

Proficiency Differences among Iraqi Speakers in the Pronunciation of English Loanwords

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Abstract

The research demonstrates the impact of proficiency on how English loanwords are pronounced in Iraqi Arabic. The descriptions of the phrases "degree of education" and "loanwords" are also provided. The research's forty participants provided the data for it (20 educated and 20 un-educated). Information gathered through the use of an individual interview technique, which involved speaking with the participants and asking them to complete a demographic questionnaire. To elicit the targeted pronunciation of the words in which phonological processes were anticipated to take place, a picture naming task was used. They comprised vowel and consonant changes, deletion, and r-insertion. The findings demonstrated that, educated group used vowel change the least and uneducated group used deletion the least, while /r/ insertion the most.

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Introduction

One of the common dialects of Standard Arabic spoken by Iraqi speakers is known as Iraqi Arabic. It has a number of terms that come from English. Several studies, including Ohso (1973), Chang (2003), Crawford (2009), Simonovic (2009), and others claim that speakers of the borrowed language modify loanwords to match their original language's phonological structure. These English loans thus represent a dramatic shift in IA. The purpose of the research is to determine whether there are disparities in English loanword use proficiency among Iraqis.

To get a better knowledge of the generation of English loanwords by Iraqi speakers and the probable phonological processes arising from this production, data collecting and data normalisation were conducted. Two methods were developed to get the data: an interview in which they were asked to describe photographs with the targeted phrases, and a demographic questionnaire that participants were needed to complete to guarantee that they are all appropriate for the research. The research is restricted to looking at how English loanwords are spoken in Iraqi Arabic. The participants' native tongue is the *gilit* dialect, which is used in Al-Anbar province.

2-Previous studies

Alnamer and Alnamer (2018) study, they try to determine the loanwords often used in Emirati Arabic (EA), as well as their origins and motivations for use. Moreover, it looked into how speakers of EA employ loanwords in relation to their gender, level of education, and age. To achieve these goals, a questionnaire was created and given to 90 EA speakers, who were then divided into three groups according to their responses: (1) Gender: men and women; (2) Education: educated and uneducated; (3) Age: young and elderly. The findings indicated that youthful EA speakers, educated EA speakers, and female EA speakers all utilise loanwords more frequently than their peers in their respective categories. The findings also demonstrated that EA speakers employed loanwords from a variety of languages, including English, Persian, Hindi, and Turkish, in addition to a few French, Italian, German, and Spanish words.

Jasim and Al-Bajjari (2021) looked from a sociolinguistic standpoint into how loanwords in Mosuli Arabic have been culturally adapted. It attempted to look into the extent of sociolinguistic characteristics such as age, gender, social status, and educational achievement, as well as the impact of the surrounding areas on Mosuli Arabic and the use of loanwords in the Mosuli speech community. The rate of loanword usage in that community is thought to be influenced by sociolinguistic variables, while loanword



introduction is thought to be influenced by environmental factors. To accomplish all of these, Poplack et al. (1988)'s sociolinguistic modified model is used. Informally conducted interviews are done with 48 native Mosuli speakers, who are separated evenly by sociolinguistic characteristics (namely, age, gender, social status, and educational level) each subgroup's usage of loanwords, which was then examined in the context of the chosen model. According to this study, the sociolinguistic variables have an impact on how loanwords are used in Mosuli Arabic. There is a slight tendency for one subgroup to use loanwords more frequently than its counterpart, despite the fact that the Mosuli speech community has a shared strategy for incorporating loanwords into Mosuli Arabic discourse and that there is a uniform pool of loanwords from which each speaker draws. It has been found that loanword usage is more prevalent among female, elderly, lower-class, and illiterate populations than among their counterparts.

3-Loanwords

Loanwords means “when form and meaning are both borrowed, or ‘assimilated,’ with some change to the phonological system of the new language, for example, sputnik” (Crystal, 2008p. 286).

While Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009 p.55) state that borrowing is a common and universal phenomenon, and is found in all languages with varying average rates. Loanwords or lexical borrowing as mentioned and defined by them (ibid) "a word that at some point in the history of a language entered its lexicon as a result of borrowing (or transfer, or copying)".

4- Level of Education

Abdullah and Daffar (2006) examined English loanwords as a sociolinguistic research in the spoken Arabic of southern Iraq. The usage of loans in speech was thought to differ among speakers of the regional variant of southern Iraqi Arabic spoken in that region of the country. It was found that, depending on their degree of education, Arabic speakers varied substantially in how they pronounce these loans. With a few exceptions, educated speakers prefer to imitate the English pronunciation patterns. The speaker becomes closer to the English pronunciation the more fluently they talk. Even when they maintain touch with metropolitan populations, illiterate rural residents and those with low levels of education typically continue to use their local English accent.



In addition, Jasim and Al-Bajjari (2021) made a study from a sociolinguistic standpoint, to look into how loanwords in Mosuli Arabic have been culturally adapted. It attempts to look into the extent of sociolinguistic characteristics such as age, gender, social status, and educational achievement, as well as the impact of the surrounding areas on Mosuli Arabic and the use of loanwords in the Mosuli speech community. The rate of loanword usage in that community is thought to be influenced by sociolinguistic variables, while loanword introduction is thought to be influenced by environmental factors.

Their study resulted: firstly, the sociolinguistic characteristics, namely (Females tend to use LWs more frequently than males, have an impact on the rate of LWs usage in MA, LWs are more prevalent in the elderly population, the lower class group uses LWs more frequently than the middle class group and instead of the speech of the educated group, LWs are found in the speech of the ignorant group). Secondly, in addition to sociolinguistic elements, environmental factors play an important role in Mosuli speech community and help LWs enter the MA lexicon. Environmental influences are symbolised by the impact of the surrounding areas on MA.

In this research, the effect of level of education has been examined throughout including two groups of participants: the first group is the educated group, which consists of 20 participants, who studied English for at least 8 years. While the second group is the un-educated group, which consists of 20 participants, who have not been exposed to English at least before and during carrying out the study.

5- Methodology

The participants of this research are 40 Iraqi Speakers divided equally into male and female: 20 of them (10 males and 10 females) represent the 'Educated group', who carry BA or B.sc degree in different specializations. The second group is composed of 20 participants (10 males and 10 females), who represent the 'un-educated group', who were not exposed to English at all, but are aware that the targeted loanwords are of English not Arabic origin. The age range of participants is 20-60 years.

The research takes a qualitative approach since it describes how a sample of Iraqis pronounce English loanwords using qualitative instruments that process the data subjectively. The research's use of stratified random sampling seeks to produce proportionally balanced population samples by recruiting a variety of individuals in roughly equal numbers (Luborsky and Rubinstein, 1995 p. 98).

Data collection is a set of connected tasks that are done in order to acquire reliable data for new research topics. Individual interviews were used to collect the research's data, and as part of the interviews, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. A task to name photographs was then given to acquire the targeted pronunciation of the words where phonological processes were anticipated to take place. These internet-downloaded images served as the stimulus for gathering data. Because it was believed to be more useful in gathering appropriate data than the reading task, it was used. Around 20 minutes were allotted for each interview.

6-Results and Discussion

Educated				
Phonologic al process	Deletio n	r- insertio n	Vowel chang e	Consona nt change
Frequency	158	530	922	613
Percentage	87.7%	98%	85%	87%
Un-educated				
Phonologic al process	Deletio n	r- insertio n	Vowel chang e	Consona nt change
Frequency	169	535	1024	664
Percentage	88.8%	98%	94.8%	94.8%

Table (1): English loanwords adapted According to Level of Education.

A) Deletion

Deletion is another process of adapting consonant cluster. When words borrowed from other languages with consonant cluster it is either accepted or modified to fit the phonological system of the borrowing language. To take the effect of participants level of education in consideration, the results revealed that educated Iraqi Arabic speakers used deletion less frequently (158 times, 87.7%) than their un-educated peers (169 times, 93.8%).

Almathkuri's (2022) study found that deletion occurred very rarely. A few examples in the current study of English loanwords show the deletion process. For example, in /ka:dʒual/ 'casual' the /j/ sound is dropped because it has no orthographic symbol, in



/deimn/ 'diamond' /ə/ is dropped to reduce the triphthong to a diphthong because triphthongs are not used in Taif Arabic; in this word, the final consonant is also dropped. Another deletion of consonants is found in /ha:s/ 'hearts' in which, /t/ is deleted.

Some English loanwords in this research can make a difference in the degree of using deletion process between educators and un-educators these words are (wrong side and freezer). Almost a large number of educated participants aware on the phoneme /g/ in the English loanwords 'wrong side', so they avoids deleting it and also they aware of the second syllable in the word freezer.

B) r- insertion

This process corresponds with Almathkuri's (2022) explanation that, the influence of Arabic spelling-to-pronunciation correspondence. In Arabic every letter of a word is pronounced. Thus, when it comes to foreign words where some letters are silent, native speakers of TA pronounce them especially the ones that are not always silent such as the letter [r] in RP. For example, in the word 'PowerPoint', the sound /r/ is inserted producing /bawarbɔɪnt/. The words /katarbɪlar/ 'caterpillar' and /ta:jar/ 'tire' provide more examples. Another influence of the Arabic spelling-to-pronunciation relation is found in the English loanwords that have double consonants; both consonants are pronounced by TA native speakers such as the word 'assignments' which is pronounced as /ʔassa:jmɪnta:t/.

Within this research, this process can represents with English loan words such as (boiler, keyboard, radiator, sticker, tyre, wire, and helicopter).

C) Vowel change

The majority achieves of loanwords adaptation by Iraqis educated and un educated speakers is this process of vowel change. Abdullah and Daffar (2006) assert that, those Arabic speakers also considerably differ in their pronunciation of such loans based on their level of education. They tend to approximate to the English pronunciation. The more the speaker is exposed to English, the more he/ she approximates to the English pronunciation corresponds with the results of the study it can be shown in Table (5.1) that educated group use vowel change 922 time (85) and uneducated group use it (94.8) with frequency 1024. It is clear that the first group apply changing vowel strategy less than the second group, which are uneducated. Examples of English loan words adopted via this process are:

Balcony /bælkəni/ pronounced /bələkə:nə/, English short vowels /æ/ and /ə/ substitute with English short vowel /ə/ and IA long vowel /o:./.



Chocolate /ʃɒklət/ pronounced /ʃɪkle:t/, English short vowels /ɒ/ and /ə/ substitute with English short vowel /i/ and IA long vowel /e:/.

Cable /keɪbl/ and 'Gauge' /geɪdʒ/ pronounced /ke:bul/ and /ge:tʃ/ , English diphthongs /eɪ/ substitute with IA long vowels /e:/.

Computer /kəmˈpjʊ:tə/ pronounced /kɒmbju:tər/, English short vowel /ə/ substitute with English short vowel /o/.

Doctor /dɒktə/ pronounced /dikto:r/, English short vowels /ɒ/ and /ə/ substitute with English short vowel /i/ and IA long vowel /o:/.

Handbrake /hændbreɪk/ pronounced /hindbre:k/, English short vowel /æ/ and English diphthong /eɪ/ substitute with English short vowel /i/ and IA long vowel /e:/.

Cutter /kʌtə/ /ketər/, English short vowel /ʌ/ substitute with English short vowel /e/.

These words can fit by IA speakers with its two groups (educators and uneducators), but with some exception by those who are educated participants. The researchers revealed that, a number of participants' can avoid vowel change in some cases such as the words (cream, cassette, drill, handbrake, spray, laptop and face book).

With the above mentioned words, Educated participants with well practice of English language can pronounced the English loanwords approximately to its original forms of pronunciation.

D) Consonant change

With some English loan words, Iraqi Arabic participants under the investigation use a process of consonant change to modify the English loan words to the phonological system of Iraqi Arabic dialect. For instance, there is a number of loans can be mention to exemplify this process. These loans are (carpet, chips, jacket, motor, spare, silencer, steering wheel, spanner and tape).

Consonant change can be either regular affecting all instances of a consonant in the same phonetic environment, or irregular, affecting only a few words, not the entire language; the change is unpredictable.

The consonant change with words contains [p] segment substitute with [b] segments by IA speakers. With English loan words (carpet, chips, spare, spanner and tape) and, also substitution of the phoneme /ŋ/ with /n/ in the English loan word 'steering wheel' regards as regular consonant change. While irregular consonant change can be shown with words, like:

jacket /dʒækɪt/ pronounced /ʃæket/, the phoneme /dʒ/ substitute with /ʃ/.



motor /məʊtə/ pronounced /ma:ʔə:r/, the English phoneme /t/ substitute with Iraqi Arabic phoneme /t /.

silencer, the English phoneme /s/ substitute with /s/.

In regards to the frequency of using consonant change by IA educated and uneducated group. It is used 613 time (87%) by IA educated group, while those who are uneducated group used consonant change process 664 time (94.8%). From these percentages and frequencies it clear that IA educators adopt English loan words less than those who are uneducated.

7-Conclusion

According to level of education variation, it observed that participants of both groups inserted /r/ the most. In depth, it is clear that, educated participants used these phonological processes in adapting English loan words less than uneducated group.

فروق الكفاءة بين المتحدثين العراقيين في نطق الكلمات الإنجليزية المستعارة

المخلص :

يوضح البحث تأثير الكفاءة على كيفية نطق الكلمات المستعارة الإنجليزية في اللهجة العربية العراقية. كما يتم توفير أوصاف عبارات "درجة التعليم" و "الكلمات المستعارة". قدم المشاركون الأربعون في الدراسة البيانات الخاصة بها (20 متعلمين و 20 غير متعلمين). المعلومات التي تم جمعها من خلال استخدام تقنية المقابلة الفردية، والتي تضمنت التحدث مع المشاركين ومطالبتهم بإكمال استبيان ديموغرافي. لاستنباط النطق المستهدف للكلمات التي كان من المتوقع أن تحدث فيها العمليات الصوتية، تم استخدام مهمة تسمية الصورة. وهي تتألف من تغييرات في حروف العلة والحروف الساكنة، والحذف وإدراج (ر). أظهرت النتائج أن المجموعة المتعلمة استخدمت تغيير حرف العلة الأقل والمجموعة غير المتعلمة استخدمت الحذف الأقل، بينما إدراج/ر/ الأكثر استخداماً.

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