# The Influence of Local Arabic Dialects on English Pronunciation Among EFL Learners

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# تأثير اللهجات العربية المحلية على نطق اللغة الإنجليزية بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the influence of local Arabic dialects on English pronunciation among EFL students at the Faculty of Human Science. Arabic, with its diverse dialects like Libyan, Egyptian, Iraqi, and Moroccan, presents unique challenges for English learners due to significant phonetic differences. The research aims to identify specific pronunciation errors and their underlying causes among Arabic-speaking EFL students, focusing on vowels, consonants, and intonation patterns. Using a quantitative approach, the study gathered perspectives through a questionnaire from 30 English language learners at Alasmarya Islamic University's, Faculty of Human Science. Data was collected from seventh and eighth-semester students aged 21-22 and analyzed word-for-word. Preliminary findings indicate that English phonemes absent in Arabic dialects, such as the voiced and voiceless "th" (as in "these" and "thanks"), "p" (as in "pop"), and "v" (as in "vine"), pose significant difficulties and are often mispronounced or substituted with similar native sounds. The study also examines the impact of consonant clusters, common in English but rare in Arabic dialects, leading to vowel insertions within clusters and resulting in mispronunciations. Additionally, differences in intonation patterns affect the naturalness and intelligibility of spoken English among Arabic speakers. The findings underscore the need for

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tailored pronunciation training that addresses these specific challenges, incorporating both phonetic practice and awareness of dialectal influences. By understanding the impact of local Arabic dialects, educators can develop more effective teaching strategies to enhance English pronunciation skills among Arabic-speaking EFL students.

***Keywords:*** *Arabic dialects, English pronunciation, EFL students, Phonetic differences, Pronunciation errors, Consonant clusters, Intonation patterns.*

## الملخص

تستكشـف هذه الدراسـة تأثير اللهجات العربية المحلية على نطق اللغة الإنجليزية بين الطلاب غير الناطقين بها في كلية العلوم الإنسـانية. تمثل اللغة العربية، بما تحتويه من لهجات متنوعة مثل الليبية والمصرية والعراقية والمغربية، تحديات فريدة للمتعلمين بسـبب الفروقات الصـوتية الكبيرة. تهدف الدراسـة إلى تحديد الأخطاء النطقية الخاصـة وأسـبابها الكامنة بين الطلاب الناطقين بالعربية في برامج تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، مع التركيز على الحروف المتحركة، الحروف السـاكنة، وأنماط التنغيم. اسـتخدم البحث منهجًا كميًا لجمع آراء 30 من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية العلوم الإنسانية بالجامعة الأسـمرية الإسلامية من خلال استبيان. تم جمع البيانات من طلاب الفصـلين الدراسـيين السـابع والثامن، تراوحت أعمارهن بين 21 و22 عامًا، وتحليلها كلمة بكلمة. تشـير النتائج الأولية إلى أن الفونيمات الإنجليزية غير الموجودة في اللهجات العربية، مثل "ث" والـ voiced والـ "ث" الصـامتة (كما في "these" و "thanks")، و "ب" كما في "pop"، و "ف" كما في "vine"، تشـكل صـعوبات كبيرة وغالبًا ما يتم نطقها بشـكل خاطئ أو اسـتبدالها بأصـوات مشـابهة في اللغة الأم. كما يدرس البحث تأثير التكتلات السـاكنة، التي تعتبر شـائعة في الإنجليزية ونادرة في اللهجات العربية، مما يؤدي إلى إدراج حروف متحركة داخل التكتلات السـاكنة ويتسـبب في أخطاء نطقية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تؤثر اختلافات أنماط التنغيم على طبيعية وفهم اللغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة بين المتحدثين بالعربية. تؤكد النتائج على الحاجة إلى تدريب نطقي مخصص يعالج هذه التحديات، ويشمل الممارسـة الصـوتية والوعي بالتأثيرات اللهجوية. من خلال فهم تأثير اللهجات العربية المحلية، يمكن للمربين تطوير اسـتراتيجيات تدريس أكثر فعالية لتحسـين مهارات النطق بالإنجليزية بين الطلاب الناطقين بالعربية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** اللهجات العربية، نطق اللغة الإنجليزية، الطلاب غير الناطقين بالإنجليزية، الفروقات الصـوتية، الأخطاء النطقية، تكتلات الحروف الساكنة، أنماط التنغيم.

## 1. Introduction

As a language learner, it is vital to understand the differences between the languages you speak to improve communication effectiveness. Recognizing sound variations between languages can help identify which sounds may be difficult and which ones are already familiar. Arabic, for example, includes several dialects like Egyptian, Iraqi, and Moroccan Arabic, each with unique pronunciation patterns. As a result, Arabic speakers learning English may encounter specific challenges with English sounds. English has several phonemes absent in Arabic, such as the voiced "th" (as in "these", "there"), voiceless "th" (as in "thanks", "three"), "p" (as in "pop", "people"), "v" (as in "very", "vine"), the soft "j" sound (as in "measure", "fissure"), "ng" (as in "thing", "wing"), and three-consonant clusters. Consonant clusters, common in English, are uncommon in most Arabic dialects, which typically do not have more than two consonants in a sequence. Understanding these phonetic differences is essential for enhancing pronunciation skills. Sounds not present in a native language can be

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more challenging to produce in a second language (Al-Jarf, 2022; Abd Elwahab, 2020; Swanson, 2019; Al-Zoubi, 2019; Alkhateeb, 2016; Mirza, 2015; Ali, 2013; El Zarka, 2013).

Identifying English sounds that are absent in Arabic can help predict potential pronunciation errors. This project aims to identify error patterns in vowels, consonants, and intonation. According to Elwahab (2020), Arab learners often struggle with English phonemes due to regional dialect variability. Native language interference frequently causes pronunciation errors. Each language has unique linguistic characteristics and pronunciation rules, which become ingrained habits during childhood, known as verbal behaviors. Analysis of English proper noun pronunciation errors by Arab informants revealed common issues, such as mispronouncing vowels in words like Google, Moodle, Uber, Nixon, and London, and substituting absent consonants with similar sounds (e.g., "bebsi" for "Pepsi" and "jafa" for "Java") (Al-Jarf, 2022).

El Zarka (2013) noted that acquiring a second language is challenging, with students making mistakes and receiving corrections from teachers. This study examines pronunciation errors by native Arabic speakers learning English, focusing on dialectal influences. Swanson (2019) discussed why certain English phonemes are difficult for Arabic learners, comparing similar sounds in both languages and offering practical advice for addressing pronunciation issues. Ali (2013) provided experimental evidence for linguistic explanations of production errors in English spoken with a Sudanese Arabic accent, analyzing acoustical differences in English vowels produced by Sudanese and native English speakers.

Mirza (2015) observed that many ESL/EFL students in Lebanon graduate with inadequate English proficiency, particularly in phonological competence. Lebanese students learn Arabic as their first language and English as a second language in English-medium schools or as a foreign language in French-medium schools. Alkhateeb (2016) highlighted English's global popularity, noting its pluricentric nature due to historical population displacement and colonialism. Al-Zoubi (2019) conducted a qualitative study on the impact of Arabic speech sounds on English pronunciation, finding many Arabic sounds have English equivalents, which facilitates learning.

## 1.1. Statement of the problem

Many students face a lot of problem when they learn new language, especially in pronunciation, grammar, and learn new vocabulary. In pronunciation, more specifically .This study aims to investigate the challenges facing student to learn correct pronunciation.

## 1.2. Research Questions

- Why do students need to know their errors pronunciation?
- What is the importance of using local dialect in education?
- Why do teachers need to know the obstacles or difficulties that students face in learning English?

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### 1.3. Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the types of errors in English pronunciation among Arabic speakers in the light of a short contrastive study of English and Arabic sounds system and stress placement rules.

- To identify the specific sounds that are commonly mispronounced by low oral proficiency Alasmarya Islamic University student.

- To find some techniques that help the Alasmarya Islamic University student of English to improve their pronunciation.

## 2. Method

The quantitative approach was used in this study. The questionnaire was the method of data collection that was used to provide desirable answers and perspectives on the research topic. The participants in the study were English language learners at the Faculty of Human Science at Alasmarya Islamic University. The questionnaire will be conducted on 30 students from the seventh and eighth semesters between the ages of 21 and 22 in the English Department. A questionnaire with 17 questions about the impact of local Arabic dialects on learning to pronounce the English language, and the answers were optional (see Appendix). The collected data was analysed word-for-word.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The results of the first question are the majority of participants go to strongly agree as 53.3%, then 23.3% as agree, 6.6% as uncertain, 10% disagree and 6.6% strongly disagree. As shown in Figure (1). The outcomes show that a dialect refers to variety of the language. It includes the different in grammar, morphology, vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation among different of various of language. Which means that the students strongly agree that the dialect refers to pronunciation of different languages.
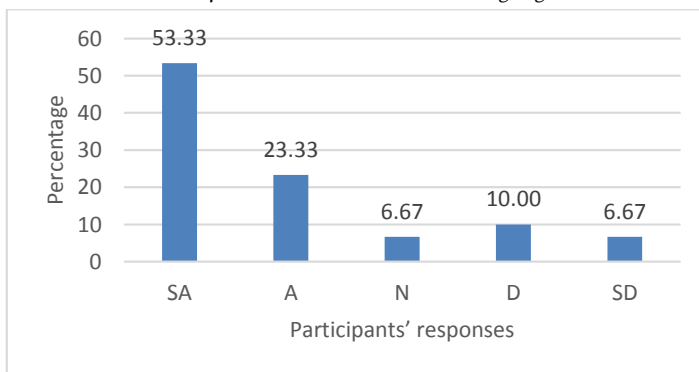


**Figure 1. A dialect refers to variety of the language. It includes the different in grammar, morphology, vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation among different of various of language.**

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According to Figure (2), strongly agree is 40%, then 50% as agree,10% as uncertain, and zero for strongly disagree and disagree. So the outcomes reveal that some learners have errors pronunciation because don't have equal word in their dialect. The highest goes to the agree, when the learners want to learn a new language their dialect effect on the second language because don't have dialect equivalents.
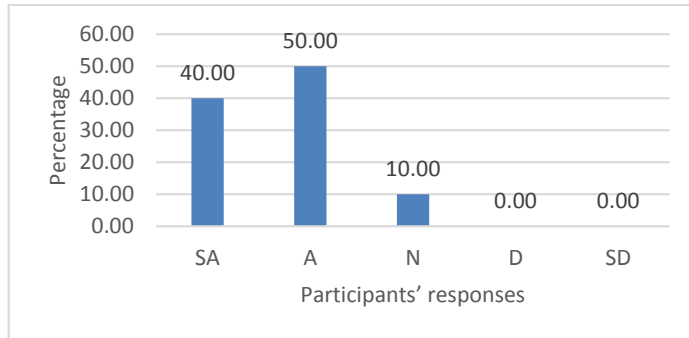


**Figure 2. Some learners have errors pronunciation because don't have equal word in their dialect.**

Figure (3) presents the results of this question is the majority of participants go to strongly agree as 30%, then 46.67% as agree, while 23.33% as neutral, and 0% as disagree and strongly disagree. This shows that by using correct sounds, when you speak, others can quickly understand what you are trying to say, and the students agree about using good pronunciation helps others understand you more quickly.
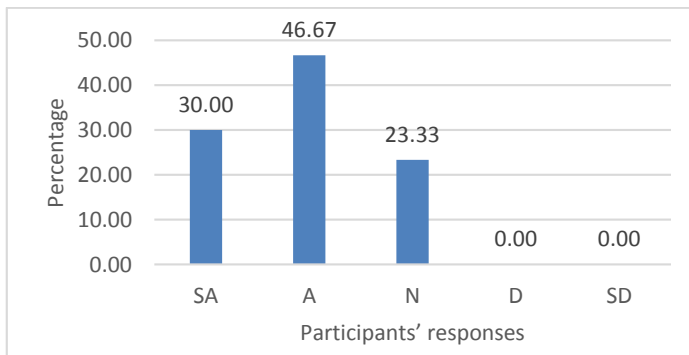


**Figure 3. By using correct sounds, when you speak, others can quickly understand what you are trying to say.**

Figure (4) shows that highest percentage goes to strong agree 40%, then 33.33% agree, 16.67% for neutral, 6.67% for strongly disagree, and 3.33% for disagree. So the outcomes reveal that Do you think that dialect is essential because they are part of our identity? So this point supports our hypothesis that dialects are essential because they are part of our identity. It makes us unique and gives us a sense of belonging.
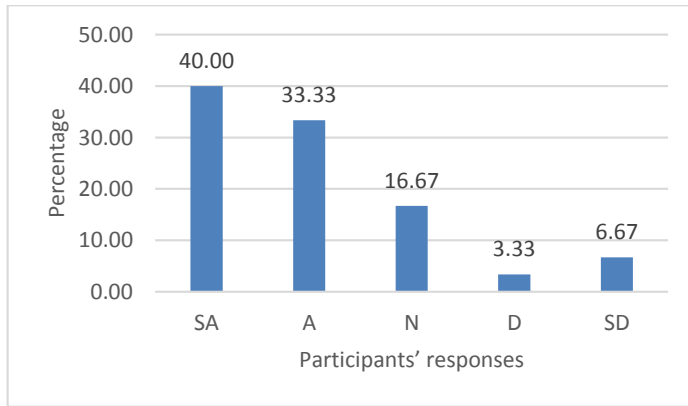
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**Figure 4. Do you think that dialect is essential because they are part of our identity?**

Figure (5) shows that 26.67% as a strongly agree, 50% agree,16.67% neutral, 0% disagree, and 6.67% strongly disagree. So the outcomes of this question reveal that some disadvantages of using our dialect is that there are no exact rules for using the language.
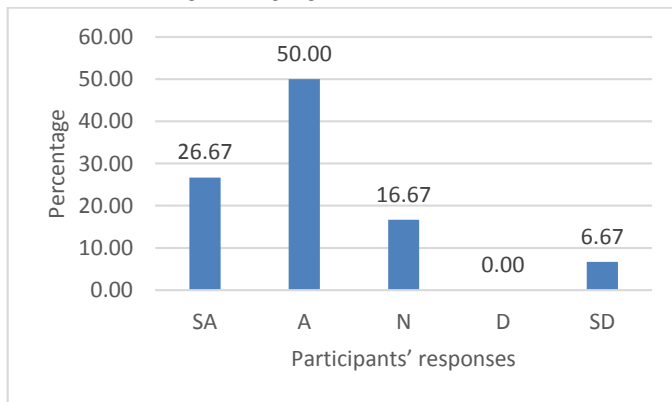


**Figure 5. Some disadvantages of using our dialect is that there are no exact rules for using the language.**

Figure (6) shows the 26.67% strongly agree, 53.33% agree,13.33% neutral, 3.33% disagree, and 3.33% strongly disagree. The results show that dialectical differences can create misunderstanding and gaps in communication. Difference in Language: It is the most obvious barrier to communication as two people who speak two different languages cannot communicate with each other. For example, an American goes to Egypt. He does not understand Arabic, and most people in Egypt do not understand English. Therefore, when an American speaks, communication is worthless because Egyptians do not understand him.
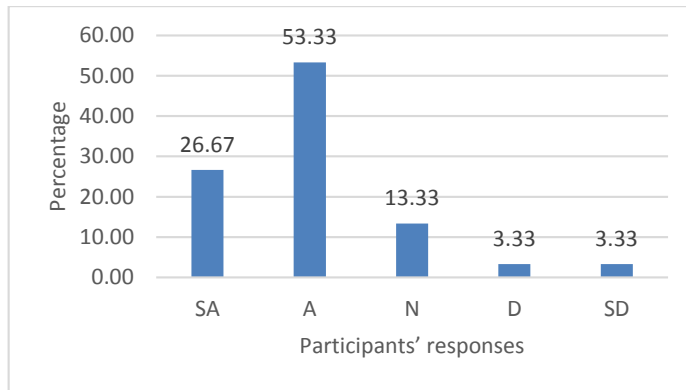
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**Figure 6. Dialectical differences can create misunderstanding and gaps in communication.**

As the Figure (7) has shown, the highest percentage goes to agree by 56.67%, 13.3% strongly agree, 13.33% uncertain, 16.67% strongly disagree, and 0% answered disagree. The results show that The dialect has some advantages such as being a faster way to express some sentence. That means the students agree about the dialect that can be used too easy to expression about something.
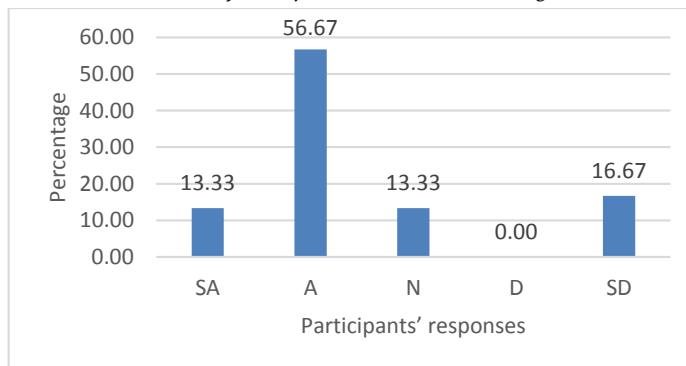


**Figure 7. The dialect has some advantages such as being a faster way to express some sentence.**

Figure (8) shows the 50% strongly agree, 26.67% agree,16.67% neutral, 6.67% strongly disagree, and 0% disagree. The results show that Without correct pronunciation, the vocabulary that you know will be less effective when communicating. Therefore, that sports our hypothesis. Proper pronunciation is the key to mastering the English language. Without the correct pronunciation, the vocabulary you know will be less effective when communicating. It is always better to know fewer words and pronounce them well than to know many words and pronounce them poorly. Bad pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings that may cause mishaps. It can also lead to people avoiding contact with you because they feel that it is too difficult to talk to you.
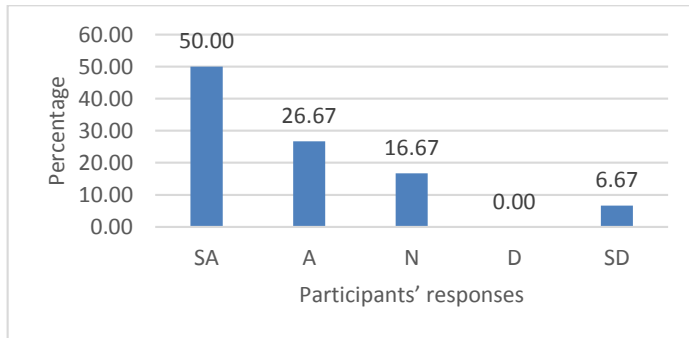
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**Figure 8. Without correct pronunciation, the vocabulary that you know will be less effective when communicating.**

Figure (9) shows the 33.33% strongly agree, 33.33% agree,16.67% neutral, 10% disagree, and 6.67% strongly disagree. The results show that besides the use of students' native dialect in education enhances the social, cognitive, emotional and linguistic development of learners. So this point supports the idea that Learning is said to be better and more successful when they are made in diversity of students.
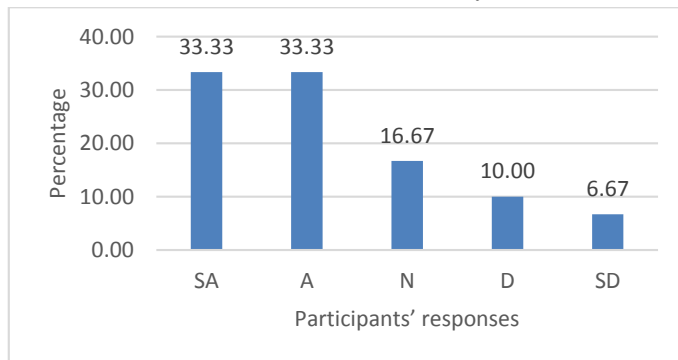


**Figure 9. Besides the use of students' native dialect in education enhances the social, cognitive, emotional and linguistic development of learners.**

Figure (10) shows the highest percentage goes to agree by 43.33%, then 33.33% strongly agree, 20% as neutral, %3.33 strongly disagree. The results show that different between language and dialect in popular usage, language is written in addition to bring spoken, while dialect is just spoken, that is mean students agree that language is written and spoken but dialect just spoken .
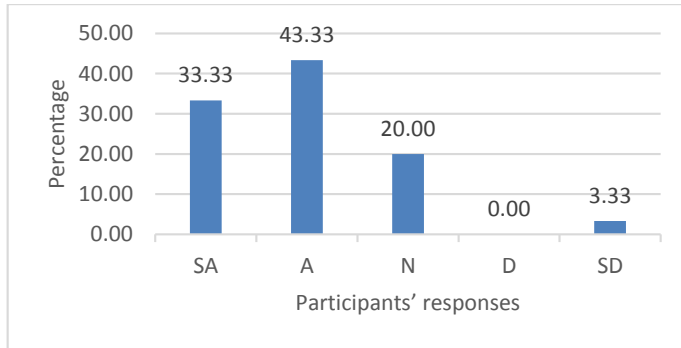
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**Figure 10. Different between language and dialect in popular usage, language is written in addition to bring spoken while dialect is just spoken.**

The results of this question is the majority of participants go to agree as 36.67%, then 26.67% as strongly agree, while 20% as neutral, 13.33% as strongly disagree, and 3.33% as disagree. This shows the dialect effect in education language, it's mean the difference in dialects has an impact on students, when they want learning second language.
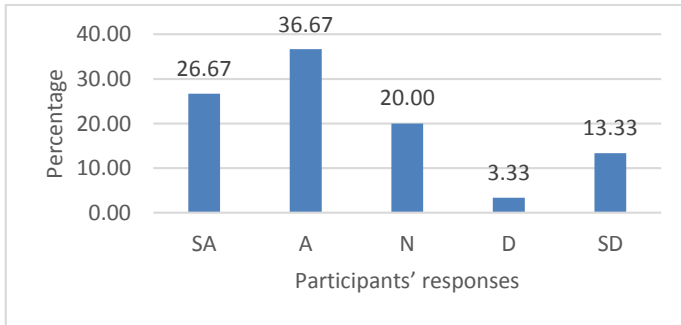


**Figure 11. Your dialect effect in your education language.**

According to Figure (12) 33.33% goes to strong agree and agree, then 10% neutral, and 16.67% as strong disagree, while 6.66% as disagree. The results of this question most of students face this problem to distinguish between the sound b. p when they speak.
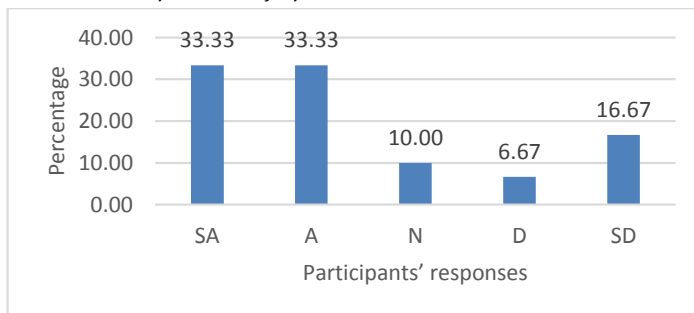


**Figure 12. One of the most common problems for you as students is differencing between the sound (p, b)**

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Figure (13) shows that highest percentage goes to strong agree 46.67%, then 40% as agree, 13.33% for neutral, and zero for strong disagree and disagree. So the outcomes revels to when students listen to examples of authentic speech, that most way to help them to improve their own pronunciation that mean students can speak very well without any errors pronunciation.
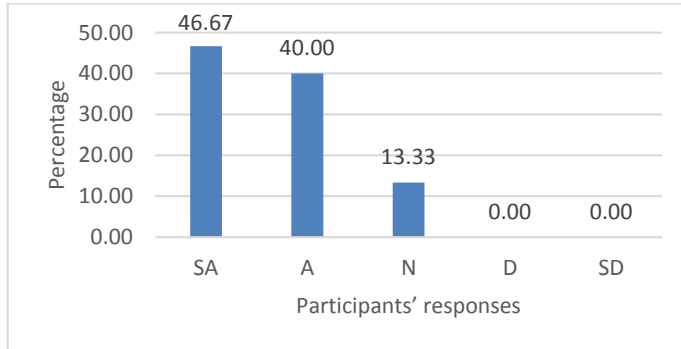


**Figure 13. Listening to examples of authentic speech is the most obvious way to improve your own Pronunciation.**

As Figure (14) has shown above, the highest percentage goes to agree 40%, then strong agree as 33.33%, 23.33% as neutral, while 3.33% goes to strong disagree, and zero for disagree. The outcomes show the one of most positive reasons to use dialect it allows you share your ideas in your own words with people.
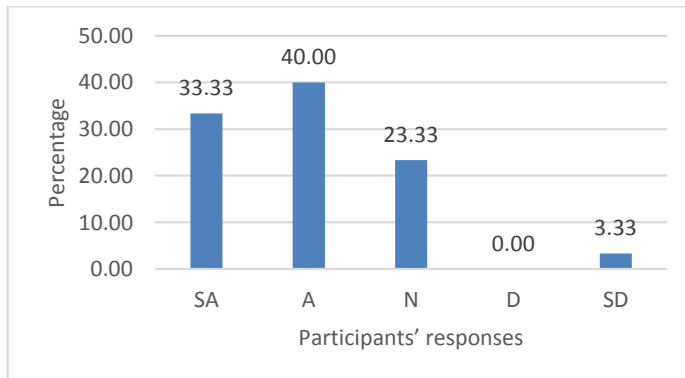


**Figure 14. We have some of the positive reasons for using local dialect it allows you to connect better with the people.**

This figure shows the highest percentage goes to agree 50%, then 26.67% as neutral and 20% for strong agree, zero for strong disagree and 3.33% for disagree. So outcomes of this question revels that using of local dialect in education it allows learners to make suggestions, ask questions and answers it, the highest percentage goes to agree when learners use local dialect it can help them to make suggestions, and ask questions without confused and answers any questions.
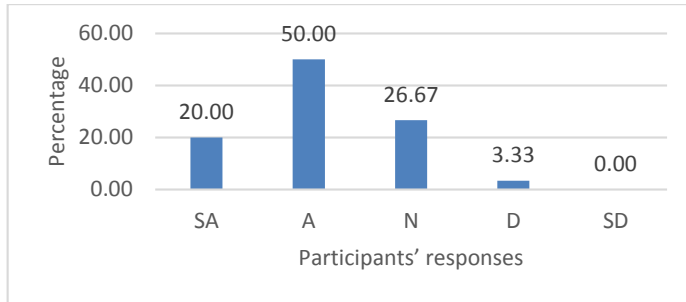
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**Figure15. Using of local dialect in education it allows learners to make suggestions, ask questions and answers it.**

According to Figure (16) shows the highest percentage goes to strong agree and neutral as 30%, then 16.67% as agree, while 13.33% as strong disagree and 10% for disagree. English is not an easy language to learn, if you speak any form of Arabic dialect, it's mean students when they speak by of any form of Arabic dialect, they will find it difficult to learn English language easily.
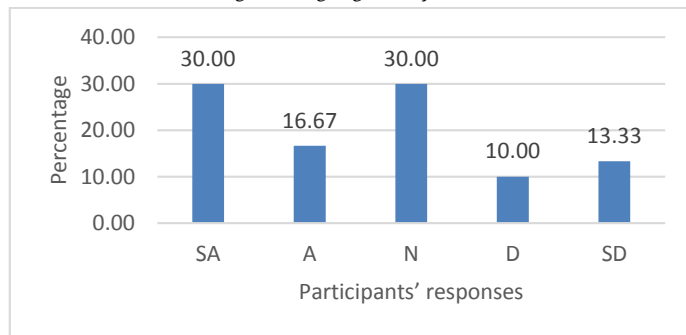


**Figure 16. English is not an easy language to learn, if you speak any form of Arabic dialect.**

As Figure (17) the highest percentage goes to strong agree as 46.67%, then 33.33% as agree, %6.67 as neutral, while 3.33% goes for strong disagree and 10% for disagree. The outcomes show that some factors may affect the pronunciation: accent, stress, intonation, rhythm, and also mother tongue influence. It's meaning that when learners want to learn a new language, they will find some factors that affect the correct pronunciation, such as mother tongue influence and stress. According to Abd Elwahab (2020), the linguistic differences between Arabic and English can significantly impact the ease with which students learn the sounds of English letters.
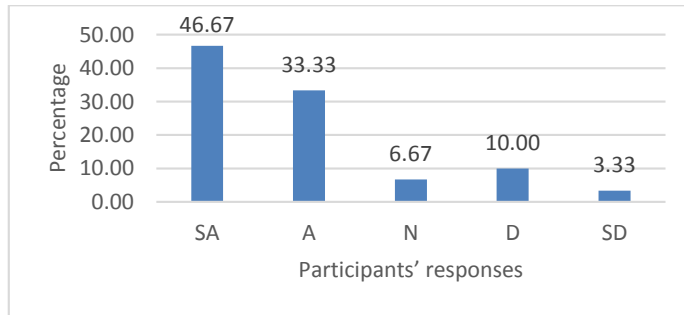
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**Figure 17. There are some factors that may affect the pronunciation: accent, stress, intonation, rhythm, and also mother tongue influence.**

## 4. Conclusion

This study analyzed the impact of dialects on students' academic achievement when learning a new language. The research findings indicate that using dialects in education has both significant positive and negative effects on students. Positively, the use of dialect in the classroom facilitates communication, allowing students to express and share their ideas more effectively, engage in discussions, and present suggestions using familiar vocabulary. However, the use of dialects also presents challenges. The differences between dialects and the lack of equivalent words across languages can complicate learning a new language and hinder effective communication between people, resulting in insufficient knowledge of other dialects. Learning new words and practicing them correctly can help students avoid mispronunciation. Factors such as stress and the influence of the mother tongue affect correct pronunciation. Therefore, it is essential for students to listen to examples of authentic speech, as this is the most effective way to improve their pronunciation.

## 5. Recommendations

Arabic learners encounter difficulties in pronouncing English because they often incorrectly apply their native language's pronunciation rules. Achieving accurate pronunciation in a foreign language necessitates a fundamental change in articulation habits, encompassing consonants, vowels, and intonation. The study suggests that teachers should incorporate the basics of correct pronunciation, promote language and pronunciation practice, utilize effective pronunciation teaching methods, and clarify the differences between similar sounds. Additionally, it advises students to become aware of pronunciation strategies, cultivate cultural awareness, practice pronunciation skills, differentiate between Arabic and English letters, and engage in practice both inside and outside the classroom. Future research should focus on the obstacles English learners face regarding pronunciation skills and the articulation of individual words.

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# Appendix

**State of Libya**
**Ministry of Higher Education**
**Alasmarya Islamic University**
**Faculty of Human Science**
**English Language Department**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**Dear Students;**

This qustionnaire is a part of our final project graduation titled "The impact of local Arabic dialects on learning English pronunciation" which aims to investigate the difficulties that EFL students in the English Language Department at Al-Asmarya University encounter while pronunced the letters right way . Your participation, time, and efforts are greatly appreciated. However, you are requested to answer each statement.

**Age : ................................**

**Semester: ......................**

| | Item | Strongly Agree (SA) | Agree (A) | Neutral (N) | Disagree (D) | Strongly Disagree (SD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A dialect refers to variety of the language. It includes the different in grammar, morphology, vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation among different of various of language. | | | | | |
| 2 | Some learners have errors pronunciation because don't have equal word in their dialect. | | | | | |
| 3 | By using correct sounds, when you speak, others can quickly understand what you are trying to say | | | | | |
| 4 | Do you think that dialect are essential because they are part of our identity. | | | | | |
| 5 | Some disadvantages of using our dialect is that there are no exact rules for using the language. | | | | | |
| 6 | Dialectical differences can create misunderstanding and gaps in communication | | | | | |
| 7 | The dialect has some advantages such as being a faster way to express some sentence. | | | | | |

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| 8 | Without correct pronunciation, the vocabulary that you know will be less effective when communicating. | | |
| 9 | Besides the use of students native dialect in education enhances the social, cognitive, emotional and linguistic development of learners. | | |
| 10 | The different between language and dialect in popular usage, a language is written in addition to bring spoken, while a dialect is just spoken. | | |
| 11 | Your dialect effect in your education language. | | |
| 12 | One of the most common problems for you as students is differencing between the sound /p/ ,/b/ | | |
| 13 | Listening to examples of authentic speech is the most obvious way to improve your own Pronunciation. | | |
| 14 | We have some of the positive reasons for using a local dialect it allows you to connect better with the people. | | |
| 15 | Using of local dialect in education it allows learners to make suggestions, ask questions and answers it. | | |
| 16 | English is not an easy language to learn, if you speak any form of Arabic dialect. | | |
| 17 | There are some factors may affect the pronunciation: accent stress, intonation, rhythm and also mother tongue influence | | |