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Yemeni EFL Learners' Typical Pronunciation Issues: A Quantitative Analysis of Enhancement via Structured Interview-Based Intervention

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Abstract: Effective communication should be fluent pronunciation (when the English language is a foreign language, EFL) in English class. These reasons are hard to work towards because of lack of well-trained teachers, obsolete syllabus and in absence of teaching aids; the pronunciation in many Arabic-speaking countries, and in particular Yemen, is marginalized. This is a quantitative research that empirically evaluates the role of a structured interview-based intervention in obtaining answers to frequent pronunciation issues experienced by Yemeni EFL learners. A total of thirty students from Hodeidah University in their eighth semester participated in a two-week workshop aimed at segmental (consonant clusters, vowel alternation) and suprasegmental (stress, intonation) teaching. Pre- and post-intervention interviews, using Munro and Derwing's (1995) taxonomy, noted significant reductions in three primary sources of error: stress misplacement (50% reduction), vowel substitution (46.43% reduction), and consonant cluster reduction (56.25% reduction). Most of the errors, particularly L1 interference errors, 56.9% and 27.4% intralingual transfer within a constrained context, contributed to the defined result. This highlighted a particular contribution of an error source analysis, which somehow drew attention to the restructuring, or even more profound alterations, to how educational resources are allocated beyond the curriculum-focused changes limited to supervision, teacher training, and tacit behavioural guidance. By tackling an overlooked yet vital aspect of EFL teaching in Yemen, this study fills an important gap while offering adaptable, practical interventions for similar regions facing pedagogical and infrastructural challenges.

Keywords: accent modification, Yemeni learners of EFL, research interviews, error analysis, first language influence, phonological modification.

1. Introduction

Concerning EFL, pronunciation is paramount because it concerns understanding and intelligibility in any academic, professional, or virtual interaction. Teaching English is increasingly prioritized in Yemen, yet pedagogical focus remains skewed toward grammar and vocabulary at the expense of pronunciation (Alrefaee & Mohammed, 2025). Despite its proliferation, pronunciation instruction is marginalized due to systemic constraints. Obstacles include a shortage of qualified teachers, reliance on mechanical learning methods, and significant phonological differences between Arabic and English, which include the absence of /p/ and /v/ and /p/ and /v/ sounds as well as complex consonant clusters.

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The idealized native-like accent has shifted to a more inclusive intelligibility framework within the global pedagogy spectrum, especially in international as well as multicultural contexts. Jenkins (2000) and Derwing and Munro (2005) supported this change, they emphasize understanding far more than sounding native. This is especially true in Yemen, which is further constrained by sociopolitical and infrastructural realities, limiting learners' exposure to the English language as it is naturally spoken.

The lack of access to authentic English input from native speakers due to the digital divide and accentuated pronunciation issues are further compounding factors. Real-time oral practice is hardly promoted in the classroom owing to a mix of outdated textbooks, internet censorship, and strict adherence to conventional teaching styles. These situations demand practical pedagogical interventions that can be easily implemented in under-resourced schools.

This study fills a significant gap in the Yemeni EFL research by context-sensitive solutions, empirically exploring viable through the lens of an interview-based structured intervention that is designed to foster intelligibility by targeting common mispronunciation errors throughout communicative exercises.

It also participates in international dialogue by using a flexible model that can be increased in similar EFL settings.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify the least proficient pronunciation sub-skills of Yemeni EFL learners, evaluating the effectiveness of a brief, structured oral correctional training program in lowering these errors. ELPs with limited resources to enhance students' English language skills are effective in tackling these issues, so the research provides these instructor-centred suggestions.

1.2. Questions of the Study

The present study seeks to answer the following research questions

1. Due to some phonological and linguistic characteristics of Arabic, do Yemeni EFL learners consistently struggle with pronunciation?
2. Can Yemeni EFL learners' pronunciation be greatly enhanced by structured interview-based treatments?
3. Do Comparative evaluations conducted before and after the intervention allow for the measurement of the improvement in pronunciation brought about by structured interviews?

1.3. Problem of the Study:

Despite undergoing rigorous phonetics training, many Yemeni EFL learners who are unable to speak English still have difficulties communicating with others and understanding English. This challenge stems from outdated and inefficient teaching methods and a lack of adequate exposure to authentic English conversation. The issue is further compounded by the shortness of any practice, and interventional studies focusing on the training of pronunciation in Yemen.

1.4. The Importance of the Study

This study has two implications, theoretical and practical. The body of knowledge about second language acquisition is explained widely by the theoretical implication, especially about the phonological comprehension of English by Arabic-speaking learners. The problems that Yemeni students, who are typically underrepresented in language research, face are explained by theoretical implications. The study provides EFL teachers with very useful tools because of well-planned interviews that support pronunciation improvement. The Yemeni educational framework and the analogous EFL setting are affected by curriculum development, teacher preparation, and student evolution.

1.5. The Study's Concept

The main idea of the study is to use a quantitative technique to identify and correct typical pronunciation problems made by Yemeni EFL learners. It particularly focuses on how the accuracy of learners' pronunciation can be developed during structured interviews. The study combines a pedagogical intervention centred on structured speaking exercises with quantitative data collection techniques, including pre-and post-tests. This conceptual framework provides a reproducible paradigm for improving pronunciation in EFL environments to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Framework for Theory and Phonological Contrast Research

There are two basic —Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Error Analysis (EA) —that show significant explanatory power while examining the issues of pronunciation among Yemeni EFL students. According to Corder (1967), EA is centred on the methodical examination of learner errors to spot trends and underlying interlanguage principles. This method has significance in detecting typical segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation mistakes done by Arabic negative transfer. In contrast to repetitive articulation drills, CLT provides pronunciation improvement during contextualized, interactive learning and places an emphasis on real-life communication and fluency (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Recently, It can be understood the differences between the phonetics of Arabic and English, particularly, interference of first language. Alzahrani and Runnels (2022) present practical data on the issues of Saudi learners with voiced-voiceless stops and English interdental fricatives, emphasizing that certain Arabic phonemes—especially those that are absent in English (e.g., /ʕ/, /ħ/)—have an influenced on mispronunciations. Wahba (2020), states that the epenthetic vowel insertion in consonant clusters is a phonotactic restriction in Arabic that continues to exist in the production of the English language. These findings are coordinated with those of Hansen Edwards (2020), who investigated stress misplacement tendencies in ESL learners who speak Arabic.

These studies help put the ongoing challenges faced by Yemeni learners in context and provide a more nuanced view of how Arabic phonology influences English pronunciation. This section critically analyzes the theoretical, methodological, and contextual foundations of pronunciation teaching in EFL, with a focus on students from Arabic-speaking backgrounds. Classifications, pedagogical strategies, technology interventions, cross-linguistic case studies, and the reasons behind pronunciation issues are all covered in its five subsections.

2.2. Historical Views on Teaching Pronunciation

Historically, practically in the Grammar-Translation era, pronunciation was offered as a secondary component of language acquisition. With the introduction of the Audiolingual Method, pronunciation—which is sometimes missing in a communicative context—became more popular through mechanical drills (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Later, when the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) movement focused on meaning, it inadvertently ignored pronunciation again.

Gilbert (1993) and Morley (1991), however, were among the proponents of restoring pronunciation into CLT, emphasizing its significance for intelligibility. Derwing and Munro (2005) and Levis (2018), stress that this role has more significance to current education. This evolution is congruent with the global paradigm shift toward English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which prioritizes intelligence over native-like correctness (Jenkins, 2000).

2.3. Suprasegmental vs. Segmental Difficulties

*There are obstacles with Arabic learners while using the following segmental features: consonant clusters and absent sounds (such as /p/ and /v/) (Al-Amrani, 2018).
*The characteristics of Suprasegmental: stress patterns and intonation, which are significant for comprehension but are often overlooked in curricula (Derwing & Munro, 2005).
*Prosodic training, however slower to produce benefits, improves comprehensibility, while explicit contrastive instruction (Arabic vs. English phonology) dramatically reduces segmental errors, according to recent studies (e.g., Al-Mohanna, 2019).

2.4. Limitations and Interventions of Technology

Mobile-assisted shadowing (Al-Jarf, 2023) and ELSA Speak (Ahmed & Patel, 2022) are promising tools, but their viability in Yemen is constrained by infrastructure deficiencies. In this study, the interview-based strategy used provides an alternative by using the feedback of instructor and interaction of the classmate, which are resources that are usually present in classrooms.

2.5. Local Perspectives

Research from Egypt (Habash & El-Nashar, 2021) and Saudi Arabia (Alzahrani, 2023) highlights Yemen's particular limitations while confirming common difficulties faced by Arab students:
*Limited resources include outdated textbooks and restricted internet access.
* Disruptions to society and politics: School closures brought on by conflict.
The characteristics of these elements are flexible, low-tech approaches, such as the structured intervention that is suggested here.
In summary, the literature shows many different intervention options and promotes good theoretical support for pronunciation instruction. Additionally, it recovers a shortage of practical research from Yemen and comparable contexts, underscoring the importance of the current study.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study used a single-group pre-test/post-test design, making it quasi-experimental. Following a two-week intervention that focused on troublesome segmental and suprasegmental elements, pronunciation errors were measured in structured oral interviews that were conducted as prompts during specific questions at the pre-and post-test.

3.2. Participants

The study focused on thirty English majors (18 females and 12 men), who are in their eighth semester at Hodeidah University and range in age from 20 to 22. Every participant provided informed consent after taking phonetics classes. None have extensive experience in an English-speaking setting.

3.3. Data Collection

Ten open-ended questions were asked throughout the ten to twelve-minute pre-training and post-training structured oral interviews. The suggestions were designed to encourage the production of phonemes both consciously and inadvertently.

Each participant had an organised interview, which lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. Every session adhered to a set protocol intended to produce both controlled and unplanned speech. To start a free-form chat, participants were first asked broad questions, such as "Can you describe your daily routine?" They next had to repeat words after a native speaker, read aloud minimum pairs (such as "ship" vs "sheep"), and answer scenario-based prompts like placing an order at a restaurant or requesting directions.

The purpose of these exercises was to evaluate typical problem noises and offer chances for immediate remedial input.

The intervention consisted of five 45-minute sessions:

*Consonant clusters, like /str/ and /θr/

*Distinct vowels, such as/ae/ as opposed to /ɑː/

*Word stress patterns;

*intonation and rhythm practice exercises; and

*a combination of practice and feedback

Resources include worksheets, recordings of native speakers, and IPA charts (International Phonetic Alphabet). Students were given visual aids in the form of IPA charts to help them comprehend the articulatory characteristics of difficult English sounds. Learners received targeted training in each session, which included demonstrations of the proper jaw, lip, and tongue postures for each phoneme. Furthermore, listening and repetition drills were conducted using recordings of native speakers that were carefully selected to incorporate target sounds in a variety of phonetic settings. After listening to these recordings, students tried to duplicate the pronunciation, and the instructor gave them immediate feedback to help them correct their pronunciation and strengthen their learning.

3.4. Data Analysis

We classified and transcribed the interviews using Munro and Derwing's (1995) taxonomy. Two proficient raters who classified errors (Cohen's kappa = 0.91) achieved inter-rater reliability. Descriptive statistics were used to compare the frequencies before and after the test. Visual data included bars and pie charts.

4. Results and Discussion

From the results, it is noted that pronunciation faults of Yemeni EFL learners are decreased exactly after intervention. The necessity for specialized instructional techniques was highlighted by the fact that some regions exhibited more moderate advances while others showed significant progress.

4.1 suprasegmental challenges

About half of the development of each suprasegmental feature, such as intonation and stress, was accessible. This moderate gain may be attributed to the two-week intervention period and the overall focus on segmental features throughout the educational process. The prolonged, context-rich exposure that suprasegmentals usually require was absent from this program. This suggests that frequent or extended training—possibly part of the regular curriculum—may be necessary to generate several significant advancements in areas like intonation, rhythm, and natural speech flow.

4.2 Metacognitive Awareness

A quick post-intervention survey and informal interviews showed that learners' self-awareness and capacity for self-correction had increased. In their everyday practice, participants reported identifying modest pair distinctions and stress patterns. "I used to say sheep ship' the same, but now I know the difference," one student wrote. "Now I listen to myself more and try to fix the stress on long words," said another commenter. These findings point to the possibility of long-term, persistent self-correction by demonstrating an early stage of metacognitive development.

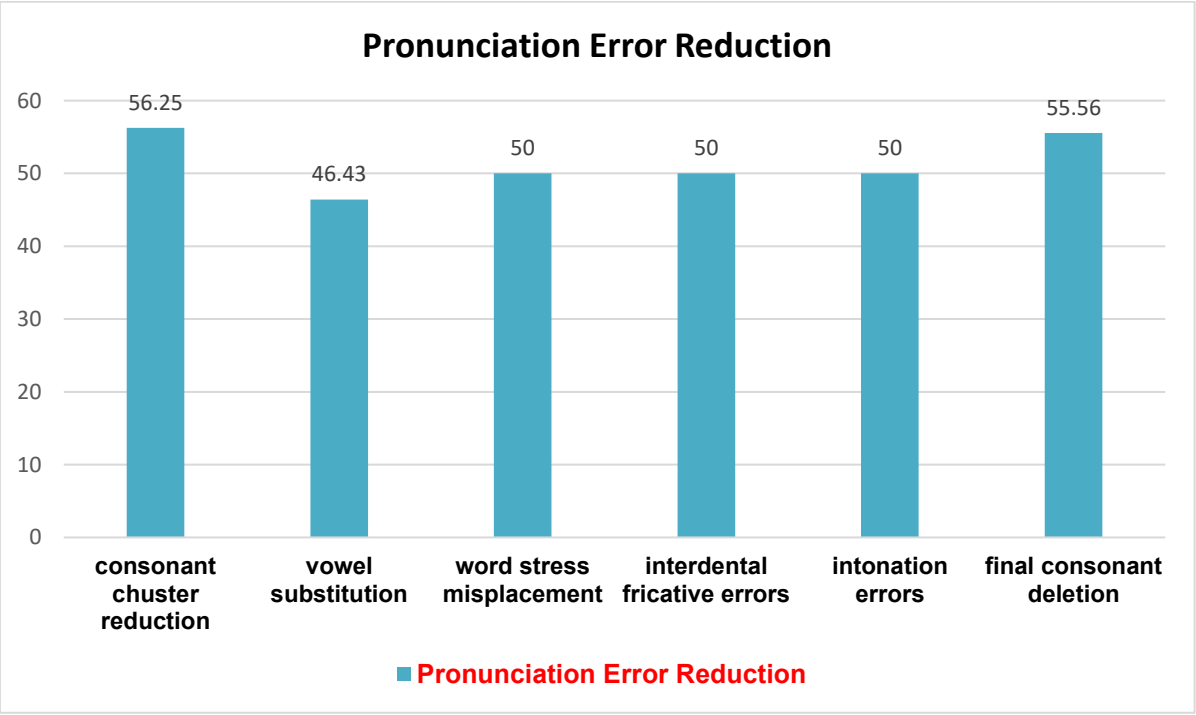
4.3 Pronunciation Errors Reduction

The mistakes in each assessed category are decreased due to intervention, as the table below demonstrates. The biggest gains were observed in consonant clusters (56.25% reduction) and terminal consonants (55.56% decrease), which are believed to have more mechanical flaws and respond well to targeted exercises. Although they were only slight, improvements in suprasegmental features also showed promise.

Table 1. *Pre- and Post-Intervention Pronunciation Error Frequencies and Reduction Rates*

Error Type	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Reduction (%)
Consonant Cluster Reduction	320	140	56.25
Vowel Substitution	280	150	46.43
Word Stress Misplacement	200	100	50.00
Interdental Fricative Errors	180	90	50.00
Intonation Errors	120	60	50.00
Final Consonant Deletion	90	40	55.56
Total Errors	1190	580	51.26

Figure 1: Percentage Reduction in Pronunciation Error Types Following Structured Intervention



Bar charts demonstrated a significant decrease in errors across all categories. The largest improvements were shown in end consonants and consonant clusters, which are highly mechanical and respond strongly to attention training. Suprasegmental gains were promising but minor.

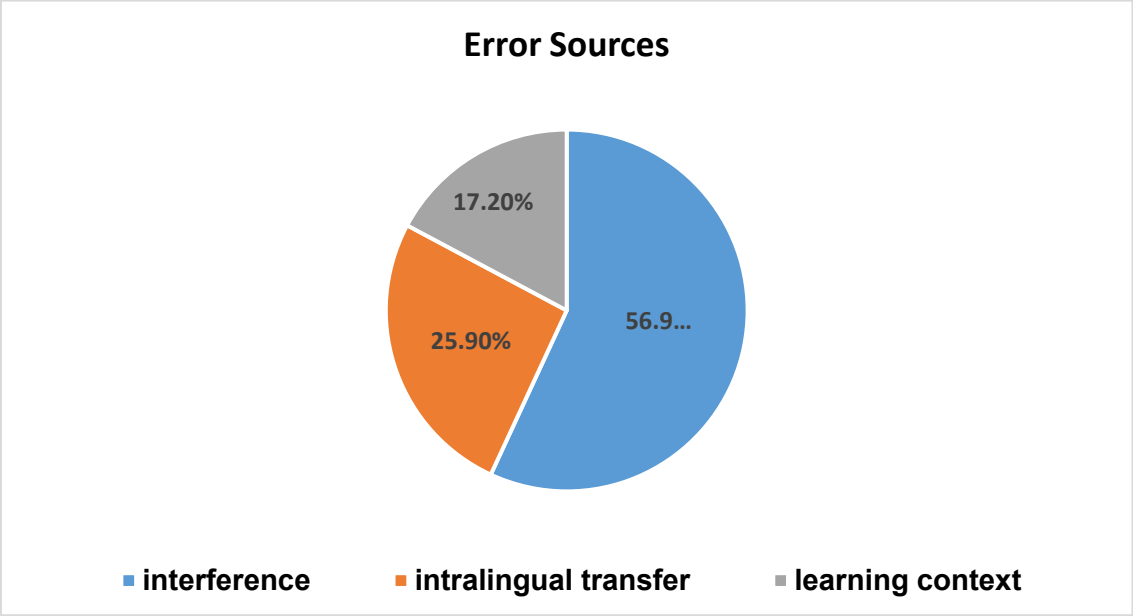
4.4 Error Sources

L1 interference accounted for 56.9% of mistakes, making it the most important contributor, according to an examination of error causes. This illustrates how Arabic and English have quite different phonemes. Due to the overgeneralization of L2 norms, intralingual transfer was responsible for 25.9% of mistakes. 17.2% of mistakes were associated with contextual restrictions, such as curriculum design and inadequate feedback.

Table 2: Distribution of Pronunciation Error Sources Among Yemeni EFL Learners

Source of Error	Frequency	Percentage (%)
L1 Interference	330	56.9
Intralingual Transfer	150	25.9
Learning Context	100	17.2
Total	580	100

Graph 2: Proportional Distribution of Pronunciation Error Sources



The significant phonetic differences between Arabic and English are reflected in the preponderance of L1 interference. Intralingual transfer was explained by the overgeneralization of L2 rules, but curriculum design and feedback deficiency were linked to contextual restrictions.

5. Findings

The quantitative results of the study show that different types of errors improve differently with targeted education. Consonant clusters and final consonant deletion are considered mechanical mistakes. They both offered the broadest reduction (56.25% and 55.56%, respectively), suggesting that they require longer-term intervention, whereas suprasegmental errors, such as intonation and

stress, improved considerably (by 50%). Importantly, learners' self-reports showed an increase in metacognitive awareness, which is a prerequisite for self-correction. These results corroborate Saito and Akiyama's (2017) assertion that systematic practice promotes accuracy and confidence.
The persistence of L1 interference (56.7%) suggests that Arabic-English inconsistencies, such as the absence of /p/ and /v/ in Arabic, call for contrastive phonological training. The study's conclusions also align with recent advances in technology and society. Al-Mansoori's (2024) results on the need for consistent contextualized practice are in line with the moderate gains in suprasegmental characteristics (50%) despite the significant decrease in mechanical mistakes (56.25%). AI technologies is enhanced autonomy in line with learners' metacognitive growth (such as self-correction) by the research of Ahmed and Patelis (2022). Regarding Al-Jarf (2023), blended treatments will be useful for Yemeni students due to the mix of formal interviews and mobile-assisted shadowing, despite the persistent L1 interference (56.9%).

6. Pedagogical Implications

The results point to several pedagogical suggestions for teaching EFL:

Virtual exchange programs aims to bridge suprasegmental barriers by collaborating with English-speaking institutions to offer socioculturally rich practices (Al-Mansoori, 2024). Longitudinal Tracking: Prioritizes intelligibility above accuracy when using portfolios to track the effectiveness of hybrid treatments (Derwing & Munro, 2005). At Integrated pronunciation practice, there is a comparison of the sound system between two languages, Arabic and English, as an example of interdental fricatives /θ/ vs. Arabic /t/, which can be treated well by L1 interference. Thomson and Derwing (2015) state that the skill of communicative language training has more significance in teaching pronunciation than a separate or complementary skill. Combine structured interviews with AI technologies (like Google's Pronunciation Tool) to get real-time feedback on segmental problems. Outside of the classroom, use mobile-assisted shadowing (Al-Jarf, 2023) to practice vowel and consonant exercises. Pay Attention to High-Impact Errors: Conducts regular oral evaluations to monitor development and customize interventions for specific error trends. The mistakes that affect intelligibility have been given priority by the teachers, particularly in L1-influenced circumstances. These mistakes are such as vowel differences and consonant clusters. It is necessary to use Technology for getting pronunciation in real time, exactly for the features of suprasegmental that are not easy to train for, it is preferred to use apps such as Praat or ELSA Speak. In addition, there are digital tools, such as speech analysis applications, that have the ability to promote classroom learning as well as offer instant feedback (Kang, Thomson, & Moran, 2019). For training Teacher, It is necessary to create peer-led workshops that aim to exchange research-based methods for training students in difficult phonemes (such as /ɪ/ versus /iː/). Confidence and proficiency should be increased in teaching pronunciation by including EFL teacher preparation programs that incorporate pronunciation pedagogy (Baker, 2014). Additionally, technology gaps should be bridged by involving modules on AI and mobile tools in workshops for professional growth. Continuous Feedback is useful feedback and it should be given to students as well, and their improvement should be observed by using structured oral evaluations such as interviews continuously.

7. Suggestions & Recommendations

Many suggestions and recommendations may be shown by the research regarding the findings of this study to aid Yemeni EFL learners in overcoming their pronunciation obstacles:

Phonetics and pronunciation should have precedence in the curriculum of the English language at both schools and universities in Yemen. If particular pronunciation units incorporate targeted instruction

about difficult sounds, the learners will get a great deal from this incorporation. Also, it is necessary that EFL teachers need to follow special training in pronunciation pedagogy and phonology. The guidance and improvement of pronunciation can increase the impact of classroom education by giving them the tools they need. As well as, utilization of technology can provide learners with instant feedback and allow for self-paced practice by following some digital resources that involve speech analysis software, language labs, and pronunciation applications. Additionally, mixing organized interviewing methods with the lesson plans of the teachers is done to the desire of the teachers themselves. A useful and effective way to work on pronunciation is provided by these techniques, as this study has stated. In addition to, the development of the learners' pronunciation habits will be achieved by encouraging the learners to imitate the original speech by showing the resources of native English by following media such as music, podcasts, and movies. Also, the students can be more conscious of their mistakes by encouraging peer and self-assessment exercises. These exercises can also help the learners to keep track of their development. Moreover, it is necessary to include future studies' limited examples of interview questions and explain the practical incorporation of digital tools like Praat and ELSA into feedback mechanisms. It will develop reproducibility and support instructional design in low-tech environments by following the steps mentioned above. In Yemen, there are some sociopolitical constraints as limited exposure to native input and curriculum rigidity, which represent obstacles to suprasegmental interpretation and should be explained deeply by this study. And there are some expanded solutions, such as mobile-based shadowing or locally recorded media should be suggested in this study. As well as, learner recommendations, quotes from reliable journals, or short interviews represent qualitative insights that should be added to this study to promote claims of metacognitive development and add a broader view of learner progress. As well as,gender, age, and educational background represent a great importance in future research to examine the long-term influence of organized interviews during different learner levels and areas in Yemen.

Finally, Yemeni learners will receive pronunciation training in a more effective way, which will develop their overall English communication skills, so they are necessary to follow all these recommendations mentioned above. Because the basic of recommendations' goals is to assist them.

8. Conclusion:

This study explains the shortness of pronunciation for segmental errors, as well as illustrates the effectiveness of systematic instruction in Yemeni EFL contexts. However, the long-term development of suprasegmental traits and fossilized mistakes needs more practice and contextualized exposure, for example, virtual interactions with native speakers.

While the findings provide preliminary proof of development in pronunciation during structured interview-based intervention, the limited sample size (n=30) restricts the generalizability of the results. So, future studies should consider reproducing this research with larger and more diverse groups to achieve the validity of these findings and discover possible variations across different EFL contexts and learner backgrounds.

Legislators decided that pronunciation has priority in programs of teacher certification. Hybrid models consist of combining interviews with AI-powered technology; it is necessary to be at a future study. In education, intelligibility-focused methods are preferred in this study more than accuracy-centric ones, which would meet the needs of Yemen's communication in an increasingly globalized environment.

It can be concluded from this study that the structured intervention has succeeded in treating segmental errors among Yemeni students, particularly when it is taken in light of the recent technology and the development in sociocultural variables. Nevertheless, for long-term renovation, the findings of Al-Mansoori (2024) and Ahmed & Patel (2022) validate the significance of integrating these methods

with virtual exchanges and artificial intelligence (AI) techniques. To achieve the advantage of this progress, funding is necessary for digital infrastructure and teacher training by policymakers, and future research should test hybrid models in Yemen. Following both Yemen's unique needs and global trends, the model follows technology. - Enhanced learning and intelligibility-focused education,

The objective of this research is to enrich the common results from the other studies in the Arab countries, including Yemeni EFL research. The infrastructure gap cannot be bridged by the low-technology way of designing the structured interview. This works especially well in countries like Yemen, where there is limited access to the internet or where there has been violence. By supporting a workable, expandable strategy that is more appropriate for Yemen's particular pedagogical issues, it advanced regional EFL research as well as more general discussions on equitable language instruction.

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