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**The Perception and Production of the Allophony of
English Lateral Consonant by EFL College Students**

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and

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Key Words ' Allophones , recognition ,production'

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to shed light on the term 'allophony' of English lateral [l]. The study is theoretically and Practically oriented. The problem of this study is that Iraqi EFL College student (learners as foreign language) may face difficulty in their recognition and production of English lateral allophones. To tackle this problem, this study is based on the following hypothesis (1) Iraqi EFL college students face no difficulty in recognizing and producing the English lateral allophones; (2) there are no statistical significant differences among the subjects of four levels in recognizing and producing the English lateral allophones.

In conducting this study ,the following procedures (1) defining and discussing some basic notions which related to allophones of lateral sound; (2) selecting test material ; (3) applying certain statistical tools such as t.test ; (4) drawing out the findings of the analyses in order to arrive at the result.

The result of this study reveals that: (1) the Iraqi EFL college students do face difficulty in recognizing and production the English lateral allophones; (2) There are statistical significant differences among the fourth levels their recognition and production in considering the allophones of lateral sound.

Section one

Description and Distribution of the Lateral consonant:

1.1 The Concept of Allophone

The term allophone comes from Creek, where “allo” means other, and “phone” means voice or sound. “Allo” is normally described as a prefix, referring to a variation in form.

Yavas(2011:37) argues that,phonetically, allophones are similar sounds of the same phoneme that have different distribution to represent that phoneme.Finch (2000:61) and Collins and Mees (2008:12) assure that allophones are different phonetic variations of the phoneme accompanied by a small symbol or diacritic that refer to a particular pronunciation form.

Robins (1994:131),Abercrombie(1967:67),Laver(1994:42)and Ladefoged (2003:42) propose that allophones are members of a phoneme that occur in specific context.Lass (1984:23) and Crystal (2008:20) support this view, stating that allophones have particular phonetic positions,based on phonological rules (i.e.,rule governed), where the distribution of a sound has a range of environment in which it occurs.On their part Lodge(2009:69) and Carr(2013:44)share the viewpoint that allophones in phonological analysis are predictable, in that allophones occur in giving contexts or situations.

However, Brosnohan and Malmberg(1970:191) negate the occurrence of allophones in specific contexts for two reasons.First , no two words are differentiated in meaning if a phone occurs only in certain environment.

Secondly, no two words can be distinguished solely by means of an opposition between these two sets of phonetics environment- they can be considered as complementing one another. Hawkins (1984:15) explains that allophones do not contrast ; thus, the fronted [l] and retracted[l̥] are allophones of the phoneme [l] .Allophones are enclosed in square brackets, [] , and phonemes in slants // . Using this notation to distinguish fronted [l] and retracted [l̥] as allophones of /l/.As far as the present study is concerned the allophones of the English lateral [l] sound are discussed thoroughly in chapter three.

1.2 Complementary Distribution of Allophones: clear and dark

Ladefoged and Johnson(2011:75) hold that the main concern of phonology is the mental rules that govern the pronunciation of words.They (ibid.) state that allophonic rules describe a language behaviour. Carr(2013:64) argues that the distribution of lateral allophones in BBC English concerns significant phonological generalization, which are stated within the syllable structure.He (ibid) explains that the distribution of clear[l] is always before a vowel , as in look [lʊk] where the clear [l] occurs in the onset. On the other hand , the distribution of dark [l̥] is in the coda, either at the end of the syllable , as in all [ɔ:l] , or when it occurs after a vowel and before another consonant, as in help [help] , as shown in the following diagram.

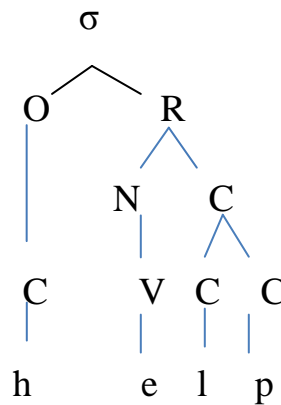


diagram (1) [ɫ] after vowel (before consonant)

Carr(ibid.) presents some examples, which he considers to be problematic to some speakers of English. One of these examples is the word lily ['lɪli], where there is an uncertainty as to whether the syllable status of the second [l] in this word is clear or dark. One may say that the second [l] is not velarized, i.e., not dark[ɫ], since [l] occurs in the onset position in the second syllable, rather than the coda position in the first, as shown in the following diagram

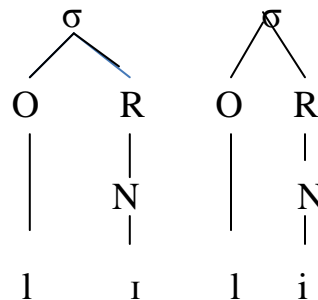


diagram (2) the word lily [lɪli] the second [l] in onset syllable structure

Another example that Carr(ibid.:65) gives concerns the double [l] in words such as roller ['rɒʊlə]. He explains that when the double letters, appear in the onset position of the second syllable, are once pronounced. Skandera and

Burleigh (2005:145) argues that the lateral allophones, clear and dark are in complementary distribution, since they cannot replace one another because of the different environments in which they occur.

1.3 Lateral Allophones

Depending on the position in which the English lateral /l/ occurs in a syllable, this sound can be classified as having two main allophones, namely [l] and the dark [ɫ].

I. Clear [l]

Gimson (2008:215) states that for the articulation of clear [l], the front of tongue raised towards the hard palate, and the sides of the tongue are lowered. When the tip of the tongue is merely in contact with the upper teeth, the lateral [l] may be closer or more open due to the following vowel, giving front vowel resonance to the consonant [l], as in lead [li:d] and loan [ləʊn].

Kreidler (1989:56) and Finch (2000:19) argue that clear [l] usually occurs before vowels, whether it occurs in initial or medial (intervocalic) position in a word, as in lamb [læm] and yellow [ˈjeləʊ]. However, Knowles (1987:77), Gussman (2002:11) and Tench (2011:47) assure that clear [l] never occurs before a consonant, except [j] as in failure [ˈfeɪljə].

Martin and Müller (2005:75) propose three main variants of the allophone clear [l], which have basically “clear” pronunciation: labialized, pharyngealized and devoiced. The first two variants present the secondary coarticulation of the lateral [l] sound.

a. Labialized [l^w]

In this sound, the coarticulation is made by placing the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge with simultaneous rounding of the lips. By this process, a quality of the high, back vowel [ʊ], added to the lateral [l]. The phonetic superscript [ʷ] is used to represent the labialization of the [l], as in lulu [l^wʊl^wʊ].

b. Palatalized [l^j]

The coarticulation of this sound is made when the tip of the tongue contacts the alveolar ridge, with the raising of the tongue body in a similar way as in [i] vowel position. The palatalization of [l] is represented by phonetic superscript mark [j], as in the articulation of the word let [l^jet].

c. Devoiced [l̥]

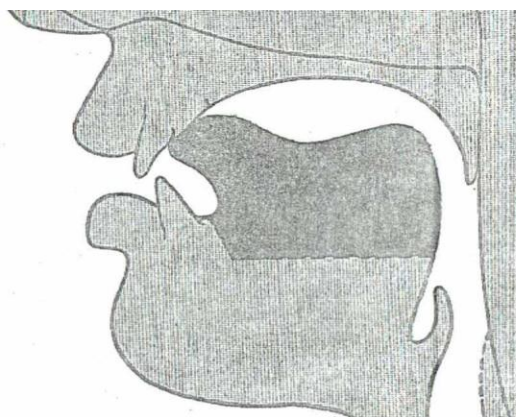
Unlike the above-mentioned variants, this variant of clear [l] does not have a coarticulation feature, and it is voiceless. It is articulated only with the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge, and the sides of the tongue are not in contact with the sides of the palate.

The clear [l] becomes devoiced only when it follows the voiceless stops [p] and [k]. The influence of the voiceless feature of these stops changes the feature of the clear [l] from voiced to voiceless (devoiced). Devoicing of the clear [l] is represented by the phonetic under script mark [̥], as in climb [k^hlaɪm].

II. Dark [ɮ]

Carr(2008:37) states that the articulation of dark [ɮ] may have a retraction of the body of the tongue, withdrawn towards the back of the oral cavity without being raised to the velum. In other words, in the articulation of the dark [ɮ], the tip contact remains at the alveolar ridge, but the front of the tongue is lowered and the back raised towards the soft palate, giving a vowel or velarized resonance.

Kreidler (1997:57) and Tim(2007:64) argue that the dark[ɮ] is articulated in a way that the tongue has a “spoon- like shape, as shown in figure (14) below



Figure(14) dark [ɮ] spoon- like shape

Adopted from Jones(1972:175)

Martin and Müller(2005:75) propose a number of variants of the allophone dark [ɮ], which have basically dark pronunciation: velarized, labialized, dental , and syllabic.

a. Velarized [ɫ]

In this variant, the co-articulation is made when the tip of the tongue contacts the alveolar ridge, with the simultaneous raising of the back of the tongue towards the velum, giving the velarized vowel quality [u], as in fool [fu:ɫ].

b. Labialized [ɫ]

In this variant, the co-articulation is made when the tip of the tongue is placed against the alveolar ridge with the retraction of the tongue. It is commonly found after a rounded or spread vowel, as in pool [pu:l] and also found after a vowel that is characterized with spread lips as in peel [pi:l], respectively.

c. Dental [ɫ]

This variant of dark [ɫ], also called fronted, is articulated with the tip of the tongue against the upper front teeth. It is normally found before a dental fricative, as in health [heɫθ].

d. Syllabic [ɫ]

Prator and Robinett (1985:118) believe that syllabic [ɫ] is formed with the tip of the tongue touching the tooth ridge. Ladefoged and Johnson (2011:74) argue that a lateral is syllabic at the end of a syllable, when it occurs after stops, fricatives and nasals, as in paddle ['pædɫ], whistle ['wɪsɫ] channel ['tʃænɫ], occupying the vowel position.

Malmberg(1963:65) remarks that syllabic [l̩] is a vowel because it stands for a syllable by itself. On their part, Skandera and Burleigh(2005:25) state that lateral sounds do not fit exactly into the consonant group, nor to the vowel group.They (ibid.) suggest that a lateral is considered as a consonant, since,phonetically, it appears at the margins of a syllable;whereas , phonologically,a lateral is considered similar to the articulation of a vowel, since it could appear at the centre of the syllable.

Prator and Robinett(1985:118)explain that the release of the stop /d/ and [t]before the [l̩] is made by a sudden lowering of the middle and sides, but not the tip of the tongue.This process allows the imprisoned air to rush out of the mouth, making a syllabic[l̩] as in little ['litl̩] and middle ['midl̩]

According to prator and Robinett (ibid.) if the tongue tip breaks it contact and move from its fixed position on the alveolar ridge for a frication for a second, this result in the insertion of a schwa[ə] between the two friction consonants, forming a foreign accent.Syllabic [l̩] is usually found in words ending in el,le or al,as in level ['levl̩] ,able['eɪbl̩] or nasal ['neɪzl̩] respectively .

McCully (2009:38) points out that syllabic [l̩] has the feature of sonority [+ sonorous] since, phonologically, it is similar to a vowel feature, i.e., has a prominent nuclei .According to Ladefoged (2006:239) syllabic [l̩] has the same sonority feature as that of high vowel [i].Martin and Müller (2005:76) states that syllabic[l̩] is voiced , if it follows a voiced consonant, as in middle ['midl̩] , or voiceless (devoiced) if it follows a voiceless consonant, as in parcel ['pɑ:s̩]

Section Two

Recognition and Production of Lateral

2.1 Introduction

The term lateral comes from the Latin word “ Lateralis” , meaning “ belonging to the side ,” (Roca and Johnson, 1999:70).In English there is only one lateral sound [l] , which can occur in different positions in words, i.e, initially, medially and finally.

2.2 Recognition and production Characteristics

Like all English Phonemes , the production and perception of English lateral [l] phoneme is correlated with the main characteristics: the articulatory characteristic, the acoustic characteristic and auditory characteristic.

2.2.1 Articulatory Characteristic

In this section , the articulatory characteristics of the English lateral [l] , are studied, in terms of the previously mentioned four parameters: place of articulation , manner of articulation , phonation, and fortis/ lenis features (see, point 2.2.1).

I. Place of Articulation

Gimson (2008:200) states that a lateral consonant is articulated by means of a partial closure, on one or both sides,of which the airstream is able to escape through the mouth.O’Connor(1980:53) agrees that lateral /l/ is produced by

making a central occlusion between the tip and the blade of the tongue towards the alveolar ridge, accompanied by lowering the sides of the tongue, as shown in figure (2) below

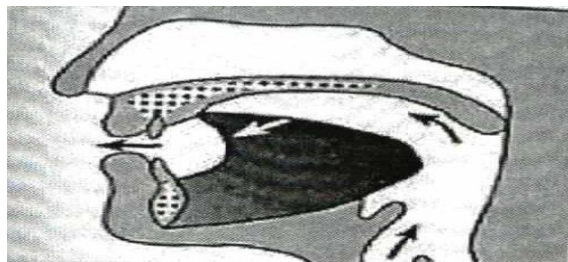


Figure no (2) Tongue position of lateral [l]

Adopted from Gimson (2008:217)

However, it is worth mentioning that although the primary articulation of the lateral [l] is the tongue tip articulating with the alveolar ridge, this can vary between dental, as in the articulation of words, such as wealth / weɪθ/ and retroflex, as in the articulation of the word already [ɔ:l'reɪdi].

II. Manner of Articulation

Kelly (2005:52) and Tim (2007:65) state that the sound [l] is called lateral because of the central obstruction of the passage of the air forcing the airflow to go around the sides of the tongue. Bickford and Floyd (2006:77) elaborate that a large enough gap is left when the sides of the tongue are lowered, so that the air is not impeded to produce turbulence between the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge, or friction to one or both sides of the tongue, i.e., no hissing sound is heard.

Catford (1994:66), Clark and Yallop (1995:51) and Hewings and Goldstein (1998:31) classify the lateral [l] as one of the three approximate consonants, the other two being [w] and [j]. However, Collins and Mees (2008:49) and Yavas (2011:8) have a different viewpoint, stating that [w] and [j] are somewhat different from the lateral [l], since their articulations have no obstruction to the airflow.

III. Phonation

Gimson (2008:200) maintains that the English lateral [l] is usually voiced and frictionless. In some cases, as when it follows the stop consonants [p] and [k], it becomes voiceless, due to the influence of the voiceless feature of these stops. In other words the voiced lateral [l] becomes devoiced. Ladefoged (2006:67) explains that the lateral [l] becomes devoiced, due to the manifestation of the phenomenon of aspiration that accompanies the voiceless stops [p] and [k].

Rogers (2000:50) adds that during the state of voicelessness of these stops, the vocal folds are separated, so that the air continues to pass freely through the glottis, while the closure for the stop is being made higher in the vocal tract. Rogers (ibid.) states that there is usually an amount of lag time between the release of the voiceless stop and starting of the voicing of the vowel. This process is termed 'voice onset time' (VOT). He explains that (VOT) relate to delay in the onset of voicing, since voicing does not start directly, but is delayed slightly. As far as the study of lateral [l] is concerned, VOT and the aspiration of the stop consonants [p] and [k] contribute to change the voicing of the lateral [l] into voicelessness or

devoicing , represented by the phonetic script mark [̥] as in play [p̥leɪ], clay [kleɪ].

IV. Fortis / Lenis Features

Fortis / lenis features are usually correlated with the voiceless / voiced features, respectively. The English lateral [l] is always voiced, whether it occurs in the initial , medial or final position in a syllable. Accordingly the lateral [l] can be described as a lenis consonant. However ,when [l] occurs after the voiceless stop [p] and [k], its voiced characteristic changes to a devoiced one and becomes voiceless. Thus, its lenis feature has to be changed to become fortis.

Section Three

The Test, Data Analysis

3.1 The Test

Brown (1987:129) defines a test as “ a method of measuring a person’s ability or knowledge in a given area”. He (ibid.) argues that the constructing of a test requires a number of components, considered important in determining testing procedures: (1) Testees (subject); (2) relevant data to achieve the goal for which the test is constructed; (3) keen scoring of the subjects answers to the test items; and (4) the interpretation of the scores.

3.2 The Purpose of the Test

The purpose of the test in this study is to : (1) measure the students' ability in recognizing the English lateral allophones,i.e.,clear [l] or dark [ɫ]; and (2) show the students 'ability in differentiating lateral allophones in pronunciation

3.1.1 The Testees (subject)

In this study the total number of the subjects conducting the test is 248, chosen randomly from 1st , 2nd , 3rd and 4th year EFL college students, morning classes,Department of English Language and literature,College of Arts, University of Al-Mustinsiriyah, during the academic year 2013-2014.The reason behind selecting four levels of students in this study is to reveal the extent at which Iraqi EFL –College students are aware of the aspect of English lateral allophones.

Thus,the total number of the subject 248, considered as the sample of the participants in the test, is divided into four groups. The first group consists of 127,1st - year students; the second group consists of 51,2nd – year students;the third group consists of 44, 3rd –year students;and the fourth group consists of 26, 4th –year students, as shown in table (1) below.

Table (1) Number of Subjects

total No of subject	1 st level	2 nd level	3 rd level	4 th level
248	127	51	44	26

3.1.2 The Data

The researcher prepares the data for the two –parts test , in order to measure the subject’s ability in recognizing and producing the English lateral allophones.The researche has selected the material that involves the use of lateral allophones in different contexts.

a.The first part test , i.e. the recognition test , comprises two questions .Q1A consists of 20 words containing lateral allophones.The subjects are asked to classify those words as whether they consist of clear [l] or dark [ɫ].Q1B consists of ten sentences.The subjects are asked to specify the words contain the clear [l] or dark [ɫ],

b.The second part of the test, i.e, the production test,also comprises two questions.Each subject is asked to read the five sentences in Q2.A, and the passage in Q2.B.on her part the researcher monitor and evaluate the subjects’ performance.

3.2 The Scoring Scheme

The term 'scoring' refers to the process of correcting test and assessing their numeral scores. Harrocks and Schannover (1969:76) believe that for the purpose of objectivity of the test, a scoring scheme must be objective and accurate. In scoring the subjects, answers to the test items, the researcher depends on a 'write- wrong basis, or the '1-0' principle, by giving '1 mark for the correct answer and '0' for the incorrect or neglected one in this study requires the application of certain statistical tools, such as the t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) f-test statistics, Scheffe method and Chi² statistics.

3.3 Statistical Tools of the Test

The first hypothesis states that " Iraqi EFL college students face no difficulty in recognizing and producing the English lateral allophones " Iraqi EFL college students face no difficulty in recognizing and producing the English lateral allophones ".

The application of t- test statistics helps the researcher to find out whether or not there are statistically significant differences between the average means of the subjects' answers to each part of the test, and the hypothesized means of that test. In considering table (2) below

Table (2)

T-test result of the subjects' performance of each level

Stages	Number of population	Mean	Standard deviation	Hypothetical Medium	Value of T		Significance level	Result
					Calculated	Tabular		
First	127	24.259	7.386	50	39.299	3.291	0.001	Valid for Hypothetical Medium
Second	51	26.058	7.063		24.208			Valid for Hypothetical Medium
Third	44	28.772	4.285		32.860			Valid for Hypothetical Medium
Fourth	26	27.346	5.878		19.664			Valid for Hypothetical Medium

Table (2) shows that:

- For the 1st level students, the average means 24.259 is lower than the hypothetical means 50 , and the calculated T- value 39.299 is higher than its scheduled value 3.291. This means that there is a statistical difference in favour of the hypothetical means.
- For the 2nd level students , the average means 26.058 is lower than hypothetical means 50, and the calculated t-value is higher than its scheduled value 3.291. This means that there is a statistical difference in favour of the hypothetical means.

- For the 3rd level students, the average means 28.772 is lower than the hypothetical means 50, and the calculated T-value 32.860 is higher than its scheduled value 3.291. This means that there is a statistical difference in favour of the hypothetical means .

For the 4th level students ,the average means 27.346 is lower than the hypothetical means 50,and the calculated T-value 19.664 is higher than its scheduled value 3.291. This means that there is a statistical difference in favour of the hypothetical means.The above discussion reveals that the level of the subjects' performance in recognizing and producing the English allophones is very weak , The above discussion reveals that the level of the subjects' performance in recognizing and producing the English allophones is very weak , the first hypothesis is refuted,in that Iraqi EFL- college students do face difficulty in recognizing and producing the English lateral allophones

The second hypothesis states that "There are statistical significant differences between the subjects of each of the 1st ,2nd , 3rd and 4th levels in recognizing and producing the English lateral allophones.Consider the table

Table (3)

t.test result performance of recognition and production

subject level	Skill	Mean	Standard deviation	T.Value		Significance level	Sig
				Calculated	Tabular		
First	Recognition	24.259	7.386	4.440	3.291	0.001	Valid for Recognition
	Production	22.031	6.309				
Second	Recognition	26.686	6.601	2.151	2.000	0.05	Valid for Production
	Production	27.941	6.159				
Third	Recognition	27.136	4.791	0.993	2.021	0.05	Invalid
	Production	28.022	5.559				
Fourth	Recognition	26.807	3.763	4.196	3.707	0.001	Valid for Production
	Production	30.384	4.050				
All stages	Recognition	25.375	6.414	3.010	2.576	0.001	Valid for Production
	Production	26.608	6.664				

It is found that

- For the 1st level subjects the calculated t- value 4.440 is higher than its scheduled value 3.291. This means that there is a statistical significant difference between the recognition and production of English lateral allophones, in favour of the recognition.
- For the 2nd level subjects the calculated t- value 2.151 is higher than its scheduled value 2.000. This means that there is a statistical significant difference between the subjects' recognition and production of the lateral allophones in favour of production .
- For the 3rd level subjects, the calculated t- value 0.993 is lower than its scheduled value 2.021 . This means that there is no statistical significant difference between the subjects' recognition and production of the lateral allophones .
- For the 4th level subject, the calculated T- value 4.196 is higher than its scheduled value 3.707. This means that there is a statistical significant difference between the subject recognition and production of the lateral allophones, in favour of production .
- For all the subjects together the calculated t- value 3.010 is higher than its scheduled value 2.576, this means that is statistical significance among the four level subjects between the recognition and production of the lateral allophones in favour of production.

The above discussion reveals that , with the exception of the 3rd level there are statistical significant differences between the subjects of each level in recognition and producing the English lateral allophones. Thus, the second hypothesis is verified, since there are statistically significant differences between the subjects of each level .

3.4 Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the analysis of the data. The analysis has displayed the following points

1. It is found that Iraqi EFL college students do face difficulty in recognizing and production the English lateral allophones. Consequently, their performance characterized by weakness in most of the words, whether used in isolation or within sentences
2. Making the comparison of the subject of four levels , it is found that only third level, have a balance in recognition and production , while the other levels relatively have a weakness in their recognition and production.
3. There are statistical significant differences among the fourth levels in considering the allophones of lateral sound.

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الخلاصة

ان الدراسة الحالية كما موضح بالعنوان ذات طابع عملي و نظري ، تسلط الضوء على مصطلح 'Allophone' (التغير الصوتي) لصوت اللام الصحيح في اللغة الانكليزية والصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة الكليات للجامعات العراقية كمتعلمين اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية .

اعتمدت الدراسة على فرضيتين : (١) ليس هناك اي صعوبات نطق واستيعاب تواجه طلبة الكليات في الجامعات العراقية كمتعلمين اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية . (٢) لاتوجد اختلافات احصائية ملحوظة بين طلبة اللغة الانكليزية من حيث النطق والاستيعاب الذين تم اخيارهم عشوائيا للمراحل الاولى والثانية والثالثة والرابعة ،من الدراسات الصباحية، قسم اللغة الانكليزية وادابها ،الجامعة المستنصرية ، خلال السنة الاكاديمية ٢٠١٣-٢٠١٤ .

تم اتباع الخطوات التالية لاجراء البحث: (١) تعريف ومناقشة موضوع البحث ،(٢) اختيار مادة الاختبار المناسبة للطلبة .(٣) تطبيق طرق احصائية معينة مثل t.test (٤) تحليل النتائج للوصول الى استنتاجات البحث .

حيث رفضت الفرضية الاولى ان طلبة الكليات من متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية يواجهون ضعف في نطق وتميز حرف اللام الصحيح .(٢) اثبتت الفرضية الثانية لوجود اختلافات احصائية ملحوظة بين المرحلة الاولى والثانية والثالثة والرابعة من طلبة الكلية واتسمت ايضا بالضعف من حيث النطق والتميز.

نطق واستيعاب التغير الصوتي لصوت (اللام) الصحيح
من قبل متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية في الجامعات العراقية

رشا طارق عواد

و

ا.م.د. سهاد عبد الستار البغدادي

في علم الصوت واللغة

الكلمات المفتاحية " التغير الصوتي ، النطق ، الاستيعاب

كانون الاول، ٢٠١٤

محرم، ١٤٣٦