Topics in Linguistics (2024), 25(2), pp. 42-52

10.17846/topling-2024-0011

# Jordanian EFL learners' pronunciation difficulties with identical adjacent consonant letters in English words

Abdel Rahman Mitib Altakhaineh*[1], Abdul Salam Al-Namer[2], Sulafah Alnamer[3]
[1]The University of Jordan, Jordan
[2]Al Ain University, UAE
[3]Madar International School, UAE

## Abstract

This research paper investigates the pronunciation difficulties faced by Arabic-speaking EFL learners, particularly with words containing identical adjacent consonant letters. This study aims to enhance pronunciation proficiency and identify effective pedagogical approaches. To this end, a questionnaire was distributed to 15 university educators in Jordan. Additionally, 48 seventh-grade students from Al-Joufah Secondary School for Girls in the South Shuna District of Jordan participated in the study, where two teaching methods were tested: drilling and songs. The students were divided into two groups: one received explicit instruction on the phenomenon of adjacent identical consonant letters and practised repeating words that commonly present these difficulties, while the other group listened to songs containing the same words. The experimental results indicated that using songs was a more effective method for teaching the pronunciation of such words. Based on the questionnaire and experimental outcomes, effective pronunciation instruction methodologies were identified including the direct method, task-based language teaching (TBLT), audio-lingual method (ALM), and total physical response (TPR). Furthermore, the study highlights the crucial role of repetition in mastering the pronunciation of words with adjacent identical consonant letters.

## Key words

gemination; task-based language teaching; audio-lingual method; total physical response; Arabic-speaking EFL Learners

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the pedagogy of pronunciation, focusing specifically on words with adjacent identical consonant letters pronounced as geminates. This linguistic phenomenon, common across many languages, involves lengthening consonantal sounds to distinguish between singletons and geminates. In phonetics and phonology, gemination and stress, which are often confused by non-natives, are distinct. Gemination refers to pronouncing a consonant for a longer duration (De Vaan, 2018; Mitterer, 2018), while stress emphasizes a syllable with varying pitch, duration, and loudness (Beckman & Pierrehumbert, 1986). Phonologically, gemination is characterized by the presence of a long consonant sound compared to a singleton, with geminates manifesting as extended duration in articulation (Zibin, 2019). Phonetically, gemination is realized through the prolonged articulation of the consonant, which can occur within words or at word boundaries (Crystal, 2008). Despite its significance, research on gemination remains limited (Kubozono, 2017). This paper also explores pronunciation challenges for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly Arabic speakers, who may inadvertently geminate consonants due to L1 interference (Grosjean, 1982; Al-Jarf, 1990). To address these challenges, a questionnaire was distributed to 15 university educators (see Al-Alawneh, 2023), and two teaching methods were evaluated: drilling

* Address for correspondence: Abdel Rahman Mitib Altakhaineh, School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, P.O Box 11942, Amman, Jordan. Email: a.altakhaineh@ju.edu.jo

exercises and songs. One group received explicit instruction on gemination, while the other practised with songs featuring target words (Altakhaineh et al., 2022). Mainly, this study aims to enhance EFL teaching by identifying effective strategies for addressing gemination and improving overall pronunciation skills in second-language (L2) learners.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Previous studies on L2 learner's problems in pronunciation

Researchers in the field of L2 acquisition have been keenly exploring how L2 learners develop their pronunciation skills and identifying effective strategies to overcome the challenges they face. For example, Hago and Khan (2015) investigated the pronunciation difficulties encountered by Saudi secondary school students, particularly with consonants. Using a combination of questionnaires, classroom observations, and document collections, they found that the students struggled with 11 consonant sounds. A common issue was the insertion of a vowel sound to break consonant clusters, a problem primarily attributed to interference from their mother tongue, Arabic.

Al-Zayed (2017) also explored pronunciation issues among English learners, focusing on factors such as age, attitude, and limited phonological knowledge. Using a methodology that included a pronunciation test, Al-Zayed collected data from undergraduate English students at two private universities in Jordan. These students, who spoke Arabic as their first language, read minimal pairs aloud and indicated whether they perceived them as pronounced similarly or differently. The study found that the students made various errors in vowels, diphthongs, consonants, stress, and consonant clusters. For example, words like 'spring' were pronounced as /sɪprɪŋ/, 'strength' as /sɪtreŋɪθ/, and 'street' as /sɪtriːt/. Al-Zayed attributed these errors to language interference and suggested several solutions, including extensive pronunciation exercises, fostering self-motivation, and meticulous teaching approaches focusing on phonological interference.

Further research by Abugohar and Yunus (2018) examined the impact of English language course outcomes on learners' pronunciation abilities. Their study involved a survey administered to 100 male students in their second year of studying EFL, followed by semi-structured interviews with five students. The findings indicated that EFL learners faced significant challenges in achieving accurate and fluent pronunciation, often due to an overemphasis on drilling at the expense of clear communication. The researchers recommended a simplified phonetics teaching approach and emphasized the benefits of listening to native speakers through media as a means to improve pronunciation.

Al-Zoubi (2019) focused on the influence of Arabic speech sounds on English pronunciation skills among Arab EFL learners. Despite some beneficial similarities between Arabic and English speech sounds, learners faced difficulties due to the absence of certain English equivalents for Arabic sounds, such as glottal stops. This mismatch led to first language interference and overgeneralization, adversely affecting English pronunciation and spelling. Al-Zoubi highlighted the importance of integrating pronunciation instruction into the curriculum and ensuring that teachers have a solid understanding of phonetics and phonology to effectively guide their students.

In a study by Thakur (2020), the phonological challenges faced by Omani EFL learners were examined through focused observation over six months, involving 100 students from grades 7 and 9 in two public schools. The study identified several key pronunciation issues, such as substituting diphthongs with monophthongs, replacing the /p/ sound with /b/, inserting the vowel sound /ɪ/ when pluralizing words or adding the past tense marker -ed, and syllabifying initial and final consonant clusters. Thakur attributed these difficulties to factors such as lack of awareness of the English phonological system, mother-tongue interference, and insufficient learning diligence. These findings aligned with observations from other studies regarding faulty pronunciation among Arabic-speaking EFL learners.

A study by Farrah and Halahlah (2020) involving 120 Palestinian university students at Hebron University investigated pronunciation challenges related to specific consonants, vowels, and consonant sequences. Using a questionnaire, a recorded pronunciation test, and interviews with eight students and two instructors, the researchers found that students struggled with English consonants not found in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), consonant clusters, silent letters, and vowels with multiple pronunciations. The primary causes of these difficulties included mother-tongue interference, lack of exposure to correct pronunciation models, limited contact with native English speakers, insufficient

practice, and disparities between Arabic and English sound systems. The study underscored the influence of word spelling on pronunciation and the variability of English vowels as significant factors contributing to pronunciation challenges.

While these studies provide valuable insights into the pronunciation challenges faced by Arabic-speaking EFL learners, they primarily address issues related to language interference and phonological differences between Arabic and English. There is a notable gap in research exploring pronunciation difficulties related to geminates in Arabic, especially in comparison to non-Arabic languages that also feature true geminates, such as Italian, Finnish, and Japanese. Moreover, theoretical aspects of L2 pronunciation, including the general mechanisms of pronunciation acquisition and transfer across different linguistic backgrounds, remain underexplored. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on these specific pronunciation challenges.

## 2.2. Methods of teaching pronunciation

Mispronouncing words can hinder effective communication, making correct pronunciation essential in language learning. Encouraging students to converse in the target language significantly enhances their pronunciation skills (Szyszka, 2017). Increased speaking practice boosts pronunciation and confidence, while minimal practice can lead to anxiety and negative attitudes towards pronunciation learning (Rais, Pranowo & Sari, 2019).

Several issues in teaching pronunciation have been identified. Fraser (2000a) notes that ESL teacher training often lacks a sufficient foundation, highlighting a scarcity of reliable, research-based methods for effective pronunciation teaching (Fraser, 2000b). Derwing (2011) adds that many teachers feel ill-prepared to teach pronunciation, leading students to seek expensive online courses with mixed outcomes (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Teachers sometimes neglect pronunciation in favour of other language skills, compounded by inadequate practice materials in textbooks and a lack of formal training among native-speaking teachers. Non-native teachers may also feel insecure about their own pronunciation (Henderson et al., 2012; Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013).

Various methods for teaching pronunciation have emerged over the years. The grammar-translation method, considered irrelevant for pronunciation, seldom includes it in instruction (Florez, 1998). The audio-lingual method emphasizes repetitive drills for pronunciation but fails to address rhythm, intonation, and authentic conversations, leading to its decline in the 1960s (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). However, this method can be effective in specific contexts (Handoko & Mindari, 2016; Hidayati, 2016; Bajri, 2018; Kirkova-Naskova, 2019; Purwanto, 2019; Akhatovna, 2022; Suwarno et al., 2023).

Otlowski (1998) suggests integrating pronunciation lessons into oral communication classes. The focus of pronunciation instruction has shifted from perfect pronunciation to realistic goals like functional intelligibility, communicability, self-confidence, speech monitoring, and modification strategies (Morley, 1991). Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained attention for its practicality, interaction, and motivational benefits in fostering speaking skills (Ellis, 2003; Fakhira, 2021). TBLT involves activities mimicking real-life situations, requiring much speaking and role-playing, but faces challenges like creativity, extra materials, and time constraints (Ma'mun, 2018; Fakhira, 2021).

Total physical response (TPR) is a teacher-initiated method coordinating speech with physical actions (Richards & Rogers, 2001). Students demonstrate understanding by responding through actions, enhancing vocabulary acquisition and sustaining attention and motivation (Sumarni et al., 2022; Idris et al., 2020). TPR helps students practice pronunciation and spelling of difficult words (Sumarni et al., 2022).

Simulation strategy, defined as producing conditions similar to real ones, focuses on practising language in interpersonal contexts rather than studying grammatical rules (Shumin, 2002). It has helped Arabic-speaking EFL learners improve speaking skills, body language, fluency, pronunciation, intonation, grammar, vocabulary, and motivation (Hamad & Alnuzaili, 2022). Simulation compensates for limited practice time and reduces anxiety (Pradeep, 2020).

The ultimate goal is to help learners acquire comprehensible spoken English tailored to their needs while fostering confidence as foreign-language speakers. Developing awareness and monitoring skills leads to learning opportunities beyond the classroom (Hişmanoğlu, 2006).

There are two main approaches to acquiring a second language: intentional (deliberate) learning and incidental learning. Intentional learning is effective for acquiring many words but can be monotonous and demotivating (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2000; Wilkinson, 2015). Incidental learning involves

engaging in enjoyable activities, like listening to music or watching movies in the target language, providing meaningful context and teaching spelling, meaning, and pronunciation (Higuchi, 2018). Both teachers and students increasingly favour incidental strategies for their motivational benefits (Altakhaineh & Zibin, 2017; Altakhaineh & Ibrahim, 2019).

Songs have gained attention as an effective incidental learning tool. They are created by native speakers without pronunciation errors and should be integrated into curricula (Al-Smadi, 2020). Songs enhance memory retention through repetition and rhyming words (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2001). Studies show that songs improve listening and speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation (Higuchi, 2018). For example, using songs to teach third-grade students at SDN Cangkringan 2 improved pronunciation and confidence (Rais et al., 2019). Songs have also been found to significantly impact students' pronunciation skills and motivation (Ridhayatullah et al., 2020). Teachers have positive views on the role of songs in enhancing pronunciation skills (Bsharat et al., 2021).

### 2.3. Research gap and research questions

Based on various studies related to EFL learner pronunciation problems, it is evident that EFL learners frequently encounter significant issues with pronunciation. However, as far as our knowledge extends, no study has been conducted to specifically investigate the pronunciation problem of identical adjacent consonant letters in English, specifically among Arabic-speaking EFL learners who pronounce gemination as part of their first language phonological system and who tend to perceive identical adjacent consonants as geminates, nor has the best method for teaching them to avoid gemination been explored. Additionally, seldom are songs used as a method to teach pronunciation in middle school, as usually songs are implemented in younger or more foundational stages (e.g. kindergarten and grade). This has sparked interest in investigating "using songs" compared to other more conventional methods (e.g. drilling) in teaching pronunciation. This gap in research, therefore, motivates our study, which aims to address two primary questions:

1. To what extent do Arabic-speaking EFL learners pronounce English words that have identical adjacent consonants as geminates?
2. What is the most effective method for teaching Arabic-speaking EFL learners proper English pronunciation of words containing identical adjacent consonants without gemination?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. The sample of the study

The participants in the current study consisted of 48 seventh-grade students at Al-Joufah Secondary School for Girls/South Shuna District, Jordan. Their mean age is 12 years old. The school divides students into classes of 24 students in each class, and the researchers relied on this division. This division is essential in the context of this study, as the researchers aimed to test the effect of a treatment on the students' pronunciation of English words that have identical adjacent consonant letters. These students have neither lived in an English-speaking country before nor have a parent who is a native speaker of English. Before conducting the experiment, the students took a pre-test that examined the participants' pronunciation of the target words in context to ensure that their English pronunciation level is similar, and the results of this test were not statistically significant ($p$=0.242) (see Table 2). This suggests that the participants' pronunciation of words that have identical adjacent consonants is relatively similar in both groups.

In addition, 15 educators who were sampled randomly participated in and contributed to this study. Among them were three professors from the University of Jordan and 12 from other various Jordanian universities. Additionally, five English teachers who taught primary and secondary stages, each possessing a minimum of five years of experience in the educational field, also participated in responding to the questionnaire. These professors have had experience teaching undergraduate students with diverse backgrounds who were majoring in English language and literature. As a result, they possessed valuable knowledge concerning fundamental pronunciation topics, including the mechanics of mouth movement during sound production, word stress, rhythm, connected speech, and intonation. Including schoolteachers in this study was essential since they directly interact with students who are in

the process of developing their pronunciation skills. Therefore, their first-hand experience with the target age group for this study contributes significantly to enriching the discussion section of this research paper (see Zibin et al., 2023).

## 3.2. The instruments

### 3.2.1. The questionnaire

A questionnaire with six open-ended questions was distributed to the participating English professors and teachers (see Appendix C). There are two purposes of the questionnaire. Firstly, it aimed to gather detailed and different opinions on pronunciation issues, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of gemination. Understanding how educators perceive and address gemination in their teaching practices is crucial for developing more effective pronunciation training.

Secondly, the questionnaire also aimed to explore the educators' views on the incorporation of songs into the curriculum as a tool for improving pronunciation. By seeking the perspectives of experienced English educators, the study aimed to evaluate the potential effectiveness and practicality of incorporating songs into pronunciation instruction. Their insights would offer valuable information on the effectiveness of this approach, highlighting any observed challenges and advantages from their teaching experiences.

### 3.2.2. The instrument and the procedures

Both the pre-test and post-test assessed the students' pronunciation of 10 words: *shimmer, dazzling, better, thrilling, caterpillar, collection, little, appear, puzzles,* and *worry* where students had to correctly read a paragraph containing the target words (see Appendix B). For each group, two sessions of 45 minutes each were dedicated to this purpose, both for the pre-test and post-test.

The control group received direct and clear instructions on the concept of gemination, examples of words susceptible to erroneous gemination, and how to pronounce them correctly to avoid gemination. In this section, the teacher, who is also one of the researchers, displayed the target words and accurately pronounced them for the students to repeat. The teacher allocated 20 minutes during the English subject periods, three times a week, for this practice. On the other hand, Section B, the treatment group, listened to songs that included words with double consonants. The teacher selected songs that were age-appropriate and culturally relevant for seventh-grade students, knowing that students would be interested in independently listening to and revisiting these songs at their own pace, even outside the classroom setting (e.g. at home). This group did not receive direct instructions explaining the definition of gemination and how to avoid it in English. Instead, they listened to the same words used in the control group but introduced within contexts sung by native English speakers (Refer to Appendix A for the list of songs used). The teacher played 2-3 songs during the last 15 minutes of three English subject periods. Importantly, the lyrics of these songs were displayed to the students via a classroom screen, allowing them to see the spelling of the target words for this study. The following section delves into the study's findings in detail. The pre- and post-tests in this study included a paragraph that contained the target words which the participants had to read without making mistakes.

### 3.2.3. Data analysis

For this study, inferential data analysis was conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of employing songs as a teaching tool [treatment] in enhancing the pronunciation skills of Arabic-speaking EFL learners when faced with English words featuring identical adjacent letters in comparison to traditional teaching methods, i.e. clear instructions and drilling. To determine the effectiveness of the aforementioned methods in teaching pronunciation, Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests were administered to assess whether statistically significant differences exist between and within the two groups. In particular, a Mann-Whitney U test was employed to test the differences in teaching pronunciation between the results of the two groups in the pre-test and post-test. Conversely, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used to test the differences in teaching pronunciation between the pre-test and post-test within each group. By examining the differences between the pre- and post-test scores for each group, we can determine if the observed changes are statistically significant, providing valuable insights into the impact of using songs as a teaching method in this context.

### 3.3. Limitations

A notable limitation of this study is the use of only 10 words for analysis. While this number is generally sufficient for detecting statistical differences, it is relatively small in the context of comprehensive linguistic research. However, the choice of 10 words was influenced by practical constraints, including the number of participants and the timeframe within which the study was conducted. The limited scope may impact the generalizability of the findings.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. The pre- and post-Tests

As stated in the methodology section, pre- and post-tests were conducted in two Grade 7 sections to evaluate the effectiveness of two methods: the traditional approach involving clear instructions and drilling, and the incidental approach using songs. Table 1 presents the statistical results obtained from both the pre-test and post-test for the selected set of 10 words for this assessment.

*Table 1.* The no. of correct pronunciations in the pre- and post-tests for the control and the treatment groups

| Words | The control group: 24 students | | The treatment group: 24 students | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | The pre-test | The post-test | The pre-test | The post-test |
| | No. of correct pronunciations out of 24 | | No. of correct pronunciations out of 24 | |
| **shimmer** | 14 | 18 | 16 | 21 |
| **dazzling** | 14 | 19 | 14 | 19 |
| **better** | 21 | 22 | 22 | 24 |
| **thrilling** | 13 | 14 | 16 | 21 |
| **caterpillar** | 15 | 16 | 14 | 23 |
| **collection** | 13 | 17 | 15 | 21 |
| **little** | 12 | 13 | 14 | 21 |
| **appear** | 12 | 17 | 13 | 21 |
| **puzzles** | 20 | 21 | 15 | 23 |
| **worry** | 15 | 17 | 17 | 23 |
| **Total no. of correct pronunciation** | **149** | **174** | **156** | **217** |
| **Mean** | **14.9** | **17.4** | **15.6** | **21.7** |

#### 4.1.2. Whitney U test and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

To determine the effectiveness of the two teaching methods in teaching English pronunciation, Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests were conducted to assess whether statistically significant differences exist between and within the groups. This analysis aimed to identify the most effective method for teaching proper pronunciation. Table 2 and 3 displays the results.

*Table 2.* The results of Mann-Whitney U test for the differences in teaching pronunciation between the results of the two groups in the pre-test and post-test

| Comparison | U-value | Z | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|
| **pre-control & pre-treatment** | **34** | **-1.172** | **.242** |
| **post-control & post-treatment** | **10** | **-2.986** | **.003** |

An examination of Table 2 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in teaching pronunciation between the results of the groups in the pre-test (Z= -1.172, p>0.05). This means that on the pre-test, the two groups performed relatively the same, suggesting that they had a similar level pertaining to the pronunciation of English sounds. On the other hand, the results displayed in Table 2 demonstrate that there are statistically significant differences in teaching pronunciation between the results of the two groups on the post-test (Z= -2.986, p<0.05) in favour of the treatment group. This suggests that the treatment group outperformed the control group on the post-test, suggesting that the treatment, i.e. using songs, can be considered more effective than traditional teaching methods, i.e. drilling. To examine the differences within the two groups concerning their performance on the pre-and post-tests, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used and the results are reported in Table 3 below.

*Table 3*. The results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for the differences in teaching pronunciation between the pre-test and post-test within each group

| Comparison | W-value | Z | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|
| **pre—and post-control group** | **8** | **-2.803** | **.005** |
| **pre—and post-treatment group** | **8** | **-2.803** | **.005** |

An examination of Table 3 reveals that concerning the control group, the differences between the participants' results on the pre- and post-test were statistically significant (*Z*= -2.803, p<0.05) in favour of the post-test. This suggests that the participants' performance on the post-test was better than that on the pre-test; thus, traditional teaching methods were not entirely ineffective in teaching English pronunciation. In addition, regarding the treatment group, the differences between the participants' results on the pre- and post-tests were statistically significant (Z= -2.803, *p*<0.05) in favour of the post-test, indicating that using songs to teach pronunciation was effective. Note that based on the results of Table 2, using songs to teach pronunciation of adjacent consonant letters is more effective than using traditional methods.

## 4.2. Discussion

### 4.2.1. The results of the pre- and post-tests

As previously mentioned, the treatment group listened to songs that contained words prone to incorrect pronunciation through gemination, which should be avoided. Based on the results obtained from the Whitney U test, conducted to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between the correct pronunciation of the treatment and control groups in the post-test, it is evident that the treatment group performed significantly better in the post-test compared to the control group. The treatment group achieved 217 correct pronunciations, while the control group achieved 174. This indicates that the method employed, namely using songs, is more effective than the traditional approach of teaching gemination's definition, providing examples, and instructing students to drill or repeat words pronounced by the teacher. However, it should be noted that the traditional method is not entirely ineffective, as the control group also demonstrated improvement in post-test results with an additional 25 correct pronunciations compared to the pre-test.

These results can be attributed to the fact that songs are generally entertaining, especially when the selected songs were age-appropriate and not gender-specific. Students enjoyed listening to these songs during class. Additionally, some students in the treatment group were interested in the song titles and requested them from the teacher to download and listen to at home or during their leisure activities, which proved beneficial for their pronunciation improvement. On the other hand, even though the teacher employed drilling and repetition with the control group, the classroom was the sole environment where students encountered the words used in this research. No homework or practice at home was assigned, making it challenging for control group students to recall and practice the words and their correct pronunciation outside of the classroom.

Another interesting factor that worked in favour of the treatment group during their post-test was the display of song lyrics while the songs were played. This feature was particularly advantageous since the songs selected were sung by native English speakers who naturally pronounced all the words.

Consequently, students in the treatment group attempted to mimic what they heard without needing to focus extensively on linguistic rules to avoid gemination. They simply heard the words and sang along.

Memory plays a significant role in second-language learning (see Altakhaineh et al., 2022). Therefore, this method, with its musical effects and electronic amplifications, facilitated the memorization of the pronunciation of target words. This aligns with the idea that "songs are appropriate for the classroom because they are highly memorable. We have all experienced the phenomenon of a song getting stuck in our heads. Songs tend to stay in both our short-term and long-term memory, making it easier to remember language chunks. Songs are also a part of everyday life" (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2001, p. 95).

In contrast, even though the results of the control group on the post-test were better than their performance on the pre-test, their mean of correct answers was lower than that of the treatment group. That is, the control group hesitated before pronouncing each word they were asked to produce and sometimes requested another chance to re-pronounce the same word. It was clear that students in the control group were aware of the absence of gemination in the English language. However, they heavily relied on their memory of how the words were pronounced and thus felt anxious during the test, leading to pronunciation errors. According to the teacher's observations, this anxiety seemed more like panic, and the entire post-test appeared more focused on memorization. During the post-test, a few students mentioned that they had not practised for the "test" and requested another opportunity or a makeup test.

### 4.2.2. The responses to the questionnaire

The responses to the questionnaire distributed among English professors and teachers provided significant insights into effective methods for teaching pronunciation, particularly focusing on avoiding gemination. Respondents emphasized the importance of considering students' backgrounds and mother tongues, with a specific focus on Arabic-speaking EFL learners who might unintentionally geminate words due to their native language's features. They highlighted the need for teachers to model correct pronunciation and create opportunities for students to practise it. The responses also underscored the diversity in students' personalities, suggesting tailored approaches to address pronunciation issues. Additionally, exposure to native English speakers was deemed crucial, with recommendations for incorporating both in-class and independent listening activities to enhance students' pronunciation and fluency.

To address pronunciation problems, many respondents suggested correcting mispronunciations through repetition and drilling. Task-based language learning (TBLT) was recommended to address L1 interference by correcting all mistakes. The significance of listening to native speakers was also emphasized, with suggestions for using songs, movies, and TV shows to naturally improve speaking skills. A few participants proposed self-recording pronunciation tests, using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and focusing on syllable stress and audio pronunciations. This method would allow students to monitor their progress by recording their pronunciations before and after practice, fostering self-awareness and improvement in their pronunciation skills.

Teaching students to avoid gemination in English pronunciation was primarily recommended through an inductive approach. Teachers could pronounce words aloud or utilize online dictionaries for students to check pronunciations. Motivation was highlighted as a key factor, with strategies to encourage students to achieve native-like pronunciation by showcasing correct and incorrect pronunciations and emphasizing the benefits of accurate pronunciation for self-esteem and confidence. Some teachers suggested dedicating time to watching English-language movies with subtitles to help students observe word pronunciation in rapid speech. The importance of teaching correct pronunciation from an early age was also stressed, aiming to prevent ingrained errors and ensuring effective communication. The responses provided a consensus on using a mix of methods, such as the direct method, TBLT, and the audio-lingual method (ALM), along with the use of educational videos and self-recording techniques to enhance pronunciation skills.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, there is no single best method for teaching correct pronunciation. The questionnaire produced a range of suggestions, including task-based language teaching (TBLT), the audio-lingual method (ALM) with techniques like repetition or drilling, and self-recording of

pronunciation before and after practice. It is clear that mother-tongue interference significantly impacts gemination pronunciation in English, particularly for Arabic-speaking learners. Arabic phonology includes several phonemes not present in English, leading to the inadvertent doubling of consonant sounds by Arabic-speaking EFL learners. This phonological challenge affects their pronunciation accuracy and can hinder their fluency in English.

Addressing the often-neglected skills of listening and speaking is crucial for effective pronunciation teaching. Identifying and improving weaknesses in learners' pronunciation is essential for their language development. Notably, the questionnaire responses indicated strong support for using songs to teach pronunciation. Songs promote indirect learning, reduce anxiety over English's complexities, and are effective in fostering continuous, enjoyable learning both in and out of the classroom. For teachers, songs are a practical, engaging tool. It is recommended that songs be used across all grade levels, with age-appropriate selections. For high-school students, rap songs may be particularly appealing.

## Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers and the editors for their useful comments on an earlier draft of the paper. We would also like to thank the participants for taking part in this study and Mrs Rozan Al Hloul for helping us in collecting the data. All remaining errors and inaccuracies are, of course, ours alone. We would also like to acknowledge that we used AI tools to proofread some sentences, as we are not native speakers of English.

## References

Abugohar, M. A., & Yunus, K. (2018). Difficulties encountered by Arab students in pronouncing English correctly. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies, 6*(4), 93-100.

Al-Alawneh, M. (2023). The degree of contribution of educational supervision in enabling teachers to possess teaching competencies from the point of view of English language teachers in the schools of the Northern Mazar Directorate of Education. *Jordan Journal of Applied Science-Humanities Series, 38*(1), 58-68.

Al-Jarf, R. (1990). *English and Arabic phonology for translation students*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Reima-Al-Jarf/publication/281003181_English_and_Arabic_Phonology_for_Translation_Students/links/5873a53c08aebf17d3b08eed/English-and-Arabic-Phonology-for-Translation-Students.pdf

Al-Smadi, M. (2020). The effect of using songs on young English learners' motivation in Jordan. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning, 15*(24), 52-63.

Altakhaineh, A. R. M., Alsaraireh, M. Y., & Alhendi, H. (2022). The impact of incidental learning on the acquisition of the sound /p/ by Arabic-speaking EFL learners. *Explorations in English Language and Linguistics, 10*(1), 51-65.

Altakhaineh, A. R., Alhloul, R., & Zibin, A. (2022). Foreign language processing of English regular and irregular past tense verbs by Arabic-speaking EFL children. *Psycholinguistics, 32*(2), 6-28.

Al-Zayed, N. N. (2017). Non-native pronunciation of English: Problems and solutions. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 7*(3), 86-90.

Al-Zoubi, S. (2019). The speech sounds of Arabic language and their effect on learning English pronunciation: A contrastive analysis. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 9*(1), 15-27.

Beckman, M. E., & Pierrehumbert, J. B. (1986). Intonational structure in Japanese and English. *Phonology Yearbook, 3*(1), 255-309.

Burns, A., & de Silva Joyce, H. (2001). *Teachers' voices 7: Teaching vocabulary.* NCELTR.

Cambridge University Press. (2023). Word. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved from https://www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/word

Crystal, D. (2008). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics.* Blackwell Publishing.

De Vaan, M. (2008). *Etymological dictionary of Latin and the other Italic languages* (Vol. 7). LEIDEN BOSTON.

Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). *Pronunciation fundamentals: Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research* (Vol. 42). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching.* Oxford University Press.
Fakhira, V. L. (2021). *Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to teach speaking in EFL classes* [Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri].
Farrah, M., & Halahlah, N. (2020). Pronunciation problems among Palestinian English major students in Hebron University.
Fraser, H. (2000a). Coordinating improvements in pronunciation teaching for adult learners of English as a second language. DETYA (ANTA Innovative project).
Fraser, H. (2000b). Literacy vs oral communication skills for ESL learners. *Literacy Link, 19*(3), 4-6.
Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism.* Harvard University Press.
Hamad, M. M., & Alnuzaili, E. S. (2022). The effect of using simulation strategy in developing English as a foreign language speaking skill. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 13*(1), 198-206.
Handoko, K. C., & Mindari, R. (2016). Using drilling to teach pronunciation to the seventh graders.
Henderson, A., Frost, D., Tergujeff, E., Kautzsch, A., Murphy, D., Kirkova-Naskova, A., Waniek-Klimczak, E., Levey, D., Cunningham, U., & Curnick, L. (2012). English pronunciation teaching in Europe survey: Selected results. *Research in Language, 10*, 5-27.
Hidayati, K. H. (2016). Using audio lingual method to improve students' pronunciation ability of Darul Mahdiah private school. *ELLITE: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching, 1*(1).
Higuchi, A. (2018). Second language vocabulary learning: Whether Western music is effective for incidental vocabulary learning. *Studies in Language and Culture, 27*, 1-22.
International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies. (2018). *Difficulties encountered by Arab students in pronouncing English correctly*. Published October 31, 2018. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1201510.pdf
Kirkova-Naskova, A. (2019). Second language pronunciation: A summary of teaching techniques. *Vestnik za tuje jezike, 11*(1), 119-136.
Kubozono, H. (Ed.). (2017). *The phonetics and phonology of geminate consonants.* Oxford University Press.
Merriam-Webster. (2023). Geminate. In *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.* Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/geminate
Mitterer, H. (2018). The singleton-geminate distinction can be rate dependent: Evidence from Maltese. *Laboratory Phonology, 9*(1).
Morley, J. (1998). Trippingly on the tongue. *ESL Magazine, 1*(1), 20-23.
Nation, I. S., & Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (Vol. 10). Cambridge university press.
Rabab'ah, G. (2003). Communicative problems facing Arab learners of English. *Journal of Language and Learning*, 3(1), 180-197.
Rais, B., Pranowo, D. D., & Sari, R. P. I. P. (2020). The Use of Song in Teaching English Pronunciation. In *1st International Conference on Language, Literature, and Arts Education (ICLLAE 2019)* (pp. 133-137). Atlantis Press.
Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching. Cambridge University press.
Ridhayatullah, R., Kasim, U., & Daud, B. (2020). The Influence of Using English Songs on The Students' achievement in Pronouncing English Words. *English Education Journal*, *11*(1), 96-116.
Schmitt, N., & Schmitt, D. (2020). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
Shumin, K. (2002). Factors to consider: Developing adult EFL students' speaking abilities. *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*, *12*(35), 204-211.
Sumarni, B., Bhatta, D. D., & Kho, S. F. C. (2022). The Use of Total Physical Response in Teaching Vocabulary Integrated with Meaningful Classroom Interaction. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, *2*(1), 23-32.
Szyszka, M. (2017). Pronunciation learning strategies and language anxiety. Springer
Thakur, V. S. (2020). Phonological Problems of Omani EFL Learners: Pedagogical Perspectives and Implications. *Arab World English Journal*, *11* (1) 29-43.
The TEFL academy. (2017). *Common Problems for Arabic Learners of English*. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from https://www.theteflacademy.com/blog/2017/04/3-common-problems-for-arabic-learners-of-english/

Zibin, A. (2019). A phonological analysis of English loanwords inflected with Arabic morphemes in urban Jordanian spoken Arabic. *SAGE Open, 9*(2), 1-13.

Zibin, A., Altakhaineh, A. R. M., Suleiman, D., & Al Abdallat, B. (2023). The Effect of Using an Arabic Assistive Application on Improving the Ability of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder to Comprehend and Answer Content Questions. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 1-20.

## Appendices:

## Appendix A

### The list of the songs used with the treatment group

1. A Whole New World by Brad Kane and Lea Salonga
2. Butterfly Fly Away by Billy Ray Cyrus and Miley Cyrus
3. Part of Your World by Jodi Benson
4. Bare Necessities by Phil Harris and Bruce Reitherman
5. When Will My Life Begin? By Mandy Moore
6. Under the Sea by Samuel E. Wright

## Appendix B

The paragraph that the participants read in the pre- and post-tests

In a secret corner of the garden, a little caterpillar worked its magic. Slowly, it began its transformation, and soon, a dazzling butterfly emerged, its wings shimmering with an array of vibrant colors. The sight was nothing short of thrilling for the children who watched in amazement. This butterfly was not just any butterfly; it was something truly special. It was better than anything they had ever seen in their collection of nature's wonders. The worries that had been on their minds earlier seemed to vanish, replaced by a sense of wonder and joy. They couldn't help but smile as they followed the butterfly's graceful dance through the garden, appreciating the beauty it brought to their world.

## Appendix C

Below are the six questions included in the questionnaire for this study:

1. When teaching pronunciation, what factors do you consider or emphasize?
2. How do you assist students facing pronunciation difficulties?
3. In English, gemination is absent. How would you, as a teacher, instruct students to pronounce words containing identical adjacent consonants without gemination?
4. Why is it essential to teach the correct pronunciation of words that may be mistakenly geminated without altering the overall meaning?
5. Based on your experience, what, in your opinion, is the most effective method for teaching pronunciation, particularly for words that may be prone to gemination?
6. As a professor of English, responsible for teaching all aspects of the English language, including English as a second language, or as an English teacher with a minimum of five years' experience in the field of education, what are your views on incorporating "songs" as a means to teach proper pronunciation to primary, middle, and high school students? Please provide elaboration in your response.