



# PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

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## **Pupils' Most Common Pronunciation Hindrances**

*Case study of secondary school's First Year EFL pupils in Ain Temouchent schools*

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a  
Master's Degree in Linguistics*

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## *Dedication*

- ❖ *To my dearest parents.*
- ❖ *To My all Family.*
- ❖ *To my Friends.*



## *Acknowledgements*

*Before all, I thank ALLAH for the accomplishment of this work.*

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## **Abstract**

Although the Algerian pupils start learning English at the age of 11 years, they learn it 4 years at middle school and 3 years at secondary school; it has been noticed that a big number of them still face some difficulties in expressing themselves in English accurately and fluently. This means that studying errors of English pronunciation could be a valuable source that provides us with specific information about students' mistakes. This would help teachers to correct the learners and improve the effectiveness as well as accuracy in teaching English pronunciation. Accordingly, this research work aims to investigate the main factors that hinder pupils from speaking and interacting naturally in the classroom during the oral session. The main problem underlying this work is that many pupils are unable to utter correctly words that have silent letter, consonant cluster, /dʒ/ sound and words which have interference with French pronunciation.

To conduct this study, two questionnaires were administered, one to teachers of English language and another to first year pupils of secondary education at secondary schools. Besides the questionnaire, we have as well used observation as a research tool to collect more information. A total of 12 classes which contain nearly 230 learners have been observed. The results obtained from the data which were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively showed that ELF (English as foreign language) first year learners are still finding difficulties in having inappropriate utterances of the former sound's problem. Eventually, this study aims at suggesting some strategies, techniques and procedures that may help teachers to teach speaking skills and help English pupils to improve and develop their speaking ability.

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## Statement of the Problem

Arabic is a Semitic language from the Afro-Asiatic language family. English on the other hand, is a West Germanic language from the Indo-European family. Inevitably, these languages show many linguistic differences at all levels of linguistic analysis, i.e., phonology, morphology, syntax, semantic, etc.

English pronunciation difficulties occur among EFL Arab students because there are huge contrasts between Arabic and English sound systems. English consonant sounds are different in number, as well as in place and manner of articulation. Some English consonants do not exist in the Arabic sound system like /p/, /ŋ/, and /v/; and even these consonants, which seem similar to some Arabic consonants like /t/ or /k/, is not identical but different in the manner and even in the place of articulation.

In the English language, there is no standard one-to-one correspondence between writing and pronunciation; therefore, Kelly.G (2000) reveals that the 44 different sounds in which English speakers use when speaking are written down using only 26 letters, it means that one distinct English sound can be represented by many letters. For example, the case of the letter *a* can be pronounced as /æ/ as in *apple* or /ɑ:/ in *ask*. Likewise, as in the case of consonant, the letter *c* can be pronounced as /k/ as in *can* or /s/ as in the *cinema*. For more complicated situations, many English sounds can be represented by more than one letter or combined ones. For instance, the sound /ʊ/ appears in *put*, *could* and *book*; whereas in Arabic language and some others like

Spanish, Japanese, and Italian, they are a good example of what we call often phonetic language.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

**FFL:** First Foreign Language

**SFL:** Second Foreign Language

**EFL:** English as Foreign Language

**MT:** Mother Tongue

**L1:** First Language

**FL:** Foreign Language

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**L2:** Second Language

**TL:** Target Language

**NT:** Native Language

**IPA:** International Phonetic Alphabet

**LAD:** Language Acquisition Device

# **General introduction**

### **General introduction**

Nowadays English language is becoming a supremacy language over other languages in the world; therefore, Algeria's educational system has decided to teach English starting from middle school to make learners dealing with it as earlier as possible because the younger you learn the easier you acquire fast the language.

However, the Algerian educational system nowadays is still considering the French language as the FFL over the English language, and French is taught starting from primary school and when coming at the middle school stage, the learners had already got familiar with French and overgeneralize its pronunciation to English one.

Therefore, pronunciation is a crucial factor to master any foreign language and having a good method of teaching and learning oral skill enable the learners to express and share their thoughts and feelings accurately so the listener could not get confused or misunderstand the message. To enhance learners' performance in terms of speaking, effective methods and strategies should be followed by either the learner and the teacher to practice pronunciation in a specific and meaningful context; besides, pedagogical learning tools are strongly recommended to make the plan possible such as lab equipment comprises all phonetic and sound apparatus as well as auditory and vocalized software.

In addition to these techniques and methods, both the learners and teachers are told ever than before to avoid traditional methods and create a speaking environment free from anxiety, shyness or uncomfortable feeling; by that, the learners can make

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unintentionally spontaneous mispronounced words and false utterances that help the teacher diagnose the most frequent mistakes, correcting them and explaining the meaning of the word. Besides that, both teachers and learners should be aware of the importance of knowing human speech organs, i.e., lungs, vocal cord, hard palate, soft palate, pharynx, tongue, lips, and teeth; so that the learner can make and produce sounds in their biological place of production. Hence, by that, we can identify sources and factors behind the most common pronunciation hindrances as well as providing practical solutions and specific corrections to the mistakes pupils make when they speak English.

From what has been said and to conduct our research, one inclusive research question is posed:

Which pronunciation hindrances are the most common among EFL first year's pupils?

To answer that included question, 4 hypotheses are suggested:

- First year pupils struggle with words that interfere with the French pronunciation.
- First year pupils struggle with words that have consonant clusters.
- First year pupils struggle with words that contain /dʒ/sound.
- First year pupils struggle with words that contain silent letters.

In this research paper, we focus on the English pronunciation of first year secondary school pupils, precisely the most common pronunciation deficiencies that they often make when delivering their speech; these common obstacles are silent letters, consonant cluster, /dʒ/ sound, and words which have interference with the

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French pronunciation. Therefore, to conduct this study we used a mixed-method approach with two main research tools i.e., a questionnaire and a classroom observation. The first questionnaire was designed for pupils of first year in which they were asked to give the appropriate pronunciation of the four aforementioned obstacles. On the other hand, the second questionnaire was devoted to the teachers who are in charge to teach first year EFL pupils where they were told to evaluate pupils' performance concerning silent letters, consonant cluster, /dʒ/ sound, and words that have interference with the French pronunciation. Besides, they were asked to answer questions about the reasons for these pronunciation deficiencies as well as providing recommendations and suggestions for that.

The second research tool was the classroom observation, covering 12 classes within 230 participants where both teachers and learners were being observed through a designed classroom grid which contained probable pronunciation mistakes which they could make related to their frequency (sometimes, always, rarely, or never). After the needed data had been collected, the researcher has analyzed them quantitatively and qualitatively to have a clear idea and better overview of the undertaken task.

Accordingly, this research work is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter reviews the literature about language and its linguistic features; it gives notions and definitions about language acquisition including mother tongue and foreign language, language transfer, dialect, bilingualism, multilingualism, and other factors that affect language learning. Furthermore, this chapter sheds the light on the importance of phonetics and phonology for having a clear overview of language's aspect and particularity; it also defines the speaking skills, silent letter, and consonant



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cluster. This chapter also introduces the English and Arabic vowel systems within their phonetic content by which long vowels, short vowels, and diphthong are phonetically described.

The second chapter deals with the practical part of the study; it contains detailed descriptions and analyses of the obtained result from the sample data. In its first part, we have discussed and analyzed the results that have been got through the research tools to answer the research question and test the validity of the hypotheses.

On the other side, the second part provides recommendations and suggestions for enhancing learners' oral performance and competence; besides, it gives methods and strategies that would be beneficial for teachers to improve their teaching environment and

reinforce

learners'

competence.

# **Chapter one: Review of the Literature**

## 1.1 Introduction

Being able to speak accurately and without stammer is the desired aim for learners who want to behave like native speakers. However, and although a quite number of Algerian English learners can read and write adequately, only a few of them can speak fluently. Therefore, effective diagnoses to this issue would provide a good and operative solution that unable Algerian learners from gaining time and effort while learning.

Furthermore, having a complete overview of how a language can be structured and how different phonemes are combined to form a word, the acquisition of any foreign language becomes easy to achieve for learners as well as teachers may find ease by giving methodic activities and instructions while teaching. Accordingly, this chapter reviews the related literature of language's approach including mother tongue and foreign language, dialect, bilingualism, and multilingualism; besides, it mentions the elements which affect negatively the learning acquisition such as language transfer, avoidance, and overgeneralization.

Additionally, speaking skills and phonetic aspects of language are mentioned too alongside phonology, fluency, and accuracy. Also, it gives definitions and notions about the silent letter and consonant cluster within the related literature. Finally, the chapter demonstrates the nature of the vowel system in both English and Arabic phonology by giving examples and phonetic symbols that defines long vowel, short vowel, and diphthong.

## 1.2 What is language

Language is defined by linguists as a system of human communication that requires the structured arrangement of sounds to the huge set of units including words, morphemes, utterances, etc, to a finite set of symbols and rules. Besides, it is a system of arbitrary symbols that facilitates the communication of human beings including gestures, speech, and writing. However, a certain definition of words' components needs some explanation:

**System:** Written words or spoken sounds arranged in a particular order.

**Communication:** Hearing or reading and responding to the spoken or written words.

**Arbitrary:** The word "arbitrary" means not based on a reason, system or plan.

**Symbol:** A symbol is a letter or a word or a sound that suggests an idea.

Accordingly, in his famous book "Language and linguistics", John Lyon (2002) has stated five major language's definitions:

- i. According to E.Sapir (1921): "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions unit desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols".
- ii. B. Bloch and G.L. Trager (1942) write: "A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates".
- iii. R.A. Hall (1968) tells us that language is "the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols".

iv. R.H. Robins (1979) does not give a formal definition of language but points out certain facts related to language, saying that “languages are symbol systems, almost wholly based on pure or arbitrary conventions”.

v. According to N. Chomsky (1969) a language is “a set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements”. ( as cited in Bashir, M., Azeem, M., & Dogar, A. H. 2011).

### **1.3 Mother Tongue and Foreign Language**

The term ( MT) mother tongue or (L1) first language refers to a language in which an individual has been exposed to it from his birth until the critical period of his lifespan (Lenneberg theory). Furthermore, young children who were brought up speaking more than one language would have more than one mother tongue language and would become bilingual or multilingual persons.

On the other hand, a foreign language (FL) is an additional language that a person can perform and is usually not spoken in his country; for example, French language or English are foreign languages to Algerian people. Learning another language enables us to explore and know other people’s cultures and traditions, also it helps us discover what has been written in the scientific and literary fields of outlander scholars. Accordingly, learning other’s language is the crucial thing that creates a real human-to-human interaction and provides a better understanding of other’s language and culture (Moeller & Catalano, 2015, p.327).

### **1.4Dialect**

Many linguistic disciplines tried to give an appropriate definition to a sub-language that is restricted to a geographical area or ethnic group. It is often seen as a subordinate term in comparison to language. The term dialect was coined for the first time in 1577 from the Latin word “dialectics” i.e., “the way of speaking”

A dialect is a form of language that is spoken in one part of a given country; it has its grammar words, vocabulary, and pronunciation that may be different from the same language. In this vein, Chambers and Trudgill have considered dialect as “a language variety along with three scopes: vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation” (1980, p.5). Besides, and although the dialect is less formal and less standard than language, and is usually regarded as a subdivision of it, it still has its rules and instructions that govern communication and interaction between ethnic and regional groups.

### **1.5Bilingualism**

Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages; it may be acquired early by young person in places where most adults speak two languages. Furthermore, children may also become bilingual by learning languages in two different social settings; the first one occurs through parent’s interaction and the second through learning in schools. More one thing, bilingualism is related to a person who speaks, reads and comprehends two codes equally well; also it is closely related to prestigious and institutional dimension that language has in such society (Sridhar, 2002, p.1).

## **1.6 Multilingualism**

Multilingualism is the capability of an individual to communicate or speak operatively in three or more languages. Hence a person who has the ability to speak more than three languages is called a polyglot or multilingual person. Similarly, multilingualism may be defined as being native-like in two or more languages through an esteemed level of literacy and fluency (Wardhaugh, 2006, p.96).

## **1.7 Language transfer**

Language transfer is a fundamental concept in applied linguistic and second language acquisition (SLA). It refers to learners applying knowledge from the native language (L1) to the target language (L2). According to Ellis (2015), the linguistic transfer is a process by which items and features of one language, linguistically affect the second one. In the same vein, many researchers have presented different definitions of language transfer; Gass and Selinker (1983) said that “transfer of prior linguistic knowledge results in interference which when compared to target language norms can be termed positive, negative or neutral.”

### **1.7.1 Positive transfer**

Lado (1961) stated that a positive transfer occurs when we found ease in learning or performance in another language. In this vein and according to Longman dictionary:

Positive transfer is transfer which makes learning easier, and may occur when the native language and the target language have the same form. For example, both French and English have the word *table*, which can have the same meaning in both languages. ( longman dictionary, 2013, p.322)

### **1.7.2 Negative transfer**

Krzeszowski (1990, p.189) claimed that when something is learned in one situation prevents an individual's ability to learn and perform in a second situation. And this happens often in our daily life; for example, individuals who used to drive standard car transmission when finding themselves behind the wheel of an automatic transmission, often step on a clutch that does not exist there. Negative transfer also known as language's interference, it occurs when a native-language's rules and patterns are used to suit the context which leads to errors or inappropriate form in the target language. For instance, a French learner of English may produce the wrong sentence *I am here since Monday* instead of *I have been here since Monday*, and this is due to the transfer of the French habits and patterns *je suis ici depuis lundi*, i.e., *I am here since Monday*. ( longman dictionary, 2013, p. 323)

### **1.7.3 Avoidance**

According to Ellis (2008, p. 357), avoidance happens when learners avoid using the linguistic structure and feature who find them difficult due to the differences between their native language (NL) and target language (TL); namely, second language learners (L2) turn to exclude some of the L2 patterns that do not exist in their



first language (L1) when they find themselves unable to use the correct form of L2 structure.

#### 1.7.4 Overgeneralization

Ellis (1999) sees that “when the learner creates a deviant structure based on other structure of the target language.” (p. 59). It means overgeneralization occurs when the learner overgeneralizes rules and instructions of the target language in the wrong context. For instance, they may use the past tense form *ed* and apply it to the irregular verb, like the verb *go*  $go \longrightarrow goed$ .

#### 1.8 Definition of speaking skill

Speaking is the delivery of language through the mouth's sounds that are created by using many parts including the lung, vocal tract, vocal cord, tongue, teeth, and lips. It is one of the four language skills: writing, reading listening, and speaking. Speaking is the active use of language, it is the action of conveying, expressing our thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

Chaney (1998) considers speaking as “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, in variety of contexts”. (p. 13). It means that speaking is a purely human being's ability that share between the individual mutual agreement of symbols and significances in a large range of utterances.

Similarly, Hedge (2000) defines speaking as “a skill by which they [people] are judged while first impressions are being formed.” Thus, this quote reveals that through

the way of speaking persons can be judged whether they are educated, clever, wise, or not.

### **1.8.1 Speaking skills in ELF classroom**

Compared to reading and writing, speaking has always been neglected or less considered by the teaching syllabus. In the same vein, oral sessions are not good enough to cover all pronunciation features of a foreign language and do not have basic competence to mastering it.

Accordingly, speaking and pronouncing accurately is the most crucial element to be like a native-like speaker at learning any foreign language; Nunan (1991, p.39) argues that “To most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important factor of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language”.

Thus, speaking is a unique skill that overcomes all other language skills in priority; people often ask the same question: “do you speak English?” rather than “do you read or write English?” Hence, people unconsciously considered speaking as a primordial thing in everyday people’s interactions and researchers regard fluency and accuracy as probing tools to measure people’s speaking ability.

### **1.8.2 Fluency**

Fluency is the quality of being able to speak or write a language especially a foreign one in an easy and well manner. It is the main characteristic of the speaker’s performance and teacher’s goal for better improvement of their learners. Hughes

(2002) defines fluency as “the learner's ability to speak in reasonable, intelligible and accurate way without too much hesitation to not break down the communication because listeners will lose their interest”. That is to say, the listener always wants to hear a thing without making any efforts in understanding what is meant.

Furthermore, Hedge (2000) reinforced what has been said by: “The term fluency relates to the production and it is for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness”. It means the speaker should pronounce a word’s phonemes properly without any pauses, stammers, or hesitations.

### **1.8.3 Accuracy**

Accuracy is the state of being exact or correct; the ability to do something skillfully without making mistakes. Fluency and accuracy have always been together, completing each other for better conversation flow because if the speaker finds difficulties in producing correct grammatical structure and clear utterances, the interlocutors will misunderstand him and may have wrong interpretations.

Hedge (2000) has claimed that: “The communicative approach somehow excuses teachers and learners from a consideration of how to develop high levels of accuracy in the use of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.” (p.16). This reveals that both teachers and learners are aware of these language components in the process of learning.

## 1.9 Phonology

Phonology is the study of how speech sounds function in a language, it studies the way speech sounds are organized. It can be seen as a functional phonetics of a particular language. Furthermore, to analyze an individuals' pronunciation, phonology is the subject field of that study. " phonology is the study of sounds structure in language, which is different from the study of sentence structure (syntax) or word structure ( morphology), or how languages change over time (historical linguistic)" ( odden, 2005, p.2). In short, phonology is the study of how sound systems and sound patterns are created.

As a linguistic field, it is the study of the sound system of languages which includes phonemes' inventory and patterns related to their syntagmatic and paradigmatic features (McCabe, 2011, p. 386). Concerning paradigmatic, it is when referring to linguistic units and their relationship; this includes phones, phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, etc. Additionally, these units can be replaced for another within the same structure, resulting in multiple varieties of meaning such as [h] and[b] before "at" to form "hat" and "bat".

On the other hand, syntagmatic is when we are referring to the relationship between elements in form of a chain; also it is the relationship that related linguistic units to combine and make together with other linguistic units. For example the relationship between "the" and "chair" in the nominal group "the chair". Furthermore, it is quite easier for a native speaker to identify foreign speakers through the way of performing sound patterns such as rhythm, stress, and intonation; hence EFL learners

should be aware of English phonology's particularity in order not to mix it with their mother tongue phonology.

### **1.10Phonetics**

According to Yule, phonetics is the general study of speech sound and its characteristics, it focuses on how an individual transmits, produces, and perceives sound (2006). Furthermore, Yule states that in phonetics we can deal with articulatory phonetics, acoustic phonetics, and auditory phonetics. Articulatory phonetics observes how speech sounds are produced, acoustic phonetics observes how speech sounds are transmitted and auditory phonetics observes how speech sounds are perceived via the ear. (Yule, 2006, p.30)

Other researchers such as, McCabe, (2011), define phonetics as the study of speech sounds, which are called in particular phones (p.43). For this purpose, linguists have designed a newly invented alphabet called the phonetic alphabet and one symbol of it represents one sound or phonemes, which is a minimal meaning-making unit in the phonology of any language, i.e., the distinctive phone.

In order to transcribe the pronunciation, phonetic transcription is needed. Phonetic transcription is when a speech is represented by small sets of symbols with standard interpretation (Odden, 2005, p.20). The small sets of symbols that are used in transcribing the pronunciation are called International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) represents both the English vowel sounds and consonant sounds.

### 1.11 Silent letters

Nowadays, English is considered as one of the obligatory subjects in almost all schools, from intermediate schools to university. However, non-native speakers especially Algerian pupils have a hard time learning English; the reason is that it has several rules which are different from Arabic and French. One of the most problematic obstacles in learning English to Algerian pupils is the pronunciation hindrances of several English words. Algerian pupils tend to pronounce English words without considering that some English words contain silent letters which are not meant to be pronounced although they are present in the spelling of the word.

English is not a phonetic language; however, it contains a high degree of regularity and constancy. The survey which has been conducted shows that there are fewer than 500 words out of over a half million English words whose spelling can be considered as irregular spelling words (Kelly, 2000, p.130).

Generally speaking a silent letter is a term for a letter of the alphabet that is left unpronounced i.e., that some words which are presenting in the spelling are not pronounced.

In English phonology, it is important to know about the English vowels and consonants as they are the first division of speech sounds. Some consonants are not pronounced in English words although they are present when writing the word, it is called silent letter. However, Carney, (1994) claims that silent letters appear in about 60% of English words and although it is problematic, silent letters are present to

distinguish words that sound similar through the spelling. This feature does not occur in the Arabic language, therefore Algerian learners struggle with it.

Silent letters are often problematic because of inconsistency i.e., the syllable structure in which the silent letter occurs. For example, the silent letter “g” that is followed by the consonant letter “h” as in the word “although” in which it is pronounced as / ə:l'dəʊ /, the consonant letters “GH” is not pronounced at all as it appears in the coda position; whenever the consonant letters “gh” appears in the coda position, it is not pronounced. However, if the “GH” consonant appears in the onset position, it is not silenced, as in the word “ghost” in which it is pronounced as / gəʊst/. The letter “g” is not silenced.

In this vein, Kelly. G (2000) claims that English consonants have one specific sound that belonged with them like b, d, f, h , j...he adds that letters can be silent in certain words, however, this could happen only when they are followed or when being preceded by another consonant within the same syllable (p:133). For instance, *s* has the basal sound of /s/ as in *gets* but it would have the second pronunciation of /z/ as in *has*.

Also, the words “sign” /saɪn / and “signal” / sɪgnl/, both have the letter “g” and “n” but the *g* in “sign” is silent while in “ signal” is pronounced. The reason is that *g* and *n* in the word “sign” belong to the same syllable but in the word “signal” do not. Therefore, ELF language learners, especially Algerian pupils are not aware of when to utter and to silent letters.

## 1.12 Consonant system

Arabic sound system comprises a total of twenty-eight consonants, while that of English has only twenty-four. There is quite a number of common consonant sound in both languages. However, there is also a considerable set of consonants restricted to each language; *p-v-g* (restricted to English) and ح-خ-ظ-ط-غ (restricted to Arabic).

There are 26 letters in the English alphabet but there are over 40 sounds in the English language. This means that the number of sounds in a word is not always the same as the number of letters. For example, the word ‘CAT’ has three letters and three sounds but the word ‘CATCH’ has five letters but still only three sounds. If we write these words using phonetic symbols, we can see exactly how many sounds they have. **Cat** is written /kæ t/, **catch** is written /kæʃ/. In catch, the three letters tch are one sound represented one phonemic symbol /tʃ/.

### 1.12.1 Consonant cluster

Another point of difference in English and Arabic phonology is the occurrence of consonant clusters. A consonant cluster is a cluster of consonants with no vowel in between; English as compared to Arabic has a wider range of consonant clusters represented in both written and spoken forms of the language. Many consonant clusters in English do not occur in the Arabic sound system (smith, 2011)

The term consonant cluster is when two or more consonants are placed one after another and belong to the same syllable. The cluster can appear in the initial, middle, and final positions (Dardjowidjojo, 2009). Furthermore, McCabe, A (2011) states that a consonant is a speech sound in which it is producing with narrowing or closure of



mouth s' position which causes an obscuration of airflow at some points in the vocal tract.(p:387)

The inconsistency and illogic of English consonant clusters are what make EFL learners make mistakes when pronouncing English words.

### **1.13Vowel system**

English has a total of twenty to twenty-two vowels (there is a lot of variation in the vowel system), including diphthongs. Arabic on the other hand, has only eight vowels (three long, three short, and two diphthongs). As we can see, English has more number of vowels in its sound system.

#### **1.13.1Vowel length and quality**

Another important difference is that Arabic mainly uses its long vowels and diphthongs as infixes. The short vowels in the language are not that conspicuous and important in the formation of words. There are only three short vowels and they are almost allophonic; in other words, Arabic speakers articulate these interchangeably or with a lot of variation.

#### **1.13.2Long vowel in Arabic**

They are three in total ex; *إشالة, واو, ياء, مثال با بو بي*; however, this does not happen in case of English. In English, both short and long vowels are equally important.

### 1.13.3 Short vowel in Arabic

Short vowels in Arabic are mainly divided into, domma -ضمة-, fatha-فتحة and kasra-كسرة. Fathaَ is represented by a small diagonal stroke on the letter; kasraِ is a similar stroke but under the letter, and dommaُ is like a miniature (waw) above the letter. ( fatihi , 2001. As cited in Elmahdio, O& Ahmad Khan, W .2015)

### 1.13.4 Diphthong in Arabic

Diphthongs in Arabic are vowel sounds consisting of two parts, a short vowel, and a consonant. The diphthongs “ ay” and “aw” are written ي as in ”بيت” (baitun) a “house”, and و as in ”خوف” ( khaufun) Arabic name for “fear”.

## 1.14 English Vowels

Vowels can be classified in different ways. The principle vowels classification is based on their length, English has 12 vowels: 5 long and 7 short vowels, the former takes more time in their articulations whereas short vowels take less time.

The English short vowels are:

/ɪ/ close, front, unrounded short vowel. E.g. **bit**

/e/ mid, front, unrounded short vowel.E.g.**edge**

/æ/ open, front, unrounded short vowel.E.g.**bat**

/ʊ/ close, back, rounded short vowel. E.g. **put**

/ʌ/ open, central, unrounded short vowel. E.g. **up**

/ə/ close, central, unrounded short vowel.E.g.**about**

/ɔ/ open, back, rounded short vowel. E.g. **stop**

The English long vowels can be classified as follow:

/i:/ close, front, unrounded, long vowel. E.g. **Peace**

/ɑ:/ open, back, unrounded, long vowel. E.g. **Half**

/ɜ:/ mid, central, unrounded, long vowel. E.g. **Purse**

/ɔ:/ open, back, rounded, long vowel. E.g. **Board**

/u:/ close, back, rounded, long vowel. E.g. **Soon**

(Roach, 1991, p.18-19).

### 1.14.1 Diphthong in English

The term Diphthongs has defined by McCabe, A (2011) as the combination of vowels sounds within the same syllable where the sound may starts in one place and glides to another place in the mouth. (P: 379)

**Table 1.1:** English diphthong (Roach, 1991, p.20)

Diphthong	Example
/ɪə/	Peer /pɪə /
/ʊə/	Poor /pʊə /
/aʊ/	Bough /baʊ /
/eə /	Air /eə /
/ɔɪ/	Boy /bɔɪ /
/eɪ /	Take /teɪk /
/aɪ /	Bye /baɪ /
/əʊ/	Go /gəʊ/

### 1.15 Conclusion

The outcome of this chapter has demonstrated the related literature of language and its linguistic feature; mainly it defined the mother tongue and foreign language, dialect, bilingualism, and multilingualism. Besides, the chapter has mentioned language obstacles such as language transfer with its negative aspect, avoidance and overgeneralization. Furthermore, it added more explanation of language's phonetic and phonology including fluency, accuracy, and speaking skills; it also stated definitions of the silent letter and consonant cluster. Eventually, the chapter has demonstrated the nature of the vowel system in both English and Arabic phonology by

giving examples and phonetic symbols that defined long vowels, short vowels and diphthongs.

Accordingly, the following chapter will tackle the practical work and the main findings of the results that will be analyzed and discussed in detail. Also, it shares the methodology and research tools used in conducting the study as well as providing solutions and suggestions.

## **ChapterTwo: Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation**

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the practical part of this research work, it aims to investigate and find solutions to the most common pronunciation hindrances that Algerian EFL first year pupils have during oral sessions. These obstacles are French interference, consonant cluster, silent letter, and /dʒ/sound. It also includes the methodology followed in the research and the sample in which the researcher has chosen to conduct the study; additionally, it presents the main tools that have been used in this research work.

The conducting study and the classroom observation occur at two secondary schools, in Ain Temouchent; in which 12 classes were observed through taking notes and voice recording. Furthermore, two questionnaires were given to both teachers and learners in order to see exactly where the problem occurs.

The first questionnaire was directed to EFL first year secondary school pupils with both streams scientific and literary field, were they told to pronounce and choose the appropriate phonetic transcription of the given words; while the second questionnaire was administrated to establishments' teachers who are in charge of teaching EFL first year pupils; it contains their evaluation concerning the pupils' performance regarding French interference, consonant cluster, silent letter and /dʒ/sound, besides they were asked to give recommendations and suggestions for the aforementioned obstacles. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to have a precise overview of deficiencies that first year pupils struggle with.

### 2.2 Choice of sample

Swetnam (2007) has defined sampling as “the obtaining of a manageable part of an object or population that supposedly processes the same qualities as the whole” (p.42). Additionally, it is an “indispensable technique of behavioral research” (Sigh, 2006, p. 81). Hence the research work cannot be undertaken without the use of sampling.

The participants of this study consist of 230 ELF first year pupils and seven teachers of two secondary schools, in AinTemouchent.

The main reason for choosing this target sample is that English learners, especially first year pupils always carry out with them previous English knowledge and pronunciation habits from middle school; and teachers intentionally tend to correct their pronunciation mistakes without knowing the reasons behind these deficiencies. Hence, the teachers do not focus enough on the mispronounce words including French interfered pronunciation words, consonant cluster, silent letter, and /dʒ/sound. In other words, pupils of first year are not able to utter and express themselves properly and with confidence, especially with previous mentioning problems.

### 2.3The research method

As it was mentioned previously, to do this research work, the data needed were collected through mixed methods i.e., classroom observation and questionnaire. The first method allows us to deal with the study qualitatively, while the second method permits us to investigate it quantitatively.



### **2.4The research instruments**

The collected data in this study were gathered from both teachers and pupils of the first year in two different secondary schools to have as a variety of information as possible. The classroom observation and the two questionnaires are the main tools and processes of our conducting study to test the validity of the hypotheses and to find an answer to the research question.

#### **2.4.1Classroom observation**

The classroom observation used in this study is a reinforcement tool for data gathering. Marshall, Catherine and Rossman (1989) defined it as “the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in social setting chosen for study”. Through this method, the observer can see both the teachers and the learners interacting in a real situation and can have reliable collecting data directly from the source. In addition to this, Dornyei (2007) focused on the importance of the observation method is a crucial research tool that gives the researcher extra information which would be forgotten in the questionnaire method.

During the lecture, both pupils and teachers were observed. The first observation was devoted to teachers focusing on their attitude toward the learners including the way they utter words and repeat them, the way they asked each one and correct their utterances; and to what extent they focus on oral activities. Simultaneously, the second observation was devoted to pupils whom they were being observed to hear their speech flow and their performance in pronunciation; also to look

## Chapter Two: Data Collection , Analysis and Interpretation

for some potential mistakes held from the middle school comprise French interference, consonant cluster, silent letter, and /dʒ/ sound.

### **2.4.2 Pupils' questionnaire**

The pupils' questionnaire (see appendix A) is composed of four phonetic questions which are: French interference, consonant cluster, silent letter, and /dʒ/ sound respectively. Each question has three suggestions and the pupils were told to choose or pronounce the appropriate phonetic transcription.

### **2.4.3 Teachers' questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire (see appendix B) consisted of seven questions, the four first questions are about their pupils' evaluation in terms of weakness, averageness, and goodness concerning French interference, consonant cluster, silent letter, and /dʒ/ sound. The three remained questions were about:

- The causes of the pronunciation difficulties.
- If they did find any technique or method to reduce them.
- If they think that it is useful to start teaching English from primary school.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

The data gathered from the instruments are analyzed in a logical, coherent, and Statistical way. Pei-chart and table representations will be demonstrated below, along with an explanation of the gathered data.

2.5.1 Results from the students' questionnaire

In this questionnaire, EFL pupils of the first year in both streams of the two secondary schools were told to answer these questions then give them back to the researcher. Through it, we aim to probe and ensure the existence of pronunciations' problems mentioned before. Besides, we tend to find the rate or percentage of each question to see exactly where are the most and the less accurate answers i.e., 0/3, 1/3, 2/3 and 3/3.

**Question 1:** Which pronunciation of the following words is the correct one?

**French interference**

**Future:** / 'fju:tʃə /  / 'fɪ:tɪ:r /

**Social:** / 'sɒʃi:jəl /  / səʊʃəl /

**Fruit:** / fru:t /  / fru:wɪt /

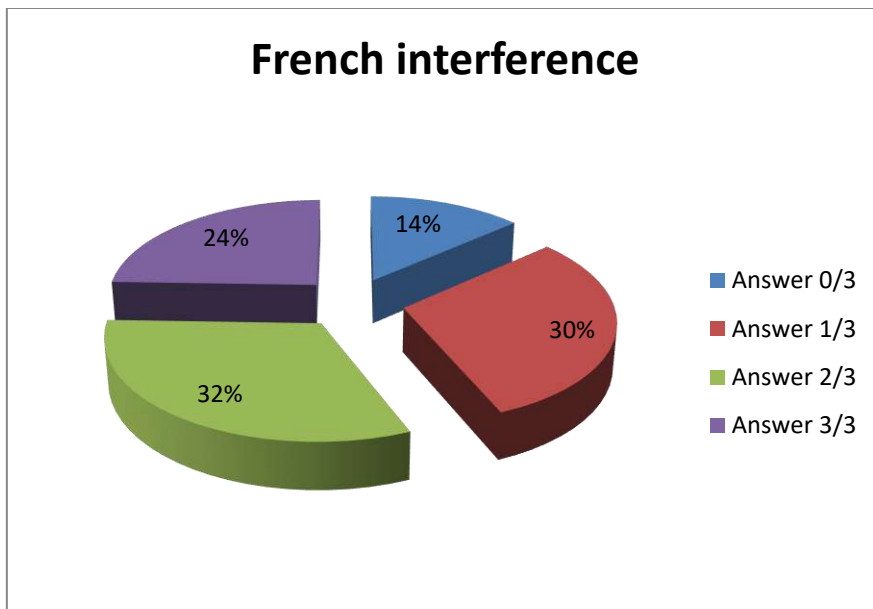


Figure 2.1: student's right answers concerning French interference

### Interpretation1:

The result above from the pie chart shows that 14% of pupils have failed in having any right answer, 30% of them have one right answer among three suggestions. Furthermore, 32% of them have succeeded in having two right answers out of three, and finally, 24% of them have completely had the three right answers. This situation reveals that average students are less to be good when pronouncing words that tend of having French pronunciation. On the other hand, around two quarters of learners are considered to be feeble at it.

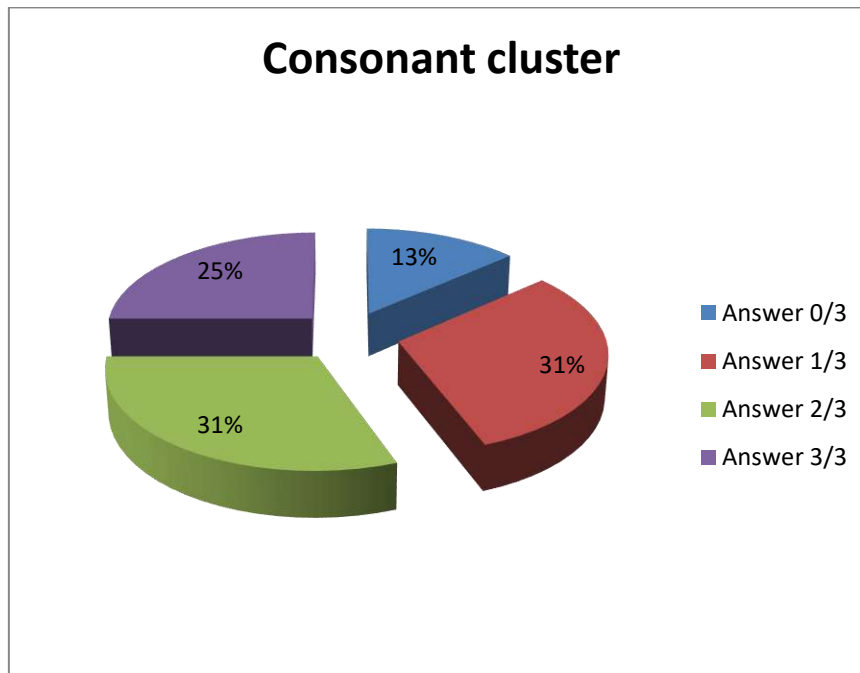
**Question 2:** Which pronunciation of the following words is the correct one?

#### Consonant cluster

**Strong:** / strɒŋ /                       / əstrɒŋ/

**Throw:** / θʌrəʊ /                       / θrəʊ /

**Middle:** / 'mɪdl /                       / mɪdʌl /



**Figure 2.2:** student's right answers concerning Consonant cluster

### Interpretation 2:

As it is shown above, 13% of pupils were incapable of answering any right suggestions, whereas 31% of them have obtained only one right answer. Similarly, 31% of pupils have got two right answers out of three, and 25% of them have got the three completed answers. This situation discloses that a considerable amount of learners are still struggling to pronounce consonant clusters properly; however, one quarter of them got the right answers which seems to be far from being average learners in this sample.

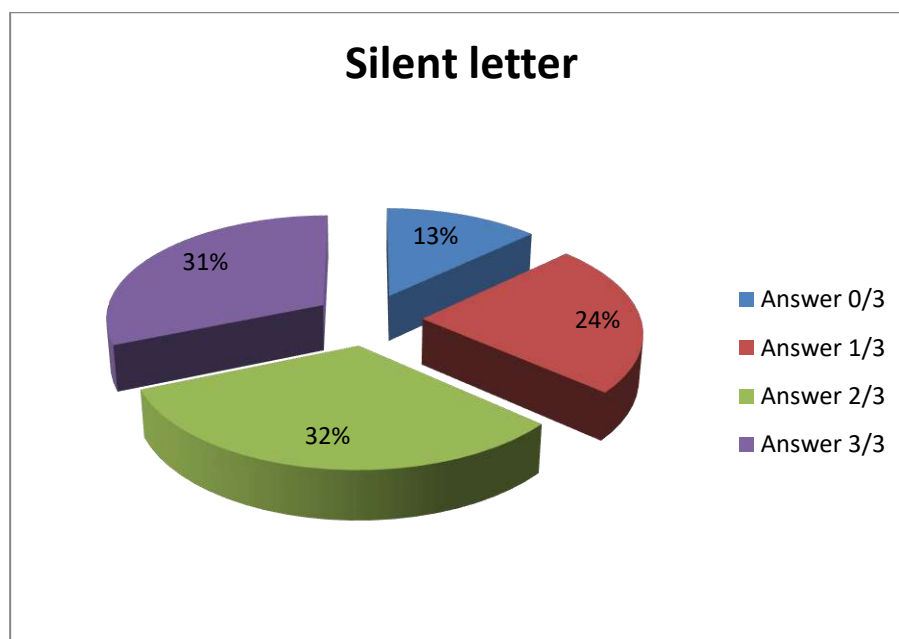
**Question 3:** Which pronunciation of the following words is the correct one?

#### Silent letter

**Wednesday:** / 'wɛnzdeɪ /       / 'wɛdnzdeɪ /

**Honest:** / 'hɒnɪst /                       / ɒnɪst /

**Business:** / 'bɪznɪs /                       / 'bɪzɪnɪs /



**Figure 2.3:** student's right answers concerning Silent letter

**Interpretation3:**

The above pie chart reveals that 13% of pupils have completely had no right answers, 24% of them have got only one answer among three; 32% of the participants have obtained the two right answers and 31% of them have succeeded in having the completed answers. However, and on the contrary of the two previous tests, more than half the learners have got approximately or full right answers which reveal that learners are less struggling at silent letter comparing to consonant cluster and French interfered pronunciation.

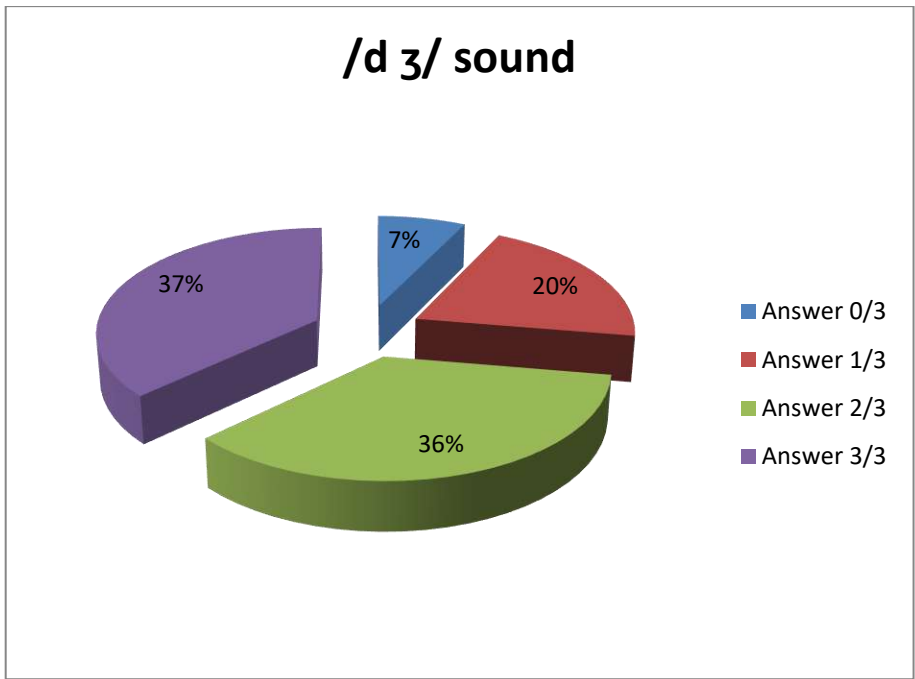
**Question4:** Which pronunciation of the following words is the correct one?

**/dʒ/ sound**

Message: / 'mɛsɪʒ /                       / mɛsɪdʒ /

Join: / dʒɔɪn /     / ʒɔɪn /

Geography: / dʒɪ'ɒgrəfi /                       / ʒɪ'ɒgrəfi /



**Figure 2.4: student's right answers concerning /dʒ/ sound**

### Interpretation4:

The pie chart above reveals that only 7% of the participants have got no right answer, however, 20% of them have answered one right answer out of three. Additionally, 36% of pupils have obtained two right answers and surprisingly 37% of them have got the total right answers. The present situation shows that quite a lot of learners were done the test almost in well manner and only less than 27% are finding difficulties when pronouncing words containing the affricate sound /dʒ/.

### 2.5.2 Results from the teachers' questionnaire

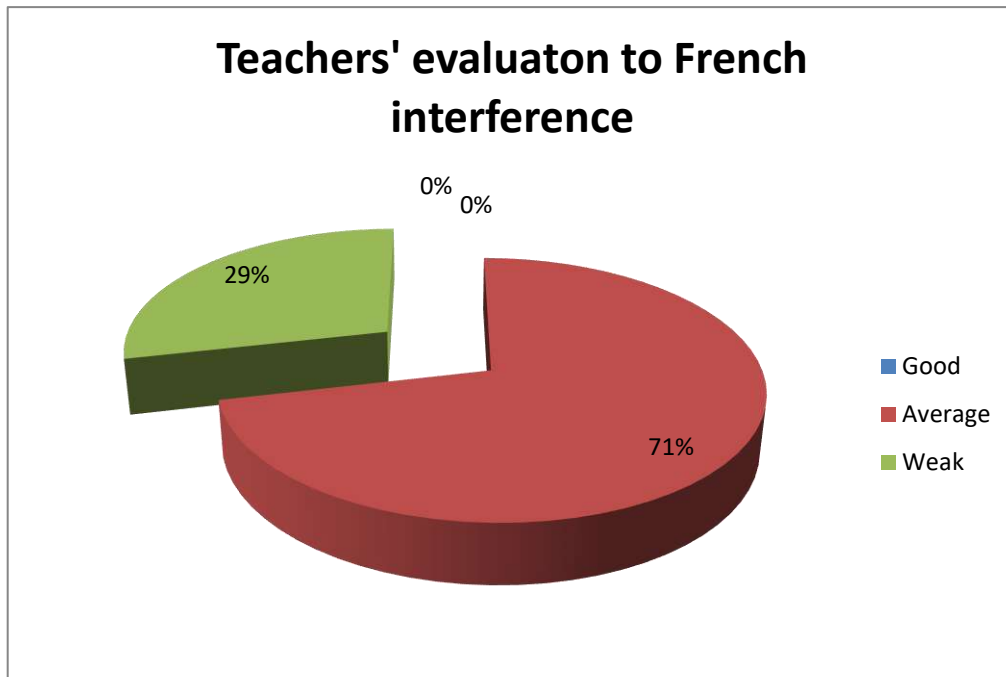
The second questionnaire in this study was administered to English teachers who are in charge and already have taught EFL pupils of the first year in both the two streams of secondary schools. It contains their students' evaluation, other questions and suggestions about improving English teaching.

**Question 1:** Concerning French interference, to what extent would you evaluate student's performance?

Weak

average

good



**Figure2.5: teachers' evaluation respecting French interference**

**Interpretation 5:**

From this chart, we can say that none of the teachers has considered his pupils as good when dealing with words which have relation to French interference. Also, 71% of them evaluate their pupils as average at; and 29% see that they are weak regarding it. Teachers consider their learners far from being weak when dealing with interfered French pronunciation words which are nearly opposed to pupil questionnaires' results.

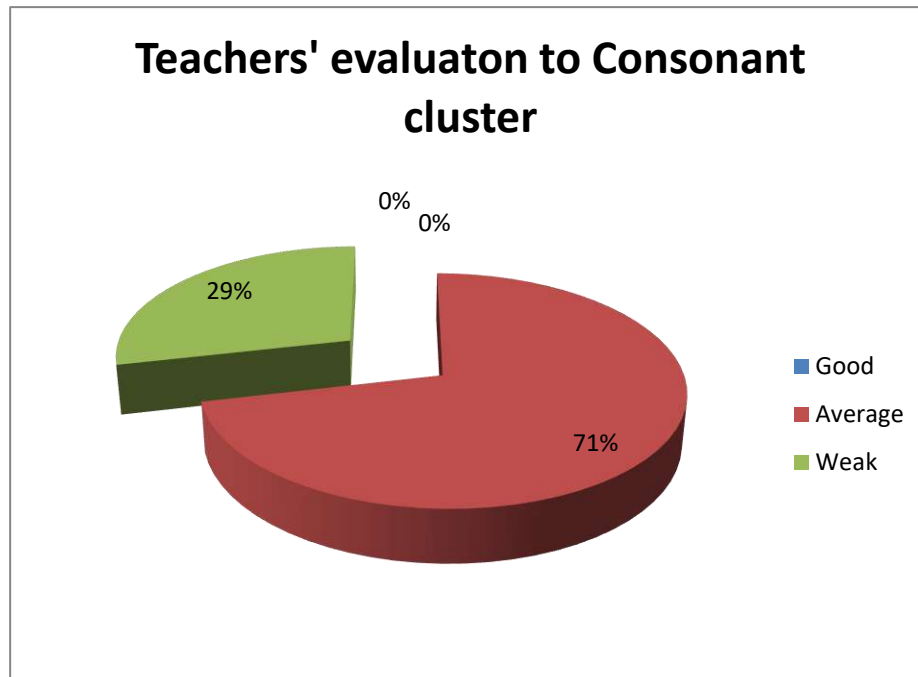
**Question 2:** Concerning consonant cluster, to what extent would you evaluate students' Performance?

Weak

average

good





**Figure 2.6: teachers' evaluation respecting Consonant cluster**

**Interpretation 6:**

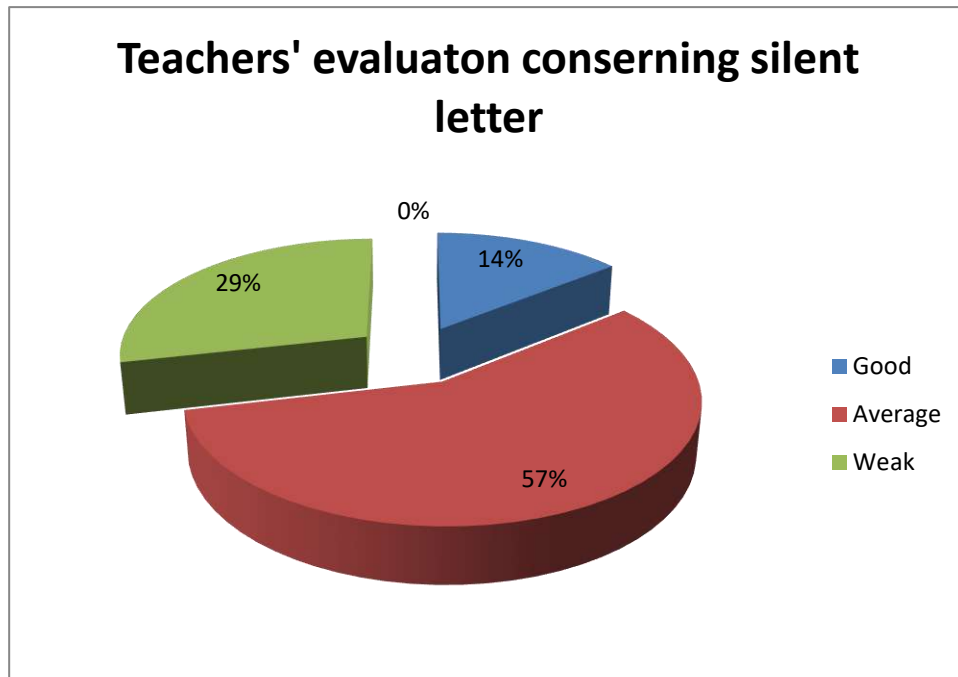
As it is shown above, no one considers his learners as good at consonant clusters; however, 71% of the teachers claim that they are average at it, and 29% state that the learners are weak. This result shows the same percentage of results belonging to French interference; however, pupils representing the sample are far from being good when dealing with the consonant cluster.

**Question 3:** Concerning silent letters, to what extent would you evaluate student's performance?

Weak

average

good



**Figure 2.7: teachers' evaluation respecting Silent letter**

**Interpretation7:**

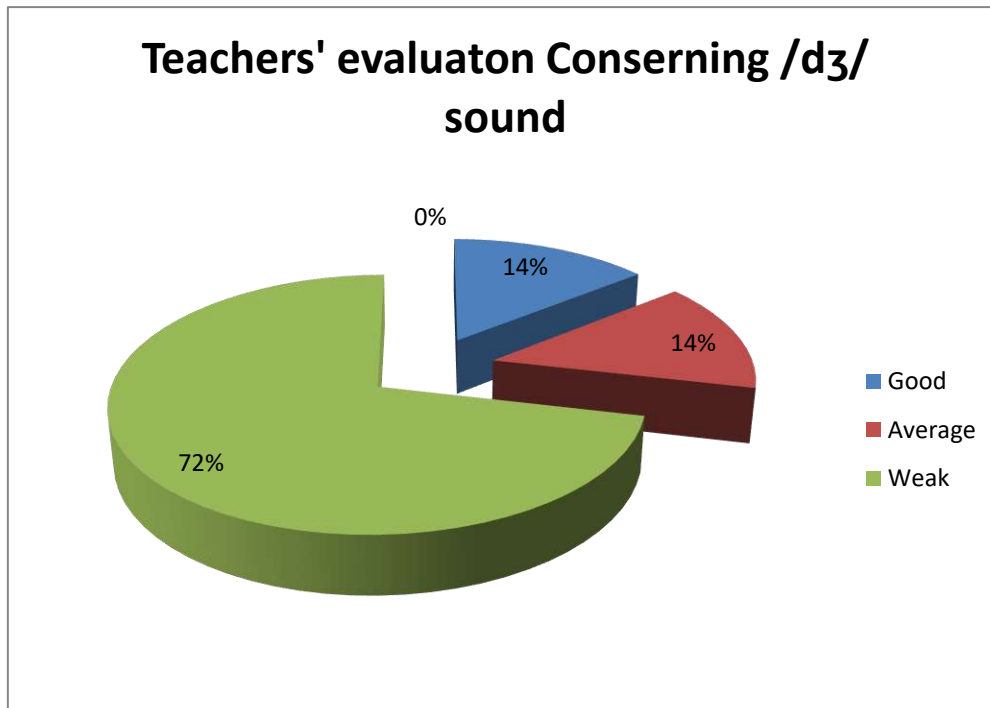
The result in the pie chart above reveals that 14% of teachers consider their learners as good when dealing with words that contain silent letters. 57% of teachers state that their learners are average at it, and 29% have claimed that they are weak. These results show a quite similarity to pupil questionnaires' result in which learners have shown a good deed concerning the test of the silent letter.

**Question 4:** Concerning /dʒ/ sounds, to what extent would you evaluate student's performance?

Weak

average

good



**Figure 2.8: teachers' evaluation respecting /dʒ/ sound**

### Interpretation 8:

As it is shown above, 14% of teachers consider their pupils as good in dealing with the affricate sound /dʒ/. Similarly, 14% of them see the learners as average at it; and 72% have claimed that they are weak regarding this sound. On the other hand, the results from the pupils' questionnaire reveal that learners are good at pronouncing words containing the affricate sound /dʒ/.

**Question 5:** According to you, these pronunciation difficulties are due to:

Student incompetence

oral expression sessions are not enough

Other factors

If other factors, what are they?

	suggestions		
	Student incompetence	Oral expression sessions are not enough	Other factors
<b>Teachers</b>			
1	X		
2		X	
3	X		
4		X	X
5		X	X
6		X	X
7		X	X
<b>percentages</b>	28.57%	71.43%	57.14%

**Table2.9: pronunciation difficulties’ sources**

**Interpretation 9:**

The table above shows that two teachers from seven have related pronunciation difficulties to student incompetence which represents 28.57%. Besides, five teachers have revealed that pronunciation difficulties are because oral expression sessions are not enough, which represents 71.43% of teachers’ suggestions. Four teachers out of seven have stated that other factors enhance pronunciations problems representing 57.14%.

teachers	Other factors
1	They do not care about practice the language.
2	Students are not interested in pronunciation; they care only about written tests and exams. Moreover, they have not studied phonetic symbols yet due to Corona Virus.
3	Learners do not give more importance to foreign languages, they do not practice the

	language, and they do not communicate with their partners.
4	Students lack self-confidence and concentration because of many reasons.

**Table2.10: other factors**

**Interpretation10:**

Concerning other factors of pronunciations’ problems, one teacher revealed that pupils do not care about practicing the language; two teachers stated that pupils generally are not interested in pronunciation because they care only on written tests and exams. Besides, they have not studied phonetic symbols yet due to Corona Virus. Three teachers argued that learners do not give more importance to foreign languages, they do not practice enough language, and they do not communicate with their colleagues. In the end, four teachers claimed that pupils lack self-confidence and concentration due to multiple reasons.

**Question 6:** While teaching, did you find any useful methods or techniques to reduce these pronunciation hindrances?

**Answer 6**

In this question, there are common agreements of enhancing speaking skill through listening-speaking skills, asking pupils to read text and utter words out loud, using dialogues between themselves and urging the learners using the language in different situations. Besides, they advice them to speak English outside in daily life and might have extra oral sessions as possible in educational syllabus.

**Question 7:** Do you think, is it useful if our educational system starts teaching English from primary school?

**Answer 7**

The teachers agree on the fact that teaching English from primary school would be more beneficial for the learners, because through that they would build a solid background of language when reaching the middle and secondary school. However and for unexpected point of view, one teacher said that it is not advisable to teach English or French at primary school; she said pupils need to master their mother tongue first.

**Question 8:** any suggestions?

**Answer 8**

Concerning the teachers' suggestions, some said that pupils in primary school could start learning other foreign language just during the last year of this period after being able to express themselves in their mother tongue language first. Others said that we should encourage learners to more practice mainly in speaking skills and have to inform and assert the learner on the importance of English as a lingua franca language. Lastly, they recommended that phonetics module should be taught along with English lessons.

### **2.6 General interpretation**

When conducting this study, we have chosen a sample of 230 pupils belonging to two different secondary schools. Also, we have analyzed the gathered data quantitatively and qualitatively through classroom observation and questionnaires.

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The reason behinds the tools' choice is to answer the research question and test the validity of hypotheses accurately and properly.

The classroom observation has taken place at two secondary schools in AinTemouchent, in which 12 classes were observed through taking notes and voice recording. Many mistakes were detected during the observation, learners made grammatical mistakes where verbs' tenses did not match the context. Also, the learners lack the vocabulary of some names of words that seems easy to know; they neglect to pronounce sounds which contain the morpheme /tʃ/ as in children and other stiffness related to diphthongs, /θ / sound, /ð/ sound, stress and intonation. Besides, the four common pronunciation problems including silent letter, consonant cluster, French interference, and /dʒ/sound were by far the most problematic ones.

The pupils' questionnaire contains four questions that represent the main pronunciation problems that first EFL learners struggle with. Concerning French interference, the study shows that average pupils are less to be good in that pronunciation task; this is because learners have already had their French pronunciation habits and they over generalized it into the English language. Besides, they think that the English alphabet is similar to the French alphabet somehow in spelling and do not know that they are different in phonetic symbols and pronunciations. Furthermore, and during English sessions, pupils often think in French rather than in English because the French language is the FFL (first foreign language) that they have been studying for nearly seven years; whereas the English language is SFL (second foreign language) in which they have been studying nearly four years. Hence, teaching a language at an early age before puberty is more beneficial and

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successful rather than after puberty and this is according to Chomsky's LAD (Language Acquisition Device) or Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypotheses.

The second task was about words containing consonant clusters which seems problematic too. The finding reveals that pupils are very weak to pronounce two or three consonants together because of many reasons. First of all, the English phonological system is different than French or Arabic phonological system. English consonant sounds are different in number as well as in place and manner of articulation; some English consonants do not exist in the Arabic sound system, they are restricted to English such as /p/, /v/, /g/, /dʒ/ etc. Hence, the voiced labio-dental fricative sound /v/ would be substituted by the voiceless counterpart /f/ in Arabic; also, Arabic does not contain the voiceless bilabial stop /p/ but the voiced equivalent /b/ sound. Secondly, the results have also demonstrated that a great number of the participants unintentionally insert a vowel sound in English syllables usually the schwa /ə/ to break up consonant clusters and make the word easy to pronounce. The schwa is a mid- central neutral vowel, mainly occurs in unstressed syllables, McCabe, A (2011). These are happening because they lack muscle memory for those articulations so that they try to suit their pronunciations' harmonies which are restricted to Arabic and French languages.

The third task was about silent letter, this task reveals that pupils are less struggling with it comparing to French interference and consonant cluster. However, silent letter pronunciation seems problematic to some pupils because of many reasons. The first thing is that English language is not phonetic and has irregular spelling i.e., written letters not always can be pronounced, however, Arabic language is phonetic



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and regular in spelling and French language contains less unpronounced letter comparing to English. Besides, pupils often ignore the orthography of English language and over generalize French spelling to English.

Eventually, the fourth task was about /dʒ/ sound in which pupils' questionnaire reveals that they did well compared to other tasks. This is maybe due to previous knowledge to this sound or by chance because the teachers consider their pupils as weak at it. According to Kelly.G (2000, p.49) affricate sounds occur when full closure is happened in some places of the mouth and the soft palate is raised. Besides, the pressure of the air is increased behind the closure then it is released quite slowly than plosive sounds. However, more almost one quarter of the sample have failed to pronounce this sound correctly which means that teachers had to do more exercises improving it and give more explanations about its articulation and proprieties in articulator phonetics.

On the other hand, teacher's questionnaire contains seven questions and suggestions. The first four questions were about evaluating the pupils' performance including silent letter, consonant cluster, /dʒ/sound and interfered French pronunciation. The first question was about French interference, and opposing to pupils' questionnaire results, they considered their learners average at it; this is not good news because the task was easy and contained simple words. Hence, we can say that a big amount of learners are still ignoring how to pronounce words properly by using French utterances. Therefore, English should be taught in parallel with French starting from primary school because learning new language at middle- school age is difficult; also, because learners are adolescents and they do not accept any kind of

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rehearsing when they start learning alphabets and utter words for training, they think it is trifle and not suitable to their ages.

The second question was about consonant cluster. In this task, teachers consider their learners as average when dealing with consonant cluster but pupils questionnaire shows that participant are not good enough and still experiencing problems in uttering them. The participants do not know that consonant cluster refers to phoneme grouping, not to alphabet letter grouping and their occurrences in the word such as syllable-initial, syllable-medial or syllable-final. Moreover, learners must be taken into consideration the segmental phonological feature of the word including its coda, onset, stress, intonation etc. As a result to that, pupils usually insert the schwa sound /ə / to break the syllables and make it easier for pronunciation, hence pupils should be stopped and corrected whenever making that kind of mistake.

The third question was about silent letter task. The task yields that average pupils are less finding difficulties when dealing with silent letter. However, some pupils do still not knowing when to prominence or not words containing silent letter. Also, the teachers consider their pupils as average ones; therefore, they should enhance the learner's performance through specific activities and explaining them the etymology of the word, its origin and how it has changed over time; by that the learners can save the image of the word better in their mental cognition. Other usefully method is that teachers can present the image of the word and focus on unpronounced letter with another color so that learners can have more attention and recognizing better the word; besides, teachers should give them dictated task including paragraphs

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and texts by focusing more on frequent words containing final *ed*, doubling and unpronounced letter.

Finally, the fourth question was about /dʒ/ sound and its utterances among EFL first year pupils. In this task, teachers consider a big amount of pupils as weak, because the learners often get confused between /dʒ/ sound and /ʒ/ sound which is the most one used due to its ease in pronunciation. The /dʒ/ sound is a sound from the consonant pairs group and it is called the voiced palato-alveolar affricated ; this means that you create friction by first, stopping the air flow with your tongue and ridge it behind your teeth, then release it through a narrow gap. However, the /ʒ/ sound is the voiced palatal approximant which belong to a category of consonant sounds called fricative sound that is made by partially blocking of air which creates an audible friction; so that learners have the habit of using it in Arabic and English languages. Accordingly, teachers should gather and census all English words that contain /dʒ/ sound and teach them through repetition again and again whenever the situation requires that.

### 2.7 Suggestions and recommendations

Generally, difficulties in pronunciations are often due to an inappropriate knowledge of English phonemes. Hence the awareness of English pronunciation within English learning programs would be the crucial thing for learning English language. Teachers of English language can integrate pronunciation practice into lessons in order to have more opportunities to pupils to practice pronunciation and improve their fluency.

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Some useful exercises related to errors with high frequency occurrence would be given to pupils so that they become more aware of word sounds particularities and their articulations' organs including tongue, lips, teeth position, vocal cords and mouth's shape. Furthermore, teachers can help pupils in developing method and strategies like learning the phonetic alphabets and using computer soft ware to listen and learn advanced pronunciation; besides, pupils should studying in language laboratory with phonetic equipment including audio-visual, voiced recording, and sound apparatus so that the learners can study in ideal environment . Also, teachers can provide a variety of activities and exercises, such as practicing dialogues in pairs or group, paragraphs and texts reading, giving short presentations, picture descriptions, and composed-syllable rehearsing.

Additionally, practicing tongue twister games are useful way in training and imitating similar sounds; also pupils can behave like a native speaker and develop their speech organs such as vocal cords, vertical and horizontal position of the tongue etc. One other thing, teachers can ask the learners to read aloud some popular song lyrics to practice rhymes and final sound, so that they enjoy the lesson and do not get bored or realizing that they are learning.

### **2.7.1 Suitable Coefficient**

Although English language is considered as an important module in the syllabus, its coefficient does not represent its weight; it is often either two or three through which pupils neglect the subject and do not make efforts while studying since other modules are higher in the coefficient and considered as ultimate in priority.

Besides, English language has fewer hours per week in programs' teaching comparing to other subject studies ; thus raising the English language coefficient and teaching hours would be better for both pupils and teachers because that can increase stimulus and motivation in learning environment.

### **2.7.2 Teaching Phonetics as a Module in Middle and Secondary Schools**

The first aim of learning any language is to communicate, and communication needs a better pronunciation. Hence, the International Phonetics Alphabets (IPA) provides a full representation of sounds' symbols in detail. The research suggests having phonetic module to be taught at both middle and secondary schools because although these phonetic symbols are represented in English books, pupils still getting confused and having ambiguity in comprehending that. Therefore, teaching phonetic module is crucial and primordial to solve all pronunciation hindrances and helps the learners to have a near native- like pronunciation.

### **2.7.3 Teaching English at Primary Schools**

English language was and still remaining the language of science and technology in the world comparing to other languages, hence it must be the FFL (first foreign languages) rather than the SFL (second foreign language); and teaching any new language at an early age enable children to acquire it with ease like the mother tongue language. That leads us to Chomsky's LAD (Language Acquisition Device) or Lenneberg's critical period hypothesis, because teaching languages at an early age before puberty is more successful and useful rather than after puberty.

## Chapter Two: Data Collection , Analysis and Interpretation

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Penfield and Roberts (1959) said that a child is special in learning to speak; he can learn two to three languages as easy as one. However, for the purpose of learning languages, the brain progressively becomes a stiff and rigid starting from the age of 9 to 12 years. Moreover, learning a new language at middle-school age is not an easy assignment because learners are adolescents; they start being shy whenever are told to repeat alphabets or rehearse repeating words, they think it is not suitable to their age. Therefore, learning English language at primary school would be more beneficial for developing children's mental cognition and language's absorption.

### 2.8 Conclusion

As we have seen previously and through the use of two questionnaires and a classroom observation as a research instruments , we have noticed that EFL pupils of first year secondary school struggle with common pronunciation problem including words contained silent letter, consonant clusters, /dʒ/ sound and words which supposed to be pronounced in French pronunciation. This chapter has also discussed and analyzed the data which have got through the research tools quantitatively and qualitatively as reinforcement in having a good overview and for better interpretation while conducting a study. Thus the aforesaid hypotheses have been proven and answered the research question. Moreover, this study shows important findings concerning teachers' recommendation and suggestions to how can we reduce pronunciation obstacles and improving learners' performance in oral expression sessions.

## **General Conclusion**

### General Conclusion

Speaking is just one way of communication among others , however it is probably the most effective process of interacting between individuals. Hence, clear communication is the key to success in any domain of life as well as learning a foreign language. Through this study, we have tried to find out and to highlight the pronunciation deficiencies that Algerian EFL pupils have at secondary schools so that we suggest remedy in order to enhance the speaking skill of these pupils. We hope that this study to be an additional contribution for academic research at AinTemouchent University as well.

Structurally, this research work has consisted of two chapters; the first chapter was devoted to the theoretical part of the study within the related literature, while the second chapter was devoted to the practical part including the used methodology, the analyzed outcome and some suggestions and recommendations.

Concerning the first chapter it has reviewed the literature about language and its linguistic features; it gave notions and definitions about language acquisition including mother tongue and foreign language, language transfer, dialect, bilingualism, multilingualism and other factors that affect language learning. Furthermore, this chapter has shed the light on the importance of phonetics and phonology for having a clear overview of language's aspect and particularity; it also defined the speaking skills, silent letter and consonant cluster. This chapter has also introduced the English and Arabic vowel system within their phonetic content by which long vowel, short vowel and diphthong are phonetically described.



## General Conclusion

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Moreover, the second chapter was shedding the light on the adopted approach while conducting the study; it contained detailed descriptions and analyses of the obtained results from the sample data. In its first part, the researcher has discussed and analyzed the results that have been got through the research tools in order to answer the research question and test the validity of the hypotheses. On the other side, the second part has provided recommendations and suggestions for enhancing learners' oral performance and competence; besides, it has given methods and strategies that would be beneficial and useful for teachers to improve their teaching's environment and reinforce learners' oral abilities.

As has already been mentioned, this study has investigated the most common pronunciation factors which sound problematic to ELF first year learners in AinTemouchent secondary schools, which cover over 230 participants and seven teachers. Additionally, the approach adopted in this research work was mixed method approach i.e., the researcher has used a classroom observation and two questionnaires to conduct the study. By using these research tools, the collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively through which the research question was answered and the hypotheses were validated.

Accordingly, we have found that Algerian secondary school learners usually find difficulties in uttering properly words that have French pronunciation interference, silent letters, consonant cluster and /dʒ/ sound. Besides, the rate between these mispronounced words varies from type to another; teachers have agreed on salient weakness among EFL first year pupils in words which contain /dʒ/sound while the other types that are silent letter, consonant cluster and French interference are

## General Conclusion

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average at. Nonetheless, pupils' questionnaire reveals that learners are finding most difficulties in consonant cluster and in interfered French pronounced words and less severity with /dʒ/and silent letter. Hence the students' questionnaire and the classroom observation have confirmed more our research hypotheses, that is to say pupils of first year secondary school do have oral deficiencies regarding the aforesaid obstacles.

An accurate diagnosis of any problem is crucial for finding the adequate solutions, therefore, teachers pointed out that those difficulties are due to learners' incompetence and the insufficient recurrence of oral sessions within the syllabus. Furthermore, learners are not interested in pronunciation at all, they care only about written tests and exams; beside they are less familiar with phonetic symbols.

Having known and been aware of these pronunciation hindrances, the teachers suggested some solutions and recommended useful techniques for that. According to them, learners might be serious and caring during the oral sessions, and the recurrence of oral sessions must be reinforced in number. Also, teachers should follow some techniques and strategies in teaching and reviewing oral skills such as pictures description, making short presentations, using software for advanced listening, giving detailed description of speech articulation organs, teaching phonetics as module etc.

In addition to what has been suggested, the Algerian educational system has to do more in developing foreign language teaching and make deep reforms which update modern education. Educational institutions must be provided of language laboratories that contain all the needed equipments such as audio-visual, voiced recording, pronunciation software , sound apparatus and speech organs prototype including lungs,

## General Conclusion

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vocal cord, hard palate, soft palate, pharynx, tongue, lips, and teeth; so that the learner can make and produce sounds in their biological place of production.

Moreover, teaching the English language starting from primary school would be more successful and beneficial for learners, because learning any foreign language before the age of puberty is easier than learning it after puberty; in this case, children's brains are not rigid and can absorb the language fast. Besides, teaching phonetics as a module at middle and secondary schools helps considerably pupils of having a clear overview of English phonemes and their proprieties. Also, raising both English's coefficient and teaching hours number within the syllabus encourage more pupils of taking into consideration the importance of the subject study and having enough time interacting with the language.

Eventually, it should be noted that this research work has some limitations. During our study, our research coincides with the epidemic period which affects us considerably; at secondary school, the given time directed to each session was reduced to 45 minutes which minimized the classroom observation's time. Moreover, each class was divided into two groups through which proceeding in research was taking us more time and effort. Due to the lack of time, we did not investigate more other common mispronounced words such as /tʃ/ sound, long and short vowel, diphthong, etc. Besides, we have found difficulties in having good sources of books for our literature review because some books are not available in some libraries and are not for free on the web. One other thing, this research work did not cover many schools so further researches are recommended to complete and reinforce this study.

## General Conclusion

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In the nutshell, our purpose of choosing this topic is to grasp the learners' attention about the importance of good pronunciation in learning any language, because it is the best and the shortest way to fluency.

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# **Appendices**

# Appendices

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## Appendix: A

### Pupils' questionnaire

Dear pupils,

It would be so kind of you if you fill this questionnaire and provide me with the data collection needed for my research. Thanks in advance.

**Which pronunciation of the following words is the correct one?**

#### 1- French interference

Future: / 'fju:tʃə /                       / 'fi:tɪ:r /

Social: / 'səʊsi:jəl /                       / səʊʃəl/

Fruit: / fru:t/                                       / fru:wɪt /

#### 2- Consonant cluster

Strong:/ strɒŋ /    /əstrɒŋ /

Throw:/ θrəʊ /    / θrəʊ /

Middle: / 'mɪdl /                                       / mɪdʌl /

#### 3- Silent letter

Wednesday: / 'wenzdeɪ /                       / 'wɛdnzdeɪ /

Honest: / 'hɒnɪst /                                       / ɒnɪst /

Business: / 'bɪznɪs /                                       / 'bɪzɪnɪs /

#### 4- /dʒ / sound

Message: / 'mɛsɪʒ /                                       / mɛsɪdʒ /

Join: / dʒɔɪn /     / ʒɔɪn /

Geography: / dʒɪ'ɒgrəfi /                                       / ʒɪ'ɒgrəfi /

# Appendices

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# Appendices

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## Appendix: B

### Teacher's questionnaire

Dear teachers

It would be so kind of you if you fill this questionnaire and provide me with the data collection needed for my research. Thanks in advance.

**1-Concerning French interference, to what extent would you evaluate student's performance?**

Weak                       average                       good

**2-Concerning consonant clusters, to what extent would you evaluate student's performance?**

Weak                       average                       good

**3-Concerning silent letters, to what extent would you evaluate student's performance?**

Weak                       average                       good

**4-Concerning /dʒ/sound, to what extent would you evaluate student's performance?**

Weak                       average                       good

**5-According to you, these pronunciation difficulties are due to:**

Student incompetence                       oral expression sessions are not enough

Other factors

If other factors, what are they?

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**6-While teaching, did you find any useful methods or techniques to reduce these pronunciation hindrances?**

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**7-Do you think, is it useful if our educational system starts teaching English from primary school?**

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**Any suggestions**

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# Appendices

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## Appendix: C

### Classroom observation grid

**Place:**  
**The class observed:**

**Date:**  
**Time:**

### The most common pronunciation hindrances

Sound	frequency			
	Sometimes	always	Rarely	Never
Silent letter				
Consonant cluster				
/dʒ/sound				
Long vowel				
French interference				
diphthong				
/θ /sound				
/ð/sound				
/fj/sound				
Short vowel				