The Impact of Prosody-based Teaching and Learning of English Pronunciation on Iraqi EFL Learners at University Level

أثر التدريس والتعلم القائم على العَروض لنطق اللغة الإنجليزية في متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من العراقيين على المستوى الجامعي

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الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس النطق، هرم العَروض، متعلمو الإنجليزية العراقيون، المهارات التواصلية.

Abstract

The present research discussed the significance of teaching English pronunciation to Iraqi EFL learners. It chronologically reviewed the drastic changes which pronunciation instruction has witnessed since the 1940s until the present. Most of these changes highly emphasized the necessity of pronunciation teachers training and education. In addition, it stressed that the learners must be encouraged to learn the target pronunciation so that they can progressively develop their communicative skills. The study also explained the prosodic structure of English and the main teaching and learning problems that pronunciation teachers as well as learners may encounter. More importantly, it presented a practical and flexible teaching model represented by a pyramid-shaped system including the most important prosodic features that ELLs (English language learners) need to concentrate on, viz., the prosody pyramid. Since the prosodic features are extensively used by NSs (native speakers), it is crucially important for ELLs to learn the rules that restrain using such features. Thus, it presented a prosody-based teaching/learning model that facilitates teaching and learning the prosodic patterns including various thought groups and feasibly helps learners implement them to form their own utterances. Strikingly, pronunciation instruction can be substantially consolidated by implementing more advanced technology tools which magnificently provide students with enriching aural-oral-visual resources. Finally, the study concludes with emphasizing the significance of pronunciation instruction to developing ELLs' communicative skills and that it must not be marginalized. Instead, it should be considered as important as the other language aspects.

1. Introduction

For a long time, teaching pronunciation has not received as much attention as teaching other aspects of language, such as vocabulary and grammar. It has been exclusively considered within the audio-lingual framework which has intensively focused on developing techniques and drills for teaching isolated sounds. However, it has been significantly found that teaching discrete sounds void of context is insufficient unless it is embedded in interactively meaningful situations. Hence, English sounds can be vitally taught as a constituent part of a larger system, viz., the English prosody system. Since correct pronunciation crucially affects speech intelligibility and, in turn, communication smoothness, the teaching of English pronunciation in contextual settings has been considerably emphasized, particularly with the advent of the communicative approach to language teaching. The communicative approach stresses the significance of pronunciation instruction and promotes teaching sounds as well as prosodic features within a meaningful context. Accordingly, learning English prosodic system including stress, rhythm and intonation facilitates learning the English sound system. In addition, it improves English language learners' (ELLs) speaking ability so that they become capable of producing clear second language (L2) utterances like those of native speakers (NSs). It also helps reduce the effects of the learners' first language (L1) accent (Altickaby, 2025; Al-Yasir, 2026; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Effective English pronunciation teaching should not merely focus on practicing single sounds or repeating words in isolation. Instead, it should be taught in a way that can help ELLs be easily understood by native and nonnative listeners. For this purpose, a new approach has been put forward. It enhances teaching pronunciation by using the prosodic system including the principal components, viz., rhythm and intonation. English is described as an intonational language in which rhythm and intonation are very important aspects that affect comprehending information structure and decoding implied messages within real communication situations. For example, 'thank you' can be said in two different ways to deliver two distinct behaviors. If it is said with a rising voice pitch and is ended with a falling one, it expresses great gratitude; whereas if it is said with a falling voice pitch and is ended with a rising one, it expresses a casual remark of acknowledgement (O'Connor, 1980, p. 108). Similarly, old and new information can be recognized by changing the voice pitch. In general, new information is accented, for example, 'I'd like a brownie and LEMONADE' in which lemonade is new information (Wells, 2006, p. 109). In addition, pitch change can indicate the way the ideas and meanings are related to each other

(cohesion). In other words, pitch signals reflect the relationship between the old information recognized as 'orientation' and the new information to be introduced in a conversation in which it can be identified by 'prediction.' For instance, changing the voice pitch in 'Is that Mr. FOGG?' and 'Is that MIST or FOG?' helps the listener predict the focus of the sentences which are a person and weather, respectively (Gilbert, 2008, p. 3).

Interestingly, unintelligible speech and listening comprehension difficulties brought about by misusing the appropriate prosodic features are important factors that should urge English pronunciation teachers to encourage their students to persistently learn and practice implementing prosodic cues during listening as well as speaking. Unfortunately, most ELLs do not pay enough attention to the significance of stress, rhythm or intonation patterns. As a result, the prosodic aspect has been neglected in most pronunciation classes where vocabulary and grammar rather than pronunciation and prosody are more important to teach. That is, learners concentrate on tracking meaning and try as much as they can to avoid making grammatical mistakes. Moreover, most teachers find it confusing to tackle the subject of prosody because they notice that students consider it as a complicated subject matter. For example, almost all pronunciation textbooks are abundant in rules of stress placement and intonation patterns which ELLs may find difficult to master (Gilbert, 2008). Undoubtedly, these rules are very important to learn in order to improve the learners' communicative skills. Yet, they should rather be embedded in contextual settings that simulate real life situations in which ELLs will be given the opportunity to enjoy learning the rhythmic and melodic patterns and be able to properly convey meaning to the listeners. Although teaching the pronunciation of isolated sounds helps ELLs produce them correctly, it should not be an end in itself. That is, it could be one of the practical procedures that aid ELLs to comprehensively understand the native speakers' speech (Gilbert, 2008; Roach, 2009).

It is considerably important for English pronunciation teachers to teach prosodic features in order to enable ELLs to comprehend native speakers' speech as well as be easily understood by native listeners via promoting efficient practice of prosodic patterns in context. Based on Gilbert's (2008) newly-established and practical approach to teaching English pronunciation, the current research presents a succinctly simplified explanation of the English prosodic features in terms of a pyramid format which classifies English prosody into four levels starting from the base to the top: "the thought group, focus word, stress and peak"

(p. 10). In order to help the learners understand spoken utterances, the thesis discusses how ELLs can easily learn the prosodic patterns including various thought groups and feasibly implement them to form their own utterances. Additionally, the research presents a mediation model by which teachers can implement certain teaching materials and strategies in order to enable ELLs to perceive the prosodic patterns of statements, questions, commands, exclamations and weak forms and encourage them to use such forms in social contexts (Dixon-Krauss, 1996).

Having known that English is an intonational language, pronunciation teachers find it highly important for ELLs to learn its prosodic structure so that they can produce intelligible speech and understand spoken utterances. Hence, the learners should listen to the prosodic signals which indicate a great variety of thought groups and try to employ the same signals to form their own utterances. Significantly, practicing the use of the prosodic pyramid components is the key catalyst that helps progressively develop the learners' speaking as well as listening skills. That is, the more they practice using these forms, the more capable they become to produce intelligible and comprehensible speech. Accordingly, the present research explains the practicality of using the prosodic features in pronunciation instruction and offers a set of feasible strategies which can be implemented by EFL pronunciation teachers.

2. English Pronunciation Teaching in the Past and the Present

In the late 1960s, and through the 1970s, researchers were intensively investigating the significance of pronunciation instruction, the feasibility of teaching it directly, its focus, and the appropriate teaching techniques. As a result, many programs had surfaced with a focus on vocabulary and structure, thus resulting in decreasing attention to pronunciation instruction if not being abandoned altogether. There was evident dissatisfaction with the manipulation of contrived and unrealistic pronunciation teaching techniques, materials and activities which were considered as inadequate and did not meet the learners' needs (Morley, 1991; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

On the contrary, during the 1980s and 1990s, pronunciation instruction witnessed dramatic changes that researchers tackled different aspects of pronunciation instruction, the most important of which are phonemics and intonation. Additionally, they tried to design more developed and context-oriented class activities which tend to be more learner-centered than teacher-centered ones. This new trend was

characterized with promoting the significance of context, meaningful communication, learners-centered activities, prosodic features, sound-spelling awareness and intelligibility, all of which facilitate developing the ELLs' communicative competence (Morley, 1991). The continuously increasing number of speakers of English as an ESL/EFL has definitely urged developing pronunciation teaching materials (Jenkins, 2000; Derwing & Munro, 2005).

Teaching pronunciation has witnessed a series of changes over time. Most of these changes highly stressed that pronunciation teachers should focus on teaching spoken language in terms of the phonetic research findings, i.e., teachers must be efficiently trained in phonetics. This is also true of ELLs who should learn phonetics for it helps them progressively develop their speaking skill (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, 2010). However, the audio-lingual and situational approaches to pronunciation teaching brought about an overarching change in teaching English pronunciation by eliminating teaching articulatory phonetics as an essential component of pronunciation instruction. Instead, they promoted interactive teaching of English sound system in communicative contexts. At the present, pronunciation instruction is still influenced by the prevalence of the communicative approach. According to this approach, phoneticians and phonologists claimed that there would be a "threshold level of pronunciation" for ELLs. If the learners' levels were below this limit, they would develop communication problems regardless of how well they mastered other language aspects, such as vocabulary and grammar (Ur, 1991; Hahn, 2004; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

2.1 The Utility of Teaching English Pronunciation

Generally speaking, pronunciation instruction aims at supporting the ELLs to efficiently communicate with other speakers of English in their environment, whether they are NSs or NNSs (non-native speakers), rather than training them to master an identical native accent (Morley, 1991; Ur, 1991). It facilitates:

1. Understanding natural native speech: it comprises teaching and practicing isolated sounds as well as prosodic features of natural connected speech. Consequently, it facilitates understanding the NSs' formal and informal characteristics of connected speech, such as, redundancy and contracted grammatical structures (Hahn, 2004, p. 202). For instance, primary stress placement helps the listeners to detect the new and contrastive information. To illustrate, in the following brief dialogue, person B introduces new information accented by primary stress:

A: Are you ready?
B: I am ALways ready.
I prefer a BLUE pen to GREEN pen.

2. Increasing speech intelligibility and comprehensibility: continuous training along with deliberate corrections can efficiently and progressively improve the learners' English pronunciation (Ur, 1991). Moreover, teaching the students where to use the features of connected speech can help them properly comprehend the natural native speech (Morley, 1991; Roach, 2009).
3. Developing the learners' phonological awareness of sound-letter correspondence which is considered to be essential to improving their reading and writing skills. I helps learners learn to read or decode certain letter combinations differently, since some English alphabetic letters do not have one-to-one letter-sound correspondence. For example, the letter 'c' can be pronounced either as /k/, as in 'cake' or /s/, as in 'cent' so that the correct pronunciation could be misleading when based on spelling (Ur, 1991, p. 56).

2.2 Teaching a Model English Accent

As far as English pronunciation learning is concerned, most ELLs strive to speak with a native-like accent. However, a desire as such might be affected by several factors, the most important of which are learner's age, the accent type they would like to master and how often they are exposed to it, and how far the teachers are capable of modelling it to the learners (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Roach, 2009; Richards, Schmidt, Kendricks, & Younkyu, 2002). Definitely, it is the pronunciation teachers' responsibility to select an appropriate model accent and train their students to use it. At this point, it is essential for teachers to realize the difference between selecting an accent either as a norm or a model. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), as stated in Jenkins (2000), explained that if an accent is used as a norm, it is very strongly related to the concept of correctness which may burden the students and this directs their efforts to achieve an unrealistic goal, i.e., speaking English with an identical native accent. At the same time, it requires them to imitate certain language structures dispatched from meaningful context. On the other hand, if an accent is chosen as a model, this implies that it can be used as a reference or guide which the learners are encouraged to approximate while they are using English in meaningfully interactive situations. Consequently, the model accent which the present research will focus on is the Received Pronunciation (RP). It is described as "the present-day version of the accent that has been used as the standard in phoneticians' descriptions of

the pronunciation of British English for centuries" (Roach, 2004, p. 239). It is spoken in southeast England and widely accepted, for it is used in the majority of English dictionaries, easily understood by Iraqi Arab learners and spoken by most Iraqi teachers (Ur, 1991; Jenkins, 2000; Roach, 2009).

2.3 English Phonetics and Phonology: Teaching and Learning Considerations

As mentioned above, the learners' L1 may affect the acquisition of the target language pronunciation in terms of both segmental and suprasegmental features. Consequently, learners of very distant languages encounter some problems of acquiring the sound system of the target language. In the case of Arabic phonological system which is distinctly different from that of English, a number of difficulties may reduce Arabic learners' performance accuracy. The difficulties can be classified into the following three categories. First, the L1 sounds that do not have cognate L2 sounds, or vice versa, for instance, Iraqi Arabic learners encounter phonetic and phonological problems with learning sounds like /v/, /p/, /ŋ/, /əʊ/, /ə/. Phonologically, these sounds do not have English counterparts in Arabic and the pronunciation of some of them varies in accordance with the context in which they occur. Second, the difference between the sound combination rules (phonotactic rules of sound clusters) in L1 and L2. For example, Iraqi learners find it uneasy to pronounce sound combinations, such as /-fθs/ in fifths /fifθs/ or /-nθs/ in months /mʌnθs/. They also mispronounce sounds occurring in specific phonetic contexts. For example, the ed-suffix of the past tense when attached to a verb ending with a voiceless consonant should be pronounced as /t/, as in looked /lʊkt/, but most Iraqi learners pronounce it as /lʊkɪd/ (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992 in Thanasoulas, 2009). Third, the transference of L1 stress and intonation patterns into L2. The supra-segmental aspect is the most problematic part of the English sound system, for the learners are unfamiliar with how the stressed and unstressed syllables are enunciated so that they can verbally transfer from L1 melodic pattern to L2 rhythmic sequences. For instance, in English, a stressed syllable is more prominent than an unstressed one. On the contrary, in Arabic, unstressed syllables can be prominently pronounced for they may contain long vowels or diphthongs. In a similar way, intonation patterns are misused for the learners are usually unaware of intonation influences on the utterance message, i.e., the speaker's intentions or implied meanings (Jesry, 2005; Modisett & Luter, 2006). Consequently, it is the teacher's responsibility to support the students to overcome this barrier. Obviously, they need to practice using the target intonational patterns in order to be able to understand other speakers and be understood by their listeners. Gilbert

(2008) stressed that "without a sufficient, threshold-level mastery of the English prosodic system, learners' intelligibility and listening comprehensibility will not advance, no matter how much effort is made drilling individual sounds" (p. 8).

3. The English Prosody System

Generally, the prosodic features comprise length, accent and stress, pitch, tone and intonation, and rhythm in addition to several others (Cruttenden, 1997; Wennerstrom, 2001). The explanation and enumeration of the prosodic features were problematic and, as a result, were neglected for a long time. Focus, instead, was directed to segmental aspects of speech pertaining to vowels and consonants. In recent years, more attention has been given to the study of prosodic features; yet, there has not been a general agreement on any specific definitions or descriptions of them. Consequently, it has become difficult to clearly sketch out the overall components of the entire prosodic system. Linguistically, the word prosody is derived from the Greek 'prosodía' which means 'song sung to music' or 'sung accompaniment,' or 'pros odein' which means 'with the song.' As a result, both meanings of prosody signify the music or melody that accompanies spoken language (Heuven, 1994, p. 3; Fox, 2000, p. 1). According to Keating (2003) prosody can be defined as "the organization of speech into a hierarchy of units or domains, some of which are more prominent than others" (p.119). Thus, the prosodic features apply to phonological units larger than a single segment, as in phrases, sentences, etc. In fact, it is difficult to make a decisively comprehensive list of the prosodic features on which all researchers agree (Fox, 2000; Shriberg & Kent, 2003). As a matter of fact, all prosody components collectively contribute to the mapping of the prosodic structure of spoken English. Hence, the prosodic features are intricately linked in the sense that it is very difficult to define them separately (Keating, 2003). Because of this overlapping correlation, the present research mainly focuses on the major prosodic components of rhythm and intonation, such as length stress and accent.

Regarding length, it refers either to the duration the speaker needs to utter a linguistic unit (e.g., a segment, syllable, word, etc.) or the time needed to perceive a linguistic unit by a listener. Loudness is articulatorily described as the breathy force needed to utter a linguistic unit by a speaker. It is acoustically associated with intensity whose variations are affected by the amount of pressure of the air coming up from the lungs and used in producing an utterance. Loudness tends to be difficult to analyze as a prosodic feature because of its disparate impact on the enunciation of the syllabic units in a given utterance. Functionally, it distinguishes stressed syllables from the unstressed ones in the sense

that stressed syllables are perceived as louder than the unstressed syllables in such situations as anger or emphasis. Pitch is associated with intonation and refers to the rate of vibration of the vocal folds (Cruttenden, 1997).

More importantly, prominence is the prosodic feature that interweaves, length, pitch and loudness together to give distinct lexical meanings (e.g., below and billow) or denotes different grammatical categories (present (noun) and present (verb)) or indicates the information contained in a prominent syllable by making it stands out, for example, JOHN opened the door. Thus, prominence is a combination of these three prosodic features: length, loudness and pitch. Obviously, prominence is a significant feature (prominence), since connected speech sequentially consists of a series of prominent and non-prominent syllables. Sequences as such form the rhythmical structure and outline the melodic pattern of spoken utterances. Thus, intonation cannot be discussed without clarifying accent and rhythm (Cruttenden, 1997).

According to Cruttenden (1997, p. 7), the three previously-mentioned features make up the syllable prominence; the most effective is pitch and the least effective is loudness. There is no systematic difference in the use of the terms prominence, stress and accent. However, stress relates to breath-force, whereas accent relates to pitch, so prominence means stress, whereas accent refers to prominence where pitch is effective. Moreover, stress is a prerequisite prosodic feature to account for intonation patterns and this is where it is recurrently referred to. Every English word has stress, particularly when said in isolation, while some grammatical categories, such as articles, short prepositions, auxiliary verbs and personal pronouns in specific contexts are unstressed when occurring in connected speech. On the other hand, the most stressed grammatical categories are the content words, such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs, etc. Ladefoged (2006) stated that "a stressed syllable is pronounced with a greater amount of energy than unstressed syllable and is more prominent in the flow of speech" (p.243). To sum up, prosody constituents collectively make up the melodic structure of spoken utterances by phrasing smaller linguistic units into larger ones, stressing syllables within words and accentuating phrases for focus and emphasis purposes and distributing tones over structurally various linguistic units (Keating, 2003).

3.1 Rhythm

Generally, every language has a characteristic rhythmical architecture, although it is of less familiarity because it is not explicitly expressed; rather it is articulatorily enhanced and perceptually magnified (Tuan & An, 2010). Regarding rhythm, it is a complex prosodic feature

which involves accent, length and tempo. It can be affected by a number of factors, such as vowel length contrasts, vowel reducibility, the patterns of syllable structures that can be stressed (Fox, 2000; Ladefoged, 2006). Brown (1990), as cited in (Tuan & An, 2010, p. 14), explained that "rhythm is part of the general look of how the speakers of their language speak it" (p. 43). The English language is described as a stress-timed language that has a unique rhythmical structure. Fundamentally, it comprises rhythmic groups in which stressed syllables evenly occur at relatively constant intervals within a given speech stream regardless of the number of the intervening unstressed syllables (Cruttenden, 1997).

Consequently, English utterances can be analyzed into rhythmic units called feet. Each foot is made either of only a stressed syllable, or a stressed syllable and the following unstressed syllable(s) up to the next stress. For example, 'down' /ˈdaʊn/ is a rhythmic unit composed of only a stressed syllable, whereas the clause 'walk down the path to the end of the canal' /ˈwɔ:k ˈdaʊn ðə ˈpɑ:θ tə ði ˈend əv kəˈnæl/, /ˈdaʊn ðə / is a foot comprising stressed and unstressed syllables (Roach, 2009, p. 107). Moreover, the feet within the very same rhythm unit share relatively the same duration. For instance, the stressed and the following unstressed syllables in 'ninety' /ˈnaɪntɪ/ and /ˈnaɪntɪəθ/ 'ninetieth' have the same duration of the stressed syllable in 'nine' /ˈnaɪn/ (O'Connor, 1980, p. 96; Roach, 2009). Thus, within a given rhythm unit, such as 'you can see them' /ju: kən ˈsi: ðəm/, the unstressed syllables after that the stress should not be enunciated as quickly as the one(s) occurring before it, because the stressed syllable and the following unstressed syllable(s) in the same foot share nearly the same duration (O'Connor, 1980, p. 97).

Avery and Ehrlich (1992), as mentioned in (Tuan & An, 2010), indicated that the "differentiation between stressed and unstressed syllables, the reduction of function words, the linking of words and phrases, etc., all combine to give English its characteristic rhythm"(p. 73), and this concept definitely reflects the close correlation between rhythm and stress. O'Connor (1980) stressed that foreign learners need to learn how to pronounce rhythmic units. He indicated that ELLs cannot produce every single syllable in a rhythmic unit with the same duration because this results in "the effect of a machine-gun firing and makes the utterances very hard to understand" (p. 100).

3.2 Intonation

Crystal (2003) defined intonation as "the distinctive use of patterns of pitch, or melody" (p. 241). Pitch variation helps impart various thoughts, attitudes and emotions. In most languages, pitch variation is used to convey linguistic information like marking spoken sentences boundaries. For instance, a speaker finalizes the sentence by declining voice pitch (Gilbert, 2008). According to Roach (2009), intonation is considered as

the most vital part of suprasegmental phonology (prosodic phonology), and it is interdependently related to pitch component. During the act of speaking, the speakers regularly change the pitch of their voices in the sense that they speak with either high or low pitch whose linguistic content is important to understand what is being said. Pitch is perceptually perceived by the listener and is important to signal the contrasts of certain linguistic units within a given speech stream. As it was previously stated, pitch is constantly changing and it can be described in terms of distinctive tones which could be level or moving (falling, rising, rising-falling, and falling-rising) tones. However, moving tones are used more frequently than the level tones. For example, 'yes' can be spoken with a falling tone, in which pitch slopes from high to low, to indicate a definite ending. English speakers have a tone range from which they choose the appropriate one that delivers the intended message. Since it is used by NSs, it is recommended that adult ELLs need to learn the necessary intonation rules to enable them to improve their speaking and communicative skills so that they can speak naturally and smoothly like NSs. There are simple tones (level, fall and rise), and complex tones (fall-rise and rise-fall). It is worth noting that there are more complex tones which are not often used.

3.2.1 The Simple Tone Patterns

1. Level: This tone is restrictively used to say routine utterances that indicate something uninteresting or boring. For instance, the tone a teacher uses when calling the names of students. In a similar way the students may use the same tone when routinely answering back (Roach, 2009, p. 125).
2. Fall: It is used when the speaker definitely finalizes his/ her speech in the sense that there is no additional information to be added. For example (Roach, 2009, p.123):

   A: Have you posted the letter?
   B: \Yes
3. Rise: It indicates that the speaker is about to add additional information, as in the following brief interaction between A 'Excuse me' and B answers 'Yes' which equates 'what do you want?' Another example, the speakers use the rising tone as they continue adding information as follows (Roach, 2009, p. 123):
   A:Do you know where the bank is?
   B: You walk straightforward…
   A: /Yes
   B: Turn left at the first roundabout…
   A: /Yes
   B: The bank is the third building on the left. If speaker B answered

no with a falling tone, this definitely signals that the speaker is not interested in completing the conversation and there is nothing to be added.

3.2.2 The Complex Tone Patterns

1. Fall-Rise: It is widely used by NSs to denote an agreement with reservation. For example (Roach, 2009, p. 124):
   A: I have hear that it is a good school.
   B: ∨Yes
   Speaker B may not completely agree with speaker A and is supposed to give an explanation for partial agreement, or speaker B may show limited agreement with speaker A or hesitation to indicate something hidden.
2. Rise-Fall: The NSs approve, disapprove something by using a rise-fall tone. It helps showing relatively strong feelings, such as surprise. Thus, it is an importantly expressive tone that ELLs need to learn. For example (Roach, 2009, p. 125):
   A: I think you said it was the best so far.
   B: ∧Yes.

3.2.3 The Three Ts of English Intonation

Wells (2006, p. 6) divided English intonation structure into three systems: "tonality, tonicity and tone." The first indicates how speakers group the linguistic units 'chunks' within spoken utterances; the second signals the focus of the spoken utterance to be accented; and the third denotes the tones (pitch movement) used by the speakers. Regarding tonality, it reflects the divisions of a speech stream into chunks known as 'intonation phrases' (IP). Within a spoken utterance, each IP has a specific intonation pattern or 'tune.' A sentence may contain more than one IP, as in the example which contains two IPs:Because I love literature (IP#1)| I am reading Dickens' novels (IP#2). However, different speakers tend to group IPs in different ways. For example, the following sentence can be enunciated as a single IP, or it can be differently broken up into more than one IP as follows (Wells, 2006, p. 7):

We don't know who she is.
We don't know | who she is.
We | don't know who she is.
We don't | know who she is.
We | don't know | who she is.

The second T in the English intonation structure is tonicity. It indicates the focus of the speaker's message in the sense that it directs the listener's attention to the most important piece of information the speaker intends to deliver. The stressed syllable(s) of the focus word receive the accent, i.e., it is highlighted by receiving pitch prominence. Within the IP, the last accent known as the 'nucleus' or 'tone-unit' marks the end of the focus unit in a spoken utterance and, at the same time, reflects the pitch movement (Wells, 2006; Roach, 2009). The nucleus may possibly occur in any part of the IP. In 'I think it was ri\diculous', the syllable -dic- represents the nucleus and denotes pitch movement. In addition, the syllable -dic- and the word 'ridiculous' receive the accent (Wells, 2006, p. 7).

In addition to the accent or the nucleus, the IP may contain other constituents including tail, onset, head and prehead. The tail comprises all the unaccented syllables after the nucleus, but if the IP ends with a nucleus placed on the last syllable, the tail does not exist anymore. Within the same IP, the nucleus might be preceded by an accent known as the onset; and the IP part starting from the onset up to the last syllable preceding the nucleus is called the head. Moreover, the onset can be preceded by some IP parts to form what is called the prehead which does not contain any accented syllables (Wells, 2006). Obviously, the boundaries of the IP components do not always correspond to word boundaries, but they always do so with syllable boundaries. The following example illustrates the IP components (prehead, onset, head and tail) (Wells, 2006, p. 9):

We're ˈplanning to fly to ˈI taly
Prehead head Nucleus Tail

The final T in a given IP is the tone. It significantly denotes the pitch movement (melody) that accompanies the spoken utterances. As it was previously mentioned, they can either be simple tones (fall, rise, level) or complex ones (fall-rise and rise-fall). Thus, to indicate the finality of a piece of information, a fall tone is used. On the contrary, rise and rise-fall tones signal that there is more information to be added by the speaker, or highlight the speaker's message implications (O'Connor, 1980; Wells, 2006; Roach, 2009).

4. Intonation Functions

English has characteristic intonation patterns differently exploited by NSs for various purposes. However, because of the apparent differences between the Arabic and English intonation patterns, this may decrease the learners' speech intelligibility and, in turn, may bring about communication breakdown. In other words, intonation patterns are

important to understand the speech of NSs and perceive the message implied. Hence, ELLs are encouraged to practice these patterns so that they can avoid making likely misunderstandings. That is, learners as well as teachers are recommended to considerably focus on intonation patterns and their versatile functions performed in real conversational situations. Wells (2006, p. 11) reported six main functions of intonation; these are the "attitudinal, grammatical, accentual, discourse, psychological and indexical functions."

Within the attitudinal function, pitch movement helps speakers convey their attitudes and emotions, such as pleasure, anger, surprise, i.e., using tones facilitates expressing opinions and miscellaneous feelings. Intonation also performs a grammatical (demarcative) function. That is, it can be used to mark the grammatical unit boundaries of spoken utterances by using tonality the same way punctuation does in written texts. It also facilitates discerning types of clauses, such as statements, interrogatives and commands. Moreover, it helps identify variously vague linguistic structures, and this syntactic function is essentially fulfilled by using tones (Wells, 2006). For example, an encouraging statement and surprise can be expressed by using rising and rising-falling tones, respectively, as in 'It won't /hurt' and 'you were ʌfirst' (Roach, 2009, p. 147).

More importantly, intonation helps the speakers indicate old and new information and, simultaneously, focus their listeners' attention on the new information in their speech. To put it differently, it highlights certain parts of the spoken utterance rather than the other ones in the same utterance, and this is usually done by using tonicity in addition to the placement of some other accents (Wells, 2006). In this respect, Wells (2006) stated that "we combine accentuation with the choice of tone to present some longer stretches of the message as constituting the foreground of the picture we paint, while leaving other stretches as background" (p. 11). Thus the speaker assumes that the listeners already know specific information (old information); therefore, the speaker will place focus on the new information, as in 'Philip just could not make it work | but /John succeeded' (Cruttenden, 1997, p. 81). Focusing information within spoken utterances is one of the most significant functions of intonation (accentual function) that should be basically learned by ELLs (Roach, 2009).

Additionally, speech stream coherence can be preserved by using intonation patterns in the sense that they smoothly connect clauses and sentences together in discourse. More precisely, it cohesively organizes informative linguistic units within a speech stream in a way that enables speakers to either add more information or finalize their speech. This is known as the discourse function of intonation. Organizing speech into relatively short, but connected units helps comprehend what is being said

and facilitate speaking and recalling information. This is recognized as the psychological function of intonation which is based on the use of tonality components. Finally, intonation performs an indexical function in that it helps reveal the speaker's personal characteristics or speaking style (identity). For instance, a mother uses distinctive speech music different from that used by a teacher, or a newsreader speaks with a melody distinguished from that employed by a sports commentator (Wells, 2006; Roach, 2009).

Having known the significance of intonation and its impact on varying the message meaning, teachers as well as ELLs should seriously consider learning the intonation patterns. However, this can be easily achieved by condensing the divergently multiple prosodic features within a pyramid shape so as to facilitate the teaching and the learning processes.

5. An Overview of the Prosody Pyramid Concept

Undoubtedly, the manipulation of supra-segmental features in general and prosodic features in particular are of paramount importance for developing the ELLs' listening and speaking skills. However, teachers as well as learners consider learning the English prosodic system as an intimidating subject because of the bulky rules of prosodic features to be learned and the intricately overlapping correlations among them. To overcome this conundrum, Gilbert (2008) presented a practical approach to teach pronunciation that combines both the prosodic and segmental features known as the prosodic pyramid. This approach primarily focuses on teaching the main prosodic features and, at the same time, clarifies the segmental aspects within the same frame work.

Interestingly, the prosody pyramid offers a simplified clarification of the English prosody system by means of a pyramid shape in which the prosodic system is divided into four levels starting from the base to the top: "the thought group, focus word, stress and peak." The four levels are displayed within *Figure 2* in p. 33. The thought group level forms the base of the pyramid and comprises a speech stream which can be a sentence, a clause or a phrase. The stream of speech as such can be superficially heard as a smooth flowing of utterances (Cruttenden, 1997; Gilbert, 2008, p. 10). In fact, a speech stream is made of sequential pulses (prominences) each of which may last for a relatively shorter or longer time. It is considerably important for ELLs to know that the prosodic information of the spoken English is as significant as the punctuation of the written English to indicate thought group boundaries. Accordingly, there are three prosodic markers of the thought group: the pause, the drop in pitch and the lengthening of the last stressed syllable. The pause indicates the end of a thought group, particularly in slow careful speech while in rapid speech, the pitch drop signals the end of a given thought

group. Additionally, the duration of pitch drop indicates different types of endings. As a result, a short intonation drop signals an end of a thought group within a sentence, whereas a longer pitch drop refers to the end of the whole sentence. The longest drop indicates the other speaker's turn to speak. That is, the last syllable is lengthened to denote that the thought group is completed (Gilbert, 2008; Roach, 2009).

Due to the enormous number of rules which mark the beginning and the end of the infinite number of thought groups, ELLs find it difficult to memorize these rules. Thus, Gilbert (2008) recommends that learners should listen to the prosodic signals including various thought groups and try to use the same signals when producing their own utterances. It is also recommended that teachers should familiarize the learners with the prosodic signals by getting them involved in analyzing recorded thought groups so that they become aware of the information structure and be able to identify the thought group boundaries.

The second level in the prosody pyramid is the focus word, i.e., it is the most prominent word. In other words, it is the word whose meaning (message) is emphasized via intonation. The meaning of a focus word can be emphasized in terms of contrast, i.e., it is highlighted via a characteristic intonation. The highlighted part of the thought group indicates the new information, while the rest of the thought group refers to the background information which is already known by the listeners. Unfortunately, ELLs pay less attention to such signals of emphasis. There are several focus rules that the ELLs have to learn. One of these rules is that the focus word in the thought group is usually a content word like verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc. as opposed to structure words like pronouns, prepositions, etc. which are not usually focused. Thus, the structure words are reduced or weakly pronounced by the native speakers when they speak rapidly. Learning to use the weak forms of structure words is another difficulty foreign learners may face. However, the more they practice using these forms, the more aware of these forms they become. The teachers may employ various materials, such as poems, chants, etc. to familiarize learners with reduced forms and encourage them to use such forms while speaking (Cruttenden, 1997; Wells, 2006; Gilbert, 2008).

Within the focus word, there is one prominent syllable which receives stress. It is this prominent syllable which highlights the 'peak information' in a given utterance. Thus, it is important to pronounce the sounds of the stressed syllable clearly. However, ELLs do not pay sufficient attention to the importance of stress placement with the vocabulary they learn and this is the reason why they cannot perceive such vocabulary items when spoken by NSs. Thus, they have to know where to place stress within the new words they learn. There are several clues that can help the learner recognize the stressed syllable in the focus

word. These are loudness, vowel length, vowel clarity and pitch change. Efficient listening can help ELLs recognize the elements which characterize stressed syllables and, in turn, recognize the focus word, i.e., they become able to perceive the message emphasized (Gilbert, 2008; Roach, 2009).

Figure 2 Prosody Pyramid

(Gilbert, 2008, p.p. 10)

6. Implementing Prosodic Features in Pronunciation Instruction

Obviously, prosody plays a remarkable role in organizing information structure and highlighting the topic of spoken utterances in addition to the other functions previously mentioned. It is widely acknowledged nowadays that the teaching of pronunciation is more than training the learners to produce single sounds. Instead, recent approaches have emphasized the utility of teaching the segmental aspects within a larger framework focusing on the supra-segmental aspects like prosody (Heuven, 1994; Wennerstrom, 2001; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Since the most important objective of pronunciation instruction is to increase the learners' intelligibility and comprehensibility which are essential requirements of successful communication, it has been pointed out by many researchers (e.g., Morley, 1991; Hahn, 2004; Hardison, 2004; Jenkins, 2004; Derwing & Munro, 2005) that effective pronunciation instruction should focus on teaching the English prosodic features.

However, pronunciation teachers should not neglect teaching the segmental features. Alternatively, they are recommended to identify their students' needs and choose what to teach in terms of the order in which pronunciation aspects should be presented (Gilbert, 2008). In this respect, Celce-Mucia et al. (2010) indicated that "teachers need to do diagnostic work and be selective in what they include in pronunciation syllabus. We agree that prosody is important, but segmental should not be ignored,

either" (p. 33). Thus, pronunciation teachers can efficiently fulfill the learners' needs by manipulating miscellaneous collections of communication-oriented and collaboration-based teaching techniques as well as practice activities.

7. Implementing Digital Movie Making and Videoconferencing as Interactive Teaching Tools

Recently, communication is heavily supported by more advanced technology. Interestingly, technology has been drastically developed in that it has become an influential handy tool greatly affecting teaching strategies. In fact, digital movie production (e.g., MovieMaker and iMovie) and videoconferencing software are examples of interactive technology tools which can be manipulated to help learners properly master the prosodic system in socially interactive settings when suitably exploited both in and out of class (Hofer & Owings-Swan, 2005). Digital movie making, according to Hofer and Owings-Swan (2005), is deemed as an interactively engaging social learning activity. Students can script-out and act in English short movies, create original screen plays and documentary videos and the like. It can be broadly defined as "the use of a variety of media (images, sound, text, video, and narration) to convey understanding" (p. 104). Teaching pronunciation within a prosodic framework interestingly focuses on improving the learners' listening and speaking skills so that they can discriminate not only discrete sounds, but also be able to identify and comprehend the prosodic structure of spoken utterances. In order to motivate students to enthusiastically explore the selected native speech excerpts, familiarize them with the content, help them develop best understanding of the speech prosodic mapping and encourage them to manipulate prosodic features, digital videotaping can be used as a practical scaffolding strategy for teaching English prosody.

More importantly, it significantly promotes learner-based activities in which the teacher performs as a guide. Thus, the learners either individually or collaboratively participate in producing digital videos portraying communicative situations related to their personal experiences (Henderson, Auld, Russell, Seah, Fernand, & Romeo, 2010). For instance, the student groups collaborate to write the scripts of their own dialogues which simulate real life situations (e.g., at the dentist's for an appointment). They may start conversing by practice using the intonation patterns they learned. The teacher will be responsible for videotaping their performance. During the show, the teacher will videotape a series of scenes which portray the conversations, and he/she will simultaneously ask provoking questions to motivate students to keep using the target intonation forms. In an amusing activity after the show ends, the students can participate in discussion groups to form three sentences to be

enunciated with the target intonation patterns and properly describe their approval of a particular group video or movie. Using movie making activity has been found to be very beneficial. That is, it vitally motivates ELLs, promotes students collaboration, and develops their learning autonomy and stimulates creative thinking (Peters, 1996; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Hofer & Owings-Swan, 2005).

Regarding videoconferencing (e.g., Skype, DimDim, Citrix GoToMeeting 4.5, Netviewer Meet 6.0, Cisco WebEx Meeting Center 8.5, Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2007, etc.**),** it refers to group of downloadable open source software which facilitates oral-aural-visual interactions. It promotes interactions between distant groups of people (e.g., language learner groups). Generally, for educational purposes, videoconferencing proves to be quite useful in the sense that it supports teachers and students to interact and exchange tremendous resources as well as knowledge via communicating with each other through a video conference while existing in distant locations. More importantly, it is considered as a very engaging and helpful technology tool to language learners (Wang, 2004). In educational settings, videoconferencing can be practically utilized in training language learners in out-of- class learning activities, i.e., it saves effort and time. For example, the pronunciation teacher and the learners share the act of preparing a tentative list of topics to be discussed in a series of sequential video conference meetings which are guided by the teacher so that he/she ensures that the learners practice the assigned prosodic features and provide support whenever necessary. Furthermore, with the advent of the videoconferencing technology, people all over the world become more interconnected. Consequently, video conferencing supports global understanding for it promotes a productive cultural dialogue. Specifically, it supports Iraqi ELLs to interact and get acquainted with other NSs and NNSs of English so that they can share ideas and experiences related to diverse cultural concepts and conventions. Thus, they get opportunity to listen to different English varieties through digital interaction medium (Wang, 2004).

8. Methodology

8.1 Participants

The participants selected to take part in the questionnaire were 801. All of the learners are students in Day and Night studies, Department of English, College of Arts, University of Basrah. They were born in the city of Basrah where they still live. They speak Iraqi colloquial Arabic in Basrah. The participants were of different ages; they were between 19 and 51 years. All of the participants had normal

articulatory structure as well as normal hearing and sight levels. See table 1 for more details about the participants.

Table 1 Details about Participants

Categories	Study Year	Study Type	Gender	Age Ranges
Year 1	496			(19-23 years) 653
Year 2	286			(24-31 years) 101
Day Study		388		(32-36 years) 19
Night Study		398		(37-41 years) 3
Male			199	(42-46 years) 7
Female			567	(47-51 years) 18

8.2 Data Collection and Analysis

A questionnaire about prosody-based learning English pronunciation was designed. It included four essential parts:

1. English Pronunciation Learning challenges
2. Evaluation of Prosody-Based Learning of English Pronunciation
3. English Pronunciation learning strategies and tools
4. Participant Feedback on Prosody-based Learning of English Pronunciation

Each part comprised 2-4 questions which were answered over a scale of on a scale of five levels: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree. The exception was only the last part which focused on collecting a feedback based on the learners' perspective. The data collected was statistically summarised and organized via calculating percentages to identify the frequency of occurrence of participants' answers and facilitate setting comparisons of participants' attitudes.

8.3 Results and Discussion

8.3.1 English Pronunciation challenges

This part of the questionnaire included five items about the difficulties which EFL learners may face during learning English pronunciation. These difficulties included learning singleton sounds, types of words to be stressed, tuning sentences correctly to sound native-like, making incorrect/ misplaced pauses during connected speech, and negative interference between L1 and L2 accents. The results revealed that most learner 69.8% misplaced word/syllable stress; while learning the production of singleton sounds formed the least difficulty for 36.3% of learners. The results also showed that 62.3% of participants misused pauses within and between sentences, whereas 52% of them incorrectly tuned sentences and instead produced robotic-like speech. More importantly, 57.3% of learners

struggle with learning the English accent, because of the strong effect of their Arabic accent. Therefore, they have been speaking English with an overtly Arabic accent. The difficulties which cause ELLs to avoid or abandon learning English pronunciation could essentially be attributed either to the learners' incapability of mastering/ acquiring a native accent, or to the tedious mechanical drills and decontextualized exercises which were used for teaching pronunciation (Morley, 1991; Derwing & Munro, 2005). Piske, MacKay, and Fledge (2001), as cited in Lightbown and Spada (2006) explained that the linguistic distance between L1 and L2 evidently affects L2 pronunciation. The dissimilarity degree between the phonological aspects of L1 and L2, particularly, the suprasegmental aspects have a negative effect on the learners' ability to acquire the L2 accent. This definitely fortifies instruction tendency towards focusing on teaching prosody rather than teaching merely isolated sounds void of context. See Table 2 and Figure 1for more illustrations.

Regarding the problems with individual sounds, Iraqi Arabic learners encounter phonetic and phonological problems with learning sounds like /v/, /p/, /ŋ/, /əʊ/, /ə/. Phonologically, these sounds do not have English counterparts in Arabic and the pronunciation of some of them varies in accordance with the context in which they occur. For example, the velar nasal consonant /ŋ/, which does not have an Arabic counterpart, is always mixed up with the alveolar nasal /n/. Phonetically, /ŋ/-sound articulation is also difficult for it requires raising the back of the tongue to be pressed against the soft palate. Additionally, Iraqi Arabic learners often misarticulate the voiceless bilabial plosive consonant /p/ in the sense that they usually pronounce it void of aspiration which is a very important phonetic feature that differentiates /p/ from /b/. Consequently, they pronounce a word like pin /pɪn/ as /bɪn/ (Jesry, 2005).

Phonotactically, Iraqi learners find it uneasy to pronounce sound combinations, such as /-fθs/ in fifths /fifθs/ or /-nθs/ in months /mʌnθs/. They also mispronounce sounds occurring in specific phonetic contexts. For example, the ed-suffix of the past tense when attached to a verb ending with a voiceless consonant should be pronounced as /t/, as in looked /lʊkt/, but most Iraqi learners pronounce it as /lʊkɪd/. A further example, /ŋ/ may not be followed by /g/ depending on the morphological structure of the word in which it clusters. Iraqi learners always pronounce it with a following /g/. It is worth noting that some English native speakers occasionally do the same; yet, it is disapproved. Moreover, Arabic learners find difficulty in mastering the rules that restrict the pronunciation of /r/ or /l/

variants, such as dark and light /l/-sound allophones, occurring in certain contexts (Wells, 2000; Jesry, 2005).

8.3.2 Evaluation of Prosody-Based Learning of English Pronunciation

The second part of the questionnaire highlighted the role of prosody teaching in helping learners improve their English pronunciation. Thus, the results showed that nearly 65% of the participants realised the significance of learning a suprasegmental feature, such as intonation in addition to learning singleton sounds. On the other hand 5.7% did not realise the importance of learning intonation. More to the point, 69% of learners indicated that learning prosodic features helped them confidently identify and emphasise the information/content words in spoken utterances. Learning prosodic features also enhanced improving speaking fluency during continuous speech production. Therefore, nearly 70.6% of participants positively responded to this option. They also extremely emphasised that the technique of imitating /shadowing various sentences melodies was feasibly more helpful than merely imitating isolated sounds. The results magnificently indicated that prosed-based learning helped nearly 64.8% of participants felt more comfortable and confident when taking part in daily real situation English conversations. See Table 4 and Figure 2.

The suprasegmental aspect is the most problematic part of the English sound system, for the learners are unfamiliar with how the stressed and unstressed syllables are enunciated so that they can verbally transfer from L1 melodic pattern to L2 rhythmic sequences. Most of the learners speak English in a way that sounds foreign and unnatural, thus confusing their listeners' comprehensibility. For instance, in English, a stressed syllable is more prominent than an unstressed one. On the contrary, in Arabic, unstressed syllables can be prominently pronounced for they may contain long vowels or diphthongs. In a similar way, intonation patterns are misused for the learners are usually unaware of intonation influences on the utterance message, i.e., the speaker's intentions or implied meanings (Jesry, 2005; Modisett & Luter, 2006). In addition, most of the learners pay an insufficient attention to the significance of intonation. Instead, they focus on utterance grammatical structure and vocabulary items that they become preoccupied with avoiding making mistakes in these aspects of language. In this respect, Gilbert (2008) clarifies that "it is common for students to feel uneasy when they hear themselves speak with the rhythm of L2. They found that they 'sound foreign' to themselves, and this is troubling for them. Although the uneasiness is usually on an unconscious level, it can be a major barrier to improved intelligibility in the L2" (p. 1). Consequently, it

is the teacher's responsibility to support the students to overcome this barrier by cajoling them to abandon the unrealistic goal of acquiring an identical native accent. Alternatively, they should focus on the basic elements of spoken English that increase their speech intelligibility and comprehensibility. Obviously, they need to practice using the target intonational patterns in order to be able to understand other speakers and be understood by their listeners. Gilbert (2008) stressed that "without a sufficient, threshold-level mastery of the English prosodic system, learners' intelligibility and listening comprehensibility will not advance, no matter how much effort is made drilling individual sounds" (p. 8).

8.3.3 English Pronunciation Learning Strategies and Tools

Learning prosodic features requires learners to continuously practice, follow practical learning strategies, and manipulate useful tools to improve speaking skills and, in return, increase their speech intelligibility. The questionnaire suggested three essential strategies. First, recording the learner's own voice and compare it to a native speaker. This option was preferred by 70.6% of participants. Second, learning word/syllable stress placement rules as well as sentence intonation was positively chosen by nearly 68.8% of participants. Finally, listening to English movies, songs, and/or social media was massively selected by 84.2% of the participants. The results were displayed in table 5 and illustrated in Figure 3.

Undoubtedly, the textbook cannot be the only in-class teaching source because it may not contain all the necessary materials that represent real life situations, in which magnificently miscellaneous prosodic patterns can be used to convey different message meanings and implications. Alternatively, teachers should vary the teaching resources to include printed materials as well as technological tools (e.g., digital multimedia resources) that are based on real experiences pertinent to the learners' personal interests (Peters, 1996). Computers are magnificent machines which are continuously modified and tend to be available to relatively all students. Consequently, drilling and practice exercises are lively performed so as to be interaction-oriented through the use of multimedia software which provides the learners with art clips, animations, sound clips and movies that simulate real life situations. More to the point, multimedia tools give the students a great variety of activities that tend to accommodate to their learning needs and matches their personal experiences and, as a result, the students partly become capable of controlling the learning process via using these digital facilities as interactive tools (Peters, 1996).

Significantly, multimedia can be manipulated in a way that helps ELLs listen to real conversations and simulate what they learned by

creating their own dialogues and recording them so that they can be listened to in class and analyzed by their classmates. Moreover, they can electronically share them through video-conferencing software or social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok , Facebook Messenger, Gmail Live Chat, DimDim Meeting, Goto Meeting, Twitter, etc.) available on the internet which has recently become the most supportive resource that provides students with extensively enormous multimedia materials (Peters, 1996). More to the point, some technology tools (e.g., CDs and DVDs run either by a CD- or DVD-player or a computer CD- or DVD-drive) characterized with huge multimedia storage capacity can be easily used in out-of-class activities for students to practice with audio and video taped native speech (Peters, 1996; Allan, 1996). In fact, bringing reality to the class is one of the most difficult conundrums language teachers may face, especially in countries where the target language is rarely used. Nonetheless, with the emergence of virtual worlds and creating real situations where the learners can interact via the target language, it becomes easier for teachers to create virtual worlds. For this purpose, teachers may use software of virtual world designs (e.g., Second Life) and set up a virtual hosting village to which students may subscribe, access and create representative avatars (characters). Then, they can interact and practice the prosodic forms they learned by using them in authentic-like or virtual real contexts, such as interviews, traveling experiences, a committee meeting, shopping, etc. (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Hofer & Owings-Swan, 2005). Digital movie making, according to Hofer and Owings-Swan (2005), is deemed as an interactively engaging social learning activity. Students can script-out and act in English short movies, create original screen plays and documentary videos and the like. It can be broadly defined as “the use of a variety of media (images, sound, text, video, and narration) to convey understanding” (p. 104).

More importantly, it significantly promotes learner-based activities in which the teacher performs as a guide. Thus, the learners either individually or collaboratively participate in producing digital videos portraying communicative situations related to their personal experiences (Henderson, Auld, Russell, Seah, Fernand, & Romeo, 2010). For instance, the student groups collaborate to write the scripts of their own dialogues which simulate real life situations (e.g., at the dentist’s for an appointment). They may start conversing by practice using the intonation patterns they learned. The teacher will be responsible for videotaping their performance. During the show, the teacher will videotape a series of scenes which portray the conversations, and he/she will simultaneously ask provoking questions to motivate students to keep using the target intonation forms. In an amusing activity after the show ends, the students can participate in discussion groups to form three sentences to be

enunciated with the target intonation patterns and properly describe their approval of a particular group video or movie. Using movie making activity has been found to be very beneficial. That is, it vitally motivates ELLs, promotes students collaboration, and develops their learning autonomy and stimulates creative thinking (Peters, 1996; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Hofer & Owings-Swan, 2005; Wang, 2004).

8.3.4 Participants Feedback on Prosody-based Learning of English Pronunciation

Although 69.3% of learners were considerably aware of the significance of learning English prosodic system, they found it a difficult goal to achieve. That is, it required the learners to persistently practice and be exposed to language for longer time. According, the questionnaire revealed that learning intonation patterns and placing stress on the correct words or word parts were the most difficulties which were impacting nearly 68.4% of learners when learning the prosodic features. See Figure 4 for more details.

Obviously, prosody plays a remarkable role in organizing information structure and highlighting the topic of spoken utterances in addition to the other functions previously mentioned. It is widely acknowledged nowadays that the teaching of pronunciation is more than training the learners to produce single sounds. Instead, recent approaches have emphasized the utility of teaching the segmental aspects within a larger framework focusing on the suprasegmental aspects like prosody (Heuven, 1994; Wennerstrom, 2001; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Since the most important objective of pronunciation instruction is to increase the learners' intelligibility and comprehensibility which are essential requirements of successful communication, it has been pointed out by many researchers (e.g., Morley, 1991; Hahn, 2004; Hardison, 2004; Jenkins, 2004; Derwing & Munro, 2005) that effective pronunciation instruction should focus on teaching the English prosodic features.

However, pronunciation teachers should not neglect teaching the segmental features. Alternatively, they are recommended to identify their students' needs and choose what to teach in terms of the order in which pronunciation aspects should be presented (Gilbert, 2008). In this respect, Celce-Mucia et al. (2010) indicated that "teachers need to do diagnostic work and be selective in what they include in pronunciation syllabus. We agree that prosody is important, but segmental should not be ignored, either" (p. 33). Thus, pronunciation teachers can efficiently fulfill the learners' needs by manipulating miscellaneous collections of communication-oriented and collaboration-based teaching techniques as well as practice activities.

9. Conclusions

Teaching pronunciation in contextual settings has been considerably emphasized, particularly with the advent of the communicative approach to language teaching. Additionally, this viewpoint has obtained more significance in Vygotsky's perspective which stresses learning through interaction and participation in collaborative learning tasks. Accordingly, the importance of pronunciation instruction that promotes teaching sounds as well as prosodic features within a context has gained a sweepingly wide approval among educators, since it hugely contributes to developing the ELLs' speaking and listening skills and greatly enhances their communication abilities. However, teaching and learning pronunciation may not be as easy as it is in the case of other language aspects of instruction.

Teachers and learners altogether may encounter challenging issues while teaching or learning pronunciation. Being pronunciation teachers, they are required to be highly trained in terms of their phonological background knowledge and skilful in setting realistic goals and instructional plans that best meet the learners' needs. That is, they should be able to choose appropriate teaching materials (e.g., textbooks, trade books, manipulative tools, technology tools, etc.), and educationally tailor them to accommodate the learners' interests and abilities by using various teaching techniques within a flexibly dynamic teaching framework as in Vygotsky's mediation model. For learners, they are eligible to be affected by different factors, such as age, personality traits, mother-tongue influence, motivation and attitudes toward the target language. Moreover, they may encounter phonological and phonetic difficulties in terms of making inaccurate sound productions, or misusing the English prosodic features. This can crucially affect the communication smoothness since it results in producing unintelligible speech by speakers and, at the same time, confusing the listeners' comprehensibility. Hence, to overcome pronunciation teaching and learning conundrums, a more extensive teaching framework has been put forward. It basically prioritizes pronunciation instruction based on familiarizing and training ELLs to use various prosodic features (e.g., stress, rhythm, etc.) in combination; yet, it indicates and clarifies relatively difficult segmental features whenever necessary. Undoubtedly, the composite manipulation of prosodic and segmental features is of paramount importance for developing the ELLs' listening and speaking skills. However, because of the abundance of prosodic rules (e.g., intonation rules), teachers as well as learners find learning them a frighteningly difficult task for they are bulky with intricately overlapping rules. Consequently, the prosody pyramid has been devised to simply present and collectively teach the

most prominent prosodic features (thought group, focus word, stress and peak).

Remarkably, the prosodic mapping of the spoken utterances plays an overarching role in organizing information structure by highlighting the contrasts and new information to be presented. In order to train ELLs to be aware of such forms affecting speech intelligibility and listening comprehensibility, teachers have a wide variety of teaching models. The most practical teaching framework is the prosody pyramid. teachers can efficiently fulfill the learners' needs by manipulating miscellaneous collections of communicatively-oriented and collaboration-based teaching techniques supported by engaging digital technology tools (e.g., digital video making, videoconferencing, listening to miscellaneous English materials saved on CDs or DVDs, or accessed online, etc.).

Table 2 English Pronunciation challenges

Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Learning individual sounds (e.g., /p/ or /v/) is the most difficult.	8.5%	25.8%	29.3%	32.1%	4.2%
2. I find it difficult to know which syllable in a word should be stressed.	3.6%	8.5%	18.1%	58%	11.8%
3. I often feel that my English speech sounds "flat" of "robotic".	5.6%	11.9%	30.5%	43.8%	8.2%
4. I struggle to understand where to pause in a long English Sentence.	4.9%	12.4%	20.5%	52.8%	9.5%
5. I believe my native Arabic dialect/accent affects how I speak English.	9.7%	15.6%	17.4%	27.2%	30.1%

Table 3 Evaluation of Prosody-Based Learning of English Pronunciation

Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Prosody-based learning helped me realise that	5.3%	5.7%	23.2%	45.5%	20.3%

melody (intonation) is as important as individual sounds.					
2. Prosody-based learning helped me confidently identify and emphasise the content words in a sentence.	3.4%	6.3%	21.3%	58.4%	10.7%
3. Prosody-based learning helped me improve my speaking fluency.	4%	7.3%	18.1%	50.3%	20.3%
4. Imitation/shadowing of sentence melody was more helpful than imitating individual sounds.	4.4%	8.1%	25.6%	43.6%	18.4%

Table 4 English Pronunciation Learning Strategies and Tools

Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Recording my own voice and comparing it to a native speakers.	7.2%	6.5%	15.7%	46.6%	24%
2. Explicitly learning rules for word stress and sentence intonation.	3.6%	5.9%	21.7%	52.5%	16.3%
3. Listening to English movies, songs, or social media.	3.3%	2.6%	9.8%	30.9%	53.3%

Table 5 Participants Feedback on Prosody-based Learning of English Pronunciation

Questionnaire Items	Intonation Patterns	Stressed Syllables	Both of Them
1. hat was the most challenging prosodic feature for you to master?	13.3 %	18.3 %	68. 4%
Questionnaire Items	Yes	No	Maybe
2. o you find prosody-based learning of English pronunciation useful and affective in improving your pronunciation?	69.3 %	2.7%	28 %

Figure 2 English Pronunciation challenges

Figure 3 Evaluation of Prosody-Based Learning of English Pronunciation

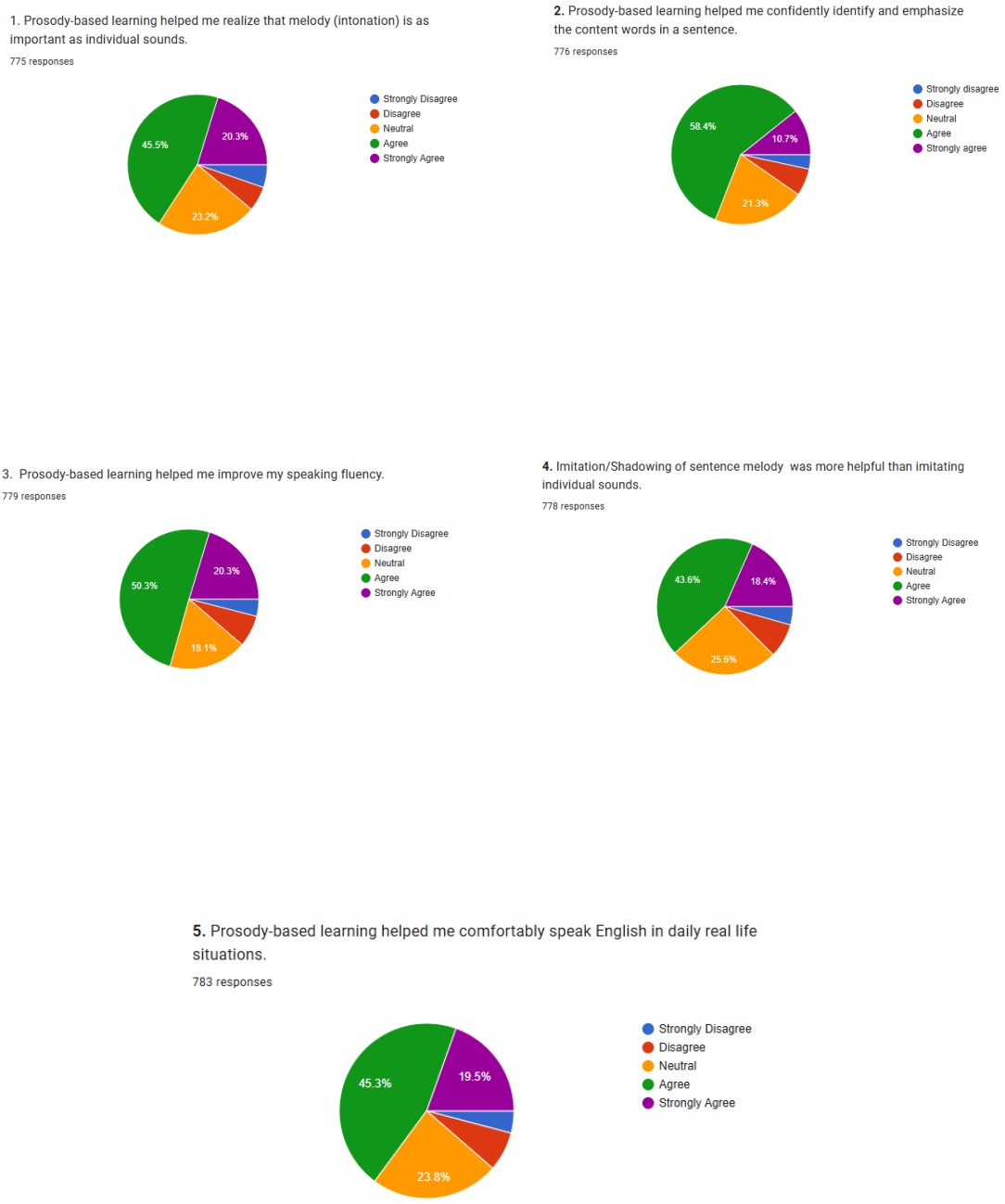


Figure 4 English Pronunciation Learning Strategies and Tools

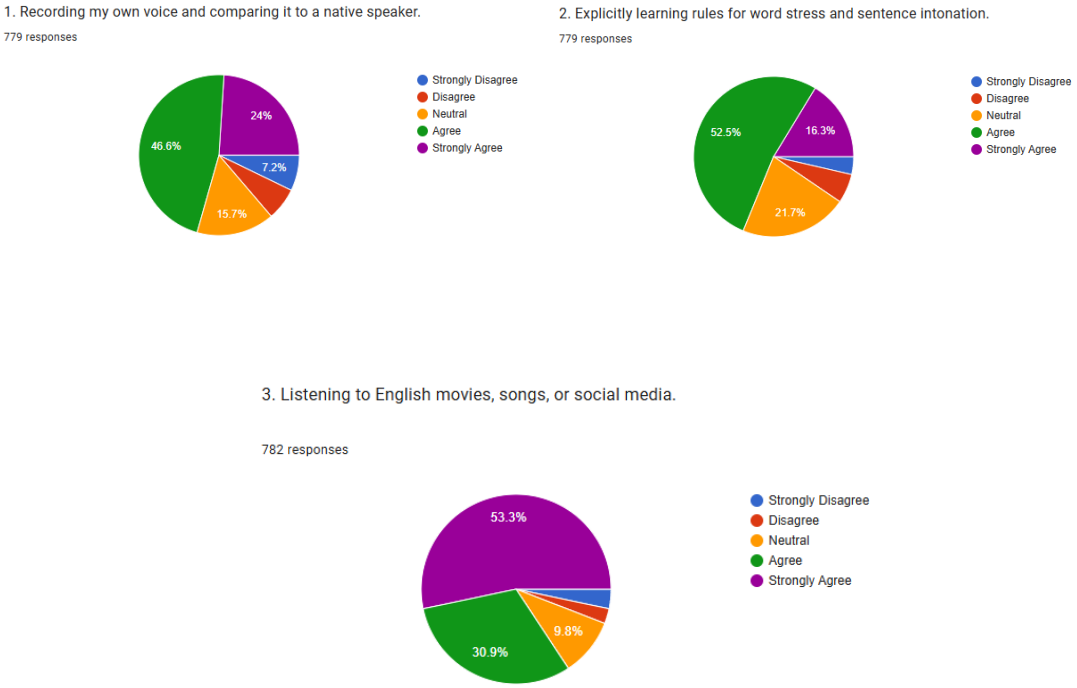
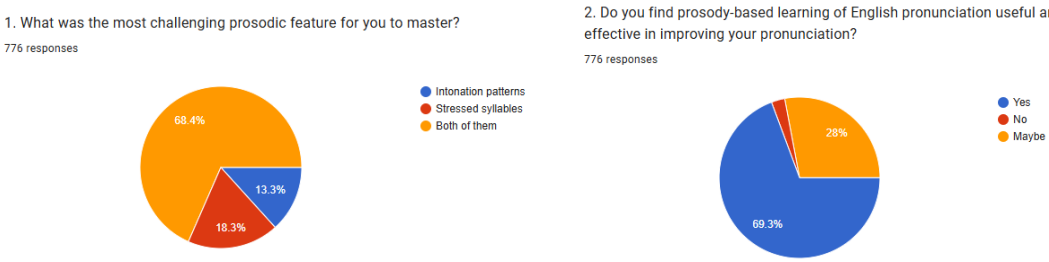


Figure 5 Participants Feedback on Prosody-based Learning of English Pronunciation



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