

## *Phonological Intelligibility in Iraqi EFL Classrooms*

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### **Abstract**

The present study aims at characterizing phonological intelligibility in the Iraqi EFL classrooms. Due to various, interrelated factors, this type of intelligibility seems to be missing. Thus, there is an urgent need to reconsider: our goals for teaching EFL to our students, the usefulness and easiness of the foreign variety we claim to be teaching, and the methodology we use to achieve our pedagogical goals.

### **1. Introduction:**

Mutual intelligibility in EFL (English as a foreign Language) classrooms is both a means and an end at the same time. It is a means for passing on (on the part of the teacher) and receiving (on the part of the hearer) both technical and practical knowledge of language.

Concerning technical knowledge, Oakeshott(1962:7) states that "in every art and science, and in every practical activity, a technique is involved. In many activities this technical knowledge is formulated into rules which are, or may be, deliberately learned, remembered, as we say, put into practice." O'Dwyer (2007:12) comments on Oakeshott's technical knowledge saying that in the case of language, grammatical rules conversations, and stock, formulaic expressions comprise their technical knowledge. The form of knowledge is not imparted, though it can be transmitted and learned directly, by means of instruction, rote-learning and the study of textbooks. Oakeshott's practical knowledge, on the other hand, refers to usage habits and skills, that is to say ways of doing things. He(ibid:10:11) describes this type of knowledge saying that "its normal expression is in a customary or traditional way of doing things, or, simply, in practice. Practical knowledge is not directly "taught nor learned, but only imparted or acquired," (ibid). O'Dwyer(2007:19) contends that those two types of knowledge:

**Are intermixed in the usual run of things--  
-A commonplace illustration of this intermixture is someone instructing a person in a new skill at the same time she is demonstrating it .While the learner is taking in explicit instructions in the skills performance, he will pick up an intuitive sense of how to perform some unspoken aspect of that skill.**

Bamgbose(1998:11) describes intelligibility as a complex of factors comprising recognizing an expression, knowing its meaning, and knowing what that meaning signifies in the sociocultural context. Mutual intelligibility includes also word and utterance recognition, speaker's message apprehension, and the accessibility of the intended propositional content encoded in an utterance. Jenkins(2002:82)uses the term intelligibility to mean "the production and recognition of the formal properties of words and utterances and, in particular, the ability to produce and receive phonological form...."She (ibid:83)adds that one needs to put into consideration that since intelligibility is a two-way process involving both speaker and listener at every stage of the interaction then in order to negotiate intelligibility, we need to establish and maintain the necessary conditions so that to achieve understanding. Above all conditions, mutual intelligibility pronunciation is of vital importance .So, if it is possible to categorize intelligibility- according to the different levels of language ,then one can speak of phonological intelligibility. The present study attempts to answer an important question, namely: What does students' speech intelligibility and particularly phonological intelligibility mean in our Iraqi EFL classrooms?.

## **2.Pronunciation Teaching in the EFL classrooms:**

Different schools and methodologies of language teaching have assigned different rules to pronunciation. The grammar translation method considered pronunciation of no use what so ever for learning a

foreign language. Structuralism is not any better in this concern. It highlighted the learning of grammatical structures at the expense of pronunciation. A major shift in the role of pronunciation in FL teaching was focused on during the years of audiolingualism .Both accuracy in pronunciation and intelligibility were sought. Castillo(1990:3)says that this method emphasized traditional notions of pronunciation ,minimal pairs, drills and short conversations. Moreover Morley(1991:484)maintains that “the pronunciation class.....was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with ....attention to stress, rhythm, and intonation.” Despite the merits of audiolingualism concerning the teaching of pronunciation when compared with the preceding ones, still it cannot be said that it successfully resulted in the desired accurate pronunciation nor the expected intelligibility.

Richards(2007:4)states that “the 1970s ushered in an era of change and innovation in language teaching methodology. This was the decade during which Communicative Language Teaching came to replace Audiolingualism and the Structural\_Situational Approach .”He (ibid:5)adds that this teaching method manipulated a diverse set of rather general and uncontroversial principles. He summarizes them as follows:

- The goal of language learning is communicative competence.

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate .
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency and accuracy are both important dimensions of communication.
- Communication includes the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a general process that includes trial and error.

As it can be seen , one of the major goals of the communicative approach is the attainment of communicative competence and not only linguistic competence. Both of accuracy and fluency are of equal status in such classrooms. Learning is guided by speaking and oral interaction in which there is a much more tolerance of errors. Drilling and other types of mechanical exercises were considered outdated whereby the focus was placed mostly on meaning and not on form.

Recently, however, many serious attempts aimed at bringing pronunciation back on stage and giving preferential treatment (see Morley,1991;Taylor,1991,among others).The different approaches to teaching pronunciation may be categorized into the bottom-up approach and the top-down approach. The former starts with the segmentals which automatically lead to the suprasegmentals. The latter, on the other hand, begins with the prosodic features which are subsequently followed by the segmental features.

Luchini(2005:3)states that "at present, and possibly as a result of this new communicative trend, many more people are again keen on pronunciation, but the truth is that, we are not completely convinced of which models, goals and methodology are more helpful for students and teachers alike."

Selecting the suitable model and methodology and setting out teaching goals are not sufficient to solve problems in teaching pronunciation. One needs to determine what to teach to whom. The following section tries to fathom out this enquiry.

### **3. The Pronunciation Syllabus in the EFL Curriculum**

Most applied linguists(such as Kachru1992;Kachru and Nelson,1996;Kasper,1998;Pennycook,1998;Seidlhofer,1999;Widdows on,1994&1997)are quite aware that the number of non-native speakers of English greatly exceeds the number of its native speakers. This fact means that "language teaching would benefit by paying attention to the L2 user rather than concentrating primarily on the native speaker ,"and should "apply an L2 user model"(Cook,1999:185).Jenkins(2002:84)argues that native speakers' intuitions are still the basis for making decisions concerning pronunciation syllabus items. These intuitions, whether accurate or inaccurate are grounded in native speakers' intelligibility rather than non-native speakers' intelligibility which might make different demands. If one compares the productive competence of the native speakers with that of the non-native one certainly he will come out

with sharp distinctions that necessitate treating these two competences differently. Furthermore, one wonders how can he pedagogically base EFL syllabi (including the pronunciation syllabus ) on an evaluation of native speakers' intuitions and intelligibility since native and non-native speakers' ability of comprehension can scarcely be of equal status. Thus, pedagogical decisions as to what to include in a pronunciation syllabus designed for EFL learners need to be reconsidered. Such a reconsideration may include questions about the setting of realistic and achievable goals for teaching pronunciation, the native English accent to be taught, and the teachability –learnability scale of aspects of English pronunciation. Let us start with the first point concerning goals of teaching pronunciation to EFL learners. Instead of aiming at a hundred percent accurate and perfect pronunciation to be attained by the learners at the expense of communication, teachers working according to the principles of the communicative approach should aim, as Morley(1991:500)affirms , at the more realistic goals of developing functional intelligibility, communicability , increased self-confidence ,the development of speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom. The teacher, Morley(ibid:507)adds, is a “speech coach or pronunciation coach...supplies information , gives models from time to time, offers cues, suggestions and constructive feedback about performance , sets high standards, provides a wide variety of practice opportunities, and overall supports and encourages the learner.”

Then, the teacher of pronunciation is seen as both an authority capable of transmitting knowledge in language , and a facilitator of cooperative language learning. An important goal of teaching English pronunciation, among other courses, to EFL learners is the preparation of English teachers. Teachers' preparation is composed of training and development. Freeman(1982:21-22)observes that "training deals with building specific teaching skills: how to sequence a lesson or how to teach a dialogue , for instance. Development, on the other hand, focuses on the individual teacher-on the process of selection, examination, and change which can lead to doing a better job and to personal growth and professional growth"

Training may include :understanding basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching , expanding one's repertoire of routines, skills and strategies trying out new strategies in the classroom, and monitoring oneself and getting feedback for others on one's practice (Richards,2007:26).Richards(ibid) adds that "teacher development serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of the teacher's general understanding of teaching and of himself or herself as a teacher."

Now, what English variety (i.e. accent)should be used in transmitting academic knowledge to EFL learners, and in classroom communication? Two options are available .Firstly, one can promote the teaching of a prestigious standard (i.e. British or American Standard).Secondly, one can set up a common phonological core for

everyone to access and acquire. Regarding the use of a prestigious standard variety in teaching English pronunciation such as General American(GA) and/or Received Pronunciation (RP),this may seem the easiest way to promote communication, but may not always be realistic when seen from the educational and sociocultural points of view (Yamaguchi,2002:3).

The prestigious British accent(RP) is used by less than 3% of the British speakers “while the majority of British people have either a regionally modified RP or a regional accent. The latter unless overly broad ....are fast gaining acceptance among the general public” (Crystal,1995:365).British people are aware of the sociolinguistic fact that regional variation is the(acceptable )rule rather than the (unacceptable) exception .Many pedagogical EFL programmes aim at a learner’s foreign accent that is close to a native speaker’s accent which should, consequently, be understood by the native speakers of the target language. Hence, the choice of a standard variety which is quite popular in the target speech community , and not like RP. Besides, RP cannot be described as the easiest accent, productively and receptively speaking, for an EFL learner to acquire .There is no clear relationship between English orthography and RP. Its vowels and consonants are approximately of the same number ;it contains a larger number of diphthongs, and after vowels it drops the /r/ sound. Moreover, as languages change over time, RP has altered also overtime. Thus, one can distinguish the speech(i.e. accent) of older from younger speakers of RP. Usually pedagogical programmes do

not notice such a change ,hence, the risk of equipping EFL learners with an old-fashioned pronunciation.

Therefore, academic institutions that use RP as a pronunciation model (such as the case in Iraq) need either to select a new model that is, though not prestigious, popular among its native speakers, or to set up a common core that is suitable to the learners' educational needs, and to their cultural ,sociolinguistic and psychological circumstances. The first option should be based on a thorough investigation of the appropriateness of the chosen model to the learners. The second one, however, depends a lot on the teachability –learnability scale ,which is our third factor in deciding on what to include in a pronunciation syllabus.

In (1994),Dalton and Seidlhofer introduced their teachability-learnability scale. This scale suggests that certain English phonetic and phonological features are quite teachable whereas others are not and should not be included in a pronunciation syllabus because it would be only a waste of time and effort.

Jennifer is one of the researchers (see also Hockett,1958; Gimson,1978;Jenner,1989;Bamgbose,1998)who suggested a common phonological core (i.e. a Lingua Franca) that is quite important for facilitating mutual intelligibility among non-native speakers learning English as an international language .Many of her items composing her phonological core (see Jenkins,1996,1998,2000and 2002) are selected, among others ,on the basis of the teachability-learnability scale and the two factors of intelligibility and relative ease of

articulation. Concerning the former, and since classroom teaching does not necessarily bring about classroom learning ,Jenkins(2000:133)argues that:

**The identification of unteachable items, is, to some extent, a matter of common sense and experience and to even greater extent, predictable from a knowledge of transfer effects...But as far as sounds are concerned, phonological universals are also able to inform, the teachability-learnability debate, by providing concrete information about the level of difficulty in relation to the degree of markedness of an individual item or set of items. For example, most of the world's languages have approximately twice as many consonants as vowel phonemes, English with 24 consonants and up to 20 vowel sounds, is marked in this respect, and we can therefore expect most learners to have problems with the English vowel system.**

Sometimes phonological items are quite teachable in the sense that learners do understand clearly the intended point; however, when it comes to production their performance may either be distorted, thus, affecting intelligibility or it may lack some features due to the difficulty of articulation. Hence, Jenkins(2000) recommends that in composing a phonological core, a researcher needs to consider such factors(i.e. intelligibility and relative ease of articulation). Her phonological core comprises the following general items(2002:96-97):

1. The consonantal inventory
2. Additional phonetic requirements
3. Consonant clusters
4. Vowel sounds
5. Production and placement of tonic(nuclear)stress.

Among other findings, Jenkins(2000) found out that unintelligibility was mainly caused by segmental errors that are sometimes accompanied with a wrong placement of nuclear stress. Thus, the urgent need is for a pronunciation syllabus which includes teachable-learnable items that can promote phonological intelligibility. However, the latter may mean different things to different academics in different contexts. The following section discusses this aspect in Iraqi EFL classrooms.

#### **4. Phonological intelligibility in Iraqi EFL classroom:**

As mentioned previously, phonological intelligibility in an EFL context may differ from that in a context in which English is taught

and learned as a second language (i.e. ESL) or as an international language (i.e.EIL).Generally speaking , phonological intelligibility is considered as a decisive factor in communication and “intelligible pronunciation is seen as an essential component of communicative competence,”(Morley,1991:513).For the sake of characterizing phonological intelligibility in our Iraqi EFL classrooms, I have addressed the teaching staff members of the Department of English at the College of Education /The University of Basrah with the following question:

Dear Colleague:

I kindly request you to answer the following question:

In your opinion what does ‘intelligibility’(that is students’ speech intelligibility )mean in our classrooms, and particularly phonological intelligibility?

Thank you .

Of course, by ‘our classrooms’ is meant Iraqi EFL classrooms at the university level. Seventeen teachers participated in answering this question; eleven of them are specialized in teaching linguistic subjects and the other six are specialized in teaching literary subjects.

The following are excerpts extracted from the responses defining intelligibility in general and /or phonological intelligibility in particular.

- ‘I consider a student to be intelligible in speaking inside the classroom when s/he is able to comprehend what is being said and respond in its accord...Therefore, speech intelligibility(and

phonological intelligibility) means having an accepted pronunciation and production of whatever is being said on condition that the student has actually understood what he heard and his speech has that full combination of understanding correctly and answering in a fairly accepted way.'

- 'I think that intelligibility on the part of the student is related to his linguistic competence, language acquisition (i.e. his background in language) as well as language performance whereas on the part of the teacher intelligibility depends on his experience in language teaching and his ability to expose the meaning depending on the context.'
- 'Intelligibility means to speak with sufficient clarity .It is an important factor to transmit the information in a foreign language teaching classroom. Both, the teacher and the student , should talk(speak)with intelligibility to be certain that the information bits have been transmitted and received correctly.'
- 'Intelligibility' means awareness of the subject matter. In this case, phonological intelligibility means phonological awareness. This implies, of course, the communicative competence of the learner.'
- Prominently, it (i.e. phonological intelligibility) means the ability of the students to express themselves verbally in a correct way. That is, they follow what they have already learnt on the phonological level in an accurate way.'

- ‘Intelligibility’ means the more words a listener is able to identify accurately when said by a particular speaker. In other words, it is the word/utterance recognition.’
- ‘I think that phonological intelligibility means that, when the students produce their speech, they should be aware enough of both segmental and non-segmental features of speech.’
- ‘I think that phonological intelligibility means the clearness and acceptability of the learner’s pronunciation in the classroom.’
- ‘Intelligibility , for voice communication , means the capability of being understood. It does not imply the recognition of particular voice.’
- ‘In my opinion, it (i.e. phonological intelligibility) means conveying the message in a communicative way via clear pronunciation.’
- ‘Intelligibility as a linguistic term means : the possibility and the easiness to understand in speech or writing.’
- ‘Intelligibility is an influential factor in making others understand the intended meaning.’

The other five responses do not include direct definitions, but explanations of the present situation. Then, as can be noticed , phonological intelligibility for those experienced teachers means the following :

1. Comprehension on the part of the listener

2. Its relation to the speakers' linguistic competence , his background in language and his language performance
3. Sufficient clarity in speech
- 4.The phonological awareness of the learner implying his communicative competence
5. The expression of oneself correctly
6. Word/utterance recognition
7. Awareness of the segmental and suprasegmental features of the learner's speech
8. The learner's pronunciation clarity and acceptability
9. The capability of being understood
10. Message communication via clear pronunciation
11. The possibility and easiness of understanding somebody's speech or writing
12. An influential factor in the intended meaning understanding

Accordingly, phonological intelligibility is understood as a linguistic phenomenon which is based on the learner's linguistic and communicative competences , which is of vital importance for and can crucially promote successful communication in our classrooms. The above definitions do not suggest that this is the actual situation in our classrooms. As a matter of fact, most if not all participants agree that the Iraqi EFL classroom lacks phonological intelligibility simply because it is a rather silent classroom but for the teacher herself /himself .

Here are some of their explanations.

- 'When urged to speak our learners almost always stutter and stammer producing hardly any intelligible utterances. Consonants are omitted , reversed ,distorted ,and even sometimes misplaced....Vowels are changed ,distorted or omitted . 'talk' becomes 'took' , a matter that justifies third person (-s) in 'tooks!' 'Attack' becomes 'tack' with the initial vowel omitted. Long vowels present a real dilemma /i:/ is /i/ and vice versa, the same is applicable to /u:/, /u/, and /ɔ:/, /D/./Λ /is another problem , it is easy in 'but', but misused in other words like 'shut' hut...' /ə/ is often misused under the dictates of spelling .So, 'suggest' is pronounced as /sʌdʒest/, the same is with 'consider', 'control', etc....There is definitely a problem of hearing correctly or perceiving perhaps. They cannot be at all hard of hearing so their perception is in some way blocked in a manner which prevents correct direct repetition ....However, since we are prompted to encourage communication we tend sometimes to ignore mispronunciation especially when corrections are never needed to, our students stumble rather than speak and it is the job of the teacher to fathom out the gist!!'
- 'Most of our students show a certain degree of what I may term as 'Intelligibility Deficiency' when they talk or answer or even comment though such performances are

common elsewhere but seldom are they done in our classrooms. The phenomenon differs in accordance to the discriminate qualities of the students, i.e. it is neither noticed nor shared by all students. It is relative .And it does not come to surface when words or segments articulated in isolation for students would concentrate on such items; they would exert efforts to let them pass unnoticed. I think the gist of the matter could lie in their latent 'irregularities' in articulation due to different factors that might be categorized as follows:

1. Physiological (i.e., defects....etc)
  2. Psychological (i.e., stammer, shyness....etc)
  3. Epistemological (i.e., lack of knowledge and learning, drills...etc.)
  4. Native-language (NL) Interference in terms of the different NL points and manner of articulation , and its sound system,....etc.)'
- 'Special problems that affect our students' intelligibility include the following :
    - Spelling pronunciation : 1) silent letters pronounced e.gs. the silent final '-e', the final '-h'. 2)problem of double 'oo', words such as look, took, book, which are commonly pronounced with an /u/sound; whereas other 'double oo' words such as, food, mood, are commonly pronounced with an/u:/ sound.

-Production of consonants : some problematic consonants deviate in the direction of the voiceless and voiced labiodentals /f/and /v/ ,the voiceless and voiced interdental fricatives / θ/and /ð/as in cloth, clothes.

-Placement of stress (word and sentence stress.)

- 'It is obvious that students face a difficulty in understanding and exchanging ideas, and therefore, they feel unable to speak properly and appropriately or even receive speech from their teachers accurately .This bad production and reception of speech is caused by a hearing disability as students, themselves, are unable or untrained to make a distinction between segments in a stretch of speech. Students are also unable to have a reasonable control over the suprasegmentals which are the main determinant factors for this 'phonological intelligibility' such as stress, pause, intonation...etc.'
- 'I think that most of my colleagues are suffering from this case .They say that our students don't talk with intelligibility , frankly speaking ,they don't talk at all and if it happens they don't talk with sufficient clarity. The girls pretend that they are shy or that this is the maximum of their voices but it is obvious that our students (of both sexes) don't know how to read or what to say. It is very clear that if the students talk with intelligibility, it will be an easy matter for the teacher to

correct the students' mistakes in pronunciation , grammar or even, in choosing the suitable vocabulary items.'

- 'It seems to me that some students pay no attention to their speech whether it is clear to the hearer or not...Anyway, in the classroom, I sometimes try to correct the students' mistakes (if there is enough time) or request the students to speak intelligibly to make others catch the meaning of their speech.'
- 'Our students should not use one phoneme instead of another , as in the use of /b/ instead of /p/ and the use of /f/ instead of /v/;and they should be able to tone their statements, questions, commands and exclamations correctly ; and they should know where to elide and assimilate ...etc.'
- 'But unfortunately this is not the real situation. They undergo fairly enough difficulty to do that 'i.e. to express themselves verbally in a correct way. Some of our students, 25% I may say , do not have such intelligibility .15% of our students are able to be so. I don't know really how to sort out the remainder.'
- 'I believe our best students have a moderate level of intelligibility, however lower-level students suffer certain problems such as mispronouncing vowels (diphthongs in particular )and consonant clusters.

- 'Our students pronounce a word in the same way they spell it when trying to memorize it during their study, and especially those long words consisting of many syllables.'
- 'Sometimes, it does not matter whether the foreign learner produces the sounds just like the native speaker of the target language, but her/his ability to make the listener understand what s/he wants to say.'
- 'In my opinion, our students' speech , in our classrooms , has no phonological intelligibility. Of course, this happens, I think , because of their native language interference.'

Then, according to their experience in teaching EFL to Iraqi students , the teachers identified various factors that cause the lack of, if any, phonological intelligibility in our classrooms. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Mispronunciation of sounds (both consonants and vowels)
2. Mispronunciation of consonant clusters
3. Spelling pronunciation
4. NL interference
5. Physiological ,psychological and epistemological factors
6. Lack of control over suprasegmental features

Basing on my humble expertise in teaching English phonology for about twenty years, to Iraqi learners, I will attempt to explain the present situation in our classrooms. First of all, RP is the British accent that is supposed to be learned since it is the one chosen

for teaching EFL in our schools and colleges. Now , how much RP is used by the teachers is an important question that needs to be answered. It may be disappointing , but not mistaken , if we say that not more than 25% of the teachers use a type of RP , coloured with some Iraqi and a sort of GA features. The rest cannot be said to be speaking RP, or GA or any other English variety. So, if what the students hear is mostly not said with RP , how can we expect them to speak it? Then, we should not expect to harvest what we did not actually plant. Thus, there is hardly a student who can be professed as using it , not even the best students.

In my opinion, the first four factors identified by the respondents are interrelated. There is no doubt that NL interference plays a role in our students' pronunciation .Interference is quite clear, when it comes to missing counterpart-sounds in our (Iraqi) Arabic sound-system. Therefore , some students pronounce /p/ as /b/,/v/ as /f/,/ŋ/ as /ing/,/ʒ/ as /dʒ/ as far as consonants are concerned , and /ʌ/ and /ð / as /e/ , /æ/ as /a:/ , / D/ as /ɔ:/,/ið /as /i:/-/i:r/,/eð /as /e/-/er/,/uð /as /u:/-/u:r/,/ð u/as /eu/as far as vowels are concerned. However, almost half of the above sounds are not problematic when produced in isolation. This means that English 'misleading' spelling is the core of the problem. Arabic spelling is phonemic in the sense that whatever written is pronounced , and this can- not be said the case with the English one. Silent letters, different combinations of letters giving the same sound , and same combinations of letters giving different sounds are real pronunciation obstacles for our students.

Consonant clusters, especially in initial positions, are to some learners difficult to pronounce; therefore, they are usually distorted either by splitting the cluster into two parts by inserting a suitable vowel (i.e. in three consonant clusters) or by adding a vowel at the beginning of the cluster (i.e. mostly in two-consonant clusters). Nevertheless, many of these mispronunciation spots cannot be said to be the main cause of the lack of intelligibility in our classrooms. I say this because I think we would still be able to understand a student saying \*/ben/ for (pen) or \*/faif/ for (five) or \*/pu:r/ for (poor) or even \*/sitri:t/ for (street) or \*/ispai/ for (spy) in the right communicative situation. Then, beside misarticulation, we need to consider some psychological, cultural, and sociolinguistic factors that I believe have an impact on intelligibility. Many of our students are accepted in the department for reasons other than their promising proficiency future in learning English or their high degrees in the subject. They are mostly low level students that often lack the motivation to be better ones. A good number of them are quite self-conscious to the extent that they are unwilling to produce the foreign sounds accurately though they are quite capable of doing that. Due to the country's special circumstances that radically turned the life of many students up side down, students read about the English society, culture, norms, conversations and literary heritage with a disgusted critical eye. So, they do not have that sympathy with the foreign language nor with its speech community.

The English suprasegmentals are really very much problematic for our students. Unlike the segmentals which are mostly teachable and learnable, many of the suprasegmentals are unteachable. I consider their inclusion in the pronunciation syllabus a waste of time and efforts. Placement of nuclear stress ,functions of intonation, rhythm, weak forms, assimilation ,elision and juncture are unteachable in the sense that our students may learn them theoretically but not practically. They sometimes perceive such information but never apply it in verbal communication .Then what is the practical point of including them in the syllabus?

Hence, I believe that our pronunciation syllabus needs to be tailored according to our special educational and pedagogical needs and goals. It is out of the question that pronunciation is a crucial factor in prompting communication and intelligibility and if we really aim at giving life to our classrooms' intelligibility, then I think we should do the following :

1. Either choose another English variety that is more popular than RP and easier to comprehend and produce, or else everybody of the teaching staff members stick to using only RP in our classrooms.
2. The pronunciation syllabus should include only teachable, thus learnable items.
3. The practical hours for teaching English pronunciation should be more than, or at least equal to, the theoretical hours.

4. Acceptable and clear pronunciation, rather than an accurate one, that can facilitate learning , fluency and communication should be sought.

5. Pronunciation errors that do not impede communication should be tolerated ;however, those that cause communication breakdowns should be corrected at once. A teacher should be able to distinguish a performance error from a more serious, consistent competence error.

6. Authentic materials produced by English native speakers should be used frequently while teaching students different subjects. A clean and clear tongue can only result from a clean and clear ear.

7. Students need to be motivated and urged to express themselves and communicate in the target language , particularly in pronunciation classes. Thus, the pronunciation course needs to include a communicative component through which many communicative oral-aural activities can be implemented .

So, in order to enhance intelligibility , and particularly phonological intelligibility in our Iraqi EFL classrooms we need to analyze the different aspects of teaching pronunciation including the accent taught, the methodology used, the items covered and different surrounding non-linguistic factors that can have a serious impact on the communicative component of the language classrooms.

### **5.Conclusions:**

It seems that Iraqi students' speech phonological intelligibility is almost missing in our classrooms. Those students hardly ever take part in class discussions and activities .However, when this happens, their speech is usually incomprehensible, unclear, distorted, and hence not quite intelligible .Most of our students lack communicative competence ;therefore, they do not dare to express themselves in the foreign language .Their pronunciation skill is not quite good due to many reasons, such as interference of their native language , lack of listening to authentic L2 materials, their courses are mostly about(not in) the language which cannot develop the communicative component of their learning, the pronunciation courses they attend are traditional and not communicative in nature,....etc.

This disappointing situation needs an urgent treatment by all those educators, teachers and decision-makers so as to promote intelligibility in our classrooms and this is not something impossible to take place. Of course, it is not only our students to blame for this unhealthy situation .We have to take our share of the responsibility, and to do so we need to reconsider : our goals and objectives for teaching EFL to our students , the foreign variety we 'claim' to be teaching , and the methodology we use to achieve those goals. Hopefully, by doing this we would be stepping on the right track.

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وضوح المعنى اللفظي في صفوف  
تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية  
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الخلاصة

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى توصيف حقيقة وضوح المعنى اللفظي في صفوف تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية في العراق.طبقاً لعوامل مختلفة ومتداخلة فأن هذا النوع من وضوح المعنى اللفظي يبدو مفقوداً في هذه الصفوف.ولهذا ، هنالك حاجة ملحة لاعادة النظر في : اهدافنا من تدريس الانجليزية لطلبتنا ، وفائدة وسهولة ولكنه الانجليزية التي نزعم بأننا ندرسها لطلبتنا ، وطريقة التدريس التي نعتمدها لتحقيق اهدافنا التعليمية .