakers of English, often with no NS present at all. According to Jenkins (2003: 81), there are various arguments against the use of the terms 'native' and 'non-native' speaker of English. These include:

1. The term 'native speaker' fails to recognise that some varieties of English, for example in Singapore, are spoken not only for official purposes but also in the home;
2. It ignores the fact that English is often one of several languages available in the repertoires of the multilingual populations of countries such as India, and that it is often difficult to decide which language is a speaker's first, second, third and so on;
3. It perpetuates the view that mono-lingualism is the world's norm when, in fact, the majority of people are bi- or multi-lingual;
4. It implies that the English of the ethnic Anglo speaker is a reference point against which all other varieties of English should be measured;
5. It is offensive to label as 'non-native' those who have learnt English and achieved bilingual status as fluent, proficient (but probably not ambilingual) users;
6. The perpetuation of the native/non-native distinction causes negative perceptions of and among 'non-native' speakers in general and teachers and researchers in particular. It leads to their being refused places on ELT teacher training courses, and to limit publication of their work in prestigious ELT and applied linguistics journals;

7. Perhaps most seriously, it encourages a very simplistic view of what constitutes error in English language use, and leads to deficiencies in the testing of English internationally, because users of English regardless of their own variety of the language, are being measured against an irrelevant and unrealistic 'native' standard.

Andreasson (1994: 402) argues that: 'the ideal goal is to imitate the native speaker of the standard language as closely as possible. Speaking English is simply not related to cultural identity. It is rather an exponent of one's academic and language-learning abilities'. As a consequence, it would be far from a compliment to tell a Spanish person that his/her variety is Spanish English because this would imply that his/her acquisition of the language left something to be desired (ibid).

Defining native-speaker may be problematic (Jenkins, 2003: 82). Therefore, there is a need to consider alternatives. If the terms 'native-speaker' and 'non-native speaker' in relation to EIL are abandoned, the alternatives are the following:

1. Rampton (1990: 98-9) proposes the use of the term 'expert'.
2. Jenkins (2003: 83) proposes the following system:
 - a. for speakers of English who speak no other language, Monolingual English Speaker (MES);
 - b. for proficient speakers of English and at least one other language, regardless of the order in which they learnt the languages, Bilingual English Speakers (BES);

- c. for those who are not bilingual in English but are nevertheless able to speak it at a level of reasonable competence, Non-Bilingual English Speakers (NBES).

Cook (1999) argues that language teaching would benefit by paying attention to the L2 user rather than concentrating primarily on the native speaker. Cook (1999) suggests ways in which language teaching can apply an L2 user model and exploit the students' L1. Because L2 users differ from monolingual native speakers in their knowledge of their L2s and L1s and in some of their cognitive processes, they should be considered as speakers in their own right, not as approximations to monolingual native speakers (ibid).

2.3.2 The Implications for Language Teaching

The logical consequence of the arguments raised above is that language teaching should place more emphasis on the student as a potential and actual L2 user and be less concerned with the monolingual native speaker (Cook, 1999). It is completely unrealistic to abandon the term 'native speaker' because this model is so entrenched in teachers' and students' minds, yet it is possible to consider and take some steps in the right direction (ibid). Cook (1999) proposes the following suggestions:

1. Set Goals Appropriate to L2 Users: Language teaching has traditionally balanced the educational gains for the student's mind, attitudes, and personality from learning the L2 against the social and communicative gains from being able to use the L2 for practical purposes. The aims of teaching English pronunciation can be classified into internal classroom goals, and external goals. The internal classroom goals that relate to the students'

life within the classroom, such as communicating their backgrounds and feelings to each other. The external goals that relate to the students' use of English outside the classroom, such as traveling or living in an English-speaking environment. Willis (1996: 12) points out that an 'internationally acceptable version of the target language' rather than a native speaker variety could be used. Based on the reading, it can be said that there is an urgent need to consider an alternative international model. The lingua franca core will be discussed later as an alternative (Please see chapter 2, section 2.11 about the lingua franca core).

2. Include L2 User Situations and Roles: The situations in course books can be classified into two broad types: those featuring all native speakers and those including L2 users. The exclusively native situations cast native speakers in all roles, as seen on virtually every page of any course book, particularly the 'authentic' conversations in the COBUILD course (Willis and Willis, 1988), which rely on recordings of English native speakers talking about themselves and carrying out tasks with each other, such as giving directions and identifying photos. The basic need is to present situations in which L2 users take part.

3. Use Teaching Methods That Acknowledge the Students' L1: Apart from the never-dying but usually decried grammar-translation method, virtually all language teaching methods since the Reform Movement of the 1880s, whether the audio-lingual and audiovisual methods, the communicative method, or the Silent Way, have insisted that teaching techniques should not rely on the L1; 'inventories of classroom techniques exist of which only a handful are not intra-lingual' (Stern, 1992: 289).

4. Base Teaching on Descriptions of L2 Users: If the aim of teaching is to create L2 users, the description of English that is logically required is a description of L2 English. Descriptive approaches often use language corpora as data for developing linguistic description. The COBUILD project, for example, produced a large database of English from which it could derive grammars, dictionaries, and teaching materials (See, e.g., the list in Payne, 1995). Such descriptions would be far more useful if L2 users were represented in the corpora. Applied linguists do not at present have a clear idea of what typical successful L2 users know except through the distorting mirror of descriptions of native speakers. In the absence of descriptions of L2 users on which to base language teaching, one possibility is to see what can be gleaned from accounts of L2 learning. Collections of learners' English, such as *The Longman Learners' Corpus*, could act as stepping-stones. Syllabuses and teaching materials could suggest intermediate goals for the students on their way to becoming successful L2 users. The next section will introduce the principle of native-likeness.

2.4 Native-likeness

According to the native-likeness principle, the achievement of native-like pronunciation in a foreign language is both desirable and possible (Levis, 2005: 370). The native-likeness approach was prevalent and dominant in second language teaching until the 1960s. This principle started to decline when research showed that native-likeness in pronunciation appeared to be biologically conditioned to occur before adulthood (Lenneberg, 1967; Scovel, 1995). However, more recent research has shown that while certain constraints such as identity, language interference, and age make native-likeness an unrealistic goal

for both learners and teachers, other combinations of factors such as motivation, training and the amount of exposure to the target language can positively contribute to the process of native-like acquisition and can eliminate a foreign accent (Please see Birdsong, 1992, Levis, 2005, Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994).

Levis (2005: 371) argues that most currently published pronunciation materials are consistent with the native-likeness principle (Roach, Gimson). The reason is that these materials hold that prestige native speaker versions of English are the proper models for pronunciation learning. Moreover, the majority of learners prefer to master the pronunciation of the target language. For example, Willing (1988) found that 77% of Arabic speakers prefer mastering pronunciation skills. One model of the native-like pronunciation is the British English accent, known as Received Pronunciation (RP). If learners have to adopt an English accent, RP is probably the most appropriate teaching model to follow in English language teaching (ELT) (Newbrook, 1986; Gimson, 1994; Hawkins, 1995), since it is the accent most commonly used in formal situations. The next section sheds light on the nature of Received Pronunciation.

2.5 The Nature of Received Pronunciation (RP)

Because of the existence of a variety of models of pronunciation, the choice of a basic model becomes a matter of special importance. Cruttenden (2001: 297) states that as a result of the great diversity of English accents, the foreign learner is advised to model his/her productive performance on one model of spoken English. Therefore, the more realist, immediate, solution lies in the choice of one of the main native-speaker

forms of English as the basic model, e.g. a representative form of British or American pronunciation (ibid: 297).

Received Pronunciation (RP for short) is defined in Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* as: 'the name given to the regionally neutral ACCENT in British English, historically deriving from the prestige speech of the Court and public schools' (Crystal, 1997: 322). According to him, the prestigious state of RP is attributed more to social factors rather than linguistic ones. The same ideas are echoed by Cruttenden (2001: 78) in the following words:

There has existed in this country the notion that one kind of pronunciation of English was preferable socially to others; one regional accent began to acquire the social prestige. For reasons of politics, commerce, and the presence of the Court, it was the pronunciation of the south-east of England, and more particularly to that of the London region, that this prestige was attached. Some prestige is still attached to this implicitly accepted social standard of pronunciation. Often called RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION (RP), the term suggesting that it is the result of a social judgement rather than of an official decision as to what is 'correct' or 'wrong'.

However, RP is also seen as the form of English pronunciation most widely recognised and understood within the British national community. Although very few British people speak with a marked RP accent, most people can recognise and understand it. It is the most commonly used accent in public life, in education, in law and government. It is, therefore, probably the most suitable English teaching model for people learning English as a foreign language. Kachru (1992: 50) argues that: 'RP as a model is about a hundred years old and is closely associated with the English public schools'. According to Crystal, RP is the accent usually taught to foreigners (1997: 322).

Received Pronunciation is also known as BBC English. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) adopted RP in the past because it is a form of pronunciation which is most likely to be widely understood both inside and outside England. This accent is also referred to variously as 'Oxford English', 'a posh accent', 'a nice voice', 'speaking without an accent', and 'educated English' (Newbrook, 1986 in Brown, 1991: 73). Essentially, RP is an abstract concept (Clark, 2001), and one which, if one starts to pin it down for pedagogic purposes, becomes difficult to define.

According to Cruttenden (2001: 80), three types of RP can be distinguished:

1. General RP
2. Refined RP
3. Regional RP

1. General RP: General RP is predominantly the most regionally neutral (Cruttenden, 2001: 298). Cruttenden argues that: 'Bearing in mind that any target model aimed at by foreign learners is almost certain to be diluted by their own regional characteristics, it seems appropriate that at least the initial target should be regionally largely neutral. It is also the case that the available textbooks and the standard pronouncing dictionaries are based on General RP' (ibid). RP is the norm where by certain types of regional variation of RP are acceptable. However, most dictionaries of the pronunciation of English are based on RP.

2. Refined RP: Refined RP is considered to be 'upper-class'. It is associated with upper-class families and with the professions

which have traditionally recruited from such families, for example officers in the navy. The number of people who speak Refined RP is declining.

3. Regional RP: Regional RP varies according to regions. It is based on regional rather than class variation. It describes a type of speech which is basically RP except for some the presence of a few regional characteristics which go unnoticed even by other speakers of RP, for example, the dark [ɹ] in '*held*' is pronounced as /ʊ/ and it becomes /heʊd/. This is a characteristic of the Cockney accent as discussed later.

General RP, Refined RP, and Regional RP are not accents with precisely enumerable lists of features but rather represent clusterings of features, which vary from individual to individual (Cruttenden, 2001). Thus, there are not categorical boundaries between the three types of RP nor between RP and Regional pronunciations. A speaker may, for example, generally be an RP speaker but have one noticeable feature of Refined or Regional RP. Newbrook (1986: 75) discusses some factors that have influenced the standard status of RP:

1. It is and has been spoken by those in high-prestige occupations, the aristocracy, and upper-middle-class in England;
2. Many of its speakers have passed through private schools of great traditional prestige especially public schools and prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge;
3. RP is to a considerable extent codified, albeit non-explicitly, and 'deviations' on the part of habitual users are frowned upon accordingly;

4. It forms the 'upper' more formal end of the formality-related register range of many speakers whose more informal usage is at most 'near-RP', and is perceived as a target for pronunciation by some others who do not actually manage to achieve this but do approach nearer to it in more formal styles;
5. Its status is institutionalised, in the sense that until recently many school students underwent classes aiming at enforcing the use of RP. Many teachers also encourage the use of RP or forms close to it;
6. It has been further institutionalised through the practices of the BBC. It is worth noting, however, that these practices have broadened to include all three categories given in (2.5) Refined, General and Regional.

Tench (1981) states the status of this accent. Tench (1981: 15) says:

RP is the British accent that has been analysed in greatest detail. British description of pronunciation and British pronunciation dictionaries invariably use that form, and the pronunciation given in any other British dictionary is RP. It is associated with educated people and has been associated in the past and to a certain extent still today with influential people – in politics, religion, business, and education.

Because RP is what might be thought of as an 'educated accent', it appears characteristically in upper and upper middle class speakers and is more sociologically, rather than geographically, defined. In other words, it is a regionless accent based on social class. The name shows that RP is essentially a social variety because values such as intelligence, wealth, prestige, professional competence, persuasive power, diligence and social privilege are connected with it (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994: 6).

However, in recent times, there has been a change in attitude towards the use of regional accents. For example, today BBC broadcasters show some regional varieties in their pronunciation (Crystal, 1997: 322). In the past, many Britons tried to modify their accent to make their pronunciation as close as possible to RP so that they could be better understood. There also has been a counter tendency in young people so that many younger members of the groups who traditionally would have used RP have moved away from it in varying degrees, with a greater sound acceptance of regional variation in accents (www.bbc.co.uk/voices)

Received Pronunciation (RP) has been used as the standard in phoneticians' description of the pronunciation of British English for centuries (Roach, 2004). The definition of this accent is a matter of heated debate and frequent controversy. According to Roach (2004), the most important aspects of this accent are the following:

1. The number of native speakers of this accent who originate in Ireland, Scotland and Wales is very small and probably diminishing, and it is therefore a misnomer to call it an accent of BRITISH English. It is an accent spoken by some English people;
2. The great majority of native speakers of this accent are of middle-class or upper-class origin, educated at private schools and (if of appropriate age) university. This does not mean that the accent cannot be acquired by others; .
3. The majority of speakers of this accent live in, or originate from, the south-east of England;

4. The accent is most familiar as that used by most 'official' BBC speakers of English origin (newsreaders and announcers on Radio 4 and Radio 3, and most television channels). It is also frequently heard on the BBC World Service, though that service appears to have adopted the policy of sometimes using newsreaders and announcers with noticeable foreign accents. It is clear that this accent will eventually lose its preeminent status in broadcasting as a result of the wish to broaden the social base of broadcast speech, but it will take a long time for this to happen.

An important factor to be taken into consideration is that RP undergoes a continuous process of change. Cruttenden (2001: 77) argues that: 'The sounds of the language have always been in process of change'. The significant source of introducing change and invention into accents in general and into RP in particular most recently is the speech pattern in London (Honey, 1989: 91). According to Honey (1989: 91), 'popular' London speech threatens the 'purity' of several RP vowels. Due to the influence of London's Cockney accent, some new pronunciation habits have increased dramatically among RP speakers. Features such as t-glottalling and replacing /r/ with 'oo', in addition to other features, are commonly heard among RP speakers (Trudgill, 1994).

One example of RP Cocknification is the feature of 't'-glottalling. The 't'-sound is glottalised where it occurs in the middle or at the end of words such as 'bottle' and 'bat'. The 't'-sound is not left out at all, instead it is pronounced without involving the tip of the tongue as a glottal stop [ʔ], a sound which is pronounced in the larynx by momentarily closing the vocal cords (Trudgill,

1994: 33). T-glottaling of *'a better bit of butter'* will sound like *'a beʔ biʔ of buʔ'* (Honey, 1989: 92).

Another example of the major influence of a 'popular' London accent on present-day RP is the pronunciation of the consonant *'l'* where it occurs after a vowel in words like *'milk'* and *'bell'*. There is a tendency to pronounce the *'l'*-sound as something more like */w/* (Honey, 1989:93) or a vowel rather like *'oo'* (Trudgill, 1994: 34). The word *'milk'* will be pronounced as *'miwk'* or *'miok'*. Although this feature is observed in today's RP, it is less common than t-glottalling.

Th-fronting is a Cockney related feature according to which the sound */θ/* as a word like *'thing'* is pronounced as */f/* (Trudgill, 1994: 32). As a result, a word like *'thought'* will be pronounced exactly like *'fought'* while the sound */ð/* as in *'other'* will be pronounced as */v/*. such examples of *'th'*-fronting can be regarded as potential occasions of intelligibility breakdown (*thought/fought*).

Pointing out reaction to changes such as these, Cruttenden (2001: 79) argues that: 'Within RP, those habits of pronunciation that are most firmly established tend to be regarded as 'correct' whilst innovation tends to be stigmatized'. Objections to the changing speech pattern such as the use of the glottal stop *'ʔ'* as a realisation of the pre-consonantal */t/* in the Cockney speech are often made. A feature such as replacing the *'l'* with *'oo'* may be unnoticed. However, a feature such as the realization of */t/* by glottal stop word-medially between two vowels, as in *'water'* (Cockney) may be 'too stigmatized to be acceptable as RP' (ibid). Based on the reading, it can be said that the change in RP may

be accepted as long as it does not affect intelligible pronunciation.

2.6 Received Pronunciation (RP) as a Reference Accent

The changing nature of RP has consequences for English language teaching (ELT) and English as a second language (ESL) curricula. Some researchers, for example Jenkins (2000), argue against the use of RP as a teaching model in pronunciation for learners of English as a second language mainly due to its continuous change. Jenkins (2000) presents some arguments against adopting RP as a reference accent for L2 learners. For example, one argument is that RP is spoken by only a tiny minority of English users and that it would be better if phoneticians 'overcome their fascination with the accent of an elite minority of the population' (Macaulay, 1988: 115 as quoted in Jenkins, 2000: 14).

A second argument against the use of RP in teaching is that compared with certain regional accents, such as Scottish English, RP is not the easiest accent for an L2 learner to acquire as far as both reception and production are concerned. RP lacks the close links with English orthography, and contains a relatively large number of diphthongs. Furthermore, weak forms provide L2 learners with receptive and productive problems (Jenkins, 2000: 15). Macaulay (1988) also draws our attention to another fact of RP, namely that it is an accent which includes 'unnecessary' difficulties for learners of English, such as the 'r' sound or some diphthongs.

A third argument against adopting RP as a reference accent is that there are certain differences between the speech of older

and younger RP speakers. Consequently, there is a risk of equipping learners with old-fashioned pronunciation. Moreover, the most recent changes to RP are not being incorporated into teaching material. Examples are: the loss of diphthong /u:/ as in the word '*poor*' which is now more likely to be pronounced as the vowel sound /ɔ:/ of the word '*core*', the lengthening of the previously clipped final vowel sound /i/ in words ending in 'y', such as '*happy*' (Jenkins, 2000: 15).

According to Abercrombie (1951: 12), RP is unique because the public schools are themselves unique. In addition, Abercrombie refers to the following three points in the changing British context. Firstly, the concept of a standard pronunciation such as RP is a bad thing not a good thing. It is an anachronism in present day democratic society (1951: 14). Secondly, it provides an 'accent bar' which does not reflect the social reality of England. The accent bar is a little like colour-bar to many people, on the right side of the bar, it appears eminently reasonable (1951: 15). Finally, RP does not necessarily represent 'educated English', for while 'those who talk RP can justly consider themselves educated, they are outnumbered these days by the undoubtedly educated people who do not talk RP (ibid).

For the purpose of ELT and ESL, an accent must be taught to foreign learners, and RP fulfils this purpose. The fact that RP is spoken by a tiny minority does not mean that learners should not learn it. This fact by itself is not enough of a reason for not teaching RP. A learner of English may need to study the features of the English language and phonology such as weak forms and diphthongs. For example, in the English Department in Syria, the learner will study these features when learning the grammar and

phonetics of the English language as they are incorporated into the course. Finally, RP, like any other accent, does change, and the changes and differences can be referred to and incorporated into teaching materials so that they are continuously updated. A learner is learning a language at a particular time and it is the RP of that time which is the accent taught. The fact that RP changes is not of itself a reason for not teaching it. It remains the accent taught to foreign learners and there is no obvious or compulsory reason to change this.

Some researchers, like Underhill (1994) and Close (1971), argue that RP is a good model to choose for teaching purposes. Commenting on the pronunciation of a newscaster on the BBC world service, Underhill (1994: 59) says: 'this type of pronunciation is useful as a target for learners to aim at in their speaking skill, as it is clear, easy to listen to and widely understood'. Close (1971: 148) also argues that RP is an appropriate accent to be taught to learners of English.

Cruttenden (2001: 297) argues that: 'The decisive criteria in the choice of any teaching model must be that it has wide currency, is widely and readily understood, is adequately described in textbooks, and has ample recorded material available for the learner'. According to Cruttenden (*ibid*), it is clear that, if these criteria are admitted, British RP is an important candidate as a basic model which is already taught throughout the world. Furthermore, if a model based on a British pronunciation is used for the foreign learner, General RP is still recommended as the target (*ibid*: 298). Fundamentally important teaching aids and reference materials - in particular dictionaries - have been based upon it (Mitchell and El-Hassan, 1989: 10). According to Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 6), RP is used as a model because it is

easy to get information about it, as it is the most fully described accent. Furthermore, prestige forms tend to be more widely accepted in a wider range of communicative situations, while non-prestige accents are often regarded as odd (ibid: 7). RP, therefore, can be considered as a widely intelligible British accent.

RP has been traditionally the type of pronunciation taught to learners of English as a second and foreign language. University authorities in Syria deem it important to present the students with a pronunciation model in order to show them the different sounds of English, how they are made and the organs of speech that are used in producing those sounds. The English Department aims at producing fluent speakers of English who can communicate effectively. Teaching RP as a model can fulfil these goals. The majority of the professors and lecturers in the Department of English at Damascus University have been themselves taught RP and educated in the UK. Therefore, it is unlikely that the students would encounter various styles of pronunciation.

RP is the Standard British model adopted widely as a reference accent for learners of English as a second/foreign language. However, it also changes across time and sociolinguistic issues associated with it point to the difficulty of retaining RP as the only reference accent for learners of English. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the issue of pronunciation has been neglected in terms of research into ELT. Some voices argue in favour of applying RP as a teaching model, while others argue against that adoption. With regard to selecting an approximate model, Received Pronunciation (RP) is chosen as an English accent model in the Department of English in Syria. Although RP is still

used in Syria as a reference accent, it is important to see what the learners currently are aiming at and what is the best model to follow. In other words, RP might be the perfect model if learners are aspiring to a native-like English proficiency. However, this might not be the case if their main aim is to be understood, rather than to be proficient according to a pronunciation model which is itself fraught with difficulties. As far as the Syrian learners in the English Department at Damascus University are concerned, they may need no more than an intelligible accent in order to be understood because they mainly contact non-native English speakers in the Syrian context. Next, a discussion of the second pronunciation aim, which is intelligibility, is presented.

2.7 Intelligibility

Intelligibility can be defined as 'being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation'; so, it is the same as 'understandability' (Kenworthy, 1987: 13). According to her, intelligibility depends on the listener's ability to accurately identify a speaker's words. The more words a listener is able to identify accurately when said by a particular speaker, the more intelligible that speaker is deemed to be. Bamgbose (1998: 10) defines intelligibility as: 'a one-way process in which non-native speakers are striving to make themselves understood by native speakers whose prerogative it was to decide what is intelligible and what is not'. While this view takes the speaker into consideration, it ignores the listener's role. Intelligibility is a mutual process of communication that involves both the speaker and the listener. Bamgbose (1998: 11) argues that: 'when a speaker and a listener communicate, they both contribute to the speech act and its interpretation'. Unintelligible communication

may be the result of a speaker's substitution of a sound, a word, or a phrase with another and the listener's inability to understand the message.

In recent decades, the idea of intelligibility has become crucial in the teaching of pronunciation. This approach implies that different features have different effects on understanding (Levis, 2005: 371). Moreover, Levis argues that: 'instruction should focus on those features that are most helpful for understanding and should de-emphasise those that are relatively unhelpful' (ibid). This assumption of differential importance is evident in most intelligibility-based arguments for pronunciation instruction. For example, Avery and Ehrlich (1992) believe that instruction should focus on supra-segmental features, and that a focus on these features leads to better and quicker speaker intelligibility than a focus on segmental features. According to Derwing and Munro (2001), most second language learners' primary aim is to be understood when they communicate in their second language by a wide range of listeners in a variety of contexts. They argue that (2001: 285):

Although a non-native accent can sometimes interfere with this goal, prior to the publication of this study, second language researchers and teachers alike were aware that an accent itself does not necessarily act as a communicative barrier. Nonetheless, there had been very little empirical investigation of how the presence of a non-native accent affects intelligibility, and the notions of 'heavy accent' and 'low intelligibility' had often been confounded.

According to Munro and Derwing (2001), some of the key findings of the study are that even heavily accented speech is sometimes perfectly intelligible and that prosodic errors appear to be a more potent force in the loss of intelligibility than

phonetic errors. However, these findings added support to some common, but weakly substantiated beliefs. Moreover, the study was significant because it also provided a framework for a program of research to evaluate the ways in which such factors as intelligibility and comprehensibility are related to a number of other dimensions (ibid).

The teaching implications of the approach to L2 speech evaluation used in this study has also proved useful in investigations of the benefits of different methods of teaching of pronunciation to ESL learners (ibid). This implies that in particular, it is now clear that learner assessments are best carried out with attention to the multidimensional nature of L2 speech, rather than with a simple focus on global accentedness. In other words, not only segmental features but also supra-segmental features should be taken into account in assessing learners. Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe (1998) have shown, for instance, that some pedagogical methods may be effective in improving intelligibility while others may have an effect only on accentedness.

Although Abercrombie (1963: 37) argues that: 'language learners need no more than a comfortably intelligible pronunciation', it is only later on that many English language teachers realized that it was a realistic teaching goal rather than native-like accent. Cruttenden (2001: 296) believes that: 'Clearly, a foreign learner who requires an adequate performance in the language for the practical purposes of everyday communication will not need to master all the variants described...Nevertheless, any teacher or learner must consider how much of the time given to the acquisition of another

language should be devoted to pronunciation and what level of performance is necessary for efficient communication’.

For Cruttenden (2001: 292), the foreign learner, even one aiming at a native pronunciation:

Should observe the rules concerning weak forms, should cultivate the correct variations of word rhythmic patterns according to the context, and should make a proper use of liaison forms. In addition, s/he should be aware of the English assimilatory tendencies governing words in context. If the learner is aiming at a native like level of production, s/he must use the special assimilated and elided word forms. The learner’s awareness of the existence of these forms is important as it will help him/her understand much of ordinary colloquial English. The foreign learner is recommended to aim at a relatively careful pronunciation of English in his own speech and, at the same time, to be aware of the features which characterize the more colloquial pronunciation s/he is likely to hear from native speakers.

As long ago as 1963, Abercrombie (1963) claims that: ‘intelligibility’ not ‘perfection’ is what language learners need’. Abercrombie (Abercrombie, 1963: 37 as quoted in Tech, 1981) argued that:

Most...language learners need no more than a comfortably intelligible pronunciation, and by ‘comfortably’ intelligible, I mean a pronunciation which can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener. I believe that pronunciation teaching should have, not a goal which must of necessity be normally an unrealised ideal, but a *limited* purpose which will be completely fulfilled: the attainment of intelligibility.

According to Kenworthy (1987: 13), setting intelligible pronunciation, rather than native-like pronunciation, as a goal

practically means that we are aiming for something 'close enough'. To put it differently, although the foreign speaker does not make precisely the same sound or use the exact feature of linkage or stress, it is possible for the listener to match the sound heard with the sound (or feature) a native speaker would use without too much difficulty.

Most researchers agree that intelligibility is the most appropriate goal for learners, although different learners may have different specific goals. The most sensible goal for learners is to be 'comfortably intelligible' so that they can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener (Kenworthy, 1987). A goal like native-likeness may be time-consuming and unrealistic. It is essential, therefore, that teachers make it clear to learners that the goal is intelligible rather than native-like pronunciation, on the grounds that the former is a realistic goal that can be achieved by learners, at a certain age (Please see chapter 4, section 4.2 below for more detail about age and the critical period hypothesis).

According to Pennington (1996), the justifiable and pressing goal is intelligibility. This aim is adequate for those who use the second language for limited communication, and for those who communicate in the second language primarily with others who speak the same first language. Consequently, it is enough to be an intelligible speaker of the target language. It can be said that this mostly applies to learners in the English Department at Damascus University as they often use English language for limited communicative purposes with other non-native speakers.

Cruttenden (2001: 299) identifies three types of intelligibility. These are:

1. Restricted intelligibility;
2. Minimal general intelligibility;
3. High acceptability.

1. Restricted intelligibility: Restricted intelligibility refers to the ways in which a speaker may sound unintelligible when s/he speaks English with the phonetic and phonological system of his/her own language. The speaker may be comprehensible only to the extent that some keywords can be decoded as a result of the general context of the situation. Learners whose aim is restricted intelligibility may seek neither to imitate a natural model nor to have any international validity. According to Cruttenden (2001: 299), this is the actual situation for many of those who use English as a second language (even teachers of English) especially within the continents of Africa and India because:

Often, English is used as a lingua franca within their own country which have a number of indigenous languages none of which is acceptable as a national language. Such types of English of restricted intelligibility may conform in many features of lexis and grammar to the native language of Britain or America and may thus in their written form pose no great problems of international intelligibility. But in the spoken form of transmission, interference from indigenous languages may erect a formidable barrier for listeners from other areas where English is spoken.

2. Minimal general intelligibility: The minimum general intelligibility means that the speaker possesses a set of distinctive elements which correspond in some measure to the inventory of the RP phonemic system and the speaker is capable of conveying a message efficiently from a native English listener's standpoint (Cruttenden, 2001: 298). Cruttenden

(2001: 313) argues that the learner's style of speech may sound foreign, but it will be generally intelligible to most native English speakers. This means that the native listener will need to adjust his/her decoding habits in much the same way that s/he does when listening to a native speaker using a regional accent of English which differs considerably from his/her own. Cruttenden (2001: 308) describes this type of performance as one in which the learner preserves the chief elements of the RP system and can convey a message with some ease to a native English listener. It is regarded as essential that the accentual characteristics of English (including rhythmic features and the associated obscuration of weak syllables) should be retained, as well as the ability to produce the common consonant clusters. But it is possible to reduce the segmental inventory of English very considerably and still retain a good level of intelligibility. The level of minimum general intelligibility may be the practical purpose of the majority of foreign learners. For example, there is no need for a taxi driver to progress beyond the level of basic intelligibility. As a result, for such a purpose, there is no need to pay too much attention to the phonetic and phonological system of the target language. Cruttenden (2001: 104) argues that: 'because of the difficulties with the RP vowel system, foreign learners may need to set the more attainable target of minimum general intelligibility'. For example, the English diphthong /əʊ/ may be given the quality which leads to confusion with /ɔ:/.

3. High acceptability: Gimson (1989:320) defines high acceptability as: 'a level of attainment in production which, for the native listener, is as readily intelligible as that of a native RP speaker and which is not immediately identifiable as foreign, and as a level of receptive ability which allows the foreign listener to

understand without difficulty all varieties and styles of RP as well as the other important forms of English'. The native listener may not identify the speaker as a non-native. The speaker is precise in the phonetic realization of phonemes accentual and intonational patterns. Many learners may aim at high acceptability for academic reasons or work purposes. Such learners may wish to communicate with non-natives easily without signalling their regional origins.

On the one hand, the minimum general intelligibility could be an attainable target for the majority of the foreign learners. They simply want to be understood when they communicate with others. Therefore, it may be satisfactory for them to be intelligible and the lingua franca core model (Please see section 2.11 about the lingua franca core) is perhaps sufficient. On the other hand, high acceptability could be the aim for learners who aspire to academic positions or work purposes. This means they may aspire for something close to RP. It is significant to investigate learners' aims of pronunciation in the English Department at Damascus University (Please see the results in Chapter 6) in order to decide the model of pronunciation that learners follow.

2.8 Factors Affecting Intelligibility

The focus of research into intelligibility has shifted away from the speaker towards the listener, with emphasis upon the contribution of listener factors. Both the speaker and the listener can influence intelligibility. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 9), for instance, state that it is likely that intelligibility is influenced by social and psychological factors. Bamgbose (1998: 11) argues that: 'intelligibility is a complex of factors comprising recognizing

an expression, knowing its meaning, and knowing what that meaning signifies in the sociocultural context'.

According to Mauranen (2006), the default assumption in human communication is mutual intelligibility between interlocutors. Nevertheless, misunderstandings also occur, and languages have resources for managing these in communicative interaction (ibid). Misunderstandings are generally expected to arise when speakers do not share a native language more frequently than between native speakers of the same language (ibid). However, it is not clear that communication breakdown is more common among second language users; the anticipation of communicative difficulty may in itself offset much of the trouble, and speakers resort to proactive strategies (ibid). Kenworthy (1987: 14) argues that intelligibility is influenced by speaker factors and listener factors.

2.8.1 Speaker Factors

Four factors are identified by Kenworthy (1987: 14). They are:

- 1 'Counts of sameness' has an impact on intelligibility. It means that although the foreign speaker does not produce precisely the same sound, or use the exact feature of linkage or stress, it is possible for the listener to match the sound heard with the sound (or feature) a native speaker would use without much difficulty;
- 2 Self-corrections, hesitations, and grammatical restructurings have an impact on understandability. They make it difficult for the listener to follow the speaker's speech;

- 3 Lack of confidence can also lead to unintelligible pronunciation. It makes the speaker difficult to understand;
- 4 Speed of speech may also affect intelligibility. When listening to somebody speaking quickly, the listener cannot seem to pick out the most important bits from the less important in order to understand the message. In other words, when learners try to speak at a lower or higher rate of speed, they may become less intelligible. However, some observations especially in the early stages of second language learning suggest that it is unlikely that non-native speakers speak quickly, sometimes they translate what they intend to say from their mother tongue to the target language and that consumes time. Not only do they tend to speak slowly, but they also tend to stress every word in an utterance including grammatical words.

2.8.2 Listener Factors

Three factors are identified. They are:

- 1 Familiarity and exposure affect the person's ability to understand a particular type of accent. The more opportunities one has to listen to a particular type of English, the more easily intelligible that accent is for him/her (Kenworthy: 1987, 14-15);
- 2 The listener's skilful way of using contextual clues from the other parts of the sentence to figure out a particular word can affect intelligibility(Kenworthy: 1987, 14-15);
- 3 The listener's expectation and attitude, such as experience with, and tolerance of, low prestige of foreign accents (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994: 10).

Intelligibility is thus a two-way process, involving at least the speaker and the listener. A speaker may, therefore, be unintelligible to a listener because of something about the listener that makes the task of understanding difficult. Intelligibility also depends on factors other than pronunciation that do not relate specifically to language learning, but to communication in general, such as whether the topic is familiar or whether it is expected in the context.

It is important to make learners aware of these factors, and to explain to them how they may lead to breakdowns in communication. Learners need to be aware of them in order to sound intelligible and communicate effectively. However, interlocutors will sound intelligible as long as the necessary factors are maintained. Since intelligibility involves both the speaker and the listener, they need to mutually understand each other to communicate successfully. Effective communication, therefore, can result in mutual understanding.

2.9 Intelligibility Problems

There are some possible problems that could result in a breakdown of intelligibility. Jenkins (2000: 83) argues that pronunciation is possibly the greatest single barrier to successful communication. It is a main cause of problematic communication between native and non-native speakers. The problems result from deviations on both segmental and supra-segmental levels. On the segmental level, they are classified into: sound substitution, sound insertion, sound deletions, and sound additions (Kenworthy, 1987: 16; Jenkins, 2000: 34). On the

supra-segmental level, they include links between words, the use of stress, the use of rhythm, and the use of intonation.

First, sound substitution is a potential source of unintelligibility because if a speaker replaces one sound for another, this may cause difficulties for the listener. Some sound substitutions, argues Kenworthy (1987: 17), are not very serious and the chances that the word will be correctly identified by the listener are good, because the substituted sound is 'close enough' to count as 'the same' to the listener. But in some instances the learner may substitute a sound which also happens to be a significant sound in English, 'a sound in its own right'. For example, a speaker may substitute the 'th' (/θ/) sound as in 'thick' with the sound /s/ as in 'sick'. The two words will be pronounced exactly the same. Kenworthy (1987: 17) argues that unless context helps the listener, or this feature of non-native speech is familiar, the listener has to decide what exactly the speaker intends to say 'My friend is sick' or 'My friend is thick'. (i.e. *stupid*).

Second, sound insertion may make the interlocutor unable to grasp the intended meaning. For example, in order to pronounce some consonant clusters, some non-native learners tend to insert a vowel as in 'speak' which may sound like a two syllable word 'es-peak'.

Third, sound deletion may result in intelligibility problem. Leaving out a sound such as a consonant or one or two of the consonants in a cluster may make the word difficult to interpret. For example, pronouncing the word 'hold' without the final 'd' would sound like 'hole'.

Fourth, the inappropriate use of stress can also result in intelligibility breakdown. Kenworthy (1987: 18) argues that if the learner does not stress one syllable more than another, or stresses the wrong syllable, it may be very difficult for the listener to identify the word. The stress pattern of a word is an important part of its identity for the native speaker (ibid). For example, if the word *'written'* is pronounced with the stress on the second syllable instead of the first, the listener may think the speaker intends to say the word *'retain'*.

Finally, the incorrect use of intonation can also be a potential source of intelligibility breakdown. According to Kenworthy (1987: 18), the importance of intonation in intelligibility is attributed to using intonation to express intentions. In other words, the pitch of the speaker's voice is a significant means by which the listener can get information. For example, the speaker's variation of pitch can reveal that s/he wants to know or to confirm something. Moreover, she argues that (ibid: 19) the effect of intonation can be cumulative. To put it differently, although the misunderstandings may be minor, they may result in judgements about the attitude, character, or way of behaving when they occur constantly. For example, if a foreign speaker always uses very low pitch, without much variation in the melody of the voice, listeners may get the impression that they are 'bored' or 'uninterested' when this is really not the case.

Intelligibility problems can also occur not only within words, but also at the borders of words. They are classified into: a linking sound, a sound merge, and a composite sound (Kenworthy, 1987: 20). For example, when using the linking consonant sound 'w', *'go in'* may sound as *'go win'*. Another example, merging the

final consonant in *'nice'* with the first consonant of *'shoe'* may result in *'ny shoe'*. Finally, English speakers may use the sound /ʃ/ (*sh*) as in *'shoe'* at the border between the two words *'this year'*. The result may sound like *'the shear'*.

2.10 Assessing Intelligibility

Kenworthy (1987: 20) argues that the measure for successful pronunciation should be the speaker's degree of intelligibility as determined by a native speaker. The most usual way of assessing intelligibility is asking a native speaker to listen to students speak and tell how difficult or easy they are to understand (Kenworthy, 1987; Jenkins, 2000). In English language examinations, the examiners' judgements of intelligibility are based on whether the examiners understand the candidates (Jenkins, 2000: 93). Unlike the native speaker who is an accurate and dependable judge, the teacher is an unsuitable judge of intelligibility (Kenworthy, 1987: 20). The reason is that the teacher's contact with the learners enables him/her to tune in to their accent. A teacher is a poor judge of intelligibility simply because of his/her familiarity with the context (ibid: 20). Judgements by teachers of English are of limited value. The ideal judges, on the other hand, are listeners who have not had an abnormal amount of exposure to non-native speech or any previous contact with the speakers being assessed. Inviting a native speaker to attend classes may be an effective way of assessing learners' intelligibility. By holding conversations with the learners, the invited listener will be able to tell how intelligible they are, and give them valuable instructions and feedback.

The assumption is that Kenworthy's argument of assessing intelligibility by a native English speaker may not apply to the Syrian context. Kenworthy (1987: 21) argues that non-native listeners can also be used as judges. The best type of non-native judge is another learner who will be able to tell how difficult it is for other non-native speakers to understand a particular speaker (ibid). The learners of English in the English Department at Damascus University communicate predominantly, and most if not all the time, with other non-native speakers, and their future use of English will be mostly with other non-native speakers.

The reference model for learners whose aim is intelligibility is, therefore, based on the lingua franca core. The model is a proposal for a research-based pedagogy for English pronunciation teaching internationally. This proposal is explained next.

2.11 English as a Lingua Franca Core: A Proposal for English as an International Language Pronunciation Teaching

The core approaches to EIL take as their starting point the fact that for various reasons, the world's two prestige accents of English, Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA), no longer provide the best goals for L2 learners (Jenkins, 2003: 125). This is particularly true of RP, whose L1 speakers now constitute less than 3 percent of the British population (Trudgill, 2001). Jenkins (2003: 125) further explains the reasons that explain the dissatisfaction with RP as a reference model, she argues that:

Not only is RP a minority accent, but its origins in the English public school system and a social élite from London and the Home Counties is nowadays more of an embarrassment than an advantage in many parts of the world including Britain. In some countries and some contexts it is even stigmatised. More importantly as far as EIL is concerned, RP is not one of the easiest accents for an L2 learners to acquire either productively, because of its large number of diphthongs, non-rhotic 'r', complex word stress rules, and tenuous relationship with spelling, or receptively because of its extensive use of weak forms. In addition, teachers with regional accents have become less willing to adopt RP or GA for teaching purposes.

Another reason is that learners are more frequently expressing their desires to preserve something of their L1 accent as a means of expressing their own identity in English rather than identifying with its NSs (ibid). The proposal of core approaches is hoped to be a realistic alternative which will change the situation. The lingua franca core is the most fully researched and detailed attempt that has as yet been made to provide EIL speakers with a core intended to guarantee the mutual intelligibility of their accents.

In contexts of English as an international language (EIL), the purpose of learning English is 'international communication rather than for communication with its native speakers NSs' (Jenkins, 2002: 85). According to her (ibid), the international speakers of EIL target the international community rather than a community of British NSs (or any other NS). Moreover, the speakers have the right to express their L1 regional group identity in English by means of their accent, as long as the accent does not jeopardize international intelligibility (ibid). Consequently, it is important to develop a research-based pedagogy for EIL Non-native speakers - non-native speakers

(NNS-NNS) interaction. Such pedagogy aims at promoting international phonological intelligibility.

According to Trudgill (1998: 29), there is a great fear that English is now used so widely around the world, and is in particular used by so many non-native speakers, that if we are not careful, and very vigilant, the language will quite rapidly break up into a series of increasingly mutually unintelligible dialects, and eventually into different languages. In other words, further phonological divergence may threaten international communication. Trudgill argues that this point of view is 'perfectly sensible' for a language that currently has more non-native than native speakers (ibid).

According to Jenkins (1998), the recent growth in the use of English as an International Language (EIL) has led to changes in learners' pronunciation needs and goals. The acquisition of a native-like accent is no longer the ultimate objective of the majority of learners, nor is communication with native speakers their primary motivation for learning English (ibid). Instead, what they need above all is to be able to communicate successfully with other non-native speakers of English from different L1 backgrounds (ibid). Jenkins (1998) argues that:

With English assuming the position of the world's major lingua franca, a radical rethink is called for in terms of the role of pronunciation and its aims within the ELT curriculum. In particular, there is an urgent need to consider the question of which pronunciation norms and models are most appropriate for classes aiming to prepare learners for interaction in EIL contexts, and to raise teachers' awareness of the issues involved.

The lingua franca core (LFC for short) provides the basis for a phonological syllabus for EIL learners. It consists of the

phonological and phonetic features which seem to be crucial as safeguards of mutual intelligibility in international language teaching ILT, as argued by Jenkins (2002: 96). Moreover, she argues that concentrating on these items is likely to be more effective than attending to every detail in which an NNS's pronunciation differs from that of the (standard) pronunciation of an NS (ibid). In addition, it is also more relevant, since the syllabus no longer attempts to address the comprehension needs of an NS listener when, in EIL, the listener is more likely to be an NNS (ibid).

2.11.1 The Core Features

The following is a summary of the main core items which should be maintained (Jenkins, 2003: 126):

1. The consonant inventory with the following provisos:

- Some substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/ are acceptable (because they are intelligible in EIL);
- Rhotic 'r' rather than non-rhotic varieties of 'r';
- British English /t/ between vowels in words such as 'latter', 'water' rather than American English flapped [r];
- Allophonic variation within phonemes permissible as long as the pronunciation does not overlap onto another phoneme, for example Spanish pronunciation of /v/ as [β] leads in word-initial positions to its being heard as /b/ can be pronounced 'facsheet' but not 'fatsheet' or 'facteet';

- /nt/ between vowels as in British English 'winter' pronounced /wɪntər/ rather than American English where, by deleting of /t/, it becomes /wɪnər/;
- Addition is acceptable, for example 'product' pronounced [pɹɒdʌkt̚] was intelligible to NNS interlocutors, whereas omission was not, for example 'product' pronounced /pɹɒdʌk/.

2. *Vowel sounds*

- Maintenance of contrast between long and short vowels for example between 'live' and 'leave';
- L2 regional qualities acceptable if they are consistent, except substitutions for the sound /ɜ:/ as in 'bird', which regularly cause problems.

3. *Production and placement of tonic (nuclear) stress*

- Appropriate use of contrastive stress to signal meaning. For example the difference in meaning in the utterances 'I came by TAXi' and 'I CAME by taxi' in which nuclear stress is shown in upper case. The former is a neutral statement of fact, whereas the latter includes an additional meaning such as 'but I'm going home by 'bus'.

2.11.2 Non-Core Features

The assumption is that non-core features are excluded from the lingua franca core simply because they are not crucially important to intelligibility in EIL contexts. Therefore, they can be considered as 'areas in which L1 transfer indicates not 'error' but (NNS) regional accent'

(Jenkins, 2002: 97). Some of these features seem to be unteachable. In other words, no matter how much classroom time is dedicated to them, learners do not acquire them (ibid). The non-core areas are as follows:

1. The consonant sounds /θ/, /ð/, and the allophone [ɫ];
2. Vowel quality, for example the difference between /bʌs/ and /bŪs/ as long as quality is used consistently;
3. Weak forms, that is the use of schwa instead of the full vowel sound in words such as 'tə', 'frəm', 'of', 'wəs', 'də'; in EIL the full vowel sounds tend to help rather than hinder intelligibility;
4. Other features of connected speech, especially assimilation, for example the assimilation of the sound /d/ at the end of one word to the sound at the beginning of the next, so that /red peɪnt/ ('red paint') becomes /reb peɪnt/.
5. The direction of pitch movements whether to signal attitude or grammatical meaning;
6. The placement of word stress which, in any case, varies considerably across different L1 varieties of English, so that there is a need for receptive flexibility;
7. Stress-timed rhythm.

If learners in the English Department at Damascus University are aiming at intelligible pronunciation, then a syllabus that enhances intelligibility will be proposed (Please see chapter 6,

sections 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 for the new course book). It will be based on LFC and the core features in particular will be stressed. The next section will deal with the two concepts of convergence and divergence.

2.12 Convergence and Divergence

Convergence is defined as a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistic/prosodic/non-vocal features including speech rate, pausal phenomena and utterance length, phonological variants, smiling, gaze and so on (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 63). There is a tendency for people to become more alike in terms of pronunciation, vocal intensities, facial expressions and the intimacy of their self-disclosures (McAllister and Keisler, 1975, cited in Giles and Clair, 1979: 46). It refers to the processes whereby individuals alter or shift their speech to resemble that of those they are interacting with. Divergence, on the other hand, is the way in which speakers accentuate speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and others in order to distinguish themselves from others (ibid: 65).

The 'English language family' at the start of the twenty-first century is described by Mesthrie (2002: 112-3) as comprising the following nine members:

1. Colonial standards in the UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa, the territories having a large settlement of 'traditional' English speakers;
2. Regional dialects, involving identifiable sub-varieties within the above territories, e.g. the broad division between north and south linguistically in England;

3. Social dialects, which involve particular varieties characteristic of social groups within a territory, e.g. Cockney within London, Appalachian English in the USA;
4. Pidgin Englishes;
5. Creole Englishes;
6. ESL (English as a second language): these are forms which have arisen in countries where English was introduced in the colonial era in face-to-face communication or in the education system in a country in which there is, or had once been, a sizeable number of speakers of English. In ESL countries such as Kenya, Sri Lanka and Nigeria English plays a key role internally in education, government and administration;
7. EFL (English as a foreign language): this refers to English used in countries in which the influence of English has been external, rather than via a large body of 'settlers'. For such countries, English plays a role mainly for international rather than intra-national communication (Japan, China and Germany);
8. Immigrant Englishes: in a context of migration to an English-dominant country, second-language varieties of English might retain their distinctiveness or merge with the English of the majority depending on the social conditions. Thus whilst English in Mexico is of the EFL variety, Chicano English of Mexican immigrants shows greater affinity with general US English, though it is still a distinctive variety;
9. Language-shift Englishes: these are varieties that arise when English replaces the erstwhile primary language of a community. Frequently the linguistic properties of ESL become stabilised; so that even though English is an L1....for many groups of native American Indians, the Irish in Ireland and Indian South Africans, the new first

language retains a distinctiveness and sense of continuity with the ancestral languages and cultures.

Jenkins (2003: 90) argues that: 'with so many different English language groupings in existence, new varieties within these groupings continuing to emerge, and the numbers of speakers of existing varieties expanding year on year, there is a very real concern as to how long the English languages will retain the potential for mutual intelligibility'. As Crystal (2002: 241-2) argues:

The growth in diversity is noticeable at both national and international levels. Nationally, urban dialects are adapting to meet the identity needs of immigrant groups such as the currently evolving Caribbean Scouse in Liverpool (UK). With over 300 languages now spoken within London, for example, it would be surprising indeed if several did not produce fresh varieties as they interact with English. The linguistic consequences of immigrant diversity have long been noted in cities in the USA, but are now a major feature of contemporary life in the urban centres of most other countries where English is a mother-tongue, notably Australia. At the international level, the evidence is overwhelming of the emergence of a new generation of nonstandard Englishes as the global reach of English extends.

The concerns about English language and the increased diversifications are echoed by Crystal (*ibid*) when he says that: 'Because no language has ever been spoken by so many people in so many places, it is difficult to predict what will happen to English as a consequence of its global expansion, but increasing variation, extending to the point of mutual unintelligibility, is already apparent in the colloquial speech of local communities...such as the code-mixed varieties now found all over the world, and identified by such names as Singlish, Taglish, and Chinglish (McArthur, 1998)'.

According to Crystal (2002), there is a prediction that the gap between standard and non-standard Englishes will widen further. Trudgill (1998) approaches the subject from a rather different perspective. According to him, English lexis will increasingly converge and pronunciation will increasingly diverge, while the grammatical situation is as yet unclear. The situation in the case of phonology is clear in the sense that the emerging picture is one of divergence. For example, *'th'-fronting*, the substitution of /θ/ and /ð/ with respectively /f/ and /v/ as in *'think'* pronounced *'fink'* and *'brother'* as *'brover'*, is spreading rapidly in both England and New Zealand but not affecting American English. Another example is that areas of England and New Zealand which have traditionally been rhotic (i.e. pronounced the *'r'* which follows vowel sounds as in *'far'* and *'part'*) are steadily becoming non-rhotic, while in North America, areas which have been non-rhotic are becoming rhotic.

Trudgill (1998: 35) concludes that: 'at the level of phonology, the dominant national native-speaker varieties of the language are slowly diverging from one another. Since there is still relatively little face-to-face contact, for the vast majority of people, between New Zealand English and Irish English, we must expect that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future'.

2.13 Listening in Terms of Pronunciation

In any course of English, a realistic amount of time should be devoted to practice in the spoken language (Cruttenden, 2001: 296). However, it is equally important to pay attention to the receptive side of the learning process. Gilbert (1984: 1) states

that the skills of listening comprehension and pronunciation are interdependent. According to Gilbert (1984: 1) if learners cannot hear English well, they are cut off from the language...If they cannot be understood easily, they are cut off from conversation with native speakers'.

Listening is prior to speaking in acquiring a satisfactory spoken performance of a foreign language. The more the learner listens and imitates native English speakers, the better. Nunan (1991:6) maintains:

In relation to listening, learners need skills in segmenting the stream of speech into meaningful words and phrases; the ability to recognise words, phrases and word clauses, ways of relating the incoming message to one's own background knowledge, and identifying the rhetorical and functional intent of an utterance or parts of an aural text; skills in interpreting rhythm, stress and intonation to identify information focus and emotional/attitudinal tone; the ability to extract the gist/essential information from longer aural texts without necessarily understanding every word.

There are some factors that make listening difficult. Anderson and Lynch (1988) point out that the difficulty of listening may result from one of the following:

1. The organisation of information: whether they are chronologically or randomly sequenced;
2. The familiarity of the topic;
3. The expression of static relationships (for example, geometric figures) or dynamic relationships (e.g. a road accident);

4. The reference expressions used (the use of pronouns rather than complete noun phrase referents make texts more difficult).

It is important that teachers make learners aware of these difficulties in order to help them overcome these problems in listening.

Emphasising the importance of listening, Mitchell and El-Hassan (1989: 16) stress the learners' need to *listen* to as much English as possible such as films, broadcasts, recording, and to hold conversations with native English speakers. Learners are advised to record and mimic the native-English language speakers as a model for listening and imitating. They argue that learners need to be guided in order to avoid the 'inculcation of errors' because it is difficult to eliminate wrong pronunciation habits that are already established (ibid: 16). Learners can monitor themselves during the process of pronunciation learning by recording themselves. With the guidance of a teacher and/or a native speaker, they can correct their mistakes. They need to repeat, and re-repeat if necessary, the wrong parts of their performance as often as they can make it so that they can perform to a nearly perfect way, no matter how boring the training may sound.

2.14 Conclusion

In conclusion, native-likeness and intelligibility are two approaches for teaching English pronunciation. The aim of native-likeness can be achieved by adopting a native reference model, such as RP, which is currently applied in the Syrian context. It is convenient for those who like to sound like native speakers. The native-likeness approach prevailed until the

1960s. Received pronunciation is a reference and prestigious accent which is commonly used in the United Kingdom such as in government and education. However, it is continuously changing, for example, most recently as a result of the influence of the Cockney accent (Honey, 1989). There are arguments that support adopting RP as a reference accent. Yet, there are also counter arguments against such adoption.

The intelligibility approach maintains that learners simply want to be understood and takes account of the fact that the hearer is more likely to be a non-native English speaker. The lingua franca core is proposed as a model for an international syllabus in the teaching of English pronunciation. Intelligibility implies that speakers are concerned mainly with effective communication and getting their message across. It is convenient especially where NNs-NNs interaction takes place. In the specified Syrian context, RP is used as a reference accent, however, the course book used does not support fully the acquisition of RP (Please see chapter 3, section 3.9 for description of the currently used pronunciation course). In addition, NNs-NNs interaction is mostly prevalent. The pronunciation course should correspond to learners aims (see chapter six for the results of the questionnaire which reveal Damascus University learners' aim of pronunciation).

In order to choose the best way of teaching pronunciation, it is necessary to review English language teaching methodology. The next chapter will present discussion of English language teaching methods.

Chapter Three

Language Teaching Methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, English language teaching methods will be considered in order to find out the best method that fulfils the learners' aim of pronunciation. The term 'method' in this section refers to common standard methods developed and conceptualized by theorists and experts. It is characterized by theoretical principles and applied through classroom techniques. It does not refer to the method of teaching adopted and actualized by teachers in the classroom, nor does it refer to what teachers actually do in the classroom. There have been many methods advocated over the years, and the following is a list of the eleven methods which are currently used arranged alphabetically (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 24):

- Audio-lingual method
- Communicative method
- Community language learning
- Direct method
- Grammar-translation method
- Natural approach
- Oral approach
- Silent way
- Situational language teaching
- Suggestopedia
- Total physical response.

While pronunciation has in the past occupied a central position in theories of oral language proficiency, the view of pronunciation embodied in traditional approaches to language teaching trivializes its true nature (Pennington and Richards, 1986). In older methods such as audio-lingualism, pronunciation has been largely identified with accurate production of isolated sounds or words, and this view is reflected in more contemporary methods such as the Silent Way. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957) regards pronunciation as central to second language proficiency, but it likewise largely restricts the domain of pronunciation to the segmental level. The goals of language teaching have changed under the impact of communicative views of language and interactive theories of language learning. Pronunciation, traditionally viewed as a component of linguistic rather than communicative competence or as an aspect of accuracy rather than of conversational fluency, has come to be regarded as of limited importance in a communicatively oriented curriculum (ibid:207). Comprehension-based approaches to teaching such as the Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach deemphasize the need for accurate production in the early stages of second language learning. In addition, the value of instruction in pronunciation has been called into question by the limited success reported for the direct teaching of this aspect of proficiency.

These methods overlap in their theoretical as well as practical approaches. In other words, what appears to be a radically new method could simply mean a variation of an existing method with the touch of new terminology (Rivers, 19[^]1: 283). As a result, for the purpose of analysis and understanding, it is important to classify these methods in terms of certain identifiable features (Please see next section 3.2 about

classification of methods). One way of doing that is to classify them according to formalist and activist approaches (Rivers, 1981).

Although there are different methods for language teaching, not all of them are of equal importance. Some of them are well known, such as the communicative language teaching approach, the audio-lingual method and the grammar-translation method. Others have attracted less followers, for example the silent way, the natural approach, the total physical response. More recently, a post-method perspective on English language teaching has been proposed by Kumaravadivelu (1994). Consequently, of the eleven methods listed, the most significant teaching methods are the following:

- 1- the grammar-translation method
- 2- the audio-lingual method
- 3- the communicative language approach
- 4- a Post-method approach

Each method will be discussed in turn. Language teaching methods are classified into formalist and activist approaches. On the one hand, the grammar-translation method represents a formal view of language teaching, whilst on the other, the audio-lingual method and the communicative language teaching approach exemplify an active approach. In addition, the concept of post-method approach will be discussed. The methods are classified according to some common features. An overview of formalist and activist approaches for language teaching and their characteristics is next.

3.2 Formalist vs. Activist Approaches

Two main streams of thought underline the theoretical basis of the language teaching methods. These two groups are represented by formalists (For example the grammar-translation approach) and activists (For example the audio-lingual method and the communicative language teaching approach). The table below summarizes the main characteristics of each approach as described in Rivers (1981:25-27)

Formalist	Activist
Language analysis: emphasis on the study of forms, the learning of rules and their application in every detail.	Language use: emphasis on the acquisition of language forms through using them in realistic language situations.
Deduction: moving from the statement of the rule to its application in the example.	Induction: moving from examples to a rule.
Details of grammar: emphasis on the final details of grammar	Functional grammar: emphasis on functional grammar and functional approach to structure
Passive classroom: in favour of passive student situation, where the students receive instruction and apply it as directed.	Active classroom: requires student's participation in the learning activities, discovery of facts of language and active use of the language for the expression of personal meaning.
Priority of writing: high value on skill in reading and accurate writing, often demonstrated by the ability to translate.	Priority of speech: emphasis on the spoken language and considers practice in oral communication to be a necessary accompaniment to fluent reading and original writing.

Table 3.1

The formalist approach emphasises grammar, translation and writing, learners are merely passive recipients and speech is not stressed. While the activist approach emphasises the acquisition of functional grammar and using language in real situations and communication. Learners are active participants in the class where speech and spoken language is stressed.

The grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method and the communicative language teaching approach will be discussed next.

3.3 The Grammar-Translation Method

The grammar-translation method dominated foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 6), and in a modified form it continues to be widely used in some parts of the world today, for example Syria. Rivers (1981: 29) observes that teachers who were themselves taught by this method, and who have not had sufficient exposure to other possible approaches to teaching a language continue with this tradition. Today, English is the world's most studied foreign language, whereas it was Latin 500 years ago. Latin was the language of education, commerce, religion and government (Richards and Rodgers 2001; Rivers, 1981). Then, the position of Latin changed so that it became a subject in the school curriculum. The study of classical Latin and the analysis of its grammar were the model for foreign language study from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The students studied Latin grammar, translation and writing. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 4) argue that: 'this approach based on the study of Latin had become the standard way of studying foreign language in schools'.

3.3.1 Aims and Objectives

The aims of this approach are:

1. Inculcating an understanding of the grammar of the language;
2. Training the students to write the new language accurately by regular practice in translating the native language;
3. Providing the students with a literary vocabulary;
4. Training the students to extract the meaning from texts in the new language by translating into the native language.

According to Rivers (1981), these aims can be achieved by:

1. Detailed grammatical explanations in the native language, followed by practice on the part of the students in writing by applying the rules they have learned in writing in the target language;
2. Translating texts from the target language into the native language;
3. Dictation helps students to associate sounds with the graphic symbols in the foreign writing system.

Richards and Rodgers (2001, 5) argue that the principal characteristics of the Grammar-translation method were the following:

1. Grammar-Translation is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language;

2. Reading and writing are the major focus; little or no attention is paid to speaking or listening;
3. The grammar rules are presented and illustrated, a list of vocabulary items is presented with their translation equivalents, and translation exercises are prescribed;
4. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice;
5. Accuracy is emphasised;
6. Grammar is taught deductively;
7. The student's native language is the medium of instruction. The target language is not used extensively in class. Yet, the teacher may ask questions from a reading text (Rivers, 1981). The students answer these questions directly from the text.

3.3.2 Critique

In recent decades the Grammar-Translation method has come under increasing attack. It sets itself limited objectives and it achieves these objectives where the students are highly intellectual and interested in abstract reasoning (Rivers, 1981: 30). In other words, such students try to understand the logic of grammar. They learn the rules and exceptions, and memorise the vocabulary lists. They become used to dictation and translation from the target language to the native language. As for their translation, it may not be a version that sounds natural to a native speaker, but, at its best, it is accurate and comprehensible. Less intellectual students may make many mistakes over and over again. Consequently, they may build up a cumulative habit of inaccuracy which is difficult to eradicate at a more advanced stage. The grammar-translation method

provides little opportunity for acquisition and relies too heavily on learning (Krashen, 1981).

In the Grammar-Translation method, teachers are less creative maybe because they follow the textbook page by page, so they do not need to show much imagination in planning the lesson. However, the student's role is passive in the sense that they are engaged monotonously in writing, vocabulary learning, copying the rules, dictation and translation corrected on the board. Little attention is paid to the communicative skills, listening, speaking and pronunciation. Therefore, students taught by the Grammar-Translation method are frequently confused and embarrassed when addressed in the language they are learning because they have little practice in using it. Moreover, communicative skills are neglected in grammar-translation because the focus is on written language and de-contextualised samples of written language whereas little stress is laid on accurate pronunciation and intonation. Much stress is laid on learning the grammatical rules and exceptions to them. The students are trained in artificial forms of language (some of them are rare, others are old-fashioned and many of them are of little practical use).

3.4 The Audio-Lingual Method

The audio-lingual method is an oral approach that involves extensive oral instructions in the target language, where translation or use of the native language is discouraged. It aims at developing the ability to listen and to speak as a basis for reading and writing. This approach emphasises the ability to communicate in the target language. This method is also referred to as 'aural-oral'. However, Brooks (1964: 263) used the term audio-lingual to avoid confusion and difficulty in

pronunciation. The notion that the native language is acquired by the infant in spoken form first, and that many languages do not have written form led to the assumption that language is 'primarily what is spoken and secondarily what is written (Brooks 1964 as quoted in Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 55). Therefore, it was believed that students would acquire the target language more easily if it was presented in a spoken form first before the written form (Rivers, 1981: 40).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 57), the audio-lingual method is characterized by the following:

1. Foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation;
2. Language skills are learned more effectively if the items to be learned in the target language are presented in spoken form before they are seen in written form;
3. Analogy provides a better foundation for language learning than analysis;
4. The meanings that the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context and not in isolation.

Audio-lingualists were strongly influenced by the psychologist B.F. Skinner who developed a theory of learning applicable to language learning in his influential book ***Verbal Behaviour*** (1975). According to Rivers (1964: 5), the linguistic principles which form the basis for language teaching methodology were:

1. language is speech, not writing;
2. A language is a set of habits;
3. Teach the language, not about the language;

4. A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say;
5. Languages are different.

The language teaching methodologists were thus armed with behavioural psychology. To the behaviourist, there are four elements represented in the following figure:



Richards and Rodgers (2001: 57)

Richards and Rodgers (2001: 56) argue that:

To apply this theory to language learning is to identify the organism as the foreign language learner, the behaviour as the verbal behaviour, the stimulus as what is taught or presented of the foreign language, the response as the learner's reaction to the stimulus, and the reinforcement as the extrinsic approval and praise of the teacher or fellow students or the intrinsic self-satisfaction of target language use.

Audio-lingualists, therefore, argue for the development of oral skills as the goal for foreign language teaching.

3.4.1 Aims and Objectives

Short-range and long-range objectives are distinguished when using this method. Short-range objectives include training in listening comprehension, accurate pronunciation, recognition of

speech symbols as graphic signs on the printed page, and ability to reproduce these symbols in writing (Brooks, 1964: 111). Long-range goals must be language as the native speaker uses it (Brooks, 1964: 107). Listening, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are important to the development of oral proficiency. In other words, speaking skills also depend on the accurate production of phonological features of the target language, the correct use of the key grammatical rules and the knowledge of sufficient vocabulary (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 58).

Language skills are taught. They are introduced as listening, speaking, reading and writing respectively. The syllabus, therefore, includes phonology, morphology and syntax that are derived from a contrastive analysis of the differences between the native language and the target language. Actually, these differences could be the source of difficulty which the learner may encounter.

Although the teaching of reading and writing may be introduced, they are dependent on prior oral skills. Reading and writing are introduced later in the learning process. The learners are taught to read and write what they already have learned orally. According to Brooks (1964: 50), recognition and discrimination are followed by imitation, repetition and memorization. The activities practiced in the audio-lingual classroom consist of dialogues and drills. If the teacher is not a native speaker of the target language, a tape recorder is used as a model for dialogues and drills. Emphasis is laid on correct pronunciation. Students are introduced first to aural input such as listening. To avoid distraction, the written words are introduced later in the teaching process.

In the audio-lingual class, the following procedures are observed (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 64):

- First, students hear a model dialogue that contains key structures. They repeat individually or in chorus. Special attention is paid to pronunciation. The mistakes are immediately corrected. The dialogue is gradually memorized;
- The dialogue is adapted to the students' interests or situation, through changing certain words or phrases;
- Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as the basis for pattern drills of different kinds. If introduced, grammatical explanation is kept to a minimum at this stage;
- The students may refer to their textbooks, and follow-up reading, writing, or vocabulary activities based on the dialogue may be introduced;
- Follow-up activities may take place in the language laboratory, where further dialogue and drill work is carried out.

3.4.2 Critique

The audio-lingual method has been criticised for the following two reasons. Firstly, students often fail to transfer skills acquired in the classroom to real communication situations outside the classroom. Secondly, the procedures are found to be boring, therefore, off putting to the student. As a result, the linguist Noam Chomsky, in considering language learning, rejected both the behaviourist and the structuralist approaches to language learning. He (1966: 153) argues that: 'language is not a habit

structure. Ordinary linguistic behaviour characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy'. So, it is not simply a matter of habit formation. In other words, much of human language use is not imitated behaviour but is created anew from underlying knowledge of abstract rules (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 66). Sentences, therefore, are not learned by imitation and repetition but 'generated' from the learner's underlying 'competence' (ibid). As a result, some scholars (Widdowson, 1978), argue that language teaching needs to focus on communicative proficiency. For example, Widdowson's book *Teaching Language as Communication* (1978) stresses the communicative acts underlying the ability to use language for different purposes. While the audio-lingual method provides the opportunity for some acquisition to occur, it cannot measure up to newer methods which provide much more comprehensible input in a low-filter environment (Krashen, 1981).

3.5 The Communicative Approach

Pronunciation is not only a matter of producing and receiving the sounds of speech. It has a communicative aspect, and it is the communicative aspect of pronunciation that has recently been the major concern of linguists and phoneticians. In other words, pronunciation can not be any more taught or studied in isolation. Discussing the importance of pronunciation for meaning, Pennington and Richards (1986: 208) say: 'It is artificial to divorce pronunciation from communication and other aspects of language use'.

This approach is based on the idea that language is acquired through communication. It entails that students can learn the

language by using it. Therefore, the communicative approach focuses on engaging learners in real-life communication in the target language. In principle, this approach came into being as a reaction to the audio-lingual and the grammar-translation methods of foreign language learning/teaching. Linguists who support this approach, for example Brumfit (1980), state that the aim of second or foreign language teaching should be the development of communicative competence taking into consideration the appropriateness of the utterance in the particular socio-cultural context in which it was uttered.

According to Savignon (1991), not long ago, language teaching methods and materials were affected mainly by the prevailing influences of the American structuralist linguistics and behaviourist. Second/foreign language teachers talked about communication in terms of language skills which are classified into four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skill categories were widely accepted and provided a ready-made framework for methods manuals, learner course materials, and teacher education programs (ibid). Savignon (1991: 264) argues that:

In the United States, Hymes (1971) had reacted to Chomsky's characterization of the linguistic competence of the ideal native speaker and proposed the term communicative competence to represent the use of language in social context, the observance of sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy. His concern with speech communities and the integration of language, communication, and culture was not unlike that of Firth and Halliday in the British linguistic tradition (see Halliday, 1978). Hymes' communicative competence may be seen as the equivalent of Halliday's meaning potential. Similarly, his focus was not language learning but language as social behaviour.

At the same time, in a research project at the University of Illinois, Savignon (1972) used the term communicative competence to characterize the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge (Savignon, 1991: 264).

Communicative language teaching (CLT) thus can be seen to derive from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes, at least, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research (Savignon, 1991). The focus has been the elaboration and implementation of programs and methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events (ibid).

By means of this approach, learners will develop their communicative competence. Communicative competence is defined as the actual demonstration of knowledge in *real* second language situations and for *authentic* communication purposes (Canale and Swain, 1980). They point out that communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. In their point of view, Canale and Swain (1980) point out that an integrative theory of communicative competence is a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social contexts to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse.

By definition, communicative language teaching (CLT) puts the focus on the learner. Learners' communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional

competence. This implies global, qualitative evaluation of learner achievement as opposed to quantitative assessment of discrete linguistic features. Controversy over appropriate language testing persists, and many a curricular innovation has been undone by failure to make corresponding changes in evaluation. The attraction for many of a multiple-choice test with single right answers that a machine can translate into a score is undeniable. Qualitative evaluation of written and oral expression is time-consuming and not so straightforward.

Advocates of the communicative approach believe that foreign language teaching could be seen in terms of notions and functions; they consider students' needs to learn a foreign language as communicative needs (Savignon, 1991: 266). Students' motivation to learn comes as a result of their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics (ibid). Depending upon their own preparation and experience, teachers themselves differ in their reactions to communicative language teaching (ibid). On the one hand, there are some teachers who feel understandable frustration at the seeming ambiguity in discussions of communicative ability (ibid). This means that negotiation of meaning is well and good, but this view of language behaviour lacks precision and does not provide a universal scale for assessment of individual learners (ibid). Ability is viewed, rather, as variable and highly dependent upon context and purpose. On the other hand, other teachers welcome the opportunity to select and/or develop their own materials, providing learners with a range of communicative tasks (ibid). And they are comfortable relying on more global, integrative judgments of learner progress. Proponents of communicative language teaching offer a view of the language learner as a partner in learning; they encourage learner

participation in communicative events and self-assessment of progress (Savignon, 1991: 273).

Ellis (1996) examines the universal relevance of the communicative approach to language teaching in view of the cultural conflicts arising from the introduction of a predominantly Western language teaching approach to Far Eastern cultures. The central argument is that, for the communicative approach to be made suitable for Asian conditions, it needs to be both culturally attuned and culturally accepted (ibid). It is suggested that 'mediating' can serve as a useful tool in this process. In this way the nature of what eventually takes place in the classroom involves the teacher's ability to both filter the method, to make it appropriate to the local cultural norms, and to re-define the teacher-student relationship in keeping with the cultural norms embedded in the method itself (ibid).

The communicative approach aims at developing communicative competence. Some characteristics of the communicative language teaching approach are the following:

- Language is a system for the expression of meaning;
- The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication;
- The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses;
- The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 161).

There are some principles that underline the communicative approach. They can be inferred from communicative language teaching practices. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 161) refer to three principles. Firstly, the communicative principle: activities that involve real communication promote learning. Secondly, the task principle: activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. Thirdly, the meaningfulness principle: language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

3.5.1 Objectives

Piepho (1981: 8) discusses the following levels of objectives in the communicative approach:

- An integrative and content level (language as a means of expression);
- A linguistic and instrumental level (language as a semiotic system and as an object of learning);
- An effective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct (language as a means of expressing values and judgements about oneself and others);
- A level of individual learning needs (remedial learning based on error analysis);
- A general educational level of extra-linguistic goals (language learning within the school curriculum).

As for the syllabus, there has been a debate on the nature of the syllabus for communicative language teaching. The Council of Europe, argue Richards and Rodgers (2001: 163), expanded and developed this into a syllabus that includes:

Descriptions of the objectives of foreign language courses for European adults, the situations in which they might typically need to use a foreign language (e.g., travel, business), the topics they might need to talk about (e.g., personal identification, education, shopping), the functions they needed language for (e.g., describing something, requesting information, expressing agreement and disagreement), the notions make use of in communication (e.g., time, frequency, duration), as well as the vocabulary and grammar needed.

According to Sinclair and Couthard (1975), some syllabuses describe interactional situations, such as teacher-student interaction. Some designers argue that only learners know exactly their needs, and communicative resources. Others support the model proposed by Brumfit (1980), which favours a grammatically based syllabus around which notions, functions, and communicative activities are grouped. The activities and exercises are variable to help in engaging the learner in communication. The tasks involve negotiation of information, information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction.

According to Breen and Candlin (1980: 110), the learner is a negotiator. The teacher, on the other hand, has two main roles (ibid:99). The first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. In addition, they refer to secondary roles such as: organizer of resources, guide within the classroom, and researcher and learner. Other roles are need analyst, counsellor, and group process manager (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 167). According to Willis (1996), the aim of communication tasks is to stimulate real communication in the target language. Task-based learning combines the best insights from communicative

language teaching with an organised focus on language form. However, task-based learning does not emphasise pronunciation, based mostly on Western culture, emphasises learner autonomy, and not filled into books.

3.6 Audio-Lingual Method vs. Communicative Approach

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) point out the main differences between the audio-lingual method and the communicative approach. According to them (1983:91-93):

Audio-lingual	Communicative Language Teaching
Attends to structure and form more than meaning	Meaning is paramount
Demands memorization of structure-based dialogues	Dialogues, if used, centre around communicative function and are not normally memorized
Language items are not necessarily contextualized	Contextualization is the basic premise
Language learning is learning structures, sounds or words	Language learning is learning to communicate
Mastery or 'over-learning' is sought	Effective communication is sought
Drilling is a central technique	Drilling may occur, but peripherally
Native-speaker-like pronunciation is sought	Comprehensible pronunciation is sought
Grammatical explanation is avoided	Any device that helps the learner is acceptable _ varying

	according to their age, interest, etc.
Communicative activities only come after a long process of rigid drills and exercises	Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning
The use of the student's native language is forbidden	Judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible
Translation is forbidden at early levels	Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it
Reading and writing are deferred till speech is mastered	Reading and writing can start from the first day, if desired
The target linguistic system will be learned through the overt teaching of the patterns of the system	The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate
Linguistic competence is the desired goal	Communicative competence is the desired goal (i.e., the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately)
Varieties of language are recognised but not emphasized	Linguistic variation is a central concept in materials and methodology
The sequence of units is determined solely by principles of linguistic complexity	Sequencing is determined by any consideration of content, function or meaning that maintains interest
The teacher controls the learners and prevents them from doing anything that	Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language

conflicts with the theory	
'language is habit' so errors must be prevented at all costs	Language is created by the individual, often through trial and errors
Accuracy, in terms of formal correctness, is a primary goal	Fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in the context
Students are expected to interact with the language system, embodied in machines or controlled materials	Students are expected to interact with other people, either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writing
The teacher is expected to specify the language that students are to use	The teacher cannot know exactly what language the students will use
Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in the structures of the language	Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language

Table 3.2

The table represents the main differences between the audio-lingual method and the communicative language teaching approach. For the purpose of this work, the most significant discrepancy is that an audio-lingual approach seeks native-like pronunciation, whereas the communicative language teaching approach seeks intelligible pronunciation. This will help identifying the appropriate teaching method that corresponds to learners' aim of pronunciation in the English Department at Damascus University after finding out the aim (i.e. native-like pronunciation or intelligible pronunciation).

3.7 Post-method Approach

Due to the dissatisfaction with the limitations of the concept of method, English language teaching is moving from the concept of method to a post method era, an era which is sensitive to the issue of culture (Please see Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Instead of trying to impose language teaching methods developed in the west, a post method methodology means finding an approach which is context-sensitive and based on local realities. This pedagogy aims at developing an approach which is suitable for a particular group of teachers and learners in a particular context.

It is assumed that a method which is suitable in one part of the world is not necessarily suitable for all parts of the world. It is not advised that teachers adopt a method whether or not this method is culturally appropriate, because context-sensitivity should be taken into consideration.

3.7.1 Limitation of the Concept of Method

The term 'method' does not refer to what teachers actually do in the classroom; rather, it refers to established methods conceptualised by experts (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 24). There are some limitations for the concept of method. Firstly, methods are based on idealised concepts geared toward idealised contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 28). However, language teaching situations are numerous. As a consequence, no idealised method can visualise all the variables in advance in order to provide situation-specific suggestions that practicing teachers sorely need to tackle the challenges they confront everyday of their professional lives (ibid). Secondly, such an

approach is inadequate to explain the complexity of language teaching operations around the world (ibid). As a consequence, the concept of method has resulted in dissatisfaction among some teachers. Therefore, they may try to avoid commitment to a particular method. Most of the teachers, alternatively, will try to rely on their intuitive ability and experiential knowledge. It is common that most teachers do not follow any particular method. Moreover, even if some teachers follow a particular method, they do not conform to its theoretical and practical principles. In other words, methods do not tell us much about what really goes on in the classroom.

According to Widdowson (1990: 50), it is quite common to hear that teachers do not subscribe to any particular method but that they are 'eclectic'. Stern (1992: 11) argues that the eclectic method is weak because it offers no criteria according to which we can determine which is best theory. Moreover, it does not present ideals or practices. The eclectic theory, therefore, is ambiguous. According to Omaggio (1986: 44), instructors need to focus on a hierarchy of priorities rather than on already pre-packed principles.

Macedo (1994: 8) advocates an 'anti-method pedagogy'. Such pedagogy should be 'informed by critical understanding of the socio-cultural context that guides our practices so as to free us from the beaten path of methodological certainties and specialisms'.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2003: 33), there are three fundamentals that construct a solid foundation for post-method pedagogy. The first fundamental is that post-method signifies the search for an alternative **TO** method rather than **AN**

alternative method. The second fundamental is that post-method indicates teacher autonomy. The third fundamental is that it refers to principled pragmatism. Widdowson (1990: 30) describes the relationship between 'theory and practice, ideas and their actualization can be realized within the domain of application, that is, through the immediate activity of teaching'. Thus, Kumaravadivelu (2003: 33) argues that, classroom learning can be shaped and reshaped by teachers as a result of self-observation, self-analysis, and self-evaluation.

There are three parameters that form the underlying structure of this pedagogy. These are the pedagogic parameters of: particularity, practicality, and possibility.

The first ideal is the parameter of particularity. According to Kumaravadivelu (2003: 34), the parameter of particularity entails that:

Any language pedagogy, to be relevant, must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular socio-cultural milieu.

The second ideal is the parameter of practicality. It refers to the relationship between theory and practice. It is based on the belief that the theory of practice will be useful and effective only when generated by the practicing teacher. Teacher generated theory of practice is different from the concept that theorists generate knowledge and teachers consume it (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 544).

The third ideal is the parameter of possibility. Kumaravadivelu (2003: 544) argues that: 'this parameter is derived from the work of Freirean critical pedagogy that seeks to empower classroom participants so that they can critically reflect on the social and historical conditions contributing to create the cultural forms and interested knowledge they encounter in their lives' (ibid).

In addition, macro-strategies are based on the three parameters to provide the fundamentals for a post-method pedagogy. The macro-strategic framework includes the following basics (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 39):

- Maximize learning opportunities;
- Minimize perceptual mismatches;
- Facilitate negotiated interaction;
- Promote learner autonomy;
- Foster language awareness;
- Activate intuitive heuristics;
- Contextualise linguistic input;
- Integrate language skills;
- Ensure social relevance;
- Raise cultural consciousness.

In brief, the concept of post-method is an invitation which implies that context and culture sensitivity should be taken into consideration. It is based on certain parameters and on macro-strategic principles.

As discussed earlier, there are many approaches for language teaching, some of them are widely used. The most significant ones are the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual

method, the communicative language teaching approach, and the post method approach. The next section will shed light on the method of language teaching which is currently applied in Syria, and the currently used course book in teaching pronunciation.

3.8 The Method of Teaching English in Syria

Although out-dated elsewhere in the world, the grammar-translation method is the one still adopted in some countries, such as Syria. This approach is still applied not only in universities, but also in schools. The audio-lingual method, the communicative approach and the post-method may offer convenient alternatives to the grammar-translation approach. The audio-lingual approach might, for example, be best for those interested in native-like pronunciation production, whereas the communicative approach could be more suitable for those interested in intelligible pronunciation (Please see section 3.6 for a contrast between the two methods).

The current method of teaching English in Syrian schools and universities depends heavily and almost purely on the teaching of English grammar. Syria has overlooked over 25 years of development in ELT. Although there is no obvious reason, yet the application of the grammar-translation method could possibly be explained by the hope that learners may apply these rules in speaking or writing English. Little attention has been paid to the teaching of spoken English and pronunciation. The majority of English lessons at schools are taught in a monotonous way. This means that learners are used to reading a text in English, translating it into Arabic and focusing on the grammatical rules and particular tenses. As a consequence of the

grammar-translation method, the attention dedicated to the teaching of spoken English and pronunciation is barely enough. This is reflected in the learners' performance and pronunciation. This method does not assist learners in efficient communication in the English language. Moreover, it deals with learners as passive recipients whose main task is to learn more vocabulary and rules and reproduce them in writing and speaking.

Because of this method, which results in very little training and practice in speaking and listening to English, it is more likely that most learners find themselves in embarrassing and confusing situations when addressed in the English language. Learners may not be competent in spoken English when the grammar-translation method is the main one applied in teaching. However, there are other approaches to English language teaching that could be more beneficial and valid.

One example is the audio-lingual approach, which emphasises speaking and listening skills rather than writing and reading. In addition, this approach depends essentially on dialogues by listening to the dialogues and repeating certain structures of them (Rivers, 1981). Another example is the communicative language teaching approach. This approach aims at developing the learners' communicative skills. A third example is the post-method pedagogy which is alternative to method rather than alternative method that takes into account context sensitivity.

Next, the pronunciation course taught currently at Damascus University in the English Department will be discussed. In addition, the assessment method used will be presented.

3.9 A Description of the Pronunciation Course Taught at Damascus University

The existing course taught to learners in the English Department at Damascus University is called ***General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English*** by Al-Shehabi (1998) (Please see appendix 1 for the contents of the book and appendix 2 for an example from the book). The book provides theoretical information and ignores practical activities. There are no follow-up activities. The course seeks to provide the Arab learner with (1) a general outline of how sounds are produced, (2) a description of the sounds of English, and (3) illustrations of attested common errors which Arab learners make. The variety of English upon which this book is based is Standard English, and the RP accent (Please see chapter 2, section 2.5). The contents of this book suggest that the main focus is on the segmental features (Please see Appendix 1), whereas the supra-segmental features are dealt with briefly (Please see Appendix 1). Some supra-segmental features of pronunciation are not discussed at all.

In terms of organisation, the book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces some definitions and theoretical concepts such as the branches of phonetics. The book deals exclusively with articulatory phonetics. The second chapter deals mainly with the organs of speech. For example, lips, the teeth, etc. This helps learners not only in learning the terminology used in describing the organs of speech such as hard palate, velum, etc., but also in describing the sounds that they produce such as 'Alveolar'. The third chapter classifies vowels and consonants. The vowels are classified according to the tongue position such as front, and according to the shape of lip such as close lip-

rounding. Then, the chapter discusses the cardinal vowels. The classification of consonants is also presented in this chapter. The consonants are classified according to the following criteria: (a) place of articulation, (b) manner of articulation and (c) the presence or absence of voice. The technical terms used in describing the English consonants are defined so that the learners are introduced to the phonetic terminology, such as plosive. The learners are introduced briefly to the notions of Broad and Narrow Transcription, Phonemic analysis, and phonemes and allophones. The next chapter, chapter four, gives a detailed description of the English RP sounds. In addition to the definitions of the vowels, the diphthongs and the consonants, further illustrations about occurrences, variants, i.e. the various ways in which the sound may be pronounced in America, southern England, and Scotland are presented, and common errors are also discussed to acquaint the learners with their mistakes due to the mispronunciation of that specific sound. Finally, a figure is drawn in order to show the exact position of the sound described (Please see appendix 2 for a sound representation). The last chapter, chapter five, is a brief discussion of the concepts of assimilation, stress, rhythm and intonation. These concepts are dealt with in a general and superficial way. Theoretical explanation of these concepts is overemphasized in this chapter. Practical activities that enforce the theoretical discussion are missing.

It is currently taught to students in the second academic year during the second term which lasts for ten weeks. A two-hour lecture is delivered in the English language each week on pronunciation. Almost six hundred students listen to the teacher during the lecture. Interaction is not encouraged and learners are merely passive recipients. The lecturer and the book provide

the model for pronunciation. The lecturer pronounces the sounds which are described theoretically. The course book is taught by means of theoretical lectures and practical seminar meetings. Students attend twice a week, once for the lecture and once for the seminar. In the theoretical lecture, learners are introduced to the individual sounds of the English Received Pronunciation (RP). The lecturer is the information-giver while the learners are passive receivers. Unfortunately, the seminar does not engage learners successfully in the practice of pronunciation. The learners mainly practice writing phonetic transcriptions of some sentences. In addition, the International Phonetic Alphabet is elaborated upon.

As far as the teaching goal is concerned, the focus is on the development of communicative effectiveness and intelligibility, rather than on the acquisition of native-like pronunciation. Pennington and Richards (1986) recommend that teaching should aim at gradually reducing the amount of native language influence on pronunciation in the second language. According to them, pronunciation should be taught as an integral part of oral language use, as a means to creating an interactional meaning, not merely as an oral production of words and sentences. The course book fails significantly in achieving an aim such as this.

Both the course-book and the lecturer provide the model for pronunciation. The book is theoretical and the teacher is the speaker of the RP English sounds. There is nothing in between. Both models, the teacher and the book, are outdated. Notions of RP, for example, have been superseded by notions of intelligibility. The book does not allow for student participation because it does not contain any exercises. The exam is based on the grammar-translation method. All of this seems to suggest

that the whole course needs to be revised; not only the method of delivery, but also the book itself, and the assessment. This can be achieved by taking into account recent relevant approaches to English language teaching and learning outlined in section (3.1).

The course book acts on the assumption that students are interested in phonetic theory. Consequently, it fails to bridge satisfactorily the gap between the teaching of phonetic theory and the practice. Moreover, it presumes that the teaching of phonetic theory is sufficient for the learners to acquire a good pronunciation. It fails to appreciate that theory needs to be turned to practice so that learners can understand how phonetic theory can be applied. A primary aim of the research undertaken for this thesis is to recommend revisions to the course book so that students can develop their communicative skills in general and pronunciation skills in particular.

The course is examined at the end of the term. In the exam, there is no oral component and the learner is not required to speak at all, s/he is supposed to write instead. The exam is multiple choice (Please see appendix 3 for sample exam questions). The English Department aims at teaching learners how to be intelligible so that they can understand spoken English and speak fluently. In addition, they are expected to be intelligible to listeners, recognise meaning and capable of applying intonational patterns correctly, and can be understood in communicative situations. Assessment is important for testing learners competence. Dudley-Evans and John (1998: 210) argue that:

Assessment is a process of measuring, and one of formal method of measuring is testing....The reasons for assessment can be grouped under two main headings: for feedback to aid learning and for a comparable measure of competence...Assessment as an aid to learning encompasses benefits such as reinforcement, confidence building, involvement and on strengths.

The course book, ***General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English*** is assessed by means of 100 multiple choice questions (Please see appendix 3 for a copy of exam questions). The questions test learners comprehension of the theoretical knowledge of the phonological definitions studied throughout the course. The total exam mark is 100. they are divided as 80 for the exam and 20 for the seminar. It is left entirely to the student to choose if they want to attend an interview at the end of the course or answer the exam questions in the exam. In the interview, the student is asked to give a definition of a vowel, a diphthong or a consonant. They are asked to pronounce them correctly. In addition, they are asked to transcribe some sentences phonetically. Clearly, students are tested on the accurate production of isolated individual sounds in de-contextualised words. The exam questions are not different from those of the seminar. Of course, the fact that the learners even though they pass the exam, it does not necessarily mean that they are actually making progress in their actual pronunciation. This is because it could simply mean they have memorized the theory they have been studying throughout the course. As far as the validity of the test is concerned, Henning (1987: 89) argues that:

Validity in general refers to the appropriateness of a given test or any of its component parts as a measure of what it is supposed to measure. A test is said to be valid to the extent that it measures what it is supposed

to measure. It follows that the term valid when used to describe a test should usually be accompanied by the preposition *for*. Any test then may be valid for some purpose but not for others.

The test is valid in testing articulatory phonetics, yet it is invalid in testing the supra-segmental features. This test is not feasible in terms of testing learners' intelligibility. Therefore, learners' performance is limited to the level of segmental features and word level and unsatisfactory beyond that level. Multiple-choice questions do not test learners' pronunciation effectively.

Recently, the pronunciation teaching materials have no longer been limited to the segmental level. The focus has shifted to the teaching of supra-segmental features because of the great role of supra-segmental features in successful communication (Please see Underhill, 1994; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994; Pennington, 1996).

Most of the graduates of the English Department at Damascus University are expected to make themselves intelligible to the listener. They are expected to hold a conversation with both native and non-native English speakers, to speak English fluently, to be able to apply stress and intonational patterns successfully to what they say, and to be able to express themselves when they communicate orally. However, the course taught in the English Department at Damascus University and the book upon which it is based, is only concerned with segmental phonology and accurate production of sounds in English, which may not of themselves be adequate to make learners sound intelligible. The focus on theoretical segmental features is not supported by practice. Therefore, there may be a need to incorporate supportive activities in addition to the supra-

segmental features of pronunciation in a new course book, which gives priority to enhancing learners' intelligibility.

It is clear that the aims of the current course book do not correspond to those of the English Department. The reason is that the mere focus on segmental features is no longer sufficient to produce intelligible speakers. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the course book to incorporate the teaching of supra-segmental features of pronunciation. Whilst detailed attention is given to the production and description of the English sounds, less attention is given to the supra-segmental features of pronunciation. In their evaluation of the status of the teaching of pronunciation from the perspective of communicative language teaching, Pennington and Richards (1986) suggest that the accuracy at the segmental level is no longer the main aim of the teaching of pronunciation. According to them, teaching isolated forms of sounds and words fails to address the fact that in communication, many aspects of pronunciation are determined by positioning of elements within longer stretches of speech.

It is essential to take account of participants' expectations of the course. Whereas theory is overemphasized, practice is neglected completely. Learners may only need to speak intelligible English in reality. However, the course book may not be supportive for the acquisition of intelligible English. The fact that the book is based on theoretical instructions which are not followed or supported by communicative activities and practice that reinforce theory may not be satisfactory for the learners.

It can be argued that intelligibility might be the aim to be aspired to in the English Department. The graduates mostly contact other non-native English speakers. They will use

pronunciation mainly for communicative purposes with other non-natives. In addition, there is an urgent need to reconsider the book and to incorporate supra-segmental features that help in enhancing learners' intelligibility.

In order to decide which method of the ones outlined in section (3.1) could be appropriate in the Syrian context, students will be given a questionnaire, the results of which will reveal which method is the most appropriate for teaching pronunciation. In other words, if the learners are interested in developing native-like pronunciation skills, then the audio-lingual method might be a suitable alternative. If the learners are interested in intelligible pronunciation, then the communicative language approach may be the candidate.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has shed light on the language teaching methods and in particular on the most significant ones in terms of the aims and the critique of these methods. The grammar-translation, the audio-lingual, the communicative and the post-method approaches have been discussed.

The next chapter will discuss in detail the factors that have an impact on pronunciation learning. In other words, age, identity and first language interference could affect pronunciation acquisition. Moreover, a detailed contrastive analysis is presented between both the Arabic language (the native-language in Syria) and the English language.

Chapter Four

Factors Affecting Pronunciation Learning

4.1 Introduction

In this section, a discussion of the factors that may affect the process of learning pronunciation is presented. These factors need to be taken into consideration as they shed light on the factors that may affect learners' performance. Moreover, they can tell us what are the difficulties that may hinder learners from acquiring intelligible accent and how it is possible to help them.

There are some factors that appear to influence how adults learn pronunciation. Kenworthy (1987: 4) lists some factors that may influence the learning process of pronunciation. They include:

1. Amount of exposure: the amount of the learner's exposure to the English language plays an important role as far as the pronunciation skills are concerned. It should be taken into consideration if the learner is 'surrounded' by English as this constant exposure to the English language affects the learner's pronunciation skills;
2. Phonetic ability: some studies have shown that some people enjoy the 'auditory discrimination ability' because they have 'better ear'. They are able to discriminate between two sounds better than others; and/or they are able to mimic sounds more accurately. Training, in this respect plays an important role as poor as well as good discriminators benefit from different pronunciation tasks;

3. Motivation and concern for good pronunciation: some learners are more motivated than others to improve their accent. This concern means that they really care for being understood by listeners. For example, 'correct me when I am wrong' is one manifestation of their concern.

Cruttenden (2001: 298) argues that learners' aims are determined by certain factors such as age, natural ability, motivation and the use to which s/he intends to put the language. The following factors can also affect the process of pronunciation learning.

1. Age and the critical period hypothesis;
2. Strength of ethnic identity;
3. First language interference .

In the following section, further analysis and discussion will be presented on the effect of these factors. Learners may find it difficult to master native-like pronunciation skills due to the impact of these factors. Next, the factor of age and the critical period hypothesis is discussed.

4.2 Age and the Critical Period Hypothesis

One main factor to be taken into consideration is age. The age factor is a much-researched and controversial topic. It is important to consider the fact that adult learners may or may not succeed in acquiring native-like production. The general consensus is that age occupies an important position in the study of pronunciation. As many authors (Lenneberg, 1967; Patkowski, 1990; Long, 1990; Scovel, 1988) have argued, pronunciation is affected by a critical period of second language

acquisition. In other words, the acquisition of native-like pronunciation is not successful after the end of this period.

While some studies (Long, 1990; Scovel, 1988) have proved that adult learners of a second language will not acquire a native-like accent, other researchers have argued that it is not impossible for late learners to attain a native-like level of proficiency. They have shown that the acquisition of a native-like production is possible in the case of high motivation and constant contact with native speakers of the target language. They have conducted some empirical studies to support their argument, and the results have confirmed their contrastive viewpoint (Birdsong, 1992; Bongaerts, 1995; Klein, 1995).

One of the authors who have argued for the critical period hypothesis, in an old yet important book, is Lenneberg (1967). He proposed the hypothesis that there is a critical period, between age two and puberty, for the acquisition of language. He argued that languages could no longer be completely successfully acquired after the close of that period. Since the sixties, Lenneberg's views have been challenged, refined, and/or redefined. Patkowski (1990 as quoted in Birdsong, 1999: 101) defines the critical period as: 'an age-based constraint on the acquisition of full native fluency in a second language'. Birdsong (1999: 1) states that according to the critical period hypothesis there is 'a limited developmental period during which it is possible to acquire a language, be it L1 or L2, to normal native like levels', while the ability to learn language declines after the close of this period. Second language pronunciation is the most vulnerable of the various linguistic domains to critical period effects (Long, 1990; Scovel, 1988).

Consistent with the critical period hypothesis, Patkowsky (1980) has found that age is the factor that has the most significant impact on the success of learning a second language in the case of immigrants to the United States of America. According to Long (1990: 266), phonological attainment is strongly conditioned by learner age. Long (1990: 280) argues that:

The ability to attain native-like phonological abilities in an SL begins to decline by age 6 in many individuals and to be beyond anyone beginning later than age 12, no matter how motivated they might be or how much opportunity they might have. Native-like morphology and syntax only seem to be possible for those beginning before age 15.

In line with most proponents of a critical period for second language acquisition, Long (1990: 280) argues that the decline in abilities is due to incremental losses of neural plasticity. Johnson and Newport (1989) believe that after the age of six, the ability to learn a second language begins to decline. Moreover, the attainment is beyond anybody who begins after twelve regardless of how motivated he/she is. Gimson (1989: 301) argues that it is 'rare for the foreign learner to approach the native's receptive and productive competence'.

Scovel (1988: 185) predicted that learners who start to learn a second language later than age twelve will never be able 'to pass themselves off as native speakers and will end up easily identified as non-native speakers of that language'. Bongaerts (1999) argues that the idea of a critical period for the acquisition of pronunciation is based on the assumption that some basic abilities that are available to young children are no longer available to adult learners. The reason is that basic neurologically based abilities are lost around the onset of

puberty. Spolsky (1989) has observed that the younger one starts to learn a second language, the better chance one has to develop a native-like pronunciation. Schumann (1978) has argued that younger learners generally receive more and more varied input from native speakers than adult learners do and are intrinsically motivated to acquire the L2 at a native-like level.

Long (1990), in his seminal paper, reviewed the second language research on age-related differences. In this paper, he has drawn several conclusions on age-related differences in second language acquisition. He made the following observations:

1. Both the initial rate of acquisition and the ultimate level of attainment depend on the age at which learning begins;
2. The acquisition of different linguistic domains of second language is successful during the critical period and incomplete after it;
3. The age-related loss of ability is cumulative;
4. In some individuals, deterioration starts at six.

Long (1990: 273) argues that: 'contrary to recent assertions in the literature, there is growing evidence that maturational constraints are at work in second language learning, and that they are not confined to phonology'. Long (1990: 206) has summarized his findings: 'a native-like accent is impossible unless first exposure is quite early, probably before 6 in many individuals and by about age 12 in the remainder'.

By contrast, some researchers like Birdsong (1992), Klein (1995) and Bongaerts (1999) have challenged the critical period hypothesis, which states that learners who are exposed to a

second language before puberty have the tendency to acquire a native-like proficiency of the language. They argue against the idea of unsuccessful adult acquisition of second language at a native-like level, and against the widely agreed on idea 'the earlier, the better'. Their results have revealed that adult learners can acquire native-like pronunciation regardless of their age if they are highly motivated and fully trained. They argue that it is possible for post-critical period learners to achieve a native-like accent in the target language. The exposure to authentic target language input, a high motivation and intensive training in the production of target language sounds are important determiners of native-like pronunciation for late learners of second language.

Bongaerts (1995) has found that late learners can achieve pronunciation levels at the same level as native speakers. Bongaerts (1999: 155) has suggested that the success of the exceptional adult learners may be contributed to the combination of three factors: high motivation, continued access to massive L2 input, and intensive training in the perception and production of L2 sounds.

Klein (1995) has pointed out that it is not always the case that adults receive less adequate input and are less motivated language learners. According to Klein (1995), if a learner has continued access to massive, authentic L2 input from native speakers and if it is of vital importance to him/her to sound like a native speaker, there is a possibility that he/she will attain a native-like accent, in spite of a late start.

Bialystok (1997) believes that adults can achieve the same success as children if they make the time and the space to learn

and if they possess the motivation from which children usually benefit. Bialystok (1997) has cited a number of empirical studies to refute Patkowski's (1980) claims. She (1997) has attributed the lack of adult success to outside factors other than age. According to her (1997: 126), the reason for differences in attainment is the relationship between languages. Bialystok (1997) believes that *interference* between first and second language factors affects second language acquisition in *adults* (Please see section 4.4 for more detailed analysis about first language interference). It is worth mentioning that although L1 interference in other aspects of language learning is not taken so seriously these days, it is still considered an important factor in pronunciation.

Some people believe that a few language learners are 'born with a good ear'. They tend to acquire a native-like pronunciation due to their natural capacity. Some foreign language learners have a 'better ear' than others (Kenworthy, 1987: 6). This talent is termed 'aptitude for oral mimicry', 'phonetic coding ability' or 'auditory discrimination ability' (ibid). Some people have the ability to discriminate between two sounds better than others. As a matter of fact, everybody has this basic ability unless hearing-impaired. This is the reason that justifies the acquisition of the native language sounds (ibid). Much research has tackled this issue, and different interesting results have been attained. One interesting result is the effect of training in the sense that good discriminators benefit from training more than poor ones. Language learners with 'good phonetic abilities' make good use of pronunciation tasks that involve repeating particular heard sounds (ibid: 7). The fact that they are born with a 'better ear' is really helpful in this respect. In contrast, learners with poor discrimination abilities do not seem to benefit from such drills.

In the teaching process, the possible limitation of adult learners should be taken into consideration. Adult learners should be given greater patience and appropriate time so that they can be immersed in the language before being expected to produce the new language. Moreover, the encouragement of as much interaction with the new culture as possible is useful, if this contact with the new culture is possible. Learners also need to maximize the amount of their exposure to the second language. Johnson and Newport (1989: 81) state that:

The learning which occurs in the formal language classroom may be unlike the learning which occurs during immersion, such that early instruction does not necessarily have the advantage for ultimate performance that is held by early immersion.

Teachers cannot change the raw phonetic ability of the learners, yet they assume that the learners have the 'basic equipment' (Kenworthy, 1987: 6). Teachers, therefore, need to provide a variety of tasks that will suit the needs of each learner.

Adults will not necessarily be able to learn an intelligible pronunciation in English without consistent, focused support and instruction. When this is given, they can make progress, although it may be slow. It is unreasonable to expect rapid change. Both students and teachers must guard against unrealistic expectations of how long it takes for improvements to be made in pronunciation, particularly in spontaneous speech. This implies that pronunciation learning must be continued outside the classroom.

Cruttenden (2001: 314) argues that: 'Since it is difficult to acquire the correct pronunciation of a second language after

early adolescence, it is desirable to teach pronunciation as early as possible'. According to Cruttenden (ibid), it is enough to demonstrate pronunciation for children because of their high ability to mimic. In addition, the teacher's pronunciation performance should reach the highest level possible (ibid). When this ability starts to decline, as in the case of adult learners, every little effort should be made in order to overcome the interference from the sound system of the first language (ibid).

4.3 Strength of Ethnic Identity

The sense of ethnic identity is also considered as a strong determiner in the acquisition of accurate pronunciation. The sense of group affiliation may be strong so that the learner may not accept any changes to the way s/he speaks. Stressing the effect of identity, Levis (2005: 374) says:

Accent is influenced not only by biological timetables but also by socio-linguistic realities. In other words, speakers speak the way they do because of the social groups they belong to or desire to belong to. The role of identity in accent is perhaps as strong as the biological constraints. Accent, along with other markers of dialect, is an essential marker of social belonging.

Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) show how ethnic group affiliation is a critical factor in pronunciation accuracy. They argue that inaccuracy may reflect neither lack of ability nor interest but rather social pressure from home communities or other students who speak their L1. In fact, speakers who are too accurate risk being seen as disloyal to their primary ethnic group.

A strong feeling of ethnic identity may sometimes lead learners to consciously or unconsciously resist making changes to their pronunciation because their accent is an important way of signalling their social and ethnic identity. Their sense of identity is invested in their first language, and they may be reluctant to speak like someone else. They may use various markers of their ethnicity in their spoken English quite unconsciously. However, if the learner is able to achieve the level of effective communication that they want, these need not be a concern unless they interfere with intelligibility.

Some researchers argue that pronunciation is closely bound up with identity (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994; Porter and Garvin, 1989; Summers, 1990). Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 7) argue that: 'pronunciation is so much a matter of self-image that students may prefer to keep their accent deliberately, in order to retain their self-respect or to gain the approval of their peers'. According to Pennington and Richards (1986: 216), some learners, wishing to integrate actively into the target culture and to be identified with its speakers, may be motivated to try to attain a native accent in the foreign language. Others, in contrast, may not have a strong integrative motivation toward the target culture and so may consciously or unconsciously seek to maintain a distinctive accent. In other words, Certain first language phonological features may be consciously retained as markers of ethnic or group identity (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor, 1977), and so caution should be exercised in regarding [phonological] intrusions *simply* as instances of inter-lingual *interferences*, particularly in the cases of second and third generations of immigrants, as they may often be adopted by them deliberately as ethnic speech markers to establish a distinctive linguistic identity (Giles, 1979: 260).

According to Crystal (1997: 116), the need for intelligibility and the need for identity often pull people and countries in opposing directions'. Jenkins (2003: 36) argues that: 'with the increase in the number of first language L1 groups who speak English as an international language, the range of differences among their Englishes has also inevitably increased. These differences are particularly evident in the spoken language, and more so in terms of pronunciation than at the other linguistic levels, since it is on pronunciation that first language transfer has its greatest influence (ibid). The demands of mutual intelligibility point to a need to decrease accent differences among speakers from different L1 backgrounds Jenkins (2003: 37). This, however, does not necessarily involve encouraging L2 learners to imitate a native-speaker accent. Indeed, such attempts have invariably failed (ibid). Accents are closely bound up with feelings of personal and group identity, which means that people tend to resist such attempts, whether consciously or subconsciously (ibid). Therefore, either they wish to preserve their mother-tongue accent in their L2 English or, more probably, they simply do not wish to identify, through mimicking an L1 English accent, with native speakers of the language. Those speakers may seek an approach to preserve intelligibility in EIL pronunciation which do not entail universal approximation to native speaker varieties.

Porter and Garvin (1989: 8) express the attitudes towards the teaching of pronunciation saying: 'By requiring someone to utter strange sounds, etc. we are making them go against deeply rooted conceptions of what is desirable, correct, and acceptable'. The teaching of pronunciation, therefore, may constitute a humiliation. Pronunciation is one expression of individual identity and self-image. A person's pronunciation 'frequently proves

resistant to change, particularly with older learners' (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994: 8). Therefore, it is argued that early language learning is better, especially in the field of pronunciation, before any notion of ethnic identity has been formed.

Cook (1999: 195) argues that consciously or unconsciously, people proclaim their membership in particular groups through the language they use. However, L2 learners are not supposed to reveal which part of the world they come from; they are considered failures if they have foreign accents, as much research into age differences in language learning assumes.

This confirms the critical period hypothesis which should be taken into consideration when teaching pronunciation. The advantage of early learning can also be explained differently (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994: 8). As one gets older, the resistance to modifying his/her pronunciation increases due to certain psycho-sociological factors. As the investment in the linguistic expression of identity increases, flexibility decreases. In other words 'Language ego' becomes less flexible as one gets older. Forcing learners into target pronunciation norms may 'even be seen as forcing them to reject their own identity' (ibid: 8). Changing someone's pronunciation may be seen as wrong because learners may be reluctant to change or to adjust their accent. It may be a good idea to encourage the learners to show and possess positive feelings and motivation towards the speakers of the new target language because this may help them in developing a more accurate accent. It is worth making clear and mentioning that the factors affect and apply only to native-like pronunciation not to intelligible pronunciation.

4.4 First Language Interference

The interference between the mother language and the target language may result in some difficulties in the correct production of the target language. The native language of the learner interferes in specific and predictable ways at each new step in acquiring a second language (Please see Selinker, 1972; Flege, 1980). Moreover, in the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning...Those elements that are similar to the learner's native language will be simple for him and those elements that are different will be difficult (Lado, 1957: 1-2). These two statements provide the essence of the contrastive analysis (CA) hypothesis. A systematic comparison of the native and target languages is made. On the basis of this comparison, it is possible to predict learners' errors. Those aspects in which the languages differ, will be the areas in which learners make errors, and their errors will consist of transferring the properties of the native language into the corresponding areas of the target language.

Language transfer has always been recognized as basic to any theory of second language phonological development (Lado, 1957). Language transfer means the use of prior linguistic information in a second language context (Flynn and O'Neil, 1988: 385). The notion of inter-language acknowledges the role of language transfer (Selinker, 1972), and current views of the nature of inter-language consider the learner's phonological representations as constituting a system intermediate between the native language and the target language (Flege, 1980, 1981). Other researchers argue that the phenomenon of transfer extends beyond the level of individual phonemes to include syllable structure (Hecht and Mulford, 1982; Johansson, 1973;

Macken and Ferguson, 1981; Tarone, 1980) as well as prosodic and voice-setting features (Esling and Wong, 1983).

The learner's native language is one factor that can have an impact on pronunciation learning. Some languages are compared with English in order to predict the difficulties that a learner may encounter. A comparative analytical study between Arabic and English is given in section (4.5). The purpose of the comparative analysis is to shed some light on the articulatory segmental problems as well as other supra-segmental features, such as stress, intonation, of Syrian learners on the one hand, and help them overcome them on the other.

The general assumption is that the influence of first language on pronunciation seems to be much greater than the influence on morphology and syntax. It is highly important, therefore, to take into consideration the influence of the first language on second language learning. In order to improve learners' pronunciation, teachers and learners of SL need to take that influence into account.

Learners sometimes cannot pronounce a foreign language intelligibly because they have already acquired all the firm pronunciation features related to their mother tongue. Unlike children, adults have already acquired an awareness of the sound system of their first language when they come to learn English. As a result, they seem to process the English sounds using the categories they have already established in their L1, especially of stress and intonation, which makes it more difficult for them to perceive and produce differences between their L1 and the sounds of the target language. This also means that they are likely to have greater difficulty producing phonemes

which are very similar to those of their L1, rather than those which are very different. Language learners tend to perceive the sounds of a foreign language 'in terms of categories in [their] native language' (Brown, 1975: 98), and to segment the stream of speech according to their L1 habits. Pennington and Richards (1986: 213) have argued that the course of acquisition, both in terms of rate and order, has been a focus of second language acquisition SLA studies, though most of these studies have addressed L2 syntactic rather than phonological development. In first language learning, however, there has been a considerable amount of research on the rate and order of L1 phonological development (Macken and Ferguson, 1981), and L2 phonology needs to be examined from a similar perspective.

In the case of adult learners of English as a second language at Damascus University, learners have to make every little effort to overcome the interference from the sound system of the mother tongue language, which is Arabic. Learners have a strong tendency to hear and produce the sounds of English in terms of the sounds of Arabic which is their native language. For example the Arabic voiceless /b/ is used to pronounce the English sound /p/. The learners tend to look for the nearest equivalent of the sounds they are familiar with (Kenworthy, 1987: 1). The English accent, therefore, has some of the sound characteristics of the learner's native Arabic language. Supra-segmental features also present the learners with some difficulties. For example, the idea that stress can alter meaning is completely new to the learners. Detailed discussion of the segmental and the supra-segmental features is presented in the next section in a contrastive analysis between Arabic and English (Please see section 4.5).

Cruttenden (2001: 314) recommends to foreign English language teachers that:

Before attempting to produce English sounds, accentual or intonational patterns, it is advisable to teach and establish certain basic discriminatory skills: the learner must be able to (a) distinguish with certainty between features of his/her own language and those of English; (b) to distinguish between the contrastive features of English. The acquisition of such new auditory skills can be achieved by the use of extensive discrimination drills. Ear training is especially important for those who aim at a high level of performance in pronunciation where phonetic precision is essential.

According to (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 213), research has confirmed that many other processes interact with language transfer in shaping the second language (L2) phonological system. Some of these acquisition processes are similar to those found in first language phonological development and may be interpreted as a reactivation of first language development strategies. For example, children acquire voiceless consonants before voiced consonants (Macken and Ferguson, 1981 as quoted in Pennington and Richards, 1986: 213), and the same order of acquisition has been observed in second language phonological development, even when the learner's native language possesses voiced final consonants (Hecht and Mulford, 1982).

It is important that the learner distinguishes between mother-language features and those of the target one. Equally important is to make learners aware of the contrastive features of the two languages. The next section deals with the contrastive analysis of Arabic and English.

4.5 Arabic versus English: Contrastive Analysis

4.5.1. Introduction

It is important to provide more information on the Arabic system because it is assumed that a lot of readers will be less familiar with Arabic than English. The varieties of Arabic and English that are the basis of the comparison are Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Standard British English (RP). MSA is the variety used throughout the Arabic world by educated Arabs in religious rites, science, education, and mass media. Moreover, it is a standard system that can be considered as a lingua franca for communication among educated Arabs.

There are some similarities and differences between both Arabic and English. Though it is difficult to cover all these aspects in this work, some noticeably common habits of mispronunciation will be referred to. They are mainly the result of mother tongue Arabic interference with English. Learners, therefore, tend to transfer, and apply, certain pronunciation norms from Arabic to English. However, generally speaking, Arab English is more readily understood than, say, Spanish or Portuguese English (Mitchell and El-Hassan, 1989: 12). Kenworthy, (1987); Swan and Smith, (1987); and Mitchell and El-Hassan, (1989) are the main sources for this contrastive analysis. They have dealt with some aspects of the contrastive analysis. These aspects are collected and presented in this work. Very little work has been done on the contrastive analysis between both languages. Consequently, the work on contrastive analysis which follows is presented as new information.

Cruttenden (2001) argues that the different features of English pronunciation offer various degrees of difficulty to learners. The

features of English which are not found in the learner's native language are of high priority. They should receive careful attention and focus, therefore.

Arabic is the mother tongue spoken in Syria. It is a Semitic language. The Arabic and English phonological systems are very different (Swan and Smith, 1987: 142). While English has 22 vowels and diphthongs to 24 consonants, Arabic has only 8 vowels and diphthongs to 32 consonants. The difference in these numbers could possibly be one source of intelligibility breakdown. Consequently, special training needs to be given to those whose aim is to achieve a native-like or intelligible level of production.

Some English phonemes, such as /a:/, /b/, have equivalents or near equivalents in Arabic. They are, therefore, articulated without great difficulty. However, some confusion may still arise and students may still mispronounce them. The unshared phonemes, such as /p/, are the most likely to cause problems in pronunciation which may lead to unintelligibility. For example, the fact that there is no voiced counterpart of /k/ and no voiceless counterpart of /b/ makes Arabic students of English substitute the Arabic /k/ for the English /g/ and the Arabic /b/ for the English /p/ when they speak in English. Under-differentiation of the English system is a consequence which most Arabic learners could encounter (Kopczynski and Mellani, 1993). The learner is faced by a divergent learning structure, as seen in figure (4.1). However, this is not always the case. Arabic system of stops has a greater range of place and manner of articulation such as the emphatic stops /T D/ (ibid). The result is a convergent learning structure for the Arabic-speaking English student particularly in the area of dento-

alveolar, as figure (4.2) shows. Such difficulties are frequent and can lead to serious consequences.

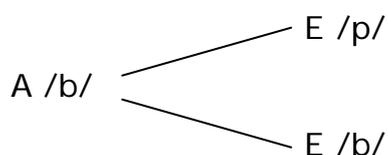


Figure 4.1

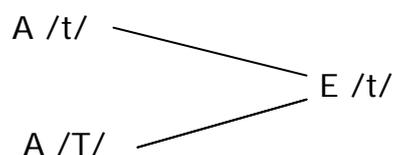


Figure 4.2

The following sections will shed more light on both the segmental and the supra-segmental features. A detailed analysis will reveal more about vowels, consonants, rhythm, stress and intonation in Arabic.

4.5.2 Vowels

Cruttenden (2001: 103) argues that: 'The English system is one of the less common and more complex types. It is, therefore, completely predictable that most foreign learners will have trouble attaining the vowel system of any variety of English, including RP'. The table below (4.1) shows the vowels in English and Arabic. The shaded vowels and diphthongs are the shared ones between both languages.



Table 4.1 the Vowels (Swan and Smith, 1987: 143).

There is a great difference between the vowel system of Arabic and English. Most noticeably English includes more vowels and diphthongs (22) than Arabic (8). As a result, Syrian learners may encounter some difficulties in the production of these vowels and commit errors in pronunciation. Syrian learners tend to use their relatively small number of vowels to 'cover' the larger English vowel system. The most common articulatory problems as far as vowels are concerned are the following:

- /i/ as in 'bit' and /e/ as in 'bet' are often confused: /bit/ for /bet/;
- /D/ as in 'cot' and /ɔ:/ as in caught are often confused: cot for caught. /D/ versus /əʊ/ can be an extremely troublesome contrast for Arabic learners, as in caught/coat. Learners may tend to use their Arabic /o/ sound for both /D/ vs. /əʊ/;
- Diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ are usually pronounced rather short. Therefore, they are confused with the short vowels /e/ and /D/. The learners may confuse 'raid' with 'red'; 'hope' with 'hop';
- /e/ as in 'bet', /æ/ as in 'hat', or /ʌ/ as in 'but' are confused.

Because of the lack of the English /ə/ in Arabic, learners usually face difficulties in pronouncing it. Learners may have problems with this vowel because in English it can be represented by many different vowel letters (Kenworthy, 1987: 125). This is in contrast to Arabic orthographic conventions, which adhere very much to the convention 'one sound-one letter' (ibid: 126). In the speech of many learners, /Iə/ is replaced by 'i:r', /eə/ is

replaced by 'e:r', /ɔə/ is substituted by 'o:r', and /uə/ is substituted with 'u:r'. For example, words spelt with 'or', 'our' such as 'word' and 'journey' are uttered with 'o:r' by learners.

4.5.3 Consonants

Some consonants are shared between both Arabic and English, others are not. Unshared ones can cause some difficulties in articulation, as the following table shows: (the shaded are shared)



Table 4.2 The Consonants (Swan and Smith, 1987: 144)

The following is an overview of the Arabic consonants (Cowell, 2005: 2-5):

- *b*, Bilabial Stop. Similar to English *b*. fully voiced before vowels and voiced consonants, but tends to devoice – to sound like an unaspirated English *p* – before voiceless obstruents (for example, *f*, *k*, *x*). and sometimes at the end of a phrase.
- *P*, Voiceless Bilabial Stop. Except as a contextual variant of *b*, *p* occurs very rarely in Syrian Arabic in a few words of foreign origin for example 'passport'.

- F, Labiodental Spirant. Similar to English *f*. Generally voiceless, also sometimes voiced before some voiced oral obstruents (such as *z*).
- V, Voiced Labiodental Spirant. Besides being a contextual variant of *f*, this sound occurs in a number of words of foreign origin, for example: *'bravo'*.
- D, Voiced Dental Stop. Differs from English *d* in the somewhat more forward position of the tongue tip, which generally touches the upper teeth in Arabic but only the alveolar ridge in most kinds of English.
- T, Voiceless Dental Stop. Differs from English *t* in the same respect as *d* from English *d*; generally somewhat less aspirated than English *t* in *'take'*.
- Z, Voiced Alveolar Sibilant. Somewhat sharper (higher pitched) than most kinds of English *z*.
- S, Voiceless Alveolar Sibilant. Generally sharper and stronger than most kinds of English *s* as in *'sell'*, and *'hiss'*.
- ḏ, Voiced Interdental Spirant. Like English in *'this'*. Not used in urban Syrian Arabic, but only in certain rural dialects, corresponding to urban Syrian *d* or *z*: *haḏa* *'this'* (for *hada*), *?iḏa* *'if'* (for *?iza*).
- θ, Voiceless Interdental Spirant. Like English *'th'* in *'think'*. Rare in urban Syrian Arabic: *θawra* (or *sawra*) *'revolution'*. Used in Classicisms, generally replaced by *s* in less elegant style. Certain rural dialects, however, have this sound as a regular thing. Sometimes it corresponds to *'t'* *'θani'* *'second'* (for *tani*).
- G, Voiced Stop. Like English *g* in *'give'*, *'good'*, its point of articulation varies between mediopalatal and velar, depending on neighbouring sounds. This sound occurs

mainly in words taken from foreign languages or other Arabic dialects: *'sigara' 'cigarettes'*.

- K, Voiceless Stop. Like English *k*, its point of articulation varies between mediopalatal and velar, depending on neighbouring sounds. It generally has somewhat less aspiration in release than English *k*, and is often unreleased finally.
- X, Voiceless Spirant. Generally involves both uvular trill and velar.
- H, Glottal Continuant. Much the same as English *h*, but generally with the larynx more open and more breath exhaled. Tends to be voiced when short between vowels or before voiced consonants, otherwise voiceless.
- ʔ, Glottal Catch. Like the interruption in the middle of the English interjections *'oh-oh!'*.
- M, Labial Nasal. Labiodental before *f*, otherwise bilabial. Like English *m*. Avoid anticipatory denasalization before spirants – i.e. do not allow a *'p'* glide to slip in after the *'m'* in words like *'ʔams'* (not *?amps*).
- N, Non-labial Nasal. Similar to English *n*. Has the same point of articulation as a following dental or palatal obstruent (including *g*, *k*), otherwise alveolar. Avoid anticipatory denasalization before spirants: *benzel* (not *bəndzel*).
- L, Lateral. Similar to *'light'* or *'bright'* English *'l'* as in *'link'*, not like *'dark'* or *'heavy'* *'l'* as in most kinds of English *'ball'*. Tends to be nasalized in some positions, especially when long or after a long vowel; English speakers may sometimes mistake it for an *'n'*.
- r. Apical Trill. A single tap when short, a multiple trill when long (rr). Tends to devoice before voiceless oral obstruents and sometimes finally; otherwise voiced.

- Arabic has only one letter in the /g/, /dʒ/ area, which is pronounced as /g/ in some regions, such as Egypt, and as /dʒ/ in others as in Syria. Arabic speakers tend, therefore, to pronounce an English /g/, and sometimes even a /j/, in all positions according to their local dialects. Learners tend to confuse /dʒ/ as in 'junk' with /ʒ/ as in 'pleasure'.
- Although Arabic does not have /tʃ/, it does have a /t/ sound and a /ʃ/ sound. Since /tʃ/ is really a combination of these two sounds, it may not be difficult for learners to achieve the sound. Since the stops /t/, /d/ and fricatives /ʃ/, /ʒ/ are used as separate phonemes in Arabic MSA, the English /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ can be simplified to /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. The Arabic /ʃ/, /ʒ/ are more palatalised than their English equivalents. A typical Arabic pronunciation of these English fricatives is softer, more palatalised (Kopczynski and Mellani, 1993: 199).
- Unlike the RP /r/, /r/ is a voiced flap. Arabic learners will tend to use their native /r/ when speaking English. This is a 'trilled' or 'rolled' type of /r/. Arabic speakers commonly over-pronounce the post-vocalic 'r', as in *car park*.
- Arabic speakers tend to produce the sound /p/ without aspiration. As a result, they produce the sound /b/ instead of /p/. Sometimes the learners tend to use /p/ and /b/ in a random way.
- Although /θ/ and /ð/ occur in Arabic, learners tend to substitute /s/ for /θ/ and /z/ for /ð/. Some dialects

tend to pronounce them as /t/ and /d/ respectively. This, obviously, creates a tendency to substitute these sounds in place of the English (E for short) /θ ð/ by the speaker of this dialect (Kopczynski and Mellani, 1993: 199).

- Arabic /l/ is very clear in quality. It is made with the tip of tongue and resembles the /l/ Welsh and Irish speakers use. English has one lateral /l/ while Arabic has two: non-emphatic /l/ and emphatic /L/, as in /wa'LLah/ 'by God'. The Arab student faces a convergent structure, thus:

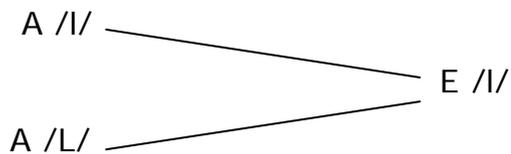


Figure 4.3 (Kopczynski and Mellani, 1993: 200)

- Arabic learners find it difficult to pronounce the phoneme /ŋ/. They usually pronounce it as /n/ or /ng/, or even /nk/. In words like 'song', 'ring', Arab learners will tend to pronounce the /g/ as a separate sound instead of using just the nasal sound /ŋ/. The Arabic-speaking student faces a divergent structure (Kopczynski and Mellani, 1993: 199), thus:

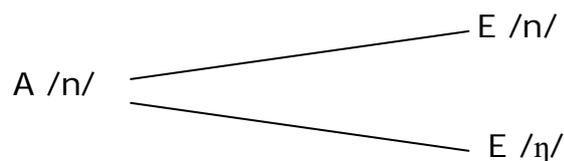


Figure 4.4

The English spelling, the diagraph (ng), certainly reinforces the pronunciations /nk/ or /ng/ instead of /ŋ/.

- /v/ and /f/ are allophonic, and are usually both pronounced as /f/. The sound /v/ does not exist in Arabic. The absence of the voiced counterpart of the sound /f/, leaves the Arabic-speaking English learners with a case of underdifferentiation of Arabic system where they pronounce both E /f/ and E /v/ as Arabic (A for short) /f/ (Kopczynski and Mellani, 1993: 197).
- There are two approximations of the English 'h' in Arabic. The commoner of them is an unvoiced, harsh aspiration. Arabic speakers tend to pronounce the English 'h' rather harshly.
- /g/ and /k/ are often confused. The phoneme /g/ is difficult because it is not included in the Syrian dialect or in the Arabic alphabet.

Syrian learners may face some problems in the receptive and productive process of certain English sounds that do not occur in Arabic. For example, the consonant /p/ does not occur in Arabic. Consequently, Syrian learners will tend to use the mother tongue /b/ sound when they intend to produce the English consonant /p/. This is a serious error as the p/b contrast in English is phonemic, i.e. many words are completely changed when /p/ is replaced by /b/ (and vice versa) as in the following pairs: pray/bray, park/bark, rope/robe. Furthermore, /p/ and /b/ tend to be randomly articulated as in: *I baid ten bence for a bicture of Pig Pen* (Swan and Smith, 1987: 144).

The English /l/ is light [l] occurring prevocally and the dark [ɫ] occurring before consonants and before a pause (Kopczynski and Mellani, 1993: 200). Arabic has no dark allophone of its /l/. As a result, one can expect to hear light /l/'s in the English words like 'cold', 'call'. In words like 'battle', an Arabic speaker may produce a light [l] plus an epenthetic schwa (ibid). Moreover, the learners find difficulty in differentiating between the positions of 'clear' and 'dark' /l/. They occur in quite unexpected places, for example in the pronunciation of the English 'feel', learners are likely confuse /fi:l/ with the clear rendering in the Arabic /fi:l/ 'elephant' (Mitchell and El-Hassan, 1989: 103). Moreover, learners are likely to use incorrectly a clear /l/ following all front vowels as in /pi:l/ 'peal'; 'peel' and /bel/ 'bell' (ibid). The Arabic language has the distinction between 'clear' and 'dark' /l/. However, the distribution of clearness and darkness is greatly different between Arabic and English. This will almost certainly lead to difficulties for the learners.

Another source of difficulty is the /r/ sound. The indiscriminate use of a tapped and especially rolled variety of /r/ is the commonest Arab error, even with the most accurate speakers of English and can contribute to a heavily foreign accent (Mitchell and El-Hassan, 1989: 103). Learners tend to use spelling pronunciations and consequent failure to recognise that, more often than not, no 'r-sound' at all is required to be made in spoken English (ibid: 106). The teacher, therefore, needs to familiarize the learner with the relationship between the 'r' of English spelling and the speech sounds corresponding to it. However, it is equally important to support the theoretical

instruction with practice in the articulation of the 'r' sound through some activities.

An Arabic-related discrepancy is that in Standard Arabic there are vowel symbols in addition to the three main vowels /a/, /i/ and /u/. They are:

1. Fathah, a diacritic, which looks like a hyphen that appears on top of a consonant to indicate that the consonant is vocalized by the sound of the Arabic short vowel /a/;
2. Kasrah, a diacritic, which looks like a hyphen that appears beneath a consonant to indicate that the consonant is vocalized by the sound of the Arabic short vowel /i/;
3. Dammah, a diacritic, which looks like a comma that appears on top of a consonant to indicate that the consonant is vocalized by the sound of the Arabic short vowel /u/.

4.5.4 Consonant clusters

Consonant clusters occur in a wider range in English than in Arabic. Moreover, English contains more and longer consonant clusters than Arabic does. Initial two-segment clusters that do not occur in Arabic include: pr, pl, gr, gl, thr, thw, sp (Swan and Smith, 1987: 145). Although two-element clusters at the beginning of words seem to cause fewer problems, those beginning with 's' are particularly difficult as in 'speak', 'state'. Initial three-segment clusters do not occur in Arabic at all. Examples are 'spr, skr, str, spl (ibid). This presents the Syrian learner with the receptive and productive difficulty of producing consonant clusters particularly three-element clusters initially and finally as in 'street' and 'against'.

Learners will tend to insert a vowel to break up the groups of consonants in order to assist pronunciation. For example, in order to pronounce the word 'asked', learners tend to insert a vowel to break the consonant group s-k-t (Kenworthy, 1987). It will be pronounced as a two syllable word (as-ked). In a similar way, 'against' will be pronounced as 'again-est', 'spring' will become as 'sip-ring'. Final clusters occur in much smaller range in Arabic. None of the 78 three-element clusters and fourteen four-element clusters in English occurs in Arabic. Learners, therefore, tend to insert a short vowel in 'arrangid', 'monthiz', and 'nekist' for 'arranged', 'months', and 'next' respectively. In addition to the uncountable examples of vowel insertion, this tendency is carried over to the learners' written English. Since the Arabic spelling system is easy and corresponds closely to pronunciation, and since most learners come to pronunciation through writing, translation and grammar not speaking or pronunciation, learners, as a result, may tend to pronounce and write English words phonetically. An example is 'istobbid' for 'stopped'. Difficult consonant clusters can sometimes be acquired by pronouncing a sequence of consonants across word boundary and then dropping the earlier part of the first word: thus /st/ may be acquired by practising first with a phrase like *bus stop*, and then reducing these to *stop*, or even in a middle position as in *mistake* and reducing it to *steak* (Cruttenden, 2001: 247).

4.5.5 Rhythm and Stress

Arabic is a stress-timed language (Kenworthy, 1987: 124; Swan and Smith, 1987: 145). Similarly, English can be regarded as having a stress-timed rhythm in the sense that the stressed parts of an utterance 'occur at fairly equal intervals of time'

(Gimson, 1989: 263). Speakers only stress those words in an utterance which are important for the meaning they wish to convey (Brown, 1990: 151). As a result, a stressed vowel in the citation form of a word may be unstressed if this word is unstressed in connected speech (Giegerich, 1992: 285). It is important to note that the same vowel is significantly shorter when unstressed, and that it may be reduced to schwa /ə/.

Word stress is predictable and regular in Arabic. As a result, Arabic learners may find it difficult to grasp the unpredictable nature of word stress in English. The comparative force of pronunciation of stressed and unstressed syllables in Arabic and English is different. In English, there is a great difference in force: while unstressed syllables are pronounced weakly, stressed syllables are pronounced fully and explicitly. In Arabic, the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables is not so extreme. In other words, unlike English, vowels in unstressed syllables in Arabic can preserve their value and are pronounced fairly clearly and neutrally.

Both Arabic and English rhythmic patterns are different in degree, not in kind. Another source of difficulty Arab learners may encounter is the idea that stress can alter meaning, (Please see word stress in section 4.5.5.3 below). Learners tend to pronounce both words randomly. As a consequence, Arab learners tend to pronounce the contracted and short forms fully. Due to the importance of the supra-segmental features of speech, and to the difficulties resulting from weak and strong forms, Syrian learners need concentrated training on them in order to eliminate and overcome such difficulties.

4.5.5.1 Sentence stress

Sentence stress in both Arabic and English is similar in that content words are usually stressed, while grammatical or function words are not. Yet, difficulties may still arise due to the following problems:

- Unlike English, function words or grammatical words in Arabic do not have two forms. They have one form. The reason is that vowels are not reduced to 'schwa' in unstressed function words. Vowels in unstressed syllables keep their 'full' value and they are pronounced more clearly (Kenworthy, 1987: 124; Swan and Smith, 1987: 145). As a result, learners tend to use the full forms of pronouns. The learners sound as if they are making contrast when they do not intend to;
- Learners tend to use the full forms of auxiliary verbs when the weak forms should be used. For instance, when learners use the full auxiliary form '*can*' /kæn/ instead of /kən/, in a sentence like '*I can do it*', they sound as if they are making a contrast and negating a sentence like '*You can't do it*' when this meaning is not intended (Kenworthy, 1987: 124).

4.5.5.2 Contrastive Stress

The idea of contrastive stress is completely strange and new to the learners. In Arabic, word order is used to show strong contrast. In other words, the relevant word or phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence. Since learners are unfamiliar

with the idea of using stress to show contrast in English, they may face some difficulties in pronunciation. A real example taken from Jenkins (2001: 51) is:

I smoke more than you DO = 'I smoke more than *you* do'.

Both speakers are NNS of English who are discussing their smoking habits and how many cigarettes a day each of them smokes. The speaker wanted to tell his interlocutor that he smoked more than the other did, so he said 'I smoke more than you DO'. But instead of putting tonic (nuclear) stress on the word 'you', where it would have indicated intonationally the contrast he was making lexically, he put it on the last item in the tone unit, that is 'do'. He misplaced the nuclear stress contrastively and instead placed it on a non-content word (Jenkins, 2000: 51).

4.5.5.3 Word Stress

The idea of word stress is familiar to the Syrian learners. Similar to English, polysyllabic Arabic words do have stressed and unstressed syllables (Kenworthy, 1987: 124). Word stress in Arabic is regular and predictable (Swan and Smith, 1987: 145). Syrian learners, therefore, find difficulties in 'grasping the unpredictable nature of English word stress' (ibid:145). The placement of stress in Arabic words is determined by the number and order of consonants and the quality of the vowel. Another difficulty is the completely new idea that stress can alter meaning as in *con'vict* (verb) and '*convict* (noun). Syrian learners, in general, will need constantly to consult a pronunciation dictionary in order to check the pronunciation and

the correct position of stress. Learners usually carry over the following Arabic-related features into English:

- Learners tend to put stress in the final syllable of English words ending in a vowel followed by two consonants (-vcc) as in 'comfort';
- Learners tend to put stress on endings such as '-est', '-ism', '-less', and '-ness';
- Learners tend to put stress on the last syllable of a word ending in a diphthong or a long vowel followed by a single consonant, as in 'irritate'.

4.5.6 Connected speech

Arabic words do not begin with vowels because the glottal stop always precedes the vowel. The glottal stop is also used to separate vowel from vowel, and vowel from consonant in connected speech in Arabic. For example, 'I scream' may be understood as 'ice cream'.

4.5.7 Intonation

Intonation patterns in both Arabic and English are similar in contour and meaning (Swan and Smith, 1987: 145). As a result, Arabic speakers tend to have relatively minor difficulties. One feature usually transferred from mother tongue into English is the use of rising tune rather than structural markers to mark questions, suggestions and offers. In Arabic, the pitch of the voice is sustained (stays steady) on each syllable, and then the speaker jumps up or down for the next syllable. In English, the pitch changes on syllables. A narrower range of falling pitch is

used in Arabic over the phrase or the clause. Arabic learners, as a result, may sound as inconclusive.

Intonationally speaking, the learner of English as a second language has to do all s/he can in order for his/her speech to sound like English (Mitchell and El-Hassan, 1989: 47). However, the learners may face a difficulty in choosing the right words to locate the nucleus in a sentence, and bounding up the appropriate intonational patterns with the words chosen (ibid).

Arabic intonation system is very simple and plays a minor role in the prosodic system of Arabic (Alhawary, 2005: 50). This is perhaps why there is no trace of intonation, and other prosodic phenomena such as stress, in the monumental work of old Arab grammarians (El-Dalee, 1999). It is very unlikely that prosodic features have gone unnoticed by old Arab grammarians. The reason for this neglect is that Classical Arabic prosodic system depends entirely on the syllabic oppositions (ibid). Recently, El-Dalee (1999) has provided another reason for the irrelevance of intonation to the prosody of Arabic. Given the fact that particles have the function of intonation in some languages, he argued that Arabic, being a particle language, has given much of the meanings conveyed by intonation to particles.

Cruttenden (2001: 276) advises foreign learners that they should pay particular attention to:

- Achieving a better style in reading aloud by appropriately dividing his/her speech into intonational phrases;
- Putting the nucleus on the focal point in the sentence;

- Using appropriate nuclear tones.

4.5.8 Orthography and Pronunciation

Arabic orthography is a cursive system, running from right to left (Swan and Smith, 1987: 199). Unlike English, Arabic lacks the capital letter system. Arabic learners, therefore, are expected to face some difficulties in writing in English. Moreover, they will not, presumably, produce the same level in writing and reading as other European students who are at the same level of proficiency in oral English do (ibid). In addition, the following problems are typically encountered by Arabic learners:

- They incorrectly read the letters that have 'mirror' shapes such as 'p' and 'q'; 'd' and 'b';
- They may misread 'letters within words by right to left movement' such as 'form' for 'from'. These errors may occur in the learners' writing as well. For example, they may confuse 'tow' for 'two' in writing;
- Incorrectly writing individual English letters. The trace of this problem could be related to the insufficient training of the learners on the English writing system. It is mostly manifested in the capital letters which are omitted sometimes (ibid, 200).

4.5.9 Spelling pronunciation

It is difficult to give a full account of all the common pronunciation errors that may be committed by Syrian learners as individuals who may, on the one hand, have developed some

pronunciation features, and who may be influenced by their regional accents on the other.

One major difficulty Syrian learners may face is the lack of correspondence between English spelling and pronunciation. Arabic can be classified as a phonetic language having a regular spelling system. Standard Arabic, therefore, can be modelled with specific rules which are developed manually using our linguistic and phonetic expertise (ibid). In other words, unlike English, the written letters correspond regularly to the spoken sound in Arabic (Mitchell and El-Hassan, 1989: 11). As a result, learners will tend to carry the habits from Arabic to English, and produce pronunciation based on spelling that can often be unintelligible.

Because Arabic is more 'phonetic' than English, Arabic learners tend to pronounce English words phonetically or letter-by-letter. For example, they may pronounce the letters (ng) in words like 'reading' as two sounds, instead of the RP /ŋ/, /ri:diŋ/. Another example is the learner's tendency to produce the sound /r/ wherever it occurs even though on some occasions it should not. Mitchell and El-Hassan (1989: 11) came to a significant conclusion that 'spelling pronunciation does not as a rule make for unintelligibility but it does contribute towards a foreign and distracting accent in English. In other words, the fact that the learner produces the /r/ sound in a word like 'girl' /gɜ:l/ or the sounds (ng) in 'reading' does not mean that the speaker is unintelligible because the listener still can understand the intended message. However, it could mean that the speaker does not acquire a native-like RP accent. Moreover, that is not all. When spelling pronunciation, a productive problem in the

sound /r/ may not lead to intelligibility breakdown, yet, it does contribute to intelligibility breakdown in other situations where the speaker pronounces 'throughout' or 'photographer' in letter by letter fashion.

Pronunciation is considered as a skill. Teaching pronunciation, therefore, is a matter of developing auditory skills (Gimson, 1989: 321). Ear training is essential in order to develop the learners' phonetic level of production. In the teaching of pronunciation, MacCarthy (1972: 15) points out that it is quite helpful if teachers draw the learners' attention to the differences rather than the similarities between the mother-tongue language and the target language. Furthermore, it is equally important that the teachers avoid the implication that the native sounds can safely replace the target ones (ibid: 15).

4.6 The Present Situation of Teaching Pronunciation in ELT

According to Jenkins (2004), For several decades of the 20th century, the main interest of pronunciation teaching research was in applying contrastive analysis techniques to the sound segments of the L1 and L2 to identify differences between them and so, it was assumed, to highlight areas where L1 transfer errors were likely to occur. Later in the century, pronunciation teaching research began to move on both by embracing more sophisticated approaches to inter-language phonology, taking universal, developmental, and other processes into account as well as transfer (see, e.g., the range of research interests documented in Ioup & Weinberger, 1987), and by focusing increasingly on supra-segmental features along with segmental. Still more recently and radically, a number of researchers have

ceased treating pronunciation as a somewhat isolated, self-contained linguistic and pedagogic phenomenon, but are forging links with research into other aspects of language and language teaching and also maximizing the opportunities offered by technological advances.

Pronunciation materials have changed as a result of shifting the emphasis from the teaching of individual sounds to focus on the communicative aspects of pronunciation (Pennington and Richards, 1986). Learners need to know more than the theoretical description of discrete isolated sounds of the target language because proficiency in the segmental level is not enough. The valuable communicative role supra-segmental features play in spoken English can not be ignored.

According to Castillo (1991: 4), there has been a shift in emphasis to the need for the integration of pronunciation with oral communication, a change of emphasis from segmental to supra-segmental features, more emphasis on individual learner needs, meaningful task-based practices, development of new teacher strategies for the teaching and introducing peer correction and group interaction within the field of pronunciation teaching. Cohen (1977: 71-7) argues that teaching the segmental phonemes is not enough for intelligibility in communication. According to Morley (1991: 488), intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence. Therefore, teachers need to make sure that learners possess the pronunciation skills that help them in communicating effectively.

Otowski (1998: 3) argues that there is a consensus that learner's pronunciation in a foreign language needs to be taught

in parallel to the communicative practices so that they can communicate effectively with native speakers. This shows the need to integrate pronunciation with communicative activities and to give the student situations to develop their pronunciation by listening and speaking (Hismanoglu, 2006). Pronunciation teaching is of great importance for successful oral communication to take place (ibid). Since sounds play an important role in communication, foreign language teachers must attribute proper importance to teaching pronunciation in their classes. However, this fact is very much neglected by many foreign language teachers (ibid).

In the past, teaching pronunciation involved a lot of exercises that engage learners in a lot of imitation and repetition. Describing how the teaching of pronunciation used to be between the 1940s and the 1960s, Morley (1991: 484-85) says:

The pronunciation class in this view was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with structurally based attention to stress, rhythm and intonation. Instruction featured articulatory explanations, imitation, and memorization of patterns through drills and dialogues, with extensive attention to correction.

This method is still applied in the Department of English at Damascus University. It is assumed that when learners learn how to produce individual discrete sounds, they would enable the learners to perform well. However, the research into this method has shown that it has some shortcomings. Learners who have been taught with this method may find themselves capable of performing well when they produce individual sounds. Yet, they may find themselves not performing well in a context

where they have to use language for a communicative purpose. Discussing the effect of this method, Jones (1997: 105) argues that: 'Recent research, however, has revealed the limitations of this approach, finding that, as with grammar, students who exhibit accuracy in controlled practice may fail to transfer such gains to actual communicative use'. To overcome these limitations, it is important to reconsider the aim of pronunciation, the current course book and the method of delivery taking into account the recent theories and pedagogies in English language teaching and bearing in mind context sensitivity.

Pennington (1996) argues that imitation drills and discrimination exercises are essential, but they should be seen as part and parcel of the whole communicative practice of spoken English. According to her, these drills should not be used only for the automatic memorization of de-contextualised sounds, but they should be used in a way which integrates sounds into effective communication.

The early pronunciation materials rely heavily on de-contextualised language and they lack the training in the supra-segmental features of spoken language. Stressing the communicative aspect of pronunciation teaching, Jones (1997: 109) points out that:

It is obvious that creating a stronger link between pronunciation and communication can help increase learners' motivation by bringing pronunciation beyond the lowest common denominator or 'intelligibility' and encouraging students' awareness of its potential as a tool for making their language not only easier to understand but more effective.

Nowadays, pronunciation teaching materials have started to integrate pronunciation instruction into a broader communicative framework. Morley (1991: 485) maintains:

The major change that has occurred today in many innovative programs is one that abandons the notion of an articulatory phonetics approach as the conceptual basis for teaching pronunciation, but integrates attention to the sound system into an expanded and more comprehensive framework, one that focuses on communicative interactions and functional language use.

Summarising the current principles guiding pronunciation pedagogy, Morley (1991: 493) points out the following:

1. A growing tendency toward communicative teaching of pronunciation considering it as 'an integral part of communication';
2. An increasing awareness of the importance of supra-segmental features (stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) and how they are used to communicate meaning in the context of discourse;
3. An understanding of pronunciation not only on the segmental (phonemes) and the supra-segmental levels but also as encompassing the voice quality features and elements of body language used in oral communication (facial expressions and gestures; eye contact, head, arm and hand gestures; body stance posturing, and use of space; and upper body movements);
4. A shift from a teaching centred approach to a learner centred one; in which the learner is more involved in the pronunciation learning/teaching process through speech awareness and self-monitoring strategies;

5. A focus on speech activities that involve students in meaningful practice of segmental features and supra-segmental features and that are suited to the communication styles and needs of the learners' real-life situations;
6. A focus on the link between listening comprehension and pronouncing/speaking, where attention is given to 'sound discrimination and identification exercises;
7. The utilisation of spelling information in adult ESL pronunciation teaching and how the morphological regularity of English spelling can be exploited for pronunciation purposes;
8. A focus on the uniqueness of each ESL learner and taking into consideration that each has his/her own learning and communication strategies.

While phonology has not occupied as central a position as syntax in second language acquisition research, some important characteristics of the phonological learning process have been isolated (Pennington and Richards, 1986). Some of these include the extent to which the second language phonological system is influenced by the phonological system of the first language, the role of universal acquisition processes in the development of L2 phonology, and the context of language learning and use (ibid). The influence of first language is discussed in detail (Please see section 4.4 about first language interference). Second language acquisition processes interact with language transfer in shaping the second language (L2) phonological system (ibid). In other words, some of these acquisition processes are similar to those found in first language phonological development. For example, children acquire voiceless consonants before voiced consonants (Macken and Ferguson, 1981). This may be explained as a

reactivation of the first language development strategies (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 213). The context of learning and use means that the degree and type of exposure to second language in classroom and naturalistic settings may in part determine eventual outcomes in phonology (ibid: 216).

Traditionally, explicit instruction in phonology (e.g., via minimal pair drills) was thought to influence the student's ability to articulate new sounds and to improve the learner's capacity for self-monitoring (Acton, 1984; Morley, 1979). Currently, acquisition- or communication-based methodologies do not assign a central role to direct instruction in pronunciation, nor do many bilingual education models, which set the goal as intelligibility rather than native-like phonology. It is assumed in these models that target-like pronunciation will eventually result from interaction with native speakers in naturalistic settings and cannot be achieved through formal instruction. A number of research studies have investigated the effects of instruction on the learning of pronunciation, but the results are inconclusive. While Suter (1976) and Madden (1983) find no positive effect for formal training on achievement in pronunciation, two studies report positive effects for phonetic training of adults. Murakawa (1981) shows that a 12-week program of phonetic training can produce significant changes in the articulation of individual phonemes by adult learners of English. Similar results are reported by Pennington (1984) after six instructional sessions incorporating training in both articulation and listening discrimination. Positive effects on production or perception are also reported for training in prosodic features by Gilbert (1980), Neufeld and Schneiderman (1980), de Bot (1983), and de Bot and Mailfert (1982). Differences in results in the reported studies appear to be due to the great variation in their experimental

design, particularly in the type of training which was provided. The next section will shed light on the segmental and the supra-segmental features.

4.7 Segmental Versus Supra-segmental Features

For most language teachers, pronunciation is largely identified with the articulation of individual sounds and, to a lesser extent, with the stress and intonation patterns of the target language (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 208). This reflects the traditional view that pronunciation is primarily associated with the expression of referential meaning and that individual sounds, or phonological segments, are the building blocks for higher level meanings (ibid).

From the perspective of contemporary research in discourse analysis (Brazil, Coulthard, and Johns, 1980), however, pronunciation is seen not only as part of the system for expressing referential meaning, but also as an important part of the interactional dynamics of the communication process (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 208). According to this view, it is artificial to divorce pronunciation from communication and from other aspects of language use, for sounds are a fundamental part of the process by which we communicate and comprehend lexical, grammatical, and sociolinguistic meaning (ibid).

Pronunciation includes different types of features (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 208), such as: segmental features, voice-setting features and supra-segmental features (or prosodic features). While phonology is incorporated in most English language teacher training programmes, segmental aspects of

phonology are often given more attention than supra-segmental aspects (Coniam, 2002: 30). In part, this is because segmental phonology is easier to define, to segment (in terms of spoken language) and therefore to 'teach'. Tench (1996: 1–2) notes that people appear to be aware of consonants and vowels (i.e. segmental features) because these may easily be identified (despite the vagaries of English spelling) in the written form. With regard to rhythm and intonation (i.e. supra-segmental features), however, he suggests that people are much less confident in discussing these because they are features of 'language in use rather than of language in units (like words)' (1996: 2).

4.7.1 Segmental Features

Segmental features are minimal units of sound defined in phonetic terms (Pennington and Richards, 1986). Traditionally, the fundamental components of pronunciation are phonemes, and acquisition of the target language phonological system is viewed as mastery of the phonemic distinctions embodied in its phonological inventory and of the phonetic variants of phonemes which occur in particular environments within syllables and words (ibid).

According to Pennington and Richards (1986: 209), there has been a shift in speech perception toward dynamic 'top-down' approaches to language processing (those which work from global to local meaning) — rather than the static 'bottom-up' model of perception (those which work from local to global meaning) seen in earlier models of speech processing (Dirven and Oakeshott-Taylor, 1984). Nevertheless, language teaching has continued to adhere to the traditional emphasis on

phonemes as the principal units of pronunciation. While phonemic and other types of features (e.g., aspiration) that function at the level of individual segments provide a valuable basis for detailed analysis of languages, this kind of micro-perspective on phonology needs to be complemented by a macro-focus on voice-setting and prosodic features.

4.7.2 Voice-Setting Features

Voice-setting features refer to general articulatory characteristics of stretches of speech. The tendency of speakers of a particular language to adopt certain habitual positions of articulation in connected speech, resulting in a characteristic voice quality, can be described in terms of voice setting features. Such features comprise what are sometimes referred to as voice quality, voice quality settings (Esling and Wong, 1983), phonetic settings (Laver, 1980), or certain paralinguistic features (Brown, 1977). Laver (1980: 2) gives an example of such a setting as:

a quasi-permanent tendency to keep the lips in a rounded position throughout speech. Another would be a habitual tendency to keep the body of the tongue slightly retracted into the pharynx while speaking. Another would be the persistent choice of a characteristically 'whispery' mode of phonation.

Thornbury (1993: 128) goes as far to say that: 'until the learner is able to approximate the voice-setting features of the target language, work on individual phonemes is largely whistling in the dark'. Voice quality setting is the phenomenon which accounts for our impressions of, for example, certain male Arabic speakers as speaking their language (or English) with a hoarse- or husky-sounding voice (Pennington and Richards, 1986).

Learners should be made aware of the voice quality as this would give them the opportunity to practice their communication communicatively (Jones and Evans, 1995). It can give students a clearer idea about the link between phonology and meaning (ibid). Paying more attention to the voice quality features in pronunciation teaching can positively increase the intelligibility of the learner (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 209).

The accent of a speaker is typically characterized by a description of the pronunciation of individual sounds, the placement of stress and of rhythm and intonation. Another way of characterizing accent, which may be less familiar to ESL teachers in North America, is the description of voice quality settings, which are the long-term postures of the larynx, pharynx, tongue, velopharyngeal system and lips, as well as long-term laryngeal configurations reflected in the diverse phonation types described by Catford (1964).

Voice quality settings may function linguistically, to characterize the particular language or dialect or social group to which a speaker belongs; or they may function paralinguistically, to signal mood or emotion in conversational contexts; or they may also function extra-linguistically to characterize or identify the individual speaker. When a feature of voice quality figures prominently in the setting of an ESL student's native language but does not occur commonly or to the same degree in English, it is a potential obstacle to intelligibility. Examples of accents which illustrate voice quality settings often found in ESL classrooms include *uvularized* tongue body position in some dialects of Arabic; *uvularized tongue body* and *faucal constriction* (that is, habitual constriction of the upper pharynx) in other dialects of Arabic.

Because voice quality setting features are often associated with individual speaker recognition or paralinguistic emotional coloring, the extent to which they incorporate the segmental phonology of the language and the extent to which they signal regional or social information may be overlooked. Distinctions in voice quality would be particularly difficult for a foreign learner of the language to recognize, lacking the opportunity or ability to observe the distribution of the phenomenon. In the United States, a broad model of voice quality setting might include the following features:

1. spread lips;
2. open jaw
3. palatalized tongue body position;
4. retroflex articulation;
5. nasal voice;
6. lowered larynx;
7. creaky voice.

Not all dialect groups will share the same features, and some dialect groups may even demonstrate opposite features, but settings that combine some if not all of these features are very common, and represent articulatory habits that students can easily observe and learn to recognize. Esling and Wong (1983) do not mean to suggest that the second language student's aim should be to sound exactly like a native speaker of the target language, but rather that identification with the target group, insofar as that is the student's goal, is often realized phonologically through the mechanism of voice quality. Honikman (1964) describes a typical setting of French as *rounded*, with *fronted* tongue and *blade articulation*, with slightly

open jaw setting. German is also characterized as lip-rounded. Russian, in contrast, is close in jaw setting, with spread lips and fronted (palatal) articulation. Indian and Pakistani languages are described as having open lips and jaw, with retroflex articulation of the tongue. Turkish and Persian are cited as examples of languages where articulation is performed primarily by the tongue tip. These descriptions are restricted to features which can be identified both auditorily and visually.

It can be argued that highlighting the significance of teaching voice quality in the teaching of pronunciation is of high importance. Learners would be able to see the effect of pronunciation on meaning through voice quality (Jones and Evans, 1995). Learners could realize that various voice settings express different emotions and consequently convey different meanings in the process of communication.

4.7.2.1 Suggestions for Teaching

Knowledge of voice quality settings of English as well as those of other languages provides a useful tool in improving pronunciation performance. A number of pronunciation difficulties may be the combined result of the learner's inability to grasp the generalization that a particular setting or long-term configuration represents. Many characteristic vowel and consonant phonemes of English share features which can be grouped together to constitute the habitual articulatory posture of English. If the voice quality of the learner's native language differs from the setting normally found in the target language, both intelligibility and comprehension in spoken communication may suffer. It follows that if the learner can be taught the relatively small number of higher-level features that constitute

the setting, then the pronunciation of a relatively large number of the lower-level segmental features captured within the generalized setting should improve as a result.

In addition, voice quality settings help to improve the image that students project when they speak English. One effective method of sensitizing ESL students to their own and each other's native voice qualities is to ask students to prepare a short phrase from everyday conversation, an announcement, or a tongue-twister to produce in their native language to the rest of the class. Even with only one or two representatives of each language, a linguistically heterogeneous class can yield noticeable differences. Particularly salient voice quality features can usually be assumed, provisionally, to be linguistically motivated, and can be contrasted from language to language. Students quickly learn that voice quality is not only individual, but also a part of one's accent in a language. Another technique for building awareness of voice quality in pronunciation is for students to observe and make notes of the settings of various personalities that they see on television. Certain programs might reflect a variety of regional or social dialects in English, whereas national newscasts might present a model which students wish to imitate.

Whether or not imitation is used as a technique, it should be pointed out to students that there are voice quality settings which one adopts in increasingly formal or prestigious varieties of English. The features of a socially higher valued setting in English may or may not correspond to the voice quality features that students bring from their native languages. If not, the difference may contribute, along with differences in rhythm, intonation, and segmental phonology, to low intelligibility or unfavorable social judgments against the speaker. It is

important for these students to become aware of voice quality and of how to observe and recognize different settings. They should also be presented with a model containing salient features which are likely to occur in the pronunciations of English which they are accustomed to hearing.

Esling and Wong (1983: 94) concludes that it is desirable to make ESL students aware of the voice quality settings that characterize their own languages, as well as to present voice quality characteristics which they can use as a model of pronunciation in English. This model can be referred to analytically to identify the settings of English speakers whom students hear and observe, or for sensitization as an example of one accent of English which is easy to recognize and to practice. Voice quality comprises the constant background of settings that define both (1) the voice of the individual and (2) the accent of the individual's language variety. While the former are personal, the latter are language-specific, socially indexical and phonologically relevant, and should be described and taught within the pronunciation component of the ESL curriculum.

4.7.3 Supra-segmental Features

The third dimension of pronunciation is the prosodic or supra-segmental features which consist of stress, intonation, assimilation, pitch, elision and rhythm. Wong (1987: 21) observes the importance of supra-segmental features of pronunciation. She argues that:

Contemporary views hold that the sounds of a language are less crucial for understanding than the way they are organised. The rhythm and intonation of English are two major organising structures that native speakers rely on

to process speech. Not only do rhythm and intonation provide structure, but they also direct the listener to the centres of attention in the stream of speech.

Pennington and Richards state that stress and intonation interact with other phonological features and with choices made about the meaning or information conveyed in an utterance. According to Brown and Yule (1983: 164), stress and intonation mark the elements which the speaker [does or] does not require the hearer to pay attention to.

The supra-segmental features operate over long stretches of speech (such as intonation) as opposed to the segmental features which are usually concerned with the individual sound. For example, Pennington and Richards (1986: 211) argue that:

Intonation is an essential component of the 'prosodic continuity' that makes connected stretches of speech—as opposed to individually spoken words or syllables—coherent and interpretable by the listener.

It is crucial that learners build awareness of supra-segmental features. It is a fundamental step that should be established in the pronunciation learning. Kenworthy (1987) argues that when learners are aware that English words have a stress pattern, that words can be pronounced in slightly different ways, that the pitch of the voice can be used to convey meaning, then learners will know what to pay attention to and can build upon this basic awareness.

Pennington and Richards (1986) argue that intonation and stress are highly context-dependent, so that the patterns of stress and pitch that characterize isolated words or phrases are typically modified when these words or phrases occur in the context of longer utterances. For example, pitch level tends to be reduced

in later parts of a discourse as predictability of information increases (ibid). Next, the supra-segmental features such as stress and intonation will be discussed.

4.7.3.1 Stress

Stress is an important aspect in prosodic features. It operates on both levels: word and sentence. According to Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 73), the most important area to start with in the teaching of pronunciation might be the teaching of stress. It is the most convenient focal point for any course in pronunciation (ibid). On the segmental level, word stress is decisive for the quality of individual sounds, on the intonation side, it signifies prominence. The term stress is used in two different ways. Firstly, it is related to the 'overall prominence of certain syllables over others'. Secondly, a narrow use is concerned with the way in which speakers actually achieve this impression of prominence (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994: 32).

There are different kinds of stress, one kind is word stress. It is defined as 'the term used to describe the accent or emphasis given to a particular syllable of a word, and it is a more or less invariable attribute of that word when spoken in isolation' (Underhill, 1994: 51). Stress is part of the acoustic identity of the word (ibid). Underhill (1994) proposes different activities that help in increasing learners' awareness of stress. One activity is asking students to repeat a sequence of an unvoiced consonant, for example (f..f..f..f..f) then stress alternate sounds (f...f...f...f...f). Learners will be aware of the difference between the stressed and unstressed versions of the (f) sound. The stressed versions are louder than the unstressed ones due to the extra power and air emitted by the lungs. Pennington and

Richards (1986: 210) argue that stress refers to the degree of effort involved in the production of individual syllables or combinations of syllables making up a word or longer utterance. For longer utterances a combination of strong and weak syllables comprises a rhythmic pattern (ibid).

Stressed syllables are prominent and distinctive for the listener (Roach, 2000). Stress could be studied from two different points of view, namely: perception and production (ibid). According to Roach (2000), stressed syllables have one characteristic in common; that is prominence. There are four different factors that contribute to making a syllable prominent; these are: loudness, length, pitch and quality (ibid). Stressed syllables are louder than unstressed ones, therefore, they are prominent in a stream of speech. In addition, the length of the syllables has an important part to play in prominence. Pitch is also a factor that helps produce the effect of prominence. Saying a certain syllable with a high pitch is likely to make it prominent. According to MacCarthy (1978: 47), the pitch variation is described as follows:

The rise and fall of the voice is determined by changes in the frequency of vibration of the vocal cords, corresponding closely to differences of perceived pitch of sounds created by this vibration; higher pitch correlates with more rapid variation of the vocal cords, lower pitch with slower vibration.

Quality is also a feature that gives prominence quality to syllables. The assumption here is that a syllabus is more likely to be 'prominent if it contains a vowel that is different in quality from neighboring vowels' (Roach, 2000: 94). According to Roach (2000), pitch and length have more effect than loudness and quality. Roach stresses the importance of pitch and length.

Recent text-books on the teaching of pronunciation give extra importance to the supra-segmental features such as stress, rhythm and intonation. Supra-segmental features play an effective role in intelligible communication. Kenworthy (1987: 28) states that: 'correct word stress patterns are essential for learner's production and perception of English'. Pronouncing words with the wrong stress pattern could lead to a misunderstanding on the listener's part, and consequently to breakdown in communication. Similarly, Wong (1987: 29) argues that: 'If a speaker places the stress on a syllable other than the one marked in the dictionary, the listener may have difficulty identifying which word it is, or if it is an English word at all'.

It can be argued that raising learners' awareness about stress will help learners gain more intelligible pronunciation. Therefore, special exercises that train students in using stress in their discourse should be incorporated in pronunciation teaching programmes. Teaching stress is of special importance as it is a vital factor in making speakers understood in communicative situations. Teaching pronunciation communicatively aims at helping learners use pronunciation effectively in practical situations. In addition, it can be said that it is important to teach stress patterns of Arabic (the mother language) and English in a contrastive study because that may help learners differentiate and apply correctly the English ones. It is hoped that learners will apply their pronunciation knowledge when they communicate in English. According to Underhill (1994: 58), stress is an umbrella term used to cover both *accent* (or word stress), and *prominence* (or sentence stress). Word stress belongs to the word. Sentence stress is determined by the speaker to highlight

the intended meaning (Underhill,1994:58). Connected speech includes both word accents (in a sense regardless of the speaker) and prominence (because of the speaker) (ibid). And what happens then is that individual word accent is likely to be subordinated to the speaker's choice of prominence, and these prominences form the major part of the rhythm of the whole utterance (ibid).

Intonation is one field of supra-segmental features. It is of great importance in the teaching of pronunciation. Intonation is indispensable for intelligible communication. Recent theories about intonation integrate teaching intonation into the broader concept of communicative pronunciation. The next section will discuss intonation.

4.7.3.2 Intonation

Intonation refers to the speech melody which is caused by what is called pitch variation. It refers to the patterns of pitch change over an utterance or series of utterances (Underhill, 1994: 75). Such patterns may be partly personal, but they are also conventional, and to that extent they are also systematic (ibid). According to Tench (1996: 1), intonation refers to the rise and fall of the pitch of the voice in spoken language. Intonation can be defined as a 'pattern of pitch variation' (Underhill, 1994: 76). Tench (1996: 2) argues that:

Intonation is in fact part and parcel of the English language, as it is for every language of the world. Intonation is inevitable whenever a language is spoken; it is important, because we eventually realize that it carries meaning and will often be the most important part of a message...and it is integral to the study of any language, for it links spoken discourse at large.

Roach (2000: 183) stresses the importance of intonation as it 'makes it easier for a listener to understand what a speaker is trying to convey'. According to Wong (1987), intonation works by means of pitch variation. Wong (1987: 55) states that: 'intonation makes words stand out by creating peaks and valleys with pitch'. Pitch is regarded as the core of intonation (Tench, 1996).

Chun (1988: 298) regards intonation as an untapped discourse tool which should be developed as part of the communicative competence of the foreign language student. Intonation can be described in terms of three aspects, namely: the attitudinal, the grammatical and the discourse approaches. In any discussion about intonation, it is important to mention and discuss the concept of tone unit. Before going into detail about the meanings of intonation, the tone unit will be briefly introduced.

4.7.3.2.1 The Tone Unit

The basic unit of intonation is called the tone unit; each tone unit conveys a unit of information, which is determined by a pause, a change of tone or by both. Underhill (1994: 76) argues that:

The tonic unit contains a single complete pitch pattern. The smallest possible tone unit contains only a tonic syllable...Most of the pitch change in a tone unit is concentrated onto one syllable of one word. This syllable is the tonic syllable (sometimes also called the tonic of the nucleus).

Roach (2000: 163) believes that it is difficult to define the tone unit. In order to help understand the tonic unit, Roach (ibid) provides the following example: *is it you?* In this example, the

third syllable is more prominent (clearer to the listener) than the other two and carries a rising tone. The example can be described as an utterance of three syllables, consisting of one tone-unit; the only syllable that carries a tone is the third one (ibid). He calls that syllable a 'tonic syllable' (ibid). The tonic syllable carries tone and stress because it is prominent.

4.7.3.2.2 The Attitudinal Function of Intonation

This approach presents intonation as a way of expressing our attitudes at the moment of speaking to the situation we are in, or to what we are talking about, or to ourselves or to our listener (Underhill, 1994: 83). This approach views intonation as a potential way of expressing the speakers' feelings and attitudes. This approach was advocated in the past and seen as central in many materials published on the teaching of English intonation (O'Connor and Arnold, 1973). The attitudinal approach to intonation describes attitudes such 'angry', 'reserved', 'grateful', 'bored', 'detached' and so on.

This approach is advocated and adopted by O'Connor and Arnold (1973). They include in their book ***Intonation of Colloquial English*** a large number of sentences and state many rules for saying these sentences using different intonational patterns to express certain attitudes. They describe around twenty different intonation patterns with the possibility of deriving a range of more meanings of each. For example, a sentence such as '*I am going to buy a new car tomorrow*', can be said in many ways as to express a wide range of attitudes; the speaker might sound sad, proud, happy, angry,...etc. According to O'Connor and Arnold (1973), there are ten tone groups. They explain them in relation to statements, WH questions, YES/NO questions,

commands, and interjections. Tench criticized O'Conner and Arnolds' description. Tench argues that: 'the range of meanings seems so wide, indeed too wide to possess any general sense' (Tench, 1996: 112). Underhill (1994: 83) expresses dissatisfaction with O'Connor and Arnolds' attitudinal approach to intonation for the following reasons. Firstly, according to Underhill (1994: 84), the attitudinal approach to intonation is confusing because the attitudes or feelings assigned to any one contour can be extended almost indefinitely. It is difficult to label attitudes objectively, and that the notion of expressing an attitude is in itself difficult and complex. Secondly, according to Underhill (1994: 84), expressing an attitude is attributed to many factors such as: the choice of vocabulary and the grammatical structure of the utterance, the placement of stress, facial expression, eye movement and many others. Therefore, he maintains that the intonation contour does not always necessarily express the attitude of the speaker, rather it might be that it sometimes 'coincides' with it. Thirdly, this approach does not yield learnable rules (ibid: 83). Underhill says that:

The problem is that such attitudinal values cannot be presented in away that offers learners a set of rules from which they can make meaningful choices affecting their own production. Nor does it enable learners to discern their own attitudes and to select an appropriate intonation before they speak.

Roach (2000) also criticized O'Conner and Arnolds' idea of a large number of sentences with different intonational patterns. Roach (2000: 185) argues that: 'the results are then very subjective, and based on artificial performance that has little resemblance to conversational speech'.

It should be mentioned that O'Connor and Arnolds' book *Intonation of Colloquial English* is taught to third year students in the English Department at Damascus University. It can be argued that this book is not a correct or learnable description of how English intonation works. It presents learners with 'countless' possibilities of expressing different attitudes by using different intonational patterns. This process could be possibly frustrating and boring to students. Underhill (1994: 84) states that:

So whatever the merits of this approach, I do not think it accounts usefully for what native speakers do and do not do, and I do not think that on its own it provides our learners with a system that is learnable or generative.

I identify with Underhill's opinion, and I feel that learners need to be presented with a learnable description of the English intonation.

4.7.3.2.3 The Grammatical Function of Intonation

The grammatical function of intonation means that some kinds of sentences are said to be inherently linked with certain intonational patterns (Crystal, 1969). Underhill (1994: 84) states that:

Although there may be a tendency for certain pitch contours to coincide with certain sentence types, it can be shown that they do not always do so. It is quite possible for a Wh-question to have either a rising tone or a falling tone, depending on its function.

To put it differently, the grammatical aspect of intonation means that there is a correlation between intonation and the type of the

utterance spoken. For example, the Wh-question is always accompanied by a falling tone. On the other hand, a yes-no question is always accompanied by a rising tone. However, this is not always the case. According to Cauldwell and Hewings (1996: 331), there are some examples and occasions where these rules are not adhered to. They provide the following examples (ibid):

↘ Are they significantly different? (A yes-no question ending with a falling tone).

↗ What's a bidet? (A Wh-question ending with a rising tone).

Therefore, they argue that the rules of intonation that are often found in ELT textbooks are not always necessarily valid as a generalizations.

In addition, there is another aspect about the grammatical function of intonation which is that intonation can mark off syntactic structures from each other. The tone unit boundaries are likely to occur at the boundaries between sentences, clauses and phrases (Underhill, 1994; Roach, 2000). In the following example, the tone unit boundary occurs at a sentence boundary (Roach, 2000: 196):

| 'won't have any tea | I don't like it |

The tone unit boundary placement can highlight the grammatical structures to the listener. Brown (1990: 93) argues that:

the most general and important function of tone group division then must be seen to be the marking off coherent syntactic structures which the listener must process as units.

To make this idea clear, Brown (1990: 93) gives the following example in which the tone unit boundary placement (or the tone unit group divisions) makes the difference between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses clear:

The boys+ who are ill + can't come. (all the boys)

Versus

The boys who are ill + can't come. (some of the boys)

However, the grammatical approach to intonation does not entirely provide learners with a learnable description of how intonation works. It works well for clause boundaries but it cannot always work properly for sentence types. Underhill (1994: 84) argues that:

By keeping the grammatical sequence of words constant, and changing the intonation and the context, we can give a range of meanings to the words. This illustrates not only that form and function do not coincide, but that classification of intonational meaning by sentence type is a generalization that cannot yield a learnable set of rules by which learners can choose one intonation pattern against the other.

In other words, any sentence can be said with different intonational patterns to produce the intended meaning.

4.7.3.2.4 The Discourse Function of Intonation

This concept approaches intonation from the perspective of discourse. The attitudinal and the grammatical approaches focus on the sentence in isolation. The discourse intonation theory was developed by Brazil et al (1980). It is based on the idea that sentences form part of a larger conversational interaction between two speakers. Therefore, intonation in this regard functions as a means by which the speaker conveys meaning to the listener through discourse.

In his book, *Pronunciation for Advanced Learners of English*, Brazil (1994) believes that learners should realize that pronunciation can make their meanings and intentions clear to the listener. Brazil (1994) argues that language is after all used to communicate. Intonation is the means whereby we organize our language into patterns that fit the present communicative need. The organization of information and the discourse are central issues in the discourse intonation theory. Moreover, discourse intonation does not isolate a stretch of speech from its context and make any generalizations or suggest any rules to account for the intonational meaning. Underhill (1994: 85) discusses the important link between intonation and discourse when he says:

Intonation reveals the information structure of the discourse, the relationship between utterances...Since intonation is a way of indicating the relationship of parts of the discourse to other parts, and of indicating what goes with what in the discourse, it follows that you cannot isolate a tone unit from its discourse context and make valid statements about what the pitch pattern means. Intonation meaning cannot be separated from discursal meaning.

Writers on discourse intonation point out that the speaker's intonational choices depend largely on what s/he perceives as

new or old information to the listener. Underhill (1994) explains that the concept of the 'common ground' (Please see also Brazil et al, 1980; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994) between the speaker and the listener is what the discourse intonation theory is all about. According to Underhill (1994: 86), common ground is the knowledge and experience that the participants think they share about the world, the topic and each other in terms of ideas, emotions, attitudes, viewpoints, etc. at any given point in the interaction. Therefore, it is assumed that anything that the speaker wants to convey to the listener could be seen as either a part of the common ground that already exists between the two or as an additional information to it.

According to Brazil (1994), discourse intonation recognizes five main tones: the fall, the rise, the rise-fall, the fall rise, and the level. Brazil has introduced the terms *referring tone* for a tone unit which the speaker regards as part of the existing common ground; it is transcribed with (). He also uses the term *proclaiming* for a tone unit which he sees as adding to the common ground; this tone unit is transcribed with (). In brief, Underhill (1994) notes that the speaker's intonation choices could be simplified as to be categorized into either falling or rising tones. He maintains that the intonational tones the speaker opts for could be explained in terms of the concept of the common ground. Underhill (1994: 86) writes:

Information which is additional to the common ground is marked by a pitch that finishes with a falling movement, and is given the name *proclaiming tone*. Information which is given as already shared and part of the common ground is marked by a pitch that finishes with a rising movement and is given the name *referring tone*, since it refers back to something already shared or negotiated.

Proclaiming tones are most frequently conveyed by a falling tone, while referring tones are conveyed by a falling-rising tone (Underhill, 1994). There are more marked versions of these two tones, the rising tone as a means of emphasizing the referring tone, and the rising-falling tone for emphasizing the proclaiming tone (ibid). According to him (ibid), these marked versions are less frequently used, and they are used to give dominance and emphasis to what the speaker says. Underhill also talks about 'zero' (level) tone that is used when the speaker is not communicating meaning e.g. when expressing boredom, hesitation noises (er...emm...), or thinking aloud. This level tone is conveyed with no pitch variation. The following table 4.3 illustrates the five tones that discourse intonation highlights:

Meaning intended in discourse	Symbol	Description
Proclaiming		Fall
Proclaiming + dominance		Rise-fall
Referring		Fall-rise
Referring + dominance		Rise
No specific communicative meaning		Zero (level)

Table 4.3

Brazil's model of intonation does introduce an element of the attitudinal function of intonation discussed earlier. According to

Brazil, the speaker could use the marked versions of tones, i.e. (proclaiming + dominance) and (referring + dominance) to indicate or claim dominance over the other(s). Also the speaker's choice of the marked versions could indicate how s/he perceives the social roles and his/her control over the other(s). The following two examples illustrates Brazil's concept of dominance:

a.  WHEN I've finished what I'm Doing // I'll HELP you //

b.  WHEN I've finished what I'm Doing // I'll HELP you //

(adapted from Brazil, 1985: 133)

The main difference between the two utterances is that in utterance (a) the speaker does not assume a dominant role over the other interlocutor, while in utterance (b) dominance is clearly marked by the use of the (referral + dominance) tone. Brazil (1985: 134) explains the previous example; he says that an adult would normally be considered to have the choice between being accommodatingly helpful or regulatory. In fact, it seems that the function of the marked versions of tones could be more or less labeled by an attitudinal adjective 'regulatory', for example. Thus the attitudinal function of intonation does emerge on the surface when Brazil discussed (+ dominance) tones.

It seems that the discourse approach to intonation is gaining more attention and prominence other than the two approaches. In fact, it facilitates the process of learning English intonation for EFL learners. It is attractive because it discusses five intonational tones only and presents learners with a limited set of rules that are easy to learn. It gives explanations for the frequently occurring intonational patterns in conversational interaction. It is

important because 'the successful use of discourse intonation could well be the key to effective cross-cultural communication' (Clennell, 1997: 117), as it accounts for what native speakers do and do not do. Thus it forms a basis for creating teaching materials that are helpful rather than misleading. Kenworthy (1987) refers to the importance of such an approach to the teaching of intonation. She (1987: 44) argues that:

The teacher should avoid an approach based on rules, or one that attempts to link a particular intonation pattern with a particular meaning or attitude...It is important that learners realize that intonation is a 'more or less' situation, a matter of degree, and sometimes very individual and situation-specific.

Underhill (1994) observes that the discourse approach to intonation is workable and learnable. According to him, mechanical practice of drills out of context is not the ideal way of teaching English intonation. Discourse intonation seems to be interesting because it emphasizes on practicing intonation in meaningful contexts above the level of the single sentence. Discourse intonation gained more attention in recent years because it fits with the currently prevailing top-down approach to pronunciation. Thus many writers started incorporating it in their textbooks on pronunciation (Please see Bradford, 1992; Brazil, 1994; and Underhill, 1994).

Cruttenden (2001: 255) argues that: 'while the variation in intonation between languages (and between dialects of English) is not as great as that involved in segments, it is nonetheless sufficient to cause a strong foreign accent and in some cases lead to misunderstanding. Cruttenden (2001: 292) advises foreign learners, even those aiming at a native pronunciation to observe the rules concerning weak forms, should cultivate the

correct variations of word rhythmic patterns according to the context, and should make a proper use of liaison forms (ibid). In addition, s/he should be aware of the English assimilatory tendencies governing words in context, so as to avoid un-English assimilations (ibid). This will help the learner understand much of ordinary colloquial English. The foreign learner is also recommended to aim at a relatively careful pronunciation of English in his/her own speech and, at the same time to be aware of the features which characterize the more colloquial pronunciation s/he is likely to hear from native speakers.

Cruttenden (2001: 275) advises foreign learner to pay particular attention to:

1. achieving a better style in reading aloud by appropriately dividing his/her speech into intonational phrases. Such division may be done in English in ways very similar to his/her native language (especially in the case of most European languages) but nevertheless the learner should note the frequency with which sentence adverbials and subjects of sentences are given their own intonational phrases;
2. putting the nucleus on the focal point in the sentence. Some languages (like French, Italian and Spanish) more regularly have the primary accent on the last word in the intonational phrase. This may sometimes mean accenting old information occurring at the end of a phrase, which is incorrect in English;
3. using appropriate nuclear tones. Learners should note that the fall-rise (especially on a single word) is rare in most languages but very frequent in English for a range of attitudinal meanings on declaratives and for subjects with

their own intonational phrase. Fall-rise is also frequent on sentence adverbials in initial position, although low rise is the usual tone in final position (but those exceptional falling adverbs, like '*definitely*', which take low fall or high fall in any position must also be noted). An overuse of simple falling tones (especially high falls), together with an overuse of glides-down in pre-nuclear positions, will produce an excessively aggressive effect, while conversely an overuse of simple rising tones (including fall-rises, and glides-up in pre-nuclear positions, which are uncommon in RP) will sound excessively tentative.

Chun (1988) argues that intonation is fundamental to genuine communication because communicative competencies means the ability not only to formulate grammatically correct utterances, but also to signal interactional strategies, such as interrupting, asking for clarification, taking the floor, changing the subject, concluding an argument, or constraining a hearer to reply. Intonation is a powerful tool for negotiating meaning, managing interaction, and achieving discourse cohesion (ibid). Intonation is bound to several levels of language, both linguistic (phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics, discourse) and extra-linguistic (emotion, interest, certainty),

Deciding which features of pronunciation that would be prioritized in order to possibly improve the learner's intelligibility is important. While segmental features include phonemes, the supra-segmental ones are mainly stress, rhythm, and intonation and are referred to as prosody. Many researchers studied the effects of both segmental and supra-segmental features of pronunciation on intelligibility. There is a general consensus on the impact of prosody on intelligible communication. Anderson-

Hsieh, Johnson, and Koehler (1992) suggest that supra-segmental features play a more important role than segmental features. Levis (2005: 369) argues that recent carefully designed studies have shown some support for the superiority of supra-segmental instruction in ESL contexts. (e.g. Derwing and Rossiter, 2003). Moreover, Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler (1988: 562) have also reported the same conclusion that: 'prosodic deviance may affect comprehension more adversely than does segmental deviance'. Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1998) also argue that prosody has a greater influence on intelligibility. This means that the insertion of non-standard phonemes does not necessarily or grossly affect pronunciation. In addition, they argue that instruction should focus on supra-segmental features because these features 'lead to better and quicker speaker intelligibility than a focus on segmentals' (Avery and Ehrlich, 1992 as quoted in Levis, 2005: 371). The belief of the superiority of the supra-segmental instruction in ESL contexts is also supported by Derwing and Rossiter (2003). The idea that supra-segmental features have more important influence than segmental features on pronunciation will be assessed in this research. The result may or may not confirm the priority of prosody.

Pennington and Richards (1986: 219) evaluate the status of the teaching of pronunciation from the perspective of communicative language teaching. They argue that accuracy at the segmental level is no longer the basic aim of pronunciation teaching and that teaching isolated forms of sounds and words fails to address the fact that in communication, many aspects of pronunciation are determined by positioning of elements within long stretches of speech. They recommend the following:

1. The teaching of pronunciation must focus on longer term goals; short-term objectives must be developed with reference to long term goals;
2. The goal of any explicit training in pronunciation should be to bring learners gradually from controlled, cognitively based performance to automatic, skill-based performance;
3. Teaching should aim toward gradually reducing the amount of native language influence on segmental, voice-setting, and prosodic features but should not necessarily seek to eradicate totally the influence of the native language on the speaker's pronunciation in the second language;
4. Pronunciation ought to be taught as an integral part of oral language use, as part of the means for creating both referential and interactional meaning, not merely as an aspect of the oral production of words and sentences;
5. Pronunciation forms a natural link to other aspects of language use, such as listening, vocabulary, and grammar; ways of highlighting this interdependence in teaching need to be explored.

4.8 Bottom-Up versus Top-Down Approaches to Pronunciation Teaching

The two terms 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' are used in the context of English language teaching in order to refer to two different approaches to the learning process. The bottom-up approach to teaching pronunciation, on the one hand, is concerned with the individual segmental components of pronunciation (phonemes) and the production of sounds in the

vocal organs (place and manner of articulation). It is concerned with teaching smaller units of meaning as a basis for explaining larger units. This approach to learning is defined in the following quotation:

A person begins his task of learning a second language from point zero and, through the steady accumulation of the mastered entities of the target language (e.g. sounds, morphemes, vocabulary, grammatical constructions, discourse units and so on) eventually masses them in quantities sufficient to constitute a particular level of proficiency. (Rutherford, 1987: 4 as quoted in Thornbury, 1993)

On the other hand, a top-down approach to pronunciation focuses on the supra-segmental aspects of speech such as intonation, stress, rhythm, and tone (Kenworthy, 1987; Nunan, 1991; Roach, 2000; Pennington, 1996).

The bottom-up approach begins with the articulation of individual vowels and consonants and works up towards intonation (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994: 69). The books that are based on the bottom-up approach usually start with describing 'speech sounds which are divided into two classes: vowels and consonants' (Matthei and Roeper, 1983: 25). Then, they proceed into the way these sounds are produced. The top-down approach, however, does not start from a zero point as it begins from a higher level that can be narrowed down and simplified into smaller units. This approach is concerned with the 'larger units' like intonation, and stress which are called the 'supra-segmental features of speech (Hyman, 1975: 186).

The focus of pronunciation teaching materials was traditionally mainly on the bottom-up processing strategies. It is only in

recent years that the focus started to shift to the top-down approach in the teaching of pronunciation. The traditional way of teaching pronunciation was primarily based on emphasizing the accurate production of the individual sounds in terms of manner and place of articulation. However, the recent way of teaching pronunciation has shifted from the atomistic view and is based on the holistic top-down approach where the priority is given to the supra-segmental features of pronunciation. Moreover, it gives them priority for the substantial role they play in the process of verbal communication.

The approach to pronunciation teaching in the context of the English Department at Damascus University is based on the bottom-up processing strategies. The assumption is that the application of this approach which starts with teaching the sound system of English first then the supra-segmental features could be an effective way of teaching pronunciation in the English Department at Damascus University. This may help learners to acquire well-established basis for the accurate production of English sounds. Consequently, they may be self-confident in producing the target sounds. In other words, this approach may help them learn the sounds which are the 'bricks' and the basic foundation with which pronunciation is constructed. Learners' attempt to learn the supra-segmental features of speech before they master the accurate production of English sounds may sound like asking them to run before they can walk.

The supposition is that training in English consonants and vowels helps learners improve their pronunciation patterns, increases their awareness and concern for pronunciation, and enhances their overall confidence in using English. While focusing on supra-segmental features helps them understand native speaker

accents, students may not find these features particularly useful for their own pronunciation. Actually the sound system should be given careful attention and training. Moreover, the Syrian schools and universities pay little attention to the teaching of spoken English and communicative pronunciation because the full attention is devoted to the teaching of English grammar. Proponents of the 'bottom-up' approach, like Hawkins (1995) and Roach (2000), suggest that foreign students are going to be particularly reliant on this processing in the early stages of learning the target language. Roach (2000: 2), for instance, argues that: 'courses which begin with matters such as stress and intonation and deal with phonemes later are found more confusing by the students who use them'. Moreover, these proponents argue that teachers should spend more time to convey the basics of pronunciation, such as articulation, to their learners, before proceeding to the more developed ways of speaking (stress, intonation, etc.). Therefore, it is more important that the teacher at this level help the learners to eliminate and reduce the influence of their first language, and should also be 'aware of the phonetic and phonological characteristics of his/her students' (Gimson, 1980: 324), in order to help them acquire the proper pronunciation of the target language.

Students, therefore, need to analyse thoroughly the sound system of the English language through the bottom-up approach to pronunciation teaching. Learners may need to make sure that they can articulate sounds properly before concentrating on other general speech features. Teaching the sound system first then the supra-segmental features may give learners self-confidence as it forms a strong basis from which students can

later comprehend how individual sounds are strung together over longer stretches of discourse.

Giving priority to segments does not mean that the supra-segmental features of speech should be neglected. When teaching segments, the teacher may introduce some supra-segmental features as necessary. Different purposes and stages in learning call for different priorities as the need arises.

Although teaching pronunciation in the context of the English Department at Damascus University starts from the mastery of the segmental level, the communicative role of supra-segmental features in spoken English must be taken into consideration. Pronunciation teaching is not only a matter of mastering the sound system of the English language. In other words, it is not enough to be proficient on the segmental level and know the theoretical description of each individual sound. The teaching of individual sounds should be followed by practice in the supra-segmental features of pronunciation. Theory should be seen as a basis for practice.

At the bottom-up level, the foreign learner needs to learn to control the phonological codes of the target language sufficiently to be able to use the richness of cues at this level (Brown, 1990: 151). According to Brown, the phonological code means the ability of the learners to differentiate between similar sounds in the target language, such as vowels as in (pull/pool/pu:l) or consonants as in (use /ju:s/, use /ju:z).

In the top-down process, 'the 'big' features of pronunciation like intonation, rhythm and stress would seem to have greater communicative value than smaller single sound features' (Parker

and Graham, 2002: 11). Proponents of this approach , for example Kenworthy (1987); Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), and Parker and Graham (2002), argue that at the early stages when students are still struggling with an unfamiliar sound system, they may lose the confidence and the courage to go on learning more complicated forms of this system.

Jenkins (2000: 80) summarises the difference between the two approaches. She quotes Anderson and Lynch (1988: 22) in supporting her argument that a bottom-up model of speech perception assumes that: 'we perceive speech by building up and interpretation in a series of separate stages, beginning with the lowest level units (the phonemic segments of words, for example, /b/, /θ/, /g/) and gradually working up to the larger units such as the utterance, from which we then derive our interpretation of the speaker's meaning'.

This top-down perspective on pronunciation highlights the overarching role of context in determining phonological choices at all three levels—segmental, voice-setting, and prosodic features (Pennington and Richards, 1986). Teaching isolated forms of sounds and words fails to address the fact that in communication, many aspects of pronunciation are determined by the positioning of elements within long stretches of speech, according to the information structure and the interfactual context of the discourse as determined by speaker and hearer (ibid).

4.9 Balancing the Two Approaches

Nunan (1991: 4) argues that: 'in terms of language processing, it is now generally accepted that learners need access to both top-down as well as bottom-up strategies'. A major task confronting the phonology teacher is to sequence and integrate the bottom-up and the top-down strategies in ways which facilitate learning. Again, it is not a question of *what* a teacher should prioritise, segmental or supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation; but it is a question of *how* to integrate these two aspects successfully in a way that suits the learning process in a specific learning context. In other words, we need teaching courses in which both bottom-up and top-down approaches are coherently and adequately combined. However, when these courses are not available, then it is the teacher's responsibility to be *selective*.

According to Hawkins (1995: 162), language in everyday use is not conducted in terms of isolated, separate units; it is performed in connected sequences of larger units, in sentences and longer utterances. So the EFL teacher may need to expose his/her learners to a kind of language that exists in natural speech (ibid). This may be presented on a record or a tape. Although the students may not succeed in imitating this sort of spoken English at the initial stages, they will be trained later to listen and repeat until they have acceptable pronunciation (ibid). The advantage of using these multi-media materials is that the students will have the opportunity to listen to real life-like situations and to listen to a pronunciation other than the teacher's. A further advantage of audio and visual devices is that they can be played over and over again until the students have understood them.

Culture is an important factor that should be taken into account when teaching the target language.

4.10 Language and Culture

4.10.1 Theoretical Background

The relationship between language and culture has been the interest and the focus of attention of many researchers for many years (Kramsch,2000; Kramsch,2008; Hinkel,2009). Linguists have studied the influence of culture on language and communication. Cultural factors can influence the process of language teaching because cultural systems in the target culture can be a source of interference when they are compared with those in the target culture (Hinkel,2009: ix). Others have analyzed the different aspects of second language use that are subject to culturally based influences, including classroom interaction, roles of teachers and students, and teaching styles and beliefs (Hinkel,2009: 1). Culture shapes and binds one's social and cognitive concepts, and these concepts are not likely to be understood by outsiders (Hinkel,2009: 2). Language teachers and applied linguists argue that it can be impossible to teach or learn second or foreign language without addressing the culture of the community in which it is used (Hinkel,2009: 2). When nonnative speakers violate cultural norms of appropriateness in interaction between native and non-native speakers, sociopragmatic failure, breakdowns in communication, and the stereotyping of nonnative speakers can result (ibid).

Language and culture are interrelated in many different ways. First, language is used to express cultural identity

(Kramsch,2000: 3). In other words, when people communicate, they use language to convey their viewpoints and/or the information about the world they share. Second, language embodies cultural reality (ibid, 3). This means that language through its verbal or non-verbal aspects is the medium used to reflect peoples' ideas or knowledge. Moreover, people interact or communicate differently such as speaking, reading or writing. Third, language symbolizes cultural reality (ibid, 3). Language is a system of symbols which have a cultural value.

Furthermore, forms of acculturation can shape language users' behavior. This means that etiquette, expressions of politeness, social *dos* and *don'ts* have an impact on people's behavior through different ways such as schooling and professional training (Kramsch,2000: 6). In addition, culture can also shape the use of written language. Cultural conventions are used in deciding (what it is proper to write to whom in what circumstances and which text genres are appropriate (the application form, the business letter, the political pamphlet (ibid)). Culture brings order and predictability into people's use of language (ibid). Language, therefore, plays a critical role in the continuity of culture especially in its printed form (Kramsch,2000: 8).

Culture could be a source of conflict when it is in contact with another. Teachers believe that knowledge of the grammatical system of a language has to be complemented by understanding of cultural meaning (Bayram and Morgon,1994: 4). They also believe that information about social institutions and geographical features of the country, family structures,

educational systems, political parties, regional industries, for example - is necessary support or 'background' to knowledge of grammar and meaning (ibid).

There is a relationship between the language spoken by the members of a social group and that group's identity. The speakers of this group by their accent and discourse patterns can identify themselves as belonging to this social group. Language, therefore, points out to the interrelation between people and their social groups. This relation promotes the feeling of cultural identity.

Questions of 'interference' or transfer are predominantly focused on syntax and phonology. As soon as semantic interference or transfer arises, however, the interdependence of language learning and culture learning begin to become evident (Byram, 1989: 42). For the association of the mother language (an L1) meaning with a foreign language FL word is a cultural transfer; the FL word is being used to refer to an L1 cultural phenomenon (ibid). Teachers, who expect and cope with syntactic or phonological transfer, must also beware of cultural interference and cope with it appropriately (ibid). Misunderstandings are likely to occur between members of different cultures, differences are real and we must learn to deal with them in any situation in which two cultures come into contact (Brown, 1987: 123 as quoted in Morgan and Byram, 1994: 11).

Cultural diversity can be a potential source of conflict when one culture comes into contact with another (Kramersch,1993 :1). Culture in language learning is not an expandable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them (ibid,1).

Educational systems have adopted functional approaches to language teaching in which educational effectiveness is traditionally measured according to its practical outcomes (Kramersch,2008: 4). Language teachers' responsibility is to get their students to talk and write as well and as fluently as possible (ibid,4). Some teachers believe that students should learn to use language in communication after they have learned the necessary linguistic skills through drills and exercises. On the other hand, teachers are now told that learners should be given the opportunity to use their skills even before they have completely mastered them and that they should focus on the message (ibid,5). Social interaction is achieved through 'student-talk' and 'teacher-talk'. However, students need to talk as much as possible, and teachers need to talk as little as possible. The focus is on the quantity rather than the quality of talk. In recent years, teachers start to expose their learners to 'quality input' (ibid,6).

According to Kramersch (2008: 23), challenge represents social and cultural differences and calls for acceptance of differences

and cooperation rather than the competition and the achievement of consensus. Challenge becomes a call for 'dialogue' between speakers of different languages who struggle to keep the channels of communication open in spite or because of the ideological differences they recognize and maintain between them.

Foreign language teachers deals with cultural factors that influence communication (Brown,1987:3 as quoted in Byram and Morgan). Some linguists focus more sharply on behavioral differences and in particular on how this may help cross-culture understanding in reading comprehension, pointing particularly to possible clashes between the culture of the reader and the foreign culture.

Experiential learning must be a clear approximation to first language and culture acquisition (Buttjes and Byram,1991: 18). Learners must understand and experience the culture from within, by acquiring new values and behaviors in a non-mediated form through direct experience. Therefore, there are two possible approaches: first, the use of learners' first language as the medium of study of a foreign culture interpreted ethnographically, although without the intention of introducing the learner to the totality of the culture. Second, the integration of language and culture learning by using the language as the medium for the continuing socialization of pupils is a process which is not intended to imitate and replicate the socialization of native-speaker peers but rather to develop pupils' cultural competence from its existing stage, by changing it into an intercultural competence (Buttjes and Byram, 1991: 19). The

issue is to change mono-cultural awareness from being ethnocentric and aware only of cultural phenomena as seen from their existing viewpoint, learners are to acquire an intercultural awareness which recognizes that such phenomena can be seen from a different perspective from within a different culture and ethnic identity (ibid).

4.10.2 From Theory to Practice

It is important to teach both language and culture in an integrated way. In the case of an English text, the teacher can deliberately choose cultural elements from the text which are comparably different from those in the native culture and discuss them. The language teacher is the facilitator for the cultural meaning who helps learners understand the cultural meaning in a context. Moreover, it is important to develop cultural awareness and positive attitudes to the target culture.

In the context of the Syrian learners who learn the phonology of the English language, the teacher helps learners understand cultural meanings. The learners are not in direct contact with the English culture or with native English speakers. Yet, in the book of phonetics, students learn the pronunciation of the English sounds in a variety of isolated words most of which are culture-free. Therefore, some of these words may have a cultural reference while others do not. On the other hand, learners may consider these words as mere pronunciation illustrations of certain sounds. For example, Appendix 2 clarifies how the isolated words that contain the sound /ð:/ are mere culture-free

examples (bird, earth...etc). In the case of words which have a cultural value, it is the teacher's task to explain this value: say for example the word *Christmas*. Students can learn the culture of the target language best by directly contacting that culture. Other indirect ways include watching English films, and reading about the target culture in magazines.

In the next section, an overview of pronunciation teaching will be presented.

4.11 Pronunciation Teaching: Past and Present

In this section, the past and present of pronunciation teaching will be presented. This section will shed light on important changes that took place since the 1940s until the recent time. Jones (1997) has discussed the history of pronunciation teaching, and here is a summary of Jones' discussion.

According to Jones (1997), Materials for the teaching of pronunciation have changed significantly over the past 50 years from emphasizing the accurate production of discrete sounds to concentrating more on the broader, more communicative aspects of connected speech. For many commercially produced materials, however, while the phonological focus has changed, the teaching techniques and task types presented continue to be based on behaviourist notions of second language acquisition, largely relying on imitation and discrimination drills, reading aloud and contrastive analysis of L1 and L2 sound systems (ibid). The next section will present the past of pronunciation teaching from the 1940s to the 1960s.

4.11.1 The 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s

According to Jones (1997), in the 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s pronunciation was viewed as an important component of English language teaching curricula in both the audio-lingual methodology developed in the U.S. and the British system of situational language teaching. In fact, along with correct grammar, accuracy of pronunciation was a high-priority goal in both systems.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) point out that these two schools of language teaching developed from different traditions, yet they reflected quite similar views on the nature of both language and language learning. Jones (1997) claims that generally, language was viewed as consisting of hierarchies of structurally related items for encoding meaning. Language learning was viewed as mastering these forms, the building blocks of the language, along with the combining rules for phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences (ibid). Jones (1997) argues that the pronunciation class in this view was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with structurally based attention to stress, rhythm, and intonation. Instruction featured articulatory explanations, imitation, and memorization of patterns through drills and dialogues, with extensive attention to correction (ibid).

Actually, both audio-lingual and situational language teaching continue to prosper in programs throughout the world. Yet, the main change that has occurred today in many innovative programs is integrating attention to the sound system into an expanded and more comprehensive framework, one that focuses

on communicative interactions and functional language use, and abandoning the notion of an articulatory phonetics approach as the conceptual basis for teaching pronunciation (ibid).

4.11.2 The 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980

Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1970s and into the 1980s, and in quite sharp contrast to the previous period, a lot of questions were raised about pronunciation in the ESL curriculum about the validity of instruction in pronunciation (ibid). There were questions about the importance of pronunciation as an instructional focus, questions about whether or not it could be taught directly at all, questions about the assumption it could be learned at all under direct instruction (ibid). Consequently, the effect was that more and more programs gave less and less time and explicit attention to pronunciation; many programs dropped it entirely.

While the number of textbooks and teacher reference publications in other segments of the ESL curriculum increased dramatically, very little new material on pronunciation appeared (ibid). The elimination or reduction of the pronunciation component developed amid growing dissatisfaction with many of the principles and practices of the traditional approach to pronunciation (ibid). This resulted in a change in models of second language learning, and a change in models of linguistic description. Consequently, the familiar ways and means of teaching pronunciation no longer seemed appropriate as new pedagogical sights were set on language functions, communicative competencies, task-based methodologies, and realism and authenticity in learning activities and materials (ibid).

Different articles on pronunciation, argues Jones (1997), addressed the topics that were to be issues of continuing concern into the 1980s. These topics dealt with:

1. basic philosophical considerations for teaching pronunciation;
2. the importance of meaning and contextualized practice;
3. learner involvement, self-monitoring, and learners' feelings;
4. learner cognitive involvement;
5. intelligibility issues;
6. variability issues;
7. correction issues;
8. increasing attention to stress, rhythm, intonation, reductions, assimilations, etc.;
9. expanded perspectives on listening/pronunciation focus;
10. attention to the sound-spelling link.

There were some indications of change through the decade of the 1970s. A number of ESL professionals began to raise issues and suggest expansions and changes of emphasis in classroom practices. In addition, many of these perspectives foreshadowed things to come. Examples are (Jones, 1997):

1. Prator (1971) examined issues relating to phonetics versus phonemics in pronunciation teaching;
2. Allen (1971) wrote on intonation, providing practice suggestions that continue to be cited today;
3. Bowen (1972) focused on contextualizing practice in the classroom, with a classic format that is still recommended, for example, by Celce-Murcia and Goodwin (1991) who refer to it as 'Bowen's Technique';

4. Kriedler (1972), W. Dickerson (1975), and Dickerson and Finney (1978) stressed the importance of the spelling/pronunciation link for learners;
5. Morley (1975) emphasized the need for learner-involvement and speech self-monitoring;
6. Robinett (1975) suggested ways to present information in a manner that appeals to students' cognitive involvement;
7. Stevick (1975) turned attention to a view of the learner's feelings and the importance of the affective dimension in learning;
8. L. Dickerson (1975) and W. Dickerson (1976) looked at aspects of variability in L2 pronunciation performance;
9. Cathcart and Olsen (1976) reported on teachers' and students' preferences for correction;
10. Parrish (1977) and Stevick (1978) presented viewpoints on a practical philosophy of pronunciation with attention to issues involving linguistic, affective, social, and methodological considerations;
11. G. Brown (1977, 1978) underscored the importance of focusing listening attention on prosodic patterning; Beebe (1978) provided some sociolinguistic perspectives on 'teaching pronunciation, why we should be';
12. Smith and Rafiqzad (1979) investigated mutual intelligibility among speakers from different cultures.

4.11.3 Through the 1980s and into the 1990s

There has been a growing interest in revisiting the pronunciation component of the ESL curriculum for adults and young adults during the mid-1980s and continuing into the 1990s (Jones,1997). Jones (1997) argues that:

Two developments have been catalysts in bringing about changes in pronunciation teaching. One is the increasing pressure of the urgent needs of special groups of ESL learners. Second, there are a number of emerging principles that seem to reflect an underlying belief system shared by many new pronunciation programs.

An important part of this movement has been pronunciation developments in several English for specific-purpose (ESP) programmes, such as academic, occupational, etc.(ibid). In the 1980s, a significant increase in both journal articles and teacher resource books appeared clearly as a reflection of renewed interest in pronunciation teaching principles and practices (ibid).

First of all, a number of insightful review articles were published in the eighties, examples are (ibid):

1. Pennington and Richards (1986), in the TESOL Quarterly, with a careful re-examination of the status of pronunciation in language teaching and a call for a broader focus on pronunciation within the context of discourse in both second language acquisition (SLA) research and ESL teaching;
2. von Schon (1987) in the 25th-anniversary edition of the English Teaching Forum, with a close look at pronunciation in the international context of English as a foreign language (EFL), and an examination of the roles of English and the issue of what models should be taught;
3. Grant (1988) in TESOL in Action, a Georgia TESOL publication, with a discussion of the problems and the possibilities for innovative pronunciation planning for the adult learner;
4. Anderson-Hsieh (1989) in Cross Currents, with a succinct history of approaches toward teaching pronunciation with special reference to Japan, but with useful applicability to other EFL contexts;

5. Yule (1989) and Riggenbach (1990) in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics (ARAL)* with reviews of a number of aspects of teaching the spoken language, including pronunciation.

In addition to these articles, a number of teacher resource books on teaching pronunciation and/or speaking skills appeared during the 1980s as well. Examples are (ibid):

1. Brown and Yule (1983), a broad 'armoury of strategies and tools', with a concentration on the communicative use of language by speakers;
2. Bygate (1987), a useful source of ideas on teaching speaking, with both practical and theoretical perspectives;
3. Morley (1987) a variety of 'current perspectives on pronunciation teaching: practices anchored in theory';
4. Kenworthy (1987), solid information on pronunciation teaching, including a section reviewing the main problems experienced by speakers of nine selected languages;
5. Avery and Ehrlich (1987) (a TESL Canada Talk volume), papers on classroom methodology and a section on problems of eight language groups;
6. Wong (1987), focus on English rhythm and intonation in pronunciation teaching Swan and Smith (1987), 24 contributors provide a comprehensive teachers' guide to 'learner English' in terms of typical inter-languages of speakers of several dozen different languages:
7. A. Brown (1991), a collection of 29 papers published between 1956 and 1986;
8. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (in press), a reference book on English pronunciation for ESL/EFL teachers;
9. Comrie (1987), linguists provide descriptions of 'the world's major languages,' including sections on phonology.

In addition, different influential English language reference books were published during the 1980s. Examples include (ibid):

1. Wells (1982), three volumes that contain detailed descriptions of a wide variety of the English dialects found around the world;
2. Ladefoged (1982), a course in phonetics with substantial information on English sounds, patterns, and supra-segmental features;
3. Bauer, Dienhart, Hartvigson, and Jakobsen (1980), a careful description of 'American English', with very useful comparative notes on 'British English' as well;
4. Brazil, Coulthard, and Johns (1980), a British discourse intonation and language teaching text which stresses the 'learnability' of four intonational categories and their associated meaning;
5. Brown, Currie, and Kenworthy (1980), a challenge to previous assumptions and models of sentence-level intonation, using data from interactive discourse; Wolfram and Johnson (1982), a volume on phonological analysis, with a 'focus on American English';
6. Kriedler (1989), a phonology course with comprehensive presentation of the pronunciation of English.

Taken together, the reviews and the teacher references reveal a number of important developments and many continuing questions (ibid). An especially significant trend is an increasing number of programmes engaged in developing new looks in pronunciation teaching, ones that are concerned with an expanded pronunciation/speech/oral communication component of the ESL curriculum (ibid).

Jones (1997) argues that:

Overall, with today's renewed professional commitment to empowering students to become effective, fully participating members of the English-speaking community in which they communicate, it is clear that there is a persistent, if small, groundswell of movement to write pronunciation back into the instructional equation but with a new look and a basic premise: Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence.

According to Beebe (1978: 121), in this era of emphasis on meaningful communication, it is important for ESL professionals to take note of the fact that 'pronunciation—like grammar, syntax, and discourse organization—communicates...the very act of pronouncing, not just the words we transmit, are an essential part of what we communicate about ourselves as people'. Beebe (1978) reported that NSs often label NNS pronunciation errors derisively, as sounding comical, cute, incompetent, not serious, childish, etc.

A number of changing views on pronunciation learning and teaching emerged during the decades of the seventies and eighties which were important periods of development (Jones, 1997). Coincidentally, some of the need to rethink both principles and practices came about as the result of the pressing urgency of student needs (ibid).

Second language study is influenced by changes in perspectives on second language learning and teaching over the past two and a half decades (ibid). In the case of pronunciation, an early and rather wholesale movement in TESL toward eliminating or reducing attention to pronunciation instruction presently seems to be undergoing something of a trend reversal. Jones (1997) justifies that by saying: 'part of the reason for this may lie in the

fact that it has become increasingly clear in recent years that ignoring students' pronunciation needs is an abrogation of professional responsibility'. For example, in programs for adult (and near-adult) ESL learners in particular, it is imperative that students' educational, occupational, and personal/social language needs, including reasonably intelligible pronunciation, be served with instruction that will give them communicative empowerment—effective language use that will help them not just to survive, but to succeed. According to Jones (1997), with an increasing focus on communication, has come a growing premium on oral comprehensibility, making it of critical importance to provide instruction that enables students to become, not 'perfect pronouncers' of English, but intelligible, communicative, confident users of spoken English for whatever purposes they need.

4.11.4 The 1990s and into the Twenty-First Century

Optimism prevails, but attention must be turned to perplexing issues and research and development needs. As observed by many colleagues in references already cited, the needs for future explorations are many. A few are presented in the following list (ibid):

1. A need to equip ESL teachers (in both initial and in-service training) with a very specific kind of background in applied English phonetics and phonology, one that gives detailed attention to supra-segmental features and voice-quality features and their forms and their functions in interactive discourse (in addition to segmental information) and one that stresses application in communicative approaches to pronunciation teaching (ibid). (As urged by Gilbert, 1984, Wong, 1986, and

others, this is an area where communication between language teachers and linguists is critical);

2. A continuing need for development of pronunciation/speech activities, tasks, materials, methodologies and techniques across the spectrum of imitative, rehearsed, and extemporaneous speaking practice experiences—that is, more of the kinds of things now available in some of the references cited above. (One tool now becoming an economic and practical possibility is self-study computer programming both for student practice and for assessment through the use of visual displays of speech parameters. As laboratory speech analysis and synthesis capabilities have become more accessible for instructional uses, Leather (1983) notes the potential for creative uses—while guarding against misuses—is great. (See Browne, 1991; de Bot 1980; de Bot and Mailfert, 1982; Gilbert, 1980; Molholt, 1988);

3. Together with the need for continuing development of creative and effective practice experiences is the need for more definitive evaluative measures and methods to quantify changes and improvements in the learner's intelligibility and communicability. (Celce-Murcia and Goodwin, 1991, stress student assessment as both formative, or ongoing, and summative, or final; Morley, 1991, suggests the development of a Speech Intelligibility Index that makes use of behavioral descriptors correlated with impact on communication);

4. A need for controlled studies of changes in learner pronunciation patterns as the result of specific instructional procedures. This is a particularly difficult area for research because, as Pennington & Richards (1986: 218-9), have pointed out, there is not likely to be a one-to-one relationship between teaching and learning, since learning 'is a gradual process involving successive approximations to the target language

system over time in a progression from controlled to automatic processing’;

5. Finally, a continuing need for research (as noted in the reviews by Leather, 1983; and Pennington and Richards, 1986) into aspects of second language phonology and the nature and course of development of an L2 phonological system. Furthermore, information on a range of inter-language phonology topics, and phonological theory and L2 phonological issues is available in the papers in Ioup and Weinberger (1987) and James and Leather (1986) and in articles in *Language Learning*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *Applied Linguistics*, and other periodicals.

4.11.5 Programming Principles

There are some of the principles guiding current directions in pedagogy (Jones, 1997; Morley, 1987). These are the following:

1. A focus that views the proper place of pronunciation in the second language curriculum as an integral part of communication, not as an isolated drills-and-exercises component set aside from the mainstream; in short, a growing trend toward communicative approaches to teaching pronunciation;
2. A redirection of priorities within the sound system to a focus on the critical importance of supra-segmental features (i.e., stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) and how they are used to communicate meaning in the context of discourse, as well as the importance of vowel and consonant sounds (segmental) and their combinations. (Yule, 1989, has observed that perhaps this direction is best described as the prosodic (or supra-segmental) approach, and that it has its intellectual roots in the intonation

work of Bolinger, 1964, and the extensive treatment of paralinguistic features by G. Brown, 1977);

3. A focus on an expanded concept of what constitutes the domain of pronunciation, one that incorporates not only attention to (a) segmental and (b) supra-segmental features, but also (c) voice quality features such as the phenomena referred to as voice-setting features by Pennington and Richards (1986); as voice quality settings by Laver (1980), Esling and Wong (1983) and Esling (1986); as paralinguistic features by G. Brown (1977) (as a rubric for certain vocal features); and as articulatory settings by Honikman (1964), and (d) elements of body language used in oral communication (e. g., facial expressions and gestures; eye contact; head, arm, and hand gestures; body stance, posturing, and use of space; and upper body movements, which Acton, (1984), discusses in detail in connection with teaching rhythm);

4. A focus on some revised expectations in both learner involvement and teacher involvement. Current perspectives on learner involvement in the pronunciation learning/teaching process include an emphasis on speech awareness and self-monitoring, while a revised characterization of teacher involvement is drawn along the lines of facilitator-coach and organizer of instructional activities. Learner involvement through overtly labelled self-monitoring is not a new focus in pronunciation (Acton, 1984; Morley, 1979). Acton stresses giving constant attention to the individual's own resources and puts the responsibility for success in the course on the student. Wong (1986) notes that by giving students specific means to develop independently, the responsibility falls on those who have the actual power to make the necessary changes. Firth (1987: 48) presents a variety of techniques for developing self-correcting and self-monitoring strategies as a way of dealing with the

serious problem of 'carry-over'. Crawford (1987) examines a number of pronunciation learning/teaching issues including perspectives on monitoring. Kenworthy (1987) emphasizes sensitizing learners to their own potential as active participants in the process and describes the teacher's role as primarily supportive of the learner's own efforts. Yule, Hoffman, and Damico (1987) point out the need for patience and support of learners who, as they are engaged in developing their L2 pronunciation skills, may go through a period of deteriorating performance as they give up old ways and have not yet become fluent with new ways. W. Dickerson (1989) makes the case for a natural ability for self-monitoring of language and the importance of activating it systematically in pronunciation teaching. Riggenbach (1990), in a section on self-monitoring of speaking activities, reviews a number of techniques for self- and peer analysis;

5. A focus on meaningful practice and especially speech-activity experiences suited to the communication styles and needs of the learners' real-life situations. Suggestions for contextualized work with segmental and supra-segmental features are found in Bowen (1972, 1975), Celce-Murcia (1983, 1987), English (1988), Celce-Murcia and Goodwin (1991), and Morley (1991). Meaningful practice activities, of course, go hand in hand with the focus on communicative approaches to teaching pronunciation. Suggested speaking activities that can be adapted for special pronunciation focus as well are found in Ur (1980), Rooks (1987), Brown and Yule (1983), Porter, Grant, and Draper (1985), Bygate (1987), Riggenbach and Lazaraton (1991);

6. A focus on the link between listening and pronouncing/speaking and a need to expand the nature and the range of pronunciation-oriented listening activities. Attention to pronunciation-oriented listening instruction was an important

component of traditional pronunciation teaching with a primary focus on sound discrimination and identification exercises. Many of today's texts and teaching references continue to include this focus among a wider range of listening/teaching foci. Gilbert (1984: 3), who stresses a dual focus on pronunciation and listening comprehension, apprises students that: 'How you hear English is closely connected with how you speak English'. Wong (1987) focuses on ways to make a language-rich pronunciation classroom in which students hear a variety of speakers engaged in diverse real-world communicative events in order to develop active listening skills and a comfortable level of fluency. Mendelson-Burns (1987) advocates teaching pronunciation through listening and suggests a variety of activities;

7. A focus on a range of important sound/spelling relationships. Substantial attention to the utilization of spelling information in adult ESL pronunciation teaching was slow to appear in course books until relatively recently, although Kriedler (1972) and W. Dickerson (1975) had emphasized its importance, and some attention to spelling was included in student texts by Bowen (1975), Morley (1979), and Prator and Robinett (1985). More recently W. Dickerson (1989) presents an extensive treatment of English orthography as a key tool in teaching pronunciation, especially in stress and rhythm instruction, and a number of new texts have included a spelling section in lessons on segmental features. Recent teacher reference materials on spelling include papers by Temperley (1983, 1987) and a chapter in Kenworthy (1987) on spelling, including how the morphological regularity of English spelling can be exploited for pronunciation purposes;

8. A focus on the uniqueness of each ESL learner. Each has created his or her own personal pattern of spoken English, which is unlike that of anyone else and the product of influences from both the L1 and the L2, the student's personal learning and

communicability strategies, as well as the impact of input and instruction. And Eckman (1991) has provided convincing evidence over the years to show that L2 pronunciation is going to be subject to universal forces quite distinct from rules of the L1 or the L2. This unique pattern now needs to be modified in some way(s) in order to reach goals of intelligibility, communicability, and self-confidence. Flege (1980) noted that L2 learners produce sounds that are not typically found in either their native or the second language. Beebe (1984), reporting on a study of variability, noted that her results suggested that there is a high level of inherent variation in inter-languages, just as there is in native languages, as indeed was revealed in earlier variability work done by L. Dickerson (1975) and W. Dickerson (1976). And Prator (1971) suggested that the safest solution for teachers is to regard unintelligibility not as a result of phonemic substitution but as the cumulative effect of many little departures from the phonetic norms of the language.

4.11.6 Learner Goals, Standards and Outcomes

Traditional pronunciation goals, by and large, exhort ESL students to strive for 'perfect pronunciation', and/or near-native pronunciation, and/or mastery of pronunciation (Jones, 1997). While these aspirations sound attractive to many students (and their teachers), the path to these high levels of performance is a tortuous one, on both sides. The truth is that they are virtually unattainable for the vast majority of ESL learners. In fact, there is a widely held consensus that few persons, especially those who learn to speak a second language after the age of puberty, can ever achieve native-like pronunciation in that second language; Scovel (1969) and others believe never. The factors involved in answering the question of why this is so are many

and varied—neurological, psychomotor, cognitive, affective—but clearly, the current consensus is that this is the case for most learners. (Please see Hill, 1970, and Neufeld, 1978).

At best, perfectionistic performance goals turn out to be unrealistic; at worst, they can be devastating: They can defeat students who feel that they cannot measure up, and they can frustrate teachers who feel they have failed in their job. How fortunate it is that perfect or native-like pronunciation is not a necessary condition for comprehensible communicative output. In fact, it may not always even be desirable. As Leather (1983) observed, in some situations learners who do well in acquiring a very good L2 accent may get mixed responses from NSs. He reports Christophersen's (1973: 199) description of one possible NS reaction to too-perfect pronunciation in an L2 speaker may be that of 'a host who sees an uninvited guest making free with his possessions'. In another dimension, perfect L2 pronunciation is not desired by some learners who wish—consciously or unconsciously—to retain accent features to mark their L1 identity and to insure that they are not perceived as betraying their loyalty to their L1 community.

In addition to the fact that it is not a realistic expectation, nor a necessary condition for effective NNS communication with NSs or other NNSs, nor necessarily a desirable goal for everyone, there is a further concern here. Notions of perfection and native-like pronunciation may be imposing and perpetuating false standards, standards difficult to define, let alone uphold, because these are slippery concepts with basic questions of, What is perfect? and Which native speaker are we talking about? Since everyone speaks their language with an accent. This is particularly significant today with many serviceable and

respected Englishes existing throughout the world. In fact, in a cross-cultural communication intelligibility study involving 1,383 people from 11 countries, Smith and Rafiqzad (1979: 375) report that a most important result is that 'the native speaker was always found to be among the least intelligible speakers'. Nakayama (1982) reports that in the business sector in Japan, some language training programs actively seek and employ NNSs as well as NSs as instructors in order to help the students become accustomed to English dialects other than British and U.S.

The reasonable and desirable goal is intelligibility as it is a key ingredient in goal setting in new programs and a bit of a shift from traditional views. In the next section, the research-based approach to teaching pronunciation will be discussed.

4.12 A Comprehensive, Research-Based Approach to Teaching Pronunciation

The research-based approach to pronunciation instruction emphasises pronunciation in the context of meaningful interaction (Scarcella and Oxford, 1994: 225). In contrast to teaching pronunciation as an isolated skill, pronunciation should be taught in all second language classes through a variety of activities. Students may take primary responsibility for improving their pronunciation, but the teacher provides them with the tools they need to accomplish this objective. As seen in Table 4.4 on the next page, the approach is a major break from the traditional approach to teaching pronunciation. It is far more comprehensive in its instructional design and yet more realistic.

The traditional approach aims at native-like pronunciation. It is suitable when learners aim at native-like proficiency in pronunciation. The research-based approach aims at sufficient pronunciation skills for communication, which means intelligibility. Therefore, it may be the approach for learners who aim at intelligible pronunciation.

Research-based approach	Traditional approach
The goal is to gain sufficient pronunciation skills so that the quality of pronunciation will not inhibit communication.	The goal of instruction is to acquire Native-like pronunciation.
Instead of putting the emphasis on sounds, teachers concentrate on stress and intonation.	The primary emphasis is teaching sounds
The emphasis of instruction is on teaching pronunciation communicatively.	Sound segments are taught non-communicatively through drills of isolated words.
The student's motivation is seen as central to successful language instruction. The student plays a primary role in improving pronunciation. Self-monitoring skills and awareness strategies are taught.	Students do not take responsibility for improving their own pronunciation.

Table 4.4

There are some specific changes including intelligibility as a more realistic objective than native-like pronunciation, a shift in

emphasis from the sounds of the language to stress and intonation, an emphasis on communicative activities instead of pronunciation drills, integration of pronunciation with other language activities, self-monitoring, and greater learner's speech awareness.

Moreover, everything that a teacher does inside the language classroom can contribute to language teaching, not only when s/he is deliberately concentrating on teaching pronunciation, but also in every spontaneous word or sentence s/he utters, such as greetings. If the teacher keeps this in mind, s/he will have a certain automatic impact on the students, who realise that everything the teacher says is a lesson in pronunciation (Parish, 1977: 104). However, Stevick (1978: 118) disagrees with this point of view, considering it as an 'unrealistic' because no learner can pay attention to everything at the same time. Yet, the spontaneous words that a teacher says in the classroom are often the things that learners need to use in normal conversations.

4.13 Implications for Teaching

The model of pronunciation as a context-dependent and dynamic interaction of segmental, voice-setting, and prosodic features has a number of implications for language teaching (Pennington and Richards, 1986). This view leads to the articulation of goals different from those set forth for traditional approaches to the teaching of pronunciation (*ibid*).

In other words, accuracy at the segmental level is no longer the fundamental aim of teaching, since it is now known that accurate production of segmental features does not in itself characterize

native-like pronunciation, nor is it the primary basis for intelligible speech. Dirven and Oakeshott-Taylor (1984, 333) argue that:

In view of the fact that segmental information in the acoustic signal may well be of limited scope and reliability, it is of the greatest importance that the learner's attention is directed to non-segmental information.

As the emphasis moves away from a narrow focus on segments to a broader focus on stretches of speech, the effects of voice setting, stress and intonation, as well as coarticulatory phenomena such as shortenings, weakening, and assimilations, assume greater importance for teaching (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 218).

This top-down perspective on pronunciation highlights the overarching role of context in determining phonological choices at all three levels—segmental, voice-setting, and prosodic features (*ibid*). Teaching isolated forms of sounds and words fails to address the fact that in communication, many aspects of pronunciation are determined by the positioning of elements within long stretches of speech, according to the information structure and the interactional context of the discourse as determined by speaker and listener (*ibid*).

Intervention by the teacher may not be able to alter the learner's path of development in mastering second language phonology. Learning is a gradual process involving successive approximations to the target language system over time and a progression from controlled to automatic processing (*ibid*).

According to Morley (1991: 505), for maximum effect, pronunciation/speech instruction must go far beyond imitation; instead, it should focus on a mix of practice activities. Morley (1991: 505) argues that: 'three kinds of speech practice can be included from the very beginning: imitative practice, as needed (dependent practice); rehearsed practice (guided self-practice and independent self-practice); extemporaneous speaking practice (guided and independent self-practice)'. In addition, specialized speech-oriented listening tasks can help learners develop their auditory perception, their discriminative listening skills for dimensions of pronunciation/speech communicability, and their overall aural comprehension of English (ibid).

Immediate results from pronunciation training may not be achieved if the learner has not reached an appropriate stage in phonological development and so lacks the developmental prerequisites for what is being taught (Pennington and Richards, 1986). Such training may, however, assist in the development of new articulatory habits and contribute to the reorganization of higher level systems, or schemata, eventually resulting in a change in performance. For the same reason, immediate improvements in pronunciation resulting from direct training may take time to become a part of spontaneous language use. In the domain of pronunciation, then, there is not likely to be a one-to-one relationship between teaching and learning (ibid).

Attention needs to be given to prosodic features and vocal features including the fast speech phenomena found in authentic speech patterns as well as vowel and consonant sounds and their combinations (Morley, 1991). Moreover, it is essential that ESL students learn to relate spoken English and written English quickly and accurately if they are to become truly literate in

English. A variety of kinds of sound/spelling work can prepare them to do this. Learner awareness of spelling patterns as cues to stress/rhythm patterning can be tremendously useful. (Please see Dickerson, 1989). Morley (1991) suggests a focus on learner involvement, teacher involvement, and instructional planning. This is discussed next.

Firstly, it is important to focus on learner involvement. Learner strategies are the measures which a learner undertakes to facilitate his/her own language learning (Morley, 1991). Research has dealt with these strategies, for example: Stern (1975), Rubin (1975), Naiman et al. (1978), Wenden and Rubin (1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1989), and Oxford (1990). Among the strategies found to be most successful for learners is self-involvement in the learning process. It is important to achieve such goal of learner self-involvement in the pronunciation teaching process. That can possibly be achieved through working on learner's awareness and attitudes. Adult learners seem to benefit most when they are involved, consciously, in the speech modification process as they work to become intelligible, communicative, confident speakers of English. Teachers can assist learners in developing useful awareness and attitudes (ibid: 506). Learner's awareness and attitudes can be fulfilled by the following steps:

1. Speech awareness;
2. Self-awareness of features of speech production and speech performance;
3. Self-observation skills and a positive attitude toward self-monitoring processes;

4. Speech-modification skills (i.e., self-'correction') and the elimination of negative feelings that correction is a punitive thing;
5. Awareness of the learner role as one of a 'speech performer' modifying, adjusting, or altering a feature of speech/pronunciation, and the teacher role as one of assisting students as a 'speech coach' who gives suggestions and cues for speech modification, support, encouragement, and constructive feedback;
6. A sense of personal responsibility for one's own learning, not only for immediate educational and occupational needs, but for future career, social, and personal goals;
7. A feeling of pride in one's own accomplishments;
8. Building a personal repertoire of speech monitoring and modification skills in order to continue to improve speaking effectiveness in English when the formal instructional program is finished.

Secondly, Morley (1991) emphasises the importance of focusing on teacher and teacher involvement. Programs that are committed to helping learners modify pronunciation/speech patterns and develop effective communicable speech skill often reflect a philosophy of learner/teacher partnership (ibid). In pronunciation work, perhaps more than in any other facet of second language instruction, clearly the teacher does not teach, but facilitates learning in a very special learner-centered way (ibid). Morley (1991: 206) argues that:

In programs with the partnership philosophy, the role of the teacher is viewed as one of assisting learners something like a coach, a speech or a pronunciation coach. A coach characteristically supplies information, gives models from time to time, offers cues, suggestions

and constructive feedback about performance, sets high standards, provides a wide variety of practice opportunities, and overall supports and encourages the learner.

The pronunciation/speech coach has the critical role of monitoring and guiding modifications of spoken English at two levels, as noted earlier: (a) speech production (i.e., the micro-level) and (b) speech performance (i.e., the macro-level). Note again that articulatory phonetics is not abandoned, but takes a place as one part in the larger communicative picture of getting the message across. The teacher-as-coach has a challenging task made up of diverse responsibilities. Teacher-as-Coach Responsibilities are the following:

1. Conducting pronunciation/speech diagnostic analyses, and choosing and prioritizing those features that will make the most noticeable impact on modifying the speech of each learner toward increased intelligibility;
2. Helping students set both long-range and short-term goals
3. Designing program scope and sequence for an entire group of learners; designing personalized programming for each individual learner in the group;
4. Developing a variety of instructional formats, modes, and modules (e.g., whole-class instruction, small-group work, individual one-on-one tutorial sessions; pre-recorded audio and/or video self-study materials; both in-class and out-of-class self-study rehearsal recordings in audio and/or video formats; work with new computer program speech analysis systems, and more). Overall, providing genuine speech task activities for practice situated in real contexts and carefully chosen simulated contexts;

5. Planning out-of-class field-trip assignments in pairs or small groups for real-world extemporaneous speaking practice, with panel discussions as follow-up;
6. Structuring in-class speaking (and listening) activities with invited NS and NNS guests participating;
7. Providing models, cues, and suggestions for modifications of elements in the speech patterning for each student;
8. Monitoring learners' speech production and speech performance at all times, and assessing pattern changes, as an ongoing part of the program;
9. Encouraging student speech awareness and realistic self-monitoring;
10. Always supporting each learner in his/her efforts, be they wildly successful or not so Successful.

Thirdly, it is significant to focus on instructional planning. According to Morley (1991), it is important to consider the instructional planning for a pronunciation/speech curriculum that encompasses (a) a cognitive dimension, with attention to selected information about both language and study procedures, as appropriate; (b) an affective dimension, with encouragement of learner self-involvement and self-monitoring, and a classroom atmosphere which is positive and supportive; and (c) a practice dimension with speaking tasks and activities through which learners can work toward modifying pronunciation/speech patterns in spoken English. The next section will discuss the implications for the pronunciation course at Damascus University.

4.14 Implications for the Pronunciation Course at Damascus University

The currently used course book in the English Department at Damascus University appears to be inefficient (Please see chapter 3, section 3.9) because of the following reasons:

1. The book focuses on segmental features;
2. It includes no activities and practice whatsoever;
3. It briefly introduces supra-segmental features.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for a newly designed course book. The new course will take into account both the segmental and the supra-segmental features. It will also take into account the role of the supra-segmental features in effective communication. Moreover, the new course will incorporate practical activities.

In addition, the contrastive analysis between the Arabic language and the English language is significant. This analysis will be taken into account in designing a new course. This analysis will be helpful for both the teacher and the learner in recognizing the differences in pronunciation between both Arabic and English languages. This will not only help in effective teaching, but also in predicting possible problems in pronunciation and eliminating such difficulties.

4.15 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the factors that may impact on pronunciation learning. The most significant factors are age, identity and first language interference. These factors may prevent learners from achieving native-like proficiency. Moreover, a detailed contrastive analysis between the Arabic mother pronunciation and the English pronunciation was

presented. In addition, the bottom-up and top-down approaches to pronunciation teaching were discussed, as well as combining the two approaches. The bottom-up starts with segmental features and moves up to teaching the supra-segmental features, whereas the top-down approach moves from supra-segmental features to segmental features. However, teachers may balance both of them. Moreover, the arguments for/against recommending these approaches was also dealt with. Finally, the research-based approach to teaching pronunciation has been proposed. According to this approach, pronunciation is stressed in meaningful interaction.

The contrastive analysis is crucial since it will make learners and teachers aware of difficulties that could possibly hinder correct production of target language. In addition to predicting these difficulties, it will also help overcoming them. This analysis will be employed in the newly designed course and referred to through the teaching process. In addition, the choice of bottom-up, top-down or both that corresponds to learners' aims will be one aim of this research. Furthermore, the research-based approach will be significant in choosing the appropriate teaching approach. If learners are interested in native-likeness, then the traditional approach is the candidate. If learners are aiming at intelligibility, the research-based approach will be adopted.

In order to verify and gather further evidence to improve the changed course book, it is necessary to investigate the students' point of view in the specific context of Damascus University, Syria. In order to do this, an empirical evidence in the form of questionnaire is carried out in the English Department at Damascus University (Please see the next chapter, chapter 5).

Chapter Five

The Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This part of the study is concerned with the empirical part of the study. In this chapter the following topics are discussed.

- Quantitative research vs. qualitative research: this research is qualitative.
- Case study
- Different methods.
- Questionnaires
- The sample
- The piloted questionnaire
- Refinements
- The main questionnaire

5.2 Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Research

It is important to start with a working definition of the two approaches. According to Dornyei (2007: 24), they are defined as follows:

- Qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods. Typical example: interview research, with the transcribed recordings analysed by qualitative content analysis.

- Quantitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods. Typical example: survey research using a questionnaire, analysed by statistical software such as SPSS.
- Mixed methods research involves different combinations of qualitative and quantitative research either at the data collection or at the analysis levels. It is defined as some sort of combination of qualitative and quantitative methods within a single research project. Typical example: consecutive and interrelated questionnaire and interview studies.

Dornyei (2007: 154) argues that qualitative research is uniquely capable of documenting and analysing the situated, contextual influences on language acquisition and use, as well as subtle variations in learner and teacher identities that emerge during the language learning/teaching process.

Qualitative research designs tend to work with a relatively small number of cases. Qualitative researchers seek detail in the precise particulars of such matters as people's understandings and interactions. Quantitative researchers find detail in certain aspects of correlation between variables (Silverman, 2005: 9).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 8), qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies

emphasize the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variable, not processes. Proponents of such studies claim that their work is done from within a value-free framework.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 10) further argue that both qualitative and quantitative researchers are concerned with the individual's point of view. However, qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observation. They argue that quantitative researchers are seldom able to capture their subjects' perspectives because they have to rely on more remote, inferential empirical methods and materials.

Qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things. In contrast, quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things (Berg, 1998: 3). The contrast between both qualitative and quantitative dimensions is presented in table 5.1 in the following page (Nunan, 1992).

The qualitative research, as the table 5.1 on the next page shows, is subjective description and examination of human behaviour in rich and deep detail. The results of the qualitative research cannot be generalized. The quantitative research, on the other hand, is objective verification and deduction of facts and courses. The outcome can be general.

Qualitative	Quantitative
Concerned with understanding human behaviour from the	Seeks fact and causes of phenomena without the

actor's point of view	regard for the individuals
Naturalistic and uncontrolled	Controlled
Subjective	Objective
Insider perspective	Outsider perspective
Grounded, discovery-oriented, explanatory, descriptive	Hypothetical deductive, inferential, verification oriented
Ungeneralisable	Hard and replicable data
Assumes a dynamic reality	Assumes a stable reality
Process-oriented: real, rich, deep data	Outcome oriented

Table 5.1

In this work, a qualitative approach is used because the qualitative research has the tendency to work with small cases. In addition, the qualitative research can be used to analyse the contextual influence on language acquisition and use.

There are many strategies for doing social science research. They include case studies, experiments, surveys, histories, and the analysis of archival information. In this research, a combination of case study and questionnaire is used. Each method and the reasons for the choice of these methods will be discussed in detail next. In the following section, case study is presented.

5.3 Case Study

The case study is used to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena (Yin, 2003: 1). It is a common research strategy

used in psychology, sociology, political science, social work, and business to investigate real-life events. Case studies are preferred when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (ibid).

Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case (Stake, 1995: xi). According to Richards (2003: 20), there has been no general consensus on the definition of case study. It means different things to different people. For some, Richards argues, it could mean qualitative research, while for others, it could mean quantitative research, and for others, it is merely a method. Therefore, a new researcher should be prepared for a certain degree of confusion. The researcher has to choose the best method that suits the research. The main focus of the study is a particular unit or units. The aim of the study is to provide a detailed description of that unit or units. What matters is that the availability of sources for information and the detailed and rich description of the case. Recently, researchers prefer to examine a particular case instead of generalization. According to Dornyei, (2007: 151), a case can be people, programme, an institution, an organization, a community, or anything as long as it serves as an entity with clearly defined boundaries. According to Yin (2003: 13), the technical definition of a case study is:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

2. The case study inquiry:

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.

According to Punch (1998: 150), the basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there may be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible.

The essence of a case study, then, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (Schramm, 1971).

The research in this thesis has been based on a review of literature on both pronunciation and pedagogy. However, it is important that the conclusions drawn are verified in some way. Therefore, a case study is employed in this study. Not a complete case study in a traditional sense, but one aspect taken, in order to verify the conclusions of the literature review. The case study seems to be the most appropriate method for providing details about the special situation of teaching pronunciation to second year students in the English Department at Damascus University. By means of case study, it is possible to

bring this special context under scrutiny. Another reason to be taken into consideration is that this situation may not be generalizable. Therefore, case study provides a good candidate as a research method for the purpose of this work.

5.3.1 Case Study Design

The design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions (Yin, 2003: 20). A case study could be single-or multiple-case design (ibid: 39). The single-case design is divided into single-case (holistic) design and single-case (embedded) design. Single cases are commonly used in designing case studies. If the case study examined the global nature of an organization or a program, a *holistic* design would have been used. According to Yin (2003: 45), single-case design can be:

1. Critical: when the case is critical of existing theory;
2. Unique: the case is a rare circumstance;
3. Representative: when it is a typical case;
- 4.Revelatory: when the case is inaccessible to scientific research;
5. Longitudinal: when the case is studied at two different times.

On the other hand, multiple-case design means that there are many different single cases included in the study. Multiple cases are sub-classified as multiple-case (holistic), and multiple case (embedded). Single and multiple-case studies are two variants of case study. In addition, case studies can include both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

5.3.2 Features of Case Studies

Three types of case study are distinguished (Stake, 2000: 437-8):

- Intrinsic case study: the study is undertaken to understand the nature of a particular case. The case is studied because of its own value or speciality. It is studied in all its particularity and ordinariness. In addition, no attempt is made to generalize beyond the single case or even to build theories.
- Instrumental case study: the study is intended to provide an insight into a wider issue or to revise a generalization. Although the case is studied in depth, the focus is on something else. The case is of secondary interest which means that the case is just used to serve as a means to explain something else.
- Multiple or collective case study: a number of cases are studied to facilitate a certain phenomenon. There is less interest in the case and the main aim is to understand a general condition or phenomenon.

Dorneyi (2007, 155) argues that the case study is an excellent method for getting a thorough description of a complicated issue in a cultural context. It provides rich in-depth insights that no other can offer. According to Duff (in press), when case studies are done well, they display a high degree of completeness, depth of analysis and readability. Moreover, case studies are effective in generating new hypotheses, models and understandings about the target phenomena. In addition, case study is ideally suited for being combined with other research approaches for example a subsequent survey. According to Duff (in press), case studies

are used in mixed method studies such as programme evaluations.

Duff (2007; as quoted in Dornyei, 2007: 155) argues that a shortcoming about case study is that it is negatively contrasted with large-scale experimental methods. The contrast is incorrect and unfair because these two types of methodologies are intended to achieve different goals (Dornyei, 2007). Using a single case presents certain limitations. Therefore, in some cases it may be worth using:

- Multiple case designs;
- Case studies with combination of other methods (ibid).

In this research, the case study is used with a combination of another method, namely: questionnaire in order to eliminate any possible limitation of the single case used.

5.3.3 Case Study in Applied Linguistic Research

Case study has been influential and effective in applied linguistics. According to Duff (2007), it is used in various typical topics such as child language acquisition, bilingualism, bilingual families, biculturalism, language loss, developmental order, identity investment, gender, fossilization, pragmatic development, language socialisation, virtual discourse communities, teacher agency, etc. Some typical participants in case study research are: infants, children in monolingual and bilingual homes/schools, adolescent and adult immigrants, study-abroad students, adults learning an additional language or losing an existing language, exceptional learners, etc. The case

study research has been used in a wide range of topics such as race, gender, community membership and social status.

For the purpose of this research, an aspect of case study has been used because it is the convenient method to be applied. The case in this research is not general yet it is insightful and enlightening. It represents a unique feature. The case study under investigation can be described as single, holistic and intrinsic. The in-depth analysis allowed by questionnaires, will help understand the target phenomenon better. In addition, in this research a questionnaire is used to collect data in a case study. The next section will give a detailed description of questionnaires.

5.4 Questionnaire

According to Oppenheim (1992: 100), the term questionnaire is used in different ways. Some practitioners would use the term to refer to self-administered and postal questionnaires, while others would include interview schedules (administered face-to-face or by telephone). In other words, the term questionnaire is sometimes used to distinguish a set of questions, including perhaps some open-ended ones, from more rigidly constructed scales or tests (ibid). Questionnaires are usually a quantitative method of research but can be used qualitatively (ibid).

A questionnaire is suitable for the purpose of this research (see appendix 4 for the original draft 1, appendix 5 for questionnaire draft 2, appendix 6 for questionnaire draft 3, appendix 7 for questionnaire draft 4, and appendix 8 for the finally distributed questionnaire draft 5). It is a better way of collecting data than interviews for the following reasons. It is the method used to

investigate the opinions and attitudes. It can provide answers to questions such as What?. It is the way to answer the question: What is the main aim of pronunciation: Is it intelligibility or native-likeness?. Furthermore, the questionnaire is used because of the following reasons:

- Able to contact large numbers of people quickly;
- Relatively quick and easy to create, code and interpret;
- Easy to standardise;
- Anonymous.

5.4.1 General Approach

A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of study, and ultimately to its conclusions (Yin, 2003: 20). In other words, it is the plan or the flow of the research. Another way to think of it is as a 'blueprint' dealing with at least four problems: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results (Philliber, Schwab, and Samsloss, 1980 in Yin, 2003: 21).

To design the questionnaire, it is important to consider the following stages:

- Define research aims;
- Identify the population and sample;
- Decide how to collect replies;
- Design the questionnaire;
- Run a pilot survey;
- Carry out the main; survey
- Analyse the data.

5.4.2 The Layout

The questionnaire should be well-designed so that it gives the information needed. Special attention is paid to the layout of the questionnaire because the appearance of the questionnaire has an impact on the respondent. The questions are typed, word processed and printed. Spaces are maintained between questions. Special care is paid for the order of questions.

5.4.3 Question Types

Generally speaking questions are either 'open' or 'closed'. In the closed question, the respondents are offered a choice of alternative replies (Oppenheim, 1992: 112). Open or free-response questions are not followed by any kind of choice, and the answers have to be recorded in full. In the written questionnaire, the amount of space and the number of lines provided for the answer will partly determine the length and fullness of the responses (ibid). The type of the question depends on the information needed. The pros and cons of open and closed questions are presented in the table (5.2).

Generally speaking, open questions give the respondents the chance to express themselves freely. However, they are not easy to interpret and analyse. According to Bell (2005: 137), questions can be of the following types:

- Verbal or open: the expected answer is a word, a phrase or an extended comment. Responses to verbal questions can produce useful information, but analysis can present problems. Verbal questions are used to give the

participants the chance to express their own views on the topic being researched.

- List: a list of items is offered, any of which may be selected;
- Category: the response is one only of a given set of categories;
- Ranking: the respondent is asked to place something in rank order;
- Quantity: the response is a number giving the amount of some characteristics;
- Grid: a table of grid is provided to record answers to two or more questions at the same time;
- Scale: there are various stages of scaling devices which may be used in questionnaires, but they require careful handling.

Table 5.2 on the following page represents both types of questions, namely: open questions and closed questions. Furthermore, it represents the advantages and disadvantages of each kind.

Open questions		Closed questions	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Freedom and spontaneity of the answers	Time-consuming	Require little time	Loss of spontaneous responses
Opportunity	In interviews:	Not extended	Bias in answer

to probe	costly of interviewer time	writing	categories
Useful for testing hypotheses about ideas or awareness	Coding: very costly and slow to process, and may be unreliable	Low costs	Sometimes too crude
	Demand more effort from respondents	Easy to process	May irritate respondents
		Make group comparisons easy	
		Useful for testing specific hypotheses	
		Less interviewer training	

Table 5.2 Adopted from Oppenheim (1992: 115).

5.4.4 Question Wording

The words of the questionnaire should be as clear as possible. Words could mean different things to different people. Therefore, the researcher needs to make sure that the words of the questionnaire mean the same to all participants. It is important to consider question wording. The process of question wording is difficult. In addition, piloting the questionnaire is important. Careful piloting is necessary in order to ensure that all questions mean the same to all respondents (Bell, 2005: 14). The aim is to

obtain answers to the same questions from a large number of individuals.

The researcher needs to avoid confusion as well. When the respondents are confused they may leave the question blank or leave the questionnaire (Bell, 2005: 140). Therefore, it is important to consider the assumptions of the respondents to avoid confusing them. Bell suggests that if the information is not essential to the questionnaire, leave it out. Bell provides a list of questions that a researcher should consider (Bell, 2005: 140):

- Assumptions;
- Memory;
- Knowledge;
- Double questions;
- Leading questions;
- Presuming questions;
- Hypothetical questions;
- Offensive questions and questions covering sensitive issues.

For example, asking for something that invites memory could be done in another way because memory plays tricks. The other way is to provide a list with the answers so that the participant can choose (ibid). In addition, it is important to be careful about questions that ask for information which the participants may not know. This could mean that they will put the questionnaire aside. Double questions should never be asked. For example, consider the following:

- Do you attend research methods and language courses?
The question should be divided into two questions

- Do you attend research methods courses?
And
- Do you attend language courses?

In addition, leading questions should be avoided. These questions lead the respondents to answer the question in one way. Another type of questions that should be avoided in questionnaires is the presuming questions in which the researcher overlooks the fact that not everyone may feel the same. Hypothetical questions can provide useless responses. Some questions are considered to be sensitive for the participants and extra care should be devoted for the wording of such questions. It is recommended that such questions should be towards the end of the questionnaire so that if the respondent abandons the questionnaire, the earlier questions are at least answered.

5.5 The Sample

Great care should be taken to ensure that the sample population is truly representative (Bell, 2005: 14). In other words, the researcher needs to consider the characteristics of the total population that needs to be represented in the sample to say with fair confidence that the sample is reasonably representative. In this study, the sample is opportunistically (Please see Clark, 2007: 33) chosen to represent the students of the second year of the English department at Damascus University. Thirty participants took part in the questionnaire, aged between 20 and 22 years old. 20 of them are females and 10 are males. They started learning English at age 10 or 11. They were happy to participate after they were given an idea about the purpose of the research. Before contacting the

participants in the English department at Damascus University, permission to carry out the pilot and subsequently the actual questionnaire was obtained from the head of the English department.

5.6 Piloting the Questionnaire

It is important to pilot questionnaires to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to enable the researcher to remove any items which do not yield usable data (Bell, 2005: 147). It is important to give the questionnaire a trial run before its distribution. Piloting the questionnaire will help the respondents complete the questionnaire without difficulty. Those who answer the piloted questionnaire will be able to tell what questions were left without answers. They will tell if the instructions and the questions are clear. In addition, they can add any comments or suggestions. The questionnaire is written in the English language.

The questionnaire was distributed after permission from my supervisor was obtained. The piloted questionnaire was sent by email to the participants few times till it was finally adopted. I gave the final questionnaire personally for the respondents in a face-to-face interaction. That gave me the chance to explain to the respondents the purpose of the research. The respondents may cooperate better in such cases of personal contact. In addition, they completed the questionnaire immediately on the spot.

5.7 Confidentiality and Anonymity

According to Berg (1998: 48), confidentiality and anonymity are sometimes used incorrectly as synonymous. They have quite different meanings. Confidentiality is an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects' identities. In a literal sense, anonymity means that the subjects remain nameless. Confidentiality is a promise that you will not be identified or presented in identifiable form, while anonymity is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses comes from which respondent (Sapsford and Abbott, 1996: 319). In my research, I promised anonymity of the questionnaire, and no one including myself can tell who has completed the questionnaire.

Bell (2005, 48) argues that if the researcher says that participants will be anonymous, then under no circumstances can they be identified. If they are promised confidentiality, then the researcher has to decide what is meant by that in the context of the researcher's investigation.

All data must be treated as confidential, only the researcher has access to them. The respondents must be assured that no data will be published under any circumstances about identifiable persons without their permission (Oppenheim, 1992: 104). Respondents are promised that any identifying information can be destroyed at the data-processing stage. Anonymity is especially important in questionnaires that involve 'sensitive' topics. The questionnaire used for the purpose of this research is absolutely anonymous. The participants are promised that the questionnaire is anonymous and the information provided is confidential. The reason is that sometimes the personal questions can be off-putting to respondents.

5.8 Checklist

The checklist is important in the sense that it helps in making sure that the all essential questionnaire-related tasks (such as question wording) are covered.

1. Make sure you have approval to proceed before moving too far on with your preparation. I obtained my supervisor's approval before moving on with my preparation to pilot the questionnaire. She was directing and watching the whole process of drafting and rewording of the questions;
2. I decided what information I needed to know and listed all items about which information is required. The questions asked are the ones important for the information needed. Extra care should be taken because failing to ask appropriate questions will result in missing the important information;
3. The questionnaire is the best way of obtaining the information. Considering the information I need, no alternative method is likely to be better. The questionnaire is the way to contact large numbers of people quickly;
4. After deciding to use a questionnaire, I began to word the questions. I checked the wording of each question in order to avoid ambiguity. I avoided asking about concepts, assumptions, knowledge, memory questions, double questions, hypothetical questions, and offensive questions. In addition, I tried to keep the language as simple as possible. I also tried not to include technical language. I tried to explain any expression that the learners may not understand. The following are some examples from the questionnaire which was in English language:

1. The first example:

- In your speech, do you aim primarily for:

a- Native-like pronunciation

b- Intelligible (i.e. understanding your) pronunciation

c- Other. Please specify

2. The second example:

- Which standard of pronunciation you prefer (the way you like to pronounce)

a- The standard authoritative pronunciation (as in a dictionary).

b- The way how people speak and pronounce.

c- The way somebody else speaks and pronounces

d- You are happy with you level of achievement and with your pronunciation

e- Other. Please specify:.....

3. The third example:

- Which process of learning pronunciation is more convenient to you:

a- Moving from the specific to the general (by following the vowel, consonant, syllables, words linking, stress, intonation pattern).

b- Moving from the general to specific (following the intonation, stress, words linking, syllables consonants, vowels patterns).

c- Both the above two processes at the same time.

d- Other. Please specify.....

4. I wrote the questions on separate cards in order to help sequencing;

5. Deciding question type: open or closed questions, single versus multiple responses. The use of open questions is usually avoided in questionnaires but can be useful. Most of the questions used are closed questions, for example,

- How long have you been learning English:
1 year 2 years 3 years more.

However, some open questions are used, for example: the last option in some questions

- Other. Please specify.

Or as in the following question:

- Please use the space below for any additional comments you may have about the acquisition of pronunciation skills.

The questions are designed to give a single response. The options are ranked and numbered.

6. The questions are sorted into order. The questions are identified in order to address the objectives of the research. Each question is written on a separate piece of paper because that will help in arranging the questions. In addition, it is important to revise the questions so that they are not ambiguous for the participants;

7. Consider the appearance and layout. The questions are laid neatly and attractively. Attention is paid to layout, for example:

- a. Consistency in matters such as wording;
- b. Using few question types;
- c. Avoiding page-overfilling;
- d. Avoiding lots of lines and borders;
- e. Thinking about length;
- f. Logical sequence (grouping together questions that relate to similar topics);
- g. Flow through logical and simple (complex branching is avoided);
- h. Word-process the questionnaire.

8. Deciding on the final sample: the sample selected is as close to the final population as possible. The sample selected is similar

students of the same department, same university and who studied the same course;

9. Piloting the questionnaire: the questionnaire is piloted to students who are similar to the sample. Five students participated in the piloted questionnaire with the purpose of providing any appropriate feedback on confusing questions;

10. Making adjustments to the questionnaire in the light of pilot respondents' comments. Therefore, the confusing question needs rewording. For example, the question about name in the first draft of the questionnaire is omitted (Please see section 5.10 for refinements and the piloted questionnaire);

11. Deciding how to distribute the questionnaire: face-to-face interaction with respondents. The final questionnaire is distributed to the whole group together in a face-to-face meeting;

12. Anonymity and confidentiality: the questionnaire does not ask the respondents for their names. Before asking the participants to answer the questions, I explained that the questionnaire is anonymous and the information is confidential. The participants completed the questionnaire immediately and it took them only a couple of minutes to complete.

One of the aims of this research is to evaluate the existing pronunciation course book and suggest an alternative course book. The main concerns of the new course are with learners' aims of pronunciation and with 'preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study' (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998: 1). However, before moving to the actual design of this course, the methodology of the research undertaken to collect all the necessary data will be presented here.

5.9 Collecting Data

The learners are required to answer all the questions in the questionnaire so that the learners' aims of pronunciation can be revealed. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions in addition to the personal information enquiries. The questionnaire is of reasonable length in order to enable the respondents to answer the questions without feeling bored. The respondents will be more accurate and quick in filling in the questionnaire. In addition, the questions are chosen carefully so that will help in concentrating on the important issues. Most of the questions are selected on purpose to be closed-response items. Respondents may consider Open-ended questions as a boring homework. Therefore, the open-ended questions are avoided as far as possible. However, they are not neglected in this questionnaire. In other words, they are mainly presented in the last option of most items in the form of 'other, please specify....'. Thus, the respondents have the freedom to express their own views and reveal their thoughts of the issues raised.

Nominal data and ordinal data are used. Nominal data is presented in the form of questions about gender, age and year of study. Ordinal data expresses degrees of agreement, personal opinions, or evaluating subjects (e.g. yes, often, sometimes).

The questionnaire has been *implicitly* divided into five sections. They are:

1. First section: the respondents provide relevant personal information, such as their age, gender, year of study, and starting age for learning English. These questions provide significant background for designing the course and analyzing

the learners' aims. This may help designing suitable materials for the target learners. The respondents have been chosen randomly, from different educational backgrounds, because they are meant to present a sample of a vast number of prospective learners;

2. The second section: questions 1, 2 and 3 describe the learners' skills in the target language. Question 1 aims at providing an idea of the learners' past experience with English and for how long they have been learning English. Questions 2 and 3 are meant to give an idea about the target learners' existing level of pronunciation skills in listening, speaking and communication;

3. The third section: this section consists of questions 4, 5 and 6. Question 4 is of particular importance as it gives an idea about whether the learners prefer bottom-up or top-down approach, or whether a combination of both approaches is preferred in the newly designed material. Question 5 provides insight into what activity the learners prefer. That could also give a clue of what they will use English for. Question 6 is especially important because it sheds light on what skills learners need to develop. That also shows what the new course should focus on as the learners' aims should be taken into consideration and fulfilled;

4. The fourth section consists of questions 7, 8a, 8b, 9, 10, 11a, 11b. These questions are of special importance because they are concerned with the learners' aims of pronunciation mainly intelligibility and native-likeness. Questions 7, 8a and 8b are about giving an insight into what intelligibility problems the learners may face. Question 9 is dedicated for the learners' goals of pronunciation. Question 10 investigates what standard of pronunciation the learners imitate. Question 11a is meant to decide the learners' satisfaction with their level of pronunciation,

and question 11b investigates the learners' needs to improve their pronunciation, for those who are not satisfied;

5. The fifth section, questions 12, 13 and 14 are meant to give an idea about the effect and application of supra-segmental features.

The final question is left for the participants to add any additional comment they may have. The order of questions is the funnel approach, this sequence progresses from the broad question to the more specific one (Oppenheim, 1992: 110), for example questions 9 and 10. Question 9 investigates the aim of pronunciation. Then, question 10 asks about the standard of pronunciation the respondents imitate.

5.10 Refinements and the Piloted Questionnaire

The final questionnaire has gone through many stages until finally it is adopted as a final version. The adjustments are mainly rewording of some questions, omitting some questions, and adding some questions. These refinements took place as a result of revising the questions, and as a result of feedback from participants. For example, there are 5 drafts, yet there is slight difference in the questions. The following table (5.3) illustrates the refinements of the different drafts. The first draft differs from the other drafts in the following (Please see appendix 4 for the original draft 1, appendix 5 for questionnaire draft 2, appendix 6 for questionnaire draft 3, appendix 7 for questionnaire draft 4, and appendix 8 for the finally distributed questionnaire draft 5):

Draft/version 2	Draft/version 3	Draft/version 4	Draft 5 the Questionnaire
Name omitted	Question no.11 added	Question no.9 renamed to 8b consequently (8 becomes 8a, 10 becomes 9, 11 becomes 10, and 12 becomes 11)	field of study omitted
male/female Added			Nationality Omitted
Question no.7 omitted			Questions no. 7, 8 and 11 (11 in draft 4 10 in draft 5) reworded
Question no.10 added			questions no. 11a,11b, 12,13,14 added

Table (5.3)

The name (draft 2), field of study (draft 5), and nationality (draft 5) are deleted because they are of face-value and of no actual contribution to the questionnaire. In other words, the name will not be disclosed for anonymity purposes, and it will not

contribute to the questionnaire. The field of study is omitted because all the participants are students of the English department at Damascus University. In addition, all the participants were of Syrian nationality. Therefore, these questions were omitted. In draft 2, gender is added in order to have an idea if the gender could affect the choices and the answers. In draft 2, question 7 (from the original draft 1) was deleted. The question omitted is:

7. When speaking to native English speakers, do you ask them to repeat:
- a. What they have said slowly
 - b. Some words of their speech
 - c. You don't ask them to repeat

This question is omitted because it investigates the intelligibility of the native English speaker, not the Syrian who is the subject of study. The addition of question 10 in draft 2 investigates the participant's main aim of pronunciation, if it is native-likeness or intelligibility.

In the third draft, question 11 is added. This question enquires about the standard of pronunciation which the participants prefer, in other words, if they prefer the authoritative pronunciation such as in a dictionary, the pronunciation of people, the pronunciation of somebody, or their own pronunciation. This question sheds light on what the standard of pronunciation to be adopted in the alternatively suggested course book.

In draft four, there is only slight change in question numbering. Question 9 (*What do they usually ask you to repeat*) is renamed

as question 8b because it is a continuation of the question 8 (*How frequently do native English speakers ask you to repeat what you have said*).

In the final draft, questions 7, 8 and 11 are reworded. Question 7 originally was (*When speaking to native English speakers, do they ask you to repeat*). The participants may have not had the chance to speak to native English speakers. Therefore, it was reworded to (*when speaking in English, do listeners ask you to repeat*). Similarly, question 8 was (*How frequently do native English speakers ask you to repeat what you have said*). It is reworded to (*How frequently do speakers of English ask you to repeat what you have said*). Furthermore, question 11 in draft 4 (10 in version 5), which provides options of standards of pronunciation, has encountered slight change. The last option in this question has been removed and has been independently used as 2 questions (11a and 11b in version 5).

The final adjustments to draft 5 are the addition of some questions. The first two inquire about satisfaction with the level of pronunciation and the reasons if not (questions 11a and 11b). The other three questions investigate the effect and application of supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation (questions 12, 13 and 14).

Finally, this chapter has presented the research methodology used for the purpose of this work. A case study has been used to study in detail the teaching and learning of pronunciation in the English department at Damascus University, Syria. This research is qualitative where the case study is used with a questionnaire to find out the attitudes of the learners in this particular context.

Chapter Six

Data Analysis

In this chapter, the findings will be presented, analysed and discussed. In addition, a newly modified pronunciation course will be proposed informed by the discussion.

6.1 Presenting the Findings

After collecting data by means of questionnaires, they are analysed, interpreted and discussed. The simple ways of presenting and analysing data are tables and charts because they are easy to manage. In questionnaires, it is helpful to identify question types in order to analyse responses. In this questionnaire, two types of questions are used, namely: list and open questions. Most of the questions in the questionnaire of this research are list questions, in which respondents tick the appropriate answer. A summary sheet is prepared for all items to be recorded. Open questions give the participants more freedom to express their viewpoints. However, they may be difficult to interpret as they may produce unexpected items. The responses are typed and all recurring answers are identified. Only a small number of participants is involved. So, only basic information is needed, such as bar charts, pie charts, and percentages. Consequently, there is no need to go to the computer statistical analysis.

The results of the questionnaire are presented as follows (Please note that the numbers in the following tables refer back to the subjects). Presenting the data in tabular form is perfect and

acceptable, however, presenting other methods, such as pie or bar chart, may illustrate the findings more clearly because numbers may not present the findings as clearly as percentages do. Now, a detailed description of the findings will be presented in the following tables:

The total number of the participants is thirty. All of them are second year university students, from the English department at Damascus University, aged between 20 and 22 years old. They have been learning English for quite a long period of time since age 10 or 11. 22 participants started learning English at age 10, while 8 participants started learning English at age 11. 20 participants are females, and 10 are males. They were randomly selected in the English Department at Damascus University.

Gender	Female: 20	Male: 10
Age	Over 18 years: 30 20 years=8 participants 21 years=13 participants 22 years=9 participants	Under 18 years: 0
Year of Study:	2 nd year	
Learning English started at age:	Age 10=22 participants Age 11=8 participants	

Table 6.1

The 'gender' of the participant is not of direct relevance to the case of our research. It is just meant to give legitimacy to the research. The 'age' factor is significant in order to take account of the critical period hypothesis since the learners are adults and may aim at native-like proficiency level.

The Questions:

1. How long have you been learning English:

1 year 2 years 3 years more

1 year	0
2 years	0
3 years	0
More	30

Table 6 question 1

This question shows the length of the period through which respondents have been learning English. It is meant to reflect the participants' language proficiency level in relation to the time they have spent in learning the second language.

2. Do you find difficulty in holding a conversation in English:

Yes often sometimes no

Yes	0
Often	2
sometimes	24
No	4

Table 6 question 2

3. Which of the following best describes your existing level of skills in English:

- a. Speaking: poor fair good
- b. Listening: poor fair good

Speaking	Listening
Poor: 0	Poor: 0
Fair: 26	Fair: 26
Good: 4	Good: 4

Table 6 question 3

Questions two and three are intended to give an account of the participants' needs as well as their levels of proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening. It should be taken into consideration that the responses to question three cannot completely be trusted. The reason is that they are based on the participants' self-perception. In other words, a good participant may under-estimate his/her skills while another one may over-estimate them. However, not all participants' answers are entirely unreliable. It is quite unlikely that all the respondents, or most of them, will estimate their levels on a discretionary basis and personal judgement. Therefore, the majority of the responses will be taken into consideration. It seems that this is now the only possible way to estimate their language skills in the present time.

4. Which process of learning pronunciation is more convenient to you:

- A. Moving from the specific to the general (by following the vowel, consonant, syllables, words linking, stress, and intonation pattern).
- B. Moving from the general to specific (following the intonation, stress, words linking, syllables, consonant, and vowel pattern).
- C. Both the above two processes at the same time.
- D. Other. Please specify.....

a. the bottom-up approach	26
b. the top-down approach	4
c. both	0
d. other	0

Table 6 question 4

This is a highly significant question because it touches upon the basis of the newly recommended course book. In fact, answer **a** refers to a 'bottom-up approach', while question **b** refers to a 'top-down approach' (see section 4.8). These terminologies (Bottom-up and Top-down) are not mentioned in the questionnaire simply because the learners may not have a clue as to what they mean. Instead, a simplified explanation of the intended terminologies is presented in order that the explanation is easier for the learners to understand. This question will help in choosing the approach which is suitable for learners.

5. When listening to English, what activity do you prefer:

- A. Listening to a long conversation.
- B. Listening to a sentence or two at a time.
- C. Listening to various sounds only.
- D. Other. Please specify.....

Listening to a long conversation	24
Listening to a sentence or two at a time	4
Listening to various sounds only	2
Other	0

Table 6 question 5

This question is highly important because it gives an idea about what listening activity learners prefer when listening to English. The majority of the participants prefer listening to a long conversation, whereas only few answers support listening to a sentence or two. Only two responses favour listening to various sounds only. This questions shows that learners are mainly concerned with intelligible pronunciation where they can converse easily. Listening to a long conversation may help them and train them in communicative situations.

6. What is the skill that you think needs more development:

- A. Speaking skills.
- B. Listening skills.
- C. Both speaking and listening skills.
- D. Effective communication with English speakers.

Speaking skills.	2
Listening skills.	0
Both speaking and listening skills.	3
Effective communication with English speakers	25

Table 6 question 6

Pronunciation is part and parcel of learning a second language in terms of production (speaking) and reception (listening). It is an important aspect of successful communication. This question is crucial because it shows the learners' aims which should be taken into consideration through incorporating them into any newly designed or recommended course book. Answers to the fourth question clearly show that this is an important issue for

the participants, whereas very few responses have chosen the promotion of both speaking and listening skills. In addition, two responses seemed to be in favour of the development of speaking skills. It appears that learners favour the development of their communicative skills. The learners' expectations of a new course will greatly help in designing, choosing or recommending an appropriate course book that addresses their aims. In order to fulfil the learners' aim of pronunciation, the course will be designed to promote their communicative language skills.

7. When speaking in English, do listeners ask you to repeat:

- a. What you have said slowly.
- b. Some words of your speech.
- c. They don't ask you to repeat.

a. What you have said slowly.	5
b. Some words of your speech.	23
c. They don't ask you to repeat.	2

Table 6 question 7

This question is meant to investigate the intelligibility of the learners, whether they are intelligible or not. In addition, it gives an idea of a possible factor of intelligibility breakdown. The majority of the respondents have opted for the second answer. Only five answers have chosen the first option, and two answers have selected the third option because they do not repeat their speech.

8a. How frequently do speakers of English ask you to repeat what you have said:

- a. Whenever you hold conversations.
- b. In few conversations.
- c. In the majority of the conversations.
- d. Not at all.

a. Whenever you hold conversations.	22
b. In few conversations.	4
c. In the majority of the conversations.	2
d. Not at all.	2

Table 6 question 8a

This question gives an idea about the frequency of repetition. The majority of the learners have chosen the first answer. Only four have chosen the second option, while two respondents have selected the third and the fourth answers. The majority of the respondents encounter intelligibility problems whenever they hold a conversation. Quite a few participants have difficulties in few conversations and a few learners also find difficulties in the majority of conversations. Only two participants have selected the last answer which shows that they have no difficulties at all.

8b. What do they usually ask you to repeat:

- a. Words which they don't understand.
- b. Words which they don't know their meanings.
- c. Words which they don't hear properly.

a. Words which they don't understand.	10
b. Words which they don't know their meanings.	2
c. Words which they don't hear properly.	18

Table 6 question 8b

This question is intended to give an account of the words which the respondents repeat when they hold conversations. In other words, this question explains the type of words which are repeated and the reason for the repetition. It seems that the majority of the participants have chosen the third answer. That is, they repeat the words which the listeners do not hear properly. Furthermore, ten participants have selected the first option which means that they repeat the words which are misunderstood by the listeners. Quite a few participants repeat the words which their hearers do not know what they mean.

9. In your speech, do you aim primarily for:

- a. Native-like pronunciation
- b. Intelligible (i.e. understanding your) pronunciation
- c. Other. Please specify.....

a. Native-like pronunciation	6
b. Intelligible pronunciation	24
c. Other.	0

Table 6 question 9

This question is of crucial importance because it touches upon the core of the research, which is the 'aim of pronunciation:

intelligibility (Please see chapter 2, section 2.7) or native-likeness (Please see chapter 2, section 2.4)'. Clearly, the majority of the respondents have chosen the second answer, which means that they are mainly looking for being intelligible when they speak. The second answer is presented in a simplified way where the word 'intelligible' is explained because the learners may not be aware of the terminology.

10. Which standard of pronunciation do you prefer (that is, the way you like to pronounce):

- A. The standard authoritative pronunciation (as in a dictionary)
- B. The pronunciation used by teachers of English in Syria.
- C. The pronunciation used in British produced audio-visual materials.
- D. The pronunciation used by ordinary people speaking English.
- E. Other. Please specify.....

The standard authoritative pronunciation	6
The pronunciation used by teachers of English in Syria.	1
The pronunciation used in British produced audio-visual materials.	2
The pronunciation used by ordinary people speaking English (i.e. intelligibility).	21
Other.	0

Table 6 question 10

This is also a highly important question because it represents what standard of pronunciation the learners prefer to imitate. According to the results, most of the learners have chosen the pronunciation used by ordinary people speaking English (i.e. intelligibility). Few learners have chosen the authoritative pronunciation, which is the first option. While two participants have selected the pronunciation used in British produced audio-visual materials, one answer has chosen the pronunciation used by teachers of English. The importance of this question lies in the fact that it provides the model learners wish to emulate. This question aims at finding out the standard of pronunciation to which learners want to converge (see section 2.12).

11a. Are you happy with your level of pronunciation:

a. Yes

b. No

a. Yes	27
b. No	3

Table 6 question 11a

This question is intended to show whether the learners are satisfied with their level of pronunciation. Obviously, the majority of the responses can tell that the learners are satisfied with their level of pronunciation. Only three respondents are not satisfied with their pronunciation skills.

11b. If no, what do you feel you need to improve it:

Conversation	3
No answer	27

Table 6 question 11b

This was an open question where the respondents were free to express their wants and needs to improve their pronunciation skills. The answers are classified into two categories. The majority of the respondents did not reply to this question because obviously they are satisfied with their level of pronunciation. However, there are three participants who feel the need to develop their conversational skills. This question is essential because the learners were given the chance to express their opinions. The learners were given the chance to present their ideas about any newly designed course book.

12. To what extent do suprasegmentals (such as stress, intonation) affect your understanding and pronunciation:

To a large extent	28
Not much	2

Table 6 question 12

It is significant that supra-segmental features have a tremendous influence on intelligibility and pronunciation (Please see chapter 4, section 4.7). Almost all the participants, except two, found that supra-segmental features affect their pronunciation and understanding to a large extent. Again, this is an open question because it is meant to leave it open to the participants to feel free to present their valuable ideas about supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation. On the basis of the analysis of the currently taught book (Please see chapter 3, section 3.9) Clearly, learners have not received enough training and practice in the supra-segmental features in the current course. Stress, intonation, and the rest of these features are of high priority in any newly designed course book.

13. When speaking in English, do you find any difficulty in applying the suprasegmentals of English:

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. No

a. Yes	2
b. Sometimes	26
c. No	2

Table 6 question 13

This question is also intended to give an account of the difficulty that learners encounter in applying the English supra-segmental features in pronunciation. It seems that most of the participants find difficulty in using the English supra-segmental features. Only two participants do not find any problems in applying the supra-segmental features of the English language (Please see chapter 4, section 4.5 for a contrastive analysis between Arabic and English, section 4.5.5 for rhythm and stress, and section 4.5.7 for intonation).

14. When speaking in English, do you feel that you are applying the suprasegmentals of your native language to English:

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. No

a. Yes	2
b. Sometimes	26
c. No	2

Table 6 question 14

This question is meant to provide an idea about any possible interference between Arabic and English supra-segmental features. The majority of learners feel that they are using the supra-segmental features of the Arabic language, their native language, instead of those of the English language when they are speaking. On the other hand, according to two participants, the Arabic supra-segmental features are not applied to the English ones. It is important to take into account the notion of first language interference (Please see chapter 4, section 4.4).

15. Please use the space below for any additional comments you may have about the acquisition of pronunciation skills.

Activities	12
Conversation	6
No answer	12

Table 6 question 15

This question is important because it is very necessary that the learners feel engaged with the course, not only by presenting their views and opinions, but also by offering them the chance to suggest any extra ideas that may be useful to any new course. Some participants feel that they need more activities while others need conversation. Some respondents did not answer this question. These suggestions should be taken into account seriously by the course designer as long as they contribute to the richness and effectiveness of the course.

6.2 A Summary of the Findings

As mentioned earlier, thirty participants, aged between 20 and 22, took part in this research. Two thirds of the participants are

females and a third is males. The results of the findings are presented in the following charts in the order that is shown in the original questionnaire (Please note that in the charts answers 1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D). Here is a synopsis of the key findings of the survey:

- **Question 1**

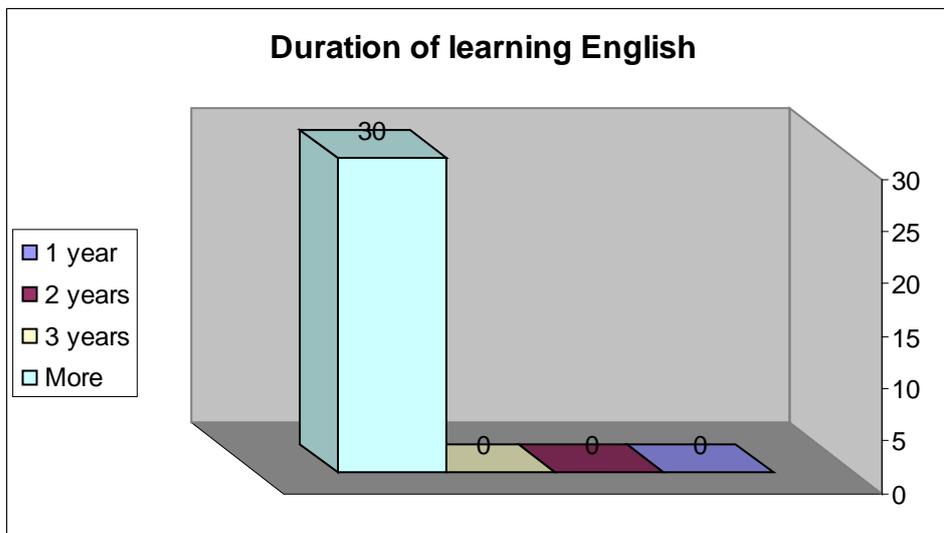


Figure 6.a question 1

All the participants have been learning English for more than three years, which is regarded as a long period of time compared with their level of language proficiency, particularly in pronunciation. The learners level of listening and speaking skills do not correspond to the long period of learning. This leads to the assumption that the learners need a more effective course for developing their speaking/listening skills.

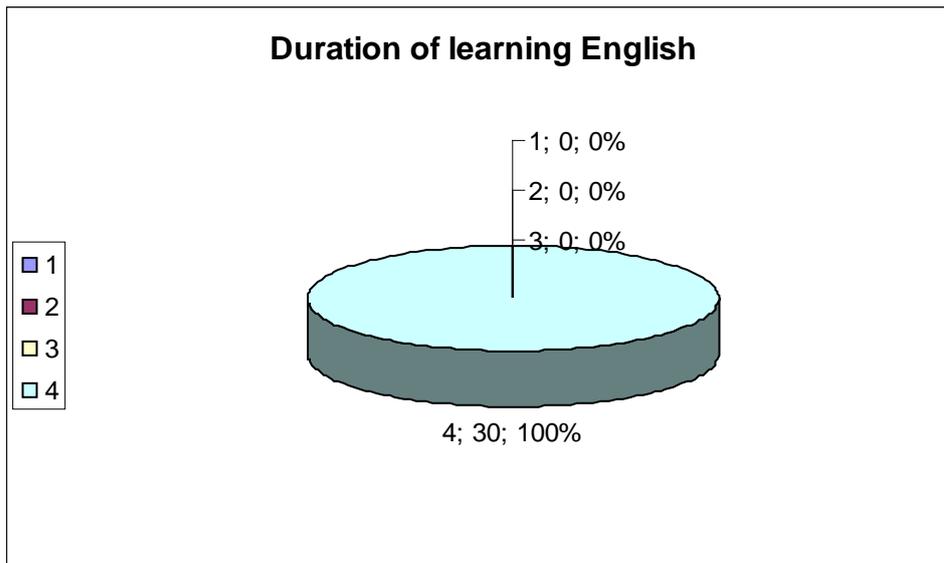


Figure 6.b question 1

- **Question 2**

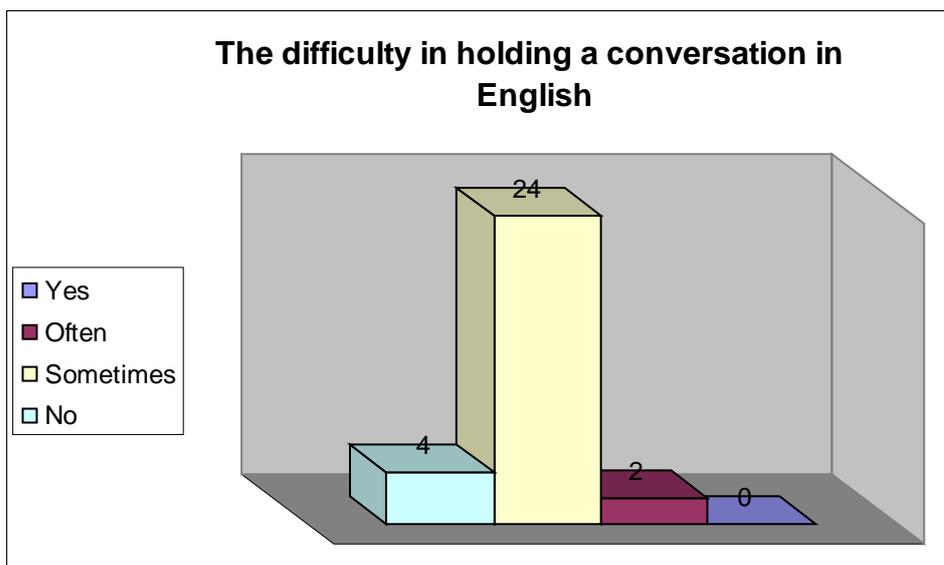


Figure 6.a question 2

80% of the participants feel that sometimes they have difficulty in holding a conversation in English, while 7% of the participants often find a difficulty in holding a conversation in English. Almost 13% of the participants have no difficulty at all. It is clear that the majority of the learners do face difficulties in conversation

and consequently in communication. Therefore, the learners need more training and more practice in conversation. In addition, they need more productive courses that address what they exactly need. This question is intended to find if learners need help or not in holding a conversation in English. The aspects and the skills of conversation will be dealt with in a new proposed course book through various activities.

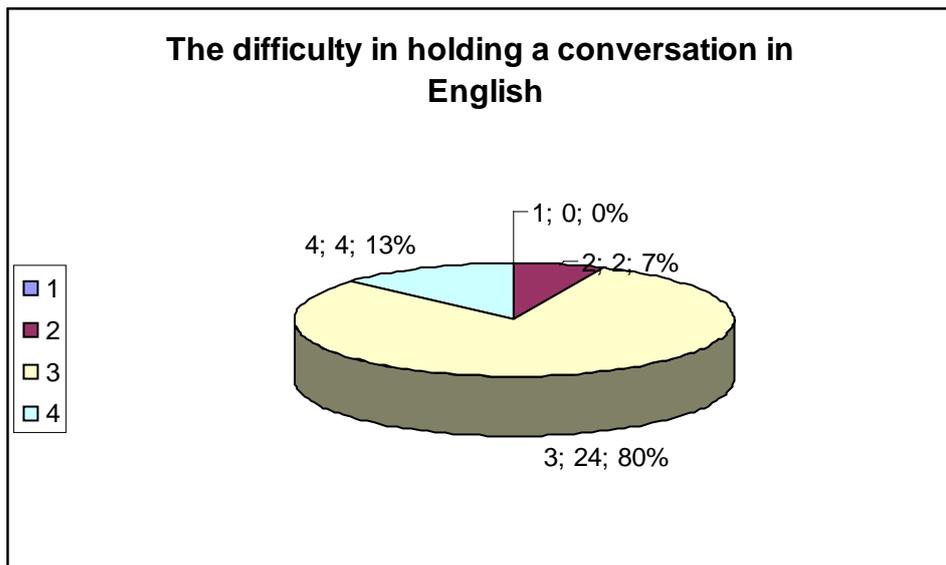


Figure 6.b question 2

- **Question 3**

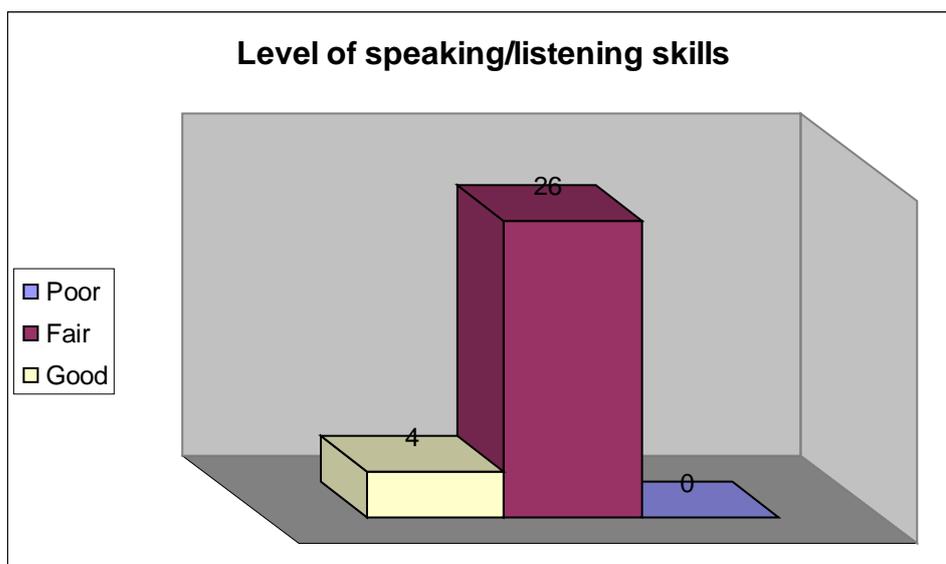


Figure 6.a question 3

Most of the respondents say they have fair level of proficiency in speaking and listening skills. 87% of the learners feel that their level of skills is fair, whereas 13% of the participants consider their skills in listening and speaking as good. 0% of the participants have poor level. In other words, there is no participant whose level can be described as poor may be because of the long duration of learning English. Obviously, the speaking and listening skills need more improvement. This again supports the assumption that there is a gap between the learners' actual level of competence and the learners' duration of learning English.

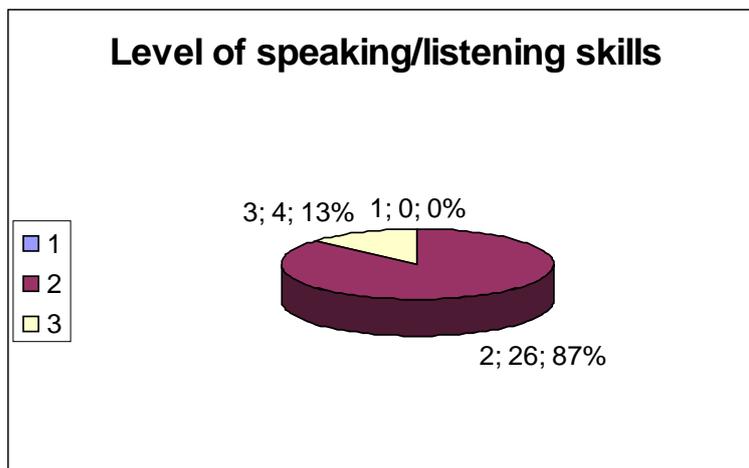


Figure 6.b question 3

- **Question 4**

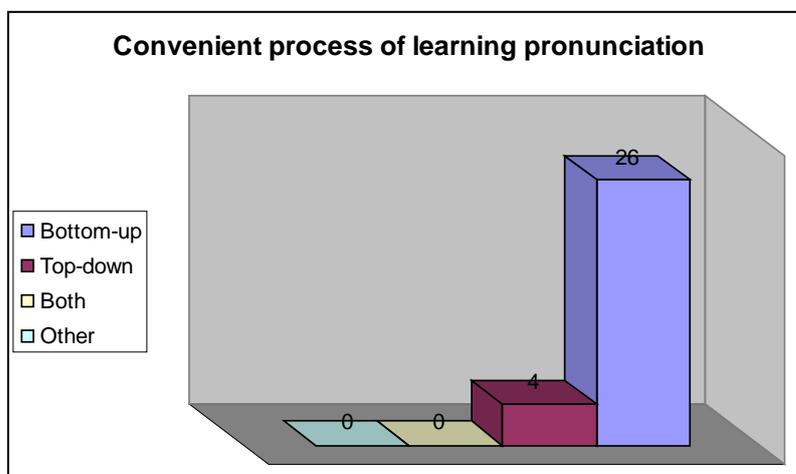


Figure 6.a question 4

87% of the participants prefer the bottom-up approach in teaching and learning pronunciation. Only 13% of the participants have selected the top-down approach. No participant has chosen a combination of both approaches. It seems that the learners in Syria still cannot cope with the top-down approach. This could also be as a result of the fact that most learners in Syria have not experienced this approach before; therefore, they have not chosen this option.

The bottom-up approach is familiar since the pronunciation course book taught to the learners in the second year is based on the bottom-up approach. The top-down approach, on the other hand, is quite unfamiliar to learners. This means that any newly designed or recommended course book needs to be based on the bottom-up approach. In other words, the current book needs to be changed, and the new course book will be based on the bottom-up approach. Clearly, the learners are quite comfortable with this approach in pronunciation learning.

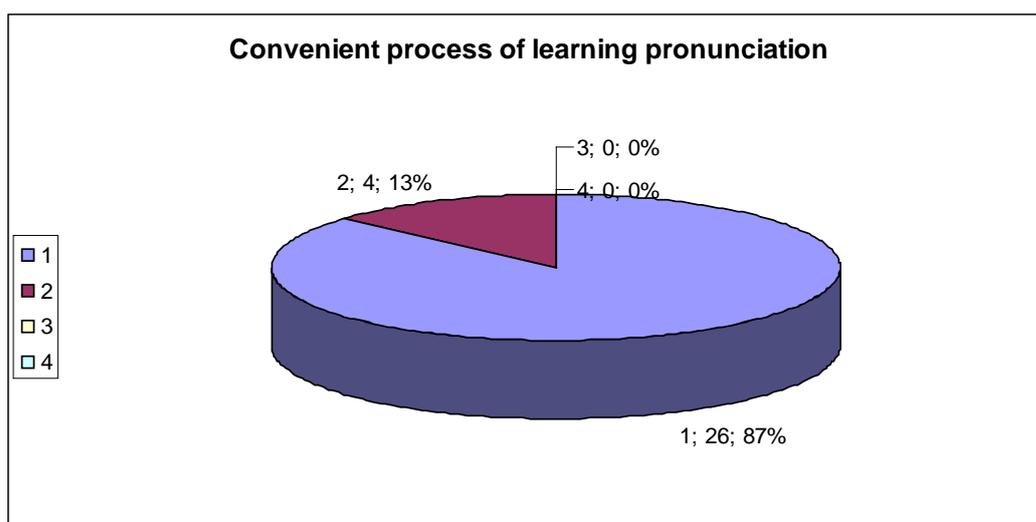


Figure 6.b Question 4

- Question 5

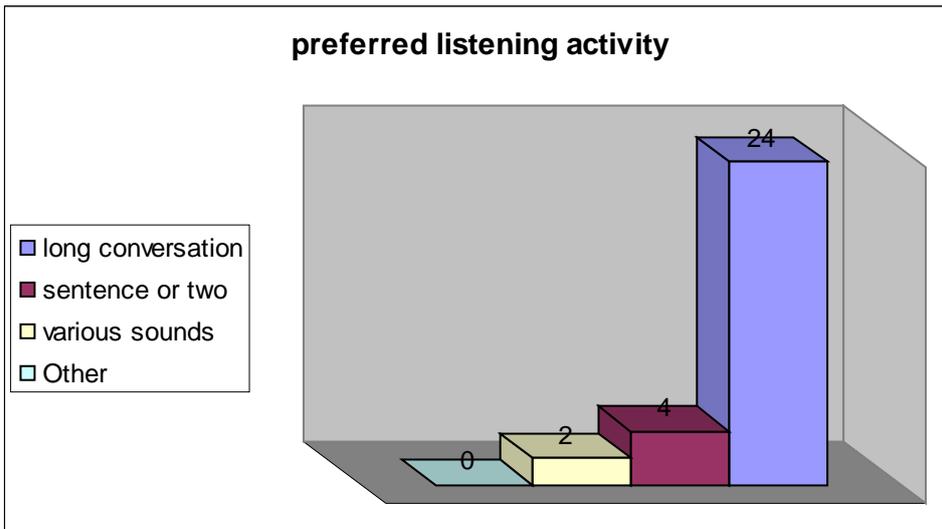


Figure 6.a question 5

80% of the responses are in favour of listening to a long conversation. 13% of the participants prefer listening to a sentence or two at a time. Only 7% of the respondents have chosen the option of listening to various sounds only. Again, this question is important in the sense that the learners will feel engaged in any new course through suggesting their needs. More importantly, though, is fulfilling these needs by incorporating long conversation activities.

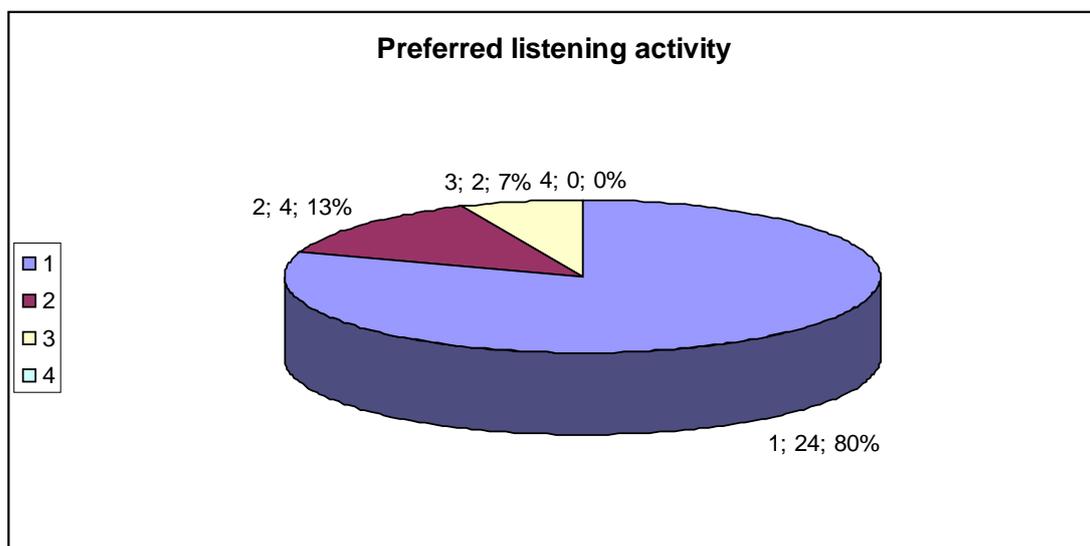


Figure 6.b question 5

- Question 6

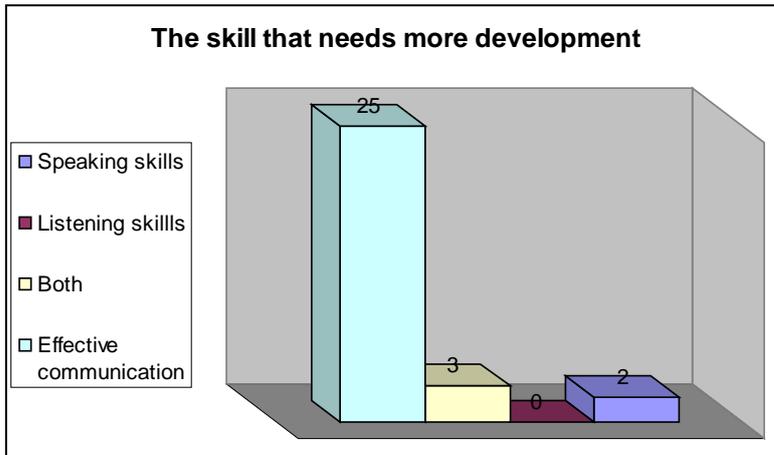


Figure 6.a question 6

While 7% of the responses believe that their speaking skills need to be developed, no one feels that his/her listening skills need more improvement. 10% of the participants think that both skills of listening and speaking require more improvement. The majority of the participants, 83%, think that the effective communicative skill needs to be developed more. Since 83% of the learners are longing for improving their communicative abilities, any new course should take that into account. Therefore, the new course should incorporate new activities and exercises whose aim is to improve the learners' communicative abilities.

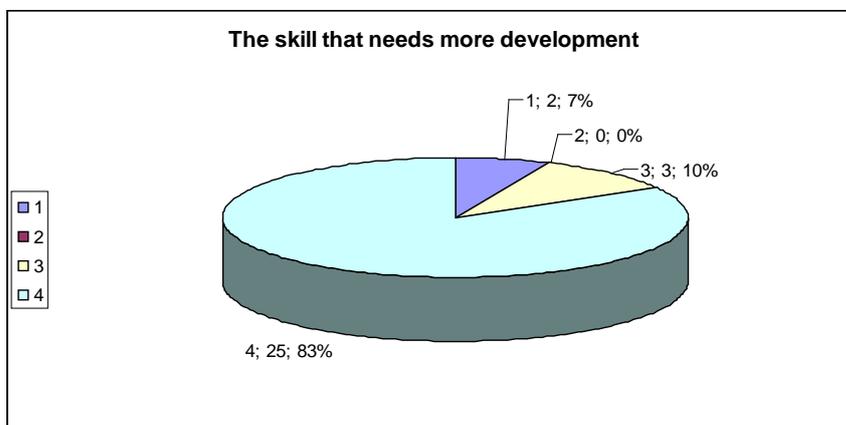


Figure 6.b question 6

- **Question 7**

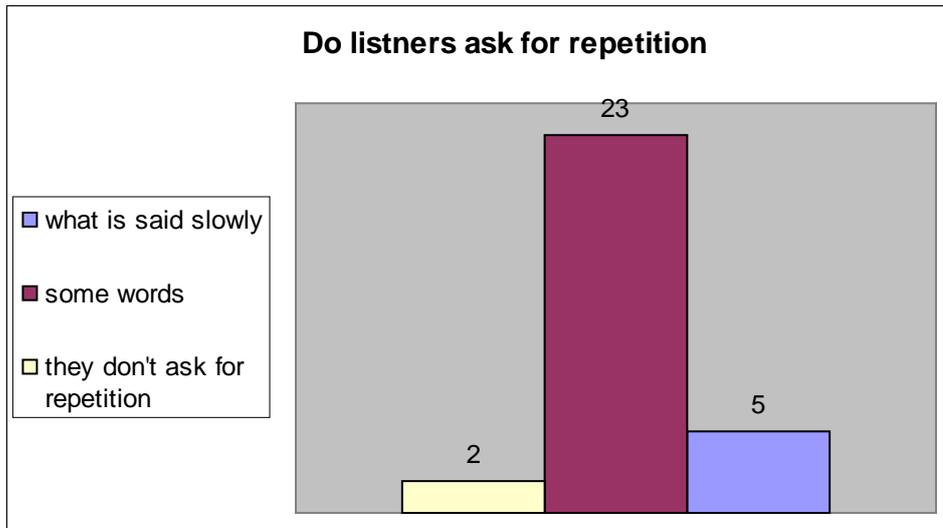


Figure 6.a question 7

When speaking in English, 17% of the participants repeat what they have said slowly. 76% of the participants repeat some words of their speech. 7% of the speakers do not repeat their speech at all. This means that the majority of the learners face intelligibility problems. 17% of these problems are caused by speed of speech. Clearly, quite few learners are those who do not have any problems because they sound intelligible. On the other hand, the majority of learners sound unintelligible.

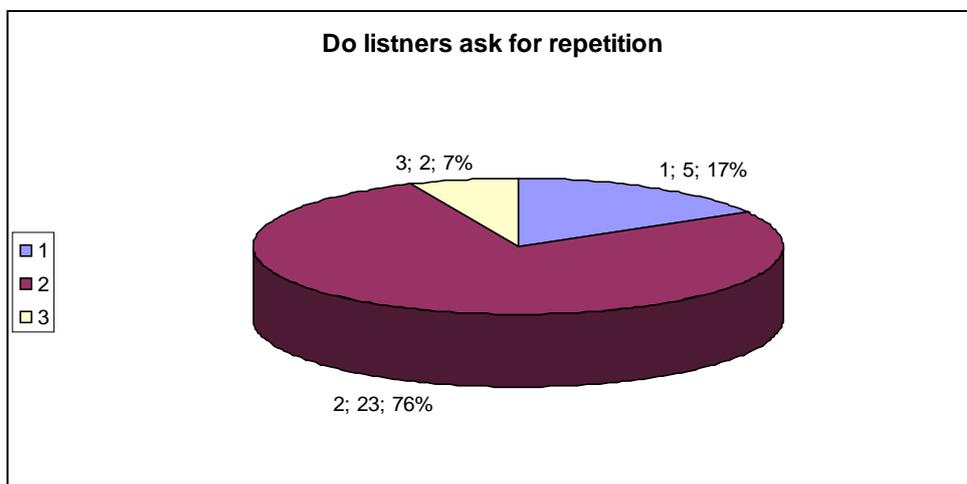


Figure 6.b question 7

- **Question 8a.**

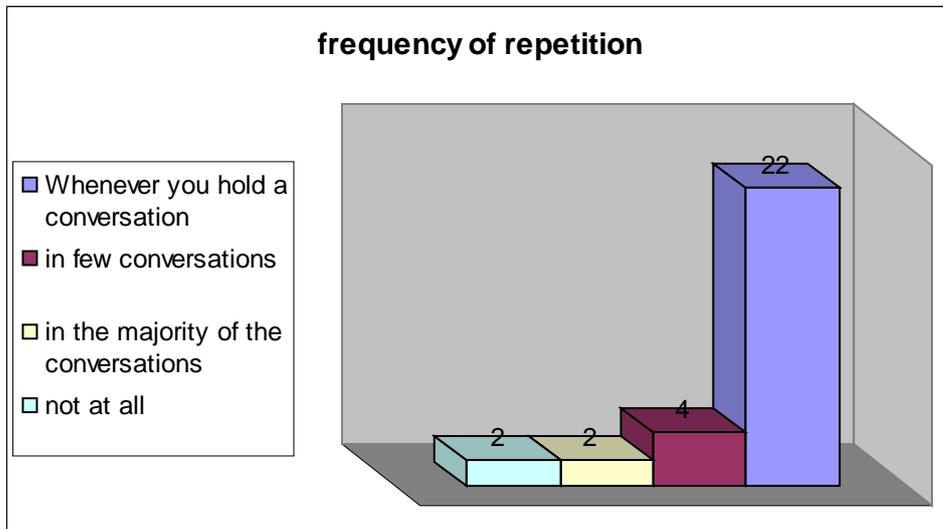


Figure 6.a question 8a

Further to the previous question, 73% of the participants have intelligibility problems whenever they hold a conversation in English. It is quite a high percentage. To put it differently, according to 73% of learners, an intelligibility breakdown is expected whenever they hold a conversation in English. 13% of learners have intelligibility problems in few conversations. 7% of the respondents seem to be unintelligible in the majority of conversations. 7% of the learners do not repeat at all.

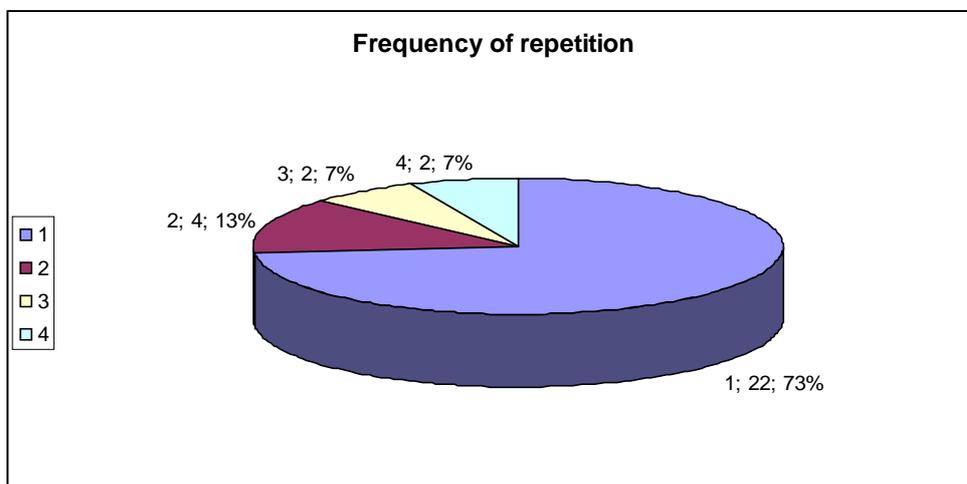


Figure 6.b question 8a

- **Question 8b.**

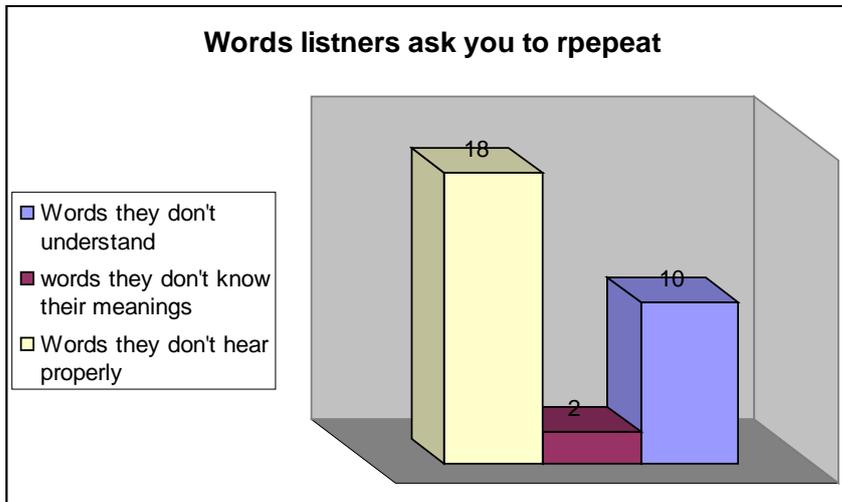


Figure 6.a question 8b

33% of the speakers reiterate the words which their hearers did not understand. 7% of the learners state again the words which their listeners did not know their meanings. 60% of the participants restate the words which their listeners could not hear correctly. According to these results, the learners may encounter intelligibility difficulties as a result of being misheard or misunderstood either in pronunciation or in meaning (semantics). Although it is interesting that the communication could fail due to misunderstanding a word meaning, yet this research is mainly interested with misunderstandings that result from pronunciation.

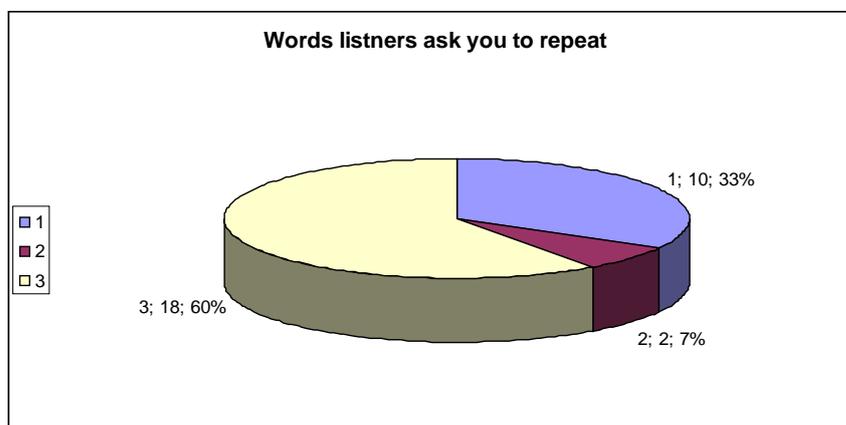


Figure 6.b question 8b

- **Question 9**

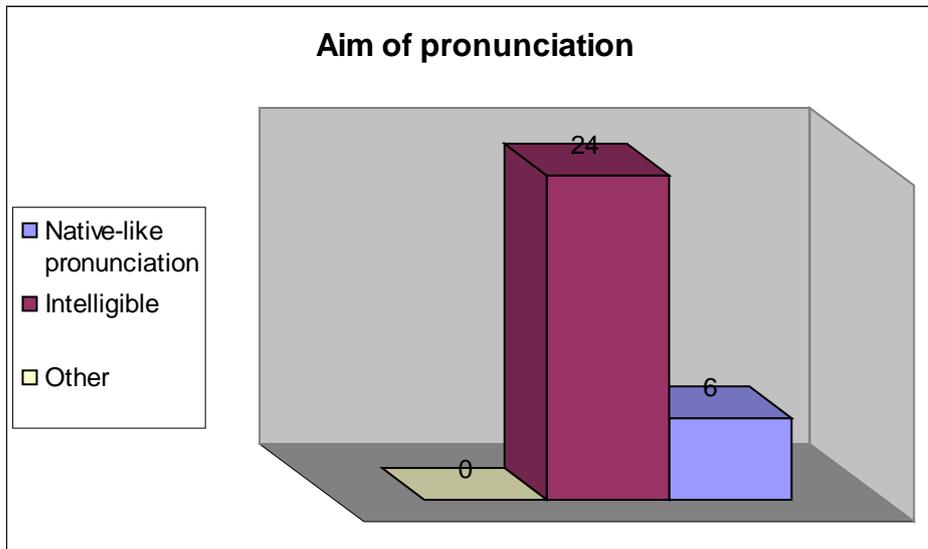


Figure 6.a question 9

This question around which this study revolves is crucial. 20% of the learners are aiming at native-like pronunciation. 80% of the learners are aspiring at intelligible pronunciation. It is significant that the majority are just aiming at simply being understood. Any newly designed course will take into consideration the learners' aims. Consequently, it will be based on intelligibility to promote intelligible communication among learners.

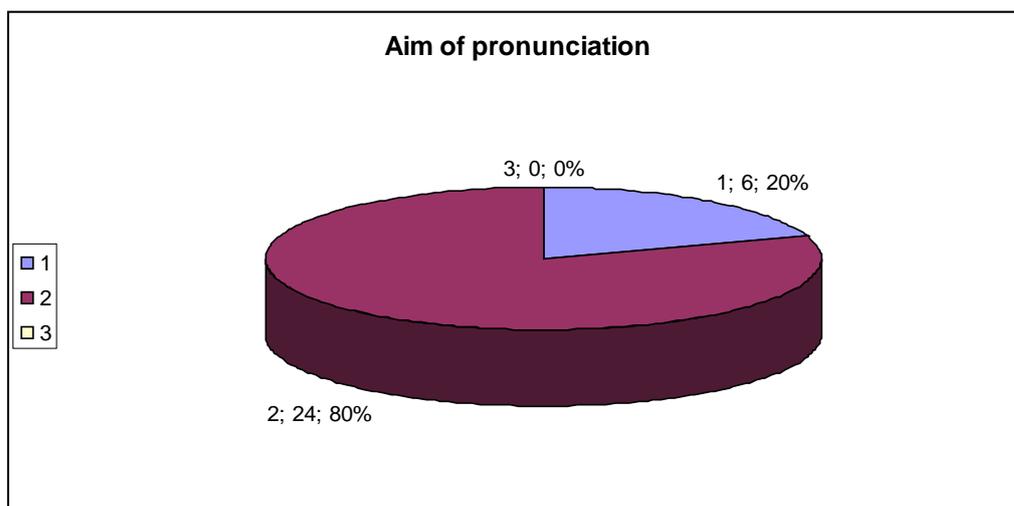


Figure 6.b question 9

- **Question 10**

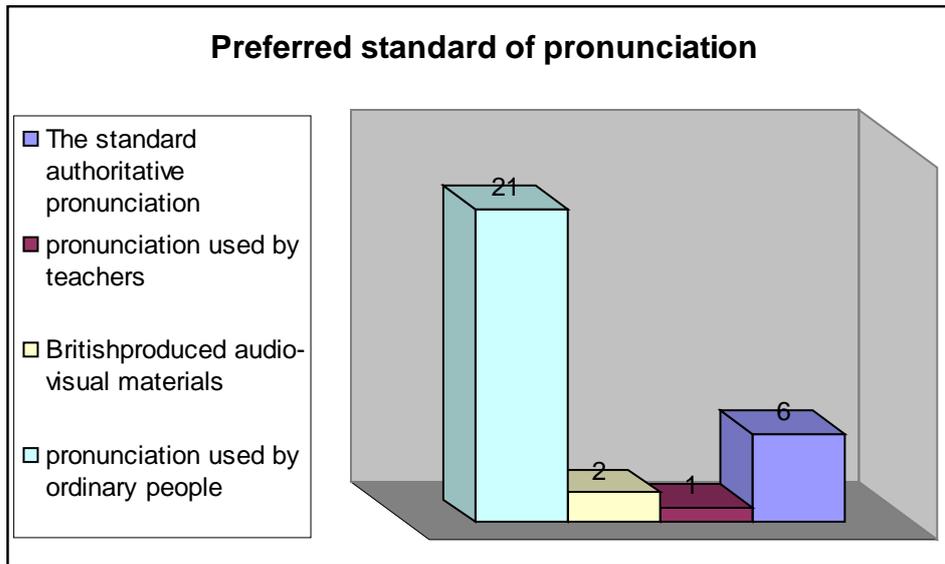


Figure 6.a question 10

This is another essential question to the essence of the study. 20% of the learners are in favour of the standard authoritative pronunciation as in dictionaries. 3% of the participants choose the pronunciation used by teachers of English in Syria. 7% of the learners opt for the pronunciation used in British-produced audio-visual materials. The majority of the respondents, that is 70%, prefer the pronunciation used by ordinary people, that is intelligible pronunciation. According to this result, it seems that the learners desire to speak like other ordinary people (i.e. to be intelligible), and communicate effectively with others. The standard of pronunciation that fulfils the learners' aims and corresponds to the intelligible communication is based on the lingua franca core (Please see chapter 2, section 2.11). It is a proposal for English as international language for teaching pronunciation. It consists of core features and non-core features. The purpose is to enhance and promote intelligibility.

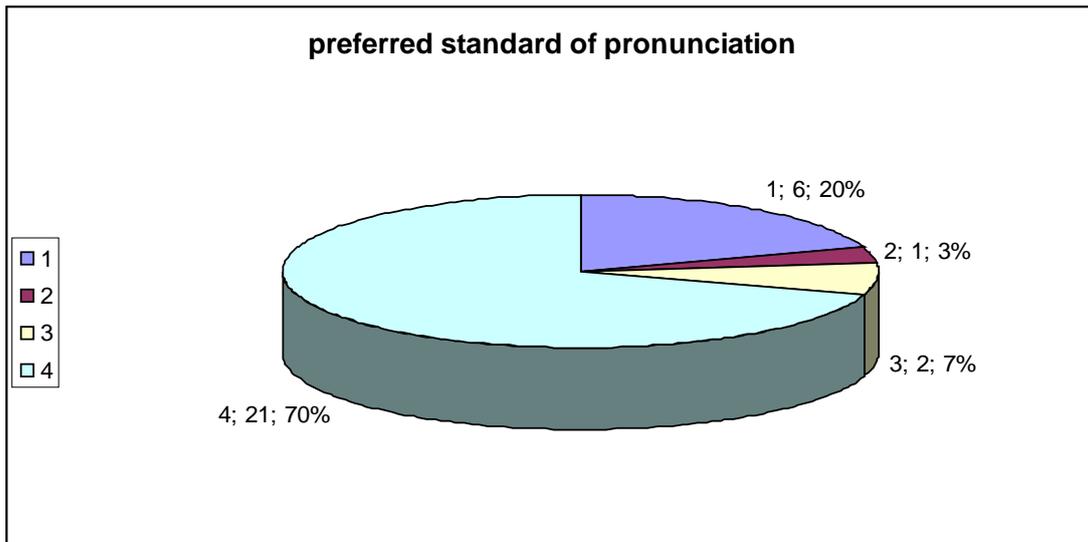


Figure 6.b question 10

Question 11a

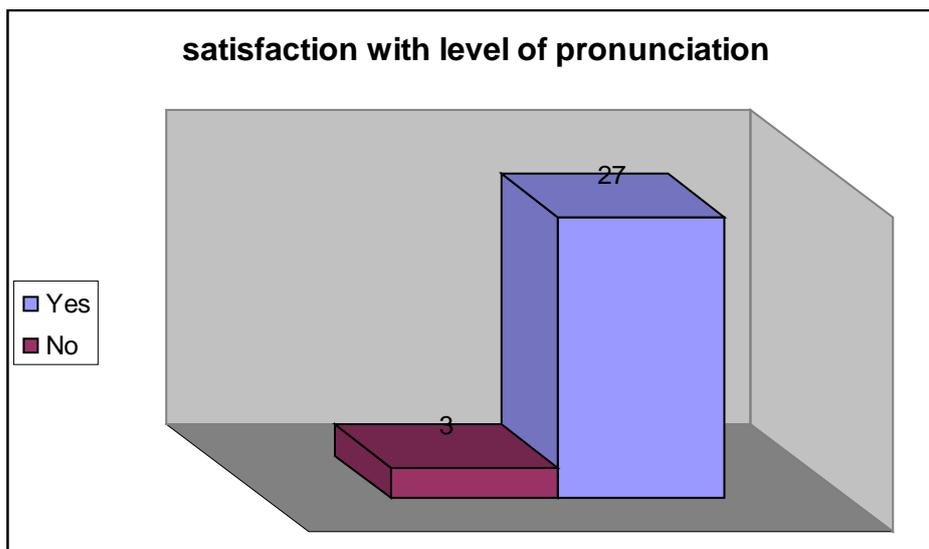


Figure 6.a question 11a

90% of the learners are quite happy with their level of pronunciation. 10% of the learners feel that they are not satisfied with their level. Obviously, the majority of learners are perfectly content with their performance possibly because they are longing only for intelligible pronunciation. They simply want

to be understood in communicative situation. Most of the learners, therefore, feel comfortable with their pronunciation.

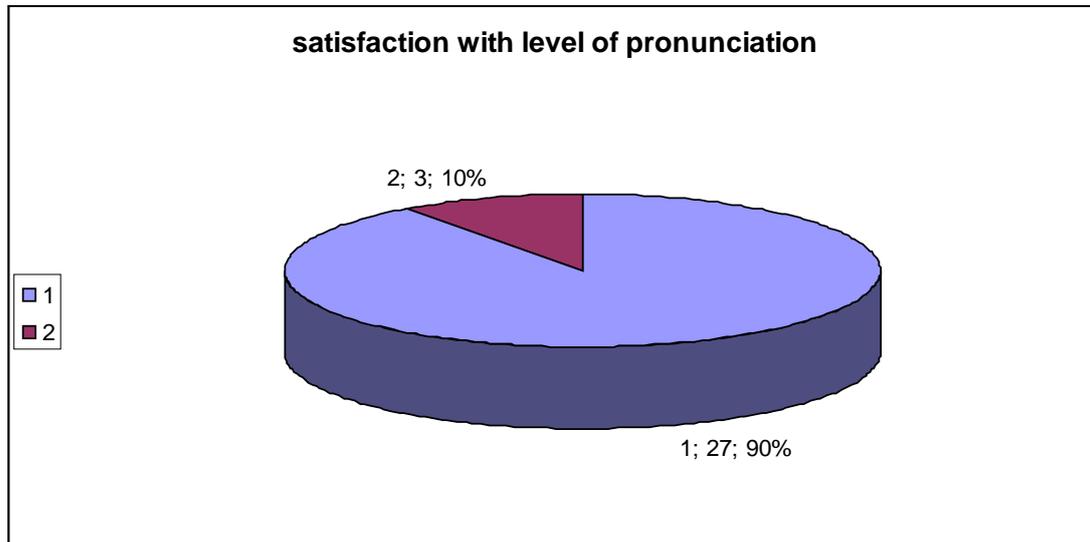


Figure 6.b question 11a

- **Question 11b.**

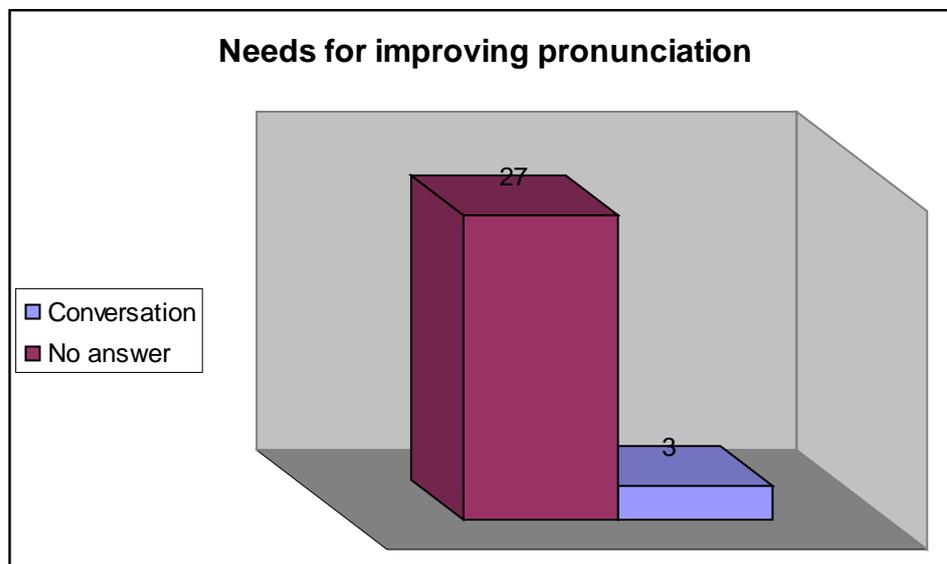


Figure 6.a question 11b

This is an open question where the respondents are left to freely express what they need. Also, it is quite of great significance to leave it open for the learners to say what they lack and want.

Clearly, those who were not happy with their level of production in pronunciation had answered this question. They need conversation and more training in communicative situations. In this regard, any newly designed or recommended course should focus on conversation. 90% of the respondents did not answer this question simply because they are happy with their pronunciation.

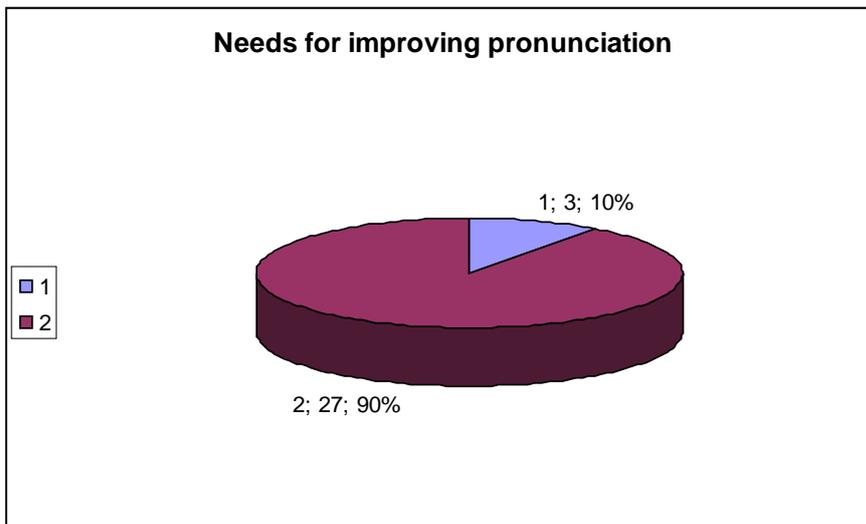


Figure 6.b question 11b

- **Question 12**

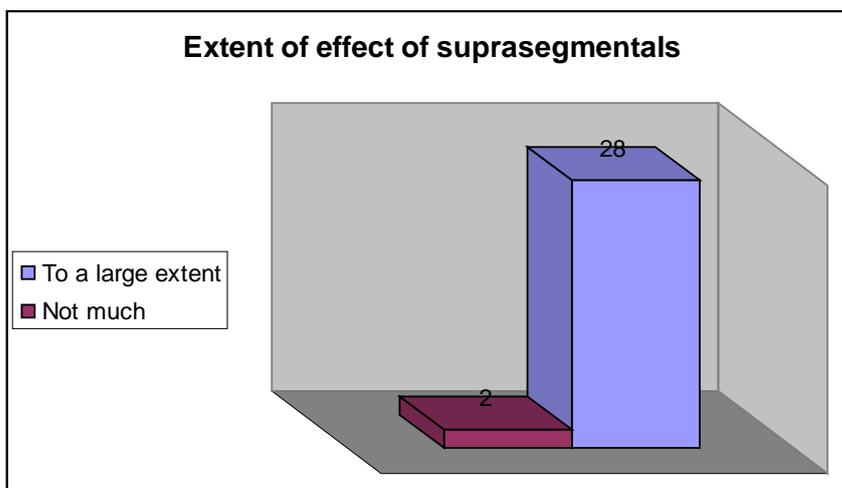


Figure 6.a question 12

This is meant to be an open question to help learners convey their thoughts about supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation. 93% of the participants feel that supra-segmental features affect their pronunciation and understanding to a large extent. Only 7% of the respondents think that the influence is not much. Supra-segmental features such as stress and intonation play a major role in intelligible communication and in pronunciation as well.

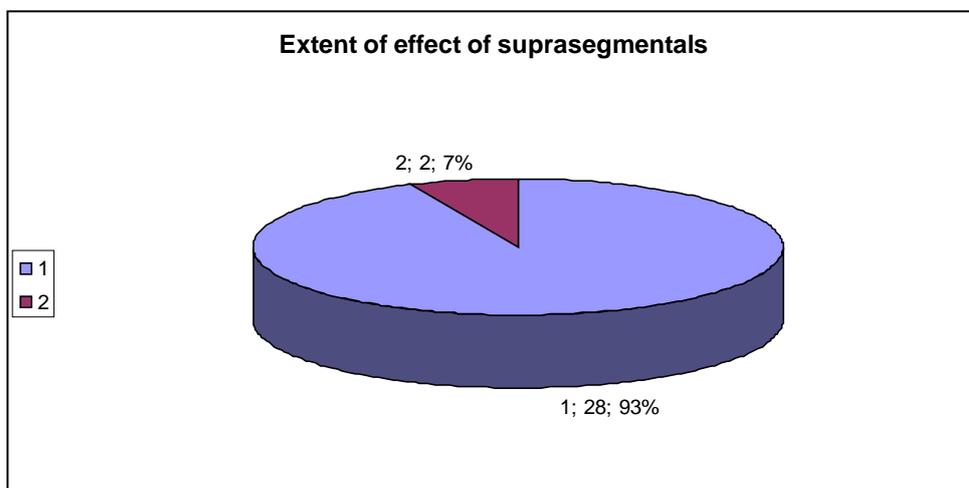


Figure 6.b question 12

- **Question 13**

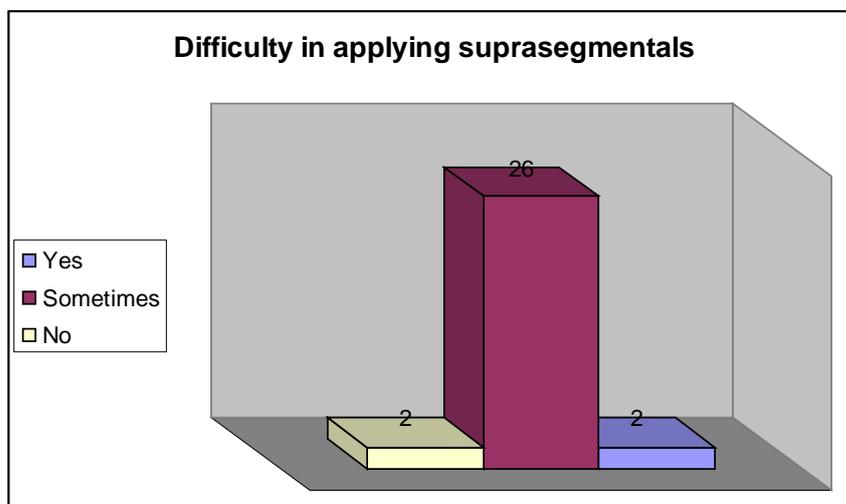


Figure 6.a question 13

7% of the participants find problems in the application of English supra-segmental features. 7% of the participants do find difficulty, whereas 86% of the learners find obstacles sometimes in using the supra-segmental aspects of English pronunciation. However, 7% of the respondents do not face any problem in English supra-segmental features. Most of the learners encounter a dilemma in the employment of the supra-segmental features. That could be due to the fact that the learners have not received adequate knowledge and practice in supra-segmental features in the course used.

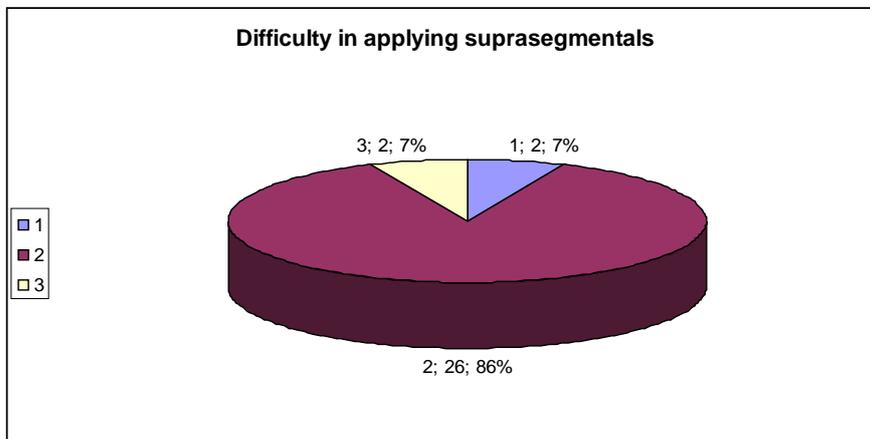


Figure 6.b question 13

- **Question 14**

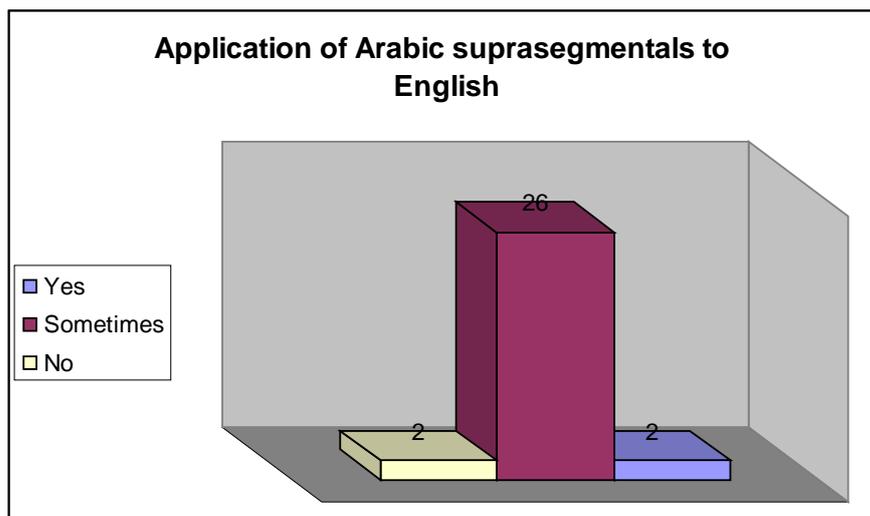


Figure 6.a question 14

7% of the learners use the Arabic supra-segmental features instead of the English ones. 86% of the participants sometimes apply the Arabic supra-segmental features to English. 7% of the respondents do not face any problems at all in using English supra-segmental features because they do not apply Arabic supra-segmental features to English.

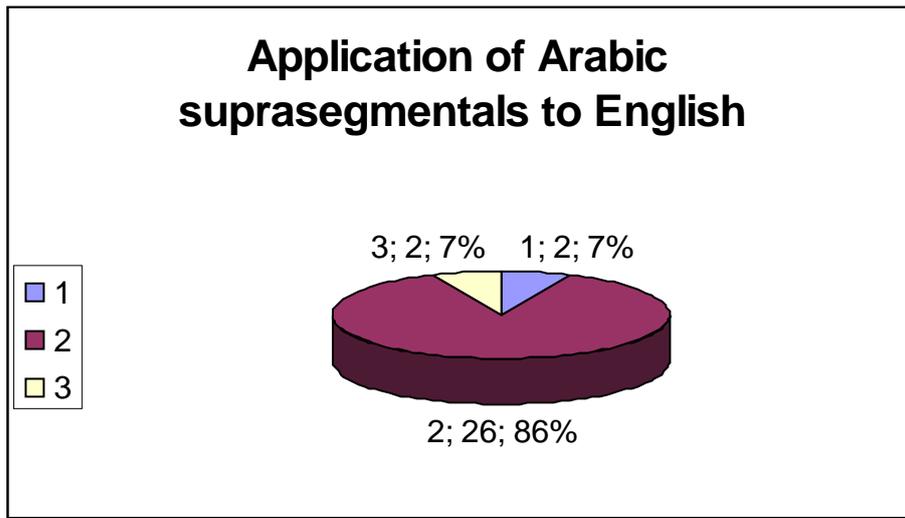


Figure 6.b question 14

- **Question 15**

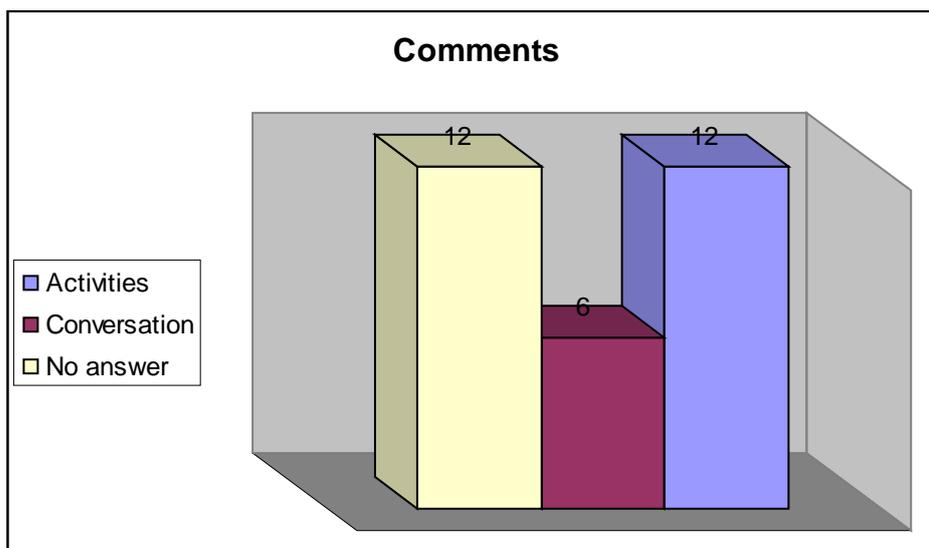


Figure 6.a question 15

This open question is key to the research as it presents the learners' suggestions and ideas which will be taken into consideration in the new course book. 40% of the participants suggest activities and practices. 20% of the learners suggest conversation activities. 40% of the participants have not commented at all. It seems that practices and conversation are priority for learners.

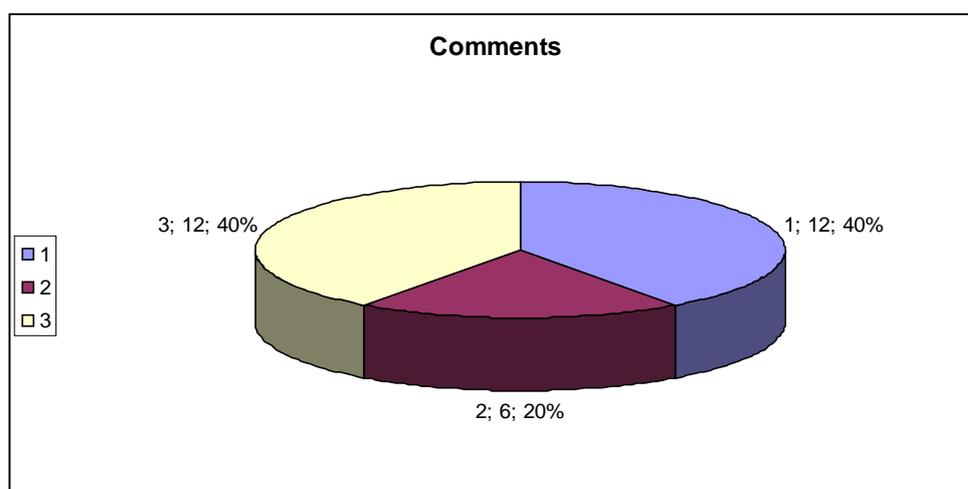


Figure 6.b question 15

6.3 Discussion and Implications

According to Bassey (1981: 85-6, as quoted in Bell: 2005: 202), it is difficult to generalize from insufficient data. However, the research might solve a particular problem or help in tackling a problem. In other words, Bassey (1981: 85) argues that: 'An important criterion for judging the merit of a case study is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a teacher working in a similar situation to relate his/her decision-making to that described in the case study. The reliability of a case study is more important than its generalizability. In other words, as Bell (2005: 202) puts it generalizability is not as much precious as reliability. The reason is that in relatively small

projects, generalizability may be unlikely, but relatability may be entirely possible. Well-prepared, small-scale studies may inform, illuminate and provide a basis for policy decisions within the institution (ibid). As such, they can be invaluable. To put it differently, the case in this research can inform and enlighten other institutions and universities in Syria so that the decision-makers can relate to this case and adopt appropriate decisions, one of which may be reconsidering the course book used for teaching pronunciation and the method of teaching pronunciation. Though in this research, it could be difficult to be sure that the results are generalizable. However, it is highly possible that this research can be useful as well as precious in providing an informed discussion of tackling issues such as: choosing appropriate pronunciation course, and method of teaching that corresponds to pronunciation goals, finding out learners' aims in a particular context, and considering factors that affect pronunciation positively as well as negatively.

According to the results of this questionnaire, it is clear that respondents saw the main aim of pronunciation as being that of intelligibility, so that the learners can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener. Generally, the learners are satisfied with their pronunciation. This confirms that they are quite satisfied with being intelligible. The standard of pronunciation the learners prefer is the way ordinary people pronounce, that is being intelligible. Consequently, the course book recommended should incorporate both theoretical background as well as practical activities. The course book should also be based on the bottom-up approach. The activity which learners prefer the most is listening to a long conversation. Learners need more than listening to isolated sounds. It is insufficient for them to achieve accuracy on the

segmental level. They need to also be competent on the level of longer stretches of speech to achieve communicative competence. Learners' aims and preferences should thus be taken into account. The aim of the activities is to help learners effectively. In addition, the new course needs to focus on supra-segmental features. The learners, according to the analysis, find difficulty in applying the supra-segmental aspects of English pronunciation. Moreover, they feel that they are applying the supra-segmental features of their native Arabic language to the English language.

The majority of the learners sometimes find difficulty in holding a conversation in English. Therefore, any new syllabus should aim at making learners comfortable with holding conversations in English. This requires more practice and training in communicative skills. In fact, conversation is a lively medium through which people interact and communicate. Equal importance is also attached to communicative skills because there is no successful communication without a comprehensible effective practice, that is conversation. Most of the learners describe their levels of speaking and listening as fair, whereas few consider them as good. The learners' levels of skills in both listening and speaking is fair as a result of their interest of being intelligible only. However, these skills need more development in order to help learners communicate effectively and without having any difficulty when holding a conversation in English.

A large percentage of students would prefer the bottom-up approach in any new course book. This means that the new syllabus should be based upon the bottom-up approach that starts with the segmental features (sounds) and proceeds to the supra-segmental features (stress, intonation, rhythm) of

pronunciation. Moreover, a large number of learners are in favour of listening to a long conversation. This desire will also be taken into consideration in the syllabus. The focus of the course will be on both the segmental as well as the supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation. It is crucial to help learners eliminate all factors that could affect understandability so that they sound intelligible.

According to the results, the majority of speakers face communication breakdown. In other words, almost whenever they hold a conversation they repeat some words. One of the reasons faced by most of the learners is that they are not heard properly. Many reasons could explain this factor such as speed of speech, the speaker's personality (hesitation), or unfamiliar stress patterns. All these factors should be taken into account in the new course.

Most learners are aiming at an intelligible level of pronunciation. They want to pronounce in the same way ordinary people speak. The lingua franca core, therefore, is the standard of pronunciation that would promote intelligibility on the one hand and fulfil learners' aims on the other. The majority of the learners are satisfied with their level of pronunciation simply because they are aiming at being understood. This confirms the choice of lingua franca core as the basis of pronunciation as it enhances intelligibility. This is because the majority of learners use Arabic supra-segmental features instead of English ones when speaking in English. They find difficulty in using them as a result of lack of practice. These features are not explained fully in the currently used pronunciation course. The learners, therefore, need more activities and conversation tasks that take

account of both segmental and supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation that could help them be more intelligible.

6.4 Towards an Intelligible Syllabus

In this section, an improved pronunciation course based on the findings of the data analysis will be proposed. The new course will take into consideration both communicative and learner-centred approaches, and relevant appropriate language materials. The course follows the technique of 'narrow focus', thus, the materials concentrate on one target event, which is communication, and two skills (speaking and listening). Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 151) argue that 'a narrow focus is appropriate where the needs are limited and the learners are convinced of the importance of concentrating just on those needs'. This course is different in the sense that it focuses on pronunciation, speaking and listening with the aim of promoting intelligible communication. In other words, this course will be particularly concerned with improving learners' pronunciation skills.

The materials are drawn directly from the learners' cultural and educational context, for example, the topics of the units match the target learners' cultural background. According to Krashen (1989), acquiring new knowledge always entails relating new information to what the learners already know, to the networks of knowledge (schemata) of which their cognitive structures are composed (cited in Eskey, 1997: 137). In addition, Douglas (2000: 26) argues that 'competence' is dependent upon both 'knowledge' and 'use', which are the essential requirements for communication. Therefore, it is important to understand how specific background knowledge interacts with the target situation

in order to produce a communicative performance in our learners' context.

Next, a new syllabus of a modified pronunciation course to be taught in the English Department will be presented and described, in addition to suggested practical methodology that accompanies the new course and potential means for assessment.

In recent years, writers on pronunciation have started to stress the need for incorporating meaningful and communicative activities that help students see the link between pronunciation and communication (see Kenworthy, 1987; Underhill, 1994; Pennigton, 1996; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994).

It is necessary to mention that the intended course will take into account all the important issues raised in the previous sections, but there might still be some points that have not been raised or some ideas to be added to enhance our course. These will emerge during trials and evaluation of the first versions of the course design.

The course consists of ten units. The sequencing of these units proceed according to the following principles. First, at the segmental level, the materials are introducing what is thought to be easier (e.g. individual sounds) and moving to what is thought to be somehow more difficult for Arabic learners (e.g. diphthongs) by following the bottom-up approach to pronunciation teaching. Second, at the supra-segmental level, the materials follow the technique of introducing what is closer to Arabic first (e.g. intonation and stress) and moving to the features which rarely exist in Arabic (e.g. elision).

The aim of the course is to understand phonology and enjoy the learning process. In addition, it seeks to provide motivating activities that would engage learners in a communicative classroom atmosphere. In addition, the course intends to help learners improve their pronunciation of English so that they can be understood by both native and non-native speakers in both formal and informal situations. The course aims at achieving balance between theory and practice. The new syllabus takes as its model an existing course, ***Sound Foundations***, by Adrian Underhill, published in 1994. This book approaches the learning and teaching of pronunciation in very interesting ways, both at the segmental and supra-segmental levels. This book is chosen because of two reasons: firstly, it combines both theory and practice of the segmental and supra-segmental features; secondly, it follows the bottom-up approach. However, this course needs to be modified in order to cope with the learners' aim of intelligibility as this book is based on RP.

6.5 Theory and Practice (*Sound Foundations*)

The aim of the book, as Underhill states in the introduction of ***Sound Foundations***, is to integrate the teaching of phonology into other areas in language and to create motivating activities that would engage learners in a communicative classroom atmosphere. In addition, ***Sound Foundations*** seeks to develop teachers themselves by increasing their awareness of what they do in classrooms.

Sound Foundations consists of two main parts namely: a 'discovery toolkit' and a 'classroom toolkit'. The first part, the discovery toolkit, addresses the teacher and invites him/her to

discover how his/her pronunciation works by direct experience and observation. It is rich with discovery activities that are followed by useful commentaries. These activities are aimed to raise the teacher's awareness by providing knowledge about practical phonology and explaining methods by which a certain task in pronunciation is best carried out. The discovery toolkit section is significant, as Underhill (1994: 1) states in the first part because:

The benefit of a working knowledge of how sounds are made, and of how they merge into words and connected speech, is in being better able to perceive what learners are doing. This enables us to guide them in the most useful and engaging direction.....The discovery toolkit enables you to discover the theory for yourself in a personal and permanent way through your own perception and experience. This will have many benefits on the ways you help your learners.

It is more interesting for the learner if theoretical instruction in phonology is accompanied by practical activities. The discovery activities are capable of creating a livelier atmosphere in the classroom, and make the learner an active participant in the learning process. For example, the following is a discovery activity that draws the learner's attention to the interrelation between tongue and jaw positions. It invites the students to feel this interrelation.

Discovery activity 9 Sensitivity to jaw position

Place your forefinger on the bridge of your nose and the thumb of the same hand on the point of your chin. Say /i:/ and glide slowly to /æ/. Notice the downward movement of your jaw indicated by the increased distance between thumb and

forefinger. Try the movement /i: æi: æ/

(Adapted from Underhill, 1994)

Table 6 activity 1

The current course book, **General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English** contains theory but no practice. Underhill does include theoretical instruction about phonology but it is always accompanied by activities that raise students' awareness of what they are learning.

The second part is the classroom toolkit which is designed to address the students and is enriched with activities. The activities increase learners' awareness and self-confidence in their capacities to learn. Moreover, they sensitise students to the physical aspect of pronouncing individual sounds, and the muscular activity that accompanies their production and develop a sense of self-monitoring among them. For example, in the following activity in the second part of Underhill's **Sound Foundations**, students are introduced to the difference between voiced and voiceless consonants in that the latter type requires more muscular effort on the part of the speaker when pronouncing it.

Classroom activity 16 Practice of *fortis* and *lenis*

1. Ask learners to hold a sheet of paper 2-3 cm in front of the mouth and say the pair of consonants /pi:/ and /bi:/.
2. The voiced and *lenis* sound /bi:/ should hardly move the paper, while the aspiration of the unvoiced and *fortis* sound /pi:/ should move the paper noticeably.
3. When your learners have found a distinction, invite them to experiment with controlling the degree of aspiration at will.

4. Apply what they have found to other voiced/unvoiced pairs of consonants. The distinction is most clear with /p,b/, /t,d/, /k,g/, /f,v/ and /θ,ð/.

(Adapted from Underhill, 1994:127)

Table 6 activity 2

Both the discovery and the classroom toolkits focus on sounds, words and connected speech. According to Underhill (1994), following this sequence seems to provide a more practical way of understanding phonology and a more useful and precise set of pedagogic tools. The sounds of English (pure vowels, diphthongs) are first studied and classified in terms of place and manner of articulation. A distinction between vowels and consonants is also made. Then, consonants are discussed using three variables: 1-voiced or unvoiced 2- place of articulation and 3-manner of articulation.

One major difference between ***General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English*** and ***Sound Foundations*** is that in the latter many discovery activities are integrated into the theoretical description of sounds and are employed to help students learn how to produce these sounds and know their various characteristics. It is worth mentioning that ***General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English*** does not include any activities whatsoever (Please see appendix 1 for the contents and Appendix 2 for an example of the book).

Another difference has to do with the fact that Underhill does not neglect the importance of supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation such as stress, rhythm and intonation. These features are explained with the assistance of interesting discovery activities. For example, clapping or tapping a rhythm is

one way through which Underhill introduces the notion of stress timing. Consider the following:

Discovery activity 73 Stress timing

This activity will give you a direct insight into the idea of stress timing:

1 Say phrase **a** aloud and rather slowly, with emphasis on each of the four words.

A You me him her

B You and me and him and her

C You and then me and then him and then her

D You and then it's me and then it's him and then it's her

2. Now say phrase **b** at the same speed, so that it occupies the same amount of time. Insert an unstressed *and* between each of the four words.

3. Now say phrase **c**, this time inserting unstressed *and then* between the four main words.

4. Now say phrase **d** with the three unstressed syllables between each main word. Try to take only the same amount of time as the first sentence.

Adapted from Underhill, 1994: 71

Table 6 activity 3

Such activities are important for improving students' perception of rhythm in English. The book starts with a thorough examination of individual sounds, then shifts the focus to the study of words spoken carefully in isolation. The concepts of word stress, primary and secondary stress are introduced and explained. The last section of the book deals extensively with the

phenomenon of connected speech. In addition, the concepts of assimilation, elision, vowel reduction, strong and weak forms, liaison, contractions and juncture are all explained and practiced by means of discovery activities. The book also discusses the concept of intonation and the different description of its meaning. The five basic tones that form the essence of the discourse intonation theory are explained.

Sound Foundations presents both teachers and learners with theory and practice. The book focuses on both individual phonemes and the essential role of supra-segmental features in communication. Therefore, a minute detailed description of connected speech including stress, rhythm and intonation is also provided in the book. The approach of ***Sound Foundations*** enables the focus of pronunciation to move elegantly, and on a moment-by-moment basis between individual sounds, individual words, and connected speech.

In the following paragraphs, the way in which the pronunciation course taught in the English department at Damascus University could be made more communicative to improve learners' pronunciation will be discussed.

The syllabus is defined as a 'plan of work and is thus essentially for the teacher, as a guideline and context for class content' (Robinson, 1991: 34). In fact, a good syllabus is the one that addresses the learners' existing level of proficiency and meets their future needs. The syllabus, in my view, should allow for a space of creativity in order to help the teacher deal with the learners' problems as they arise. In other words, the syllabus should not limit or restrict the teacher.

The following is a proposed syllabus with the units and the objectives of each unit. The following table, table 6.4, shows the organisation of the contents of the course: (Table 6.4)

Unit	Topic	Objective
1	The sounds of English: the pure vowels	Develop awareness of the production of pure vowels.
2	The sounds of English: the diphthongs	Develop awareness of the production of diphthongs
3	The sounds of English: the consonants	Develop awareness of the production of consonants
4	Stress	Develop learners awareness of stress and different aspects of stress.
5	Rhythm	Create a sense for English rhythm
6	Discourse intonation	Introduce learners to the discourse intonation theory.
7	Discourse intonation	Practice of intonation patterns
8	Connected speech	Introduce learners to different aspects of connected speech. Develop ear-training
9	Voice quality	Raise learners' awareness of the importance of voice quality for communication.
10	Revision	Revising all the newly introduced concepts.

Students' desires for long stretches of conversation will be incorporated into different types of learning activities. According to Eskey (1997: 133), people do not learn languages and then use them, but they learn languages *by* using them. Therefore, the design of the syllabus focuses on the practical needs of the learners that will be applied to the target situation, such as using the language of every-day communicative life situations.

6.6 Course Description

This course in English pronunciation consists of ten units (Please see appendix 9 for a sample unit). This course is designed to be taught to second year students in the English Department throughout Term One (October through mid December). The teaching process will take place in the ideal best place, which is the language laboratory. The reason for this is that in some activities, learners are expected to record their voice after the teaching of a given sound.

The aim of the course is to give learners adequate instruction in both segmental and supra-segmental phonology that helps them to be intelligible when they communicate. Following the bottom-up approach, the course starts with segmental phonemes and follows to supra-segmental features. The first three units are devoted to the individual English sounds. The rest of the units (4,5,6,7,8, and 9) address different kinds of supra-segmental features of pronunciation, such as stress, rhythm, intonation, connected speech, and voice quality.

Unit Four focuses on stress as the starting supra-segmental feature on purpose. Stress can be considered as a joint between segmental and supra-segmental phonology because it functions

on both word and sentence levels. Word stress is essential for the correct pronunciation of the individual sounds of words in isolation. In addition, stress functions at the sentence level and, therefore, carries a communicative value of what the speaker intends to convey to the listener. Moreover, the kinds of stress, that is primary, secondary, word and sentence stress, will help them understand rhythm in English.

Unit Five deals with rhythm, an important supra-segmental feature. This will help learners pronounce confidently and, consequently, be understood in spoken English. The activities of this unit will help learners differentiate between stressed and unstressed syllables. One activity that could help learners is distinguishing between content and function words. It is worth mentioning that usually content words are stressed while function words are not. The rhythmical poems will be of great assistance, an example is stressed and unstressed syllables that occur at equal intervals. Learners will benefit from such activities on rhythm in conversation. The reason is that, as Underhill puts it (1994: 73), rhythm is created by the relationship between stress and unstress. Therefore, it is 'quite difficult to understand English speech in which the stress is either absent or wrongly placed' (ibid).

Units Six and seven are intended to introduce discourse intonation theory, and provide learners with training and practice on tones in order to fulfil the communicative function of intonation. The five tones of discourse intonation will be practiced through various activities and exercises.

Unit Eight concentrates on various aspects of connected speech in English, such as assimilation, weak and strong forms, elision

and liaison. These features are presented in theoretical description and practical examples. It will be useful to make learners aware of the contrast between Standard Arabic and English aspects of connected speech as this will help learners see the difference and use them correctly.

Unit Nine centres on voice quality and its effective role in communication. The voice quality has a significant role in meaning because learners use different voice tones to convey different messages. Students will be trained in English conversation so that they can tell the features of the speakers' voices that give a certain impression or convey a certain attitude or emotion. A contrastive analysis between voice quality in Arabic and English will be compared so that learners can use them without confusion. This will increase students' self-confidence in using voice for communicating their attitudes.

Unit ten is a revision of all previous units. The course aims at raising the learners' awareness of the physical aspect of pronunciation on both the segmental as well as the supra-segmental levels. In particular, the course aims at giving learners basic knowledge of and practice in supra-segmental features of pronunciation. The teacher, the course and its discovery activities adopted from ***Sound Foundations***. As a means of evaluating the course, end of term interviews will be carried out in order to give feedback which is essential for improving the course. In addition, mid-term course evaluation questionnaire will be distributed to learners to provide feedback (Please see appendix 10). Moreover, the course will hopefully give learners basic knowledge about the supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation that will be further practiced in future advanced courses in the third and the fourth years.

Students' participation is encouraged to engage them in the teaching process and make it livelier. Learners' motivation plays a basic role in learning. This can be achieved through the various teaching methods that address their needs. In addition, activities in the course would be of a communicative nature to provide learners with real life-like situations. Moreover, these activities try to reflect the context in which everyday spoken English takes place. This will help establish communicative classroom atmosphere.

The units begin with presentation followed by practice. The course can be taught by using teaching techniques such as demonstration or explanation. This depends on the teacher who can tell how much assistance learners need.

As far as the assessment method is concerned, the learner's speaking as well as listening abilities will be assessed. The assessment should take into consideration both learners' ability to accurately produce individual sounds and meaningful application of supra-segmental features in their speech. The testing of segmental features can be achieved by asking learners to pronounce some words, and read a paragraph. The testing of supra-segmental features can be carried out through a recorded interview where a conversation on a given topic is recorded for five minutes. In the listening test, the teacher can play a conversation, and then ask the learners to choose a word from a list of words that have similar sounds or pronunciation. This word should complete a sentence from the conversation meaningfully. Such activity will test learners' listening abilities in addition to their abilities to decode the meaning according to the context of the sentence. This will test learners' pronunciation,

listening and communicative competence. The teacher may use any other appropriate assessing methodology that takes into account the clarity and correct pronunciation of individual sounds, the appropriate use of stress, intonation, and other aspects of connected speech. The teacher should assess learners' overall intelligibility on the segmental as well as the supra-segmental levels.

A teacher-training programme will contribute to the success of the new course. Before the academic year starts, it is very important to train the teaching staff on the implementation of the newly proposed course. The teacher-training programme will contribute to teacher's qualifications. This will help them to apply the appropriate teaching techniques. Such training can possibly be done by the researcher before the academic year starts.

As discussed earlier, the grammar-translation method (see chapter 3, section 3.3) does not take pronunciation into account. Therefore, the communicative language teaching approach provides a better methodology of teaching (Please see chapter 3, section 3.5). According to this approach, effective communication is sought, and language is learnt for the purpose of communication. In addition, this approach seeks intelligible pronunciation. This approach fulfils learners' aims. The aim of the communicative language teaching approach is to gain sufficient pronunciation skills. According to this approach, the emphasis is not only on sounds, but also on stress and intonation. The instruction focuses on teaching pronunciation communicatively. Student's motivation is central to successful teaching as it plays important role in the teaching process. In addition, self-monitoring and awareness strategies are also essential.

As discussed in (section 2.3), one important decision teachers of a second language should set for their learners in the early stage of the teaching process is whether the learners need to achieve native-like or intelligible pronunciation. According to the results of this questionnaire, learners aim at intelligible pronunciation. They simply need to be understood when they speak. Intelligibility is a realistic teaching goal because it requires no more than an adequate performance in English for the practical purposes of everyday communication. The learners are satisfied with a comfortably intelligible pronunciation. They aim at being understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener. Intelligibility seems to be the most appropriate goal for the learners, although different learners may have different specific goals. The majority of the learners are satisfied with intelligible level of pronunciation.

There are some factors that affect intelligibility, such as speed of speech, or lack of confidence (Please see chapter 2, section 2.8). It makes the speaker difficult to understand. According to the findings, some learners have to repeat what they said because they were not heard properly. Therefore, these factors should be handled by practicing some communicative situations (such as role-play). Consequently, these factors will be eliminated gradually.

This thesis shows very clearly that the current pronunciation course is ineffective. Therefore, there is an urgent need to change it (Please see chapter 3, section 3.9). The book lacks practical activities and focuses mainly on segmental features (individual sounds based on the RP English). According to the results of the literature review supported by the results of the

questionnaire, a new modified course will be proposed. The course will incorporate activities that will support the theory learners receive. The newly modified course will be based on the bottom-up approach (Please see chapter 4, section 4.8), which introduces segmental features (sounds) and then moves to supra-segmental features (such as stress, intonation, etc.). Moreover, it will include theory as well as activities about supra-segmental features. Learners are aware of the importance of supra-segmental features and their influence on pronunciation.

The newly designed book will be based on the lingua franca core (See chapter 2, section 2.11) that aims at promoting international phonological intelligibility. It consists of crucial phonetic features that are safeguards for mutual intelligibility. These features will effectively result in comprehensive communication rather than attending to every detail of the Standard English RP. According to the results of the questionnaire, RP and native-likeness (Please see chapter 2, sections 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6) are no longer the aims of learners in the English Department at Damascus University. Learners prefer being understood to sounding like native RP speakers. The communicative language teaching approach (Please see chapter 3, section 3.5) is the one that best suits the learners because it aims at intelligible pronunciation and seeks effective communication. The communicative approach, however, will take account of the post-method in that the designed course will be context-sensitive. In other words, it will be suitable for the Syrian learners in the English Department at Damascus University. It may not be applicable anywhere since it takes into account Syrian context, interference between Arabic and English and pronunciation features that are context-specific. The approach to be followed is a research-based approach rather

than the traditional approach (Please see chapter 4, section 4.11). The research-based approach helps learners gain pronunciation skills that enable them of effective communication. It also stresses supra-segmental features and communicative teaching of pronunciation. Learners' self-awareness and motivation are encouraged.

The contrastive analysis between Arabic and English (See chapter 4, section 4.5) will be of great help in pronunciation because it will assist learners in recognizing the differences in pronunciation between Arabic and English. The lecturer will make learners aware of these differences between both the segmental and the supra-segmental features of both languages. Consequently, they will be able to produce and articulate correctly the sounds, and apply the supra-segmental features successfully. The importance of this is that it eliminates any influence or interference between the native mother language (Arabic) and target language (English). The learner's previous knowledge influences the new language. Learners have already established pronunciation habits in the mother language (Arabic) which could influence the pronunciation of English. Teachers should consider the interference because that will make teaching more effective. In other words, this will help in pinpointing learners' problems better, understanding what is easy and difficult for learners, and eliminating these difficulties.

Thus, the analysis has answered all the research questions and hypotheses. According to the results, learners aim at intelligible pronunciation based on lingua franca core. A new course will be proposed based on the bottom-up approach. The book will contain exercises and focus on segmental alongside the supra-segmental features. The overall aim of the course is effective

communication. In the next chapter, the newly proposed course book will be tested and tried in order to evaluate how effective it is.

Chapter Seven Testing the Course-book

7.1. Introduction

Having proposed a revised syllabus, this chapter details piloting of the materials with students in order to test the effectiveness of the syllabus. This section demonstrates how intelligibility can be achieved by implementing the proposed materials. This chapter reports a small-scale study which provides evidence that teaching the suggested materials contributes to learners' pronunciation skills.

7.2 Empirical Evidence: Overview of the Experiment

Two groups have participated in the experiment, a control group and an experimental group. The participants of the two groups were 10 voluntary second-year university students in the English Department at Damascus University, following an undergraduate program in English Literature. Each group consisted of five participants. Students gave verbal consent to participate in this study. In addition, they filled and signed a consent form confirming that they have accepted to participate in the experimental study (see appendix 11b). Appendix (11a) is a copy of the ethics form filled by the researcher as required by Aston University Regulations. As this was a voluntary activity, participation is of itself indicative of consent. Any names given are anonymised. The sample was chosen opportunistically.

The teaching period lasts for 8 weeks starting on the fifteenth of October until the fifteenth of December 2008, two hours per session, to a total of sixteen hours per group. Teaching was carried out in the university itself, in a room with which all

students were familiar. The units which were taught dealt mainly with the suprasegmental features. These units were chosen on purpose because the currently taught book, ***General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English***, briefly introduces these features. In addition the book lacks practical activities. The control group was taught chapter five of the current syllabus, ***General Phonetics and Pronunciation of English***, which briefly covers the suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation (Please see appendix 1). It covers topics like assimilation, elision, juncture, stress, etc.. The experimental group was taught unit 8 of the proposed syllabus which deals with the same suprasegmental topics (Please see appendix 9). In addition, not only unit 8 explains in detail suprasegmental features, but also it contains practical activities. Further to unit 8, learners of the experimental group were also introduced to the concept of stress because unit 5 taught to learners of the control group introduces stress. Intonation is left out of unit 5 and 8, and both groups were not introduced to the concept of intonation because of the time limit. Teaching was carried out through explanation and demonstration. In addition, some examples of the target language were introduced to facilitate learning.

Both groups were set a written pre-test to test their level of English pronunciation (see appendix 12 for the test). They were also set a post-test at the end of the course to test learners' comprehension. In addition, both groups were set a delayed post-test (follow-up test) two weeks later after the end of the experiment to test their retention. All three tests were identical. Furthermore, the participants have completed a mid-term course-evaluation questionnaire (see appendix 10). The courses and the tests are both in the English language. The test can assess participants' levels of pronunciation.

The questions of these tests were chosen carefully. Ten multiple choice questions adopted from three books, the first one is ***English Pronunciation in Use***, elementary book by Marks, J. (questions 5,6,8,9, and10) ; the second is ***English Pronunciation in Use***, intermediate level by Hancock, M (questions 1,2,3,and 4); and the third is ***English Pronunciation in Use***, the advanced level by Hewings, M. (question 7). Most of the questions were adopted from the elementary level and the rest are from the intermediate level.

To verify the results even further, a follow-up test was issued to the students two weeks after the post-test in order to assess learners' retention and to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention as the direct positive results can vanish within few months (Truscott, 1998). In addition, a delayed post-test can help understand the retained effects of intervention (Norris and Ortega, 2000). Students of the experimental group had achieved well in this test. This showed that students' had really understood the instructions they have been receiving during course hours. Both groups were taught about the same topics regarding the supra-segmental features since research has shown that the suprasegmental features play an important role in communication (see 4.7.3).

7.3 Results of the Experiment

Before and after the course, students' pronunciation and phonological skills were tested through the pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test in which all questions were identical (Please see Appendix 12). Ratings of students' performances were compared for the experimental and the control groups.

The following table (7.1) shows the average percentage of the correct answers for both groups in the pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test.

	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed post-test (follow-up test)
The control group	8%	30%	30%
The experimental group	12%	92%	94%

In the pre-test for the control group, four students had one question answered correctly out of the ten questions. The fifth student had all the answers wrong. This comparison showed that experimental group generally did better on the post-test than the control group. The following table (7.2) shows the correct key answers and the students' answers in the pre-test.

Pre-test for the control group

Question/students	Correct Key answer	1	2	3	4	5
1	C	A	B	A	A	D
2	D	B	B	B	B	C
3	C	A	A	C	A	B
4	A	B	A	D	B	B
5	C	C	D	A	C	A
6	A	C	C	B	C	B

7	B	A	C	C	A	C
8	B	A	A	A	A	A
9	C	B	A	B	B	A
10	A	B	B	A	B	B

students	1	2	3	4	5
Number of correct answers	1	1	1	1	0
percentage	10%	10%	10%	10%	0%

Table 7.2

The average of correct answers for the control group is 8%. In the pre-test, the experimental group has five students who had not answered the questions correctly. The following table (7.3) shows their results.

Question/students	Correct Key answer	1	2	3	4	5
1	C	A	A	b	A	D
2	D	B	B	B	B	A
3	C	C	A	A	C	B
4	A	D	B	A	D	C
5	C	A	A	D	A	A
6	A	B	A	C	B	B
7	B	C	D	A	C	C
8	B	A	A	A	A	A
9	C	B	C	A	B	B
10	A	B	B	B	B	A

students	1	2	3	4	5
Number of correct answers	1	2	1	1	1
percentage	10%	20%	10%	10%	10%

Table 7. 3

12% of the experimental groups' answers are correct, which is obviously a very low percentage. In the post-test, the results of the control group slightly improved but not as much as the significant improvement of the experimental group's results in the post-test. Three students of the control group have three out of ten questions right, two students have four right answers. The following table (Table 7.4) shows these results.

The post-test for the control group

Question/students	Correct Key answer	1	2	3	4	5
1	C	A	A	C	B	A
2	D	D	B	C	A	D
3	C	B	A	A	A	D
4	A	A	B	B	A	A
5	C	A	B	C	A	D
6	A	C	C	A	B	C
7	B	D	B	A	B	C
8	B	A	B	A	B	A
9	C	A	B	A	B	B
10	A	A	B	A	B	A

students	1	2	3	4	5
Number of correct answers	3	2	4	3	3
percentage	30%	20%	40%	30%	30%

Table 7.4

The percentage of the correct answers for the control group in the post-test is 30%. It shows an improvement in comparison of the results of the pre-test. The experimental group shows a great improvement in the post-test. In the post-test, three students have answered the ten questions correctly, one has nine questions right, and the fifth has eight right answers. The following table (7.5) illustrates these answers.

The post-test of the experimental group

Question/students	Correct Key answer	1	2	3	4	5
1	C	C	C	C	C	C
2	D	D	D	D	D	D
3	C	C	C	C	C	C
4	A	A	A	A	A	A
5	C	C	C	C	C	C
6	A	A	A	A	A	A
7	B	A	B	B	B	B
8	B	A	A	B	B	B
9	C	C	C	C	C	C
10	A	A	A	B	A	A

students	1	2	3	4	5
Number of correct answers	8	9	9	10	10
percentage	80%	90%	90%	100%	100%

Table 7.5

The average of the correct answers for the experimental group is 92%.

The learners were also tested two weeks after the end of the post-test. The aim of the delayed test is to check if learners' comprehension for the instruction and the input they had received during the teaching period. The results of the test show that the learners of the experimental group have really understood the materials and comprehend well to the instruction in the test. The following table (7.6) represents the results of the follow-up test for the control group and table (7.7) shows the results of the follow-up test for the experimental group.

The follow-up test for the control group

Question/students	Correct Key answer	1	2	3	4	5
1	C	C	A	A	A	C
2	D	A	B	D	D	C
3	C	C	C	B	B	B
4	A	B	D	A	C	A
5	C	A	C	D	B	D
6	A	A	A	B	B	B

7	B	C	D	B	B	D
8	B	A	A	A	A	A
9	C	B	B	C	A	B
10	A	B	B	B	A	A

students	1	2	3	4	5
Number of correct answers	3	2	4	3	3
percentage	30%	20%	40%	30%	30%

Table 7.6

The average of the correct answers is 30%.

The follow-up test for the experimental group

Question/students	Correct Key answer	1	2	3	4	5
1	C	C	C	C	C	C
2	D	D	D	D	D	D
3	C	C	C	C	C	C
4	A	A	A	A	A	A
5	C	B	C	C	A	C
6	A	A	A	A	A	A
7	B	B	B	B	B	B
8	B	B	B	B	B	B
9	C	C	C	C	C	C
10	A	A	A	B	A	A

students	1	2	3	4	5
Number of correct	9	10	9	9	10

answers					
percentage	90%	100%	90%	90%	100%

Table 7.7

The average of the correct answers is 94%. The follow-up and post-tests reveal that the traditional instruction and material are not effective. The results of the follow-up test for the experimental group show that instruction and suggested material facilitate the input and comprehension that lead to more accurate production. The assessment scales used show significantly improved performance in pronunciation.

7.4 A mid-course evaluation questionnaire

A mid-course evaluation questionnaire was given to the participants of the experimental group to evaluate the newly designed course (see appendix 10). The following table (7.8) represents the answers of the experimental group. These are the results of the questionnaire which is meant to evaluate the new materials. In the following table, A is abbreviation of agree, and SA is abbreviation of strongly agree.

The results of the mid-course evaluation questionnaire

	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	SA	A	A	SA
2	A	A	A	SA	A
3	A	A	SA	A	A
4	A	SA	A	SA	A
5	A	SA	A	SA	A
6	A	A	A	A	A

7	SA	A	A	A	A
8	SA	A	SA	A	SA

Table 7.8

The questions of the questionnaire are meant to examine learners' satisfaction with the newly designed materials. The questions are closed where learners were offered a choice of alternative replies (Please see chapter 5, section 5.4.3). The first question asks whether the course is motivating. Three learners agree to this statement and two strongly agree. The second question is about if the course is interesting. Four students agree that it is interesting and the fifth strongly agrees. The third question is whether the course is enriched with helpful activities. Again, four students agree and the fifth strongly agrees to this statement. The fourth question is whether the course is not too difficult. Three students agree and two strongly agree that it is not too difficult. The fifth question asks if the course is well organised. Four students agree that the course is well organised, and one strongly agrees. The sixth question asks if the explanation is easy to understand. All the students agree that the explanation is easy to understand. The seventh question asks if the course contains sufficient theory supported by practical activities. Four students agree to this statement and one strongly agrees with it. The eighth question asks if the course provides good examples that clearly demonstrate theory. Two learners agree to this statement, while three strongly agree.

Overall, the questionnaire showed that the learners were satisfied with the new course. The results of the questionnaire clearly reflect that the course is effective, enjoyable and interesting. Students agreed that the course is motivating, well

organised and easy to understand. The questionnaire also showed that the course contained sufficient theory supported by good examples and by practical activities.

7.5 Conclusion

The results of all the tests given to both the experimental teaching groups and the questionnaire show that the proposed syllabus has contributed to learners intelligibility. Although only a pilot of one unit, this unit is underpinned by the same principles of all others as outlined in table 6.4, and it showed that the new course is effective because it improves learners' pronunciation skills. The general impression created was that the effect of training and instruction, especially in the supra-segmental features, over this short course had been to a large extent beneficial. It proves the importance of suprasegmental features and activities to develop communicative skills.

Chapter Eight

Summary and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Working on this thesis has revealed much about issues of intelligibility versus RP that are related to teaching English pronunciation. Starting with the need to find out better ways of teaching pronunciation and in particular the aim of native-like RP level of production, it was discovered that the notion of RP is too problematic for all kinds of reasons: it is an abstract concept, raises many ideological issues, and is no longer suitable as a model for teaching pronunciation. In addition, the acquisition of RP is unattainable for reasons such as age, identity and interference. It was revealed that the notion of intelligibility is far more suitable. This is because learners need no more than to be understood in communicative situations where they mainly come into contact with other non-native English speakers.

8.2 Summary

The main issues discussed in the literature review will be summarized in the following paragraphs. The first chapter introduces the context and the aim of the research. This research aims at finding learners' aim of pronunciation in the English Department at Damascus University, Syria. The learners are highly motivated intrinsically and extrinsically to learn the English language, which is spreading widely and internationally.

The second chapter discusses both aims of native-like and intelligible pronunciation. RP is the Standard British model adopted widely as a reference accent for learners of English as a second/foreign language. It is continuously changing. Some voices argue with applying RP as a teaching model, while others argue against that adoption. With regard to selecting an approximate model, Received Pronunciation (RP) is chosen as an English accent model in the Department of English in Syria. Although RP is still used in Syria as a reference accent, yet it is important to see what the learners currently are aiming at and what is the best model to follow. In other words, RP will be the perfect model if learners are aspiring to a native-like English proficiency; however, this might not be the case if they wish to be mainly understood. As far as the Syrian learners in the English Department at Damascus University are concerned, they probably need no more than an intelligible accent in order to be understood in communicative situations with other non-native English speakers.

Intelligibility is thus a two-way process, involving at least the speaker and the listener. A speaker may, therefore, be unintelligible to a listener because of something about the listener that makes the task of understanding difficult. Intelligibility also depends on factors other than pronunciation that do not relate specifically to language learning, but to communication in general, such as whether the topic is familiar or whether it is expected in the context.

It is important to make learners aware of these factors, and to explain to them how they may lead to breakdowns in communication. Learners need to avoid them in order to sound intelligible and communicate effectively. However, interlocutors

will sound intelligible as long as the necessary factors are maintained. Since intelligibility involves both the speaker and the listener, they need to mutually understand each other to communicate successfully. Effective communication, therefore, can result in mutual understanding.

Native-likeness and intelligibility are two approaches for teaching English pronunciation. The name of native-likeness can be achieved by adopting a native reference model, such as RP, which is currently applied in the Syrian context. It is convenient for those who like to sound as native speakers. Intelligibility approach maintains that learners simply want to be understood and that the hearer is more likely to be a non-native English speaker. The lingua franca core is proposed as a model for international syllabus in the teaching of English pronunciation. The native-likeness approach prevailed until the 1960s. Received Pronunciation is a reference and prestigious accent which is commonly used in the United Kingdom such as in government and education. However, it is continuously changing for reasons such as the influence of the Cockney accent. There are arguments that support adopting RP as a reference accent. Yet, there are also counter arguments against such adoption.

Intelligibility implies that speakers are concerned mainly with effective communication and getting their message across. It is convenient especially where NNS-NNs interaction takes place. In the specified Syrian context, RP is used as a reference accent, however, the course book used does not support fully the acquisition of RP. In addition, NNS-NNs interaction is mostly prevalent. Learners' aims should correspond to the currently used book.

The third chapter has shed the light on the language teaching methods and in particular with the most significant ones in terms of the aims and the critique of these methods. The grammar-translation, the audio-lingual, the communicative and the post-method approaches are discussed.

The fourth chapter has discussed in details the factors that have an impact on pronunciation learning. In other words, age, identity and first language interference could affect pronunciation acquisition. Moreover, a detailed contrastive analysis has been presented between both the Arabic language (the native-language in Syria) and the English language.

The most significant factors are age, identity and first language interference. These factors may prevent learners from achieving native-like proficiency. Moreover, a detailed contrastive analysis between the Arabic mother pronunciation and the English pronunciation is presented. In addition, the bottom-up and top-down approaches to pronunciation teaching are discussed, as well as combining the two approaches. The bottom-up starts with the segmental features and moves up to teaching the supra-segmental features, whereas the top-down approach moves from the supra-segmental to the segmental features. However, teachers may balance both of them. Moreover, the arguments for/against recommending these approaches is also dealt with. Finally, the research-based approach to teaching pronunciation is proposed. According to this approach, pronunciation is stressed in meaningful interaction. There are some factors that affect intelligibility, such as speed of speech, or lack of confidence. It makes the speaker difficult to understand. According to the findings, some learners have to repeat what they said because they were not heard properly.

Therefore, these factors should be handled by practicing some communicative situations (role-play) and gradually, they will be eliminated.

The contrastive analysis is crucial since it will make learners and teachers aware of difficulties that could possibly hinder correct production of target language. In addition to predicting these difficulties, it will also help overcoming them. This analysis will be employed in the newly designed course and referred to through the teaching process. In addition, the choice of bottom-up, top-down or both that corresponds to learners' needs will be one aim of this research. This will be based on the results of the questionnaire in which participants are asked about the approach they prefer so that the newly designed book will be based on it. Furthermore, the research-based approach will be significant in choosing the appropriate teaching approach. If learners are interested in native-likeness, then the traditional approach is the candidate. If learners are aiming at intelligibility, the research-based approach is the candidate.

The contrastive analysis between Arabic and English will be of great help in pronunciation because it will assist learners in recognizing the differences in pronunciation between Arabic and English. The lecturer will make learners aware of these differences between both the segmental and the supra-segmental features of both languages. Consequently, they will be able to produce and articulate correctly the sounds, and apply the supra-segmental features successfully. The importance of this is that it eliminates any influence or interference between the native mother language (Arabic) and target language (English). Learners have already established pronunciation habits in the mother language (Arabic) which could influence

the pronunciation of English. Teachers should consider the interference because that will make teaching more effective. In other words, this will help in pinpointing learners' problems better, understanding what is easy and difficult for learners, and eliminating these difficulties.

The fifth chapter has dealt with the research methodology used for the purpose of this work. It is a case study in order to analyse in details the teaching and learning of pronunciation in the English department at Damascus University, Syria. This research is qualitative where the case study is supported with a questionnaire to find out the attitudes of the learners in this particular context.

The results of the questionnaire, the implications and the new pronunciation course book are discussed in chapter six. According to the results of this questionnaire, learners aim at intelligible pronunciation. They simply need to be understood when they speak. Intelligibility is a realistic teaching goal because it may require no more than an adequate performance in English for the practical purposes of everyday communication. The learners are satisfied with a comfortably intelligible pronunciation. They aim at being understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener. Intelligibility seems to be the most appropriate goal for the learners.

The current pronunciation course is ineffective. Therefore, there is an urgent need to change it. The book lacks practical activities and focuses mainly on segmental features (individual sounds based on the RP English). According to the results of the questionnaire, a new modified course will be proposed. The courses will incorporate activities that will support the theory

learners receive. The newly modified course will be based on the bottom-up approach, which introduces segmental features (sounds) and then moves to supra-segmental features (stress, intonation). Moreover, it will include theory as well as activities about supra-segmental features. Learners are aware of the importance of the supra-segmental features and their influence in pronunciation. The newly designed book will be based on the lingua franca core (see chapter two, section 2.8) that aims at promoting international phonological intelligibility. It consists of crucial phonetic features that are safeguards for mutual intelligibility. These features will effectively result in comprehensive communication rather than attending to every detail of the Standard English RP. According to the results of the questionnaire, RP and native-likeness are no longer the aims of learners in the English Department at Damascus University. Learners prefer being understood to sounding like native RP speakers. The communicative language teaching approach is the one that best suits the learners because it aims at intelligible pronunciation and seeks effective communication. The communicative approach, however, will take account of the post-method in that the designed course will be context-sensitive. In other words, it will be suitable for the Syrian learners in the English Department at Damascus University. It may not be applicable anywhere since it takes into account Syrian context, interference between Arabic and English and pronunciation features that are context-specific. The approach to be followed is a research-based approach rather than the traditional approach. The research-based approach helps learners gain pronunciation skills that enable them of effective communication. It also stresses the supra-segmental features and communicative teaching of pronunciation. Learners' self-awareness and motivation are encouraged.

The seventh chapter is an attempt to try the newly proposed course book in order to evaluate how effective the course is. Two groups participated in the study: one is control and the other is experimental. The experimental group proved that the implementation of the proposed material helps in the achievement of intelligibility.

In the next section, the research questions will be revisited and the way they have been answered. In addition, it is worth referring to how they informed not only me, but also the Syrian context. The research questions will be referred to once more in the following paragraphs. The third section of the conclusion will refer to the practical implications of this research and the plan of what to do in Syria. The fourth section will reflect upon the research design, what lessons are learnt and what implications for future research such as what to do next.

8.3 The Research Questions Answered

The first research question was about the teaching goal of pronunciation in the English Department at Damascus University. There are two aims discussed, namely: native-likeness and intelligibility. The literature review showed that RP is no longer suitable as a model to be followed. It also showed that it is an abstract and problematic concept (Please see chapter 3, sections 2.5 and 2.6). Moreover, it revealed that factors such as age, identity and first language interference could hinder the acquisition of RP (Please see chapter 4, section 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4). The aim of intelligibility is found to be a realistic aim to be followed in teaching pronunciation because learners need to be understood when they communicate. Furthermore, in a Syrian context most communication takes place with other speakers

who are non-native English speakers. As the results of the questionnaire show, a learner's aim is intelligibility. The results of the questionnaire correspond with the findings of the literature review. The literature review has revealed that the aim of teaching pronunciation is intelligibility, and the findings of the questionnaire support the literature review.

The second question asks if learners are interested in intelligible pronunciation, what would be their reference model. Based on reading and reviewing the literature, the answer to this question was that the lingua franca core can be a reference accent to be followed (Please see chapter 2, section 2.11). It can be the model for learners whose main contact is with non-native English speakers. In other words, it is the pronunciation model in English as a second/foreign language for international communication. There are certain core features that safeguard to enhance intelligibility, for example British English /t/ between vowels in words such as 'water' rather than American English flapped 'r' (Please see chapter 2, section 2.11.1). These features need to be promoted and taught. The majority of learners in the English Department, if not all, contact and communicate with other non-native English speakers. Adopting the lingua franca core as a reference model will help them to communicate and to interact with ease with others. Since learners have chosen the aim of intelligibility in the questionnaire, then the reference model to be followed is the lingua franca core.

The third question dealt with the currently used pronunciation course in the English Department at Damascus University. This question inquires whether this course is effective, if there is a balance between theory and practice, and if it considers the role of segmental and supra-segmental features in effective

communication. On the basis of the literature review, the answer to this question was that the current course book is ineffective. There are no practical activities within the book at all. The course book deals extensively with the segmental sounds. It briefly introduces the supra-segmental features, but does not go into detail. The course book, therefore, needs to be reconsidered in the light of learners' aim of pronunciation and contemporary research. In other words, the course book needs to be revisited to address the aim of intelligibility based on the lingua franca core as a reference model. It should include practical activities, not only theoretical knowledge. In addition, it should discuss the supra-segmental features and refer to their role in successful communication.

The fourth question seeks an answer to a question about the currently applied teaching method in the English Department at Damascus University, and if the method applied is effective or not. Moreover, it inquires about alternatives to the current method. On the basis of the literature reviewed, the answer to this question was that the currently used teaching method is the grammar-translation method. It is ineffective and it does not focus on pronunciation. There are many different teaching methods more recent than the grammar-translation method. The English Department has overlooked such methods and it is still applying the outdated grammar-translation method. The alternative to the grammar-translation method is decided by the learner's pronunciation aim. The other alternatives are the audio-lingual method that aims at native-like pronunciation, and the communicative approach that seeks the aim of intelligibility (Please see chapter 2, section 2.7). On the basis of the results of the questionnaire, it is revealed that the learner's aim in the English Department is intelligibility. Therefore, the best method

that addresses learner's aim of intelligibility is the communicative language teaching approach.

The final question asks about the alternative course book in case the currently used pronunciation course fails to fulfil the learners' aims. The answer to that question is that the learner's aim is intelligible pronunciation. The literature review presents an overview of approaches to pronunciation teaching, such as bottom-up, top-down and a combination of both approaches. A new course book for the teaching of intelligible pronunciation is proposed. It is based on learners' preferences that are revealed by the questionnaire. On the basis of the findings of the questionnaire, learners prefer bottom-up approach to pronunciation.

8.4 Teaching Implications for Pronunciation at Damascus University, Syria

In this section, the implications for the future of the pronunciation course at Damascus University will be discussed. It is clear that learners aim at intelligible pronunciation. A new course will be proposed based on the lingua franca core and on the bottom-up approach to pronunciation. The book will contain exercises and practical activities. It will also focus on the segmental and the supra-segmental features of pronunciation. The overall aim of the course is effective communication. In addition, a teacher-training course will be of great help before the beginning of the academic year. This training will assist teachers in the best method of teaching the course. The training can be done by means of workshops, and exercises. The most feasible way of assessing the curriculum of the new course will

be taken into consideration in order to make sure that the assessment can test learner's intelligible pronunciation.

The research questions were answered by means of reviewing relevant literature on teaching English pronunciation and pedagogy, and supported by the empirical aspect of the research which is a case study employing a questionnaire. The findings of this research have informed me and the English Department as well about the current issues and theories on English language pronunciation teaching and pedagogy. In addition, they are of crucial importance in applying these theories into practice. These results will assist in deciding the learner's aim of pronunciation, the best teaching method and the appropriate pronunciation course book.

It is clear that it is time for pronunciation teaching in the English Department at Damascus University to go beyond the teaching of segmental level of instruction in phonology. This study has explored the benefits of the teaching of supra-segmental features of pronunciation for successful communication. This work also aims at proposing a new syllabus for the teaching of pronunciation and more practical methods for assessment. By means of the new course, the new teaching method, and the application of the current pedagogies and theories that correspond to learner's aim, it is hoped that this will make a positive contribution to the improvement of learners' intelligibility and pronunciation, and make the learning/teaching of pronunciation more enjoyable.

8.5 Implications for Future Research

This thesis has focused upon revising a curriculum for teaching pronunciation. Future research will concentrate on assessing and testing intelligible pronunciation. It will also focus on the different levels of intelligible pronunciation. Moreover, it is interesting also to look into intelligibility from another perspective, which is intelligible semantics (i.e. understanding meaning) rather than intelligible pronunciation. Moreover, research will be done on the teaching of intonation in the English Department at Damascus University. The currently used course book is O'Connor and Arnold's Intonation ***of Colloquial English*** (1973) which focuses on teaching the attitudinal function of intonation. It might be better to introduce a new course-book which takes into account the discourse function of intonation.

Final word count: 84.002

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Appendices

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Appendix 2

The sound /ə:/ from the book

4.11 RP No. 11 ə: (e.g. bird, earn, herd).

Definition : A central unrounded long vowel between half-close and half-open pronounced with neutrally spread lips.

Occurrences :

er — refer, verse, herd.

ir — bird, girl, sir, birth.

ur — fur, turn, burn.

ear — earth, heard, earn, learn.

or — word, world, work.

our — journal, journey, adjourn.

(Note : the only word in English spelt without r and pronounced with ə: is colonel (kə:nl).

Variants : Different RP speakers use closer and opener varieties of this vowel. In Scottish pronunciation, this vowel is replaced by a short i followed by a flapped or rolled r as in bird, girl and first. But in words spelt with ur, Scottish pronunciation is ʌr as in turn, hurt and burst. Moreover, words spelt with er or ear are pronounced with ɛr in Scottish English, e.g. serve and earning. In American English, ə: is replaced by a retroflex r (sometimes preceded by ə).

Common Errors : Because of the lack of a similar central vowel in local speech, many learners pronounce ə: as e:r in words spelt with er, ir, ur, or, ear (e.g. refer, girl, fur, earth, respectively). Words spelt with or, our such as word and journey are uttered with o:r by learners.

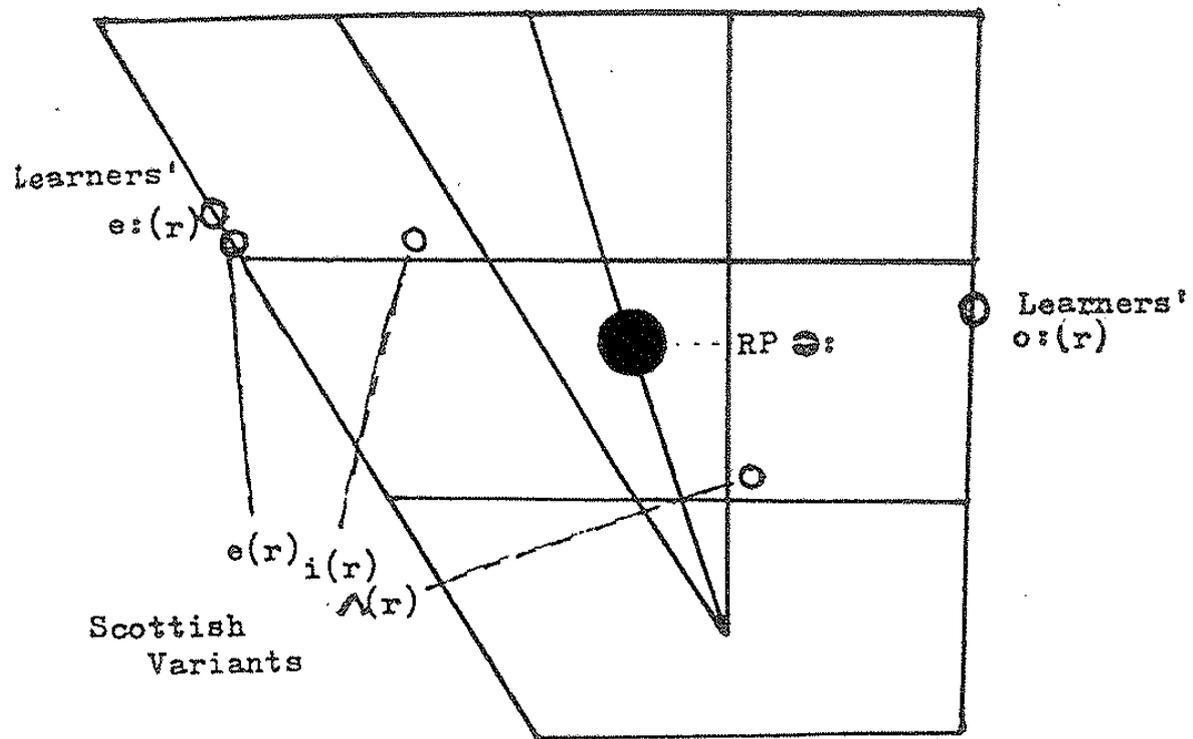


Fig. 21. RP ə: and Variants

Appendix 3

Sample exam Questions



Aston University

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Aston University

Illustration removed for copyright restrictions



Illustration removed for copyright restrictions



Aston University

Illustration removed for copyright restrictions

Appendix 4 Version 1

Questionnaire

This survey is designed to provide an opportunity for you to express your opinions, experiences and expectations of promoting your pronunciation skills. We value your contribution and assure you that the information you provide remain confidential and will be used for your own GOOD.

Thank You

- Name:
- Age:
- Field of study:
- Year of study:
- Learning English started at age:
- Nationality:

1. How long have you been learning English:

1 year 2 years 3 years more

2. Do you find difficulty in holding a conversation in English:

Yes often sometimes no

3. Which of the following best describes your existing level of skills in English?

Speaking: poor fair good

Listening: poor fair good

4. Which process of learning pronunciation is more convenient to you:

- a. Moving from the specific to the general (by following the vowel, consonant, syllables, words linking, stress, intonation pattern).
- b. Moving from the general to specific (following the intonation, stress, words linking, syllables, consonant, vowel pattern).
- c. Both the above two processes at the same time.
- d. Other. Please specify.....

.....

5. When listening to English, what activity do you prefer:

- a. Listening to a long conversation.
- b. Listening to a sentence or two at a time.
- c. Listening to various sounds only.
- d. Other. Please specify.....

.....

6. What is the skill that you think needs more development:

- a. Speaking skills.
- b. Listening skills.
- c. Both speaking and listening skills.
- d. Effective communication with native speakers.

7. When speaking to native English speakers, do you ask them to repeat:

- A. What they have said slowly.
- B. Some words of their speech.
- C. You don't ask them to repeat.

8. When speaking to native English speakers, do they ask you to repeat:

- A. What you have said slowly.
- B. Some words of your speech.
- C. they don't ask you to repeat.

9. How frequently do native English speakers ask you to repeat what you have said:

- A. Whenever you hold conversations.
- B. In few conversations.
- C. In the majority of the conversations.
- D. Not at all.

10. What do they usually ask you to repeat:

- A. Words which they don't understand.
- B. Words which they don't know their meanings.
- C. Words which they don't hear properly.

11. Please use the space below for any additional comments you may have about the acquisition of pronunciation skills.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 5 Version 2

Questionnaire

This survey is designed to provide an opportunity for you to express your opinions, experiences and expectations of promoting your pronunciation skills. We value your contribution and assure you that the information you provide remain confidential and will be used for your own GOOD.

Thank You

- Age:
- Male or female:
- Field of study:
- Year of study:
- Learning English started at age:
- Nationality:

1. How long have you been learning English:

1 year 2 years 3 years more

2. Do you find difficulty in holding a conversation in English:

Yes often sometimes no

3. Which of the following best describes your existing level of skills in English?

Speaking: poor fair good

Listening: poor fair good

4. Which process of learning pronunciation is more convenient to you:

- a. Moving from the specific to the general (by following the vowel, consonant, syllables, words linking, stress, intonation pattern).
- b. Moving from the general to specific (following the intonation, stress, words linking, syllables, consonant, vowel pattern).
- c. Both the above two processes at the same time.
- d. Other. Please specify.....
.....
.....

5. When listening to English, what activity do you prefer:
- a. Listening to a long conversation.
 - b. Listening to a sentence or two at a time.
 - c. Listening to various sounds only.
 - d. Other. Please specify.....
.....
.....

6. What is the skill that you think needs more development:
- a. Speaking skills.
 - b. Listening skills.
 - c. Both speaking and listening skills.
 - d. Effective communication with native speakers.

7. When speaking to native English speakers, do they ask you to repeat:
- A. What you have said slowly.
 - B. Some words of your speech.
 - C. They don't ask you to repeat.

8. How frequently do native English speakers ask you to repeat what you have said:

- A. Whenever you hold conversations.
- B. In few conversations.
- C. In the majority of the conversations.
- D. Not at all.

9. What do they usually ask you to repeat:

- A. Words which they don't understand.
- B. Words which they don't know their meanings.
- C. Words which they don't hear properly.

10- In your speech, do you aim primarily for:

- A. Native-like pronunciation
- B. Being understood
- C. Other. Please specify.....

11. Please use the space below for any additional comments you may have about the acquisition of pronunciation skills.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank You

Appendix 6 Version 3

Questionnaire

This survey is designed to provide an opportunity for you to express your opinions, experiences and expectations of promoting your pronunciation skills. We value your contribution and assure you that the information you provide remain confidential and will be used for your own GOOD.

Thank You

- Age:
- Male or female:
- Field of study:
- Year of study:
- Learning English started at age:
- Nationality:

1. How long have you been learning English:

1 year 2 years 3 years more

2. Do you find difficulty in holding a conversation in English:

Yes often sometimes no

3. Which of the following best describes your existing level of skills in English?

*Speaking: poor fair good

*Listening: poor fair good

4. Which process of learning pronunciation is more convenient to you:

3. Moving from the specific to the general (by following the vowel, consonant, syllables, words linking, stress, intonation pattern).
4. Moving from the general to specific (following the intonation, stress, words linking, syllables, consonant, vowel pattern).
5. Both the above two processes at the same time.
6. Other. Please specify.....
.....
.....

5. When listening to English, what activity do you prefer:

7. Listening to a long conversation.
8. Listening to a sentence or two at a time.
9. Listening to various sounds only.
10. Other. Please specify.....

6. What is the skill that you think needs more development:

- a. Speaking skills.
- b. Listening skills.
- c. Both speaking and listening skills.
- d. Effective communication with native speakers.

7. When speaking to native English speakers, do they ask you to repeat:

- A. What you have said slowly.
- B. Some words of your speech.
- C. They don't ask you to repeat.

8. How frequently do native English speakers ask you to repeat what you have said:

- A. Whenever you hold conversations.
- B. In few conversations.
- C. In the majority of the conversations.
- D. Not at all.

9. What do they usually ask you to repeat:

- A. Words which they don't understand.
- B. Words which they don't know their meanings.
- D. Words which they don't hear properly.

10- In your speech, do you aim primarily for:

- A. Native-like pronunciation
- B. Being understood
- C. Other. Please specify.....

11. Which standard of pronunciation you prefer (the way you like to pronounce)

- a. The standard authoritative pronunciation (as in a dictionary)
- b. The way how people speak and pronounce
- c. The way somebody else speaks and pronounces
- d. You are happy with your level of achievement and with your pronunciation
- e. Other. Please specify.....
.....
.....
.....

12. Please use the space below for any additional comments you may have about the acquisition of pronunciation skills.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank You

Appendix 7 Version 4

Questionnaire

This survey is designed to provide an opportunity for you to express your opinions, experiences and expectations of promoting your pronunciation skills. We value your contribution and assure you that the information you provide remain confidential and will be used for your own GOOD.

Thank You

- Age:
- Male or female:
- Field of study:
- Year of study:
- Learning English started at age:
- Nationality:

1. How long have you been learning English:

1 year 2 years 3 years more

2. Do you find difficulty in holding a conversation in English:

Yes often sometimes no

3. Which of the following best describes your existing level of skills in English?

*Speaking: poor fair good

*Listening: poor fair good

4. Which process of learning pronunciation is more convenient to you:

- a. Moving from the specific to the general (by following the vowel, consonant, syllables, words linking, stress, intonation pattern).
 - b. Moving from the general to specific (following the intonation, stress, words linking, syllables, consonant, vowel pattern).
 - c. Both the above two processes at the same time.
 - d. Other. Please specify.....
-

5. When listening to English, what activity do you prefer:

- a. Listening to a long conversation.
 - b. Listening to a sentence or two at a time.
 - c. Listening to various sounds only.
 - d. Other. Please specify.....
-

6. What is the skill that you think needs more development:

- a. Speaking skills.
- b. Listening skills.
- c. Both speaking and listening skills.
- d. Effective communication with native speakers.

7. When speaking to native English speakers, do they ask you to repeat:

- A. What you have said slowly.
- B. Some words of your speech.
- C. They don't ask you to repeat.

8a. How frequently do native English speakers ask you to repeat what you have said:

- A. Whenever you hold conversations.

- B. In few conversations.
- C. In the majority of the conversations.
- D. Not at all.

8b. What do they usually ask you to repeat:

- A. Words which they don't understand.
- B. Words which they don't know their meanings.
- C. Words which they don't hear properly.

9- In your speech, do you aim primarily for:

- A. Native-like pronunciation
- B. Intelligible (i.e. understanding your) pronunciation
- C. Other. Please specify.....

10. Which standard of pronunciation you prefer (the way you like to pronounce)

- a. The standard authoritative pronunciation (as in a dictionary)
- b. The way how people speak and pronounce
- c. The way somebody else speaks and pronounces
- d. You are happy with your level of achievement and with your pronunciation
- e. Other. Please specify.....

.....

11. Please use the space below for any additional comments you may have about the acquisition of pronunciation skills.

.....

.....
.....

Thank You

Appendix 8

version 5

Questionnaire

This survey is designed to provide an opportunity for you to express your opinions, experiences and expectations of promoting your pronunciation skills. We value your contribution and assure you that the information you provide remain confidential and will be used for your own GOOD.

Thank You

- Age:
- Male or female:.....
- Year of study:.....
- Learning English started at age:.....

1. How long have you been learning English:

1 year 2 years 3 years more

2. Do you find difficulty in holding a conversation in English:

Yes often sometimes no

3. Which of the following best describes your existing level of skills in English:

- a. Speaking: poor fair good
- b. Listening: poor fair good

4. Which process of learning pronunciation is more convenient to you:

- a. Moving from the specific to the general (by following the vowel, consonant, syllables, words linking, stress, and intonation pattern).
- b. Moving from the general to specific (following the intonation, stress, words linking, syllables, consonant, and vowel pattern).
- c. Both the above two processes at the same time.
- d. Other. Please specify.....

.....

5. When listening to English, what activity do you prefer:

- a. Listening to a long conversation.
- b. Listening to a sentence or two at a time.
- c. Listening to various sounds only.
- d. Other. Please specify.....

.....

6. What is the skill that you think needs more development:

- a. Speaking skills.
- b. Listening skills.
- c. Both speaking and listening skills.
- d. Effective communication with English speakers.

7. When speaking in English, do listeners ask you to repeat:

- a. What you have said slowly.
- b. Some words of your speech.
- c. They don't ask you to repeat.

8a. How frequently do speakers of English ask you to repeat what you have said:

- a. Whenever you hold conversations.
- b. In few conversations.

- c. In the majority of the conversations.
- d. Not at all.

- 8b. What do they usually ask you to repeat:
- a. Words which they don't understand.
 - b. Words which they don't know their meanings.
 - c. Words which they don't hear properly.

9. In your speech, do you aim primarily for:
- a. Native-like pronunciation
 - b. Intelligible (i.e. understanding your) pronunciation
 - c. Other. Please specify.....
.....

10. Which standard of pronunciation do you prefer (that is, the way you like to pronounce)
- a. The standard authoritative pronunciation (as in a dictionary)
 - b. The pronunciation used by teachers of English in Syria.
 - c. The pronunciation used in British produced audio-visual materials.
 - d. The pronunciation used by ordinary people speaking English.
 - e. Other. Please specify.....
.....

- 11a. Are you happy with your level of pronunciation:
- a. Yes
 - b. No

11b. If no, what do you feel you need to improve it:.....

.....
.....
.....

12. To what extent suprasegmentals (such as stress, intonation) affect your understanding and pronunciation:

.....
.....

13. When speaking in English, do you find any difficulty in applying the suprasegmentals of English:

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. No

14. When speaking in English, do you feel that you are applying the suprasegmentals of your native language to English:

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. No

15. Please use the space below for any additional comments you may have about the acquisition of pronunciation skills.

.....
.....
.....

Thank You

Appendix 9

Sample Unit

Unit 8

Connected Speech

- **The aim of the unit**

This unit aims at introducing learners to the different aspects of connected speech in English. It introduces both theory and practice for concepts such as assimilation, elision, strong and weak forms, liaison, vowel reduction, linking and intrusive sounds, and juncture. The activities are adopted from Underhill's *Sound Foundations*, and Roach's *Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course* (2000). When these aspects are not applied in connected speech, it may be more difficult for the speaker to use rhythm and intonation patterns fluently.

Assimilation

Assimilation occurs when a phoneme changes its quality due to the influence of a neighbouring sound. It changes to become more like the neighbouring sound, or even identical to it. It is defined as the change that occurs to a sound because of the effect of adjacent sound. Assimilation makes the process of articulation easier. It occurs at word boundaries and affects mainly consonants.

Activity

The following are examples of assimilation in English. Say the following phrases first as isolated words and then several times

as connected speech. Do you change any of the sounds at the word boundaries?

In bed

Tin man

Good boy

Good girl

This shop

Have to go

Don't you know

Think of examples of assimilation in Arabic. Say the words aloud and notice the assimilation of sounds.

.....

Elision

Elision occurs when a sound which would be present in a word spoken in isolation is omitted in connected speech. Elision is defined as the loss of a sound.

Activity

Sounds /t/ and /d/ are mainly elided in English, particularly when they are between two other consonants. Experiment yourself with the possible omissions in these phrases. Say these phrases in rapid connected speech. Play them back. Do you notice any sound omission?

I don't know

Next please

You and me

Sandwich

Now try to say the previous phrases without eliding any of the sounds. How different does it feel? What impression do you get?

Consider the following example of elision in Arabic 'min mal'. Notice how the /n/ sound is deleted in order to make articulation easy. Think of other elision examples in Arabic.

Strong and weak forms

English grammatical words (function words) have two or more accepted pronunciations. One when stressed or spoken in isolation, the *strong form*, and one when reduced in their more usual unstressed position, the *weak form*. The weak form is frequently used in connected speech. Therefore, it is important to be familiar with the use of weak forms as this will assist in understanding English speech. They are frequently used in their weak forms unless the speaker wishes to emphasise them to underline the message.

Activity

Make two sentences for each of the following function words, one that contains the strong, prominent form, the other the weak, reduced form. Notice the difference in pronunciation and emphasis between the two forms. Compare your version with the forms given here.

	trong form	weak form
And	/ænd/	/ən/
Of	/ɒv/	/əv/
You	/ju:/	/ju/
Me	/mi:/	/mi/
She	/ʃi:/	/ʃi/
Would	/wʊd/	/wəd/ /əd/
Does	/dʌz/	/dəz/
Have	/hæv/	/həv/ /əv/
must	/mʌst/	/məst/ /məs/

(adapted from Underhill, 1994: 64)

- Does Arabic include words that have strong and weak forms?
- Listen to the following sentences then repeat them:

We can 'wait for the 'bus wi kən 'weɪt fɔ̃ ðə 'bʌs

'How do the lights 'work 'haʊ də ðə 'laɪts 'wɜ:k

There are some 'new 'books I must 'read ðə r ə səm nju: 'bʊks aɪ mʌs ri:d

'Why am I 'too 'late to 'see him to'day? 'waɪ əm aɪ 'tu: 'leɪt tə si: ɪm tə 'deɪ

'Have you 'taken them from 'that 'box? 'hæv ju 'teɪkən ðəm frəm 'ðæt 'bɒks

(adapted from Roach, 2000: Audio Unit 12, Exercise 1).

- In the following sentences, the transcriptions for the weak-form words is left blank. Fill in the blanks, taking care to use the appropriate form (weak or strong).

1. I want her to park that car over there.

ai wDnt pa:k ka:r əuvə

2. Of all the proposals, the one that you made is the silliest.

ɔ:l prəpəʊziz wʌn meɪd ɪz sɪliəst

3. Jane and Bill could have driven them to and from the party.

dʒeɪn bɪl drɪvən pɑ:ti

4. To come to the point, what shall we do for the rest of the week?

kʌm pɔɪnt wɪt rest wi:k

5. has anyone got an idea where it came from?

eniwʌn gɒt aɪdɪə weər ɪt keɪm

(adapted from Roach, 2000: 120)

Liaison

Liaison refers to the smooth linking or joining together of words in connected speech. Liaison is concerned with the way sounds are fused together at word boundaries.

Activity

- Say each of the following phrases and notice how you join the words together:

In English my uncle far away go away

- Now say each one without joining the words together. Notice the difference.

(adapted from Underhill, 1994: 65)

- Consider the following example Standard Arabic phrase written in the English Alphabet:

Al jawabu al sades (the sixth answer)

- Say the words in isolation. Then, say the words together and notice how sounds are fused together at word boundaries.
- Can you think of other examples of liaison in Arabic?

Appendix 10

Mid – Term Course Evaluation

Please tick as appropriate.

About the course	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The course is motivating				
The course is interesting				
The course is enriched with helpful activities				
The course is not too difficult				
The course is well organised				
The explanation is easy to understand				
The course contains sufficient theory supported by practical activities				
The course provides good examples that clearly demonstrate theory				

Appendix 11A

Student Research Ethics Approval Form (RECI)

PLEASE NOTE: You MUST gain approval for any research BEFORE any research takes place. Failure to do so could result in a ZERO mark

Name:
Student Number:
Module Name:
Module Number:

Please type your answers to the following questions:

1. What are the aim(s) of your research?

2. What research methods to you intend to use?

3. Please give details of the type of informants, the method of access and sampling, and the location(s) of your fieldwork. (see guidance notes).

4. Please give full details of all ethical issues which arise from this research.

5. What steps are you taking to address these ethical issues?

6. What issues for the personal safety of the researcher(s) arise from this research?

7. What steps will be taken to minimise the risks of personal safety to the researchers?

Statement by student investigator(s):

I/We consider that the details given constitute a true summary of the project proposed

I/We have read, understood and will act in line with the LSS Student Research Ethics and Fieldwork Safety Guidance lines.

Name	Signature	Date

Statement by module convenor or project supervisor

I have read the above project proposal and believe that this project only involves minimum risk. I also believe that the student(s) understand the ethical and safety issues which arise from this project.

Name	Signature	Date

This form must be signed and both staff and students need to keep copies.

Appendix 11B

Student Consent Form

This experiment is designed to provide the opportunity for you to promote your pronunciation skills. We value your participation and assure you that the names will be anonymised.

Thank you

I accept to participate in the experimental study. The researcher explained the experiment in detail.

Student Signature

Date

Please choose the correct answer.

1. The sentence or phrase that corresponds to the following stress pattern 0o0o is:

- a. The water is cold.
- b. Where is the car?
- c. Close the window.
- d. What did she say?

2. The sentence or phrase which doesn't belong to the following stress pattern 0oo is:

- a. Doesn't he?
- b. Cabbages
- c. Answer me!
- d. September

3. Is he happy? Belongs to which stress pattern:

- a. 0o0o
- b. o0o0
- c. oo0o
- d. 0oo0

4. The word which has a different stress pattern from the others is:

- a. complete
- b. common
- c. careful
- d. crazy

5. The phrases or the words which don't belong to the rhythm oo0o

- a. photographic
- b. information

- c. discussion
- d. what about it?

6. **Your** is weak in

- a. Give me your hand
- b. Your turn!
- c. No, it's your turn!

7. It's for you. But what's it for?

- a. For /fə/ is weak in both sentences.
- b. For /fə/ is weak in the first sentence only.
- c. For /fə/ is weak in the second sentence only.
- d. For /fə/ is not weak in both sentences.

8. Do you like those sweets?

- a. **Do** is strong.
- b. **Do** is weak.

9. A: Would you like some ice cream or some cake?

B: I'd like some ice cream and some cake, please!

- a. The word some is weak in A only.
- b. The word some is weak in B only.
- c. The word some is weak in both A and B.

10. In the same example above, the word **and** in **B** (I'd like some ice cream and some cake, please!) is

- a. strong
- b. weak

Answer Sheet

1. a. b. c. d.
2. a. b. c. d.
3. a. b. c. d.
4. a. b. c. d.
5. a. b. c. d.
6. a. b. c.
7. a. b. c. d.
8. a. b.
9. a. b. c.
10. a. b.