

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA MINISTRY OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITY OF  
MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

N°:.....



DOMAIN: FOREIGN  
LANGUAGES  
STREAM: ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE  
OPTION: LINGUISTICS

**Investigating Student' Perception Towards  
Using Aspects of Connected Speech to Develop  
Phonological Accuracy: the Case of Third Year  
Students at the Department of English University of  
M'sila.**

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master*

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**JULY 2020**

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all, thanks are due to Allah Almighty who helped to accomplish this study. The Deepest gratitude goes to the supervisor **Dr. Touati Mourad** who was a source of guidance, help, and support through this process. Thank you very much!

Thanks to all who participated in the study.

Above all, special thanks go to the respectful jury for the devoted time to read and evaluate this work, and for their guidance to better this dissertation.

We also take the full responsibility for the mistakes and flaws in our research. Any consequences are not endorsed by our supervisor.

Finally, special thanks go to every person who helped to fulfill this work

## **Abstract**

Despite the fact that connected speech aspects hold an important place in foreign language education, students' perceptions towards using those aspects to achieve phonologically accurate and intelligible pronunciation is still neglected within the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of M'sila. The present study aims at investigating EFL students' perceptions towards the use of aspects of connected speech to achieve intelligible or native-like pronunciation. The study targets third-year students from the Department of English at the University of M'sila. In order to achieve valid results, a triangulated research method was applied encompassing two data collection tools: A descriptive method was implemented via two questionnaires one is to third-year EFL students and the other is to Oral Expression teachers, a classroom observation of Oral Expression class at the same Department, and a diagnostic test. The obtained results have revealed that oral expression teachers do not make use of aspects of connected speech instruction. Additionally, EFL students do not have positive perception and phonological awareness towards the role of connected speech aspects. Henceforth, teachers of oral expression should integrate aspect of connected speech insights into their lessons for the sake of strengthening EFL students' phonological competence which is a crucial factor to avoid any sort of speech problems or speech misperception and misinterpretation.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**CPH:** Critical Period Hypothesis

**EFL :**English as Foreign Language

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**ACS:** Aspects of connected speech

**TL** Target Language

**Cf :** Final consonant

**Ci:** initial consonant

**SLA:** second language acquisition

**NS:** native speaker

**NNS:** non-native speaker

**TL:** target language

**CPH:** Critical Period Hypothesis

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## **General Introduction**

### **1. Background of the Study**

English language in the twenty first century has gained an important status in the world for reasons such as trade and technology. Hence, mastering it becomes increasingly required. To this end, The main objective of learning English as a foreign language for the majority of EFL learners is to communicate effectively, that is, to have an accurate accent that enables them to understand and to be understood by others. But due to their mispronunciation and inappropriate comprehension, many of English learners face speaking and listening difficulties which make their speech incomprehensible and unintelligible nonetheless their skillful manipulation of grammar and vocabulary (J. D. Brown, 2013). Similarly, Olufumbi (2014) states that the barrier that hinders EFL learners from developing their English pronunciation is their failure to master the phonological requirements of English; for instance, connected speech of English is different from that of their mother tongue. To elucidate, in natural speech native speakers have the tendency to join words to each other that comes with some changes. These changes are described as features of connected speech (e.g. elision, assimilation, and linking) (Hamad, 2014). Hieke (1987) as cited in (Alameen& Levis, 2009) defined connected speech processes as "the changes which conventional word forms undergo due to the temporal and articulatory constraints upon spontaneous, casual speech" (p. 41). In view of this, connected speech is a natural process that creates new phonological modified forms (Emerick, 2018). As a matter of fact, the mission that the features of connected speech play have been neglected by EFL learners and their teachers as well (Akram&Qureshi, 2014). Significantly, language learners should bear in mind that the phonological awareness of aspects of connected speech is the point of departure to develop their phonological accuracy and speech perception (Sutrisno, 2018).

In the light of the literature discussed earlier, the present study seeks to investigate learners' perceptions towards the use of the features of connected speech to refine their phonological performance. Although considerable research has been devoted to enlighten the role of features of connected speech, no attention has been given to learners whether they have good perceptions or not. Hence, the present descriptive study takes an active stance and offers new ways to help learners to overcome the problems faced in learning English pronunciation by raising their awareness about the role and benefits of mastering aspects of connected speech and investigating whether EFL teachers integrate features of connected speech instructions or not in their classrooms at M'sila University.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

It is widely known that obtaining good, accurate pronunciation skills is deemed one of the major problems that foreign language learners confront. Even though Konstantin (2007) proves that very little attention is paid to learning pronunciation and usually is set aside, it is unexpectedly one of the crucial skills that has been ignored. As such, EFL teaching and learning require not merely immersing students in grammar and vocabulary, but also developing students' phonological competence, mainly the aspects of connected speech since they are the main feature of typical native speakers' speech. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) stress that the ignorance of the connectivity of natural speech could be the major factor of learners' low comprehensibility. And they add –Learners who use incorrect rhythm patterns or who do not connect words together are at best frustrating to the native-speaking listener (Ibid). Additionally, Jahandar et al. (2012) highlight that highly accepted level of phonological competence is an efficacious tool to realize one of the pedagogical aims which is enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence. Unfortunately, the aspects of connected speech

seem to be ignored at Algerian English Departments in general and at English third-year oral expression classrooms of M'sila English Department in particular. According to this regard, EFL students, with the absence of their teachers' feedback, face a variety of difficulties to apply aspects of connected speech in order to make their speech sound intelligible and phonologically accurate.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

Some specific objectives have been established to guide this research. These objectives are as follow:

1. To investigate how well EFL learners perceive the role of aspects of connected as a booster to their phonological accuracy.
2. To raise third-year EFL student awareness of connected speech aspects as a helping way to develop their phonological accurate pronunciation.
3. To investigate whether EFL teachers at University of M'sila give instructions or raise their students' attention about aspects of connected speech in oral expression sessions. .

### **4. Research Questions**

The present study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent are third-year students aware of the role of aspects of connected speech?
2. To what extent do oral expression teachers raise students' attention about aspects of connected speech in their sessions?
3. Do oral expression teachers provide their students with appropriate feedback to develop their phonological accuracy?

## **5. Hypotheses**

In the light of the aforementioned questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

1. EFL students at University of M'sila may downplay the role of aspects of connected speech.
2. EFL teachers at University of M'sila are not aware enough of the role of the aspects of connected speech.
3. EFL teachers at University of M'sila may not integrate sufficient aspects of connected speech-based instructions in their language teaching syllabi.

## **6. Research Methodology**

### **6.1 Research Method**

The hypotheses testing and the above three research questions necessitated to cover the study quantitatively and qualitatively through the use of mixed method and explanatory design. Qualitative data will be collected to record teachers' and students' perception towards aspects of connected speech while the quantitative would help to assess teachers' and students' perception and awareness of the use of aspects of connected speech and to measure students' problems when applying aspects of connected speech.

### **Sample of the Study**

The sample of this investigation is composed of thirty-three (33) students who were randomly selected from third-year EFL students in the department of English at Mohamed Boudiaf M'sila University and five (05) EFL teachers.

## **7. Data Gathering Tools**

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the obtained data and in an attempt to gain more meaningful insights into the situation, a class observation, questionnaires, and a

diagnostic test are employed. On one hand, one questionnaire was designed and administered to EFL teachers and another to third-year EFL students, in addition to an EFL third-year students class was observed. On the other hand, a diagnostic test was conducted to probe the strengths and weakness of EFL students. Hence, the aforementioned data collecting instruments may help in obtaining sustainable results and, thus, verifying our hypotheses and answering our research questions.

## **8. Significance of the Study**

The present study would be a contribution to L2 learning and teaching pronunciation research as the students' perceptions towards using aspects of connected speech to achieve accurate and intelligible pronunciation is still neglected. Particularly, it is significant to teachers who seek for the betterment of pronunciation teaching. Moreover, it attempts to provide EFL students with a comprehensible view of what the role of connected speech aspects is in enhancing their pronunciation. Hopefully, the present study would reveal sustained results so as to improve pronunciation teaching and learning and support the production of native-like production and reception of the target language.

## **9. Structure of the Dissertation**

The present dissertation is made up of three chapters. In the first chapter, we have attempted to provide an overview on phonological accurate pronunciation, namely phonological accurate versus Native-Like (perfect) Pronunciation, the importance of phonological accuracy, techniques for teaching phonological accurate pronunciation, and factors that hinder EFL learners to be phonologically accurate. In the meantime, the second chapter is dedicated to connected speech. It includes definition of connected speech and its function, the most common aspects of connected speech (rhythm, assimilation, elision,

linking, juncture, reduction in English, etc), other supra-segmental features (stress and intonation), problems encountering L2 learners when applying aspects of connected speech, and some useful strategies to overcome those problems. Whereas, the third chapter sets out the research methods, and provides a detailed analysis that was obtained from the data gathering tools in question. Within this part, limitations of the study, implications and suggestions for future research, and pedagogical recommendations would be provided for EFL teachers and learners.

## **10. Definition of terms**

In this section, the most prominent terms used throughout this research will be demonstrated.

**Connected Speech:** According to Crystal (2008), connected speech is a linguistic term used as a label for spoken language when it is examined in continuous speech such as normal conversations and utterances. It is the opposite of traditional linguistic investigation that studies words or phrases in isolation. It has many processes such as assimilation, elision, linking ...etc.

**Phonological Accuracy:** Gatbonton et al. (2005) define it as "*L2 speech that contains no first language (L1) phonological influences*". That is, the negative transfer or the interference of the phonological rules of the mother tongue (L1) which is the sole factor that impedes foreign language learners accurate pronunciation.

## CHAPTER ONE

# UNDERSTANDING PHONOLOGICAL ACCURATE PRONUNCIATION

In this globalized world where English is the most spoken language, Making an effective conversation and avoiding misunderstanding and miscomprehension in communication requires learning and mastering English phonological system since the most noticeable things while communicating in English is the way the speech is articulated. Indeed, the learnt vocabulary and grammar rules lose their significance when a learner does not know how to pronounce it correctly. In the same line, Fraser (2001) argues that –excellent grammar can be completely masked by poor pronunciation (p.5). Consequently, foreign English learners should boost their linguistic competence with deeper understanding of phonological knowledge to make their speech clear and intelligible and identify the sounds accurately. Hence, the chapter at hand aims at providing clear explanation on the phonological accurate pronunciation. Firstly, it starts with an overview on English phonology as sub-branch of linguistics. Secondly, it introduces the concept of phonological accuracy. Then, it draws a clear cut between phonological accurate and Native- like pronunciation. Thirdly, it sheds the light on the importance of being phonologically accurate. Fourthly, it elucidates the strategies that can be adopted to adjust and refine learners' unintelligible pronunciation. This Chapter ends with the factors that may hinder EFL learners to be phonologically accurate.

## 1. English Phonology: Overview

### Defining English Phonology

Any language uses specific underpinning features that determine how their users sound when speaking. The study of these rules is called phonology. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, –Phonology is the study of sounds in a particular language or in languages generally. In the same vein, Daniel ( 2020) states:

*Phonology is concerned with the regularities that govern the phonetic realization of sounds in words of a language. It looks at and tries to establish a system of sound distinctions relevant to a particular language. It then seeks to determine how the elements of this abstract system behave in actual speech. Phonology actually delineates the functioning of sounds in particular context.*  
(p.5)

Further, Odden (2013) adds that it is sufficient to contrast phonology with other fields within linguistics to understand the main scope of what it is and how it is interrelated with them . That is, since phonology is the study of structure of sounds in language, it is completely different from syntax which is the study of the components of sentence, morphology which is the study of the components of words, or historical linguistics which is the study of language change over time.

To put it all together, as pronunciation is an important element in the study of word, sentence structure, and even sound change, Phonology has its prominent place within the other subfields of linguistics. Yet, for better understanding, the distinction between phonetics and phonology is worth mentioning. Here phonology stands for the aforementioned scope while –phonetics deals with –actual physical sounds as they are manifested in human speech (Ipid.p.2).

## Teaching and Learning English Phonology

Undeniably, the locus of phonology in the field of English as foreign language learning is, to a greater extent, prominent since pronunciation is more related to everyday aspects of human verbal communication. To support this, phonology has an important role in making the right production of words, sentences and meanings. In view of the fact that it focuses on the sound structure of speech including itssegmental and suprasegmental features. The former features include vowels consonants, etc whereas the latter include stress, rhythm, intonation, etc(Broughton et al., 1978). As such, Richards and Renandya (2002) claim that integrating the phonological aspects are so crucial that they maintain successful communication. Nonetheless, countless studies have proved that phonology programs are still ignored and they lack the right implementation in EFL classrooms (Brown, 2001). Many teachers are in need of phonological awareness which is a serious problem that is likely to be the main reason for the misuse of the phonological aspects of a language.

To recap, out of the aforementioned information, Celce-Murcia et al. ( 2010) suggest five steps that should be followed in designing any pronunciation teaching program.

- **Description and analysis:** In this step, the teacher provides oral or visual illustrations of how the feature is produced.
- **Listening discrimination:** This is a vital step where the teacher uses listening activities then controls how the learner discriminates between those sounds.
- **Controlled practice:** The teacher provides the learners with the necessary feedback after implementing a selected phonological feature in dialogues or other texts.

➤ **Guided practice:** This step involves immersing the learner in structured-communicative activities, then testing if the learner is able to monitor the target phonological features.

➤ **Communicative practice:** This step enables the teacher to test the learners' progress and what remains for them to produce intelligible pronunciation as a consequence of involving them in less structured activities.

Ultimately, the steps suggested by Celce-Murcia et al. have been one of the central issues in pronunciation teaching since they cover the logical progress of the learners' phonological production. It means, they provide the teacher with a systematic framework that guides the classroom instructions and enables the learner to build effective communicative tasks.

### **The Teacher's Role**

Phonological accurate pronunciation is an important skill in communication that should receive a strong emphasis from EFL teachers. For Morley (1991), the teacher is a facilitator of the learners' learning pronunciation, say, his task includes designing, providing, monitoring, and supporting the learners. Likewise, Fraser (2000) probes that the teachers have a pivotal role in improving their learners' phonological accuracy by pinpointing realistic, reasonable, and applicable goals that fit their communication needs. Accordingly, Fraser (2000) continues, EFL teachers should be equipped with the appropriate materials to develop their pronunciation instruction.

As far as the role of the teachers is concerned, Gilakjani (2011) goes more further and states that to improve learners' pronunciation of English words, EFL teachers should change the way their learners think about the sounds of those words. That is to say, there is a high correlation between sound perception and speech production. Additionally, Gilakjani and

Sabouri (2016) argue that EFL teachers should keep themselves up-to-date by means of training in teaching pronunciation. Hence, in doing so, they would deploy the appropriate techniques and strategies to adjust their learners' pronunciation because it is difficult for EFL learners to learn an intelligible pronunciation without their teachers' guidance.

### **The Learner's Role**

Indeed, EFL learners seek to reach advanced speaking skill levels within different social contexts. For such reason, EFL learners are asked to considerably focus on the phonological aspects of English language. Actually, EFL learners, according to Rubin and Thompson (1982), have to develop their own way of learning so as to become more autonomous. In this respect, N. Naiman et al. (1996) and Oxford (1990) purport that self-involvement is an efficacious strategy that can be adopted by EFL learners to refine their speech.

As a matter of fact, the more the learner is consciously involved in communication tasks, the more he becomes confident speaker of English. In doing so, EFL learners would own an accurate pronunciation that enables them to be understood by others (Helen Fraser, 2000).

### **Approaches and Techniques to Teaching Phonology**

#### **Approaches to Teaching Phonology**

The verities of the available teaching methods proved that there is no perfect methodology that can be followed by all. However, two main approaches underlined by Celce- Murcia et al. (1996) have been acknowledged by many scholars (Addou, 2017).

#### **The Intuitive-Imitative Approach**

In this view, the learner carefully listens then imitates the given rhythm and speech sound of the foreign language without the intervention of any explicit information, i.e. the learner listens and imitates the speech sounds of the target language. Hence, from this instruction, it is clear that this method best fits beginners at the first lessons of learning foreign language phonology. Moreover, at this stage, learners could get benefit from the different available sophisticated materials that facilitate the access to authentic speech.

### **The Analytic-Linguistic Approach**

This approach utilizes information and tools such as phonetics alphabets, articulatory description, and other aids to supplement listening and imitation. That is to say, it is based mainly on the supporting and pedagogical aids developed on the basis of explicit, planned instruction and illustrated phonological patterns such as phonemic alphabets and charts of speech organs. For Murcia et al. (1996), this approach was developed to complement rather than to replace the Intuitive-imitative approach.

### **Techniques for teaching phonology**

Like the other subcomponents of linguistic systems, teaching phonology involves adopting a variety of techniques in order to enhance the speech perception and production. That is, the more the techniques are diversified, the more chance to teaching process ends with success (Jarosz, 2019). To start with, Gottlieb (2006) claims that teaching phonology cannot reach high level of proficiency without teaching the learner the prediction of oral communication needs. For Gottlieb, through teaching prediction, the learners develop good experience to communicate in different situations and help them become independent learners in a very short time. Plus, Cook (2001) propounds a set of techniques for teaching and learning English phonology which are based on phonetic transcription, imitation, and discrimination of sound.

Ur (2006) also states that the goal of teaching phonology and pronunciation is not to obtain a native accent but to help the learners make their speech intelligible. Accordingly, she recommended some techniques, via imitating the teacher's speech, or recording the learners' pronunciation and compare it with native speaker's. In this way, the learners can correct their own speech. Likewise, Harmer (2006) foregrounds the notion of intelligibility rather than perfection as the main objective of learners and suggests learning connected speech, pronunciation games, and minimal-pair drills as a suitable instruction to improve learners' intelligibility.

Cheng (1998) highlights that being able to speak English involves the integration of a set of techniques in the classroom instructions. These techniques can be framed as follows:

- Articulating meaningful materials.
- Strengthening the learners' phonological abilities through the use of songs, games, etc.
- Evaluating the learners' progress and improvement. For Cheng, this is a powerful technique in order to push the learners improving.

Furthermore, Scarcella and Oxford (1994) propose more detailed range of techniques for pronunciation teaching as follows:

- **Self-Monitoring:** The learners have to detect their own mispronunciation then strive to make their speech intelligible. That is, it is the responsibility of the students to monitor themselves and make their speech understood.
- **Tutorial Sessions and Self-Study:** In light of this technique, the learners' speech should be diagnosed. Then, individualized programs would be planned for each learner.

- **Modeling and Individual Correction:** This consists of regularly report the analysis of the learners' speech individually in order to monitor their progress. In analyzing learners' speech the light, according to this technique, should beshed on rhythm, stress, accent, linking, and consonant clusters.
- **Communicative Activities:** The target phonological features should be identified then integrated in suitable communicative activity along with their lexical and grammatical contexts and in appropriate communicative tasks.
- **Written Versions of Oral Presentations:** This technique is useful for more advanced learners. In this technique, the learners are asked to analyze the written form of their own speech.
- **Computer Assisted Language Learning:** Using this technique, the teacher may use some visual displays of speech patterns to teach the aspects of connected speech such as intonation and elision.
- **Explanations:** The teacher explains to the learners how to produce sounds appropriately and keep them progressing in the right direction.
- **Utilization of Known Sounds:** This technique is useful when the leaner is already familiar with sounds that are similar in the target language.
- **Communication Strategies:** Some useful communication strategies, which will help learners give the impression that their pronunciation is better than it really is, are previewing, sequencing (e.g. first, second, third), using contrast words (e.g. however), repeating, and paraphrasing can increase the non-native English speakers' intelligibility.
- **Affective Strategies:** The teacher may make use of different affective strategies that help reduce their anxiety and shyness levels and gain more

confidence such as deep breathing, meditation exercises before speaking, listening to music, and laughing.

## **The Difference between Phonological Accurate and Native-Like Pronunciation**

One of the largest area of research in SLA studies is the extent to which EFL learners should excel in foreign language pronunciation (Cook, 2008). That is to say, is it the target goal of learning English pronunciation is perfection? That is, to make EFL learners sound like natives? Or the comprehensibility and phonological accurate pronunciation are in favor? Hence, Bruhn (2015) stresses the need to make a clear distinction between the two perspectives.

### **Phonological Accuracy**

In an attempt to figure out a good definition to phonological accuracy , Kenworthy (1988) defines phonological accuracy as the understandability and the intelligibility of the speaker's speech even when the speaker substitutes one sound with another s/he remains intelligible as far as the listener understands the intended meaning. In the same vein, Gimson(1994) suggests three factors that determines the characteristics of the phonological accuracy

instructions designed for learners. These are:

- Phonological accuracy should be learned as any natural model.
- Phonological accuracy should be easily understood to most native speakers.
- Phonological accuracy should equip the learner to understand not only the major varieties of English.

- With a regard to the aforementioned definition, Gatbonton et al. (2005) report “*phonological accurate pronunciation is L2 speech that contains no first language (L1) phonological influences*”. That is, the negative transfer or the interference of the phonological rules of the mother tongue (L1) which is the sole factor that impedes foreign language learner’s accurate pronunciation.

### **Native –like pronunciation**

One of the most contentious issues investigated on the ground of pronunciation is defining native-like pronunciation. To begin with, Yager (1992) defines native-like pronunciation as “*the pronunciation that is accepted by native speakers as native, which in an experimental context means that carefully selected and trained native speakers must evaluate L2 pronunciation under conditions that control non-pronunciation variables*”(p.1).

For Yager, the native speaker (NS), based on set of non-pronunciation variables, is the only one who has the ability to evaluate non-native speaker (NNS) pronunciation and among these variables: vocabulary, grammar, and linguistic context of the communication. Hence, based on the aforementioned variables the listener decides what native-like pronunciation is.

Further, he argues that native-like pronunciation, oftentimes, is advisable if a foreign speaker wants to be accepted by the L2 community. Along with Bouchard et al. (1977) and Derwing and Munro (2009), as cited in Lee et al. (2019), show that there is a significant correlation between NNSs native-like pronunciation and successful communication with their interlocutors.

In a nutshell, EFL learners may have the ambition to own a native-like pronunciation, but teachers need to take into consideration the superiority of comprehensibility and intelligibility over perfect pronunciation.

In addition, teachers by evaluating their learners' abilities vis-à-vis their learners' perspective can put into action a realistic goal. In this respect, *Saito* (n.d.) argues that –Although some L2 learners who strongly strive for nativeness should not be discouraged to pursue their ambitions, and researchers as well as teachers should set realistic goals for L2 learners (p. 45).

## **Phonological Awareness and its Role to Develop Phonological accuracy**

### **Phonological Awareness Definition**

Phonological awareness refers to the ability to hear and monitor the sound pattern of language (Adam & Mohammed, 2017). More, Souza (2015) defines the phonological awareness as: –L2 phonological awareness is understood as knowledge about the target language phonological system at the segmental, prosodic domain. (p125).

From the abovementioned definitions, the phonological awareness can be classified as an applied linguistics term that covers an indispensable skill that involves identifying and manipulating speech sounds and oral communication language.

Furthermore, since phonological awareness is linked to L2 phonological knowledge, it can be the basis for building the learner's reading skill. For instance, the learner begins to read by listening to others, then recognizing sounds in words and use this knowledge to read and build new words.

### **The Role of Phonological Awareness to Develop Phonological Accuracy**

According to Moats and Tolman (2016), phonological awareness is critical for developing accurate pronunciation, and a learner who lacks phonological awareness of the target language (TL) certainly will face huge problems to read correctly and make an accurate

pronunciation of speech sound patterns when reading any alphabetical writing system. That is, a learner who is consciously aware of the phonological rules of TL will be able to look inside the words and decodes its sound patterns, syllables, and rhymes. Consequently, s/he will easily and correctly blend and manipulate syllables, onset, rhyme, and sounds of the TL (Adam & Mohi Eddin, 2017).

In sum, it is true to support the claim that good reader or a poor reader; accurate or inaccurate pronunciation can be easily predicted simply by testing the phonological awareness of the learner and without phonological awareness learners will surely be dissatisfied by the print system and how it represents the spoken word.

### **Factors that Hinder the Phonological Accurate Production**

It is undeniable that communicating with foreign language speakers witness tremendous difficulties that vary from a number of linguistic features. As such, EFL learners are more likely to fall in the trap of mispronunciation problems and seriously encounter variety of phonetic and phonological dilemmas which certainly hinder their learning of L2 pronunciation and, consequently, prevent them from developing the oral and auditory skills of the target language (Hamerlain, 2013). To elucidate the matter further, Gilakjani et al. (2011) summarize the factors that affect the learning of L2 pronunciation as follow:

#### **Learner's Age**

The age can negatively or positively influence the learning of L2 phonological rules and make it more difficult. In the light of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) launched by Lenneberg(1967), as cited in Hamerlain (2013), there is a biological period that ends by the

age of eleven (11) after which the learning of another language becomes really hard especially the phonological aspects of that language.

Nonetheless, a study conducted by Bialystock (1997), as cited in Hamerlain (2013), proves that learners after the CPH can achieve the highest level of phonological accuracy. Further, according to Avery and Ehrlich (1992), the level of the reached phonological accuracy differs from a learner to another. For them, phonological accuracy is not merely due to this factor, but also to others like motivation and exposure.

### **Motivation and exposure**

In addition to the learner's age, the learner's motivation and the amount of exposure could be strong elements that determine whether the learner will have a good phonological accurate pronunciation or not. Several studies have found that in many cases when the learner has a predetermined goal or objectives for learning a foreign language, s/he will be sufficiently energized to go more further towards developing phonological accurate, or even native-like pronunciation (Bernaus, Masgoret, Gardner, & Reyes, 2004; Gatbonton et al., 2005; Marinova-Todd et al., 2000; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003), as cited in Hamerlain (2013).

### **Learner's Attitude**

It is remarkable that some learners are more equipped with abilities that make them develop their pronunciation better than others. Henceforth, many researchers tried to analyze the individual differences that contribute in their success in foreign language learning.

For instance, a study conducted by Elliot (1995), as cited in Hamerlain (2013), finds that a learner with more inclination toward foreign language tends to have better phonological accurate pronunciation. In fact, this confirms the findings of an investigation made by Suter (1976) which highlights that learners who were more concerned with their pronunciation have better phonological accurate pronunciation of English (Elliot,1995), as cited in Hamerlain (2013).

In the main stream, discussing the impact of learners attitude necessitates to note the investigations of Schumann (1986) who proves that there is high correlation between the learners openness toward foreign culture, or what he calls ‘acculturation level’, and the success in improving the pronunciation of foreign language(Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996), as cited in Hamerlain (2013).

### **The influence of the mother tongue**

Undeniably, several studies have been carried out on the impact of the mother tongue on learning foreign language. In other words, Catford (1977), Moosa(1972), and Swan and Smith(2001), as cited in Kouihi (2018), proclaims that many Arabic learners mispronounce many English sounds owing to the fact that the interference of their mother tongue, i.e. the differences between L1 and L2 phonological rules.

For instance, There is no initial consonant cluster allowed in Arabic, but in English allows three consonants at the beginning of words (e.g. /str/ as in ‘struggle’) or clusters that contain sounds that are not in the Arabic consonants inventory or have different pronunciations (e.g. /spr/ as in ‘spread’). Therefore, mistakes at the level of pronunciation are expected due chiefly to this sort of differences between the two phonological systems.

In conclusion, Avery and Ehrlich (1992), as cited in Hamerlain (2013), hold that the learner's mother tongue could mislead the learner's pronunciation of the target language from three angles. Firstly, when the sound in the foreign language is absent from the learner's mother tongue sound inventory or vice versa. Secondly, in case of the phonological rules of the foreign language differ from that of mother tongue. Thirdly, since stress and intonation patterns are deeply linked to the rhythm and melody of any language, learners are likely to apply those patterns in the foreign language.

## **Conclusion**

Since understandable pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence, phonological accuracy instructions should not be regarded only as routines that display the way correct production of segmental and suprasegmental phonological sound features should be, but rather it should be regarded as an important part of communication that should take part in classroom activities. As for the teachers, as motivators, they can motivate their learners by virtue of controlling their own pronunciation in/outside the classroom (Ellis, 1998). With this in mind, It is advisable for teachers to cooperate with their own learners to ascertain a set goals that fit their needs and raise their phonological awareness (Abdon et al., 2019).

## Chapter two

# Understanding of connected speech

### Introduction

This section provides a better understanding of connected speech and its aspects. It includes definition of connected speech and its function; the most common aspects of connected speech (rhythm, assimilation, elision, linking, juncture, reduction in English, etc); other supra-segmental features (stress and intonation), problems encountering L2 learners when applying aspects of connected speech; and some useful strategies to overcome those problems and to easily teach, learn, and apply those aspects of connected speech.

## 2. Definition of connected speech

Words spoken in context (in connected speech) often sound quite different from those same words when they are spoken in isolation (in their citation forms, or dictionary pronunciations).

The pronunciation of words in connected speech may leave vowel and consonant sounds relatively intact, as in some types of linking, or connected speech may result in modifications to pronunciation that are quite dramatic, including deletions, additions, or changes of sounds into other sounds, or combinations of all three in a given word in context. These kinds of connected speech processes are important in a number of areas, including speech recognition software, text-to-speech systems, and in teaching English to second language learners.

Nonetheless, connected speech, in which segmental and suprasegmental features interact strongly, lags far behind work in other areas of segmental and suprasegmentals in second language research and teaching. Some researchers have argued that understanding connected speech processes may be particularly important for the development of listening skills (Field, 2008; Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010), while others see connected speech processes' production as being particularly important for more intelligible pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, 2010; Reed & Michaud, 2005).

Once a word is spoken next to other words, the way it is pronounced is subject to a wide variety of processes. The changes may derive from linguistic context (e.g., *can be* said as *cam be*), from speech rate (e.g., tomorrow's *temperature* runs from 40 in the morning to 90 at midday, in which *temperature* may be said as *temprətʃə*, *tempətʃə*, or *temtʃə*, depending on speed of speech), or from register (e.g., *I don't know* spoken with almost indistinct vowels and consonants but a distinctive intonation in very casual speech).

When these conditioning factors occur together in normal spoken discourse, the changes to citation forms can become cumulative and dramatic. Thus, it is essential that EFL and ESL learners get to know connected speech and its aspects or features.

According to Crystal (2008), connected speech is a linguistic term used as a label for spoken language when it is examined in continuous speech such as normal conversations and utterances. It is the opposite of traditional linguistic investigation that studies words or phrases in isolation. It has many processes such as assimilation, elision, linking ...etc. This definition, in turn, brings us to ask the question about what the function of connected speech in English is.

### **Function of connected speech in English**

The primary function of connected speech in English is to promote the regularity of English rhythm by compressing syllables between stressed elements and facilitating their articulation so that regular running speech timing can be maintained (Clark & Yallop, 1995). For example, certain closed class words such as prepositions, pronouns, and conjunctions are rarely stressed, and thus appear in a weak form in unstressed contexts. Consequently, they are reduced in a variety of processes to preserve the rhythm of the language.

Reducing speech can also be attributed to the law of economy where speakers economize on effort, avoiding, for example, difficult consonant sequences by eliding sounds (Field, 2003).

The organs of speech, instead of taking a new position for every sound, tend to connect sounds together using the same or intermediate articulatory gestures to save time and energy (Clarey & Dixon, 1963).

The function of this phenomenon is rather obvious, yet what are the aspects or features of connected speech that any L2 learner should know and have a well-rounded perception of in

order to keep this speech phenomenon functions well in case of the reception and production of the language?

## **Aspects/Features of connected speech**

### **Rhythm**

As for Roach (2009), the notion of rhythm involves some noticeable event at regular intervals of time. Rhythm refers to frequency of significant elements of speech (i.e. the strongest syllable) regular intervals of time (Skandera and Burleigh, 2005).

The period of time between two stressed syllables is roughly the same, irrespective of the number of unstressed syllables between them, or even there is no unstressed syllable in between. It is clear that English is one of the stress-timed languages; such as, Russian and Arabic. In such languages, the stressed syllables tend to occur approximately at the same time duration, and the more unstressed syllables between them, the faster they pronounced to fit them into regular time span.

In contrast with stress-timed languages, there are also syllable-timed languages, in which the duration of each syllable tend to be the same, whether it is stressed or not as well as the duration between the stressed syllables according to the unstressed ones whether they are short or long.

The difference between stress-timed languages and syllable-timed languages is not accurate enough and seems to exclude some facts and details about these type of languages. Hence, it is probably fair to say that some languages use one kind of rhythm intensively (i.e. stress-timed rhythm), but the two types of rhythm (i.e. stress-timed & syllable-timed rhythm) can be found in most languages (Ashby and Maidment,2005).

As it was stated above, stress-timed rhythm includes that stressed syllables tend to occur with regular intervals of time, regardless of the number of unstressed syllables between them (Roach,2009: 118).

To make it clearer, in the following sentence:

Walk down the bath to the end of the canal.

1    2        3            4            5

The stressed syllables are marked by numbers, syllables number 1 &2 are not separated by unstressed syllable 2 &3 are separated by only one unstressed syllable, while 3 & 4 are separated by tow unstressed syllables, and 4 & 5 are separated by three unstressed syllables.

The regularity existence of the stressed syllables is not fixed but it is just relative (Roach, 2009). Rhythm is strongly related to stress because it can be recognized through the existence of stressed syllable in a piece of spoken language.

In English, there is a tendency to avoid stress too much closer. This causes stress in multi-syllabic word to be on one syllable in one sentence and on another syllable in another sentence according to the context in which the word is uttered (i.e. the stress is shifted from one syllable to another in order to preserve distance between the two stresses), like in the example compact [kəm'pækt] the second syllable is stressed, but in the phrase compact disk ['kɒmpækt'disk] the stress is shifted to the first syllable to avoid the occurrence of two adjacent stresses. They said also it is quite wrong to assume the quality of intervals between stressed syllables. Plus, they regard regularity as a number of processes run together to maintain rhythmicity.

One of the processes is that English speakers tend to minimize the diversity in length in words with only one stress; for instance, the vowel in the word speed [spi:d] is longer

than the first in the word *'speedy'* [spi:dɪ] and the first vowel in the same word is actually longer than the first one in the word *'speedily'* [spi:dɪli].

The regularity of intervals is achieved through the reduction of vowels, the omission of other one in the weak syllable, and the use of weak forms of functional words (e.g. and, for, of, the, etc.) ( Ladefoged& Johnson,2010).

Frankly, without using reduction and weak forms, the regularity is impossible to be achieved (Ibid). To achieve rhythmic language, English speakers tend to reduce the intervals between stressed syllables and the degree of reduction may be according to the number of intervals. So, if they are a lot, they will be more reduced and vice versa.

In the previous section, it has been said that syllables are grouped into words. But a word is a semantic and grammatical unit, not phonological unit. The phonological unit above syllable is called foot. Some linguists had developed very important theory of English rhythm called the theory of foot. English foot starts with stressed syllable and continues up to but does not include the next stressed syllable (McMahon, 2002: 124).

Henceforth, the previous example can be divided into feet as follows:

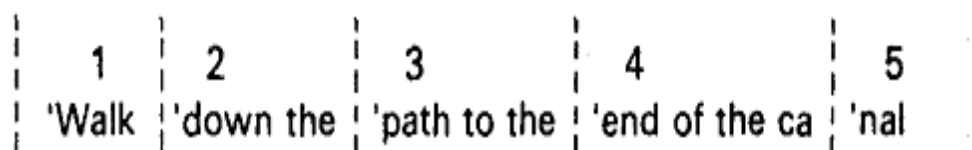


Figure2. 1 How Sentence can be divided into Feet, (Roach, 2009, p. 118).

The intervals are affected by the number of syllables within the stressed group, the time and number of vowels and consonants of each single syllable, and by different factors such as the differences of emphases put in each word (Ladefoged& Johnson, 2010).

Other theories of rhythm go beyond the foot to claim that some feet are stronger than others and this can be realized through the diagram of rhythmical structure; for example, the word twenty can be represented as:

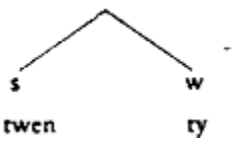


Figure2.2.Diagram of Rhythmical Structure (Ibid: p.119).

And the word places also: (Roach, 2009: 119).

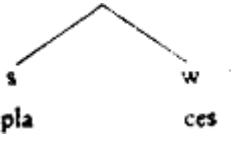


Figure2.3.Diagram of Rhythmical Structure (Ibid: p.119).

If the two words are combined in one phrase to be twenty places, the word places has obviously stronger stress than twenty, it can be represented as:

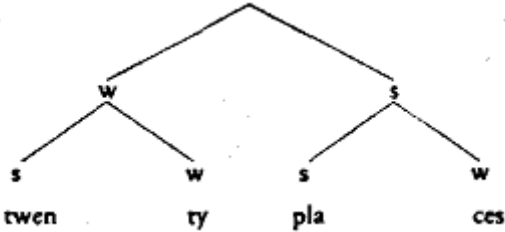


Figure2.4.Diagram of Rhythmical Structure Two words are combined in one phrase

When the above phrase is put in larger phrase, like twenty places furtherback', the diagram is developed as follows: (Ibid, p. 120).

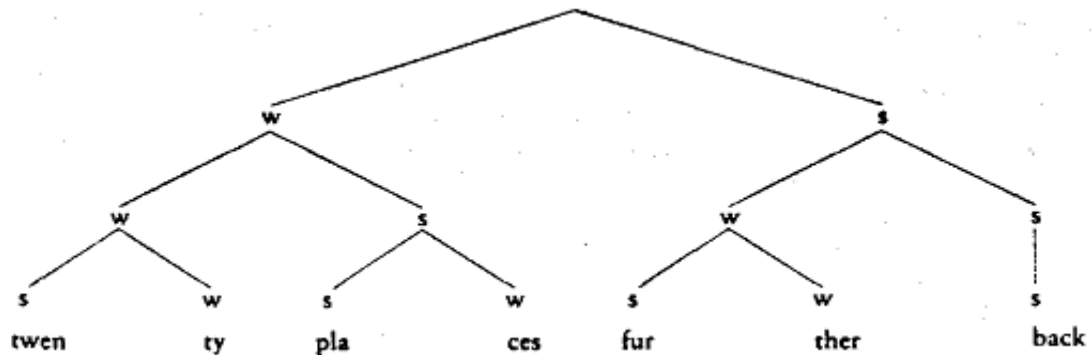


Figure 2.5. Diagram of Rhythmical Structure in Case of larger Phrase, (Ibid: p.120)

The above analysis enables us to know the relationship between strong and weak syllables and the variety of stress. The strength of any syllable can be judged through counting the number of (S) symbol above it, the symbol (W) is omitted: (Roach, 2009, p. 119).

The metrical division is only valid for slow speech, but, in daily speech, many English speakers claim that right foot of places is stronger than the left one of twenty in the phrase twenty places while the foot twenty is stronger than the foot places in twenty places further back when the speech is in conversational style.

Eventually, according to (Roach, 2009) and also in spite of the regularity in English speech, there is no strong indication to the existence of truly stress-timed rhythm. Techniques of measuring the intervals of connected speech have not explored the expected regularity, and the same techniques which have been used in measuring differences between stress-timed languages and syllable-timed languages did not explore clear differences.

## **Assimilation**

### **Definition of assimilation**

Jones (2003, p. 38) defines assimilation as follows: "*Assimilation is what happens to a sound when it is influenced by one of its neighbours; essentially it becomes more similar to a neighbour*". For Stockwell and Minkova (2001), assimilation rules are replacement rules which have the effect of making one vowel or consonant more similar to, or even identical with another. It can affect both vowels and consonants.

According to Crystal (2008), assimilation is a phonological name used to indicate the effect of one sound segment upon the articulation of a nearby sound whether between word boundaries or within a word. It is clear, as mentioned earlier, that assimilation can be split into local assimilation and long distance assimilation.

Local assimilation happens between sounds in the same consonant cluster while long distance assimilation occurs between consonants across word boundaries (De Lacy, 2007).

### **Types of assimilation**

Assimilation can be analyzed through two major perspectives. The first one is direction of influence and the second is type of influence.

#### **A. Direction of influence**

Speaking of direction of assimilation, Roach (2009) assumes that if two words are related together, the first word which ends in a single final consonant will be called (Cf), the other that begins with a single initial consonant will be called (Ci).

In accordance with this view, he proposes a diagram to show the influence as follows:

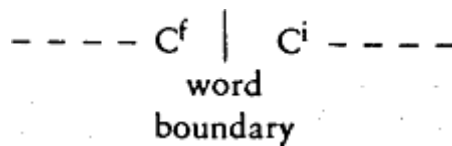


Figure 2.6 Assimilation, Word Boundary

Apropos of the direction of influence, assimilation has three categories regressive, progressive, and coalescence.

### A1/ Regressive assimilation

Regressive assimilation happens when  $C^f$  is changed to become like  $C^i$  (Roach, 2009). Skandera and Burleigh (2005) explain that regressive assimilation is much more occurring across word boundaries. The most familiar case is that when a word ends in alveolar consonant sound affected by initial consonant sound of a neighbouring word with non-alveolar place of articulation.

This can be illustrated in the phrase ‘that car’ which would be pronounced as [ðæt̩kɑ:]. The sound /t/ of ‘that’ is pronounced further back to be /k/. Another illustration would be in the phrase ‘good boy’ pronounced as [gʊdɔɪ], in which the consonant /d/ at the end of ‘good’ is articulated further forward and becomes /b/.

If assimilation has the result of two identical sound of longer articulation of two sounds, it will be then transcribed with small horizontal line to connect them e.g. [ðækk:]. Regressive assimilation within words is found in words; such as, ‘width’ in which the sound /d/ is changed into /t/ under the influence of voicing of the sound /θ/.

### A2/ Progressive assimilation

Progressive assimilation occurs when  $C^i$  is changed to become like  $C^f$  (Roach, 2009). Progressive assimilation can be found within words as well as across word boundaries.

Within words, it can be rendered by third person singular, possessive case, regular plural and regular past and past participle as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 2.2. Progressive Assimilation within Word

Word	Goes	Dentist's	Pigs	Backed
Transcription	[gəʊz]	[dentists]	[pɪgz]	[bækt]

Progressive assimilation across word boundaries, on the other hand, can be noticed in the phrase *shut your mouth*. In this situation, the sound /j/ of *your* is substituted by [ʃ], and the whole sequence becomes like [ʃʌtʃəmaʊθ].

Anyway, an important thing about progressive assimilation across word boundaries is that it is not very common in English. (Ibid)

## B. Coalescence assimilation

Coalescence assimilation takes place when there is a mutual influence between the sounds (C<sub>f</sub> and C<sub>i</sub>), i.e. in case C<sub>f</sub> is /t/ or /d/ and C<sub>i</sub> is /j/, they will be shrunk together to form affricate /tʃ/ or /dʒ/ (Ibid). For example the phrase *don't you* (/dɒnt ju:/), in which /t/ and /j/ are shrunk together to form /tʃ/. So, the result of the combination is [dɒnt tʃu:].

Another instance is the phrase *could you* in which the sounds /d/ and /j/ coalesce to form /dʒ/ then they pronounced as [kʊd dʒu:].

Within words, coalescence assimilation is seen in words like *actual*. Where /t/ and /j/ are merged together in the form of /tʃ/ then the word becomes [æktʃuəl]. Also, in the word *dual*, the sounds /d/ and /j/ are combined together to become /dʒ/. Hence, the result is [dʒu:əl].

Some words, however, have historical coalescence assimilation regarded as a normal pronunciation of the word; such as in ‘picture’ and ‘soldier’. Out of such situations, coalescence assimilation is considered as a feature of colloquial non-standard speech (Ibid).

Previously, assimilation has been discussed from the prescriptive of direction of influence. Now, it is going to be discussed from type of influence perspective.

### **Type of influence**

Assimilation, as Skandera and Burleigh (2005), is also categorized according to the type of influence into three categories: assimilation of place, manner, and voicing (intensity).

#### **A. Assimilation of place**

For Skandera and Burleigh (2005), Assimilation of place happens with respect to place of articulation and is the most frequent category that is found across word boundaries and typically regressive. Skandera and Burleigh (2005) also state that this kind is marked when Cf is alveolar and Ci is not alveolar, which in turn results in assimilation of place according to Ci features.

This could be clarified through the following Table:

Table .2.3. Assimilation of Place

Phrase	Phonetic Transcription	Phonemic transcription	Assimilated sound	Assimilated to	Type of assimilation
that person	/ðætɹpɜːsn/	/ðæptɹn/	/t/	/p/	bilabial
light blue	/laɪtbluː/	/laɪbbɫuː/	/t/	/b/	bilabial
bright colour	/braɪtkɔːlə/	/braɪkkɔːlə/	/t/	/k/	velar
quite good	/kwatgʊd/	/kwaɪggʊd/	/t/	/g/	velar

good boy	/gʊdbɔɪ/	/gʊbbɔɪ/	/d/	/b/	bilabial
good girl	/gʊdgɜ:l/	/gʊggɜ:l/	/d/	/g/	velar
does she	/dʌzʃi:/	/dʌʒʃi:/	/z/	/ʒ/	palato-alveolar
this year	/ðɪsjə/	/ðɪjɜ:/	/s/	/j/	palato-alveolar

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The essential feature of place assimilation is that the place of articulation has changed, not the voicing because voice differences at the end of words are important to indicate whether the assimilated sound is voiced or voiceless (Roach, 2009).

### **B. Assimilation of manner**

According to Skandera and Burleigh (2005), this category has much less frequency than others. It is found in the most rapid speech or even in informal one.

In this type, the tendency is for regressive and manner. It is changed toward easier consonant which makes less obstruction of airflow. It is familiar enough to find plosive changing to fricative or nasal, but final fricative or nasal cannot be changed into plosive.

Progressive assimilation of manner is happened when a word ends in plosive or nasal (Cf) followed by another one ends in /ð/ (Ci); in such situation, I becomes identical with Cf. e.g. get them /get ðem/ [get<sub>tem</sub>] e.g. in the /ɪnðə/ [ɪn<sub>n</sub> ə].

Generally, manner assimilation tends to be regressive; also it is toward another consonant with wider open between articulators, i.e. less air obstruction (Ibid).

### **C. Assimilation of voicing**

Assimilation of Voicing, according to Roach (2009), is found in restricted way in regressive direction across word boundaries. Skandera and Burleigh (2005) have opposed his

claim saying that it is more frequently regressive, but it can be progressive as well. When there is a lenis consonant, it is generally devoiced, as in the example *I have to* /ahævtə/ becomes [ahæf t̥] in which the /v/ is lenis, i.e. the /v/ is changed into /f/ under the influence of /t/ which is fortis or voiceless. This is a typical example of regressive assimilation of voicing.

Progressive assimilation of voicing, however, can be made clear by the instance *shut your mouth*, where the lenis approximant /j/ is changed into fortis /ʃ/ under the influence of fortis /t/, the statement is then pronounced like [ʃʌt ʃəmʌθ]. This category is not quite noticeable because the lenis in initial and final position are typically voiced.

Voicing assimilation within words is normally found in regular plural, possessive, third person singular, or regular form of past and past participle; such as, in the word *looked* in which the lenis /d/ is changed into fortis /t/ under the influence of fortis /k/. The statement would be pronounced like [lɒkt] and the same for the word *eggs*. This kind of assimilation is only regressive (Roach, 2009).

### **Dissimilation (the opposite of assimilation)**

In the previous section, we have discovered that a consonant can assimilate another one in some special circumstances. Contrariwise, there is also another different process in English connected speech which is called *dissimilation*; it is the opposite of assimilation.

Skandera and Burleigh (2005) define dissimilation as a process by which one sound becomes less like another, and by then the dissimilated phoneme loses one or more features that are shared with other nearby phoneme, so the result is two dissimilated sounds.

In English, the phoneme /p/ is a voiceless bilabial plosive. For example, the sentence *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers* in rapid speech some of its phonemes

dissimilated and become like others, the statement is then pronounced like *“Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled favers”*. The sound /p/ becomes less like /p/ changing the form plosive into fricative /f/. Another instance would be the word ‘pilgrim’ is from Latin root ‘peregrines’; the first /r/ dissimilated and changed into /l/. As stated in Ibid, the purpose of dissimilation is to reach greater ease of pronunciation and clarity.

Dissimilation has the same characteristics of assimilation; it can be regressive or progressive; within word or between words ..., but the significant distinction is –as previously mentioned– one phoneme becomes less like another (Ibid).

### **Elision**

Elision is the omission of sounds in connected speech where both consonants and vowels may be affected, and sometimes the whole syllables may be elided (Crystal, 2008). For Kelly (2000), the term elision describes the complete disappearance of a sound for the reason of economy of efforts in some utterances, and in some instances the difficulty of putting certain consonants sounds together. However, it is important to distinguish between cases of elision which have been established in the language for some time and those which have become current only recently.

The followings are examples of elision suggested by Kelly (2000, p. 110-111):

- **The phonemes /t/ and /d/ are elided when they are in a consonant cluster.** For example:

*The man you are looking for lives next door.* (/t/ is elided between /ks/ and /d/)

*When we reached Providence, we stopped for a lunch.* (/t/ is elided between /tʃ/ and /p/ and between /p/ and /f/)

*We bought a lovely carved statuette.* (/d/ is elided between /v/ and /st/)

- **Before consonants, the phoneme /v / is elided in the word ‘of’, as in:**
  - *You can use one of these tools to fix your bicycle.*
  - *My graduating day will be the 13th of March.*
  - *This is the second edition of the same book I gave you.*
  - *Our next meeting will be the 6th of June.*
- **Complex consonant clusters are usually simplified.**
  - *This book has a lot of good texts that you can use for your lesson. (/teksts/ can be simplified into /teks/)*
  - *It is strange how Tim changed; he acts as if he never knew me. (/ækts/ can be Simplified into /æks/)*
- **/ ə / can disappear in unstressed syllables.**
  - *I think she would rather call the police. (/ə/ can disappear in the first syllable of police)*
  - *Lidia sounds a very interesting person. (/ə/ is elided in most cases)*

Another prominent example of elision is the contraction of grammatical forms, which are used frequently in spoken language. Roach (2009) states that to consider contractions whether they are a feature of elision or not is not easy, but the way they are represented in spelling make them differ from other types. The most common types are as suggested by Roach (2009, p.125-126).

- 'had' and 'would' are spelt 'd (pronounced /d/ after vowels and [əd] after consonants).
- 'is' and 'has' are spelt 's (pronounced [s] after fortis consonants and [z] after lenis consonants, except that after [s, z, ʃ, tʃ, dʒ] 'is' is pronounced [ɪz]).
- 'will' is spelt 'll (pronounced [l] after vowels and [l̩] after consonants).
- 'have' is spelt 've (pronounced [v] after vowels and [əv] after consonants).

- 'not' is spelt n't (pronounced [nt] after vowels and [n̩t] after consonants).
- 'are' is spelt 're [pronounced [ə] after vowels, usually with some change in the preceding vowel (e.g. /'you' ju:/- 'you're' [jʊə] or [jɔ:],  
'we' /wi:/ - 'we're' [weɪə], 'they' [/ðeɪ/ - 'they're' [ðeə])

### **Linking and intrusion**

The connection of two groups of words together is referred to as linking which occurs in connected speech when words within the same phrase or sentence often blend together (Crystal, 2008). Additionally, Dretzke (1998) defines linking as one of the typical features of spoken English; in which there is a smooth connection of sounds. Moreover, he added that linking can be vowel to vowel, consonant to vowel, and consonant to consonant.

#### **a- Linking of vowel to consonant**

When a word or syllable ends in /i/, /ɪ/, /a/, /e/, or /ɪ/ and the following word or syllable begins with a vowel; there is a linking glide represented with the phonetic symbol [j].

e.g. *say it* [seɪjt] / *my answer* [maɪjænsə].

Similarly, when a word or syllable ends in /u:/, /əʊ/, or /aʊ/ and the following word or syllable begins with a vowel; there is a linking there is a linking glide represented with the phonetic symbol [w].

#### **b- Linking of consonant to vowel (resyllabification)**

If a word ends in a consonant and the next word begins with a vowel, use that consonant to begin the syllable of the following word.

e.g. *down and out* - *rush out* - *back up*

If a word ends in a consonant cluster (more than one consonant) and the next word begins with a vowel, do the same.

*e.g. left arm - pushed up - rest area*

### c- Linking of consonant to consonant (germination)

When you link two consonants that are the same, do not say the sound twice; rather, say the consonant once, but make it longer.

*e.g. big girls - nice summer - with them*

[bɪg:z:lz] - [naɪs:ʌmə] - [wɪð:əm]

In phonetic transcription, it will be represented with the length mark [:].

Another instance of linking which is found in many accents of English (in rhotic accent) is called linking /r/. The term is referred to as between two words by articulating a generally unarticulated final /r/ which is finitely preceded by a vowel in the same word and followed by initial-word vowel in consecutive word. So, words like *‘far’* and *‘for’* are not pronounced with /r/ suggested by spelling, normally they end in long vowels, transcribed as /fa:/ and /fɔ:/, but when these words are followed by another one that begins with a vowel such as in the consequences *‘far away’* and *‘four eggs’*, the sound is articulated and the transcription becomes [fa:r weɪ] and [fɔ:r eɡz]. In contrast with the transcription of other types of linking, linking /r/ is transcribed in its normal position and size (Skandera&Burleigh, 2005).

The third type of linking is known as intrusive /r/. This term has been defined by Roach (2009) as linking two consequent vowels belonging to different words, or less common to different syllables of one word by inserting /r/ sound which is not originally justified. There are the hiatus of consecutive as in *‘media event’*, *‘Australia all out’*, *‘drawing’*, *‘visa application’*, etc may be substituted by intrusive /r/ transcribed like [mi:diar vent],

[əʊstreɪlɪə:ɪəʊt], [drɔ:ɪŋg], [vi:zər əplikeɪn]. The intrusive /r/ is superscripted in **r** and on the top of previous word (Ibid).

Speaking of linking and intrusion leads us to clarify two significant accents in English. The first one is non-Rhotic accent in which /r/ sound is not articulated at the end of speech or after a pause. In this type of accent, the word loses its final /r/ by historical transmission. Such accent is common in England and less common in US. On the other hand, the second type of accent is called Rhotic accent in which /r/ sound is articulated whenever it is suggested by spelling. This accent is much dominant in US and less used in UK (Ibid).

### **Juncture**

When words and phrases are pronounced in isolation; they could easily be recognized. However, spoken language consists of continuous strings of speech with just few pauses between them. Some speaker and listener are often face difficulties to detect where word ends and another one starts because it cannot be identified by phonetic or phonological feature. How they can distinguish an utterance like [naɪtreɪt] whether is *“nitrate”* or *“night rate”*, and also [əneɪm] is it *“a name”* or *“an aim”*. Such phenomenon is called Juncture (Roach, 2009).

According to Crystal (2008), juncture is a term used in phonology and phonetic boundary feature which may demarcate grammatical unit such as morpheme word or clause. In juncture, we have to put into consideration the relationship between the sound and the preceding and following sounds. This has been illustrated through the utterance *“myturn”*.

In this utterance, the relation between /aɪ/ and /t/ because there is no pause between the two words to indicate their boundary. English speakers do not mix and usually know the target word is *“may turn”* [maɪtʒ:n] and not *“might rain”* [maɪtʒ:n]. The crucial question is

‘how can we recognize the difference?’ The sound /t/ is completely aspirated in [t̟ n] and it does not when it is the final of [maɪt]; furthermore, the diphthong [aɪ] is shorter in [maɪt] (Roach, 2009).

Juncture has been divided into open and close juncture if a word in a question is not preceded and followed by a pause, i.e. when word borders are uttered together, this typically internal open juncture, and when a border is followed by a pause when the word in a question found at the end of speech, we speak about external open juncture. Close open juncture, on the other side, refers to transition within word boundaries.

### Reduction in English

In English, there are some words, strictly function words, have two prominent realizations. One of which is called strong form if the word is pronounced in isolation or found in a stressed position. The second realization is called weak form, in which a vowel sound affected in both quality and quantity and reduced to shorter one, i.e. vowels can be short or long and vary in height and backness. Reduced vowels lose some of their possibilities and reduced to /ɪ, ʊ, ə/. So, vowel reduction in English supports a productive phonological regularity in the language.

Here are some examples of differences of pronunciation of function words in isolation and in connected speech:

Table 2.4. Differences of Pronunciation of Function Words

Word in Isolation	Transcription	Word in Context	Transcription
At	/æt/	at home	ət'həʊm

and	/ænd/	you and I	'ju:ən 'aɪ
She	/ʃi:/	will she come	wɪlʃi'kʌm
For	/fɔ:r/	for better or worse	fə'betər ə'wɜ:s
Are	/ɑ:/	they are gone	ðeɪ ə 'gʌn

The reduction of vowels in English is closely related to stress placement in words. This can be clarified by word class pairs, i.e. words have the same spelling form and different class. Such as the word protest' when it is used as a noun, it pronounced as ['prəʊtest] with diphthong in the first syllable's centre. The same diphthong /əʊ/ is reduced to /ə/ when it is pronounced as a verb, the pronunciation becomes [prə'test].

Another case of vowel reduction is when suffixes are attached to the word, and this causes stress shift from one syllable to another and consequently vowel reduction. In the word torrent' [tɔrənt], the centre of the first syllable is /ɔ/ when we add suffix al'(torrential), the stress is shifted to the first syllable, and the first syllable's centre is reduced to schwa [tɔrənʃəl] (Laszlo, 2014).

Pronunciation research and teaching focus not solely on the above-mentioned features, but also on other supra-segmental features—that is, vocal effects that extend over more than one sound—such as stress and intonation.

## Other supra-segmental features

### Stress

#### Stress definition

Jones (1991) defines stress as a property of syllables which makes them stand out more noticeable than others. Stress can be defined as a stronger muscular effort both respiratory and articulatory, which we can feel in relation with some syllables as opposed to others.

Stress, as an integral part of word shape, is the key of the pronunciation of a word and its localization should always be learnt within the word itself. Stressed syllables tend to be longer, louder, and produced with greater effort than unstressed syllables (Hewings&Goldstein, 1999). Stress is very important because its position can change the meaning or the function of the words.

### **Stress placement**

Since there are no firm rules regarding the placement of stress because there are always exceptions, students should learn every word with its stress. However, there are still some common points to take into consideration when placing stress and they are often useful for language learners.

Kelly (2000) summarizes the rules of word stress as follows:

- ✓ **Prefixes and suffixes:** It is useful to know that English prefixes and suffixes are usually unstressed. Thus, words including prefixes or suffixes are not usually stressed on the syllable containing the prefixes or suffixes. For example, QUIetly, deFEctive, and in EViTable. Still, there are some exceptions as: BIcycle, DISlocate.
- ✓ **Core vocabulary:** A lot of two-syllable nouns and adjectives tend to be stressed on the first syllable. For example, MOther, SISter, TaBle, WAter, and COFfee.
- ✓ **Compound words:** Stress is often regular in compound words; usually the first word in the compound word is stressed. Whether written as one word or separated, this does

not affect the stress placement on compound words. For example, DRUG store, CLASSroom, HAIRcut, and AIRplane.

✓ **Words with two grammatical functions:** There are some words that can be used as verb and noun. Here, it is the stress that determines which is the verb and which is the noun; nouns will be stressed on the first syllable while verbs on the last syllable. For example, INcrease (n), inCREASE(v). IMport (n), imPORT(v), TRANSfer (n), transFER(v).

Though the rules of stress placement have exceptions, it is always useful for students to get used to them. When they get familiar with them, they will save time to memorize the stress placement of many vocabulary items. Thus teachers are advised to make sure that their students master the major stress placements.

## **Intonation**

### **Definition of intonation**

Wells (1996) defines intonation as the melody of speech. In studying intonation, we study how the pitch of the voice rises and falls.

A comprehensive definition of intonation is provided by Levis (1999, p. 37), he views it as: *“the quality of language that includes both rhythm and melody, and is produced by tonal height and depth along with stress, volume and varying length of pause.”*

For Cruttenden (1997), intonation involves the occurrence of recurring speech patterns, each of which is used with a set of relatively consistent meanings, either on single words or on groups of words of varying length.

## **The importance of intonation**

- ✓ Roach (2009) summarizes the importance of intonation as follows:  
Intonation can indicate different types of utterance, such as statement and question; when there is a fall-rise of voice, this means a yes or no question, if the voice only falls, so it is a statement.
- ✓ Intonation gives the listener a lot of information about what is being said; it can signal politeness. As in the example Can you lend me some money? When the voice falls in the last word money, this indicates politeness.
- ✓ Intonation indicates the attitudes and emotions of the speaker; a sentence as **'I think it is time to go now'** can be said in three different ways, happily, angrily, or sadly.

All in all, intonation needs to be taught explicitly in the classroom and integrated in almost all work such as in teaching listening, speaking, and grammar. Learners also need to be aware of it at receptive and productive levels.

After tackling almost all the aspects of connected speech and taking a look to the uttermost salient ones and the other supra-segmental features, it is compulsory to uncover some problems that L2 learners usually come across whenever they are put in front of cases of application.

### **Learners' problems in applying aspects of connected speech:**

Connected speech is one of the aspects essential for successful communication, which leads to effective auditory perception and speech production. Getting acquainted to its aspects can play the role of assistant when delivering and receiving a communicative message.

According to Crystal (2008), L2 learners have problems regarding the use of the aspects of connected speech; in other words, they cannot apply these aspects in a way similar to that of native speakers while some of them cannot apply these aspects at all. Moreover, Those aspects of connected speech are not much integrated in middle and secondary schools curriculum.

Besides, in spite of their inclusion in the university syllabi, teachers have some difficulties delivering the content in a proper way. Another reason is lack or even absence of well-equipped laboratories as well as the absence of activities that have its impact on this problem.

If we take a closer look to the way of L2 students' speech, we will discover that they speak rhythmically; they cannot maintain the natural rhythm of English (according to the prominence of syllables) by the overuse of pauses.

Another problem is that L2 students pronounce words as they are, i.e. without necessary changes that happen naturally in the course of speech. For instance, they cannot apply assimilation aspects, except those types happen as a result of a mother tongue influence; also, they do not use elision effectively as a mean of maintaining language rhythmicity and the same thing for linking (Ibid).

In order to overcome those problems, some suggested strategies are to be put into action as solution to teach, learn, and deploy the aspects of connected with great ease.

### **Teaching and Learning Connected Speech Strategies**

Learners often attempt to pronounce each individual word so clearly that they fail to blend words within a single thought group smoothly. This can cause speech to be unnatural. All languages have some rules concerning adjustments in connected speech. However, no

other language has exactly the same rules as English, teaching the conventions that are specific to English in the pedagogical challenge.

There are several ways and strategies to overcome the challenge. Only three strategies for teaching and learning aspects of connected speech would be presented according to Hamad (2014, p. 206-210).

### **Strategy One: Using Audio Files**

The teacher uses a CD or DVD audio or video file where one or two people are communicating naturally. It would be good to keep in mind the relevance of the content to the students to help students work on the features that the teacher aims at investigating. It could be a tape of the teachers himself or somebody else. The students will listen to the file once. The teacher briefly explains the aspect of connected speech you are discussing and focusing on (for instance, assimilation, elision or any other aspect) and plays the file again up to the first example of the use of the chosen aspect of connected speech.

The teacher stops at this point and may write on the board the example found and provide transcription and explanation of the underlying factor of the process. The teacher then asks the students to listen carefully to the sound and try to spot the next example of elision for instance and whoever spots an example should shout out. At this point the tape should be stopped and the teacher asks the students to specify the example and explain it to the rest of the class and even coming to the board and writing the full form and the elided form in this case.

The students can discuss whether the spotted example is appropriate or not while the teacher is observing students' discussions. The students will listen to the whole file again, then they are asked to identify as much as they can from the aspects of connected speech. They are asked to compare it with the one next to them or any other partner. Here, pair work is helpful

to find out the aspects of connected speech and then explain the factors together. Then the transcript is given to the students to compare what they have spotted with what is actually found and then play the tape again. Ask individual students to practice specific parts. Consider this example which is an audio file. Students first will listen to the whole text:

*Opera refers to a dramatic art form, originating in Europe, in which the emotional content is conveyed to the audience as much through music, both vocal and instrumental, as it is through the lyrics. By contrast, in musical theatre an actor's dramatic performance is primary, and the music plays a lesser role. The drama in opera is presented using the primary elements of theatre such as scenery, costumes, and acting. However, the words of the opera, or libretto, are sung rather than spoken. The singers are accompanied by a musical ensemble ranging from a small instrumental ensemble to a full symphonic orchestra.*

The teacher then explains the aspect of connected speech that he needs to study in this lesson, let's suppose that it is assimilation and elision. The teacher will give a definition of each along with some examples. Then, the teacher will play the audio file again until the spot of the first example of assimilation and elision where he stops. The teacher explains the underlying factors; for instance, the effect of surrounding and adjacent sounds. Then, the teacher asks the students to listen very carefully again and shout when they spot the next example. The audio file is played again and is stopped as soon as students shout out the example. The student is asked to write the example and try to provide an explanation for the aspect. This will go on till the end of the audio file. The students are required to write down examples in their notebooks and then compare it with the one next to them to see if they have spotted the same examples. The teacher then provides the whole transcribed text to the students to compare it with what they have written down and discuss it with their partners.

This strategy is very helpful for students as it leads to building their self-confidence and yields better learning outcome because it is learning by doing practically. It is always good for the teacher to have more than one exercise available in class because one of the texts might not work due to technological problems and simply might not be of interest to students.

### **Strategy Two: Using Transcribed Written Pieces**

The teacher provides a short dialogue or passage to the students in writing, asks the individual students to identify the aspects of connected speech, and then share it with a partner. The teacher asks students to read out the passage or role-play dialogue focusing on the aspects of connected speech.

The teacher asks the rest of the class to compare what they hear from colleagues to the ones they have identified to themselves. Students will be asked to explain each aspect and groups similar aspects together and present the underlying factor in each case. When this activity is done with some students groups, then the teacher provides a transcribed version of the dialogue or passage to the students or writes piece by piece on the board , identifying the aspects in bold or italics or underlined , so that the students can easily spot them and compare it with their own version.

A number of students can be asked to practice the correct version on the stage and the teacher can add some final comments and notes on each aspect and provide more similar examples if time allows.

Consider the following sample exercise. First, the teacher gives this short passage to the students and asks them to underline or identify the aspects of connected speech.

*Extract from Bill Bryson,*

*London cab drivers are, without question, the finest in the world. They're trustworthy, safe, generally friendly, always polite. They keep their vehicles spotless inside and out, and they'll put themselves to the most extraordinary inconvenience to drop you at the front entrance of your destination. There are really only two odd things about them. One is that they cannot drive more than two hundred feet in a straight line. I've never understood this, but no matter where you are or what the driving conditions, every two hundred feet a little bell goes off in their heads and they abruptly lunge down a side street. And when you get to your hotel or railway station or wherever it is you are going, they like to drive you all the way around it at least once so that you can see it from all angles.*

*“Notes from a Small Island”*

The students will be asked to work with a partner and compare their answers. Each group will be asked to read out the passage at normal speed and concentrating on the aspect where they need to slow down. The teacher asks the rest of the class if what they say is true or not to them, then goes on with another group till the next example and so on. Along with the aspect identified, the teacher asks for explanation of the underlying factor. When the whole passage is read out, the teacher provides a transcribed version of the passage. The teacher asks the students to compare their answers with the correct version of the transcription and the aspects. Any exceptional case is to be clarified by the teacher as well.

### **Strategy Three: Word Count Technique**

In this strategy the teacher provides fully transcribed short passages without identifying word boundaries except for punctuation marks. The students are asked to identify word boundaries and then spot the aspects of connected speech in the passage.

The students need to work in small groups as this will save time and effort. Individual students from each group will be selected to present the passage aloud and the rest of the class are asked to compare it with their own version. Then, other students will be asked to present aspects of connected speech. In some cases, individual students are asked to write the sentence on the board sentence by sentence until the whole passage is written on the board.

The teacher provides the fully transcribed text to the students. Then, he asks them to count the number of words. This will oblige the students to work hard in order to separate the merged words as the result of aspects of connected speech. This will lead to the reinforcement of the aspects in students mind because this has become the problem-solving activity for them.

The students are asked to compare their answers with a partner. When they are done, the teacher will provide the ordinary text to the students and asks them to see where they have made a mistake.

Extract from William Trevor, the Paradise Lounge

*In those days adultery and divorce had belonged more in America and England, read about and alien to what already was being called the 'Irish way of life'. 'Decent, Catholic Ireland,' Father Horan used to say. The term was vague and yet had meaning. The emergent nation, seeking pillars on which to build itself, had plumped for holiness and the Irish language, natural choices in the circumstances. 'A certain class of woman,' old Father Horan used to say, 'constitutes abhorrence.'*

Some sample mistakes need to be explained by the teacher for the whole class in order to show the students the reasons that resulted in the mistake.

It is always good for the teacher to have more than one exercise available in class because one of the texts might not work due to technological problems and simply might not be of interest to students. Here are two other similar texts for the exercises which can be easily applied using this strategy for teaching aspects of connected speech.

## **Conclusion**

When training students to produce a fluent and correct English pronunciation, we need to work hard on all pronunciation features, not only at the level of vowels, consonants, stress and intonation, but also on all the other aspects of connected speech that have been discussed. Introducing these features to learners will be of a great benefit in all cases. When students are aware of the presence of these features, they will be aware of how the sound system in English works; hence, they will pay more attention to them and will improve their pronunciation of English gradually. In order to improve students' pronunciation of English and increase their fluency and comprehensibility, it is very important for teachers of EFL to introduce all these features in the classroom.

## Chapter Three

### **Field of Work**

#### **Introduction**

The focus of this section is on the research design and methodologies used in this study. The chapter starts by specifying the variables, population, and sample of the study. The section then deals with the research methodology in which the main schools of thought about knowledge creation are outlined pointing to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches. It also tackles the research design chosen for this study which is the descriptive research.

In the next step, the section describes the tools used to collect data, that is, the teachers' and students' questionnaires, classroom observation, and diagnostic test. Data collection procedures and analysis wrap up this section.

## **Research variables**

This study is about investigating the students' perceptions towards aspects of connected speech to develop phonological accuracy. The study thus contains two variables, independent and dependent. The independent variable is the –students' perceptions towards aspects of connected speech| while the dependent is –developing phonological accuracy|.

## **Population and sample of the study**

The research is conducted among third-year EFL students in M'sila University. This choice was based on the belief that third-year students are taught the aspects of connected speech in their second year, and they, normally, have a comprehensive understanding of those aspects.

Generally, it is impossible to work with the whole population because it consumes time and effort. Hence, among all third-year students, a representative sample of thirty-three students was selected randomly to answer the questionnaire, observed, and diagnostically tested. As for the teachers, five EFL teachers participated in this study.

## **Research Paradigm and Related Methodologies**

In educational research, the term paradigm is used to describe the researcher's worldview (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In other words, as Kivunja & Kuyini (2017) explains, a paradigm constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how s/he interprets and acts within that world. It is the lens through which a researcher looks at the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017b). Also, it is the conceptual lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project in order to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analyzed.

A paradigm is composed of four components, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited in (Subhi et al., 2016), viz epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology. Because these four elements comprise the basic assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values that each paradigm holds and understanding them determines which paradigm the research is guided by; it is thus crucial to know what each of these elements mean.

- **Epistemology:** Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define epistemology as the study of ways of how we come to know something, the truth, or reality. Slavin (1984) clarifies that the sources on which the researcher relies determine the type of epistemology. That is, if they depend on beliefs, faith, and intuition; the type of epistemology is intuitive. If data gathered from the people in the know, books, leaders in organizations, or the like; then the epistemology is authoritative. Logical epistemology, however, favors reason to be the way to knowing the truth. As for empirical epistemology, it leans towards experiences as the best source to obtaining knowledge.

- **Ontology:** is concerned with the philosophical assumptions, concepts, or propositions about the nature of reality in order for a researcher to understand how they make meaning of the data gathered; to orientate their thinking about the research problem and its significance; and to know how they might approach it so as to answer their research questions, understand the problem investigated, and contribute to its solution (Kivunja&Kuyini, 2017).

- **Methodology:** methodology of a paradigm is generally used to refer to the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used in an investigation that is well planned to uncover something (Keeves, 1997).

Axiology, on the other hand and as Kivunja and Kuyini explain(2017), has to do with the ethical issues and considerations that need to be accounted for when planning and carrying

out any research. In that, a researcher should have best ethical conduct and an understanding of what is right or wrong behaviour as they conduct the research.

Although many paradigms have been proposed by researchers, Candy (1989) believes that three thrust taxonomies can group them all. These taxonomies are Positivist, Interpretive, and Critical paradigms.

A fourth paradigm, however, that takes from the three has been added is the so-called Pragmatic paradigm or mixed method (Tashakkori&Teddie, 2003a; 2003b). Let us have a brief look at each of these.

- **Positivist paradigm:** Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) hold that Positivist paradigm which was first pioneered by the French philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857), postulates that knowledge about social phenomena is discovered by virtue of observation and experiment in that the context is unimportant, and it is a worldview to research that is based on the scientific method of investigation which involves a process of experimentation used to explore observations and answer questions in order to search for cause and effect relationships in nature.

Also, they claim that research located in this paradigm relies on deductive logic, that is, formulation of hypotheses, testing them, offering operational definitions and mathematical equations, calculations, and extrapolations and expressions so that to derive conclusions; i.e. it depends on measurable outcomes to draw conclusions.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000), as cited in (Kivunja&Kuyini, 2017), suggest that those measurable outcomes are to be supported by four assumptions, namely determinism (it means the researcher needs to determine that the other factors cause the observed events), empiricism (the researcher is in need of collecting verifiable empirical data so as to support

the theoretical framework and to test the formulated hypotheses), parsimony (the conducted research should be as economic as possible), and generalizability (the obtained results ought to be applicable to other situations when the research is carried out elsewhere).

Owing to these assumptions, it is necessary of Positivists to put quantitative research methods in use as major means to gather, analyse, interpret, and understand data. In their belief, the results of inquiry can thus be quantified (Kivunja&Kuyini, 2017).

And so, one can conclude that, in accordance with Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the four foundational elements of Positivist paradigm are the following: objectivist epistemology which means through research and application of reason, researchers gain the ability to understand the surrounding world more objectively; naïve realist ontology, say, the belief that truth or knowledge is ‘out there to be discovered’ by research; experimental methodology, that is, the manipulation and the ability to control the variables or subjects being studied in order to test and accept or reject hypotheses; and beneficence axiology, meaning disagreeable and bad output should be minimized and good outcomes ought to be maximized.

Four criteria any Positivist has to take into consideration at a time of validating research positioned in this paradigm are, as Burns (200) states, internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) elaborate on internal validity to be the extent to which the results obtained in a study are attributable to the independent variable that explains their occurrence and not some other factors; in other words, it is the extent to which a researcher is able to eliminate confounding variables within the study.

On the contrary, external validity is defined by Prochaska, F. (2017) as the degree to which the outcomes of a study can be generalized to other settings. Reliability, in contrast, refers to the extent to which results are consistent and stable in the same context and with the same methods as well as the same research participants (Joppe, 2000).

Finally, objectivity, according to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), is having to remain distanced from what is being studied so that the findings of the research will depend on the nature of the data themselves rather than on the researcher's preferences, personality, beliefs, and values. Accordingly, by the application of the four above mentioned criteria, Positivists are legitimately able to announce that the study is valid.

- **Interpretivist:** As for the Interpretivist or Constructivist paradigm emphasizes that realities are multiple and socially constructed, and ergo the context is vital for getting knowledge and knowing (Bodgan&Biklen, 1998). Simply put, their goal is to understand the viewpoint of the observed subject instead of that of the observer's making use of qualitative research methods (Kivunja&Kuyini, 2017). In this paradigm, theory comes after the research resulting from its obtained data (strauss&Corbin, 1990), so as to describe the research within this paradigm as inductive (strauss& Corbin, 1990). In this view, there is mutual interdependency between causes and effects. This worldview to research, however, holds a subjectivist epistemology, relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and a balanced axiology. Below, these elements are explained in short.

Punch (2005) clarifies that a subjectivist epistemology assumes that the researcher interprets data through their own point of view on the basis of their personal experiences of the real life as they interact with their subjects being studied.

On one hand, relativist ontology, as Chalmers, Manley, and Wasserman (2005) elucidate, proposes that by means of interactions between the researcher and the subjects of the research multiple realities can be discovered in the situation being under investigation.

A naturalist methodology, on the other hand, needs from the researcher to play the role of an observer, and such as interviews, discourses, text messages, reflective sessions, etc are the chief source of collecting data to be deployed (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

At last, when the assumption is being that the outcome of the research will reflect the values of the researcher, trying to present a balanced report of the findings, then the axiology is called a balanced axiology (Kivunja&Kuyini, 2017).

Speaking of the validation of the research, Guba (1981) proclaims that Interpretivist research demands from the researcher to consider these four fundamental criteria to ensure that the study is valid. These include credibility, dependability, conformability, and transformability in preference successively to internal validity, reliability, objectivity, and external validity of that of Positivists paradigm (Guba, 1981). In this approach, generalizability of the findings is not accounted because the results cannot practically be generalized as long as Interpretivist research is context-specific (Erlandson et al. 1993). Herein, every criterion is unpacked.

Guba (1981) explicates that credibility is the ability to say the findings are believable, trustworthy, or authentic. To put it another way, the research is credible when the results align firmly with reality as a result of the construction among researchers and their participants (Merriam, 1998).

Unlike Positivist paradigm which results in similar findings in dissimilar contexts (reliability), Interpretivist paradigm brings about antonymous findings within synonomous contexts due to the fact that Interpretivists deal with human behaviour which is, by its nature, constantly variable, contextual, subject to multiple interpretations of reality (Guba, 1981). Consequently, he adds, Interpretivist researcher should infer and interpret data with regard to their own viewpoint depending on their ability and skills to ensure that the findings truly emerge from the data collected.

From this standpoint, Guba (1981) defines dependability as the ability to observe the same outcome or finding under similar circumstances. Conformability has to do with the

extent to which the research results can be confirmed by others in the field, i.e. when other researchers in the field achieve as equal as that researcher has achieved, then the study is said to be confirmable (Shenton, 2004).

And when it comes to transferability, Linclon and Buba (1985) explain that researchers need to provide sufficient contextual data about their research so that readers of their findings can relate those findings to their own contexts. In conclusion, according to Interpretivist paradigm, if the study is credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable; it hence deserves to earn the quality of validity.

- **Critical / Transformative paradigm:** A third distinction has been made in the literature between paradigms is the Critical / Transformative paradigm. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) tried to make clear critical paradigm as follows. This paradigm relates itself to the issues of the social justice, especially in politics, sociology, and economics which in turn engender social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures. It has been given the name Transformative paradigm because it seeks to transform those atrocious, social issues to be improved, straightforward, and just.

This view assumes transactional epistemology (knowledge is obtained through the interactions between the researcher and participants), historical realist ontology (situating knowledge historically and socially), dialogic methodology (depending on practice and the use of participatory research), and respecting cultural norms is the major concern of its axiology.

- **Pragmatic Paradigm:** An inclusive paradigm has come into existence as a reaction to Positivists and Constructivists paradigms which advocates the use of mixed methods as a pragmatic way to access the ‘truth’ about the real world as well as human behaviour is known as Pragmatic paradigm (Kivunja&Kuyini, 2017).

This paradigm, however, goes for a relational epistemology (i.e. relationships in research are best determined by what the researcher deems appropriate to that particular study), a non-singular reality ontology (that there is no single reality and all individuals have their own and unique interpretations of reality), a mixed methods methodology (a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods), and a value-laden axiology (conducting research that benefits people) (Kivunja&Kuyini , 2017, p.35). This approach emphasizes workability‘ and suitability‘ in research (Creswel, 2003; Tashakkori&Teddlie, 2003; Patton, 1990; and Mertens, 2015).

After we have explained research paradigms and the assumptions related to each, our at hand research in quest of what works and suits well‘ for the purpose of the study necessitates a methodology which is a mixture of both qualitative (observations, interviews, case studies, etc) and quantitative (surveys, questionnaires, experiments, etc) research methods, an axiology that minimizes harm and benefits all people with no exception, an ontology that advocates the claim that reality is not single yet differs according to the individuals‘ own interpretations, and an epistemology with the assumption that relationships in research are best determined by what the researcher deems appropriate to that particular study.

At any case, because these assumptions can solely be found in Pragmatic paradigm and work suitably as well as appropriately for the aim of our study, our paradigm choice would go for Pragmatic paradigm as a worldview of ours to research.

## **Research Design**

Researchers when conducting a piece of research need to follow a predetermined plan or as it is overtly known research design. Research design by definition is a master plan

specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing the needed information' (Zikmund, 1988, p.41).

In this case, it is compulsory for the researcher to prepare an appropriate research design that serves the purpose of the study since it controls the whole research (Kahn, 2008). The present study chose the descriptive design, since the aim is to investigate EFL students' perceptions towards the aspects of connected speech and their usefulness to become phonologically accurate, so as to explore and describe the case as it is in present.

- **Descriptive Design**

Burns and Grove (2001) state that 'descriptive designs help to identify problems in a current practice with a view to improve outcomes' (p.248). To put it another way, this design seeks to discover and depict real-life situations in present. The results of this design may take the form of texts, drawings, Tables, graphs, statistical notions (mean, mode, median, etc), or maps (Lans&Voordt, 2002).

Therefore, the study in hand opted for the descriptive method to provide a clear vision on EFL students' perceptions towards aspects of connected speech at University of M'sila, Algeria, during the academic year 2019-2020. Anyway, as this design utilizes questionnaires, observations, interviews, surveys, and so on as tools to collect data; this study only used a questionnaires for EFL students and teachers, a classroom observation, and diagnostic test.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In the descriptive design, we opted for two questionnaires, observation and a diagnostic test as the main data gathering tools.

### **Questionnaire**

As for the definition of a questionnaire, according to Brown (2001), as cited in Dornyei (2003),—questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers (p.06).

That is to say, questionnaires represent any form of list of questions which need to be answered; they can be list of questions, checklists, multiple choice items, and/or other sorts (Dornyei, 2003).

### **Teachers' Questionnaire**

In order to investigate teachers' perception, awareness, and articulation of aspects of connected speech in their classroom; the researcher implemented a questionnaire in the research process.

In this study, the teachers will receive a set of questions which will help us analyzing their various answers for the same situation to determine their genuine perceptions concerning aspects of connected speech. That is to say, analyzing teachers' questionnaires will assist in going beyond the numerical data to interpreting their own proper responses. Moreover, the implementation of questionnaires techniques would help in treating in-depth the respondents' perceptions and views.

- **Types of the Questions:**

In order to collect the necessary information, three types of questions were used in this investigation: closed-ended questions, multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions. That is, qualitative and quantitative data.

-The closed-ended questions are designed using the Likert Scale. For example,

**Question 7:** Pronunciation instructions should be designed to prepare the students to communicate effectively in natural speech.

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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-In the multiple choice questions, the teachers are asked to choose the appropriate answer. For illustration,

**Question 4:**How long have you been teaching English?

- a) One to five years  b) Five to ten years  c) More than ten years

- To allow the participants express themselves more freely and direct their answers according to their own understanding, a set of open-ended questions were articulated in this study. For instance,

**Questions21:** Do you opt for this statement: *–Students should be aware of and have good perception of all different aspects of connected speech in order for them to be phonologically accurate.!*? (Elaborate, please!)

- **The Structure of the Teacher’s Questionnaire**

The teachers’ questionnaire contains twenty-eight (28) questions divided into three main sections. The first section is concerned with general information about the teachers. The second section is devoted to probe teachers’ perception, awareness, and their opinion towards aspects of connected speech. The third section investigates aspects of connected speech instructions that may be utilized by EFL teachers. Simply put, the **Table3.1** summarizes the structure of the questionnaire.

Table3.1. Structure of the Teachers' Questionnaire

Section			04
1	Personal information	items 1,2,3 and 4	items
Section	Perception and awareness	items 5,6,7,8,9, 10 and 11 closed-ended question	11
2		items 19,20,21 and 22 open-ended questions	items
Section	Practices	items 12,13,14,15,16,17 and 18 closed ended questions	13
3		items 23,24,25,26,27,28 open ended questions	items
Total			28
			items

### Students' Questionnaire

Indeed, a questionnaire can be easily constructed, administered, and processed on a large scale. Plus, it leads to a quick and efficient collection of large amounts of data about the participants. Ergo, a questionnaire was distributed to a sample of EFL students in order to gain more insights into the students' perception and awareness of the phonological accurate pronunciation and to evaluate the situation where aspects of connected speech may be used to maintain successful production and perception of utterances.

- **Types of the Questions**

Most of the questions used in the students' questionnaire were closed-ended, in addition to taking into consideration the preferences of the students (see the results of the pilot study), two open-ended questions, and the rest are multiple choice. The

accumulation of the different types of questions could be sufficient to have good understanding of the participants. Hence, better the results would be.

-The closed-ended questions were designed mainly to ensure that the answers can reach the different angles of the investigation and variables. Additionally, closed-ended questions can be easily collected, processed, and interpreted. In this study most of the closed-ended questions are designed using the Likert Scale. Such as,

**Question7:** Listening improves phonological accuracy.

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
--	---------------------------------------	------------------------------------	---

- The multiple choice questions can easily allow the students to select the answers that fit their preferences. For demonstration,

**Question4:** Which language skill you most focus on ?

<input type="radio"/> <b>Reading</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Writing</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Listening</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Speaking</b>
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- Conversely to the closed-ended questions, the open –ended questions in this study gave more room for further answers. Like,

**Question11:**If yes, according to you, what are the aspects of connected speech?

- **The Structure of the Student’s Questionnaire**

The students questionnaire contains (18 items) divided into three sections. The first section is concerned with personal information as well as the background of the students which could provide more insights into their view towards the subject of the study. The second section could gradually guide the participant to jet down their perception and degree of awareness about their own quality of pronunciation. The third

section was designed basically to assess students' perception towards aspect of connected speech and to measure the existence of those aspects in their utterances and classroom instructions. However, the Table below summarises the structure of the students' questionnaire.

Table 3.2. Structure of the Students' Questionnaire

Section 1	Personal information	items 1, 2, 3 and 4 open-ended question	05 items
Section 2	Perception and awareness	items 6, 7, 8 and 9 closed-ended question item 9 (the second part)	11 items
Section 3	Practices	items 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 closed ended questions item 11 open ended question	13 items
Total			18 items

### **Classroom Observation**

In addition to preciseness of questionnaire, the classroom observation is flexible tool for data collection that it provides more opportunity to evaluate the situation and collect evidence of what is seen and heard in natural context (*Observation Guide*, 2019). The observation can be used in conjunction with a questionnaire to build more complete assessment (Kothari, 2004, p. 97).

As to this study, the researcher took non-participant position while carefully collecting the necessary notes needed in the check list which is designed using the Likert Scale. The Table below summarises the structure of the classroom observation.

Table 3.3. The Structure of the Classroom Observation

Teachers' perception about the role of aspects of connected in the reception and production of his/her own students.	<b>items 1,2,3,4,5 and 6</b>
The students' perception about the usefulness of aspects of connected speech.	<b>items 7,8,9 and 10</b>
Total	<b>10 items</b>

### **Diagnostic Test**

Moreover, according to Alderson (2005), a diagnostic test is a test that provides immediate results about the strengths and weaknesses of students' knowledge and language use.

In this investigation, a diagnostic test could provide the researcher with a useful information about students' understanding of aspects of connected speech. More, it determines the difficulties and deficiencies of the learners as it provides an informative feedback that can be used by the teachers to design a remedial instructions for their students; therefore, more valid conclusions would be reached and formulated (Subhi et al., 2016).

- **The structure of the Diagnostic Test**

In order to measure students' knowledge about aspects of connected speech which could assist finding accurate answers to the research questions and test the hypotheses, a test was designed by implementing different aspects of

connected speech within twenty (20) sentences, then testing whether the students are able to ascertain those aspects or not.

### **Statistical Tools:**

This study used different statistical tools that provide a visual presentation and could help to analyze the data. Thus, standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ), the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), and frequencies were utilized to make a clear description of the data. Plus, Pearson's ( $r$ ) correlation Coefficient was used to probe correlation between test scores and the items of the questionnaire. Moreover, in order to measure reliability or internal consistency of the test and the questionnaires' items, Cronbach's Alpha tool ( $\alpha$ ) was used.

For hypotheses testing, the researcher used the Shapiro–Wilk and T-test since the valid sample of the study was less than thirty-three (33) participants.

Then, the results were processed using SPSS software 22nd version. The table below summarises the formula of each tool.

### **Results and Data Analyses**

After the description of the research methodology and explanation of research instruments, this part of the study displays the results and analyses of the obtained data. That is, the results collected from the pilot study, distributed questionnaires, classroom observation check list, and diagnostic test.

#### **Pilot Study of the Research Instruments**

##### **Pilot study of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

A pilot study is crucial stage in any research and is conducted to identify potential problem areas and deficiencies in the research instruments and test the feasibility of the research tools (Hassan et al., 2006).

The teachers' questionnaire was sent via email to three English teachers in order to ensure that the questions fit the purpose of the study. As far as the teachers' questionnaire is concerned, one of the English teachers stated that two (2) open-ended questions were inaccurate and did not serve the purpose of the study.

Table 3.5. Teachers' Perception about the Clearness of Instructions and language

Question1: Clearness of the questionnaire instructions			Question2 Clearness of the questionnaire language			Question 3 Appropriateness of the questions		
Answer	Frequency	%	Answer	Frequency	%	Answer	Frequency	%
Yes	3	100	Yes	3	84	Yes	2	66.66
No	0	0	No	0	16	No	1	33.33
Total	3	100	Total	3	100	Total	3	100

From the Table 3.5, most of the questions used in the questionnaire are appropriate; however, two open-ended questions were needed to be replaced or omitted.

### **Pilot Study of Students' Questionnaire**

For the purpose of checking the research feasibility, the students' questionnaire was sent via Facebook to Fifteen (15) third-year English students from different Algerian Universities. Those students were asked to mention any ambiguity that might arise while answering the questionnaire (clearness of the instructions and language of the questionnaire). The answers of the students' piloting questions are displayed in the Table 3.6

Table3.6. Students‘ Perception about the Clearness of Instructions and language

Question1: Clearness of the questionnaire instructions			Question2 Clearness of the questionnaire language		
Answer	Frequency	%	Answer	Frequency	%
Yes	12	80	Yes	10	84
No	3	20	No	2	16
Total	15	100	Total	15	100

From the Table 3.6, we can conclude that the language and instructions of the questionnaire are understandable for most of the students. Still, a number of students stressed that they prefer closed- ended questions which were then taken into consideration in the final version of the students‘ questionnaire.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument**

#### **Validity and Reliability of Teachers‘ Questionnaire:**

A questionnaire to be considered as accurate, it must be valid and reliable. The reliability measures the consistency of the questionnaire while validity measures the degree to which the results from the questionnaire agree with the real world (Oden, 2018).

In this study, two statistical tools were used to check the researcher‘ s instruments reliability and validity. Alpha Cronbach coefficient was used to measure thereliability of the questionnaire while Internal Consistency Coefficient to measure the validity of the questionnaire. The Table below shows the different values of Alpha Cronbach and its meaning.

Table3.7. Cronbach' Alpha criteria and its reliability classification

Cronbach alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Table3.8Teachers' Questionnaire Reliability Test

Section	Cronbach's Alpha
02	0.773
03	0.829
02+03	0.541

From the Table3.8, the values of  $\alpha$  in the section two and three are 0.773 and 0.829. In this case,  $\alpha$  is more than 0.6 which reflects,according to the Table 3.7,good level or reliability. That is to say, teachers' questionnaire is reliable and can be used in this study.

Verification of the questionnaire validation can be treated from different perspectives. To assess the validity of the teachers' questionnaire in this study, the researcher measured

correlation coefficient, which is acknowledged by many experts as an appropriate tool for validity testing(Hatch & Lazaraton, 1994), between the items of each section and the total score of the whole section. The results are displayed in the tables below.

Table3.9. Validity Test for Teachers‘ Questionnaire section 2

		I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11
SECTION 2	Pearson Correlation		,968**	,968**	-,593	-,735	-,687	-,968**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,001	,223	,000
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table3.10. Validity Test for Teachers‘ Questionnaire, Section three

		I12	I13	I14	I15	I16	I17	I18
SECTION 3	Pearson Correlation	,968**	968**	968**	-,593	-,378	-,784	-,897
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,001	,223	,000
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the above Tables, all of r values are more than 0.6 which indicate that there is a strong correlation between the items of the questionnaire and the sections. That is to say, the questionnaire used in this study is statistically valid at the level of significance 0, 01.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Students‘ Questionnaire**

Following the same steps in teachers‘ questionnaire and as it is presented in the Table 3.11, Alpha Cronbach values for each section is more than 0.6 ( 0.738 and 0.678) which prove that the students‘ questionnaire is reliable.

Table3.11. Reliability Test for Student \_Questionnaire

Section	Cronbach's Alpha
02	0.738
03	0.678
Scale	0.563

Additionally, after measuring correlation coefficient between the item of each section in the students' questionnaire and the whole section (see Table 3.12 and table 3.13), it is clear that most of r values are statistically significant which means there is a strong correlation between the components of each section and the whole sections (only item 13  $r = 0.38$  and item 23  $r = 0.16$ ). Hence, according to internal consistency measurement, the students' questionnaire is valid at the level of significance 0.01. The results of the validity testing perception and practices are displayed in the table3.13 and Table3.14, respectively.

Table3.12. Validity Test for Students' questionnaire, section 2

		I8	I9	I10	I11	I12	I13	I14	I15
SECTION 2	Pearson Correlation	1	,771**	,711**	,693**	,605**	,238	,626**	,550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,003	,001	,223	,001	,002
	N	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table3.13. validity Test for Students' Questionnaire, section 3

		Correlations							
		I6	I17	I18	I19	I20	I21	I22	I23
SECTION 3	Pearson Correlation	0,,96	.433*	,793**	,925**	,878**	,913	,869**	,161**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,641	,027	,000	,001	,000	,002	,000
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Validity and Reliability of the Diagnostic Test

To assess the validity and reliability of the diagnostic test, a copy form was sent via email to University for more refinement and adjustment and for making an appropriate scoring scale.

### **Validity and Reliability of Observation Checklist**

Again, designing and implementing data from observation should be based on scientific assumptions and good understanding. That is to say, quantifying qualitative data is a complicated process. Hence, the study may lose its significance without acceptable level of validity and reliability. To do so, the draft of the checklist was sent via email to an EFL teacher who has a long experience teaching research skills.

### **Data collection and analyses**

#### **Teachers' Data Analysis**

#### **Questionnaire (Closed-ended Questions)**

Table 3.14 Teachers' Sex

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	1	20,0	20,0
	Female	4	80,0	100,0
	Total	5	100,0	

Teachers' section-one questions are designed in this study to have a clear vision about the teachers' background. From the table, the majority of the participants are female (four out of five participants).

Table 3.15. Teachers' Qualifications

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Magister	4	80,0
	Doctora	1	20,0
	Total	5	100,0

From the Table 3.15, most of participants have magister degree; only one participant has PhD qualification.

Table 3.16. Teachers' specialty

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Applied linguistics	1	20,0
	Translation	1	20,0
	Didactics	3	60,0
	Total	5	100,0

The following Table indicates that half of the teachers' sample has Didactics orientation. In addition, one teacher specialized in translation and another one has applied linguistics background.

Table 3.17 Teachers' Experience

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	One to five years	1	60,0
	Five to ten	3	20,0
	More than ten	1	20,0
	Total	5	100,0

The Table 3.17 shows that three teachers out of five have an experience of teaching between five and ten years. Additionally, one teacher has less than five years, and one has over than ten years. Hence, the participants have a considerable amount of experience which could positively affect the findings of the study.

The table 3.18 was designed using Likert scale in order to probe teachers' awareness towards their learners' pronunciation in general and aspects of connected speech in particular. For full understanding, the researcher purposefully displays the maximum and minimum answers of each item in order to know that the answers are ranged in each item. Additionally,

the mean shows the average of the answers in each item. Contrariwise; the standard deviation figures out how the results are far from the mean. Moreover, the skewness measurement explains the general distribution of the data.

Table 3.18 Teachers' perception about the aspects of connected speech

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean/Error	Std	Order	Skewness	
5. Improving students' pronunciation is one of the main goals of teaching English	5	3	4	3,60	,245	.548	1	-,609
6. Students' lack the comprehension of aspects of connected speech would influence their abilities to understand natives' speech	5	3	4	3,60	,245	,548	1	-,609
7. Pronunciation instructions should be designed to prepare the students to communicate effectively in natural speech	5	3	4	3,60	,245	,548	1	-,609
8. Through the available materials, the teacher can help the students to acquire intelligible pronunciation	5	2	3	2,20	,200	,471	7	2.23
9. Native- like pronunciation is not necessary for an effective every day communication	5	2	4	3,00	,447	1	6	,000
10. Native –like pronunciation cannot be reached	5	3	4	3,40	,245	,548	5	-,609

11.Connected speech is one of the main features of natives' natural speech	5	3	4	3,60	,245	,548	-,6091
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Form the Table3.18, it is clear that there is a general consensus that students' oral production is prioritized and comes in the first place by most of the teachers which, in turn, reflects a high level of awareness ( M=3.6 , SD=054). Additionally, the importance of aspects of connected speech (item 2 and item 11) and preparing to communicate effectively (item 7) are also stressed by most of the teachers and ranked in the same place with the same SD and M values.

Further, the majority of teachers agree that native-like pronunciation is not necessary and unreachable. For instance, item 8 with M=3 and SD=1 and item 9 with M=3.4 and SD=0, 54. The item 8 shows that more than a half of the teachers claim that the available materials are not sufficient (M=2.2; SD= 0; 471). For the entire item, skweness values are negative which mean that most of the teachers agree or strongly agree with it.

The table 3.19 explains how the teachers practice and implement the phonological aspects in their classes.

Table3.19Teachers' Practice of aspects of connected speech in their classrooms

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>	<u>Skewness</u>	<u>Order</u>
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5. How often do you teach aspects of connected speech?	5	2	4	2,80	,837	,512	5
6. How often do you speak about aspects of connected speech used in natives' every day live utterances?	5	2	4	3,20	,837	-,512	3
7. How often do you speak about the role of understanding these aspects to produce and understand native-like pronunciation?	5	2	4	3,00	,707	,000	4
8. How often do you provide your students with the necessary feedback to overcome the phonological constraints?	5	3	4	3,40	,548	,609	1

9. How often do you use authentic materials to teach aspects of connected speech?	5	2	4	3,00	,707	,000	4
10. How often do you teach your students new strategies to keep your students focusing on their phonological accuracy?	5	2	3	2,80	,447	-2,236	5
11. How often do you succeed in making your students correcting their phonological errors?	5	2	4	3,40	,894	-1,258	1

To explain, The item 13 (M= 3.2 and SD= 0,83) and the item 18 (M=3,4 SD = 0,89)are ranked in the first place, that is, most of the teachers argue that they provide their students with the necessary feedback that is associated with their oral performance, As a result then, they succeed in helping them to overcome their phonological constraints. Also, from the item 13 (M=3.2; SD= .83), it shows that the majority of teachers declare that they explain to their students how natives use aspects of connected speech.

From the item13 (12 M=2.8, SD=0,83) and item 17(M= 2,8 ; SD= 0,44) ,which are ranked in the last place, it is clear that said teachers are not frequently teaching aspects of connected speech and rarely provide their students with new strategies.

However, most of the skewness values are negative which means that teachers used the highest level of the Likert scale.

### **Questionnaire (Open-Ended Questions)**

The results obtained from open-ended questions would help in treating the issue in depth and assist in asserting and enriching the results of the other quantitative data gathering instruments. That is, the QUAN-qual or the explanatory mixed method. Thereby, establishing a profound view of the situation in focus.

According to their answers, four participants (04) make use of handouts as the main teaching tool. Concerning the syllabus, the teachers confirmed that they were already provided with a syllabus. One (01) teacher believed that it was too general, and therefore, teachers were required to supply the detailed content.

Meanwhile, another teacher (01) said that she never liked it, yet she was asked to work with it. When the participants were asked about whether connected speech should be taught explicitly or implicitly, two (02) of them supported the explicit instruction.

In their views, explicit connected speech instructions would guarantee correct and effective interaction. Also, they believed that some students are unable to understand the phonological structures implicitly. Whereas, the other three (03) participants maintained that connected speech should be taught implicitly because it is the only way that can assist learners to infer the hidden aspects of connected speech within communicative contexts.

Concerning the students' awareness of all different aspects of connected speech, all participants (05) asserted that learners should have good perception of all different aspects of connected speech. In that, they argued convincingly that whenever they apply those aspects in their speech, they would be much intelligible and much accurate.

In addition, the teachers were asked whether they integrated connected speech aspects in pronunciation teaching, three(04) of them acknowledged the importance of including connected speech aspects in pronunciation teaching as it raises learners' consciousness of how native speakers naturally utter the target language, and helps the learners to deduce the implied meaning from native speakers' utterances. Yet, only one (01) teacher who said that she teaches pronunciation disregarding the application of connected speech aspects because it seems rather difficult for them to apply those aspects each time they utter English utterances.

Subsequent to this point, three (03) participants mentioned that they do make use of explicit aspects of connected speech instructions. Whereas, one (01) informant stated that aspects of connected speech instructions are integrated only when the lecture requires a demonstration of some ambiguous utterances; one (01) teacher held that she does not instruct their learners about those aspects while teaching pronunciation.

Moreover, all teachers asserted that students' L1 highly influences their L2 production and almost all students rely on their L1 background knowledge in the process of producing or interpreting the L2.

This made the answer for the following question apparent that students are unaware of the phonological differences between their mother tongue and the target language when reading and speaking, mainly at the level of connected speech, which are likely to constrain their pronunciation learning process.

Furthermore, participants were asked about whether they give feedback to their students in case they do not apply aspects of connected speech, all participants (05) asserted that learners' phonological errors should be corrected. In that, they argued convincingly that it is learners' natural right to receive feedback on their performances so as to have their knowledge refined and, therefore, preventing them from repeating any error as they would be teachers of English.

Speaking of students' consideration of the given feedback, four (04) informants affirmed that it depends on the students' concern and carefulness; sometimes the given feedback is pleasantly appreciated and other times never be taken into consideration. In the same respect, only one (01) participant stated that the students do not consider the given feedback at all due to the fact that they do not pay much attention to pronunciation; instead, other aspects of language for them are of higher concern.

As for the last question, the teachers were requested to explain that being phonologically accurate needs from students to be aware of different connected speech aspects, all the five (05) teachers agreed that this is one of the excellent ways that help L2 learners to master English phonological accuracy and have good speech intelligibility because connected speech is the native speakers' natural way in case of speaking or reading.

## **Students' Data Analysis**

### **Personal Information**

This part of the study is devoted to display the personal information and the background of the student. From the Table 3.20, it is obvious that most of participants (93.9%) have an experience of learning English ranged from five to ten years ( $M=2.06$ ;  $SD=.34$ ). Hence, they should have a considerable amount of knowledge linked to the phonological aspects.

Moreover, the majority of participants were female (26 out of 33 participants). When students were asked to evaluate their own level of English (item 3) most of them assert that they belong to the medium category (23 participants); only four students said they are advanced learners.

The item 4 was designed to know how often the participant practicing English language activities. Fourteen (14) participants said that they rarely practice English while nine (09) students said that it happens sometimes, and the other seven (07) students go for always.

The item 5 was implemented to know the skill that the student stresses on. About a half of students focuses on speaking skill and the other half concentrates on listening skill. Besides, only four (04) students pay much attention on reading and no one select writing skill.

*Table 3.20. Students Personal and Background Information*

Item		Mean	S.D	(%)	N
1. Period of Studying English	One to five years			0,0	0
	five to ten years	2.06	0,34	93,9	31
	More than ten years			6,1	2
2. Students' Gender	Male			21,2	7
	Female	1.79	0,41	78,8	26
3. Students' Evaluation of their Level of English	Very low			0,0	0
	Low	2,94	0,556	18,2	6
	Medium			69,7	23
	High			12,1	4
	Very high			0,0	0
4. Students' Practice of English	Never	2,97	1,01	0,0	0
	Rarely			42,4	14
	Sometimes			27,3	9
	Usually			21,2	7
	Always			9,1	3

5. Language Skill Students Focus on	Reading	3,21	0,96	12,1	4
	Wirting			0,0	0
	Listening			42,4	14
	Speaking			45,5	15

### **Students' perception and awareness of aspects of connected speech**

Six items were designed in order to probestudents about aspect of connected speech. Concerningitem six which is devoted to measure students' perception about their own phonologicalproduction, most of students reject the statement and said that their own phonological production is not satisfying( $M=2.19$ ;  $SD=.946$ ). The positive value of the skweness( $SK=0,850$ ) confirms that most of the answers are in lowest level of the scale.

Item 7 was articulated to whether students agree or disagree with role of listening skill to develop the phonological accuracy. As it was expected, most of the students agree that listening develop phonological accuracy ( $M=3.24$ ;  $SD=.51$ ).

To investigate the problems that face students, items 8,9,10 and 11 propose different obstacles that may hinder students from being phonologically accurate. Approximately, all the mean values are in the average (2.71, 2.73, 2.67 and 3.7). That is, most of students agree that lack of practice, influence of the mother tongue and the lack of interaction prevent themfrom being phonologically accurate.

By contrast, the vast majority of students did not add any other obstacles. This may reflect that the most hindering difficulties for students are the four above-mentioned ones.

The Table.3.21 Summaries the statistical analysis of perception and awareness sections.

Table3.21. Students' Perception about Aspects of Connected Speech

	Valid N	Mini	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
6. Students' perception about the degree of accuracy of their own phonological production.	31	1	4	2,19	,946	,850
7. Students' Perception about the role of listening in developing phonological accuracy.	29	2	4	3,24	,511	-,373
8. Students' view that lack of practice hindersthem from developing phonological accurate pronunciation.	32	3	4	3,44	,504	,265
9. Students' view that mother tongue hinders them from developing phonological accurate pronunciation.	33	1	4	2,70	1,311	-,371
10. Students'view that the lack of phonological clues hindersthem from developing phonological accurate pronunciation.	33	1	4	2,73	1,376	-,394

11. Students' view that the lack of interaction hinders them from developing phonological accurate pronunciation.	26	1	4	2,67	1,291	-,347
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### Students' Practice of Aspects of Connected Speech

To investigate whether students practice and use the aspects of connected speech in their oral expression session or not, eight items were stressed in this study.

Table 3.22. Students' practice of aspects of connected speech

	N	Minimum	Maximum	R	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
12. Whether students have been taught aspects of connected speech.	33	1	4	7	1,82	,769	1,209 ,409
13. Whether the students pay attention to the aspects of connected speech.	33	1	4	8	1,52	,906	1,699 ,409
14. Whether the students effortlessly apply aspects of connected speech.	32	1	4	4	2,34	1,096	-,122 ,414

15. Whether the students seem like native speaker when using aspects of connected speech.	33	2	4	2	3,15	,442	,791	,409
16. Whether the students are motivated to apply aspects of connected speech.	31	2	5	3	3,00	,730	,549	,421
17. Whether teachers' instructions help to develop phonological accurate pronunciation.	31	3	4	1	3,35	,486	,638	,421
18. Whether the students receive feedback when they do not apply aspects of connected speech.	33	1	4	5	1,85	,755	,727	,409
19. Whether the students consider their teacher' feedback.	33	1	4	6	2,18	,808	,781	,409

The item 12 asked the students whether they studied aspects of connected speech or not. Most of students disagree with the statement. That is, they claim that they did not study these aspects; (M=1, 8) which is near the first option (disagree). Based upon students' answers, it is noteworthy that most learners have not been taught aspects of connected speech except a few.

Item 13, 'Whether the students pay attention to the aspects of connected speech', is described mostly as 'disagree'. It means, the majority of students lack knowledge about those phonological aspects when they engage in communicative activities as illustrated by the Table3.22 (M=1.52). A considerable rate of learners selected the box of 'rarely' in the questionnaire. These results could support students' answers in the previous two questions in which most students neither know nor have been taught aspects of connected speech.

When students were asked if they easily apply the aspect of connected speech (item14), according to the Mean (2.34), a vast number of them find a serious problem to use them without extra effort. In that, the positive value of skewness (0,414) confirms it.

Item 15 was implemented to know whether students seem like a native speaker when using connected speech aspects. About a half of the informants agree that they seem like a native-speaker (M= 3.15; SD=0;442).Based upon students' replies, it is evident that they do not recognize to some extent that aspects of connected speech when they are put into use make students' English pronunciation appear as similar as the natives. In addition, these results may reflect that they need to receive instructions concerning all connected speech features since they have to some extent inclinations towards these features.

Items 16, 17,18and 19 were precisely designed to gain insights about students perception and satisfaction towards their teachers' activities in the class. Most of students agree that they are motivated to apply aspects of connected speech (M=3) and the teachers' instructions help them to overcome the difficulties that face.

### Data Collected from Observation Checklist

The data displayed on Table 3.23 below represent cumulative results of the checklist used to gather information about a teacher of oral expression for three sessions long. One and a half an hour for each session. As it stands, using a YES/NO scale to gain insights into students' awareness and perception about aspects of connected speech and to measure the occurrence of connected speech aspects under study in teacher's instructions and practice inside the class. The results are proved as Table 3.23 identifies below.

Table 3.23. Students Awareness and Practice of Aspect of Connected Speech

According to the Observation

Item	yes	No
1. The teacher corrects students' phonological errors.		X
2. The teacher's use of aspects of connected speech in their own speech.		X
3. The teacher's use of instructions that imply aspects of connected speech.		X
4. The teacher speaks about the role of understanding aspects of connected speech to produce and understand native-like conversation.		X
5. The teacher's use of authentic materials.		X
6. The teacher analyzes genuine dialogues and conversations and extracts the aspects of the connected speech.		X
7. The teacher feels satisfied with his students' phonological performance.	x	
8. The students use the aspects of connected speech in their speech.		X
9. The students make phonological errors.		X

10. The students are motivated to improve their pronunciation.		X
11. The students understand their teacher's pronunciation.	x	
12. The students are interested in the aspects of the connected speech.		X

With regard to the results, on a YES/ NO scale, obtained along with the observed items in three sessions of Oral Expression, it is noticeable that –correcting students phonological errors by teachers scored NO. These values indicate the teachers' rare correction of phonological errors.

As for –the teachers' use of aspects of connected speech in their own speech, again, it scored NO. This also explains the scarcity of connected speech features in the teachers' speech.

–Teachers' use of instructions that imply aspects of connected speech however scored NO. This also indicates the absence of teachers' instructions about these aspects.

Next, –the teachers' awareness raising about the role of understanding aspects of connected speech to produce and understand native-like conversation is described mostly as NO along with the sessions of observation. This is to say that this latter receives scarce attention and that Oral Expression teacher does not consider instruction in the role of understanding aspects of connected speech to produce and understand native-like conversation. Whereas, the teachers' use of authentic materials as an item under observation proved YES which is an indicator that this item was sometimes a part of teachers' instruction.

In addition, as for –teachers' analyses of genuine dialogues and conversations and their extraction of aspects of the connected speech, it marked NO. These values indicate that

connected speech aspects were rarely a part of some teachers' instructions and however it wasn't at all in others.

Furthermore, –the teachers' feeling of satisfaction with their students' phonological performance marked YES which might be said to entail few attention and scarce instruction were devoted for this item. In short, the items under investigation proved, to an extent, low level of attention and practice by the teacher of oral expression along three sessions of the observation time.

The obtained results along with the observed items in three sessions could give clues about students' perceptions towards connected speech aspects with regard to the items under observation. A close look at the real situation with regard to ninth item, –the students' use of aspects of connected speech in their speech seemed to be totally absent.

The item –the phonological errors made by students yielded data in forms of No occurrence indicating yet low level of practice with regard to this item. Moreover, –the students' motivation to improve their pronunciation is marked NO. This result highlights the students' unwillingness to enhance their pronunciation.

Item twelve (12), however, marked YES with regard to –the students' understanding of their teacher's pronunciation. At last, –applying connected speech aspects in their speech was not of the students' interest or intention that the option—NO marked of the teachers' and students' observational checklist. This identifies the absence of such instructions and uses within the teachers' contents as well as pedagogy.

### **Data Collected from Diagnostic Test**

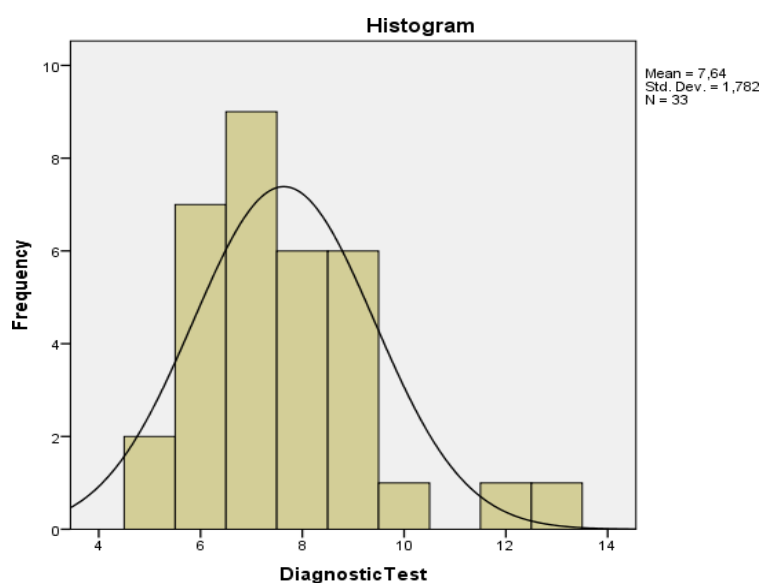
As it is mentioned in the previous sections, the study used a diagnostic test to make a comprehensive understanding about the problem under investigation. To put it another way,

making a comparison between students' scores in the test and their level of awareness and perception towards aspects of connected speech.

Table3.24. Analysis of the Results Obtained from the Diagnostic Test

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Test	33	8	5	13	7,64	1,782	1,155	1,894
N	33							

The results of the test (Table3.24) show that a considerable number of the students' scores has very low marks (max=13, R=8) with M=7.64 and SD=1.782. Meaning, the students have very limited knowledge about the English phonological aspects. Further, Skewness values demonstrate that the distribution of marks is asymmetrical; it is skewed and stretches toward right ( see graph.3.1) which confirms that most values are low. Plus, kurtosis value is more than 1. Therefore, the distribution is too peaked making it another proof that only few students got high marks.



Graph3. 1. The distribution of the diagnostic test marks

For more explanation, the table 3.2 illustrates that there is a high positive correlation between students' perception and their scores in the diagnostic test ( $r = 0,887$ ). Simply put, students, who are aware of the role of the phonological aspects and recognize their importance, certainly would strive to strengthen their phonological competence. Consequently, they succeed in the artificial context as they did in the diagnostic test and in real life situations.

Tableau 3. 25. Correlation between Students' Scores and Perception towards Aspects of Connected Speech.

		Diagnostic Test	Awareness section
Diagnostic Test	Pearson Correlation	1	,887**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	33	29
Awareness Items Section 2	Pearson Correlation	,887**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	29	29

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Hypotheses Testing

### First hypothesis

**H0 / EFL student at University of M'sila may downplay the role of aspects of connected speech.**

To select the appropriate test for the hypothesis of the study, we have to test the normality of the data, i.e. we verify if the data are normally distributed. In this case, we used Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov at the level of significance 0, 05. According to Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov measurement the data are normally distributed if sig is greater than 0,05.

Table3.26. Normality test for students' perception data

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Students' Perception	,138	33	,200*	,896	33	,012

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

From the table3.26, Shpiro-wilk values are more than 0.05, That is, the data are normally distributed and we can then use T-test to verify the hypotheses.

Table3.27 T-test for Students' Perception AboutAspects of Connected Speech

	Test Value = 2					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Students' Perception	1,431	32	,162	,16667	-,0706	,4040

$P = 0,162$  which is greater than the level of significance  $0,05$ . Therefore there is statistical significance that support  $H_0$  so we accept the null hypothesis at the level of significance  $0,05$  and degree of freedom  $df=32$ . Which mean EFL students at University of M'sila downplay the role of aspects of connected speech.

### Second hypothesis

**$H_0$  /EFL teachers at University of M'sila are not aware enough of the role of aspects of connected speech.**

Again, we employed Shpiro-wilk values to test the normality of the distribution.

From the table3.28 below Kolmogorov-Smirnov valueis greater than 0.05 which means the data are normally distributed, so we can utilize T-test to test the null hypothesis

Table3.28 Test of Normality for Teachers' Perception Data

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Teachers' Perception	,367	5	,026	,684	5	,006

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

According to the table3.28,  $p=0$  which is less than 0.05. That is to say, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis at the level of significance 0,05 and degree of freedom  $df=5$ . Consequently, it would be EFL teachers are aware of the role of aspects of connected speech.

Table3.29. T-test for Teachers' perception about aspects of connected speech

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
TEACHERSPERCEPTION	14,697	4	,000	3,60000	2,9199	4,2801

### Third Hypothesis

**H0/ EFL teachers at University of M'sila may not integrate sufficient aspects of connected speech-based instruction in their language teaching syllabi.**

From the Table3.30, Shapiro-Wilk value is greater than the level of significance 0.05 that is the data are normally distributed. So we can use T-test to verify the null hypothesis.

Table3.30. Tests of Normality of Teachers' Practice of Aspects of Connected Speech in Their Classes

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
TEACHERSPRACTICE	,237	5	,200*	,961	5	,814

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

From T-test and  $p=0$ , it is obvious to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis  $H_1$  the level of significance 0,05 and degree of freedom  $df=5$ . That is, EFL teachers integrate aspect of connected speech in the classroom instructions. This can be justified by the fact that classroom instructions do not fit the learners' needs or interest.

Table 3.31. T-test for Teachers' practicing of aspects of connected speech

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
practice	10,983	4	,000	2,80000	2,0921	3,5079

### General discussion

On the basis of the results obtained from the selected data gathering tools, this study comes to support the effectiveness of English teaching Phonology and Phonetics instructions.

Referring to teachers' questionnaire, the high values of means and the negative values of skewness for all most of perception section could indicate that most of teachers are aware about the necessity of developing their students' phonological accuracy and these results were confirmed by testing the hypothesis using T-test. Moreover, the analysis of second section of teachers' questionnaire proved that most teachers claimed that they provide their students with necessary feedback and they also make use of aspects of connected speech in their class ( $M=2.8$ ;  $SD=.8$ ). Those claims were confirmed by testing the third hypothesis using T-test which proved that there is a difference that has statistical significance to reject the null hypothesis.

Furthermore, when students were asked to answer a set of questions that need a phonological background, the majority failed to do it in the right way. These differences between teachers claims and students failure can be justified by the fact that third year EFL students are not being instructed in Phonology and Phonetics in the right way. In other words, EFL teachers may not make use of instructions that fit their need and interest. Additionally, the findings may suggest that the time allotted for Oral Expression is not enough. In this questionnaire, teachers were requested for the ways they select their teaching strategies. A substantial number of them do not provide their students with new strategies that, in fact, have a tremendous effect on students' engagement in classroom activities.

Also, observation Grid revealed insights that Oral Expression teacher, unfortunately, tend to give little or no attention to the phonological accuracy and it is relatively ignored in the language teaching program. Oral Expression teacher utilizes exclusively free topics for discussion as the principal teaching materials.

Additionally, from students' questionnaires, we can infer that third-year students are likely not aware of the significance of the accuracy of their oral production. Correspondingly, the findings of the questionnaire revealed that nearly all students face a set of constraints that prevent them from developing their oral production.

Hence, the aforementioned claims with concern with their awareness of the role of aspects of connected speech were confirmed in the testing of the first hypothesis. Unsurprisingly, T-test supports the null hypothesis and proved that third-year EFL students are not aware of the role of aspects of connected speech to communicate effortlessly and effectively in real life situations.

In summation, the results of the study could answer the stated research questions as well as to assess the hypotheses.

## **Suggestion and Pedagogical recommendations**

### **Pedagogical recommendations**

Based upon the findings of the present study and the reviewed literature, some suggestions and pedagogical recommendations seem to be appropriate. To begin with, it is recommended that connected speech courses, which are very important means of spoken language, should be given a great attention by both university through designing insensitive syllabi, and by teachers through presenting these syllabi in a proper way, in addition to adopting adequate methods of testing and examining learners.

Secondly, teachers are recommended to take an advantage of the idea of peer coaching. That is, according to Kogan and Wallach (1967), this strategy of professional development is based on three main features, planning, observation, and feedback labelled clinical supervision. It is a strategy according to which pairs of teachers, usually trained to do so visit each other's classes and advise each other on irrelevant teaching practices and provide insights on what went on in classroom instruction. Teachers themselves decide about the focus of observation and the necessary instruments that enable them to observe the use of the language, the way it is delivered, the methods of its assessment, and the recording of the learners' progress.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that teachers put into use mentoring strategy. In other words, this developmental strategy seeks to gather more experienced teachers with less experienced teachers for the sake of collaboration and feedback on training and learning. Novice teachers take advantage of the experience, knowledge, and expertise of veteran teachers, as mentors help with advice, support, and encouragement for their mentees, who in their turn, provide mentors with opportunities to reflect on their experience. The new teachers are always in need of help to understand the school environment and their decisive impact on

the learners. Mentors also can help novice teachers with their pedagogical competence and strategies and how they are used in the practical classroom situation.

Subsequently, formative or constructive feedback ought to be one of the thrust foci of teachers. More clearly, one of the most crucial roles of the teacher is to provide feedback to the learners. This feedback lies at the heart of assessment because it has a significant impact on the learner's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It is a key feature to successful learning process and the teacher-learner partnership, and also aims to improve the learners' opportunities for learning. Opportunities for teachers to give formative feedback to learners arise from activities and interventions, including informal interactions, classroom situations, formative assessment activities, group work, pair work, project-based work, and so forth. These activities provide opportunities for formative feedback, and can contribute to the learner's formative feedback and learning. Feedback, then, does not have a single source, like teachers but it can also come from peers and friends. This assessment is also characterized by day- to-day use of evidence by the teacher to guide the learner's learning, and everyday practice must be based on learning theories of how students learn.

Besides, motivation and exposure, according to language experts, push EFL learners to eagerly want that language proficiency in terms of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and so on. It means that when learners have a personal goal or a professional motive for learning English, this is likely to influence them to learn phonology in order to acquire a native-like pronunciation (Gardner & Reyes, 2004). In this respect, it would make more sense to make reference to personal motivation (Fishman, 1977) rather than instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Personal motivation is likely to urge the learner to take the initiative by himself to respond to his needs. Teachers can use a variety of strategies to arouse the learners' innate desires for the course of phonology. Teachers, for instance, can spark the learners' interest in a pronunciation class by highlighting the importance of connected speech

for the speaker's intelligibility. Such perceptions held by the learners are likely to urge them to take responsibility of their own learning, and willingly engage in the classroom phonological practices.

As for EFL learners, they should expose themselves to a permanent extensive practice of listening and speaking through using the available technology (e.g. smart phones), and also they should concentrate more in-depth on studying phonology to understand the nature of the spoken language by practicing it continuously. This will enable them to obtain better performance.

Hopefully, the reached conclusions and the provided suggestions would be beneficial for all of EFL researchers, teachers, and students who wish to ameliorate their pronunciation teaching and learning. Undeniably, more research is immensely needed in this area of study to come up with more advantageous solutions to all of the language practitioners.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The aforementioned limitations that were identified in the present study establish, in fact, the foundations for future studies. Initially, Future research is highly felt to cover effects of connected on students' listening, comprehension, or others since the present descriptive study is restricted only to phonological accuracy. Hence, it would be even more interesting if one can replicate the present study using experimental design which is likely to bring better results.

In addition, despite the significance of connected speech instruction in second and foreign language teaching and learning, still connected speech aspects are relatively neglected by language teachers and students. Thus, a detailed and extensive research is necessary to examine ESL/EFL teachers' and students' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward integrating connected speech instruction, to explore problems of EFL learners in

understanding native speakers' connected speech, to investigate EFL learners' problems during communicating with native speakers, or to discover teaching problems of connected speech aspects and their impact on EFL learners' oral performance

### **Limitations of the Study**

Despite supporting and rejecting our hypotheses, the present study has a number of limitations that should be highlighted. Firstly, the most important limitation was time constraints. In addition to the unfavourable circumstances our country went through, there was unanticipated pandemic (covid-19) in all over the world which seriously hindered the ongoing of the study. Hence, it is assumed that extended time and good conditions could have helped us to assess better the situation in-depth and to come up with more productive proposals.

Secondly, because of the pandemic, there must be a social distancing and almost everything was closed up. Thus, direct contact with students and teachers was impossible in order to administer the questionnaires. As the sole solution, we emailed the questionnaires to five teachers and thirty-three students.

Thirdly, the small sample of the present study will constrain generalizing the findings because this study was limited to only one third-year class of students at the Department of Language and English literature at M'sila University. For this reason, the established inferences are specific to this sample, and they do not represent all Algerian universities or any other EFL/ESL learning setting.

## **General conclusion**

Pronunciation practice is a very important element in oral comprehension and performance of students at the department of English; it is a key to overcome pronunciation difficulties and problems, and to improve students' pronunciation. When students are not given chances and appropriate contexts to practice, they become less aware of their pronunciation, and hence they do not focus on their pronunciation errors.

This fact was not recognized until recently because academic research in linguistics did not pay much attention to Phonetics and how to acquire pronunciation, thus teachers did not have much theory about how to teach it until recently. More precisely, connected speech, as a salient part of pronunciation, is no exception.

In the present study, we endeavoured to investigate EFL students' perceptions towards connected speech and its usefulness in order for EFL students to become phonologically accurate. To achieve this, the work comprises three main chapters.

The first chapter was meant to provide theoretical background knowledge about phonological accurate pronunciation in foreign language learning and teaching. In the second chapter, the concept of connected speech and its aspects were introduced, followed by a description of the main features of connected speech. Within this chapter, it was attempted to provide plausible explanations for the common problems that EFL learners encounter whenever they apply those aspects, and some strategies to overcome these difficulties.

In the third chapter, we carried out a triangulation methodological stance so as to examine the extent to which connected speech could enhance learners' pronunciation. In order to confirm the proposed hypotheses and to answer the stated research questions, a diagnostic test was employed on how well EFL learners perceive connected speech aspects.

Besides, two questionnaires were submitted, one is to third-year students and the other is to oral expression teachers, and we observed oral expression classes. In fact, the obtained results revealed that oral expression teachers still downplaying the role of aspects of connected speech, and third-year students at the department of English at M'sila University are not aware enough about the role of the aspects of connected speech. In this case the speculated hypotheses were strongly statistically confirmed.

In light of this situation, we are hoping that this study will give more ideas for pronunciation teachers including both Phonetics and Oral Expression teachers to collaborate and discuss the courses objectives in order to design a more appropriate syllabus of Oral Expression course by integrating the pronunciation theoretical knowledge into the Oral Expression class through meaningful practice. Thus, the Oral Expression class can serve as a useful space for practicing pronunciation aspects and speaking.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendice1 Diagnostic Test

Full name

In each of these sentences, could you sort out what aspect of connected speech you would apply?

Sentence	Aspect of Connected Speech Applied
➤ I would like to see <b>that</b> golden ring.	
➤ What is the price of <b>that</b> car over there?	
➤ I think this magazine has a <b>bad</b> cover.	
➤ She is a <b>good</b> girl.	
➤ He has <b>been</b> gaining a lot of money from his new job. I will travel to the east coast by my <b>own</b> car.	
➤ We would rather finish our work now; I will <b>get</b> busy over next week.	
➤ She will move to a new <b>apart</b> ment by the next month.	
➤ He is a very <b>good</b> boy.	
➤ When we <b>reached</b> providence, we <b>stopped</b> for lunch.	
➤ We <b>need</b> you to stay at home.	
➤ He went <b>with</b> them.	
➤ The man you are looking for lives <b>next</b> door.	
➤ They <b>want</b> you to take care of it.	
➤ We bought a lovely <b>carved</b> statuette.	
➤ You can use one <b>of</b> these tools to fix your bicycle.	
➤ I have <b>been</b> motivated since I <b>started</b> working with Mr. Johns.	
➤ I <b>like</b> <b>this</b> <b>show</b> , it has very creative ideas.	
➤ I like <b>this</b> <b>show</b> , it has very creative ideas.	
➤ I like <b>this</b> <b>show</b> , it has very creative ideas.	

➤ I like <u>this show</u> , it has very creative ideas.	
➤ I prefer <u>those shoes</u> , they look better on you.	
➤ They <u>want you</u> to take care of it	
➤ Lidia sounds a very <u>interesting person</u> .	
➤ <u>Play it</u> with your brother.	
➤ This book has a lot of good <u>texts</u> that you can use for your lesson.	
➤ It is strange how Tim changed; he <u>acts</u> as if he never knew me.	
➤ I think she would rather call the <u>police</u> .	
➤ Our next meeting will be on the <u>6th of June</u> .	
➤ My <u>arm</u> is aching.	
➤ The <u>boy is</u> happy.	
➤ They used <u>to act</u> as lawyers.	
➤ The <u>dough is</u> unready.	
➤ It was <u>nice summer</u> .	
➤ She met <u>big girls</u> .	
➤ <u>Pick it</u> , please!	
➤ They look <u>at it</u> .	

## Appendix 2: Checklist for Classroom Observation

**Class:**

**Teacher:**

	yes	no
<b>13.</b> The teacher corrects students' phonological errors.		
<b>14.</b> The teacher uses aspects of connected speech in his own speech.		
<b>15.</b> The teacher uses instructions that imply the aspects of connected speech.		
<b>16.</b> The teacher speaks about the role of aspects of connected speech in producing and understanding native-like conversations.		
<b>17.</b> The teacher uses authentic materials.		
<b>18.</b> The teacher analyzes genuine dialogues and conversations and extracts the aspects of the connected speech.		
<b>19.</b> The teacher feels satisfied with their students' phonological performance.		
<b>20.</b> The students use aspects of connected speech in their speech.		
<b>21.</b> The students make phonological errors.		
<b>22.</b> The students are motivated to improve their pronunciation.		
<b>23.</b> The students understand their teacher's pronunciation.		
<b>24.</b> The students are interested in the aspects of the connected speech.		

## Appendix 3: Teachers' Questionnaire

**Dear teachers,**

Indeed, knowledge is created and structured between participants (Liang, 1967 as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). For this reason, we will be very thankful if you answer this questionnaire which is a part of a research that is conducted for the sake of investigating to what extent you can be phonologically accurate if you have good perception about the different aspects of connected speech. Thus, it would be a great pleasure for us to provide succinct and sincere responses as this will lead to the success of this investigation. Please, respond as objectively as possible, and thank you in advance for your cooperation!

### **Section one: Personal Information:**

#### **1. Gender:**

Male       Female

#### **2. What (academic) qualifications do you hold?**

Magister/Master    Doctorate

#### **3. You major in:**

Applied linguistics       Didactics (TEFL)       Civilization and literature

Translation    ESP (English for specific purposes)

#### **4. How long have you been teaching English?**

a) One to five years    b) Five to ten years    c) More than ten years

### **Section two: Perception and awareness:**

You are kindly requested to indicate ( circle), on the five-point scale next to the questions, the levels of (dis)agreement you hold with regard to the statements below. The numbers represent the following categories:

1	2	4	5
Strongly agree	agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Item	S A	A	D	S D
<b>5.</b> Improving students' pronunciation is one of the main goals of teaching English.	1	2	3	4
<b>6.</b> Students' lack of comprehension of aspects of connected speech would influence their abilities to understand natives' speech.	1	2	3	4
<b>7.</b> Pronunciation instructions should be designed to prepare the students to communicate effectively in natural speech.	1	2	3	4
<b>8.</b> Through the available materials, the teacher can help students to acquire intelligible pronunciation.	1	2	3	4
<b>9.</b> Native- like pronunciation is not	1	2	3	4

necessary for an effective every day communication.				
<b>10.</b> Native –like pronunciation cannot be reached.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>11.</b> Connected speech is one of the main features of natives‘ natural speech.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

### Section three: Teacher’s practices

You are kindly requested to indicate (circle), on the five-point scale next to the questions, how often you instruct in these areas. The numbers represent the following categories:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Very often</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometim es</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>

Item	<b>V</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>12.</b> How often do you teach aspects of the connected speech?	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>13.</b> How often do you speak about aspects of connected speech used in natives‘ every day live utterances.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>14.</b> How often do you speak about the role of aspects of connected speech in producing and understanding natives‘ pronunciation?	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>15.</b> How often do you provide your students with the necessary feedback to overcome phonological constraints?	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>16.</b> How often do you use authentic materials to teach aspects of connected speech?	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>17.</b> How often do you teach your students new strategies to keep your students focusing on their	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

phonological accuracy?					
<b>18.</b> How often do you succeed in making your students correcting their phonological errors?	1	2	3	4	5

### Open-Ended Questions

19. As an element in Phonetics and Phonology, connected speech is best taught explicitly or implicitly?
20. Do you opt for this statement: –*Students should be aware of and have good perception of all different aspects of connected speech in order for them to be phonologically accurate.*”? (Elaborate, please!)
21. Do your students consider the given feedback to improve themselves?
22. Do you find students’ native language significantly bears on their ability to learn English pronunciation?
23. Do you teach pronunciation with regard to the application of connected speech aspects?
24. Do you make use of explicit instructions concerning aspects of connected speech while teaching pronunciation?
25. Do you have an official syllabus for teaching Oral Expression?
26. Do you find your students aware of all various features of connected speech while speaking or reading English?
27. Do you often give feedback to your students in case they do not apply aspects of connected speech?
28. Do you think being phonologically accurate needs from students to be aware of different connected speech aspects?

## Appendix4: Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

We will be very thankful if you answer this questionnaire which is a part of a research that is conducted for the sake of investigating to what extent you can be phonologically accurate if you have a good perception about the different aspects of connected speech. Bear in mind that there is no wrong or right answer. Thus, it would be a great pleasure for us to provide succinct and sincere responses as this will lead to the success of this investigation. Please, respond as objectively as possible, and thank you in advance for your cooperation!

### Section one: personal information

#### 1- Gender:

<input type="radio"/> Male	<input type="radio"/> Female
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#### 2- How long have you been studying English?

<input type="radio"/> One to six years	<input type="radio"/> Six to ten years	<input type="radio"/> More than ten years
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#### 3- My English level is:

<input type="radio"/> Very low	<input type="radio"/> Low	<input type="radio"/> Medium	<input type="radio"/> High	<input type="radio"/> Very high
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#### 4- Which language skill you most focus on ?

<input type="radio"/> Reading	<input type="radio"/> Writing	<input type="radio"/> Listening	<input type="radio"/> Speaking
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#### 5- How often do you practice English?

<input type="radio"/> Never	<input type="radio"/> Rarely	<input type="radio"/> sometimes	<input type="radio"/> Usually	<input type="radio"/> Always
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**Section two: perception and awareness**

**6- Between ‘listening’ and ‘speaking’, which skill do you practice more?**

<input type="radio"/> Reading	<input type="radio"/> Writing	<input type="radio"/> Both
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**7- Listening improves phonological accuracy.**

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
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**8- When you speak English, do you feel that your speech is phonologically accurate?**

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
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**9- If no, tick on the difficulty or obstacle that hinders you to do so.**

- Lack of practice:

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
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- The influence of the mother tongue (negative transfer):

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
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- Lack of knowledge about phonological clues:

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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- Lack of interaction with others:

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**Section Three: Practices**

**10- You have been taught aspects of connected speech.**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**11- If yes, according to you, what are the aspects of connected speech?**

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**12- When speaking English, you pay attention to these aspects of connected speech?**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**13- In my speech, I feel more comfortable and fluent when I apply the different aspects of connected speech.**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**14- Using aspects of connected speech when speaking makes my English seem more native-like.**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**15-I feel more motivated to speak English whenever I put into use aspects of connected speech.**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**16-I think if I develop my perception of aspects of connected speech, this will help me improve my phonological accuracy.**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**17- You receive feedback whenever you do not apply aspects of connected speech**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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**18- You consider the given feedback to improve yourself.**

<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Disagree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Agree</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>Strongly Agree</b>
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## Abstract

Despite the fact that connected speech aspects hold an important place in foreign language education, students' perceptions towards using those aspects to achieve phonologically accurate and intelligible pronunciation is still neglected within the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of M'sila. The present study aims at investigating EFL students' perceptions towards the use of aspects of connected speech to achieve intelligible or native-like pronunciation. The study targets third-year students from the Department of English at the University of M'sila. In order to achieve valid results, a triangulated research method was applied encompassing two data collection tools: A descriptive method was implemented via two questionnaires one is to third-year EFL students and the other is to Oral Expression teachers, a classroom observation of Oral Expression class at the same Department, and a diagnostic test. The obtained results have revealed that oral expression teachers do not make use of aspects of connected speech instruction. Additionally, EFL students do not have positive perception and phonological awareness towards the role of connected speech aspects. Henceforth, teachers of oral expression should integrate aspect of connected speech insights into their lessons for the sake of strengthening EFL students' phonological competence which is a crucial factor to avoid any sort of speech problems or speech misperception and misinterpretation.

**Key words:** Aspects of connected speech, students' perceptions, phonological awareness

## الملخص

رغم الأهمية البالغة التي يحظى "أنماط الكلام المرتبط" في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية إلا أن العمل على توعية الطلبة اتجاه استخدامه لتعزيز مهاراتهم في النطق بوضوح لا يزال متجاهلا بقسم اللغة الانجليزية جامعه المسيلة. تهدف هذه الدراسة لمعرفة درجه وعي الطلبة اتجاه استخدام "أنماط الكلام المرتبط" لتعزيز مهاراتهم في النطق بسلاسة و بوضوح. تستهدف هذه الدراسة طلبه السنة الثالثة اللغة الانجليزية بجامعه المسيلة. لضمان مصداقية الدراسة تم الدراسة من جميع الجوانب تم استخدام طريقة التثليث. تم جمع البيانات من خلال توزيع استبيان لمعلمي التعبير الشفهي و آخر لطلبه السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية بالاضافه الملاحظه. علاوة على ذلك تم تعزيز الدراسة باستخدام اختبار تشخيصي لقياس المستوى المعرفي للطلبة فيما يخص استخدام أنماط الكلام المرتبط . أظهرت النتائج افتقار الطلبة للوعي فيما يتعلق أنماط الكلام المرتبط . بالرغم من ان المعلمين اظهروا قدرا كافي امن الوعي إلا أنهم ليزودون الطلبة بما يحتاجونه من تدريب لإتقان استخدام هاته الأنماط. تخلص الدراسة إلى الضرورة تدريب الطلبة على استخدام هذا أنماط الكلام المرتبط وكذا العمل على الرفع مدى وعيهم كونه يكتسي أهميه بالغه في تحسين الأداء الشفهي للطلبة.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: أنماط الكلام المرتبط , درجه وعي الطلبة

## Résumé

En dépit de l'intérêt accordé par la didactique de l'enseignement de l'anglais à la syntaxe, plus précisément à l'élément de la liaison de parole, les étudiants du département de la langue anglaise à l'université de M'sila ne donnent pas malheureusement, une importance à ces moyens linguistiques. Ce constat nous pousse à mener une étude bien ciblée pour avoir une idée claire sur ce sujet, tout en vérifiant si les étudiants ont une perception raisonnée sur la valeur de l'usage des mots connectés, qui assurent en quelques sortes, une bonne prononciation et par conséquent produire un discours cohérent. Dans cette entreprise nous allons prendre les étudiants de troisième année langue anglaise à l'université de M'sila comme objet d'étude. Pour faire le tour de la question, et pour que notre recherche ait un sens, nous allons recourir à la méthode de trilogie. Après la collecte des données recueillies à partir d'un sondage distribué aux professeurs chargés d'enseigner l'expression orale, et un autre destiné aux étudiants concernés. Par le biais de l'observation et l'analyse des constats, accompagnée d'une évaluation diagnostique qui a pour objectif, vérifier les connaissances en termes de l'emploi des connecteurs. On a constaté qu'il y a une certaine insuffisance au niveau de l'usage de ces mots chez les étudiants concernés malgré les efforts fournis par les enseignants, et bien qu'il y ait un manque au niveau des consignes destinées à cette fin. A notre sens, le but ultime de cette étude est de montrer la nécessité d'encourager les étudiants à avoir une prise conscience de l'utilité de ces articulateurs, dans la mesure où ils permettent d'améliorer et développer la compétence de la production orale chez eux.

**Les Mots Clés ;** Parole connecté, perception des étudiants.

