

# 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

يبدأ الباحث بعرض المشكلة وهي كون الطلبة الكويتيين يواجهون صعوبات في تعلم لفظ اللغة الإنجليزية ، وأن أهم أسباب هذه الصعوبات تدخل لفظ اللهجة الكويتية عند محاولة الطالب تعلم لفظ اللغة الإنجليزية ، هذا التدخل الذي يبدو واضحاً بسبب قصر مدة استماع الطالب للغة الإنجليزية مما يقلل فرص إلغاء العادات اللفظية الأولى ، وكذلك بسبب كون الطالب يبدأ تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في الصف الأول المتوسط ( أي وهو في حوالي العاشرة من عمره ) ، وهذا السن هو الوقت الذي تظهر فيه آثار تدخل اللغة الأولى في تعلم لغة أجنبية . ويستطيع المتعلمون والمدرسون ملاحظة بعض الصعوبات الواضحة والمتكررة مثل لفظ الـ /p/ على شكل /b/ لكون الأول غير موجود في اللهجة على شكل صوت

ذي معنى إلا أن الحاجة ماسة إلى عرض مفصل لهذه الصعوبات من خلال بحث وصفي تحليلي مقارنة بين على أسس علمية سليمة .

ثم يبين الهدف من البحث وهو إبراز الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة الكويتيون في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية والتنوُّ بمواضع حدوثها في مجموعة هامة من أصوات اللغة الإنجليزية وهي مجموعة « أصوات اللين » (Vowels) ومن ثم الخروج بتوصيات للمدرسين والدارسين تعينهم على تحطيم هذه الصعوبات مع وضع التمرينات الخاصة بذلك وشرح كيفية الأخذ بها .

ثم يستعرض بعض الدراسات اللغوية التي سبقت في هذا المجال والتي يمكن أن تكون مفيدة في بحثه ، وبخاصة ما يتعلق باللهجة الكويتية واللهجات الخليجية والعربية ، مبيّناً أنه ، بحسب علمه ، لم يسبق أن نشر بحث أو دراسة حول مقارنة اللهجة الكويتية باللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض تربوية تدريسية .

وبعد ذلك يبين الباحث خطة الدراسة ويلخصها بأنها دراسة تعتمد على وصف « أصوات اللين » الكويتية مع مقارنتها « بأصوات اللين » الإنجليزية ، ومن خلال المقارنة يركز على جوانب الاختلاف دون التشابه لأنها هي التي تؤثر سلباً على عملية إتقان الصوت من قبل المتعلم . وكذلك يبين أثر الكتابة الإنجليزية السليبي على لفظ الطلبة بسبب عدم تطابق هذه الكتابة مع اللفظ .

ثم يصف أسلوب العرض وهو البدء بالصوت في اللغة الإنجليزية وبيان ما إذا كان موجوداً في اللهجة الكويتية أم لا وبناء عليه يتنبأ بالصعوبة التي يمكن أن يواجهها الطالب . وقد حصر الباحث جوانب المقارنة بالنطق فقط لأنها هي التي تخدم الجوانب التعليمية . كما خصص جزءاً من البحث لأثر كتابة كل صوت في اللغة الإنجليزية على عملية تعلم لفظ هذا الصوت واتقانه .

ويتألف البحث من أربعة أجزاء :

الجزء الأول يتعلق بالوصف المقارن لأصوات اللين في اللغة الإنجليزية ونظائرها في اللهجة الكويتية . وقد استعرض الباحث الإثني عشر صوتاً في الإنجليزية والمصنفة (Phonemes) أي أصوات ذات مغزى ، وبين أن في اللهجة الكويتية ثمانية أصوات تصنف (Phonemes) منها خمسة مشتركة مع اللغة الإنجليزية وثلاثة غير موجودة في اللغة الإنجليزية . وأما السبعة الأصوات الإنجليزية الباقية فمنها ستة موجودة في اللهجة الكويتية على شكل أصوات غير ذات مغزى (Allophones) وصوت واحد غير موجود في اللهجة الكويتية . ومن خلال العرض يتبين أنه حتى الأصوات المشتركة لا تتطابق تصرفاتها مع ما جاورها من أصوات في اللغتين .

الجزء الثاني يستعرض الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطالب الكويتي في لفظ أصوات اللين الإنجليزية بسبب اختلاف اللغتين المفصل في الجزء الأول . وقد بين الباحث أحد عشر موضعاً فيه صعوبة ، ووصف الأصوات التي يمكن للطلبة أن ينطقوها بدل الأصوات الإنجليزية .

وفي الجزء الثالث يستعرض الباحث أشكال كتابة أصوات اللين في اللغة الإنجليزية مركزاً على الأشكال التي يمكن أن تحدث إرتباكاً لدى المتعلم لكونها توحى بلفظ صوت آخر .

وأما الجزء الرابع فيتألف من توصيات الباحث للمدرسين والمتعلمين لكي يمكن التغلب على هذه الصعوبات قبل حدوثها أو قبل أن تصبح عادات راسخة يصعب التخلص منها . وهو عبارة عن عرض مفصل لكيفية التعامل مع كل نقطة من نقاط الصعوبة على حدة . فيه إرشاد لأسلوب نطق الصوت نطقاً سليماً بشكل منفصل أولاً ، ويتبع ذلك مجموعة كلمات متقاه للتدريب على هذا الصوت .

## **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-Ani (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 Mediteranean, (Garbell 1958).

The sole study that deals with KA exclusively is the one which Matar (1970) did in Arabic: *Min Asrar al-lahja al-Kuwaitiyah*, "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 padagogical 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:

Jones, Daniel, *The Pronunciation of English*, 1956.

—————*English Pronouncing Dictionary*, 1967

O'Connor, J.D. *Better English Pronunciation*, 1971.

Gimson, A.C. *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*, 1978.

## **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 ' 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.

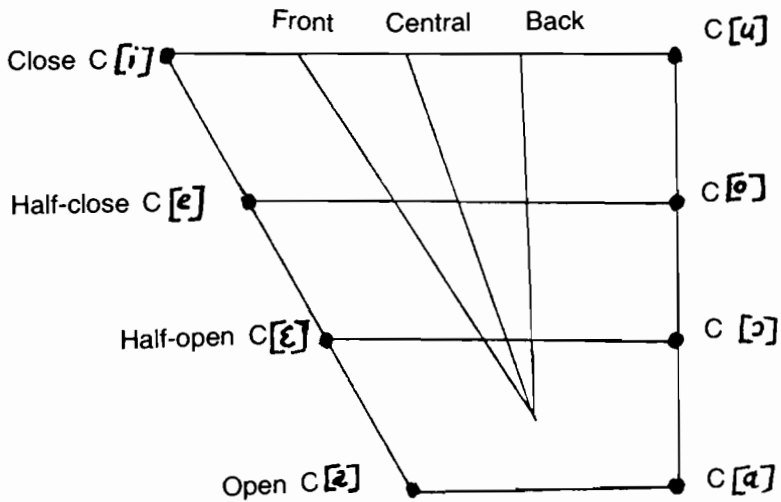


Figure 1. The primary Cardinal Vowels.

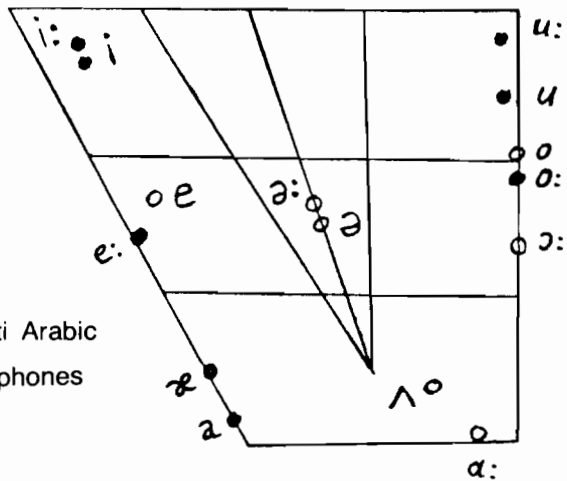


Figure 2. Kuwaiti Arabic vowels and allophones

- Vowels
- Allophones

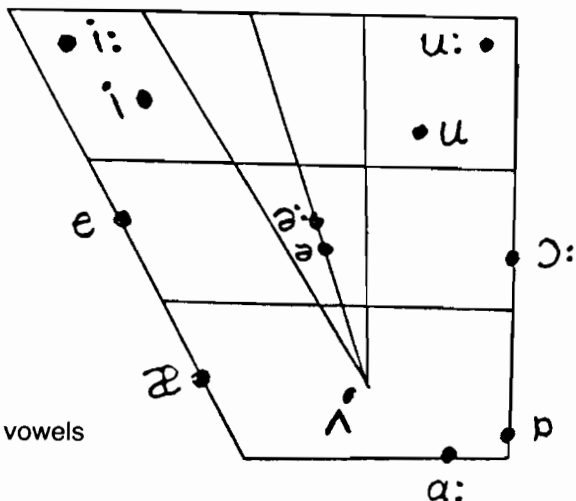


Figure 3. English vowels

## PART 1

### Contrastive Description of English and Kuwaiti Arabic Vowels

#### 1.1. /i:/\*

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

- /ji:b/\*\* 'bring' (imperative, masculine, singular)
- /jɛb/ 'He brought'

The KA /i:/ is similar to the RP /i:/ in quality. Both of them are pronounced with the front of the tongue taking a position just below and behind that of Cardinal [i]. The tongue is tense in both of them. The difference is that in KA the /i:/ is nearer to the centre than to the front and is raised just above Cardinal [e] 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 II.

\*\* For phonetic symbols used to transcribe KA consonants see Appendix I.

in /jsi:r/ 'he walks' /i:/ is nearer to close and front.  
but in [jSi:r] 'he becomes' /i:/ is nearer to half-close and centre.

## 1.2. /i/

This sound exists in KA as a phoneme. Minimal pairs are:  
/Aallimni/ 'tell me' (imperative, singular, masculine)  
/Aallamni/ 'he told me'  
/fi/ 'unfold'  
/fi:l/ 'elephant'

The KA /i/ is pronounced with the tongue and the lips taking nearly the same position of the long RP /i:/, just below and behind Cardinal [i]. In the RP /i/ 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 /i/ is pronounced almost like RP /i/ when it is adjacent to emphatic consonants, e.g., the /i/ in /tib/ 'bucket' is closer than the /i/ in /Tib/ 'medicine'.

## 1.3. /e/

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

The distribution of /i/ 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 /i/ when attached to certain pronouns and with [e] when they occur without any attached pronoun, e.g.

Aallim-ni	'teach me'
Aallim-ha	'teach her'
Aallim-hum	'teach them'
Aallim-na	'teach us'

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

## 1.4. /ɤ/

This sound exists in KA as a phoneme. Minimal pairs are:  
/mɤ/ 'money'  
/mu:l/ 'never'

KA /æ/ is similar to RP /ɛ/ 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.

/mæ/	'money'
/ma/	'he got bored'

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

### 1.5. [ʌ]

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

The KA [ʌ] occurs in the environment of the velar consonants /x/ and /ʁ/ in addition to the emphatic consonants (T, D, S, Z, ʔ, 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:

[Tʌl]	'he appeared'
/tal/	'hill'

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

Other examples on [ʌ] with emphatic consonants are:

[bʌT]	'ducks'
/bat/	'he decided'
[AʌD]	'he bit'
/Aad/	'he counted'
[Dʌl]	'he went astray'
/dal/	'he guided'
[Sʌb]	'he poured'
/səb/	'he swore'
[mʌS]	'he sucked'
/mas/	'he touched'
[Zʌl]	'he stayed'
/ʔal/	'he submitted'

[Hʌz]	'chance'
/Haz/	'he cut'
[bʌr]	'desert'
[gʌlb]	'heart'

Broadly speaking KA [ʌ] occurs in the environment of emphatic consonants, e.g.

[Tʌl] and [bʌt]

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

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

#### 1.6. /ɑ:/

This sound exists in KA as an allophone of the phoneme /æ/. Like [ʌ] it occurs with the emphatic consonants as well as the velar consonants /x/ and /g/, e.g.

[Sɑ:t]	'he became'
[Tɑ:t]	'he flew'
[zɑ:lem]	'unfair'
[xɑ:li]	'empty'
[gɑ:li]	'expensive'

KA [ɑ:] is similar to RP /ɑ:/ 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. /ɔ/

This sound does not exist in KA neither as a phoneme nor as an allophone. The nearest sound to the RP /ɔ/ in KA is [o] which is an allophone of /u/, e.g.

/kitæbuhum/ 'their book (in classical Arabic)

has become /kitæbuhum/ 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:/

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

/ʊ:f/	'look' (v., imp., sing., m.)
/ʊ:ɸ/	'looking' (n.)

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

/8u:S/	'dive' v., imp., sing., m.
[8 :S]	'diving' n.
/su:m/	'fast' v., imp., sing., m.
[Sɔ:m]	'fasting' v., imp., sing., m.

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

#### 1.9. /u/

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

/Hub/	'love'
/Hab/	'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. /u:/

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

/Tu:l/	'length'
/Tu/	'look over'

Both of the KA /u:/ 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. /ɔ:/

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

[ʃə:f]	'summer'
[Tə:ba]	'a proper name'
[bə:D]	'eggs'
[ʃrə:Ti]	'broker'
[8ə:m]	'clouds'
[Xə:l]	'horses'

The Ka [ə:] 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. /ə/

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

[məTʌr]	'rain'
[bəʒʌr]	'cows'
[FəSʌx]	'he took off (clothes)'
[wəSʌl]	'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 [ə] and the RP /ə/ are central vowels. The only difference is that the KA [ə] 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 [ə] when it is adjacent to velars.

## PART 2

### difficulties Caused by Interference of the Kuwaiti Arabic Pronunciation

2.1. In RP the long vowels /i:, a:, ɔ:, u:, ʒ:/ 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, dʒ, m, n/ (Gimson, 1978, p. 105), e.g.

Compare:

seed	/si:d/	seat	/si:t/
carve	/kɑ:v/	chief	/kæ:f/
saws	/sɔ:z/	source	/sɔ:s/
rude	/ru:d/	root	/ru:t/
surge	/sə:dʒ/	search	/sə:tʃ/
cab	/kæb/	cap	/kæp/

This rule does not apply to KA vowels. Lehn (1967, p. 323) states that in Riyad Arabic "all complex nuclei have longer variants when stressed." The same rule applies to KA which, broadly speaking, shares many rules with Riyad 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. /ze:n/ 'good'  
CVCC, e.g. /ʃift/ 'I saw'
- medium: CVĊ, e.g. /'na:mat/ 'she slept' (the ultimate syllable)  
CVV, e.g. /'na:mat/ 'she slept' (the first syllable)
- Short: CV, e.g. /madrisa/ 'school' (the ultimate and the penultimate syllables)

So, the stressed vowel [ɑ:] in [rɑ:yeH] 'going' (singular, mas.) is longer than the same unstressed vowel in [rɑ:yhi:n] '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' is expected to be mispronounced handi'cap [handikæp]. The wrong pronunciation in such a word is three-fold: shifting the stress, shortening the sound /æ/ before the lenis /n/, and lengthening it before the fortis /p/. Other examples of predicted mispronunciation in this respect are:

RP	Predicted mispronunciation
newspaper /'nju:speipə/	[nʃus'pei:pə] - /u:/ shortened - /eɪ/ lengthened - Stress shifted
normality /nɔ:'nɔ:li/	[nɔ::rɔ:li] - /ɔ:/ lengthened - /æ/ shortened into /a/
astronaut /'æstrənɔ:t/	[?astrɔ'hɔ:t] - /ɔ:/ lengthened - /æ/ shortened - stress shifted - /ə/ pronounced /ɔ/ - The glottal stop /ʔ/ is added .
distribute /dɪ'strɪbjʊ:t/	[dɪstrɪbjʊ:t] - /u:/ lengthened - stress shifted
fibreglass /faɪbə'glɑ:s/	[faɪbə'glɑ::s] - /ɑ:/ lengthened - stress shifted

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 /dʌbl/ which was borrowed to KA is pronounced /dabal/ by Kuwaitis. 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 [Sʌn] 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 /gʌlb/ 'heart' /gʌb/ 'he went away'. So, words like bug and gum will be easy to pronounce by KS.

2.5. The RP /ɑ:/ poses difficulties to KS since it exists in KA as an allophone of /æ/ with different distribution from English. (1.6 above). So, KS tend to produce /æ/ instead of /ɑ:/ in words like half /ha:lf/ and bath /bɑ:θ/. In car /kɑ:/ and bar /bɑ:/ the /ɑ:/ 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 /bo:t/, /fo:t/, and /bro: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 ʌ r] '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 /bɜ:d/ and her /hə:/ will be mispronounced /be:rd/ and /he:r/.

2.10. The RP /ʌ/ 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 /ʌ/ by the KA /a/. For example about /ʌbaʊt/ and advice /ʌdvais/ will be wrongly pronounced /ʔabaʊt/ and /ʔadvais/ with the glottal plosive /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 /priti/, careless /kɛʔlis/, wicket /wikit/ suggests the pronunciation of /e/ rather than /i/.

#### 3.2. /e/

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

(b) a in many /meni/ is mispronounced [mani].

### 3.3. /æ/

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

### 3.4. /ʌ/

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

### 3.5. /ɑ:/

(a) The letters ear in heart /hɑ:t/, and hearth /hɑ:θ/ suggest the pronunciation of /ei/ or /ɛ:/.

(b) The letters er in clerk /klɑ:k/ and sergeant /sɑ:dʒɑ:nt/ are misleading and KS will mispronounce these words producing /e/ or /e:/ instead of /ɑ:/.

### 3.6. /ɔ/

(a) The a in want /wɔnt/ and quality /kwɔli/ suggests the pronunciation of /æ/ and in fact almost all KS mispronounce these words producing [wænt] and [kwæli].

(b) The letters ou in cough /kɔf/ and trough /trɔf/ are likely to be mispronounced (kʌf) and (trʌf) under the influence of the word enough /ɪnvf/ 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. /ɔ:/

(a) The a in all /ɔ:l/, salt /sɔ:lt/ and quarter /kwɔ:t/ is misleading especially to beginners who may pronounce such words with /æ/ instead of /ɔ:/.

(b) The letters aw in dawn /dɔ:n/ and yawn /jɔ:n/ can be mispronounced /au/ instead of /ɔ:/.

### 3.8. /u/

(a) The letter o in wolf /wulf/ and bosom /buzəm/ suggests the pronunciation of [ɔ] rather than /u/.

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

### 3.9. /u:/

(a) The oo in cooed /ku:d/, and wood /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 /dʒɔ:ni/, journal /dʒɔ:nl/, and courtesy /kɔ:tsi/ suggest the pronunciation of [ɔ:] rather than /ɔ:/.

### 3.11. /ə/

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 /kən'fain/ is mispronounced [ɔ] rather than /ə/.

(b) a is abroad /ə'brɔ:d/ is mispronounced /æ/.

(c) e in per cent /pə'sent/ is mispronounced /e/ or even [e:] because KS tend to stress it and consequently give it a longer duration.

(d) u in suppress /sə'press/ and symposium /sim'pɔ:zjəm/ 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 /t/ or voice the /d/. Only pronounce seed with fully long /i:/ and seat with duration about half as long as /i:/. Do the same thing with the following pairs:

calf	carve
source	saws
root	rude
search	surge

You can find other examples.

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

cap	cab
mat	mad
back	bag

(d) Drill multisyllabic words such as:

'handicap	(first /æ/ lengthened)
'newspaper	(/u:/ long)
'astronaut	(/ɔ:/ shortened)
dis'tribute	(/u:/ shortened)

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

#### 4.2. /i/ and /i:/ (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'.

(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 [ʌ] 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	/əməŋ/
oven	/ʌvən/
onion	/ʌnjən/

4.5. /ɑ:/ (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 /ɑ:/ and /æ/ on the one hand, and /ɑ:/ and /ʌ/ on the other, e.g.

/ɑ:/	/æ/
marred	mad
hard	had
bard	bad
bark	back

and

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

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

hearth	/hɑ:θ/
heart	/hɑ:t/
clerk	/klɑ:k/
sergeant	/sɑ:dʒənt/

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 /dɔ:S/ '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/	/ɔ:/
cod	cord
pot	port
cock	cork
cot	court
shone	shorn
shot	short

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

want	/wɔ nt/
quality	/kwɔ liti/
was (strong form)	/wɔ z/
cough	/kɔ f/
gone	/gɔ n/

4.7. /ɔ:/ (see 1.8, 2.7 & 3.7).

(a) To make learners produce the RP /ɔ:/ tell them it is similar to the KA [ɔ:] in [8ɔ:S] and /Sɔ::m/. You can also write fought on the blackboard and let learners utter it making the closing /t/ as the emphatic KA /T/.

(b) Drill the following minimal pairs:

/ɔ/	/ɔ:/
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/	/ɔ:/
full	fall
bull	ball
pull	pall
stood	stored

also

/u/	/u:/
full	fool
soot	suit
wood	woed
pull	pool
look	Luke

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

bosom	/buz ə m/
hook	/huk/
woman	/wum ə n/
wolf	/wulf/
brook	/bruk/

4.9. /u:/ (see 1.10 & 3.9)

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

woed	/wu:d/	coed	/ku:d/	rude	/ru:d/
wound	/wu:nd/	chew	/tʃu:/		

4.10. /ɜ:/ (see 1.11, 2.9 & 3.10).

(a) Tell learners that the RP /ɜ:/ is very much similar to the KA sound in (Tɜ:r) '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. /ɝ/ (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 [ɝ] in words like:

/m ə ʔ ʌ r/ 'rain'  
 /b ə g ʌ r/ 'cows'

(b) Drill the following words:

father	/'fɑ:ðə/
mother	/mʌðə/
suppose	/səpəʊz/
confine	/kənfaɪn/
above	/əbʌv/
advice	/ədvaɪs/

(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/	/eɪ/
an	/ə n/	/æn/
and	/ə nd/	/ænd/
but	/b ə t/	/bʌt/
can	/kən/	/cæn/
could	/kəd/	/kud/
does	/dəz/	/dʌz/
from	/fr ə m/	/frɔ m/
must	/m ə st/	/mʌst/
shall	/ʃ ə l/	/ʃæl/
should	/ʃ ə d/	/ʃud/
them	/dəm/	/de m/
was	/w ə z/	/wɔ z/
would	/w ə d/	/wud/

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**

ʔ	glottal plosive	ʔanʔm	'I sleep'
b	voiced bilabial plosive	bʔg	'he stole'
t	voiceless dental plosive	tal	'hill'
θ	voiceless inter-dental fricative	ʔʔni	'second'
dʒ	voiced palato-alveolar affricate	dʒili:b	'well'
H	voiceless pharyngeal fricative	Harir	'silk'
x	voiceless velar fricative	xɔ:f	'fear'
d	voiced dental plosive	ʔaxal	'he entered'
ð	voiced inter-dental fricative	ðanb	'fault'
r	voiced alveolar roll	ra:H	'he went'
z	voiced alveolar fricative	zɔd	'it went'
s	voiceless alveolar fricative	salʔm	'peace'
ʃ	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	ʃak	'doubt'
tʃ	voiceless palato-alveolar affricate	tʃ am	'how much'
S	voiceless alveolar fricative (emphatic)	Sʔ.r	'it became'
D	voiced dental plosive (emphatic)	Dʔ.A	'it was lost'
T	voiceless dental plosive (emphatic)	Tʔ I	'he appeared'
Z	voiced inter-dental fricative (emphatic)	ʔZʔ:lem	'unjust'
A	voiced pharyngeal fricative	ʔAʔ:mel	'labourer'
ʕ	voiced velar fricative	ʕʔ:S	'he dived'
f	voiceless labio-dental fricative	fa:s	'axe'
q	voiceless uvular plosive	qa:nu:n	'law'
g	voiced velar plosive	gʔlb	'heart'
k	voiceless velar plosive	ka'ʔm	'speech'
l	voiced alveolar lateral	ʔʔm	'he blamed'
m	voiced bilabial nasal	mal	'he got bored'
n	voiced alveolar nasal	nʔm	'he slept'
h	voiceless glottal fricative	hʔk	'take'
w	voiced bilabial frictionless	waHl	'mud'
j	voiced palatal frictionless	jʔb	'he brought'

## APPENDIX II

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

English words given as examples are underlined.

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