The EFL Learners' Fossilization of the / θ / and / ð / Sounds. Case Study: First Year EFL Students at Tahri Mohamed University, Bechar, Algeria

Khelf Yakout[1]* & Prof. Mostari Hind Amel [2]
[1]*Djillali Liabes University-SBA, Algeria*
[2]*Djillali Liabes University-SBA, Algeria*
Corresponding Author: Khelf Yakout, E-mail: kh.yakouta@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The articulation of the consonant sounds / θ / and / ð / of the English language is a serious pronunciation problem for the Bechari students in general and EFL students at Tahri Mohamed University (UTMB) in particular. It was noticed that EFL students at UTMB manage to use the /t/ and /d/ sounds instead of / θ / and / ð /; and thus changing the meaning of words, which boil down to mean that it can create breakdowns in communication. Mother tongue interference and lack of professional instruction are some of the causes that lead to the mispronunciation of sounds. The aim of this study is to explore the causes of the constant mispronunciation of the English consonant sounds / θ / and / ð / by EFL students at UTMB besides showing the importance of pronunciation Teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning English is becoming important in a time of worldwide communication where English language becomes the most dominant and used language all over the world. As Suleiman asserts, *"English has become the language of diplomacy, trade, and technology of a large number of countries."* (1993 as cited in Binturki, 2001, p. 2). Learning additional languages apart from one's mother tongue has a significant importance nowadays for it allows us to keep up with the world, and communicate with people speaking those languages. Moreover, learning a foreign language requires learning its aspects like semantics, syntax, pragmatics and pronunciation. The latter seems to be a major aspect of any language. That is to say, having a good level at grammar or having much vocabulary is not enough to be a good communicator unless you have a correct pronunciation.

Pronunciation is indispensable when learning foreign languages. Incorrect pronunciation is also inevitable when learning them, especially when there are a lot of differences between the sound system of the first language and that of the target one. Analyzing the sound systems of Arabic and English, one can realize how great the differences between them are. Needless to say, the greater the differences are, the more difficult pronouncing the sounds of a foreign language becomes. That is why Arab learners of English as a foreign language suffer many difficulties when trying to pronounce some English sounds and they, therefore, pronounce them incorrectly. Such incorrect pronunciation can be referred to as mispronunciation. Mispronunciation can be a serious obstacle to making oneself understood in a foreign language (Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 795).

The present study aims at investigating the fossilization errors in the production of /ð/ and /θ/ by first year EFL students at the English Department in Bechar University. Therefore, this research attempts to identify the pronunciation errors among English learners and tries to find suitable techniques that help the students speak English with better pronunciation. In addition to that, this study sheds light on the reasons that affect learning pronunciation in order to help EFL learners overcome their pronunciation problems and improve their pronunciation intelligibility.

This study is constructed upon three main questions: (1) what is the effect of mispronunciation of /ð/ and /θ/ in EFL Learning? (2) How does the mother tongue 'Arabic' affect English pronunciation? and (3) Why do EFL learners mispronounce certain English sounds? Consequently, the researchers strive to answer the above questions by formulating the following hypotheses: (1) Bechar University EFL students face difficulties at the level of pronunciation, which affect their English usage

while speaking. (2) EFL learners have some errors with some sounds such as /θ ð/; and (3) EFL learners mispronounce some sounds because they do not exist in their L1.

This study is significant due to the fact that it investigates the effect of mispronunciation of /ð/ and /θ/ in EFL Learning. In addition to that, it sheds light on EFL learners' challenges and difficulties and it explores the main reasons behind such type of errors. It can help students to pay attention to their mispronunciations and the importance of overcoming them. The present study is expected to encourage other researchers to deal with other phonological topics. In addition to this, it may inspire researchers to create new educational techniques or programs that may help to reduce or overcome mispronunciations among students. The result of this study may contribute different ways to develop pronunciation, and may help in suggesting solutions to the mispronunciation of sounds facing EFL students.

2. DEFINITION OF FOSSILIZATION
The term fossilization was introduced by Larry Selinker in 1972. He defined it then in the following words: *"Fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL will tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular TL, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the TL"* (1972, p. 36). Han (2009, p. 133) defines it as *"an interlanguage-unique phenomenon in which a semi-developed linguistic form or construction shows permanent resistance to environmental influence and thus fails to progress towards the target"*. Fossilization may occur in relation to any linguistic level,' foreign accent' being the result of one form of fossilization.

Fossilization is a stage in the acquisition of a second language or a foreign language. It is characterized by the stabilization of target language norms till it becomes permanent. The Longman dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics defines fossilization as:

> *…a process (in second language learning) which sometimes occurs in which incorrect linguistic features become a permanent part of the way a person speaks or writes a language Aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and grammar may become fixed*

> *or fossilized in second language learning.*

Fossilized features of pronunciation contribute to a person's foreign accent. These definitions suggest that fossilization involves many areas such as grammar, lexis, and pronunciation.

3. THE INMPORTANCE OF TEACHING PRONUNCIATION
The first thing that native speakers pay attention to during a conversation is pronunciation (Harmer, 2001). Though grammar and vocabulary are very important elements in any language, they can be useless if the speakers cannot pronounce accurately. Native speakers can understand each other's despite their grammatical mistakes. This is because of their accurate pronunciation.

Harmer (2001) added that through pronunciation instruction, students do not only learn different sounds and sound features, but they also improve their speaking skill. This means that when learners concentrate on how sounds are pronounced, they develop their awareness of where words should be stressed, when to use a falling or rising intonation, and how to pronounce a word according to the number of syllables. This way gives them more information about spoken English and helps them to comprehend English speakers.

Nevertheless, 'perfect' pronunciation should not be the ultimate goal of English learners. The most important thing in learning pronunciation is to achieve an understandable pronunciation. Similarly, there are some learners who do not like to pronounce like native- speakers because they want to maintain their foreign accent as a part of their identity. Likewise, learners can rarely achieve 'perfect' pronunciation (Harmer, 2001).

The importance of teaching pronunciation is explained through a set of goals mentioned by Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003). These goals include developing English that is easy to understand and not confusing to the listener, developing English that meets persons' needs and that results in communication competence, helping learners feel comfortable in using English, developing a positive self-awareness as non-native speakers in oral communication, developing speech consciousness, personal speech monitoring skills and speech adjustment strategies that help learners develop in and out the class. Indeed, English learners cannot mostly express their ideas or answer questions in the classroom when they fear being misunderstood

because of their incorrect pronunciation. As a result, they will lose confidence in themselves as English learners.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNING PRONUNCIATION

The role of various factors affecting learning English pronunciation in general has been investigated by many researchers. Fraser (2006, p. 82) stated: *"at first glance, it looks as though learning foreign language pronunciation should be easy: a simple matter of imitating the pronunciation of native speakers. In practice, of course the reality is quite different"*. As a matter of fact, learners of English think that the easiest thing to study in English is pronunciation. They assume that correct pronunciation of English could be achieved by listening to native-speakers of English and imitating them. However, it is not as simple as that. Learning pronunciation involve learning a set of elements which in practice learners find very difficult to comprehend such as intonation, rhythm and stress.

By the same token, English teachers find it very difficult to teach pronunciation. This is because of a set of factors that negatively interfere in the process of teaching. Wong (1987) stated that teaching pronunciation is a linguistic matter and that teachers must consider all the other factors that may affect learners' pronunciation and speaking skill. These factors include age, the amount of exposure to the practice of English, phonetic ability, personality and attitude, motivation, and equally important the mother tongue interference.

4.1 Mother Tongue Interference

English learners speak the target language in a way that is different from that of English native-speakers. This kind of English spoken by English learners is called "foreign accent" (Avery, 1987). This foreign accent is the result of mother tongue interference. Crystal (1992) defined the concept "interference" as the introduction of errors into one language. He added that interference occurs while people are learning a foreign language. He asserted that the major problem faced is the difference in the language sound system which may result to difficulty in perception and production of foreign sounds. That is to say, languages around the world have different sound systems. As users of the dialect of Bechar, we have difficulty in some English words and sounds which are not found in our dialect. For example, /θ/ and /ð/ sounds do not exist in the dialect of Bechar, and that is why speakers of this dialect encounter pronunciation difficulties with the words that include those sounds and hence they produce them under the influence of their mother tongue.

The mispronunciation of the two sounds mentioned earlier is the result of the over practice of the first language O'Connor (2003) stated that the main problem of English pronunciation is to build a new set of sounds corresponding to the sounds of English, and to break down the arrangement of sounds which were strongly built up under the habits and the systems of our L1 (in this study, the L1 represents Bechari Arabic but not Modern Standard Arabic because the sound of the study do exist in MSA). When L2 learners turn linguistic features that are correct in their first language, they will create permanent errors in the way they speak the new language.

It is too difficult for L2 learners to change their habits which they have obtained since their childhood in acquiring their first language. This means that their organs of speech were trained to produce a set of sounds which belong to their mother tongue. Then, they are required to these organs of speech to produce new sounds that belong to the second language. As a result, learners will confuse the new sounds which do not belong to their mother tongue and replace each of them with other sounds that are said to be nearest ones to them. (O'Connor, 2003)

4.2 Sound System Differences between L1 and L2

The differences between the learners' mother tongue and the target language at the level of their sound systems cause many difficulties for learners to speak English correctly. Moosa (1972) noted that the Arab learners of English form habits of their mother (Arabic) and hence they strongly build the phonological features of Arabic; this makes them encounter many difficulties in distinguishing sound systems between a native language and the second language. For example, the sound /p/ does not exist in the Arabic sound system which makes it difficult for Arab speakers to pronounce words like computer /kəmˈpjuːtə/.

Nevertheless, the sounds /θ/ and /ð/ are found in the Arabic language. This means that our research will discuss the mispronunciation of these two sounds by examining the difference between the sound system of the dialect of Bechar (Bechari Arabic) and the sound system of the English language. Accordingly, Hassan (2014) argued that the main problem in teaching and learning English pronunciation results from the differences in the sound system of the English language and the native language. Thus, speakers of the dialect of Bechar are not accustomed to pronounce the two sounds /θ/ and /ð/ because they do not find these sounds in their native language. This means that the speech organs of the learner are

not trained to produce such sounds. This is why the learner uses the nearest sounds such as /t/ and /d/.

Furthermore, Cruttenden (1994) noted that in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), learners with different linguistic backgrounds would of course confront different difficulties in order to produce English sounds because of the differences between the two languages. These differences between the sound systems of the two languages will make a barrier for learners in being competent in the pronunciation of English. The new sounds will remain strange for learners especially if they start learning English after the age of adulthood. However, this problem is expected to be solved after a long time of regular practice and hard work.

5. ERROR ANALYSIS

James (1998, p. 1) defines error analysis as *"a process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language"*. In other words, error analysis examines the errors of second language learners. He adds that language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the topic. These errors occur in the course of the learner's study because they have not acquired enough knowledge. Once they acquire additional knowledge, they will be able to correct their errors and the more errors the learners correct, the more conscious of language they will become.

In addition, error analysis is regarded as *"a procedure used by both researchers and teachers which involves collecting samples of learners' language, identifying errors and classifying them according to their nature and causes and evaluating their seriousness"* (Keshavarz, 1999, p. 168.). According to Crystal (1992, 112) *"Error analysis is a way of identifying, classifying, and systematically interrupting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by the*

7. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

It is known that the tool of any study is the instrument which any researcher uses for collecting the required data for the study. There are many types of tools used in the field of scientific research. In this study, different research tools were used to collect reliable data from participants of the study. There are different types of measurement instruments that can

linguistics". I.e. error analysis is an activity to identify, describe, interpret, evaluate and prevent the errors made by the learners.

6. THE RESEARCH TARGETED PRONUNCIATION

The population of the study is a sample of twenty (20) first year LMD students of the English language and five (5) EFL teachers from the University of Tahri Mohamed Bechar (UTMB). The samples have been randomly chosen to respond to the research instruments addressed to them. The survey was conducted at the English Language Department.

6.1 Students' Profile

The informants in this study were first year LMD students at the English Department in Bechar University. The sample population consists of twenty (20) students (males and females). The reason behind choosing first year LMD students is that, it has been noticed that learners have a deficiency to speak English language accurately with different pronunciation mistakes

6.2 Teachers' Profile

The participants were comprised of (5) teachers who were selected randomly to answer the interview. The teachers responded to the questions about the exact sounds that the students mispronounce and the reasons for pronunciation problems facing first year LMD students at the English Department in Bechar University. The participants teach different modules such as: Advanced Grammar, Articulatory Phonetics, Culture and Civilization, listening and speaking, reading and writing. This selection was to elicit more explanation about mispronouncing some English consonants and vowel sounds, and to identify the pronunciation errors in EFL Learning.

be used by researchers for their studies; it depends on the nature of research that is carried out. In order to answer the research questions posed and to confirm the research hypotheses stated before, this research work consisted on different research instruments, which are questionnaires for students and teachers and a recordings test.

7.1 The Students' Questionnaire

This research questionnaire consists of (12) twelve

questions designed for first year LMD students at

UTMB. The students' questionnaire starts with a small introduction that explains the aim behind our study. It is composed of (12) twelve questions and is divided in three (03) sections. The first section consists of four (04) questions, which concern the students' background information. The second section contains four (04) questions that investigate the learners' pronunciation problems. The third section sets the main attitudes towards error correction that contains four (04) questions. The questions are either closed, requiring from the students to pick up the appropriate answer from a number of choices, or open, where the respondent is asked to answer in his/her own words.

7.2 The Teachers' Questionnaire

This questionnaire is composed of 14 questions including both open and close-ended question. It is divided into three main part: This first part consists of 04 questions aimed at determining general information about Teachers' gender, qualifications, and their experience in teaching in general and teaching English in particular. The second part was designed to gather some information about the teachers' opinions attitudes towards teaching pronunciation. The first two questions (Q1 and Q2) of the interview were about whether the teachers think that they sufficiently focus on the pronunciation skills and if their students are motivated to learn phonetics or not. The third question was about how often teachers correct their students' pronunciation errors. The fourth question was about teachers' perceptions about the reasons for common pronunciation errors of the first year LMD learners.

The fifth question was about the reasons of the students' pronunciation errors or in other words the factors that teachers see to be contributing in learners' pronunciation difficulties and problems. The last question (6) was about the suggestions of EFL teachers to eliminate the pronunciation errors of the first year LMD students. The third part is designed to identify the effects of mother tongue in learning English that teachers observe from students' performance and their attitude toward students 'usage of mother tongue besides the way they deal with this problem. The first two questions (Q1 and Q2) were about whether the teachers use the mother tongue (Arabic) in Class while explaining the lectures or not and for what purpose they use it in class. The third question was about the teachers opinions on the influence of the mother tongue in the student's learning of English. The last question (4) was about the teachers' perception on which aspect of language is more influenced by the mother tongue.

7.3. The Recording Test

The oral pronunciation test was carried out to identify the most common mispronunciations among the first year LMD students at the English Department in Bechar University. The purpose of the pronunciation test was to elicit pronunciation errors of English learners the test consisted of a set of sentences, all containing problematic phonemes for first year LMD students of English. The tape recording is the appropriate way to collect learners' real production of English sounds. This aims at finding the most problematic areas in English pronunciation that learners have difficulties with. The test comprises of a number of sentences that are chosen for the purpose of consisting the target sounds. The voice-recording test includes (10) sentences. All of the sentences in the voice-recording test were mostly common and widely used in order to make the participants feel more relaxed. The voice- recording test was conducted individually with six (06) students, (02) males, and (04) females. In the first step, students were asked to read all the sentences aloud while recording their voices. After transcribing learners' speeches, we conducted an error analysis in order to investigate and highlight the common pronunciation errors made by the participants of the study. The pronunciation test was carried out to identify the most common mispronunciations among the first year LMD students at the English Department in Bechar University.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
This part provides analysis of the data that was collected to prove the hypothesis of this research. It is concerned with the analysis of data results from students' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire, classroom observation, and the recording test.

8.1. Discussion and Interpretation of the Results of Students' Questionnaire

After the analysis of the data obtained from the informants' answers, we came up with a set of results. In section one, concerning the first question, the study reveals that most of the informants are males in which they represent (60%) of the informants while females represent (40%). The high rate of males registered in the Department of English at the University of Bechar contradicts the common belief which states that females have more tendency towards learning foreign languages. Therefore, this result indicates that males are becoming more interested in learning foreign languages especially English language.

The second question in section one asks students whether English was their first choice of study. The majority of the informants which represent (80%) answered with yes. This means that most of the students are motivated to learn English. The third question is concerned with the level of the students in English language. (55%) of students said that their level is average. The fourth question is about the level of the students in pronunciation. The answers to this question resemble the results of the previous question in which (60%) of students said that their level in pronunciation is average. They added that they have problems in pronouncing words for the first time, but when they repeat the same words they pronounce them correctly. Hence, students need practice in order to enhance their pronunciation.

Section two, which is concerned with pronunciation problems, involves four questions. In the first question, which asks students whether they find it difficult to pronounce words when they speak English, (50%) of students answered with yes while the other (50%) answered with no. Those who answered with yes, they were required to give some examples of the difficulties which they face. They claimed that most of the words which they find difficult to pronounce contain the two sounds /ð/ and /θ/. This indicates that it is common among English learners in Bechar to find difficulty in pronouncing these two sounds. The second question is about how often students make errors in pronunciation. (55%) of the students said that they sometimes make pronunciation errors. The results show that the students have problems in pronunciation. While, in the third question, students were asked about how often they speak English during lectures. (85%) of students answered that they speak English during lectures. It means that they do not use Arabic inside the classroom. Question four aims to know how much English students speak outside the classroom. (60%) of the students said that they sometimes speak English outside the classroom, and that depends on the topic they are talking about it. These findings reveal that it is too difficult for L2 learners to change their habits which they have obtained since their childhood in acquiring their first language and they cannot use English all the time just in some cases related to their studies.

Section three is concerned in the attitudes towards error correction. The first question asks students whether their teacher explains to them how to pronounce the most difficult words in English. As a result, teachers provide the students with the necessary help to enhance their pronunciation. In the second question, students were asked about how

often their teachers interrupt them to correct their mistakes. (45%) of students answered that their teachers sometimes interrupt them and correct their mistakes. The third question asks the students about their reaction towards teachers' interruption and correction of mistakes. (85%) of students said that they like it when their teachers interrupt them and correct their mistakes. Therefore, students are likely comfortable when they are interrupted and corrected. They consider this way helpful to them to improve their level in pronunciation. The final question in this section was planned to know the reason behind students' lack of interaction in the classroom. (40%) of students claimed that they do not interact because they fear to make mistakes. This fear of making mistakes leads the students to avoid speaking and hence they do not practice their pronunciation. When students do not practice their pronunciation, they keep making the same mistakes and they will never improve their level in pronunciation.

8.2. Discussion and Interpretation of the Results of Teachers' Questionnaire

Analyzing the teachers' questionnaire has revealed many facts that should be taken into account. On the basis of the teachers' previous answers, we can wind up that: in section one, concerning the first question, which is about teachers' gender, answers reveal that females (55%) are dominant over males (45%). This may be due to the fact that females are more interested in teaching English than males. In (Q2), the highest percentage of the teachers have a doctorate which represents (78%), while in the second position come who have the magister degree which represent (22%), whereas no member of the selected sample had the License or master degree. This question was asked because teachers' qualification has an important role in the efficiency of teaching phonetics. This result shows that the teachers are qualified enough to teach phonetics.

In (Q3), 22 % of the teachers have a teaching experience between 5 and10 years, while 78 % of them have an experience more than 10 years. This result denotes that all the teachers involved in this study have reasonable years of experience. This means that our participants have different experience, and this is positive in the sense that they will have different viewpoints and perspectives towards the subject under investigation, also will be sufficient and helpful in order to enable the students to pronounce English appropriately.

Concerning the second section about teachers' attitudes towards teaching pronunciation in (Q1), the

majority of teachers state that they sufficiently focus on pronunciation skills, while others said that it depends on the subject of the lecture if it is speaking, then the pronunciation is important. Whereas, one teacher said that pronunciation is very important in the teaching process but it is not everything. These replies indicate that teachers find it very important to pay attention to pronunciation in order to help enhance students' level and decrease the pronunciation problems. Concerning question two, which is about the students' motivation in learning phonetics, the teachers answered yes, which means that their students has the willingness to attend phonetics session and learn pronunciation, so they have no problems with motivation. The reason behind asking this question is to determine if motivation has an effect on first year student' pronunciation.

In (Q3), the majority of teachers answered that they sometimes correct their student's errors, whereas the rest answered often they correct them. This indicates that teachers have the tendency to correct their students' errors and they are concerned with the accurateness and the enhancement of their students' pronunciation. The results in this question intends show how the teachers are concerned with the correctness of their student's pronunciation.

Concerning question four, which is about the common pronunciation errors that the teachers had noticed in their students, the teachers agreed that their students do have common pronunciation errors. They emphasized that the common errors that they always encounter such fossilized errors. They state that the majority of these common pronunciation errors of the students do not belong to only one student, but they are commonly mispronounced by the students in general. The most common errors that teachers mention are: "the", "father"," mother", "three", short vowels, and some consonant such /ð/and/θ/. Another teacher said that students make common pronunciation errors like pronouncing the silent letter. These findings reveal that are many pronunciation errors that impede students to pronounce English appropriately.

However, in question five, teachers were asked about the reasons of their students' pronunciation errors. The majority of teachers thought that the most dominant factor for the students' mispronunciation is the interference with the mother tongue. The other teacher state that the lack of practice to be the main reason beyond his students' pronunciation problems. Whereas, the rest of them referring the pronunciation errors of their students not only to the lack of practice, but also considering the effect of the interference with the mother tongue and students inability to understand the phonological which are to some extent complex. The objective of this question is to determine the factors that contribute in learners' pronunciation difficulties and problem.

Concerning third section about the influence of the mother tongue in learning EFL in (Q1), (55%) of teachers reported that they never use mother tongue (Arabic) in class. Whereas the other teachers (45%) said that they « Sometimes » use it in class. The results show that teachers do not prefer the usage of mother tongue in class unless in the necessary situations.

In (Q2), which is about the purposes behind the use of mother tongue, (22%) of the teachers said that they use the mother tongue in class to correct students' errors/ give feedback, Whereas, others said that they use it to give instructions, while the rest of them(45%), state other purposes. The findings reveal that teachers in general they do not encourage the use of mother tongue just in necessary situations.

Concerning question three, teachers were asked about the influence of mother tongue in the students' learning of English. According to teachers who gave affirmative answers, the mother tongue has negative influence on the pronunciation of the target language. They justify their answers by saying that it impacts advanced learners' language production (accuracy and correctness).As it is shown in the interview' results that teachers assert that the use of mother tongue influence negatively the performance of students in learning English as accuracy and fluency. They also argued that its effect is noticeable in the majority of language aspects.

In the last question, the teachers were asked to determine the language' aspects influenced by the use of mother tongue in learning English. The majority of teachers affirmed that they notice the influence of mother tongue in phonology, while others (33%) state that syntactic is the major aspect of language that is influenced by mother tongue, whereas, two teachers choose lexical as an aspect of language that is influenced by mother tongue. As it is shown in the results all the teachers argued that the mother tongue's effect is noticeable in the majority of language aspects.

8.3. Discussion of the Classroom Observation

The observation method is one of the most efficient ways to check and help in discovering the environment of the classroom, and to observe students' pronunciation while speaking English in
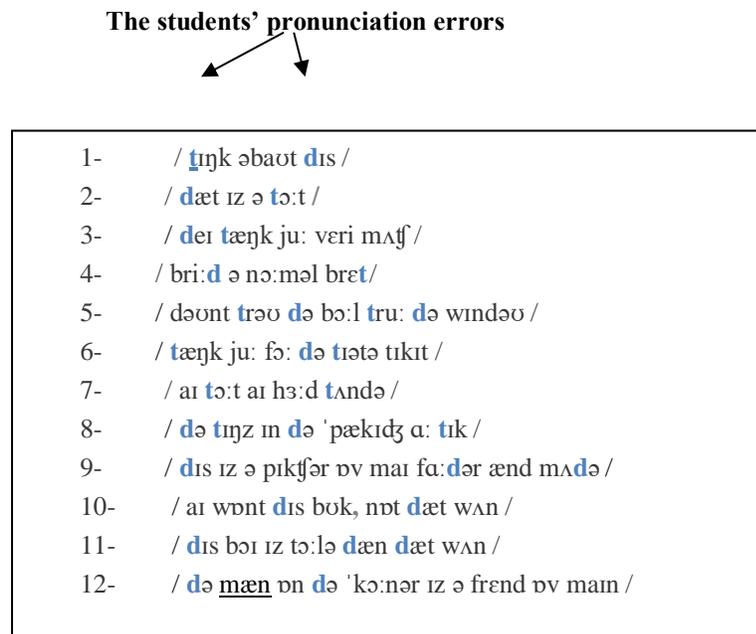
the classroom. It also helps in observing teachers while they are correcting their students' mispronunciation. Accordingly, the results obtained from the classroom observation helped a lot in deducing that first year LMD students mispronounce the two sounds /ð/ and /θ/ as /d/ and /t/ respectively. This is due to their mother tongue interference and the difference between L1 sound system and that of the target language. Students' dialectal Arabic does not contain /ð/ and /θ/ and hence students have already built old behaviours from their mother tongue and this makes it difficult for them to build new behaviours of the target language.

8.4. Discussion of the Recording Test

The oral pronunciation test was carried out to identify the effect of mispronunciation of /ð/ and /θ/ among the first year LMD students in UTMB. In this study, for testing the pronunciation errors, we prepared (12) sentences written on a paper. Each participant was given the sentences sheet that they were required to read. These sentences were given to the students to read individually. The sounds /θ/, /ð/ were included in the sentences to be pronounced by the first year LMD students as target sounds in order to confirm or reject that the students have problems in those sounds. Each of the students read the whole twelve sentences aloud while we were recording their pronunciations. We later listened carefully several times to samples of the first year recorded pronunciations a list of the recorded sounds was later written in the figure 3.3.5. Accordingly, the results obtained from the recording test helped a lot in deducing that first year LMD students mispronounce the two sounds /ð/ and /θ/ as /d/ and /t/ respectively.

Figure 1. The Transcription Format of the students' recorded pronunciation

The students' pronunciation errors

1-   / **t**ɪŋk əbaʊt **d**ɪs /
2-   / **d**æt ɪz ə **t**ɔːt /
3-   / **d**eɪ **t**æŋk juː vɛri mʌtʃ /
4-   / briː**d** ə nɔːməl brɛ**t**/
5-   / dəʊnt **t**rəʊ **d**ə bɔːl **t**ruː **d**ə wɪndəʊ /
6-   / **t**æŋk juː fɔː **d**ə **t**ɪətə tɪkɪt /
7-   / aɪ **t**ɔːt aɪ hɜːd **t**ʌndə /
8-   / **d**ə **t**ɪŋz ɪn **d**ə ˈpækɪdʒ ɑː **t**ɪk /
9-   / **d**ɪs ɪz ə pɪktʃər ɒv maɪ fɑː**d**ər ænd mʌ**d**ə /
10-   / aɪ wɒnt **d**ɪs bʊk, nɒt **d**æt wʌn /
11-   / **d**ɪs bɔɪ ɪz tɔːlə **d**æn **d**æt wʌn /
12-   / **d**ə <u>mæn</u> ɒn **d**ə ˈkɔːnər ɪz ə frɛnd ɒv maɪn /

9. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMONDATIONS

The present study attempted to shed light on the effect of mispronunciation of /ð/ and /θ/ in EFL learning. The results obtained from this research confirmed that first year LMD students Mispronounce /ð/ and /θ/ while using English. Based on these findings, suggestions and recommendations can be addressed to both teachers and learners.

Teachers should recognize the pronunciation errors, correct them, and teach the students how to pronounce these sounds correctly. Another strategy that is consider by researchers as an effective tactic in improving learners pronunciation, and decreasing language interference, which is talking to natives. By talking to them students will notice and discover their mistakes, and learn how to pronounce some new words. Besides that, talking to natives and be understood, it means having a good level of pronunciation. Also, the more learners talk to them the less they make mistakes, and the less they be interfered by their mother tongue.

Learners must use English language as a medium of communication, within and outside the classroom. Both teachers and students should endeavor to improve their proficiency level of the English language and pronunciation in particular. Teachers must avoid too much the use of Arabic in EFL classes. They also should be given opportunity to explain points and express views in class discussion and any errors made, have to be corrected by the teacher, and these will enhance their pronunciation in the English language.

EFL students should not base on only their teachers of phonetics to enhance their pronunciation. They rather have to look for other sources such as audio books of native speakers, listening to native speakers' conversations, imitating them, and then memorizing the accurate pronunciation of the English sounds. Thus, learners will certainly improve their pronunciation level.

Learners should be given the opportunity to prepare dialogues or role-plays and present them in front of their classmates. This activity help students to check up the correct pronunciation of words before making their presentations, and this is very important for learners to have a good pronunciation. In addition to that, teaching pronunciation for a short period is not sufficient for learners. It is better if the phonetics module taught for more than two years.

10. CONCLUSION

The importance of teaching pronunciation stems from the fact that it leads to the improvement of the speaking skill. When learners enrich their knowledge about how to pronounce certain sounds, how to differentiate between pronouncing a noun, a verb or an adjective, and when to rise or fall intonation, they can easily comprehend English native speakers. From the obtained results, it is observed that first year LMD students mispronounce the two sounds /ð/ and /θ/ as /d/ and /t/ respectively. This is the result of their mother tongue interference since their dialectal Arabic (Bechari Arabic) does not contain these two sounds. Therefore, the difference between the two sound systems of Bechari Arabic and English cause difficulties for English learners at the level of pronunciation. Another factor that leads students to mispronounce /ð/ and /θ/ is that spelling in English language is not phonetic, that is, words are not pronounced as they are written. In other words, /ð/ and /θ/ have the same written form which is "th"; as a result, students can be confused when they pronounce "th" as /ð/ and when they pronounce it as /θ/.

Studying the factors that lead to the mispronunciation of the two sounds /ð/ and /θ/ can

help in enhancing students' pronunciation via avoiding these factors. Therefore, the current study was conducted to investigate the extent to which first year LMD students mispronounce /ð/ and /θ/. Our main objective was to confirm and verify the hypothesis as to whether students' mother tongue (Bechari Arabic) negatively affects students' pronunciation.

In the light of the results obtained throughout this study, it is obvious that students' mother tongue definitely plays a role in mispronouncing the two sounds /ð/ and /θ/. So, if students are provided with data concerned with the differences that exist between the sound system of their mother tongue and that of English language, they can avoid making pronunciation errors. Students have also to use the target language outside the classroom. This way can help them to know their pronunciation errors and hence they can focus on these errors and correct them. Finally, students' correct pronunciation helps them in building their self-confidence and encourages them to speak English more often.

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