DIFFICULTIES KUWAITI STUDENTS ENCOUNTER IN THE PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH VOWELS

by

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SUMMARY

The aim of this research is to pinpoint difficulties Kuwaiti students encounter in learning the pronunciation of English vowels. It is composed of four parts. The first part deals with English and Kuwaiti Arabic vowels contrastively. It starts with the English vowel and mentions whether it exists in Kuwaiti Arabic as a phoneme, an allophone, or if it does not exist altogether. Then description of the articulation of the vowel in both languages follows. The second part attempts to predict difficulties caused by differences in both articulation and significance of vowels in the two languages. Possible mispronunciations are stated with reasons based on contrastive descriptions mentioned in the first part. The third part is concerned with English spelling and how it suggests mispronunciation of English vowels. The English vowel is presented with its misleading spelling in certain words. The possible mispronunciation of the vowel is mentioned. The fourth part deals with classroom teaching and drilling. Suggestions for teachers are given with drills that would help students to overcome difficulties in the pronunciation of English vowels.

ملخص البحث

بدأ البحث بعرض المشكلة وهي كون الطلبة الكويتيين يواجهون صعوبات في تعليم لغة الإنجليزية، وأن أهم أسباب هذه الصعوبات تدخل لغة اللغة العربية، عند محاولة الطالب تعليم لغة الإنجليزية، هذا التدخل الذي يبدو واضحاً بسبب قصر مدة استماع الطالب لغة اللغة العربية مما يقلل فرص إلغاء العادات اللغوية الأولى، وكذلك بسبب كون الطالب بدأ تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في الصف الأول المتوسط (أي وهو في حوالي العاشرة من عمره)، وهذا السيناريو الذي يظهر فيه آثار تدخل اللغة الأولى في لغة أجنبية. وبستطيع المعلمين والمدرسون ملاحظة بعض الصعوبات الواضحة والمتكررة مثل لفظ المد/ن/ على شكل /b/ في الكلمة /beat/، لكونه الأول غير موجود في اللغة على شكل صوت.
ذي معنى إلا أن الحاجة ماسة إلى عرض مفصل لهذه الصرعات من خلال بحث وصفي تحليلي مقارن مع
على أسس علمية سابعة.
ثم بين الهدف من البحث وهو إبراز الصواعات التي يواجهها الطبيب الكوبتيون في تعلم اللغة
الإنجليزية والثنوية تتوجه حدوثها في مجموعة من أصوات اللغة الإنجليزية وهي مجموعة أصوات
الألواح (Vowels)، ومن المفروض أن يكونوا النواحين والدارسين تعتبرن على تحقيق هذه الصواعات
مع وضع التمرنات الخاصة بذلك وشرح كيفية الأخذ بها.
ثم يعرض بعض الدراسات اللغوية التي سبقت في هذا المجال والتي يمكن أن تكون مفيدة في
بحثنا، وبخصوص ما يتعلق باللغة الكوبية والنواحات الحليبية والعربية، بيد أن، بحسب علمه، لم
يمكن أن نشر بحث أو دراسة حول مقارنة اللغة الكوبية باللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض تعليمية
وكم ذلك بين البحثات الخاصة بالدراسة ويلخصها فيما يمكن دراسة تعتمد على وصف ووصفت:
اللغة الكوبية مع مقارنتها بأصوات اللين الإنجليزية، ومن خلال القنوات يركز على جوانب الاختلاف
الذي تؤثر فيه زوايا عملنا على إنشاء الصوت من قبل المعامل. وكذلك بين أن الكتابة
الإنجليزية السلبي على نظم اللغة بسبب عدم تطبيق هذه الكتابة في rencont.
ثم يصف أسلوب البحث وهو البدء بالصوت في اللغة الإنجليزية وجهد ما كان موجوداً في
اللغة الكوبية أم لا وإلى عليه إذا الصوت الذي يمكن أن نواجهه الطلب. وقد خرج البحث
جوانب المقارنة بالنقل، فضلاً عن يراشدي التي تخدم الجوانب التعليمية، كما خصص جزءاً من البحث لأثر
كتابة كل صوت في اللغة الإنجليزية على عملية تعلم لفيه هذا الصوت والاتصال.
ويتألف البحث من أربعة أجزاء:
الجزء الأول يتعلق بالإفصاح الكروني لصوت في اللغة الإنجليزية ونظائرها في اللغة
اللغة الكوبية. وقد استعرض الباحث الإفصاح الكروني لصوت في الإنجليزية والمصنفة
منها كلمة مشتركة مع (Phonemes)، وبين أن في اللغة الكوبية ثمانية أصوات تصنف
ذات مفعمة، وبين أن في اللغة الكوبية ثمانية أصوات تصنف
بكلمة مشتركة مع اللغة الإنجليزية ومعالجات ولا يوجد في اللغة الإنجليزية. وأما السبع المصطلحات الإنجليزية السلبية فيهما
اللغة الكوبية على لكل الصوتية لا يوجد في اللغة الكوبية. ومن خلال العرض يبين أنه حتى الأصوات المشتركة لا تتطابق
ما جاورها من أصوات في اللغتين.
الجزء الثاني يتضمن الصواعات التي يواجهها الطالب الكوبتي في لفظ أصوات اللين الإنجليزية
بسبب اختلاف اللغتين المفصل في الجزء الأول. وقد بين البحث أحد عشر موضوعاً في صومية
ووصف الأصوات التي يمكن للطالب أن يتذكروا بدل الأصوات الإنجليزية.
وفي الجزء الثالث يعرض البحث أشكال كتابة أصوات اللين في اللغة الإنجليزية مرتكزاً على
الأشكال التي يمكن أن تحدث إرباكاً لدى المعامل لكونها توضيح لفظ صوت آخر.
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The Problem

Kuwaiti students (KS) start learning English in the 1st year of the intermediate stage (4 years) when they are at the age of ten. In the first two years they take 5 hours per week and in the second two years they take 6 hours per week. In the secondary stage (4 years) they take 6 periods per week in the 1st year and 5 in the 2nd. In the 3rd and 4th years the literary section takes 7 periods per week and the scientific section takes 6 periods per week in the 3rd year and 5 in the 4th. (Ministry of Education, Kuwait 1983-1984). Obviously they face difficulties in learning the systems of the target language of which pronunciation is an important one. Failure to produce English sounds or to interpret them correctly will certainly result in incomprehensible expressions. Difficulties KS encounter in learning English pronunciation are due to many reasons. First, the short period of time in which they are exposed to English. Second, the age of students (around 10) in which the foreign accent emerges (Lenneberg, 1967, p. 181). Third, differences in pronunciation between the mother tongue which is Kuwaiti Arabic (KA) and the target language. All these reasons contribute to cause interference of students' mother tongue in the process of learning the target language especially in the area of pronunciation. Interference in this area is usually observed by teachers who need to know more about it through detailed and scientific study. This knowledge will help them list predicted difficulties, focus on them, and let their students practise them before they are fixed as mispronunciations which may distort their understanding when they listen to English, or render their speech incomprehensible.

The Aim

Interference in the area of pronunciation can be divided into five sections: vowels, diphthongs, consonants, stress, and intonation. This study tackles the problem in the section of vowels. Its aim is pedagogical and can be summarized in the following:

1. to predict difficulties KS encounter in learning the pronunciation of the English vowels.
2. to give suggestions for teachers and learners in order to overcome areas of difficulties.

Related Literature

1. Material related to Arabic phonology

Al-Ari (1978) lists 16 research works on Arabic phonology none of which deals with contrastive analysis of English and Arabic pronunciation. Some studies, however, talk about dialects that are close to Kuwaiti Arabic or discuss aspects that might be of use in our study. Johnstone (1963) discusses the africation of 'Kaf' and 'gaf' in Arabic dialects of the Arabian peninsula. He also talks about the relation between the emphatics and the back vowels with examples from Kuwaiti Arabic. Lehn (1967) studies vowel contrasts in Najdi Arabic but does not talk about the Arabic of the Gulf area. Some of his notes about "simple and complex nuclei" are applicable to Kuwaiti Arabic. Other research works are concerned with certain aspects of the phonology of Arabic such as: Mitchell (1960) "Prominence and Syllabication of Arabic", and Jakobson (1957) "Mufaxxama, The Emphatic Phonemes in Arabic". Some studies deal with Arabic dialects used in other parts of the Arab world such as Egypt, (Lehn 1963); Morocco, (Harris 1942); East Mediterranean, (Garbell 1958).

The sole study that deals with KA exclusively is the one which Matar (1970) did in Arabic: Min Asrar al-lahja al-Kuwaityah, "Some Secrets of the Kuwaiti Dialect". Matar deals with the phonology and morphology of KA. He reveals rules of the pronunciation of KA concerning the relation between the vowels (fatha, damma, kasra) and the various groups of consonants. Matar does not describe the articulation of the KA vowels in terms of the position of the tongue. Only once does he refer to the cardinal vowels scale (p. 29) when he deals with one vowel which he calls "Kasra Khafeefa" (light kasra) and defines it "close to cardinal (3)". Matar is not concerned with the significance of the vowels, i.e. whether they behave as phonemes or allophones.

Our study is different from the above ones in three ways. First, we describe the articulation of the vowel in terms of the position of the tongue and the movement of the lips. Second, we are concerned with the significant behaviour of the vowels. Third and above all we hold contrast between English and KA vowels for pedagogical purposes.
Through investigations in magazines concerned with teaching languages we found a few articles that discuss problems of Arab students in learning English pronunciation. The following are related to our study:

Boseiri (1966) talks about the influence of Sudanese Arabic on the pronunciation of English. This influence is, in many ways, different from the influence of KA on English pronunciation.

Aziz (1974) deals with some problems of English consonants and diphthongs for the Iraqi learner. He does not tackle the vowels. However, problems of English consonants and diphthongs for KS are not identical with those encountered by Iraqi learners.

2. Material related to English phonology:

As for the material related to English phonology the writer depends on four main references. These are:

Approach and Plan of Study

The approach adopted in this study is that of contrastive analysis of the learner’s mother tongue (KA) and the target language (English). Contrast reveals similarities and differences and it is the latter that concerns us more since it is differences that are expected to create difficulties.

In presentation I start with the English vowel and then mention whether it exists in KA as a phoneme, or an allophone or if it does not exist altogether. Contrastive description of the articulation of both the English and the KA vowels follows. In English I take the RP as the standard pronunciation. The acoustic features of either of the two languages lie beyond the limits of this study. It should also be mentioned that variants of English used in different regions are not of our concern. As for KA I depend on Kuwaiti informants, who in all cases are my students at the university. It is their pronunciation that I consider standard KA. Long experience in teaching English in Kuwait (24 years) helps me to come very close to reality in my predictions. However, the examination of the truth value of these predictions has to be done in a separate research.

In describing the vowels in both languages I refer to the diagram of
Gimson (1978, p. 38) which represents the Cardinal Vowels, (figure 1 below) Predicted difficulties due to interference of the mother tongue are dealt with in detail. Then follow difficulties due to English spelling.

Suggestions for teachers in practical teaching are given at the end of the study.

![Figure 1. The primary Cardinal Vowels.](image1)

![Figure 2. Kuwaiti Arabic vowels and allophones](image2)

- Vowels
- Allophones
Figure 3. English vowels

PART 1

Contrastive Description of English and Kuwaiti Arabic Vowels

1.1. /iː/∗

This sound exists in KA as a phoneme. Minimal pairs are:

/ʤiːb/** ‘bring’ (imperative, masculine, singular)
/ʤɑb/ ‘He brought’

The KA /iː/ is similar to the RP /iː/ in quality. Both of them are pronounced with the front of the tongue taking a position just below and behind that of Cardinal [iː]. The tongue is tense in both of them. The difference is that in KA the /iː/ is nearer to the centre than to the front and is raised just above Cardinal [æ] when it is in the environment of an emphatic consonant (see 1.5. below), e.g.

∗ In transcribing English sounds I follow D. Jones, English Pronouncing Dictionary, 1967. For signs and their meaning see Appendix I.

** For phonetic symbols used to transcribe KA consonants see Appendix I.
in /ʃiː/ 'he walks’ /iː/ is nearer to close and front.
but in [ʃiː] ‘he becomes /iː/ is nearer to half-close and centre.

1.2. /iː/

This sound exists in KA as a phoneme. Minimal pairs are:
/Alimni/ ‘tell me’ (imperative, singular, masculine)
/Aalimni/ ‘he told me’
/iil/ ‘unfold’
/iil/ ‘elephant’

The KA /iː/ is pronounced with the tongue and the lips taking nearly the
same position of the long RP /iː/, just below and behind Cardinal [j]. In the
RP /iː/ the tongue is nearer to the centre than to the front, and is raised just
above Cardinal [e], the tongue is lax and the lips are loosely spread
(Gimson, 1978, p. 101). The KA /iː/ is pronounced almost like RP /iː/ when it
is adjacent to emphatic consonants, e.g., the /iː/ in /tib/ ‘bucket’ is closer than
the /iː/ in /Tib/ ‘medicine’.

1.3. /eː/

In KA this sound is not a phoneme. It exists as an allophone of /iː/. For
example, the word /Aalimni/ ‘teach me’ is pronounced [‘Aallem] ‘tell’ when
it occurs without the morpheme /ni/ which means ‘me’.

The distribution of /iː/ and [e] in KA follows regular rules that are not our
main concern in this study. It would be relevant however to give one of
these rules. Imperative verbs of the type CVCCVC, e.g. [‘Aallem] (medial
geminates) are pronounced with /iː/ when attached to certain pronouns and
with [e] when they occur without any attached pronoun, e.g.

Aalim-ni ‘teach me’
Aalim-ha ‘teach her’
Aalim-hum ‘teach them’
Aalim-na ‘teach us’

The KA [e] is closer than the RP /eː/. It is also slightly retracted. Both of
the sounds are realized with the lips loosely spread.

1.4. /æː/

This sound exists in KA as a phoneme. Minimal pairs are:
/mæ ɪ/ ‘money’
/muːl/ ‘never’
KA /æ/ is similar to RP /æ/ as far as quality is concerned. Both of the two sounds are articulated with the tongue raised just below the half-open position. The lips take a neutral position in both of them. The tongue is rather tense. KA /æ/ has a short and lax counterpart /a/ which behaves as a phoneme, e.g.

\[\text{/mal/} \quad \text{‘he got bored’}\]

The /a/ phoneme in KA has two allophones \[\text{[ə]}\] and \[\text{ə}\] (see 1.5, 1.12 below)

1.5. \[\text{[ə]}\]

This sound exists in KA as an allophone of the vowel /a/ (1.4 above) which is very near in tongue position to Cardinal \[\text{[a]}\].

The KA \[\text{[ə]}\] occurs in the environment of the velar consonants /x/ and /ɣ/ in addition to the emphatic consonants (T, D, S, Z, r, g). For information about emphatic consonants in KA see (Matar, 1970, p. 37). See also (Ferguson, 1956; Jakobson, 1957; Lehn, 1967) for analysis of ‘emphatics’ in other Arabic dialects.

Consider the following minimal pairs:

\[\text{[təl]} \quad \text{‘he appeared’}\]
\[\text{[tal]} \quad \text{‘hill’}\]

In KA these two words are different not because of opposition between \[\text{[ə]}\] and /a/ but because of opposition between the emphatic /T/ and the non-emphatic /t/. (See Lehn, 1967; and Garbell, 1958).

Other examples on \[\text{[ə]}\] with emphatic consonants are:

\[\text{[bət]} \quad \text{‘ducks’}\]
\[\text{[bət]} \quad \text{‘he decided’}\]
\[\text{[səd]} \quad \text{‘he bit’}\]
\[\text{[səd]} \quad \text{‘he counted’}\]
\[\text{[dəi]} \quad \text{‘he went astray’}\]
\[\text{[dəi]} \quad \text{‘he guided’}\]
\[\text{[səb]} \quad \text{‘he poured’}\]
\[\text{[səb]} \quad \text{‘he swore’}\]
\[\text{[məs]} \quad \text{‘he sucked’}\]
\[\text{[məs]} \quad \text{‘he touched’}\]
\[\text{[zəl]} \quad \text{‘he stayed’}\]
\[\text{[zəl]} \quad \text{‘he submitted’}\]
[H A Z]  'chance'
/Haz/  'he cut'
[b A r]  'desert'
[g A lb]  'heart'

Broadly speaking KA [A] occurs in the environment of emphatic consonants, e.g.
[T A ] and [b A T]

It is obvious that the distribution of [A] in KA is different from its counterpart in English.

Compared with the RP /a:/ the KA one is slightly retracted. Except for this difference the two sounds are similar.

1.6. /a:/

This sound exists in KA as an allophone of the phoneme /æ/. Like [A] it occurs with the emphatic consonants as well as the velar consonants /x/ and /θ/, e.g.
[Sæj]  'he became'
[TA:z]  'he flew'
[zæ:lem]  'unfair'
[ˈɛkli]  'empty'
[ˈɛski:]  'expensive'

KA[a:] is similar to RP /a:/ in articulation. The jaws are separated and the lips are neutrally open. The centre and the back of the tongue are in the open position.

1.7. /ə/

This sound does not exist in KA neither as a phoneme nor as an allophone. The nearest sound to the RP /ə/ in KA is [o] which is an allophone of /u/, e.g.
/kɪt æ buhum/ 'their book (in classical Arabic)
has become /kit æ buhum/ in KA. The classical /u/ is pronounced [o] in certain positions in KA but has not developed into a different phoneme. The phonological rules concerning the distribution of [o] and /u/ in KA are beyond the limits of this study.

The quality of KA [o] is similar to that of Cardinal [o].

1.8. /ɔ:/

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This sound exists in KA as an allophone of the vowel /o:/ which behaves as a phoneme, e.g.

\[ /\text{uː}/ \] ‘look’ (v., imp., sing., m.)
\[ /\text{oː}/ \] ‘looking’ (n.)

Broadly speaking we can say that the allophone [ɔː] in KA occurs with the emphatic consonants as well as the velar ones, e.g.

\[ /\text{uːS}/ \] ‘dive’ v., imp., sing., m.
\[ [\text{8} : \text{S}] \] ‘diving’ n.
\[ /\text{sʊm}/ \] ‘fast’ v., imp., sing., m.
\[ [\text{S} \text{ɔm}] \] ‘fasting’ v., imp., sing., m.

The allophone [ɔː] in KA is pronounced with the back of the tongue raised to a position between Cardinal [ɔ] and Cardinal [ɔː]. The lips are rather rounded.

1.9. /u/

This sound exists in KA as a phoneme, e.g.

\[ /\text{ʌb}/ \] ‘love’
\[ /\text{əb}/ \] ‘he loved’

KA /u/ is pronounced with the back of the tongue raised to a position between the close and the half-close. The lips are less rounded than the RP /u/. When KA /u/ is adjacent to emphatic consonants part of the tongue moves to a central position and in this case it becomes similar to the RP /u/. For example, /u/ in /Suba:\H/ ‘The name of the royal family’ is similar to the RP /u/ in full, whereas the /u/ in /ful/ ‘jasmine’ is similar to the shortened form of the RP /u:/ as far as quality is concerned.

1.10. /uː/

This sound exists as a phoneme in KA, e.g.

\[ /\text{uːl}/ \] ‘length’
\[ /\text{uí}/ \] ‘look over’

Both of the KA /uː/ and the RP one are articulated with the back of the tongue being raised to a point just below the closest position. The lips are rounded in both of them.

1.11. /ɔː/

This sound does not exist in KA as a phoneme. It exists as an allophone
of the vowel /e:/ which in turn does not exist in English as a phoneme. Minimal pairs on /e:/ are:

/di:n/ 'religion'
/de:n/ 'loan'

The allophone [e:] in KA occurs with the emphatic consonants as well as the velar consonants /x/ and /b/, e.g.

[Seːf] 'summer'
[Teːba] 'a proper name'
[bɔːD] 'eggs'
[seauTi] 'broker'
[baːm] 'clouds'
[Xeː!] 'horses'

The Ka [e:] is similar to the RP /ə:/ in quality. Both of them are articulated with the centre of the tongue reaching a position between half-close and half-open. The lips are neutrally spread.

1.12. /e/

This sound exists in KA as an allophone of the vowel /a/ (1.4 above). It is to be noticed that the [e] in the example mentioned below is pronounced with /a/ in Modern Standard Arabic.

[məTAR] 'rain'
[bagv] 'cows'
[FaSax] 'he took off (clothes)'
[waSam] 'he arrived'

Matar (1970, p. 37) noticed the existence of this sound in KA but he did not call it schwa. He described it as a ‘damma’ /u/ which inclines to be ‘kasra’ /i/. He noticed also that this sound occurs when preceded by the bilabials /m, b, f, w/ and followed by the emphatics /S, D, T, Z, g, r/.

The KA [e] and the RP /ə/ are central vowels. The only difference is that the KA [e] is articulated with the centre of the tongue raised to a half-close position, whereas with the RP /ə/ the tongue takes a position between half-close and half-open. However, the RP /ə/ is identical with the KA [e] when it is adjacent to velars.
PART 2

difficulties Caused by Interference of the
Kuwaiti Arabic Pronunciation

2.1. In RP the long vowels /iː, ː, uː, ː/ are “shortened when they occur in a syllable closed by a fortis consonant” (Gimson, 1978, p. 94) /æ/ is lengthened before lenis consonants especially /b, d, g, j, m, n/ (Gimson, 1978, p. 105), e.g.

- Compare:
  - seed /siːd/  seat /siːt/
  - carve /kəːv/  call /kæːl/
  - saws /səʊz/  source /səʊs/
  - rude /ruːd/  root /ruːt/
  - surge /səːdʒ/  search /səːtʃ/
  - cab /kæb/  cap /kæp/

This rule does not apply to KA vowels. Lehn (1967, p. 323) states that in Riyadh Arabic “all complex nuclei have longer variants when stressed.” The same rule applies to KA which, broadly speaking, shares many rules with Riyadh Arabic since both of them belong to the Najdi Arabic group. Matar (1970, pp. 116-122) gives stress rules of KA. One of these rules is “The word stress falls on the long syllable whether it is initial, medial, or final. In words of more than one long syllable stress falls on the ultimate one.” Another rule is “If the word does not contain any long syllable, i.e. it is composed of only short or medium syllables the stress falls on the penultimate.” Matar defines long, medium and short syllables as follows:

- Long: CVVC, e.g. /zeːn/ ‘good’
  CVCC, e.g. /ʃit/ ‘I saw’

- Medium: CVČ, e.g. /ˈnaːmat/ ‘she slept’ (the ultimate syllable)
  CVV, e.g. /ˈnaːmat/ ‘she slept’ (the first syllable)

- Short: CV, e.g. /mədrısa/ ‘school’ (the ultimate and the penultimate syllables)

So, the stressed vowel [əː] in [iːˈyeH] ‘going’ (singular, mas.) is longer than the same unstressed vowel in [raːˈyːhiːn] ‘going’ (plural).

With regard to the above mentioned rules we can infer that KS will find it difficult to discern the difference in the length of the English vowels before
lenis and fortis consonants. So, they are expected to mispronounce English words:

(a) giving the same length to the vowels in monosyllabic words such as: leave, leaf; seize, cease; bad, bat; league, leak.

(b) lengthening and shortening long vowels in multisyllabic words according to the KA pronunciation rules. In this case the RP vowels which should be lengthened are likely to be shortened and those which should be shortened are likely to be lengthened by KS. For example the word ‘handicap’ expected to be mispronounced \(\text{handi'cap} \quad [\text{handik} \text{kap}]\). The wrong pronunciation in such a word is three-fold: shifting the stress, shortening the sound /ɛ/ before the lenis /n/, and lengthening it before the fortis /p/. Other examples of predicted mispronunciation in this respect are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RP</th>
<th>Predicted mispronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>newspaper /'njuːspeɪə/</td>
<td>[njuːspei:pə]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /u:/ shortened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /ei/ lengthened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stress shifted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normality /nɔːɹməliti/</td>
<td>[nɔːɹmaliti]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /ɔː/ lengthened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /æ/ shortened into /ə/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stress shifted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>astronaut /æstrənəːt/</td>
<td>[æstrənəːt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /ɔː/ lengthened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /æ/ shortened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stress shifted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /ə/ pronounced /ɔː/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The glottal stop /ʔ/ is added</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distribute /dɪstribjuːt/</td>
<td>[dɪstribjuːt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /u:/ lengthened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stress shifted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fibreglass /faɪbəɡlæs/</td>
<td>[faɪbəɡlæs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- /ɑː/ lengthened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stress shifted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is to be noticed however that in the previous examples KS may produce roll /r/ being misled by the English spelling.

2.2. KS will face difficulty in mastering the pronunciation of the half-close,
lax and short /i/ in bit and sit because this sound occurs with emphatics in KA (1.2. above). So, they are expected to give it the quality of reduced close and tense /i:/ in beat and seat.

2.3. The RP /i/ and /e/ behave as phonemes, whereas in KA the /e/ behaves as an allophone of /i/. The distribution of /e/ and /i/ in KA is also different from English. So, it is expected that KS will find it difficult to discern the difference in meaning between such pairs as: sit, set; bit, bet; pin, pen. It will also be difficult for them to produce the correct pronunciation of the word they mean to use. For example, KS may say set and mean sit and vice versa.

2.4. The RP /ʌ/ is difficult to master by KS in all its positions since it exists in KA as an allophone of /a/ (1.4 & 1.5 above). So, KS are expected to replace /a/ for /ʌ/ in such words as: but /bʌt/ and cut /kʌt/ confusing them with bat /bæt/ and cat /kæt/ in which the /æ/ is shortened to become almost as long as the KA phoneme /a/. It is worthwhile mentioning that the English word double /ˈdʌbl/ which was borrowed to KA is pronounced /ˈdabəl/ by Kuwailites. If, however, KS are to produce the /ʌ/ sound in English they are expected to pronounce the following or the preceding consonant as an emphatic one, e.g. sun /sʌn/ and but /bʌt/ will be pronounced [sʌnt] and [bʌt]. It is to be noticed that when the English /ʌ/ follows or precedes the /g/ sound it does not create any difficulty to KS since it will be identical with the KA [ʌ] in words like /gʌb/ 'heart' /gʌb/ 'he went away'. So, words like bug and gum will be easy to pronounce by KS.

2.5. The RP /ɔ:/ poses difficulties to KS since it exists in KA as an allophone of /ɔ/ with different distribution from English. (1.6 above). So, KS tend to produce /ɔ/ instead of /ɔ:/ in words like half /ˈhɔːf/ and bath /ˈbɑːθ/. In car /kɔː/ and bar /bɔː/ the /ɔ:/ is pronounced correctly by KS because it is followed by /r/ which is emphatic in KA. In this case, however, KS tend to produce the /r/ too.

2.6. The RP /ɔ/ is expected to create difficulties to KS since it does not exist in KA either as a phoneme or as an allophone (1.7 above). KS are likely to realize /ɔ/ as the KA [o] in such words as: cod /kɔd/ and dot /dɔt/.

2.7. Since the RP /ɔ:/ exists in KA as an allophone of /o:/ (1.8 above) KS are expected to replace it by /o:/ For example, bought, fought, and broad will be mispronounced /bɔ:t/ , /fɔ:t/ , and /bɹɔ:d/ respectively. If the /ɔ:/ sound is to be realized the final consonants /t, d/ will be pronounced like the emphatics /T, D/ in KA.
2.8. The RP /u/ is similar to the KA /u/ when adjacent to emphatic consonants (1.9 above). So, KS tend to produce the RP /u/ as short /u:/ mispronouncing words like book, wood, and woman. It is to be noticed that the /u/ in good is pronounced correctly by KS because /g/ is an emphatic consonant in KA and the /u/ in good is similar to the /u/ in /gum/ 'go away' and [gum ɪŋ] 'moon'.

2.9. The RP /ə:/ is expected to present difficulties to KS since in KA it is an allophone of /e:/ and its occurrence is restricted to emphatic consonants. So, KS tend to replace the RP /ə:/ with the KA /e:/.. For example words such as bird /bɜːd/ and her /hər/ will be mispronounced /beːrd/ and /heːr/.

2.10. The RP /aː/ is difficult to master by KS because in KA it exists as an allophone of /a/ and occurs when preceded by bilabials and followed by emphatics (1.12. above). It is expected therefore that KS replace the RP /aː/ by the KA /a/. For example about /əbɔːt/ and advice /ədvais/ will be wrongly pronounced /əbət/ and /ədvais/ with the glottal stop /ʔ/ preceding the /a/. They are also expected to shift the stress from the second into the first syllable.

PART 3

Difficulties caused by English spelling:

The discussion of problems of English pronunciation to KS should also include those posed by the English spelling for two reasons. First, because KS spend more time reading English than listening to it. Second, because Arabic transcription represents Arabic pronunciation much more closely than English spelling represents English pronunciation.

3.1 /i/

The _e_ in words like: pretty /prɪti/, careless /kɛəlɪs/, wicket /wɪkɪt/ suggests the pronunciation of /e/ rather than /i/.

3.2. /e/

(a) The letters ay in says /sez/ suggest the pronunciation of /eɪ/ and KS will identify it with days and ways.

(b) a in many /meni/ is mispronounced [manɪ].
3.3. /ɔ/

The letters ai in plait /plæt/ and plaid /plæd/ suggest the pronunciation of /ei/ rather than /ɔ/. 

3.4. /ʌ/

The o in monkey /mʌŋki/, among /əmʌŋ/, oven /əʊvən/ is misleading and suggests the pronunciation of /ʌ/ rather than /ʌ/.

3.5. /ɔː/:

(a) The letters ear in heart /hɑːt/ and hearth /hɑːθ/ suggest the pronunciation of /eər/ or /ɜː/. 

(b) The letters er in clerk /klaːk/ and sergeant /ˈsɜːdʒi.ənt/ are misleading and KS will mispronounce these words producing /eər/ or /ɜːr/ instead of /ər/.

3.6. /ɔ/:

(a) The a in want /wɔnt/ and quality /ˈkwɒlɪtɪ/ suggests the pronunciation of /ɔ/ and in fact almost all KS mispronounce these words producing /wɔnt/ and /kwɔlɪtɪ/.

(b) The letters ou in cough /kəuf/ and trough /truːf/ are likely to be mispronounced (kʌf) and (trʌf) under the influence of the word enough /ɪnʌf/ which KS usually learn in their beginning lessons of English.

(c) The o in gone /gɔn/ will be realized like the o in done /dʌn/ by KS.

3.7. /ɔː/:

(a) The a in all /ɔl/, salt /sɔːlt/ and quarter /kwɔ:tə/ is misleading especially to beginners who may pronounce such words with /ɔ/ instead of /ɔː/.

(b) The letters aw in dawn /daʊn/ and yawn /ˈvaʊn/ can be mispronounced /au/ instead of /ɔː/.

3.8. /u/:

(a) The letter o in wolf /wʊlf/ and bosom /bɒzəm/ suggests the pronunciation of /ʊ/ rather than /u/.

(b) The letters oo in hook /hʊk/ and brook /bruːk/ suggest the pronunciation of /uː/ instead of /u/ since the long /uː/ corresponds with the double oo more than the short /u/. 

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3.9. /u:/

(a) The oo in cooed /ku:d/, and wooed /wu:d/ suggest the pronunciation of [o:] rather than /u:/.

(b) The u in rude /ru:d/ and Luke /lu:k/ is mispronounced /u/ instead of /u:/.

3.10. /ɔ:/

(a) The letter o in word /wɔ:d/, world /wɔ:ld/, and worse /wɔ:s/ suggests the pronunciation of [ɔ] instead of /ɔ:/.

(b) The letters ou in journey /dʒə:nɪ/, journal /dʒə:nl/, and courtesy /kə:tsi/ suggest the pronunciation of [ɔ] rather than /ɔ:/.

3.11. /ɔ/

The spelling of this sound is confusing to KS because it “may be spelt with most vowel letters and their combinations” as Gimson (1978, p. 123) says. Here are examples of the difficulties that the spelling of this sound may raise to KS.

(a) o in confine /kənfain/ is mispronounced [ɔ] rather than /ɔ/.

(b) a is abroad /əbrə:d/ is mispronounced /ɔ/.

(c) e in percent /pərˈsɛnt/ is mispronounced /e/ or even [æ] because KS tend to stress it and consequently give it a longer duration.

(d) u in suppress /səˈpres/ and symposium /sɪmˈpəzjəm/ is mispronounced /ʌ/ and [ɔ] respectively.

PART 4

Suggestions for Teacher

I would like to call attention to two points

(a) Our goal is the pronunciation of the native speaker which, we agree, is not easy to achieve in the circumstances of teaching English in Kuwait. Nevertheless, we believe that practice built on scientific research will bring learners very close to the goal.
(b) Some drills mentioned here suit beginners and others suit more advanced levels. So it is left to teachers to decide upon which drills suit which levels.

4.1. The shortened vowels and the lengthened /æ/ (see 2.1):

(a) Call learners' attention to the fact that the long vowels are shortened before fortis consonants. Give minimal pairs and let your pupils distinguish between them by vowel length rather than aspirating or voicing the closing consonants, e.g.

seat

seed

(b) Do not aspirate the /l/ or voice the /d/. Only pronounce seed with fully long /iː/ and seat with duration about half as long as /iː/. Do the same thing with the following pairs:

calf

source

root

search

carve

saws

rude

surge

You can find other examples.

(c) Drill the lengthened /æ/ before lenis consonants. Use minimal pairs such as:

cap

mat

back

cab

mad

bag

(d) Drill multisyllabic words such as:

'handicap  (first /æ/ lengthened)

'newspaper  (/l/ long)

'astronaut  (/ɔː/ shortened)

dis'tribute  (/l/ shortened)

(e) Call learners' attention to confusing words such as plait /plæt/ and plaid /plæt/.

4.2. /i/ and /iː/ (see 1.1, 1.2, & 2.2).

(a) To make learners produce the short and lax /i/ tell them that it is similar to the /i/ in the KA word /Tib/ 'medicine' rather than the /i/ in /tib/ 'bucket'.

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(b) Drill the following minimal pairs:

/i/   /i:/
sit   seat
bit   beat
hit   heat
lid   lead
will  wheel

4.3. /i/ and /e/ (see 1.3, 2.3, 3.1, & 3.2).

(a) Point out differences in meaning between such words as: sit, set; bid, bed... etc.

(b) Drill the following words:

/i/   /e/
will  well
hill  hell
till  tell
pin   pen

(c) Drill pairs whose spelling is different from the above ones:

/i/   /e/
hid   head
did   dead
rid   read (past tense)

(d) Drill confusing words such as:

many   /meni/
pretty /priti/
careless /kælis/
business /biznis/

4.4. /ʌ/ (see 1.5, 2.4, & 3.4).

(a) Tell learners that the RP /ʌ/ is similar to the KA /ə/ in words like [Sʌb] ‘he poured’ and [bʌT] ‘ducks’.

(b) Let them utter the English word but without making the /t/ like the emphatic KA /T/.

(c) Drill minimal pairs pointing out that members of each pair are different in meaning. The following will help you:
/ʌ/  /æ/  
cut    cat
but    bat
much   match
bud    bad
lump   lamp

(d) Drill words whose spelling might be confusing such as:

monkey    /mʌŋki/
among     /əmʌŋ/
oven      /ˈʌvn/  
onion      /ʌnɪən/

4.5. /ə:/ (see 1.6, 2.5 & 3.5).

(a) Drill words which do not contain /r/ such as:
    calm, half, bath.

(b) Drill words with /r/ pointing out that the /r/ is silent, e.g., part, far, march...etc.

(c) Drill minimal pairs opposing between /a:/ and /æ/ on the one hand, and /ə:/ and /ʌ/ on the other, e.g.

/ʌ:/     /ə:/
marrred  mad
hard     had
bard     bad
bark     back

and

/ʌ:/     /æ/
bard     bud
march    much
harm     hum
cart     cut

(d) Drill words whose spelling might be confusing, e.g.

hearth    /hɑːθ/
heart     /hɑːt/
clerk     /klɑːk/
sergeant /sɑːdʒənt/

4.6. /ɔ/ (see 1.7, 2.6 & 3.6).

(a) Let learners practise the pronunciation of /ɔ/ as a separate sound first. Tell them to utter it like the /ɔ:/ in /ˈɔːs/ ‘diving’.
(b) Drill minimal pairs contrasting /ɔ:/ with /ʌ/ and /ɔ/ with /ɔ:/, e.g.

/ɔ/        /ʌ/
dog         dug
sock        suck
dock        duck
don         done

Also

/ɔ/        /ɔː/
cod         cord
pot         port
cock        cork
cot          court
shone       shorn
shot         short

(c) Drill words whose spelling might be confusing such as:

want        /wɔnt/
quality     /kwɔliti/
was (strong form) /wɔs/
cough       /kɔf/
gone        /ɡʌn/

4.7. /ɔː/ (see 1.8, 2.7 & 3.7).

(a) To make learners produce the RP /ɔː/ tell them it is similar to the KA
[ɔ] in [ɔ:] and /sɔɔːm/. You can also write fount on the blackboard
and let learners utter it making the closing /t/ as the emphatic KA /T/.

(b) Drill the following minimal pairs:

/ɔ/        /ɔː/
cot         caught
moss        Morse
tot         taught
fox         forks

(c) Drill words whose spelling might be confusing, e.g. broad, all, salt,
yawn, floor, board.

4.8. /u/ (see 1.9, 2.8, & 3.8)

(a) Let learners produce the RP /u/ like the KA /u/ in /Sub/ ‘pour’
(imperative 2nd p. masculine) rather than the reduced form of /u:/ in words
like boot and hoof.
(b) Drill the following minimal pairs:

/u/  /ɔː:/
full  fall
bull  ball
pull  pull
stood  stored

also
/u/  /uː/
full  fool
soot  suit
wood  wooed
pull  pool
look  Luke

(c) Further practice is to be done on the following words since their spelling can be misleading:

bosom  /bʊsəm/
hook  /hʊk/
womán  /womən/
wolf  /wʊlf/
brook  /brʊk/

4.9. /uː/ (see 1.10 & 3.9)

In addition to minimal pairs with /u/ learners should practise the following words whose spelling can be confusing:

wooed /wuːd/, cooed /kuːd/, rude /ruːd/,
wound /wuːnd/, chew /tʃuː/.

4.10. /ɔː/ (see 1.11, 2.9 & 3.10).

(a) Tell learners that the RP /ɔː/ is very much similar to the KA sound in (ˈtɔːr) ‘bird’. Then let them practise it as a separate sound.

(b) Drill the following words: heard, girl, bird, her, serve, burn.

(c) Focus on words whose spelling might be confusing such as: word, world, journey, journal....etc.

4.11. /ə/ (see 1.12, 2.10 & 3.11).

(a) Let learners practise the pronunciation of this sound as separate. Tell them that it is similar to the KA [ə] in words like:
/m ə r/  ‘rain’
/bəg ə r/  ‘cows’

(b) Drill the following words:

father  /'faː da/
mother  /mə də/
suppose  /sə pə zə/
confine  /kənfain/
above  /ə bə və/
advice  /ə dovais/

(c) Remember that the RP /ə/ “occurs only in unaccented syllables” (Gimson, 1978, p. 94) whereas the KA [ə] may occur in accented syllables. It is important that learners practise weak and strong forms of such words as:*

a  /ə/  /ei/
an  /ə n/  /ə n/
and  /ə nd/  /ə nd/
but  /bə t/  /bə t/
can  /kə n/  /kə n/
could  /kəd/  /kud/
does  /dəz/  /də z/
from  /frəm/  /frə m/
must  /mə st/  /mə st/
shall  /ʃə l/  /ʃə l/
should  /ʃə d/  /ʃə d/
them  /θə m/  /θə m/
was  /wə z/  /wə z/
would  /wə d/  /wə d/

*Teachers are advised to drill weak and strong forms in sentences rather than in isolation
appendix iv

list of Phonetic Symbols Used to Transcribe Kuwaiti Arabic Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>glottal plosive</td>
<td>Pan?m ‘I sleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>voiced bilabial plosive</td>
<td>b?g ‘he stole’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>voiceless dental plosive</td>
<td>tal ‘hill’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>voiceless inter-dental fricative</td>
<td>‘Ωmni ‘second’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dz</td>
<td>voiced palato-alveolar affricate</td>
<td>dzil:b ‘well’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>voiceless pharyngeal fricative</td>
<td>Hali:r ‘silk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>voiceless velar fricative</td>
<td>xɔ:f ‘fear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>voiced dental plosive</td>
<td>‘daxal ‘he entered’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dɔ</td>
<td>voiced inter-dental fricative</td>
<td>dɔnb ‘fault’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>voiced alveolar roll</td>
<td>ra:H ‘he went’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>voiced alveolar fricative</td>
<td>zil ‘it went’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>voiceless alveolar fricative</td>
<td>sa:lm ‘peace’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʃ</td>
<td>voiceless palato-alveolar fricative</td>
<td>ʃak ‘doubt’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʃɔ</td>
<td>voiceless palato-alveolar affricate</td>
<td>tʃam ‘how much’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>voiceless alveolar fricative (emphatic)</td>
<td>Sa:r ‘it became’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>voiced dental plosive (emphatic)</td>
<td>Da:A ‘it was lost’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>voiceless dental plosive (emphatic)</td>
<td>TA:I ‘he appeared’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>voiced inter-dental fricative (emphatic)</td>
<td>‘Za:lem ‘unjust’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>voiced pharyngeal fricative</td>
<td>‘Aq:mel ‘labourer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɔ</td>
<td>voiced palatal fricative</td>
<td>ɔ:s ‘axe’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>voiceless uvular plosive</td>
<td>qa:n:um ‘law’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>voiced velar plosive</td>
<td>g ɔ:ib ‘heart’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>voiceless velar plosive</td>
<td>ka:lm ‘speech’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>voiced alveolar lateral</td>
<td>ëm ‘he blamed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>voiced bilabial nasal</td>
<td>ma:l ‘he got bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>voiced alveolar nasal</td>
<td>nɔm ‘he slept’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>voiceless glottal fricative</td>
<td>hɔk ‘take’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>voiced bilabial frictionless</td>
<td>wa:Hl ‘mud’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>voiced palatal frictionless</td>
<td>jɔb ‘he brought’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II

/ / Phonetic transcription
[ ] phonetic transcription
- meaning of KA examples.

English words given as examples are underlined.

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