

Researches

Difficulties Kuwaiti Students Encounter in the Pronunciation of English Diphthongs

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to deal with difficulties Kuwaiti Students encounter in the pronunciation of English diphthongs. It is composed of four parts. The first part is concerned with contrastive description of English diphthongs and their Kuwaiti Arabic equivalents. The English diphthong is described first, then it is mentioned whether it has an equivalent in Kuwaiti Arabic, and how differently or similarly it behaves. The second part deals with pronunciation difficulties due to differences in the articulation, significance, and behaviour of the RP diphthongs and their KA equivalents. The third part talks about the English spelling as another source of difficulty for Kuwaiti students. It presents the different ways of spelling which represent English diphthongs and how they may cause mispronunciations. The fourth part gives practical classroom suggestions for teachers with drills built on the contrastive study presented in the research.

0. Introduction

0.1. The Problem

In a study entitled "Difficulties Kuwaiti Students Encounter in the Pronunciation of English Vowels" published in the **The Educational Journal**, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1984) pp. 119-146 the writer talks about the status of English in Kuwaiti schools. He mentions three reasons to explain why interference from the mother tongue, Kuwaiti Arabic* (KA), can be considered the main source of difficulty for Kuwaiti Students (KS) in learning English pronunciation. These are: "first, the short period of time in which KS are exposed to English**; second, the age of students when they begin

* Kuwaiti Arabic here means the colloquial Arabic used by Kuwaities who live in the urban districts of Kuwait.

** 5-6 hours per week throughout eight school years, (Ministry of Education, 1983-1984)

learning English (around 10) in which the foreign accent emerges (Lenneberg, 1967, p. 181); third, differences in pronunciation between English and Kuwaiti Arabic''. The same reasons apply to this study which deals with the area of diphthongs which is by no means less problematic for KS than the area of vowels. In fact, it presents more problems because, unlike English, KA does not have diphthongs which behave like phonemes (see part 1 below). On the other hand, a union of two vowels is more complicated and difficult than one.

0.2. The Aim

The aim of this study is two-fold:

- (1) to predict difficulties KS encounter in learning the pronunciation of English diphthongs.
- (2) to give suggestions for teachers and learners in order to overcome these difficulties.

0.3 Related Literature

- (1) Material related to Arabic phonology

Publications on Arabic phonology are very few with regard to the amount of different dialects and speech varieties in the Arab countries. In the study mentioned above the writer talked about researches and books that dealt with aspects of Arabic phonology and from which he really benefitted.

None of these studies, however, discusses English and KA contrastively. One article needs further discussion, which is that of Aziz entitled "Some Problems of the English Diphthongs for the Iraqi Learner", (ELT, Vol. 29, pp. 68-71). First, Aziz mentions problems without holding detailed contrastive analysis between English diphthongs and their Iraqi equivalents. In fact, he refers more to Standard Arabic than to Iraqi Arabic. Second, his suggestions for teachers do not include minimal pair drills in English so as to make the learner perceive the significance of different sounds and how mispronunciation can result in misunderstanding.

This study is different in four ways. First, it is concerned with the Kuwaiti learner whose problems in learning English pronunciation are not identical with those of the Iraqi learner. For example, the Iraqi learner replaces the RP diphthong / ə u/ by / ʊ :/ (Aziz, Ibid, p. 69), whereas the Kuwaiti learner replaces the RP diphthong / ə u/ and the long vowel / ʊ :/ by the KA phoneme / o:/ (see below, and Dannan, 1984, p. 133). Second, the writer's approach is to give a detailed contrastive analysis of similarities and differences between the RP

diphthongs and their equivalents in KA. Third, the writer discusses pronunciation problems which are due to English spelling thoroughly. Fourth, suggestions for teachers include pronunciation drills built on the contrastive approach which the writer adopts.

(2) Material related to English phonology

In describing and transcribing RP sounds the writer depends on (Jones, Daniel 1956 & 1967), (Gimson, A.C. 1978), and (O'Connor, J.D. 1978).

(3) Approach and Plan of Study

The writer adopts the contrastive analysis approach. So, he first starts with the RP diphthong, describes it and mentions whether it has an equivalent in KA or not. Then the KA equivalent is described in contrast with the RP diphthong. In describing the movements of the tongue the writer refers to the diagram of Gimson (1978, p. 38) which represents the cardinal vowels, (figure 1). Difficulties due to interference of KA and those caused by English spelling are dealt with in separate parts. Suggestions for teachers with lists of minimal pairs compose the last part.

It is to be mentioned that the writer's informants are his students at the university with whom he always checked the correctness of his inferences as well as the truth value of his predictions. Long period (25 years) of experience in teaching English in Kuwait helps to bring his predictions close to reality.

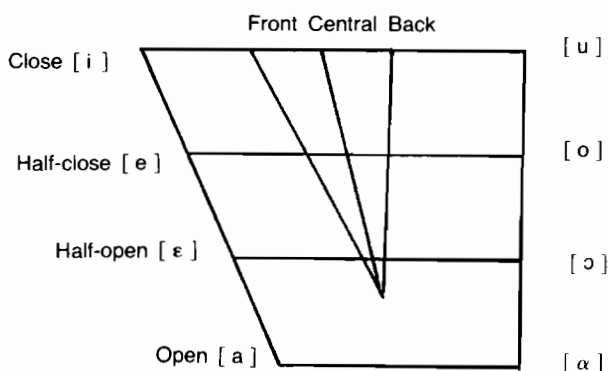


Figure 1. The primary Cardinal Vowels, which will be referred to as C [i], C [e]... etc. (Gimson, p. 38).

1. Contrastive Description of English Diphthongs and their Equivalents in Kuwaiti Arabic

1.1 Sequences of Vocalic Elements in RP

In his discussion of diphthongal vowel glides Gimson (1978, p. 126) says, "The sequences of vocalic elements included under the term 'diphthong' are those which form a glide within one syllable." When talking about the term 'vowel' linguistically, he applies it to those phonemes "which are typically central (or nuclear) in the syllable" (p.53). On the other hand, he applies the term 'consonant' to those phonemes "which are non-central (or marginal) in the syllable." One would then ask: "Under which category do the RP /j/ and /w/ and their combinations with other vowels fall?" Gimson (p.212) answers: "Despite the fact that semi-vowels (/j, w/) are, in **phonetic** terms, generally vocalic, they are treated within the consonant class, mainly because their **function** is consonantal rather than vowel-like, i.e. they have a marginal rather than a central situation in the syllable*." According to these definitions one can justifiably infer that a glide which is composed of a combination of a vowel and /j/ or /w/ does not function as nucleus in the syllable, and hence is not regarded as diphthong. In fact, this is what Gimson applies whenever /j/ or /w/ occurs initially or pre-centrally after a fortis consonant (pp. 213, 92-93).

For example, /j/ in **yet** /jet/ and **queu** /kju:/; and /w/ in **wit** /wit/ and **queen** /kwi:n/ function as consonants rather than vocalic elements forming the nucleus of the syllable. When /j/ and /w/ occur finally it is also possible to treat them as consonantal. For example, /ei/ and /au/ can be considered equivalent to /ej/ and /aw/ respectively (Gimson, p. 93). However, RP final /j/ and /w/ are regarded as vocalic (Gimson, p. 93) because:

- (1) they do not occur after all vocalic elements as is the case when they are in initial position.
- (2) they are very weakly articulated to the extent that they "may be realized as merely a prolongation of the central syllabic vowel quality".
- (3) they do not have any fricative allophones which are phonetically consonantal.

So, combinations of a vowel + final or post-central /j/ or /w/ are considered diphthongs and function as nucleus of the syllable.

* The brackets and the block letters are added by the writer.

1.2 Sequences of Vocalic Elements in Standard Arabic and Kuwaiti Arabic

The syllable in Standard (SA) has "a vowel, either long or short as its nucleus" (Al-Ani, 1973, p. 49). This statement indicates that glides which may constitute nucleus of syllable do not exist in SA. It also means that in SA vocalic sounds /j/ and /w/ **function** as consonants in all their positions. Mitchell (1960, p. 329*) says that the rules of prominence that govern a given colloquial "are storable", and that correspondence between colloquials or between a colloquial and a given 'Classical' pronunciation is equally regular. In the footnotes he includes KA when he states that "preliminary research indicates the possibility of substantially similar statement for Kuwaiti Arabic". Matar (1970, pp. 115-122) reveals the KA rules of 'al-nabr' "prominence" or "accent" which he applies to all his data with complete regularity. He considers combinations of vowel and /j/ or /w/ as a sequence of vowel plus consonant. Lehn (1967, p. 324*) notices that /j/ and /w/ in Najdi Arabic are, like consonants, doubled when they occur medially in the root morpheme of the triliteral verb so as to produce a verb pattern with different semantic reference. He gives examples of /Tjr/ 'to fly' and /ṣwf/ 'to see' which, after doubling /j/ and /w/ become /Tajjar/ 'cause to fly' and /ṣawwaf/ 'cause to see' respectively. He comments on these examples, "In fact not only in describing verb derivation but throughout the grammar, description is complicated and the amount of morphophonemic alteration on the phonemic level is greatly increased if **the complex nuclei** are not interpreted as a sequence of two units, viz. vowel plus semi-consonant".**

KA has the same characteristics of SA and other Arabic dialects with regard to the phonemic values of /j/ and /w/. Its prominence rules are completely regular if /j/ and /w/ are linguistically treated as consonants, i.e. forming the borderline of the syllable regardless of their position whether initial, medial, or final. One example on their final positions is sufficient to illustrate this last point. Let us consider the two words /ʔin/ Tuwa/ 'it was folded', and /murabʔija/ 'governess' in the light of the prominence rules of KA stated by Matar (1970). One of the rules (p.120) says that in words composed of medium (CVC or CVV) or short (CV) syllables stress must fall on the penultimate one. Now, if /w/ in /ʔin/ Tuwa/ is treated as consonant the word will be considered trisyllabic (medium /ʔin/ CVC, short /Tu/ CV, and short /wa/ CV) and by applying the above rule we stress the correct syllable /Tu/. If the combination /uwa/ is treated as diphthong the same word will become disyllabic (medium /ʔin/ CVC, and medium CVV), and by applying the above rule this word will be mispronounced [ʔinTua] with

* For page numbers see the reprinted version in Al-Ani (1970).

** The same examples quoted from Najdi Arabic apply to KA.

/ʔ in/ being wrongly stressed. Similarly, /murab'bija/ is composed of four medium or short syllables (with /j/ treated as consonant) and in this case the penultimate /bi/ is regularly stressed. If /j/ is treated as vowel /ija/ will become diphthong /ia/ and the word will be composed of three syllables /mʊ/ /rab/ /ia/ and in this case the penultimate syllable /rab/ will be wrongly stressed.

It is evident that /j/ and /w/ in KA function as consonants, and in the present study I am going to treat their combination with vowels as a sequence of two units, viz vowel plus semi-vowel rather than diphthong.*

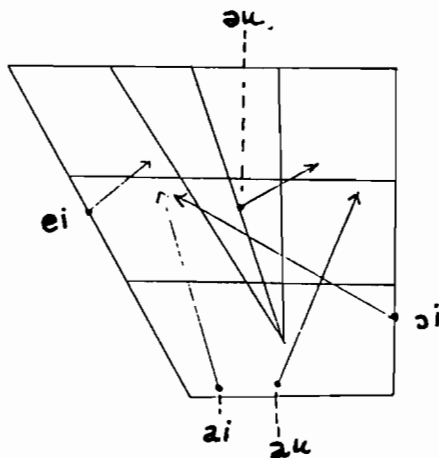


Figure 2a. RP diphthongs /ei, ai, ɔi, au, əu/

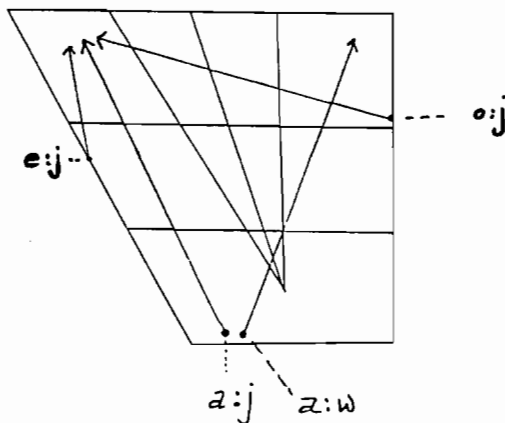


Figure 2b. KA combination of vowels and semi-wave /e:j, a:j, a:w, o:j/

* For more information about KA vowels see (Dannan, 1984).

1.3 /ei/

The equivalent of the RP diphthong /ei/ does not exist in KA as a phoneme. It exists as a sequence of the phoneme /e:/ and the semi-vowel /j/ when they occur in final position in words like /dAe:j/ 'proper name'.

The KA /e:j/ is to a great extent similar to the RP lengthened /e:i/ which occurs before fortis consonants. The glide in both of them starts just below C [e] and moves in the direction of the RP /i/. In KA the tongue goes up to the close position of the RP /i/, whereas in RP the tongue stays in a position just above the half-close area. In RP /e:/ the lips are spread whereas in KA /e:j/ the lips are neutral.

1.4 /ai/

This RP diphthong has a KA equivalent composed of the vowel /a:/ and the semi-vowel /j/, e.g.

/tʃa:j/ 'tea', /ra: j^hHi:n/ 'gonè' (pl. mas.), /ma:j/ 'water'

The pronunciation of the RP /ai/ starts at a point between C [a] and C [α] and the glide moves toward a point behind but lower than C [i]. The lips are spread. In KA the glide starts at the same point like the RP one and moves up in the same direction. The difference is that in KA the front of the tongue reaches a close position just behind C [i]. Unlike RP /ai/ the lips in KA /a:j/ are neutral. The length of the KA /a:j/ is very close to that of the RP [a:i] occurring before fortis consonants.

1.5 /ɔi/

RP /ɔi/ does not exist in KA neither as a phoneme nor as a sequence of vowel and semi-vowel. The first element [ɔ] is an allophone of [o] in KA but its distribution does not cover situations with /j/. So, the nearest combination of sounds to the RP /ɔi/ is the sequence of /o:j/ in words like /mo:j/ 'waves'.

The RP diphthong starts at a point between the back half-open and open position and moves in the direction of RP /i/. The tongue reaches a level not closer than the rather open and centralized C [e]. The KA sequence /o:j/ starts at a point just above C [ɔ] reaching a point closer than RP /i/. The lips in both RP and KA are open rounded for the first element and change to neutral for the second.

1.6 /əu/

The equivalent of the RP diphthong does not exist in KA neither as a phoneme nor as a sequence of vowel and semi-vowel. The first element /ə/ occurs in KA as an allophone of /ɛ/ when preceded by the bilabials /m, b, f,

w/ and followed by the emphatics /S,D,T,Z,g,r/. The second element exists in KA as a phoneme. However, a sequence of /ə+u/ is not familiar and in fact appears to be strange to the ear among Kuwaitis.

The first element in RP /əu/ starts at a central point, and moves toward RP /u/ reaching a point very close to centralized and rather open C [u]. The lips are neutral in the pronunciation of /ə/ and tend to be rounded for /u/.

1.7 /au/

The equivalent of the RP /au/ is not a phoneme in KA. The nearest utterance to it is a sequence of the phoneme vowel sound /a:/ and the semi-vowel /w/ in words like / 'Ha:wli/ 'try (imp. 2nd. p., s., f.), / 'ha:wja/ 'quàrrel with him' (imp. 2nd. p., s., m.).

The starting point of the RP diphthong /au/ lies between the back and front open position, and moves up until it reaches the half-close level. The lips begin neutrally open and end weakly rounded. In KA the tongue begins at a back open position in the environment of emphatic consonants, and a front open position in other cases, e.g.

/ 'Ta:wali/ 'give' (imp. 2nd. p., s., f.)
/ 'Ha:wli/ 'try'

The tongue in KA moves up to a position between back close and half-close so as to produce the /w/ sound. The lips start neutrally open and end half-rounded.

1.8 /iə/

The equivalent of the RP diphthong /iə/ does not exist in KA as a separate phoneme. It exists as a sequence of three sounds: the vowel /i/, the semi-vowel /j/, and the vowel /a/, e.g.

/ ? u8nija/ 'song
/taʔbija/ 'education'

It is to be noticed that, in the above examples, this sequence belongs to two syllables /ni,ja/ and /bi,ja/.

In RP the first element /i/ starts at a centralized front and half-close position, then the tongue moves in the direction of the half-open and half-close centre. In KA /i/ is pronounced with the front of the tongue starting at a point between close and half-close position, then it moves up in the direction of the centralized front half-close area so as to realize /j/, and down until it reaches a point between half-open and open front positions. The lips are neutral in both RP and KA.

1.9. / $\epsilon\partial$ /

This RP diphthong does not exist in KA as a phoneme, neither does it exist as a sequence of vowels. The first element / ϵ / does not exist in KA altogether, but the second element exists as an allophone of the phoneme / ∂ / (Dannan, 1984, p. 130).

The first element of RP / $\epsilon\partial$ / starts at a position just behind Cardinal [ϵ]. The glide moves in the direction of the central [∂] sound. The lips take a neutral and open position.

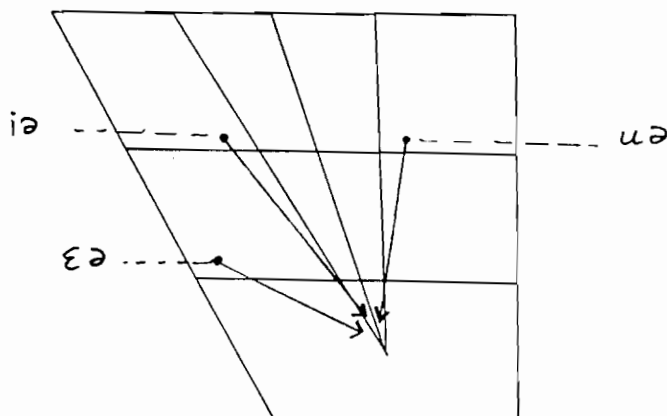


Figure 3a. RP diphthongs /iə, uə, εə/

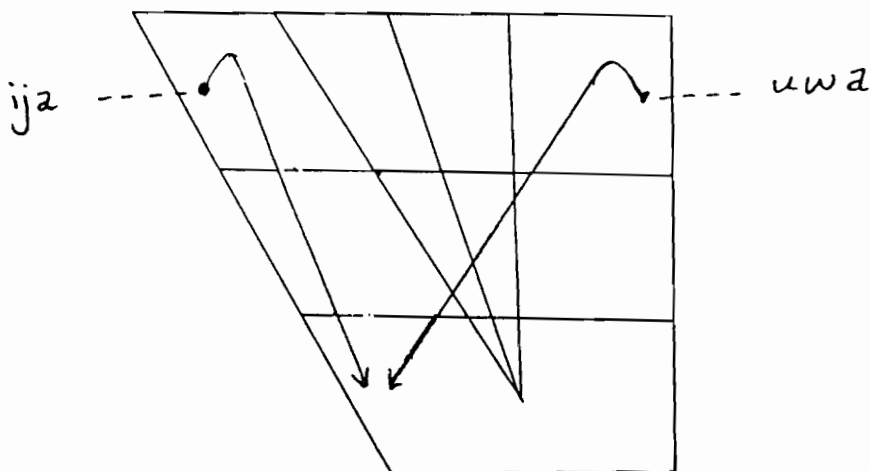


Figure 3b. KA combinations of vowels and semi-vowels /ija, uwa/

1.10 / u ə /

The nearest KA is a combination of three sounds: /u/, /w/ and [ə] in words like ['Tuw ə] 'he folded', and ['Duw ə] 'it lit.' The final [ə] which is an allophone of /a/ occurs only in an environment of emphatics. Examples of /uwa/ are / duwa / 'medicine' and / 'huwa / 'he intended'. / uwa (ə)/ in such words belong to two syllables [du, wa].

The glide of the RP / u ə / starts at a centralized position just above the half-close. Then it moves in the direction of the central half-open position forming the second diphthong. The lips begin weakly rounded and end neutrally spread.

The KA /uwa/ starts with the back of the tongue being raised to an area between half-close and close positions. The lips are closely rounded. Then the tongue moves up in the direction of the centralized back half-close area so as to realize /w/ and down in the direction of /a/ until it reaches a position between the open and half-open front area. In the case of the allophone [ə] the tongue stops at the central half-open position.

2. Difficulties of Pronouncing English Diphthongs Caused by the Interference of Kuwaiti Arabic

2.1. In RP all diphthongs (except /uə/) are reduced before fortis consonants and lengthened before lenis consonants, e.g.,

reduced		lengthened	
voice	[v ɔ is]	noise	[n ɔ : iz]
plate	[pleit]	played	[ple:ɪd]
tight	[t a it]	tide	[t a : ɪd]
wrote	[r ə ut]	road	[r ə : ʊd]
loud	[l a ut]	loud	[l a : ʊd]
fierce	[fi ə s]	fears	[fi : ə z]
scarce	[sk ɛ ə s]	scares	[sk ɛ : ə z]

This rule, which also applies to RP vowels, does not apply to KA in which longer vocalic variants occur only in stressed syllables of complex nuclei. The word stress falls on the long syllable (cvvc, or cvcc) which is accordingly lengthened regardless of its closing consonant being lenis or fortis (for more details about word stress rules in KA see Dannan, 1984, p. 131; and Matar, 1970, pp 116-122).

So, KS are expected to give the same length to the diphthongs in the above mentioned mono-syllabic words. It is not easy for them to realize the

correct RP pronunciation in this respect. Moreover, they will transfer the KA word stress rule onto English in words of more than one syllable. In KA stress falls on the long syllable and in words of more than one long syllable stress falls on the ultimate long one. In this case KS are expected to stress and lengthen ultimate long syllables in words similar to the examples given below:

Rp		Predicted Mispronunciation*
'generate	/ 'dʒenəreɪt/	[dʒenere:ɪt] — / eɪ / lengthened — stress shifted
stress shifted		
'overtime	/ 'əʊvət aɪm/	[əʊv ərtaɪm] — / əʊ / relatively shortened — / aɪ / lengthened — stress shifted
'generalize	/ 'dʒenərəlaɪz/	[dʒen ər ə'laɪz] — / aɪ / lengthened — stress shifted

In words like overload / 'əʊv əl əʊd/ (n.) and / əʊv əl əʊd/ (V.) KS will not easily master the correct pronunciation and will most likely mispronounce both of them as /əʊv əl əʊd/

2.2 /eɪ/

The combination equivalent to this diphthong in KA occurs only in final positions (see 1.3). So, KS are expected to mispronounce the RP / eɪ / producing [e:] instead when it is not final in such words as **gale** / geɪ / and **pale** / peɪ /. These words are usually confused by KS with **girl** / g ɜ : l / and **pearl** / p ɜ : l /, which they also mispronounce as / g e : l / and / p e : l /. In final positions, the problem is different because KS tend to pronounce the second element like the KA semi-vowel / j /, reaching the region of fully close [i].

2.3 /aɪ/

Since the equivalent to RP / aɪ / in KA is long / a: /+ semi-vowel / j /, KS are expected to produce the long allophone RP [a:ɪ] regardless of the following consonant (see 2.1). They are also expected to glide to the close area of C [i].

* In the given examples we point out mispronunciations in the problem under discussion.

2.4 /ɔi/

Since the equivalent to RP /i/ in KA is a sequence of long [o:] and [j], KS are expected to replace /i/ by [o:j] (see 1.5). They tend to realize the quality of the first element just above C [o] instead of making it between C [ɔ] and C [ɔ̃]. In the second element, they are expected to raise the front of the tongue until it reaches the close area behind C [i]. So, words like **noise** /nɔiz/ and **voice** /vɔis/ will be mispronounced [no:jz] and [vo:js], respectively. RP /ɔi/, however, is not likely to be confused with any other RP vowel or diphthong. Compared with /əu/, it is much easier to master.

2.5 /əu/

Since this RP diphthong does not have an equivalent in KA (see 1.6), it is likely that KS will find difficulty in mastering it. They usually realize it as [o:], identifying it with the [o:] in KA words such as /no:m/ 'sleep' and /so:m/ 'bargaining'. So words like **coat** /kəut/ and **code** /kəud/ will be mispronounced [ko:t] and [ko:d], respectively. In this case, KS will confuse it with RP /ɔ:/, which they usually pronounce as [o:]. It is, in fact, very difficult to make KS observe differences in pronunciation between such words as **so**/səu/ and **saw** /sɔ:/, **cold** /kəuld/ and **called** /kɔ:ld/, **coat** /kəut/ and **caught** /kɔ:t/, etc.

2.6 /au/

Since the equivalent to RP /au/ in KA is the sequence of /a/ plus /w/ (see 1.7), KS are expected to realize the second element /u/ in the region of close RP /u/. They are also expected to give more prominence to the second element than to the first. For example, words like **tower** /tauə/ and **hour** /auə/ will be mispronounced [tawar] and [ʔawar], respectively, with role [r] and glottal [ʔ]. Such monosyllabic English words will be realized as disyllabic by KS.

2.7 /iə/

Since the equivalent to RP /iə/ in KA is the sequence [i+j+a] (see 1.8), KS are expected to face the following difficulties in mastering it:

- They tend to monophthongize it, producing long [i:] instead of /iə/, mispronouncing **dear** /diə/ and **fierce** /fiəs/ as [di:r] and [fi:rs], respectively (with roll [r]).
- If, however, they are to produce glide, KS are likely to change monosyllabic words into disyllabic, e.g., **fear** /fiə/ and **here** /hiə/ will be mispronounced [fijər] and [hijər].

- (c) KS may change the / ə / in this diphthong into [a] because / ə / exists in KA only as an allophone of / a / when "it is preceded by the bilabials / m, b, f, w / and followed by the emphatics / S, D, T, Z, g, r /" (Dannan, 1984). So, words like **idea** / aɪdɪə/ and **real** / riəl/ will be mispronounced [aɪdɪja] and [rijal], respectively.
- (d) KS are also expected to use a too close first element of this diphthong.

2.8 / ɛ ə /

This RP diphthong is most difficult to produce by KS since neither of its elements have significant equivalents in KA (see 1.9). The first element [ɛ] will be confused with [e], and the second element [ə] is expected to be changed into [a]. It is also expected that a long [e:] is produced. So words like **pair** / p ɛ ə /, **chair** / tʃ ɛ ə / and **fair** / f ɛ ə / are likely to be mispronounced [pe:r], [tʃ e:r], and [fe:r]. KS might also confuse it with long [ə:]. For example, it will not be easy for KS to discern the difference between **fur** / fə:/ and **fare** / f ɛ ə / **purrr** / p ə : / and **pear** / p ɛ ə /.

Consusion can also take place between [ɛ ə] and [i ə] because it will be difficult for KS to discern the difference between the starting elements [ɛ] and [i] in the two diphthongs. Accordingly, KS are expected to confuse such words as **fear** / fi ə / and **fair** / ɛ ə /, **mere** / mi ə / and **mare** / m ɛ ə /, and **dear** / di ə / and **dare** / d ɛ ə /

2.9 / u ə /

Since RP / u ə / does not exist in KA, neither as a phoneme nor as a sequence of consonants, KS are likely to find it difficult to master. They are expected to lengthen the first element [u:], insert the semi-vowel [w] and change the second element [ə] into [a]. In this case, they may mispronounce words like **sewer** / su ə /, **fewer** / fju ə /, **doer** / du ə / as [su:war], [fju:war], and [du:war] (with roll [r]), respectively. KS are also expected to produce long [u:] instead of RP [u ə] in words like **sure** / ʃ u ə /, **tour** / tu ə / and **your** / ju ə /, realizing them as ([ʃ u:r], [tu:r], and [ju:r] (with roll [r])).

3. Difficulties Caused by English Spelling

English spelling is also confusing to KS since it does not mirror RP pronunciation. These are the main confusing areas:

3.1. /ei/

- (a) The **ea** in **great** /greit/ and **steak** /steik/ may be confused with the

ea in **eat** or **leave** and, in this case, it may be mispronounced /i:/ instead of /ei/.

- (b) The **au** and **ao** in **gauge** /geidz/ and **gaol** /dzeil/ are confusing because they suggest the pronunciation of /au/ rather than /ei/.

3.2 /ai/

- (a) The **ei** in **height** /haɪt/ and the **ei** in **weight** /weɪt/ are likely to be confused with each other.
- (b) The **i** in words like **mild** /maɪld/ and **kind** /kaɪnd/ is likely to be confused with the **i** in **silk** /sɪlk/ and **milk** /mɪlk/.
- (c) The **ai** in **aisle** /aɪl/ is identified with **ai** in words like **rain** /reɪn/ and, in this case, it will be mispronounced /eɪl/, being confused with **ale**.

3.3 /ɔɪ/

This diphthong is represented as **oi** and **oy** in English orthography. These letters suggest the pronunciation of /ɔɪ/. So, as far as spelling is concerned, KS do not find difficulty in realizing it wherever it occurs, e.g., **noise**, **voice**, **coil**,

3.4 /əʊ/

- (a) The **o** in **fold** /fəʊld/ and **folk** /fəʊk/ suggests the pronunciation of /ɔɪ/ rather than /əʊ/. So, KS are likely to identify it with the **o** in **fond** /fɔnd/ and **bond** /bɔnd/.
- (b) The **oa** causes confusion between such words as **road** /rəʊd/ and **broad** /brɔ:d/, **oak** /əʊk/ and **oar** /ɔ:/.
- (c) The **oe** in **toe** /təʊ/ can be identified with the **oe** in **shoe** /ʃu:/ and mispronounced /tu:/ (notice **two** /tu:/).
- (d) The **ou** in words like **soul** /səʊl/ and **mould** /məʊld/ can be confused with the **ou** in **sound** /saʊnd/ and **found** /faʊnd/.
- (e) The **ow** in words like **know** /nəʊ/ and **blow** /bləʊ/ is likely to be mispronounced /au/, being identified with **ow** in words like **town** /taʊn/ and **clown** /klaʊn/.

3.5 /aʊ/

This diphthong is represented by **ou** or **ow** in English orthography. Both of those two ways of spelling are easy to be mastered and are associated with the /aʊ/ sound. English spelling does not cause serious difficulties to KS when they learn the pronunciation of this diphthong.

3.6. / i ə /

- (a) The **ee** in **deer** / di ə / suggests the pronunciation of / i: /, being identified with **ee** in **deep** and **reel**.
- (b) The **ea** in **dear** / di ə / can be confused with the **ea** in **bear** / b ɛ ə / and **wear** / w ɛ ə /.
- (c) The **ie** in **fierce** / fi ə s / is likely to be confused with the **ie** in **piece** / pi:s /.
- (d) The **ei** in **weird** / wi ə d / can be confused with the **ei** in **seize** / si:z /
- (e) The **eo** suggests the pronunciation of [eo] rather than / i ə / in **theory** / θ i ə ri / and **theologic** / θ i ə l ɔ dzɪk /.

3.7 / ɛ ə /

- (a) The **a** in **care** / k ɛ ə / and **mare** / m ɛ ə / is likely to be mispronounced / ei /, being confused with the **a** in **made** /meɪd/ or **save** /seɪv/.
- (b) The **ai** in **fair** / f ɛ ə / and **pair** / p ɛ ə / is likely to be mispronounced / ei /, being identified with **ai** in **mail** /meɪl/ and **rail** /reɪl/.
- (c) **ear** in **pear** / p ɛ ə / and **wear** / w ɛ ə / is confused with **ea** in **fear** / fi ə / and **gear** / gi ə / (see 3.6.b.)

3.8 / u ə /

- (a) The **oor** in **poor** / pu ə / and **moor** / mu ə / is likely to be confused with the **oor** in **door** / dɔ: / and **floor** / flɔ: /
- (b) The **ure** suggests the pronunciation of /u:/ rather than / u ə / in words like **cure** / kju ə / and **sure** / ʃ u ə /.
- (c) The **ur** in **spurious** / spju ə ri ə s / can be confused with **ur** in **fur** / f ə: /
- (d) The **our** in **tour** / tu ə / is possible to be mispronounced / tɔ: /, being identified with the **our** in **pour** / pɔ: /. It is also likely to be confused with the **our** in **hour** / au ə /.

4. Suggestions for Teachers

Teachers are advised to let pupils listen to and imitate the pronunciation of native speakers, which can now be obtained on tape. In addition, they can spot difficulties mentioned in this study and give drills especially

Note: In the cases mentioned above under 3.6., 3.7 and 3.8. the letter **r** poses another problem since KS tend to pronounce it as rolled / r /.

prepared for the purpose. Here are some recommendations about the strategy to be followed with samples of drills:

4.1. Long and reduced diphthongs (see 2.1)

Choose one lenis and one fortis consonant and let learners practise long and short diphthongs. Take /z/ as lenis and /s/ as fortis. The following pairs may help you:

phase	[fei:z]	face	[feis]
raise	[rei:z]	race	[reis]
rise	[rai:z]	rice	[rais]
dies	[dai:z]	dice	[dais]
rose	[rə:uz]	roast	[rəʊst]
pose	[pə:uz]	post	[pəʊst]
joys	[dʒi:z]	joist	[dʒoist]
hoys	[hɔi:z]	hoist	[hɔist]
Howse	[ha:uz]	house	[haʊs]
allows	[əla:ʊz]	a louse	[əlaʊs]
piers	[piə:z]	pierce	[piə:s]
fears	[fiə:z]	fierce	[fiə:s]
scares	[skɛ:əz]	scarce	[skɛəs]

4.2. /ei/ (see 1.3, 2.2, 3.1)

- (a) Make sure that learners do not produce /e:/ instead of /ei/, especially in non-final positions. Tell them to identify the RP /ei/ with the KA /ej/, but they should not exaggerate the /j/ sound. Drill minimal pairs opposing between /e/ and /ei/, e.g.:

/e/	/ei/
let	late
met	mate
wet	wait
tell	tale
sell	sale

- (b) Give dictation exercises using words of similar spelling to Compare /i:/ and /ei/, e.g.:

/ei/	/i:/
great	leaf
break	leave
steak	speak

4.3 /ai/ (see 1.4, 2.3, 3.2)

- (a) Tell learners not to exaggerate the /i/ to become like /j/.
- (b) Drill words with confusing spelling, e.g.:

/ai/	/i/
mild	milk
wild	silk
kind	kin

and

/ai/	/ei/
height	weight
aisle	ale

- (c) Compare /ai/ with /i/ in words like **ride** and **rid**, **bite** and **bit**. Give dictation exercises on such words.

4.4 /ɔi/ (see 1.5, 2.4, 3.3)

Make sure that learners do not mispronounce /ɔ/ like /o/ or emphasize /i/ to become like /j/, especially in medial positions. Drill words opposing between final and medial /ɔ:/, e.g.:

boy	boil
toy	toil
coy	coil
hoy	hoik
soy	soil

4.5 /əu/ (see 1.6, 2.5, 3.4)

- (a) It is important to make learners produce this diphthong first as separate. Let them start with the sound /ə:/, which exists in KA in words like /Tə:/ 'bird' (Dannan, p. 141), then tell them to round their lips.
- (b) Drill minimal pairs opposing between /əu/ and /ɔ:/, on the one hand, and / u/ and / /, on the other, e.g.,:

/əu/	/ɔ:/
cold	called
boat	bought
hole	hall
so	saw

and

/əu/	/ə:/
woke	work
whole	hurl
loan	learn
pole	pearl

(c) Drill words whose spelling is likely to be confusing, such as:

dough
mould
soul
blow, etc.

4.6 /au/ (see 1.7, 2.6, 3.5)

Make sure that learners do not realize the second element like /w/, especially in medial positions. Give drills on /au/ medial and final, e.g.,

how	howl
plough	ploughing
vow	vowing
bow (bending)	bound
cow	cows

4.7. /iə/ (see 1.8, 2.7, 3.6)

(a) Drill minimal pairs, contrasting /iə/ and /i:/, e.g.:

/iə/	/i:/
beard	bead
pierce	piece
fears	fees
near	knee

(b) Also /iə/ and /eə/

/iə/	/eə/
here	heir
weir	wear
mere	mare
fear	fair
tear (drop of liquid)	tear (v.)

(c) Drill words whose spelling can be confusing, e.g.:

/iə/
deer

beer
peer
seer
veer

4.8 /ɛə/ (see 1.9, 2.8, 3.7)

- (a) Explain differences in pronunciation between /ɛə/ and /ei/. Point out that the letters **are** and **air** are pronounced /ɛə/, whereas the same combinations of letters with **r** replaced by any other consonant is pronounced /ei/ (with few exceptions). Give the following drill:

/ɛə/	/ei/
mare	made
rare	rage
care	came
fare	fade
hare	hate

also

/ɛə/	/ei/
pair	pail
hair	hail
fair	fail
dairy	daisy
chair	chain

- (b) Give a drill to contrast /ɛə/ and /ə:/, e.g.:

/ɛə/	/ə:/
fair	fur
hare	her
pear	purr
sear	sir

(See 4.7.b for a drill to contrast /ɛə/ and /iə/.)

4.9 /uə/ (see 1.10, 2.9, 3.9)

- (a) Make sure that learners do not use the high close long /u:/ instead of the diphthong /uə/. Tell them first to produce the word /guwwa/ 'force' in KA, with one /w/ rather than geminated /ww/. Then tell them to pronounce the same words with weakly rounded lips. Give a drill

comparing /u:/ and /uə /, e.g.:

/u:/

Shoe
do
sue
you
two

/uə/

sure
doer
sewer
you're
tour

(b) Drill minimal pairs to contrast /uə/ and /ʊ:/, e.g.:

/uə/

dour
moor
gourd
poor
tour

/ʊ:/

door
more
goored
pour
tore

APPENDIX I

List of Phonetic Symbols Used to Transcribe Kuwaiti Arabic Consonants

ʔ	glottal plosive	ʔan ^h am	'I sleep'
b	voiced bilabial plosive	b ^h ag	'he stole'
t	voiceless dental plosive	tal	'hill'
θ	voiceless inter-dental fricative	θani	'second'
dʒ	voiced palato-alveolar affricate	dʒili:b	'well'
H	voiceless pharyngeal fricative	Hari:r	'silk'
x	voiceless velar fricative	xɔ:f	'fear'
d	voiced dental plosive	'daxal	'he entered'
ɖ	voiced inter-dental fricative	ɖanb	'fault'
r	voiced alveolar roll	ra:H	'he went'
z	voiced alveolar fricative	z ^h al	'it went'
s	voiceless alveolar fricative	sal ^h am	'peace'
ʃ	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	ʃak	'doubt'
tʃ	voiced palato-alveolar affricate	tʃam	'how much'
S	voiceless alveolar fricative (emphatic)	Sa:r	'it became'
D	voiced dental plosive (emphatic)	Da:A	'it was lost'
T	voiceless dental plosive (emphatic)	T ^h al	'he appeared'
Z	voiced inter-dental fricative (emphatic)	'Za:lem	'unjust'
A	voiced pharyngeal fricative	'Aa:mel	'labourer'
ʁ	voiced uvular fricative	ʁa:S	'he dived'
f	voiceless labio-dental fricative	fa:s	'axe'
q	voiceless uvular plosive	qa:nu:n	'law'
g	voiced velar plosive	g ^h alb	'heart'
k	voiceless velar plosive	ka'l ^h am	'speech'
l	voiced alveolar lateral	l ^h am	'he blamed'
m	voiced bilabial nasal	mal	'he got bored'
n	voiced alveolar nasal	n ^h am	'he selpt'
h	voiceless glottal fricative	h ^h ak	'take'
w	voiced bilabial frictionless	waHl	'mud'
j	voiced palatal frictionless	j ^h ab	'he brought'

APPENDIX II

- / / phonemic transcription
 [] phonetic transcription
 ' ' meaning of KA examples

English words given as examples are underlined.

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الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة الكويتيون في تعلم لفظ أصوات اللين المزدوجة في اللغة الإنجليزية

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ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى معالجة الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة الكويتيون في تعلم لفظ أصوات اللين المزدوجة (Diphthongs) في اللغة الإنجليزية . ويتألف من أربعة أجزاء . في الجزء الأول يقارن الباحث بين أصوات اللين المزدوجة في اللغة الإنجليزية ونظائرها في اللهجة الكويتية ، فيصف الصوت المزدوج في اللغة الإنجليزية ، ثم يذكر إذا كان له نظير في اللهجة الكويتية ، وكيف يختلف أو يتشابه كل منهما مع الآخر من حيث النطق والدلالة والسلوك اللغوي .

وفي الجزء الثاني يحدد الباحث الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة الكويتيون في تعلم الأصوات الإنجليزية بناء على المقارنة الواردة في الجزء الأول من البحث ، هذه الصعوبات التي يرجعها الباحث إلى عوامل اختلاف الأصوات بين اللغتين .

وفي الجزء الثالث يستعرض الكاتب الأشكال المختلفة لتمثيل الأصوات المزدوجة في الكتابة العادية باللغة الإنجليزية ، ويبين الصعوبات الناجمة عن الاختلاف بين الحروف المكتوبة ولفظ هذه الأصوات .

وفي الجزء الرابع والأخير يقدم الباحث مجموعة من الاقتراحات لكيفية معالجة هذه الصعوبات داخل حجرة الدرس ، مضمناً اقتراحاته مجموعة من التمارين على لفظ الأصوات الإنجليزية مبنية على الاستنتاجات التي استخلصها من هذا البحث .