

An Assessment of Iraqi EFL Learners' Ability to Produce English Stressed Syllables in Disyllabic and Trisyllabic words

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In linguistics, and particularly phonology, stress is relative emphasis or prominence given to a certain syllable in a word, or to a certain word in a phrase or sentence. This emphasis is typically caused by such properties as increased loudness and vowel length and changes in pitch. The terms stress and accent are often used synonymously in the context, with accent being more strictly sound-based.

The present study aims at assessing the errors made by Iraqi learners of English at the university level and identifying the difficulties they encounter in pronouncing and recognizing the stressed syllables. The main purpose of this study is to assess EFL learners' abilities to pronounce and recognize stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words.

A diagnostic test is designed and administered to a sample of 50 students of third year, Department of English, Iraqiya University. The results show that most learners encounter more difficulties at the production level as the rate of their incorrect answers is (68.52%) compared to (45.92%) for their incorrect answers at the recognition level. The subject's errors as well as causes are identified and analyzed and accordingly conclusion is drawn.

ملخص

في علم اللغة وخاصة في علم الصوتيات فإن الزيجي تشديد أو بروز نسبي يكون موجوداً في مقطع محدد في كلمة أو عبارة أو جملة. إن سبب هذا التشديد خصائص محددة كالزيادة في الصوت أو طول الصوت الحركي أو المتغيرات في طبقة الصوت. إن هذان المصطلحان البرز والتشديد هما غالباً ما يكونان مترادفان في النص ذات القاعدة الصوتية الميزة بشكل صارم. يهدف البحث إلى تقييم الأخطاء المرتكبة من قبل متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية من العراقيين في المستوى الجامعي وتحديد المشاكل التي تواجههم في استخدام المقاطع الميزة عند كلتا المستويين الانتاجي والتمييزي. الغرض الاساسي لهذا البحث هو لتقييم قدرات المتعلمين في انتاج وتميز المقاطع الميزة داخل الكلمات البسيطة التي تحتوي على مقطعين أو ثلاثة مقاطع فقط. تم تحديد وتطبيق اختبار تجريبي على عينة مكونة من خمسين طالباً من المرحلة الجامعية قسم اللغة الانكليزية الجامعة العراقية. وظهرت النتائج بان معظم المتعلمين للغة الانكليزية من العراقيين يواجه مشاكل في انتاج المناط الميزة، فالنسبة الاعلى من اجوبتهم هي غير صحيحة وبنسبة (52,68%) وكذلك اظهرت النتائج بان اكثر المتعلمين من العراقيين لا يواجه مشاكل في تميز المقاطع الميزة، فالنسبة الاعلى من اجوبتهم هي صحيحة وبنسبة الاخطاء في مستوى التميز هي (92,45%) ان اخطاء الطلبة وكذلك اسبابها تم تحديدها وتحليلها وتم وضع الاستنتاجات على ضوءها.

Introduction

The terms stress and accent are often used synonymously in the context , but they are sometimes distinguished with accent being more strictly sound-based. For example, when emphasis is produced through pitch alone, it is called pitch accent, and when produced through length alone, it is called quantitative accent . When caused by a combination of various intensified properties, it is called



stress accent or dynamic accent. English uses what is called variable stress accent. The stress placed on syllables within words is called word stress or lexical stress. Some languages have fixed stress, meaning that the stress on virtually any multi syllable word falls on a particular syllable. Other languages, like English, have variable stress, where the position of stress in a word is not predictable in that way. Sometimes more than one level of stress, such as primary stress and secondary stress, may be identified. However, some languages such as French and Mandarin, are sometimes analyzed as lacking lexical stress entirely (Paulston, 1976:72). One of the most noticeable features of English is that some of its syllables are stressed, while many others are unstressed. The is also true of many other languages, but it is necessary to study how these stressed syllables are pronounced and where they can occur in English. In this study, the researcher is dealing only with stress in simple words. This means that researcher is looking at words as they are said in isolation. However, looking at words in isolation does help to see stress placement and stress levels more clearly than study them in the context of continuous speech.

The Importance of Accurate Pronunciation

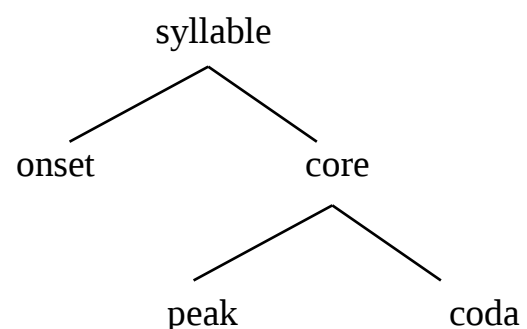
To achieve proficiency of pronunciation in a foreign language needs long years of practice, but the accurate time required to start with teaching a foreign language is still under debates. Jones (1975: 36) contends that pronunciation difficulties in a foreign language are due to two major weakness too late and too little which are the most important elements for producing good ear. Ladofoged (1975: 67) prefers to start with pronunciation far from the age of childhood because of their speech organs, their lack of inhibitions that are typical of older persons learning a language and their apparent physiological need to communicate with other children. It is necessary for any language speaker of English to have a proper pronunciation. Gimson (1973: 61) believes that it is not easy for a foreigner to have native like proficiency because many speakers who can produce all the sounds of English without difficulty still mispronounce words. Gimson adds that even advanced learners can be proficient in all aspects in English except pronunciation. For christophersen (1966: 86), the main aim of any learner is to reach a near native pronunciation, therefore languages not only comprehension but also phonological speech. He adds that any deficiency in the manner of communication hinders the act of communicating the message intended. In the same sense, mispronunciation brings out subconscious attitudes unfavorable to the foreign speaker such as a sense of lack of sympathy or intimacy or deeper understanding or just a vague feeling that the speaker could, if he had wished, have taken greater trouble to pronounce ones language well. For Ladofoged (1982: 38), teaching pronunciation must produce a pronunciation which is both intelligible and acceptable to the native ear. Actually, any Foreign speaker of English should be qualified to communicate with a native one and to create a good impression on the part of the listener so as to achieve effective

communication. According to Lado (1957: 2), the elements that are similar to the learners' native language will be simple for him, and the elements that are different will be difficult. Hence, interference is the greatest when languages involved are distinct. Rivers (1968: 112) Finds out that the greater the difference between the systems, i.e., the more numerous the mutually exclusive forms and patterns in each, the greater is the learning problem and the potential areas of interference. Therefore, effective teaching comes from focusing on contrast and the study of the phonemic system of the language to be taught will enable the learner to emphasize the phonetic differences which will determine whether what the students' speech is intelligible or unintelligible to a native speaker to identify the problematic areas and to handle them more effectively. In the present study, focus will be laid on an assessment the difficulties faced by undergraduate students as they attempt to produce stressed syllables and to check whether or not they can stress syllables within disyllabic and trisyllabic words.

The syllable is very important unit in the present student. Most learners seem to believe that, even if they cannot define what a syllable is, they can count how many syllables these are in a given word or sentence.

The nature of the syllable

In this regard, O'conner (1973: 201) shows that the nature of syllable structure varies from languages to language since there is universal phonological syllable. However Malmberg (1968:212) believes that a syllable consists of a consonant + vowel is the only one which is general for all languages. This stance can be enhanced by other scholars. Rogers(2000:265) who shows that a syllable consists of two essential part namely, the onset and rhyme. The term onset refers to a consonant or consonants in the initial position of a syllable. The term rhyme consist of two parts: the nucleus and the coda. A nucleus is assumed to be the center around which other sounds occur. A coda which is the second part of the rhyme, is a term used to refer to the consonants that can occur in final position of the syllable. From the phonetic point of view, Hyman(1975;188) admits that syllable structure consists of three phonetic part; the onset, the peak and the coda. Sequences of segments within a phonetic syllable depend on an inherent hierarchical scale of sonority. The most sonorous segments occupy the nucleus and further from the nucleus on either margin the least sonorous the sounds will be. So it is possible to represent the syllable structure by the following figure.



Generally speaking, English shows more complex syllable patterns resulting from adding several consonant elements in the marginal places. The largest possible consonants that occur initially with a syllable are three while Four consonants are allowed to occur finally. English syllable structure can be outlined in the formula:

$$C_0 \rightarrow 3VC_0 \rightarrow 4.$$

This pattern means that syllable consists of a vowel which is preceded by zero, one, two or three as a maximum limit, and followed by zero, one, tow, three or four consonants. This pattern is agreed upon most phoneticians such as Abercrombie (1967:15; o'connor (1975: 229); Roach(1983: 72) and Hawkins (1984:269) .So, In English, not all syllables are created equal. Stressed or accented syllables or accented syllables will be higher in pitch, longer in duration, and generally a little louder than unstressed or accented syllables For example, the word "imagination"- "na" has a primary stress, but there is secondary stress in this word. 1ma-, on the first syllable. This means that a secondary stress will be a little higher in pitch, may be a little longer in duration, but not quite as much as the syllable in this word that has the primary stress.

The Nature of stress

Roach (2000,93) shows that the stress can be studied from the point of view production and perception: the two are closely related, but are not identical. The production of stress is generally believed to depend on the speaker using more muscular energy that is used for unstressed syllable. According to experimental studies, when we produce stressed syllable, the muscles that we use to expel air from the lungs are often more active, producing higher subglottal pressure. From the perceptual point of view, all stressed syllables, have one characteristic in common, and that is prominence. Stressed syllables are recognized as stressed because they are prominent that unstressed syllables. There are four different factors, which make syllables prominent.

- 1- The loudness of syllable has an important part to play in prominence. Stressed syllables are louder than unstressed
- 2- The length of syllable has an important part in prominence.
- 3- If one syllable of a word is said with a pitch that is noticeably different from that of the other syllable, this will have a strong tendency to produce the effect of prominence.
- 4- A syllable will tend to be prominent if it contains a vowel that is different in quality from neighboring vowels. If we change one of the vowels in the word (e.g.ba:bi:ba:ba:) the odd syllable /bi:/will tend to be heard as stressed. Experimental work has shown that these factors are not equally important. The

strongest effect is produced by pitch, and length is also powerful factor,. Loudness and quality have much less effect (Roach,1991:103)

In English stress syllables tend to occur at regular intervals and unstressed syllables in between and given less time. The vowels in unstressed syllables are systematically reduced. English speakers will not try to control the position of the tongue body during the vowel of an unstressed syllables. In stead the tongue body will reach whatever point is convenient in getting from the preceding consonant to the following consonant, and the average position reached is mid-central schwa /ə/, The tendency to reduce and run together all unstressed syllables is one of the characteristics which make spoken English very difficult for foreign students and failing to reduce unstressed vowels is one of the major contributions to accent in non-native speaker of English. This because the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables on more extreme in English than in most languages (Paulston and Bruder, 1976:22).

Finocchiro (1986:28) points out that in speaking English, speakers try to maintain the same time between one stressed syllable and the next stressed syllable in simple words. In order to maintain the rhythm, we say the unstressed syllables faster. This is done by crowding the unstressed syllables together and by pronouncing all or most of the unstressed vowels as /ə/ or not pronouncing them at all.

O'Connor and Trim (1973 :257) stated that some languages are described as having both primary stress and secondary stress. A syllable with secondary stress is stressed relative to unstressed syllable but not as strong as a syllable with primary stress. As with primary stress, the position of secondary stress depending on language. In English it is not fully predictable the words organization and accumulation both have primary stress on the fourth syllable, but the secondary stress comes on the first syllable in the former word and on the second syllable in the latter.

Al-Hamash (1997:64) claimed that Iraqi is a syllable – timed language, and English is stress – timed language, in syllable – timed language, each syllable is given the same amount of the pronounced about the same length, but in stress – timed language, the stress syllable, comes at regular intervals consequently, Iraqi learners have problems with timing of stressed words. There are three level that can be used in describing English stress. However, it is clear that unstressed syllables containing /ə , I , or u / or a syllabic consonant will sound less prominent than an unstressed syllable containing some other vowels. For example, the first syllable of 'Poetic' /Pəu'etik/ is more prominence than the first syllable of 'Pathetic' /Pəθ'etik/ (Roach,2000,96).

English is not one of languages where word stress can be decided simply in relation to the syllables of the word. Many writers among them Wells (2000) claimed that English words stress is so difficult to treat stress placement as a property of the individual word to be learned when the word itself is

learned. The following summary of ideas on stress placement in nouns, verbs and adjectives in an attempt to present a few rules in the simplest possible form practically all the rules have exceptions and learners may feel that the rules are so complex that it would be easier to go back to the idea of learning the stress for each word individually. Roach (1988:71) mentioned that in order to decide on stress placement, it is necessary to make use of some or all of the following information:

- i. Whether the word is morphological simple or whether it is complex all a result either of containing one or more affixes or of being a compound word.
- ii. What the grammatical category of the word is (noun, verb, adjective).
- iii. How many syllables the words has.
- iv. What the phonological structure of these syllables is .

The rules for complex words are different from those for simple words. Obviously, Single – syllable words present not problems. If they are pronounced in isolation they are said with primary stress. It is possible to divide syllables into two basic categories: strong and weak. One component of a syllable is the rhyme, which contains the syllable peak and the coda. A strong syllable has a rhyme which is a long vowel or diphthong, or a vowel followed by a coda that is, one or more consonants weak syllables have a syllable speak which is a short vowel, and no coda unless the syllable speak is the schwa vowel /ə/.

Examples of strong syllables are :

die /dai/
heart /ha:t/
bat /bæt /

Examples of weak syllables are :

're' in 'reduce' /ridju:s/
'Pen' in 'open' /əpən/

The important point to remember is that only strong syllables can be stressed. Weak syllables are always unstressed. This piece of knowledge does not solve the problems of how to place English stress, but it can help in some cases (ibid). Roach (2000,99) provided some useful pieces of information concerning the placement of stress within English words which consist of two – syllable words either the first or the second syllable in stressed. In two syllable verbs, the second syllable is stressed if it contains a long vowel or diphthong, or if it ends with more than one consonant e.g 'apply' /ə'plai/.

If the final syllable is weak, the first syllable is stressed e.g 'enter' /èntə/. A final syllable is also unstressed if it contains /ə/ e.g. 'follow' /'fələu/. two – syllable simple adjectives are stressed according to the same rule used for stressing two syllables verbs e.g.. 'lovely' /'lʌvli/. Nouns require a different rule: if the second syllable contains a short vowel, then the stress will come on the first syllables. Otherwise it will be on the second syllables e.g. 'money'/'mʌni/. Other two –



syllable words such as adverbs and prepositions seem to behave like verbs and adjectives.

There are many two - syllable words in English whose meaning and class change with a change in stress. The word 'Present', For example is a two syllables word. If we stress the first syllables, it is a noun (gift) or an adjective (opposite of absent). But if we stress the second syllable, it becomes a verb (to offer). More examples: the words 'export' , 'import', 'contact' and 'object' can all be nouns or verbs depending on whether the stress in on the first or second syllable.

Roach (2000:100) provided some useful information concerning the placement of stress within English words of the syllables.

In verbs, if the final syllable is strong, then it will be stressed e.g. 'entertain' /entə'tain/. If the last syllable is weak, then it will be unstressed, and stress will be placed on the preceding syllable if that syllables is strong e.g. 'encounter' /i'ŋkauntə/. If both the second and third syllables are weak, then stress falls on the first syllables e.g., 'parody' /'Pærədi/. Nouns require a slightly containing a short vowel or /ə/ it is unstressed. If the syllable preceding this final syllables contains along vowel or diphthong or if it ends with more than one consonant, the middle syllable, will be stressed e.g. 'Potato' /Pə'teitə/. If the second and third syllables are both weak, then the first syllables is stressed e.g. 'cinema' /'Sinəmə/. Three syllables adjectives are stressed by the same rule used for stressing three syllable nouns e.g. 'insolent' /'jnsələnt/.

Gimson (1973:100) claimed that although native speakers may well find no difficulty in dividing words into three syllables, it seems that learners of English have trouble in doing so. The researcher of the present study noticed that most learners of English at university level do not have the ability to produce stress syllables. It is difficult for them to select the syllable to be stressed.

As a teacher of English, The researcher wishes to learn more about aspects that influence language learners when they learn how to speak English. Therefore, the researcher wants to explore some common difficulties that Iraqi students encounter when they learn to produce stress syllable so that he can teach effectively and help them to communicate more effectively. This study covered a number of frequent pronunciation difficulties that causes problem for Iraqi learners of English. These difficulties include the ability to produce stressed syllable in simple words which consist of one, two and three syllables. The researcher finds this study a useful reference for both teachers and students who want to improve their pronunciation of English. Learners of English often expect to be able to speak that language like a native speaker. However, they encounter many factors to gain their desire. One of the common factors that they find difficulty is the pronunciation of stressed syllables in simple words. The native



language affects both the ability to produce English stressed syllables and the ability to hear sounds.

Pronunciation is most definitely the first aspect that learners can notice in second language learners when they are speaking English. Nation (2009:75) stated, "when some teachers and students complain about difficulties in producing stressed syllables, they are often talking about pronunciation".

Pronunciation also plays a very important role in learning language, as Derwin and Murno (2005:7) claimed that "having good pronunciation of the language can help in normal communications, particularly intelligibility".

In this study, it is noticed in Iraq that some common difficulties in pronunciation that Iraqi learners of English face when learning how to produce stressed syllables. The researcher noticed through his experience in teaching English in universities, that the real problem encountered by most Iraqi learners of English is their failure to produce and specify stressed syllables and place stress marks correctly. So, the learners of English may tend to stress every syllable without determining which syllable of a word should be stressed. For examples, the word 'listen' has primary stress falling on the first syllable /li-/ and the stress pattern of this word is /lisn/ or /lisdn/. This word is syllabified into syllables /li/ and /sɒn/. on the other hand, it may be expected that many learners of English may attempt to stress the final syllable of the English word 'listen'. The learners may be expected to produce the word 'listen' as /li'sɒn/.

In Iraq, it is noticed that the number of syllables in simple words which consist of three syllables may be expected to cause a great difficulty to Iraqi learners of English. This difficulty is determined by the length of syllables. For example, the word 'cinema' /sinəmə/ as a primary stress falling on the first syllable /si/. This word is syllabified into three syllables. In this respect, it is noticed that most learners of English do not have the ability to produce the stressed syllable in words which consist of three syllables. For this reason, The word 'cinema' for example, may be produced and syllabified by most learners improperly because most learners are misled by the length of syllables.

It has been noticed that Iraqi students try to speak and write as accurately as possible, They usually listen to speak English literally, trying to understand each word as accurately as possible. This study empirically assesses whether learners of English are able to produce stress syllables. It will exclusively limit its assessment to disyllabic and trisyllabic words, namely, nouns, verbs and adjectives. It also aims to illustrate the main types of errors and specify the sources behind them. The reason behind conducting this study is that, to the present researcher best knowledge, no fieldwork has been done in this specific area. The main purpose of the study is to give answers to the following questions:

- 1- To what extent can learners of English produce stress syllables in disyllabic and tri-syllabic words?



- 2- To what extent can learners of English recognize stress syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words?

The Test

Introduction

Since the main objective of this study is to assess whether learners of English are able to produce stress syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words. There should be practical investigation that reveals the subjects' difficulties and identifies them. Therefore, it is necessary for the researcher to assess the learners actual pronunciation of English stressed syllables in the form of diagnostic test that seeks to find out the difficult spots. In addition to this, the researcher notices that it turns essential for the test to assess stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words, Other words of more than three syllables were excluded because they are quite rare and unfamiliar in the students' books.

The subjects

The population often this study comprises 50 Iraqi students. Third year students of both sexes who constitute the main sample taking part in the test due to the fact that those students have acquainted with almost all the problems and major aspects of English stress. They are all native speakers of Iraqi. Arabic. None of them has ever been in an English speaking country or even as had the chance to be taught by native speakers of English. In respect to their first and second years, they have taken two courses in phonetics; therefore, they are expected to be fit for the purpose of the test. The items of the test are chose from some text books which have already been studied by the subjects. In fact the words are extracted from examples mentioned in Roach's phonetics and phonology (1983) and O'connor's Better English Pronunciation (1980). The reason behind this is to guarantee the familiarity items.

Description of the Test

The aim of the test is to diagnose the subject's specific strength and weakness in producing and recognizing stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words. The test that consists of two questions has prepared to be administrated to third year students, college of Arts, university of Iraqia. The test was conducted at 10 O'clock in the morning, in the 23st of April, 2016, in room no.33. Question one (see appendix I) comprises 50 items. It covers the production level of the test in which the subjects have asked to record the disyllabic and trisyllabic words carefully. The pronunciation of each subject has recorded while reading the test items. Stress placement has noticed during the subject's production of the stressed syllables and their production is compared with the of the native speaker (BBC) regarding production test, the subjects have been told to read the test instructions carefully. They have been advised to read carefully in a normal speed and not to spend too long attempting to produce any given item.



The researcher adopted a test – retest method that can be used to establish reliability. According to this method, the subjects have re-examined after two weeks of the first question. Question two (see appendix2) comprises 50 items. It covers the recognition level of the test in which the subjects were asked to place primary stress correctly before the stress syllables. Moreover, the test items used in the recognition test were written down and transcribed into its phonetic representation on separate sheets of paper by the researcher. As soon as the subjects finished doing the task, all the answer sheets were collected.

The administration of the Test

The test is designed to measure the student's production and recognition of the stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words. In order to ensure the validity of the test, the test items have examined by experts who have known as having profound knowledge in English language. The jury members are arranged according to their academic titles and then alphabetically are :

Asst. Prof. Khalid S.(Ph.D.in linguistics and Translation) . College of Arts / university of Iraqiya.

Lecturer Shamma M. (Ph.D.in Teaching English as a Foreign language) College of Arts / university of Iraqiya.

After checking validity, the test has administered at the language Laboratory, Al-Iraqiya university at the end of the second half of the Academic year 2016. The subjects' production of each item was recorded individually. The test items use in the recognition test were written down on separate sheets of paper. The subject, have to put primary stress before the stressed syllables. The period of time allotted to the performance of the two questions of the test was limited to two hours for each question. The subjects were given numbers and instructed to mention their numbers before starting to read.

The scoring scheme

The students' responses have been analyzed via a stereo cassettes recorder. The researcher has focused on the way the subjects have pronounced. Each correct item is given one mark and incorrect is given zero. The entire test has been scored out of 100. The test items are scored one by one on the basis of right – wrong criteria. In case where the pronunciation is not very clear, the researcher has to stop the recorder and listen to the words several times until eventually he gets a complete satisfaction of the right decision. The results of the production and recognition tests are subjected to a statistical evaluation so that the researcher could reach reasonable conclusions and strongly confirm his Findings. Pearson correlation formula was used to compute the correlation coefficient. It was then corrected by Spearman Brown formula in order to get the reliability coefficient of the total test. (Hughes, 1998, 158).

Results and Discussion

Tale (1) below was designed to answer the first study question: "To what extent can learners of English produce stress syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic

words"? Results show that the majority of the subjects are not able to pronounce the stressed syllables. 3184 (68.52%) of their answers were incorrect, while 1038 (31.48%) of their answers were correct. This result gives concrete evidence that a considerable proportion of the participants were not able to produce stressed syllables within words of two and three syllables (disyllabic and tri syllabic words).

Table (1). The production test. Number of correct and incorrect answers with their percentages.

Item no.	Correct Answers	%	Incorrect Answers	%
1	14	28	36	72
2	8	16	42	84
3	11	22	39	48
4	6	12	44	88
5	18	36	32	64
6	10	20	40	80
7	15	30	35	70
8	5	10	45	90
9	20	40	30	60
10	10	20	40	80
11	22	44	28	56
12	18	36	32	64
13	30	60	20	40
14	23	46	27	54
15	21	42	29	58
16	11	22	39	78
17	27	54	23	46
18	6	12	44	88
19	32	64	18	36
20	30	60	20	40
21	10	20	40	80
22	7	14	43	86
23	11	22	39	78
24	13	26	37	74
25	27	54	23	46
26	33	66	17	34
27	30	40	30	60
28	18	36	32	64
29	13	26	37	74
30	18	36	32	64

31	14	28	36	72
32	3	6	47	94
33	13	26	37	74
34	35	70	15	30
35	24	48	26	52
36	39	78	11	22
37	20	40	30	60
38	32	64	18	36
39	20	40	30	60
40	13	26	37	74
41	8	16	42	84
42	13	26	37	74
43	22	44	28	56
44	27	54	23	46
45	38	76	12	24
46	20	40	30	60
47	10	20	40	80
48	18	36	32	64
49	29	58	21	42
50	28	56	22	44
	1038	31.48	3184	68.52

The result also gives concrete evidence that the majority of EFL students fail to distinguish between stressed and unstressed syllables due to the lack of attention given in such aspect of English sound system by the instructors. On the other hand, words of one syllables (which are excluded this test) are of low difficulty because they can be easily produced by EFL students. Most subjects face difficulty in producing stressed syllables in monosyllabic words.

Table (I) shows that most students face difficulty in pronouncing words of two and three syllables.

This means that most students pronounce syllables in their English pronunciation remote from the native speakers of English. For examples the words disaster, separate, insolent, opportune, determine are pronounced as /'diza:stə, sepə'rei't, in'sələnt, opətju:'n, di'tə: 'min/ instead of /di'za:stə, sepə'reit, 'insələnt, 'opətju:n, di'tə:min/ respectively.

The high percentage of the subjects' incorrect answers in producing stressed syllables means that Iraqi learners of English encounter difficulty pronouncing stressed syllables. The researcher notices that incorrect answers may be referred to insufficient sophisticated teachers whose improper pronunciation influences the subjects' performance.

Production test shows that the difficulty in pronouncing stressed syllables increases as the number of syllables in a given word increases. This difficulty is determined by the length of syllables. It is clear that trisyllabic words are the most difficult ones. Items of such types are (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, 48, 50) (See table I) (Appendix I).

It has been found out that the disyllabic words (two syllables) also constitute difficulty for Iraqi students. Items of two syllables are (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 49) (see table I) (appendix I). The reason behind fluctuation of errors in this respect may be revealed to the complexity of the number of syllables within disyllabic and trisyllabic words for the subjects. It is obvious from the total number of the incorrect answers that the subjects are incompetent in producing stressed syllables within disyllabic and tri syllabic words and this answers the first question of the study which states to what extent can learners of English produce stress syllables in disyllabic and tri syllabic words?

Table (2) below was designed to answer the second study question: "To what extent can learners of English recognize stress syllables in disyllabic and tri syllabic words"?

Results show that the majority of the participants were able to recognize the stressed syllables in disyllabic and tri syllabic words. 2676 (54.8) of their answers were correct, while the number of incorrect answers was 2304 (45.92). This result gives concrete evidence that a considerable proportion of the participants were able to identify the stressed syllables.

Table (2). Recognition Test: Number of Correct Incorrect Answers with their percentage.

Item no.	Correct Answers	%	Incorrect Answers	%
1	20	40	30	60
2	30	60	20	40
3	37	34	13	26
4	12	24	38	76
5	34	68	16	32
6	30	60	20	40
7	40	80	10	20
8	28	56	22	44
9	18	36	32	64
10	20	52	24	48
11	30	60	20	40
12	24	48	20	52
13	32	64	18	36
14	28	56	22	44



15	25	50	25	50
16	20	40	30	60
17	27	54		
18	31	62	19	38
19	30	60	20	40
20	21	42	29	58
21	26	52	24	48
22	32	64	18	36
23	25	50	25	50
24	30	60	20	50
25	24	48	26	52
26	18	36	32	64
27	26	52	24	48
28	23	46	27	54
29	36	72	14	28
30	18	36	32	64
31	30	60	20	40
32	26	52	24	48
33	10	20	40	80
34	29	58	21	42
35	25	50	25	50
36	30	60	20	40
37	26	52	24	48
38	20	40	30	60
39	31	62	19	38
40	20	40	30	60
41	22	44	28	56
42	36	72	14	78
43	27	54	23	46
44	21	42	29	58
45	37	64	13	26
46	25	50	25	50
47	30	60	20	40
48	27	54	23	46
49	34	68	16	32
50	30	60	20	40
	2676	54.8	2304	45.92

It also appears that subjects' performance in recognizing stressed syllables in disyllabic and tri syllabic words is better than their performance in producing them.

The overall results indicate that the total number of errors made by the subjects in recognizing stressed syllables is (45.92%) (see table 2). Such percentage indicates that the subjects' ability to produce stressed syllables is disappointing. It also seems that subjects are good at recognizing stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words.

The results also indicate that the majority of subjects have little difficulty in identifying stress marks in appropriate syllables. For example, most subjects succeeded to place primary stress marks in items such as (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 27, 29, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 39, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50) (see table 2) (appendix 2).

The results also show that the minority of the same subjects face little difficulty in identifying the stressed syllables in the same items above. So, they make errors in syllable stress placement by placing the stress marks in an appropriate syllable. For example, the words advantage, English, banana, television, consonants are recognized as /'ədva:ntidʒ, ɪŋɡlɪʃ, 'bɒnainə, te'lɪvɪʃn, kəʊnsənənt/ instead of /ədvaɪntɪdʒ, 'ɪŋɡlɪʃ, bɒ'nainə, 'telɪvɪʒn, 'kəʊnsənənt/.

The percentage of errors shows that the subjects are successful in recognizing the stressed syllables especially the items of two syllables. This indicates that EFL students succeeded to distinguish stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words. This would answer the second study question which states to what extent can learners of English recognize stress in disyllabic and trisyllabic words?

Conclusion

In the light of the study results, the following conclusions are presented:

1- Iraqi learners of English at the university level are varied considerably in respect to their abilities to produce and recognize English stressed syllables, namely, disyllabic and trisyllabic words.

2- By comparing the performance of the production test with that of recognition test, it appears that the subjects made (3184) errors (68.52%).

The same subjects made (2304) (45.92%) at the recognition test. The results indicate that the subjects face difficulty in producing the stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words but they have no difficulty in recognizing the stressed syllables in disyllabic and trisyllabic words. This aspect is neglected by the teachers because producing stress syllables represents a difficult area to the students.

3- Iraqi learners of English at the university level are found to be better in producing and recognizing stressed syllables within words of two syllables than words of three syllables. This may suggest that though, in some cases, they managed to place the stress mark on the stressed syllable, they face some difficulty in producing them. It appears that good performance of some subjects could be attributed to guessing rather than sharp distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables. For example, a subject may face little difficulty in

identifying the stressed syllables in a word such as banana /bə'nainə/ as having three syllables while the same subject tends to produce it as /'bənainə/.

The subject makes errors in producing the stressed syllables but the same subject tends to place the stress mark in appropriate syllable.

4- The researcher believes that mispronunciation and misplacement of stress are due to improper models used in teaching pronunciation.

The researcher also relates this problem to fact that phonetics is taught through Arabic. This may lead to all sorts of mispronunciation and misplacement of stress.

5- The researcher believes that the role of the language laboratory is not taken into consideration in the process of teaching in Iraqi universities. He shows that the language laboratory can help the student in:

1- The student will accustom himself to the normal speed of the native speaker without limiting himself to hearing his teacher only.

2- He always hears authentic language with correct pronunciation and stress.

3- The teacher can listen to his students carefully while he practices sound production so that he can give immediate help for students who need it.

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Appendix 1

The production test

Please pronounce the following items carefully. Pay more attention to the pronunciation of stressed syllables in words of two and three syllables.

Item no	Item	Phonetic transcription
1	autumn (N)	O: tɒm
2	disaster (N)	diza:stə
3	deceive (V)	disi: v
4	separate (V)	sepə'reit
5	easy (Adj)	I:zi/
6	insolent (Adj)	insə'lɒnt
7	collect (V)	kə'lekt
8	entertain (V)	entə'tein
9	yellow (Adj)	jeləu
10	opportune (Adj)	opə'tju:n
11	array (N)	ə'rei
12	potato (N)	pə'teɪtəu
13	major (Adj)	meɪdʒə
14	disease (n)	dizi:z
15	hesitate (V)	hezɪtet
16	important (Adj)	ɪm'pɔ:tnt
17	cinema (N)	sɪnə'mə
18	determine (V)	dɪ'tɜːmɪn
19	early (Adj)	ɜːli
20	behind (N)	bɪhaɪnd



21	correct (V)	kðrekt
22	fantastic (Adj)	Fðentastik
23	emperor (N)	emðrð
24	encounter (V)	inkauntð
25	language (N)	lðeŋgwidʒ
26	complete (V)	kðmpli:t
27	divine (Adj)	divain
28	accurate (Adj)	ðekjðrðt
29	abnormal (Adj)	ðebno:ml
30	encourage (V)	lnkʌridʒ
31	guarantee (V)	gðerðnti
32	synopsis (N)	synopsis
33	quantity (N)	kwontðti
34	alive (Adj)	ðlaiv
35	honest (Adj)	onist
36	Picture (N)	piktʃð
37	design (N)	dizain
38	include (V)	inklu:d
39	relate (V)	ri'leit
40	furniture (N)	fð:nitʃð
41	interrupt (V)	intðrʌpt
42	inclusive (Adj)	inklu: siv
43	sublime (Adj)	sðblaim
44	pronounce (V)	prðnauns
45	money (N)	mʌni
46	ambulance (N)	ðembjðlðns
47	abandon (V)	ðbðendðn
48	continuous (Adj)	kðntinjuðs
49	random (Adj)	rðendðm
50	tomato (n)	tðma:tðu

Appendix 2

The recognition test

Please place primary stress marks over the stressed syllables within disyllabic and trisyllabic words.

Item no	Item	Phonetic transcription
1	explain (V)	iksplein
2	advantage (Y)	ədva:ntidʒ
3	English (N)	ɪŋɡlɪʃ
4	envelope (N)	envə'loup
5	tranquil (Adj)	trænkwɪl
6	necessary (Adj)	nesəsəri
7	abstract (V)	əbstrəkt
8	emphasize (V)	emfəsaɪz
9	protest (N)	prətest
10	security (N)	sɪkjʊərɪti
11	capital (Adj)	kəpɪtl
12	yesterday (Adj)	jestədeɪ
13	revenge (V)	rɪvendʒ
14	deliver (V)	dɪlɪvə
15	import (N)	ɪmpo:t
16	protestant (N)	prətestənt
17	abstract (adj)	əbstrəkt
18	together (Adj)	təgeðə
19	insult (V)	ɪnsʌlt
20	commandeer (V)	kəməndiə
21	record (N)	reko:d
22	banana (N)	nəna:nə
23	humble (Adj)	hʌmbl
24	consonant (Adj)	kənsənənt
25	humble (V)	hʌmbl
26	determine (V)	dɪtə:mɪn
27	contrast (N)	kəntrəst
28	adventure (N)	ədventʃə
29	orange (Adj)	orɪndʒ
30	masculine (Adj)	məskjʊlɪn
31	discuss (V)	dɪskʌs
32	organize (V)	o:gənaɪz
33	chocolate (N)	tʃɒklət



34	television (N)	teliviʃn
35	family (Adj)	fəməðli
36	defeatist (Adj)	difi:tist
37	defeat (V)	difi:t
38	resurrect (V)	rezərekt
39	produce (N)	prədiu:s
40	masculine (N)	mədeskjəlin
41	holistic (Adj)	həʊlistik
42	english (Adj)	ɪŋɡlɪʃ
43	insult (V)	ɪnsʌlt
44	entertain (V)	entətein
45	orange (N)	orɪndʒ
46	consonant (N)	kənsənənt
47	hollow (Adj)	həʊləʊ
48	reasonable (Adj)	rɪznəbl
49	produce (V)	prədjʊ:s
50	abnormal	əb'no:ml