

THE DEGREE OF PHONEMIC VARIATION OF ENGLISH FOR KUWAITI LEARNERS OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to know the degree of phonemic variation of English for Kuwaiti learners of English. So, the purpose here was to search into three objectives, namely to bridge the gap related to the VOT research for Arabic language learners, and to investigate the voices of second-level English language learners in Kuwait. In addition to an endeavor to know the impact of three distinct elements on the VOT produced by Kuwaiti second language learners of English residing in the United Kingdom and British speakers. The study relied on the descriptive analytical method. The researcher chose a group of participants who were distributed into three groups: The first one: the Kuwaiti short stay, the second group was the Kuwaiti long stay, and the third group was the British English group. The study found a set of results that the VOT pattern produced by Kuwaiti second-level English language learners, and it was concluded that they created positive VOT values. Vowel conditions fundamentally impacted the VOT values created by the three gatherings, and VOT of longer values were detected. While in the short vowel, more limited VOT values were seen in this review aside from the Kuwaiti short LOR. Finally, there is an effect of vowel quality on VOT values.

KEYWORDS: Phonemic Variation, English, Kuwaiti learners

INTRODUCTION

The Kuwaiti dialect is characterized by being inclusive of a group of six Arabic dialects, and due to the Kuwaitis' trading, travel and receptiveness to many adjoining nations, for example, the Bedouin Promontory, the Indian subcontinent and Persia, their vernacular enhanced with many expressions of various starting points (Aldamen, 2013).

The Kuwaiti dialect is characterized by many linguistic influences such as proverbs, wisdom, riddles, chants and jokes, in addition to the large number of synonyms, and what distinguishes the Kuwaiti dialect is its diversity between more than one dialect, as it is comprehensive and covers the vocabulary of the Arabic language (Kulikov, 2018). Boersma & Weenink (2020) indicated that the Kuwaiti dialect is characterized by transmutation of letters in many cases, but it is limited; That is, the sounds do not change in all words, unlike some dialects.

It is worth noting that Kuwait uses English as a second and primary language after Arabic, as English occupies an important place in the educational curricula in Kuwait and is taught alongside Arabic in the country's schools (Na'ama, 2011). The demand for English language education in Kuwait has increased due to factors such as the advanced curricula of non-Arab foreign educational institutions in Kuwait and the importance of having an English institution for advanced education abroad (Shrem, 2019).

On the other hand, measuring the similarities between Kuwaiti speakers and English speakers gives importance to clarifying the differences in sounds and the nature of bridging the knowledge gap in the phonetic literature related to the research field in theology VOT (Al-Mutair, 2020). This could be educated and further develop VOT creation of discourse sounds by second language students (Hayat & AlBader, 2022). Akbar et al (2017) noted that learning a second language is

different from learning a first. Since English speakers rarely gain proficiency in a second language as native speakers.

This is because the second language learner usually faces some difficulties as these difficulties in second language acquisition turn out to be clearer at the point when students get the sounds of the language they are learning. Just students who procure sounds at an early age can duplicate these sounds in a real style (Taqi et al, 2018). However, the Arabic and English languages vary from one another in numerous angles (Alzankawi, 2022). They have a place with two unique language families, as a matter of fact. The first is a Semitic language, while the second is an Indo-European language. They vary in their linguistic system, morphology and phonology (Alnwaiem et al, 2021).

Based on the foregoing, the current research comes to clarify the differences and importance in speaking English for Kuwaiti learners, the pause in the sound while speaking in English, and the discrepancy between English and Arabic.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The differences between Arabic and English language learners lie in the phonemic system and how sounds are acquired while speaking. In order to be clear, it is necessary to explain how Kuwaiti second language learners acquire English stops, and to research the acoustic feature of pauses called Voice Onset Time (VOT) produced by Learners of English in Kuwait L2 (Almutawa, 2022). It should be noted that the Arabic VOT patterns contain phonetic stops as well as short/long pauses, while the English VOT designs as having just short and long stops.

The study of Alshatti et al (2022) indicated that the pronunciation of pauses between the two languages shows these differences, and that the English language differs in the pronunciation of stop sounds in the Arabic language. It should be noted that the Arabic VOT patterns contain phonetic stops as well as short/long pauses, while the English VOT patterns as having only short and long stops. For this reason one of the primary distinctions between the Arabic and English phonetic systems is that the distinctions in the values of VOT that are created when the consonants are articulated. Here, the importance of the current study in focusing on the Kuwaiti Arab diversity to notice the VOT example of this particular dialect in the English language becomes apparent. Hence, the goal here is to search into the distinctions in VOT articulation of English pauses between two groups: English speakers, as well as L2 Arab speakers (Kuwaiti learners of English). Accordingly, the study problem is defined in the following main question:

What is the degree of phonemic variation of English for Kuwaiti learners of the second language?

The following sub-questions are derived from the main question:

- To what degree do British English speakers produce positive VOT values for both vocal and non-vocal pauses?
- To what degree do Arabic speakers produce the Kuwaiti short and long LOR sound as most Arabic speakers produce it with a prior vowel?

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The main purpose of the current study is to achieve three goals, namely, to bridge the gap related to VOT research for Arabic language learners, and to investigate the voices of second-level English language learners in Kuwait. Therefore, the purpose is to identify the patterns of English produced by speakers of the Kuwaiti dialect. In addition to an endeavor to study the impact of three distinct variables on the VOT produced by Kuwaiti second language learners of English residing in the United Kingdom and native British speakers.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The current study seeks to show the importance of verifying the degree of voices of English language learners of the second level in Kuwait, and accordingly the importance of the study is in the following points:

- Shedding light on the differences between Kuwaiti English and Arabic speakers.
- Detection of positive VOT values for both vocal and non-vocal pauses of English speakers.
- An attempt to show the Kuwaiti dialect for learners and the degree of its impact on the English language as a second language.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the current study are the nature of the Kuwaiti dialect in a specific aspect (VOT) with a specific dialect (KAD), and this may contribute to the difficulty of determining the nature of the Kuwaiti dialect in speaking English and the effect of the sounds that result from those dialects. The limitations are also represented by British speakers, as some of the participants spoke Welsh and French and it is difficult to find a pure monolingual because most people around the world these days have learned at least some basics from any other language. The last limitation is the method of collecting data during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the restrictions are safety and prevention measures.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology of the Study

The research relied on the descriptive analytical method in order to clarify the results of the study and answer its questions. The use of this method shows the phenomenon studied and the analysis of its aspects and dimensions.

Study Sample (Participants)

The researcher chose a group of participants who were divided into three groups, the first group represented the Kuwaiti short stay, the second group represented the Kuwaiti long stay, and the third group represented the original British English group, where the goal of these groups is to show the difference in the degree of use of the two languages for speakers in Arabic and English.

Instruments of the Study

The study used a tool represented in the list of words that was built to verify the production of sound stops in English (/b/, /d/, /g/) in addition to stops in which there is no sound such as (/p/, /t/, /k/) in the word position followed by short vowels (/ɪ/, /æ) (/u:/, /i:/) and long vowels (/u:/, /i:/). The questionnaire was also used as a second tool that measures the background of the original language, as a multiple-choice questionnaire was filled out in English with short answers. It consisted of essential inquiries regarding the length of stay of the Kuwaiti members, as well as the time they spent practicing English. This language foundation survey differentiates Kuwaiti members with regards to their proficiency of English.

Internal Consistency Validity

In order to ensure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, the correlation coefficients were determined between the all-out score for each gathering of English speakers in the three aforementioned groups, and the following table shows that:

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Groups

Groups	Correlation Coefficients	Value of Significance
Group(1)	0.932**	0.000
Group(2)	0.942**	0.000
Group(3)	0.909**	0.000

The correlation coefficients of the degrees of each group, as seen in Table (1), are high correlation coefficients, and statistically significant at the level of significance (0.000). This means that the groups according to the moderate distribution have validity of internal consistency.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

To check its reliability, Cronbach's Alpha method was adopted. The following table shows the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire and each group using Cronbach's Alpha equation

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

Groups	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
Group(1)	0.803
Group(2)	0.847
Group(3)	0.832
Total Reliability	0.963

Table (2) shows that Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three groups are high. As it can be seen from the table that the total stability coefficient of (0.936), which is a high stability coefficient.

Data Analysis

To measure the VOT produced by the participants while the target symbols were pronounced, an auditory analysis was performed using a. (Boersma & Weenink, 2020) Praat software. Graphics have also been created to help researchers clearly measure sounds, and the goal of auditory analysis is to ensure that the symbols are differentiated as the boundaries of these symbols are distinguished (labeling process). The VOT value for native British speakers has also been rated for consonants.

Statistical Test (Four-Way ANOVA).

ANOVA test was used because the current study uses four different independent variables called factors: group, expression, POA, and vowel length. This is in order to find differences in the dependent variable VOT according to the independent variables, and accordingly, multiple comparisons were made with the (Shaffer) test, in order to verify the validity of the four-way analysis of variance, and the following table shows that:

Table 3: Multiple Comparisons

(I) Groups// Mean	(J) Groups	Mean Difference	Sig.
(LOR) // 7.98	(LOR) // 12.34	-3,653	0,75
	(BNS) // 57.46	-47,22*	0,00
(LOR) // 12.34	British Native-Speakers (BNS)	-42,44*	0,00
Dependent	Mean - Voicing		
	Voiceless stops	Voiced stops	
VOT	78.66	-44.32	

It is clear from Table (3) that there is a variance in the voice VOT which is positive in the vocal pauses and that every one of the distinctions in the voting qualities between the sample of participants according to the group to which they belong, were between short Kuwaitis (LOR) and BNS, and between Kuwaitis long (LOR) & BNS. These voting distinctions have always been between BNS on "(LOR) and (LOR)".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to answer the main question of the study problem, which is (What is the degree of phonemic variation of English for Kuwaiti learners of the second language?), the differences between the three groups were analyzed. The arithmetic means, standard deviations, and the degree of variance in the order were used for the three groups, as shown in the following table:

Table 4: Differences between Groups in Voicing for VOT:

Groups	Voicing	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sound Contrast
(LOR)	voiceless	77,2543	44,234	high
	voiced	-47,5436	102,639	medium
(LOR)	voiceless	67,2682	43,826	high
	voiced	-44,2587	66,556	medium
(BNS)	voiceless	91,9555	27,709	high
	voiced	14,7222	22,704	high

It is clear from Table (4) that the loudspeakers of Kuwaiti short and long (LOR) speakers came with negative values. As indicated by the results for British Speakers (BNS), a positive vote value was found when performing a hearing analysis using praat software produced a BNS VOT to stop with a short lag medium value. On the other hand, second-level English learners and in the short and long stay groups, showing evidence of discrimination between voiceless stop consonants, produced positive VOT values for long periods, while for the phonemic stops, they prefigured the sounds. It is typical for the production of phonetic pauses in Arabic.

Accordingly, the results came that the sounds with negative VOT values, and this difference is due to the fact that the Arabic language belongs to the category of languages that contain positive VOT values for the phonemic stops and negative values for the phonetic stops.

As for the group of native British speakers they produced soundless pauses with a positive long-delayed VOT.. The phonetic stops were performed in a different manner than the groups of Kuwaiti second language learners. They were delivered with a positive VOT, but in the region of a short lag, and in this way the speculation that English speakers would create vocal and non-vocal pauses with a positive vote was affirmed. These distinctions between the groups of Kuwaiti second language learners and the BNS group are due to the fact that English, unlike Arabic, has a place with the class of languages with positive VOT values for voiceless stop consonants. The results therefore indicate that only British monolinguals produced negative values, while British bilinguals, who spoke Spanish and French, produced positive VOT values.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

Through the previous analysis in the three groups, and the analysis of the study's questionnaire according to Arabic speakers (Kuwaiti) and English speakers (British), the most prominent results were the following:

- The VOT pattern produced by Kuwaiti second-level English language learners, furthermore, it was concluded that they delivered positive VOT values.
- Vowel environments significantly affected the VOT values produced by the three groups.
- Longer VOT values were found, while in the short vowel environment, shorter VOT values were observed in this study except for the Kuwaiti short LOR group
- The presence of an effect of vowel quality on VOT values.

Accordingly, the current study recommends second-level Arabic learners whose English are at an advanced level, to make practice attempts in the application of English to see if the VOT pattern fits with their native language and bypassing phonetic pauses while speaking English as a second language.

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