# The Iraqi Learners' Production Of rp Clipped Vowel

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## Abstract

Within connected speech, RP speakers tend to shorten stressed long vowels end diphthongs in pre. Forties consonants in the same syllable on the basis of complementary Distribution, i.e., the phonological environment decides the influence of the forties plosives and fricatives, as far as they are in find position preceded by stressed long vowels and diphthongs, or particular voiced consonants plus vowels. The Iraqi learners, then, face difficulty in manipulating this phonological phenomena, i.e., they are unable to pronounce the chipped vowels.

This paper is meant to find out how twelve Iraqi postgraduates, MA students in Linguistics College of Languages- English Department, are capable of pronouncing the clipped vowels in mono- and polly- syllables; a questionnaire is designed to specify their contribution by transcribing twelve pairs of items to manipulate this phonological phenomenon within the domain of rhythmicity.

## Introduction

The distinction between the voiced sounds- long and short vowels- can be clarified on the basis of phonetic aspects that affect the vocal tract movement.

All vowels have certain properties in common; from a phonetic point of view, vowels are articulated with a relatively open configuration of the vocal tract: no part of the mouth is closed, and none of the vocal organs come so close together that the sound of the air passing is heard between them. From a phonological point of view, vowels are units of the sound system, which is the nucleus. (Crystal, 2000:238).

Vowels typically involve the vibration of the vocal cords (voicing) and their distinctive resonance are made by varying the shape of the mouth, using the tongue

and lips. In English, There are no vowels whose chief characteristic is the use of nasal resonance (nasal vowels). English vowels are all oral vowels, and take on a nasal quality only when they are being influenced by an adjacent nasal consonant (op.cit.).

An Overview of vowel Articulation

Crystal (op.cit.239) indicates that a particularly important factor in the vowel system is length; length seems to relate pairs of vowels which are articulately in roughly the same part of the month. In the following examples, pairs of work are followed by the same consonant, and there is no doubt that the vowel in seat [si$^{1}$:?t] is much longer then that in sit [sI$^{1}$?t].The contrast between long and short vowels is not just one of length (quantity); a different place of articulation (quantity); a different place of articulation (quality) is involved.

Lotto et al (1996:76f) comment, moreover, that in a number of vowel systems, there exists a production covariation between vocal tract shape and phonation type. Breathy phonation tends to be associated with a raised tongue body or an advanced tongue root (Dinning, 1980). If breathy phonation and an advanced togue root or raised tongue body conspire to enhance the spectral feature which distinguish the resultant vowel from other vowel in the language system; then one would expect that breathiness and the vocal tract shapes would be used in a correlated fashion both phonemically and subphonemically. The increase in communication robustness obtained from this kind of articulatory covariation is presumably important to a communication system frequently challenged by unpredictable and noisy environments. Vowels produced with breathy phonation are characterised by an increased open quotient in the fold vibratory cycle (Holmberg et al, 1988; prince, 1988). That is, for breathy phonation, vocal folds are adducted for a relatively short time in relation to the entire vibratory cycle.

The Phonological View of Clipping

On the basis of CV system and thymicity, English syllables are, mainly, structured into onset, vowel and coda[1].• Vowels, being the nucleus, undergo conditioned length. Hawkins (1984:135) specifies the rules of allophonic variation what follow and precede the vowel: vowels are longer when followed by a voiced

• syllables might be called minimum syllables which would be a single vowel as in are [a$^{1}$:] or consonant as in agreement [m]. Syllables which can be with zero onset as in eat [i$^{1}$:/t] or zero coda as in high [ ha$^{1}$t] (Roach,2000:40f).

sound and shorter when preceding a voiceless sound. For example, the [I] of bit is shorter than the [I] of bid, and the diphthong [ei] of safe is shorter than the [ei] of save. Since the distinction applies to all vowels, a statement of the allophones is formulated along the following lines, using the raised dot to show length:

**/v/** **[v] – [- voice]** → [vˑ] elsewhere.( pre- fort is clipping).

Wells (1990:136) identifies and illustrates the phonotactics of pre – fortis chapping; a chipped vowel is one that an unclipped vowel. For example, rice [ra$^1$is] has a quick [a$^1$i] and a slower [s]), as compared with rise [ra$^1$iz] (slow [a$^1$i], quicker [z]). Ansother RP utterance is when a vowel (or vowel plus rasal, or vowel plus liquid) is clipped as for as it is followed by one of the fort is consonants such as [p, t, k, s] in the same syllable; both [e] and the [n] of tent [t$^h$e$^1$nt] are affected by pre-fort is clipping (compare tend [t$^h$e$^1$nd] with no clipping). It is particularly noticeable with long vowels and diphthongs when they are stressed.

In addition to the mono-syllables, polly -syllables are affected by clipping on the basis of phonological environment; the [e$^1$I] in plating [p!e$^1$I?ti] has pre – fortis clipping, but the [e$^1$I] in playtime [p!e$^1$I?taim] dose not, since here the [t] is in a different syllable. (op.cit.)

Clipping does not involve any change of vowel quality. Clipped [i:] in teach [t$^h$i$^1$:/tς] does not sound like [I] in rich [ri$^1$?tς] however, in teacher [t$^h$i$^1$:?tς∂] the [i:] is affected both by pre – fortis clipping because of the [?tς] and by rhythmic clipping (because of the -er). Rhythmic clipping in English, then, depends on the presence of one or more unstressed syllables in a word after the stressed syllable. (op.cit.).

## Questionnaire

Transcribe each of the following pairs to pinpoint the RP pre – fort is clipping:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | feet | **feed** |
| 2 | loose | lose |
| 3 | rate | raid |
| 4 | seeking | intriguing |
| 5 | paper | labor |
| 6 | total | modal |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | platting | playtime |
| 8 | teach | rich |
| 9 | tent | tend |
| 10 | milk | mik |
| 11 | fierce | fears |
| 12 | lead | leadership |

Items Analysis

In such a questionnaire, the learners have been asked to submit transcribed pairs with main emphasis on clipped vowels (irrespective of other RP allophones and diactric marks).

The results of the answers have revealed the following percentages to the required pairs in more – and Polly – syllables:•

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| items | 1,2,9 | 59% |
| items | 3,4,5 | 50% |
| items | 6 | 66% |
| items | 7,8,11 | 34% |
| items | 10, 12 | 75% |

It can be plainly declared, then, that speaking RP, no matter how the syllable of the utterance is structured, would be so effective that particular intralingual errors can be the result of the learners inability to cope with the phonological environments and such parries of distinctive features; for these features serve to different; ate meanings in a language, and that speech is viewed as a chain composed of individual sqments one after an other, in which case each such segment is a composite of certain articulator features. (Kreidler, 1989:13).

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Moreover, it is plausible to add that on the basis of rhymicity, those students errors are correlated with what Abercrombie (1956:37) calls upon ‘ comfortably intelligible pronunciation’; Roach (1991:6) argues in favor of comfortable intelligibly as described by Abercombie (op.cit.:37) as “a pronunciation which can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener”. Benrabah (1997:158f), accordingly, comments that international communication requires a certain degree of intelligibility for the performance model, that is to serve as a common denominator for all the communities of the world that use this language. To Baxter (1980:53), “communicating internationally means actively seeking a common ground and this entails adapting one’s way of speaking English”. This adaptation requires, from both natives and non-natives, the ability to control and mollify linguistic as well cultural features. One way of mollifying the native speaker’s pronunciation to meet the need for a model for international communication is by making “economies” in the spoken patterns of English at the segmental and supraseqmental levels. Most non- native speakers need to aim at this model that is comfortably intelligible and socially acceptable. However, any model that is to serve for international communication cannot be simplified to the point of distorting festers that constitute “a prime characteristic of spoken English, any distortion of which seriously diminishes efficiency of communication”. (Oimson, 1978:47).

It thus appears that certain pronunciation features are more important than others. A non-native speaker can produce speech that is easily understood without too much effort if he/ she manages to control factors that have a drastic effect on comprehension. A particular pronunciation feature is classified as important after probing its in feuence on intelligibility. Goldman et al (1980:157) and praetor (1971) remind us that, as far as phonology is concerned, lexical – stress, rhythm and intonation have a fundamental function in communication and must be assigned “the highest of all priorities”. (Praetor, 1971: 68). Benrabah (op.cit.)

. Macarthy (1972: 10) concludes that in order to develop the technique for performing a foreign language, three main heading could be put: the first, concentration, the second, repitition, and the third, co- ordination.

Conclusion

From a phonetic point of view, English forties plosives and fricatives, distinct from lens ones are articulated by exerting pressure inside the vocal tract. Phonologically, on the basis of complementary. Distribution and rhythmically, the domination of these consonants is apparent in mono- and Polly- syllables; where the long stressed nuclei and particular voiced consonants precede these forties consonants that are in final position in mono syllables, hence these nuclei and the voiced consonants undergo the pre- forties clipping. In Polly syllables, the clipping process is corried out on condition that the forties consonants are in the same syllable as well as followed by unstressed syllables. Such a meticulous phonological phenomena of pre- forties clipping results in a fluctuation of the learners' transcribed pairs; i.e., the low percentages to submit RP clipped vowels are due to the learners' misconception about the influential effect of forties consonants, their phonotactics in relation to phonological environment. Other results are of high percentages for it is a logical fact that these learners have been trying to be native – like in RP, in which case the familiarity of certain syllables has motivated them to submit comfortably intelligible pronunciation.

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**ملخص البحث: نطق الطلبة العراقيين للصائت المرخم في اللغة الانكليزية الفصحى**