



Research Paper

## English Diphthongs Difficulties Encountered by EFL Yemeni Speakers

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### ABSTRACT:

*This experimental study aims to investigate the pronunciation difficulties encountered by EFL Yemeni speakers regarding English diphthongs. Error Analysis approach was preferred to conduct the current study since it has recently replaced the Contrastive Analysis approach and involves an unpredicted and objective description of the learners' interlanguage. A list of 24 words, containing the eight diphthongs of Received Pronunciation standard English in different phonetic environments, initially, medially, and finally, was prepared to elicit the required data. 120 Yemeni Arabic native speakers using English as a foreign language, have been recorded and the recordings have been analyzed auditorily and acoustically using PRAAT software program to get the spectrograms in order to provide instrumental evidence of diphthongs utterances and their durations. It was concluded that EFL Yemeni speakers had serious errors with some English diphthongs. /eə/ and /ɪə/ were found to be the most difficult for the participants as the percentage of articulation errors in the production of these two diphthongs were 97.9% and 93.9% respectively. 75% of erroneous utterances were found in producing the diphthong /əʊ/, 37% were made in articulating /ʊə/, and 29% was the percent of errors regarding the diphthong /eɪ/. They had less serious difficulties with /aʊ/ since the mispronounced utterances were about 21.5% in the target words. The two diphthongs /ɔɪ/ and /aɪ/ can be stated to be of no difficulty as less than 10% of errors have been committed by the participants.*

**KEYBOARD:** *English diphthongs, pronunciation difficulties, EFL Yemeni speakers, error analysis, PRAAT spectrograms.*

*Received 12 November, 2021; Revised: 25 November, 2021; Accepted 27 November, 2021 © The author(s) 2021. Published with open access at [www.questjournals.org](http://www.questjournals.org)*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Achieving proficiency in the four domains of English, speaking, listening, reading, and writing is the most desirable aim for all EFL learners including Arabs. However, for many learners, English-speaking competency is considered to be the most purposeful especially in the globalization era. It seems to be a common dream among foreign-language learners to become indistinguishable from native speakers regarding pronunciation. However, pronunciation is difficult to be mastered perhaps because its acquisition is far more complex than it may be.

Factors such as age, the role of the learner's first language, culture, attitudes towards the language, exposure to the foreign language, and the type and amount of prior pronunciation instruction, need to be taken into account. It is hard to understand and control all the factors that are involved in the process of pronunciation acquisition. However, grasping all these factors and the errors that they may cause, will help pedagogically to figure out the nature of speakers' performance and enable language teachers to design lessons that will help to improve pronunciation. Furthermore, good phonological awareness of a second or foreign language is necessary for learners to have if they are to achieve fluent language communication.

Arabs, including Yemenis, fail to produce certain sounds and phonological patterns which usually do not exist in their mother tongue; Arabic. For this reason, they have difficulties regarding pronunciation and commit certain errors in this area.

This study focuses on investigating the pronunciation errors related to English diphthongs as committed by EFL Yemeni Arabic Speakers, providing experimentally substantiated evidence along with a brief discussion. As a background, Yemen is located in the southern corner of the peninsula. Yemeni Arabic is generally considered a very conservative dialect cluster, having many classical features not found across most of the Arabic-speaking world. The regional dialects in Yemen are strongly similar to Standard Arabic. There are

four main dialects in Yemen, San'ani, Ta'izzi, Tihami, and Hadhrami and it can be said that there are a lot of similarities and features shared by these four dialects. For the purpose of the current study, Ta'izzi Yemenis have been taken as informants the data was collected from. There are 27 consonant letters in the Yemeni Arabic orthography, including eight plosives, two nasals, thirteen fricatives, one trill/tap, one lateral, two approximants, and no affricates at all. Vowels are represented by diacritics that appear above or below the consonant. There are mainly six vowels in Arabic, three shorts phonemically contrasted with their three long counterparts.

Arabic vowels are damma, fatha, kasra (shorts), and waw, alif, ya' (longs). Diphthongs do not exist in Yemeni Arabic.

English, particularly RP English, is taught as a foreign language course at schools in Yemen and used in a very narrow range by a minority of educated people for special purposes. Recently, English has got a significant status among people, especially educated youth who interestingly pay especial attention to English language prosperity in Yemen.

In English, there are 44 sounds/segments, 24 consonants, and 20 vowels. According to Gimson (2013), consonants are those segments which, in a particular language, occur at the edges of syllables, while vowels are those which occur as nuclei at the centre of syllables. English vowels are normally made with a voiced airstream, without any closure or narrowing such as would result in the noise component characteristic of many consonantal sounds; moreover, the escape of the air is characteristically accomplished in an unimpeded way over the middle line of the tongue (Gimson, 2013).

Vowels are described with reference to:

- (1) The position of the soft palate in the mouth, raised or lowered.
- (2) The kind of aperture made by the lips, neutral, spread, close-rounded, or open-rounded.
- (3) The part of the tongue which is raised and the degree of raising, front, central, or back.

A vowel description is, to some extent, based mainly on auditory impression of sound relationships, along with taking into consideration some articulatory information, especially which regards the position of the lips. The acoustic description can be given in terms of the disposition of the characteristic formants of the target sound.

Daniel Jones (1956) presented a system for vowels known as the Cardinal Vowel system which is considered to be the most satisfactory among linguists. A scale of eight primary Cardinal Vowels was devised, denoted by the following numbers and symbols: 1-[i], 2-[e], 3- [ɛ], 4- [a], 5-[ɒ], 6-[ɔ], 7-[o], 8-[u]. This representation of the auditory space and these tongue and lip positions in the primary Cardinal Vowels are the most frequent in phonology.

Daniel Jones, later, created the secondary cardinal vowels system which can be obtained by reversing the lip positions, e.g., applying lip-rounding to the [i] tongue position, or lip-spreading to the [u] position. This secondary series is denoted by the following numbers and symbols: 9, [y]; 10, [ø], 11- [œ], 12- [ɛ̃], 13- [ɑ̃], 14- [ʌ̃], 15-[ɣ̃], 16- [w̃]. He could distinguish between front, central, and back, and between four levels of opening: close, close-mid, open-mid, and open.

In short, English has a large number of vowels, either pure or gliding in nature. English vowels are 20, 12 of them are pure (7 short, 5 long) and 8 are diphthongs. A diphthong is defined as a gliding vowel or a combination of two adjacent vowel sounds within the same syllable in a word.

Diphthongs of English along with examples are as the following:

/ eɪ /	aim, make, play
/ aɪ /	eyes, side, die
/ ɔɪ /	oil, boil, joy
/ əʊ /	oat, rope, go
/ aʊ /	out, loud, cow
/ ɪə /	ear, beard, dear
/ ʊə /	visual, cure, pure
/ eə /	air, bare, shared

## **1.2. Aim of the study**

This study seeks to find out what sorts of diphthongs' errors a group of EFL Yemeni speakers develop in common. Error analysis was preferred to conduct the current study which does not take contrastive analysis into consideration where features of Target Language and Native Language are described and compared.

In order to achieve the goal of this study and spot learners' (pronunciation) errors and difficulties, we need to do error analysis. Error Analysis is a branch not of linguistic theory or pure linguistics but of applied linguistics that is concerned with tracing errors made by language learners, of which pronunciation errors (James, 2013:2). EA is reserved for 'the study of erroneous utterances produced by groups of learners' (ibid.: 207).

The novelty of EA, distinguishing it from CA, is that in the former, the mother tongue was not supposed to enter the picture predictably. The claim was made that those errors could be fully described in terms

of the Target Language, without the need to refer to the L1 of the learner (James,2013:5). As Cook puts it: 'Error Analysis was [and still is] a methodology for dealing with data, rather than a theory of acquisition' (James,2013: 22).

## II. MRTHOD

### 2.1. Participants

The participants of this study are 120 EFL Yemeni Arabic native speakers, 60 males and 60 females. All are adults (aged between 20 to 35) and undergraduates or postgraduates of different majors who are studying or working in Yemen. None is bilingual and Yemeni Arabic is the mother tongue of all. They have been taught English as a course at schools and universities for at least seven years. It can be said that they are homogeneous to a large extent. Participants were asked to read the list of corpus spontaneously and naturally.

### 2.2. Assessment Material

The Labovian model was adopted for collecting the data for this study. This model was developed by William Labovin 1966)and was extended by Lorna Dickerson in 1974. According to Ghani (2003:115), this model 'emphasizes the significant influence of inner psychological (mental) processes upon individual speakers' patterns of stylistic variation'. This model 'aims at describing accurately the systematically variable patterns of a speaker's speech production in a multiplicity of situations' . In this model,Labovproposes four different tasks for collecting linguistic data, as shown below:

1. Passage reading.
2. Word list reading.
3. Casual speech.
4. Minimal pairs reading.

In this study,the second task is utilized for collecting the required data. The Labovian model was chosen simply because it has been extensively employed and tested by many researchers on second language acquisition such as Schmidt (1977); Dickerson (1974); Archibald (1992, 1993); Alias Abd Ghani (1995, 2003); Su-Yin (2001); Al-Fakhri (2003), Shaker (2004) and Al-Shuaibi(2009).

For the purpose of this research, a list of 24 English words has been prepared to target difficulties and errors in the production of English diphthongs. Each diphthong sound in the twenty-four target words is repeated three times in different words at different phonetic positions. The chosen words along with their phonetic transcription (based on the IPA)and the target diphthong in each word are listed in Table1 below.

Target Words	Phonetic Transcription	Target Diphthongs
aim	/eɪm/	
behave	/bɪheɪv/	eɪ
birthday	/bɜːθdeɪ/	
eyes	/aɪz/	
five	/faɪv/	aɪ
die	/daɪ/	
oil	/ɔɪl/	
choice	/tʃɔɪs/	ɔɪ
enjoy	/ɪndʒɔɪ/	
oats	/əʊts/	
rope	/rəʊp/	əʊ
go	/gəʊ/	
outage	/aʊtɪdʒ/	
about	/əbaʊt <sup>h</sup> /	aʊ
now	/naʊ/	
earring	/ɪərɪŋ/	
beard	/bɪəd/	ɪə
cashier	/k <sup>h</sup> æʃɪə(r)/	
visual	/vɪʒʊəl/	
cure	/kjʊə(r)/	ʊə
casual	/kæʒʊəl/	
airway	/eəweɪ/	
heir	/eə(r)/	eə
there	/ðeə(r)/	

### 2.3. Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through audio recordings. The 120 participants were asked to read the list of words as naturally as they could. A mono-directional microphone, a laptop in which PRAAT (praat6024\_win64) was

uploaded, were used to record and analyse the stimuli which were words designed to elicit the difficulties in pronouncing the eight English diphthongs.

**2.4. Data Analysis**

The analysis of pronunciation difficulties has been performed on the basis of the following:

1. The intuition and observation of the researcher, who is a native speaker of Yemeni Arabic and works in the field of teaching English.
2. Spectrograms that are obtained from PRAAT in order to provide instrumental evidence of diphthongs and their durations. PRAAT is a software program developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink of the University of Amsterdam. It is a very flexible tool to do speech analysis. It offers a wide range of standard and non-standard procedures, including spectrographic analysis, articulatory synthesis, and neural networks. Data will be phonetically transcribed and analysed. Any deviance from RP diphthongs is noted down and analysed.

**III. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

With reference to the eight diphthong vowels, the participants’ articulations were auditorily and acoustically analysed to identify the violations that take place with each one as can be explained in the following:

**/eɪ/**

It is a closing diphthong as the glide begins at the tongue open position /e/ and ends at the close tongue position /ɪ/. It occurred in 3 words of the target list and in different phonetic environments. It was produced correctly by 78 of the participants in “aim”, 67 in “behave”, and 93 in “birthday”. The short pure vowel /e/, which is a portion of the target diphthong, replaced /eɪ/ by 4 speakers in “aim”, one speaker in “birthday”, and one in “behave”, while its long form /e:/ replaced it by 20 of the speakers in “behave”, 13 in “aim”, and 3 in “birthday”. The long front vowel /a:/ was used wrongly as an alternative by 25 of the participants in “behave”. It was also found that long /a:/ followed with the palatal approximant /j/ was used by 2 speakers in “birthday” and one in “behave” and its short form /a/, also followed by the approximant /j/, was used erroneously by 6 speakers in “aim” and 5 in “behave”. Similarly, the short pure vowel /e/ followed by the palatal /j/ was uttered by one speaker instead of the target diphthong in “birthday”. The diphthong /aɪ/ replaced the target one by 18 speakers in “aim”, one speaker in “behave”, and the vowels /i/ and /i:/ replaced it in “birthday” and “aim” respectively by the same speaker.

Table 2 below summarizes how this diphthong was mispronounced and replaced by wrong alternative vowels along with the percentage of errors that occurred.

**Table 2**

Target Phoneme	Alternatives used by speakers in the target words								
/eɪ/	e:	a:	aɪ	aj	e	a:j	ej	ɪ	i:
No. of Speakers	36	25	19	11	6	3	1	1	1
Percentage	28,6%								

From table 2 above, it was found out that 28.6% is the percentage of error production regarding the English diphthong /eɪ/ in the target words. Most of the participants replaced it with the pure vowels /e:/ and /a:/ as appears from the formants’ patterns in the spectrograms of the word “behave” in Figs.1, 2 and 3 below:

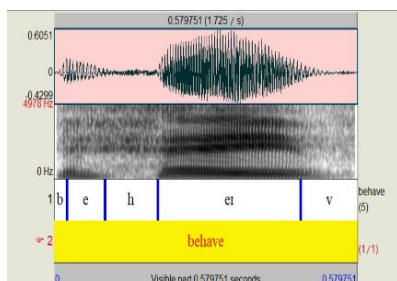


Fig.1

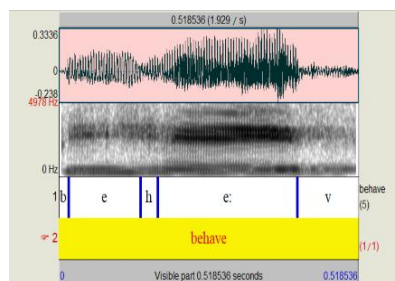


Fig.2

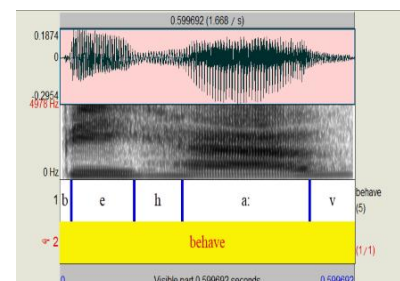


Fig.3

**/aɪ/**

It is a closing diphthong which is produced when a glide movement occurs from the tongue open position /a/ to the close position /ɪ/. This diphthong was investigated in 3 target words of the list. It was pronounced accurately by the 120 speakers in “five”, 117 in “die”, and 101 in “eyes”. However, it was replaced

with the long pure front vowel /i:/ by 2 speakers in “die” and one in “eyes”. As erroneous alternatives, /e:/ was used by 3 speakers, /a/ followed with /j/ by 2 speakers and the diphthong /eɪ/ by 9 speakers in the word “eyes”. All the wrong vowel phonemes used by the speakers, in the position of the target diphthong, along with the percentage of those errors are shown in table 3 below.

**Table 3**  
Alternatives used by speakers in the target words

Target Phoneme	eɪ	e:	i	aj
/aɪ/	9	3	3	2
No. of Speakers	4.7%			
Percentage				

Table 3. above illustrates the percentage of mispronounced utterances made in pronouncing the English diphthong /aɪ / in the target words. The spectrograms in Fig.4 & 5 below exhibit the acoustic transition of formants patterns in the word “eyes” in which the diphthong /eɪ/ replaced the target diphthong 9 times.

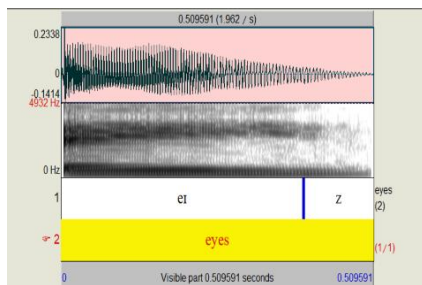


Fig.4

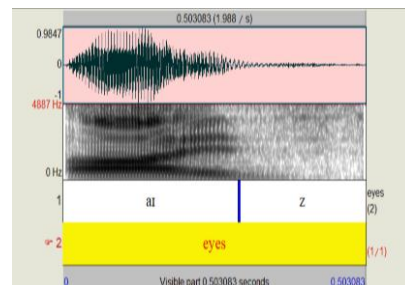


Fig.5

**/ɔɪ/**

It is produced when the glide begins from the back point of the tongue /ɔ/ and moves to the direction of the close front point of /ɪ/. /ɔɪ/ was a target phoneme in 3 words of the list in different phonetic positions. It was articulated with no phonetic errors by 111 speakers in “oil”, 102 in “choice”, and 118 speakers in “enjoy”. The first part /ɔ/ of the diphthong was substituted by the less open and back vowel /o/ to become like /oɪ/ by 5 speakers in “oil” and one in “choice”. The long, back, and pure vowel /u:/ was an alternative used by 5 speakers in “choice”.

The other alternatives with the total percentage of errors that took place in producing this target diphthong are presented in table 4 below.

**Table 4**  
Alternatives used by speakers in the target words

Target Phoneme	oɪ	u:	ɔ:ɪə	ɔɪə	ɔjə	wai	ueɪ
/ɔɪ/	6	5	2	2	2	2	2
No. of speakers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Percentage	7.7%						

In table 4 above, it can be stated that the participants had no serious difficulties with the diphthong /ɔɪ / since only 7.7% of the speakers replaced it with incorrect alternatives in the target words such as /u:/ in “choice” as evidenced acoustically by the following spectrograms (Figs.6 & 7):



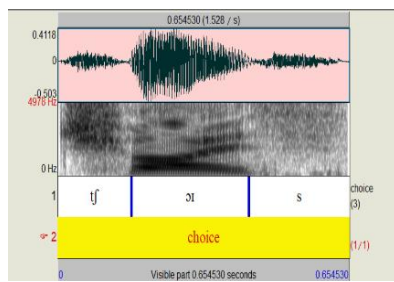


Fig.6

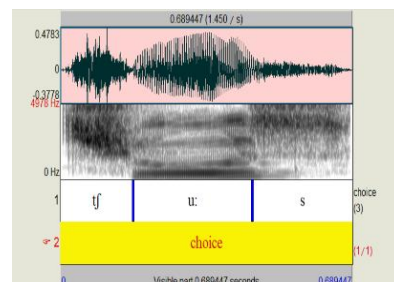


Fig.7

**/əʊ/**

It is a diphthong that starts with the centralised-close position /ə/ and ends at the back position /ʊ/.

It took place in 3 target words in phonetically different environments. It was pronounced correctly by 29 of the speakers in “oats”, 35 in “rope”, and 47 in “go”. It was replaced with the short and back pure vowel /o/ by 4 speakers in “rope”, one speaker in each “oats” and “go”, whereas its long counterpart /o:/ was erroneously used by 33 of the speakers in “oats”, 14 in “rope” and 32 in “go”. The diphthong /aʊ/ substituted the target diphthong by 38 speakers in “oats”, 8 in “rope” and 11 in “go”. The American English diphthong /oʊ/ was used by 6 speakers in “oats”, 5 in “rope” and 25 in “go”. Furthermore, 4 speakers in “oats”, 19 in “rope” and 3 in “go” tended to use the long and back vowel /u:/ as an alternative, while /ɔ/ was used in “rope” by 15 of the speakers and one speaker in “oats”.

Table 5. below shows the entire patterns of wrong alternatives used by the speakers in addition to the total percent of error productions.

**Table 5**

Target Phoneme	Alternatives used by speakers in the target words									
/əʊ/	o:	aʊ	oʊ	u:	ɔ:	ɔ	o	ʊ	ao	ə
No. of speakers	79	57	36	26	19	16	6	3	3	1
Percentage	75.3%									

Table 5. reveals that the majority of the speakers encountered serious problems with the diphthong /əʊ/ since more than 75% of the participants produced it incorrectly in the three target words. It was replaced 78 times by /o:/ and 57 times by /aʊ/ in “rope” as can be demonstrated acoustically in the following spectrograms (Figs.8,9& 10):

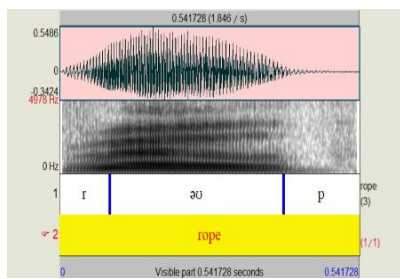


Fig.8

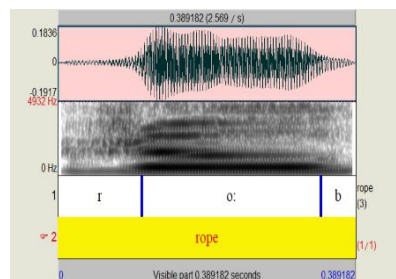


Fig.9

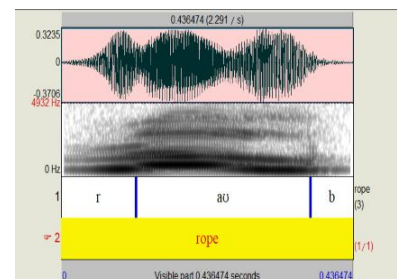


Fig.10

**/aʊ/**

It is a diphthong that begins at the front tongue position /a/ and moves to end at its back position /ʊ/. It occurs in 3 target words and in phonetically different environments. It was produced with no violation by 119 of the speakers in “about”, 103 in “outage”, and 118 in “now”. While it was uttered as a pure vowel /o/ by 12 speakers in “outage”, as /o:/, /ɔ/, /ʊ/, /oʊ/ by one of the speakers in “outage”, and as /u:/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/ by one speaker in the word “now”. All the erroneous alternative phonemes that replaced this target diphthong by the speakers are shown in table 6.

**Table 6**

Target Phoneme	Alternatives used by speakers in the target words							
/aʊ/	o	o:	əʊ	oʊ	ɔ	u:	aʊ	ʊ
No. of speakers	12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Percentage	5.3%							

As obvious in table 6 above, most speakers had no problematic issues with this diphthong since only about 5% of them replaced it with incorrect alternatives such as /o/ in “outage” that the spectrogram below shows acoustically (Figs. 11 & 12).

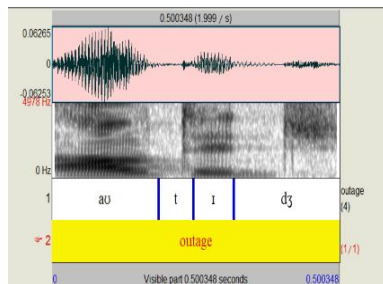


Fig.11

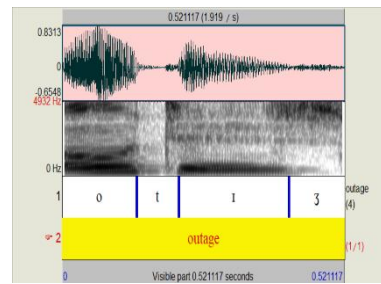


Fig.12

**/ɪə/**

It is a combination of the short vowels /ɪ/ and /ə/. The glide begins when the tongue moves approximately from the close-mid position /ɪ/ to the direction of the more open central /ə/. It takes place in 3 words of the corpus. It was pronounced in accurate manner by only one speaker in “earring”, 9 speakers in “cashier”, and 49 in “beard”. The pure front and close vowel /i/, with various durations, replaced the target diphthong by 91 of the speakers in “earring”, 71 in “cashier”, and 40 in “beard”. The pure vowel /e/, either as short or long, was chosen as an alternative by 24 speakers in “earring”, 34 in “cashier”, and 51 in “beard”. Furthermore, short or long /ɜ/ replaced the target phoneme by 19 speakers in “beard” and one speaker in “earring”.

Table 7. shows how /ɪə/ was mispronounced and replaced by inaccurate phonemes along with the total percentage of committed errors. Noteworthy, the phoneme /r/ was pronounced finally after the vowel in “cashier” by all the speakers.

**Table 7**

Target Phoneme	Alternatives used by speakers in the 3 target words											
/ɪə/	i:	e:	ɪ	e	i.	ɜ:	i:ə	je:	ɜ	a:	eɪ	je
No. of speakers	138	77	35	32	29	19	2	2	1	1	1	1
Percentage	93.88%											

Table 7. illustrates that the participants have serious difficulties with the diphthong /ɪə/. About 94% of errors were committed by the speakers who tended to produce it incorrectly. /i:/ and /e:/ in “earring” are shown in the spectrograms below where the formants patterns can illustrate the acoustic differences between them and the target diphthong (Figs. 13, 14, 15).

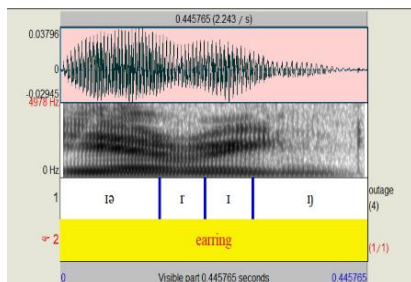


Fig.13

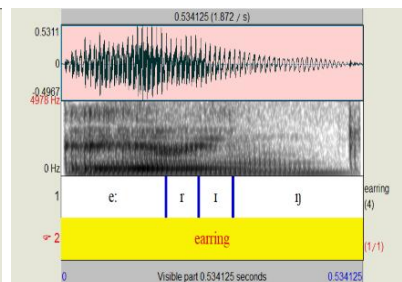


Fig.14

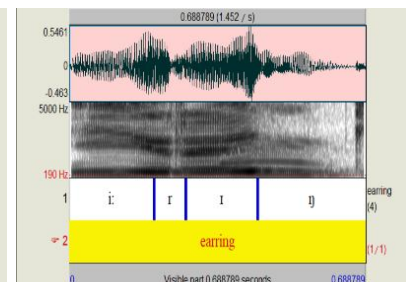


Fig.15

**/ʊə/**

It is a diphthong that occurs when a glide takes place in the tongue close and back position of /ʊ/ and moves to the more open and central position of /ə/. Three target words in the list contain this centring diphthong. It can be said that it was articulated properly by 111 speakers in “visual”, 2 speakers in “cure”, and 113 in “casual”. The vowel /o/, either in long or short length, substituted the target diphthong by 9 speakers in “cure”, 2 speakers in “casual”, and one speaker in “visual”. The first single element /ʊ/ of the target diphthong was used as an alternative by 13 speakers in “cure” and one in “visual”, while its second part /ə/ was used by 5 speakers in “visual”, and 4 in “casual”. In “cure”, 78 of the speakers replaced the target diphthong with various lengths of the back vowel /u/. All patterns of mispronunciation that occurred by the speakers and the total percentage of errors can be seen in table 8.

Table 8

Target Phoneme	Alternatives used by speakers in the target words								
/ʊə/	u:	ʊ	o:	ə	e:	o	u.	ɜ:	ɔ
No. of speakers	75	14	9	9	8	3	3	2	2
/ʊə/	jo	a	ɜ	au	a:	ʌ	ʌ:	wo	e
No. of speakers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Percentage	37.22%								

In table 8, we find that about 37% is the rate of errors made by the participants regarding the diphthong /ʊə/. They tend to have wrong vowels on behalf the accurate one such as /u:/ which occurred 75 times in the target word “cure” as can be seen and compared in the below spectrograms (Figure 16, 17)

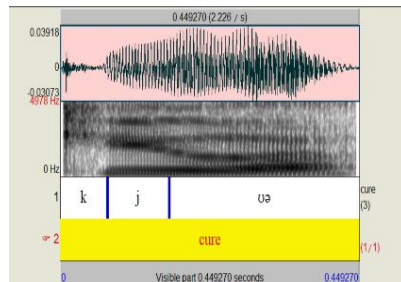


Fig.16

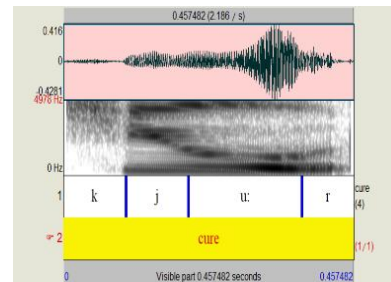


Fig.17

/eə/

It is a centring diphthong that starts at the cardinal front vowel /e/ and ends at the central position of /ə/. Three words of the list include this target phoneme. It was found to be produced with no errors by 11 speakers in “there”, 2 speakers in “airway”, and 4 speakers in “heir”. The pure vowel /e/, with diverse lengths, replaced the target diphthong by 93 speakers in “there”, 56 in “airway” and 47 in “heir”, while the short form /e/ was used erroneously by 5 speakers in “there”, 32 in “airway” and 7 in “heir”. The long vowel /i:/ was wrongly used as the diphthong alternative by 9 speakers in “there”, 2 in “airway” and 33 in “heir”. The closing diphthong /eɪ/ replaced it by 4 speakers in “airway”, one speaker in the two words “there” and “heir”, and it was uttered as the diphthong /aɪ/ by 8 speakers in “airway”, one speaker in both “there” and “heir”. The erroneous phonemes mentioned above with more improper alternative phonemes used by the participants can be abbreviated in table 9 below.

Table 9

Target Phoneme	Alternatives used by speakers in the target words								
/eə/	e:	i:	e	eɪ	ɪə	aɪ	a:	aɪə	e:j
No. of speakers	196	44	44	20	10	9	3	7	3
/eə/	aj	a:j	e:ɪə	a	ɪe	je:	jiə	i:ə	
No. of speakers	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	
Percentage	97.9%								

Table 9 concludes that almost 98% is the percentage of erroneous utterances produced by the participants when articulating the target words containing the diphthong /eə/. There was a strong tendency to replace it with wrong alternatives such as /e:/, /i:/, and /e/ followed by /r/ in words like “there”. The spectrograms (Figs. 18, 19, 20) below provide acoustic evidence for such mispronunciation on the basis of formants patterns.



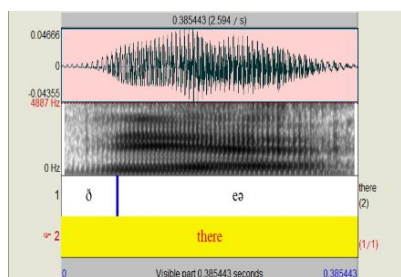


Fig.18

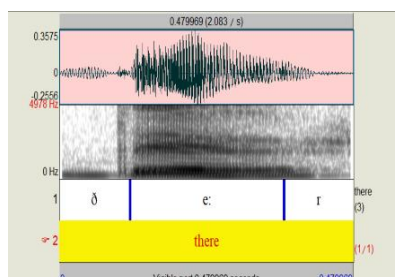


Fig.19

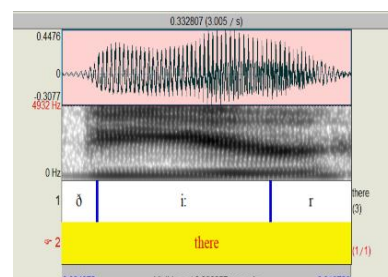


Fig.20

The above analysis and tables reveal that EFL Yemeni speakers have serious errors with most English diphthongs. For the participants, the diphthong /eə/ and /ɪə/ were the most difficult to produce; the percentage of errors in the articulation of these two diphthongs are 97.9% and 93.9% respectively. 75.3% of the participants committed errors in pronouncing /əʊ/, 37.2% faced difficulties in articulating /ʊə/, and 28.6% in pronouncing /eɪ/. They have less serious problems with /aʊ/ since only 21.5% of the subjects mispronounced it in the target words. It can be stated that, with less than 10% errors, participants have no serious issues with the two diphthongs /ɔɪ/ and /aɪ/.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude, errors occur in the pronunciation of words' phonemes including diphthongs by EFL Yemeni speakers in different proportions. The reasons lying behind the observed phonetic errors and difficulties are attributed to many factors such as the negative mother tongue interference. No diphthongs exist in Yemeni Arabic, which makes it difficult for Yemenis to understand their nature and consequently produce them accurately. Yemenis tend to replace them with short or mostly long vowels. Errors may also occur due to analogy, wild guesses, and a remarkable lack of language accuracy and speaking skills which can be considered as the main reason. Furthermore, it can be noticed from the results that speakers' errors can be attributed to orthography. Unaware that there is no correspondence between the spelling and phonology in English, most of those who failed to produce diphthongs in the target words read the words according to the spelling. The pedagogical implications of the study for the field of pronunciation error analysis, is that it may lead to designing and developing a language syllabus with efficient pronunciation content. Moreover, it can help syllabus designers to realize the need for more phonologically-oriented content and phonologically well-trained teachers. Absence of a rich linguistic environment, learning English late in age, attitude towards the language can also greatly contribute to pronunciation errors among EFL Yemeni learners.

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