Analyzing Arabic and English Linguistic patterns: A Phonological contrastive Study

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ABSTRACT

The current study was an attempt to analyze phonological patterns of Arabic and English languages that are among the top ten languages in the world. Both the languages have strong influence in Pakistani context: Arabic being a religious language of the majority of Pakistan's population and English being the Pakistan's official and educational language since the time of British colonization. The literature review revealed that Pakistani ESL learners had always faced difficulties in learning English particularly the pronunciation system due to discrepancies between the sounds and letters. This research aimed at exploring the similarities and differences between the vowels and their patterns in Arabic and English languages. It also endeavored to discover whether Arabic vowels and phonological patterns could be used to minimize the disparities between English letters and sounds. In the backdrop of Chomsky's theory of *Universal Grammar,* the method of Contrastive Analysis was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of vowels from the standard dialects of English and Arabic. After a detailed discussion, the researchers proved

how explicit and clear Arabic phonological patterns were in comparison with English vowels and the ways in which Arabic system could be used to eliminate the inconsistencies between English vowel sounds and letters to assist the ESL learners.

Keywords: Phonetics, Phonology, TESOL, Arabic and English Vowels sounds

INTRODUCTION:

In Islamic Republic of Pakistan, majority of the population is Muslim. As Arabic is the sacred religious language of Islam, the Muslims have a great devotion for Arabic. Due to this reason, Arabic is one of the languages that are learned and taught in Pakistan from school to university levels. Besides, thousands of religious institutions are devoted to learning and teaching Arabic. Those institutions are associated with one of the major boards that are Minhaj.ul.Quran, Wafaq.ul.Madaris, Tanzeem.ul.Madaris, and Dar.ul.Uloom Mohammadia Ghausia, Bhera, Sargodha.

In these religious institutions, the students study for seven, eight or nine years to earn the degrees of Al-Shahada tul Alamiya. During these years, Arabic is taught extensively focusing on all its four skills reading, writing, listening and speaking beside Arabic grammar which is focused significantly to enable the students interpret the religious texts. With Arabic language, its literature is also comprehensively studied. Apart from these degree awarding institutions, there are innumerable academies (madrassa) and mosques where the kids learn how to read the sacred text of the Quran. Some of them also memorize the text. Moreover, Arabic has been one of the official languages in UN[1].

If we speak about English, it is the inseparable part of Pakistan's history. It was the official and educational language during the time of colonialism.

Pakistan remained the part of British colony for over two centuries which resulted in English being the official and educational language of Pakistan even after seven decades of its postcolonial period. It is not only learnt and taught as a language, but it is also the language of communication in courts, offices, and parliaments, and language of education in schools, colleges and universities. Students even from other countries i.e. Soudan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and China etc. come to Pakistani universities to learn and study English. Pakistani diasporic literature in English has also made its own place in the world English literature.

If we go beyond Pakistan, it is a fact that English is now the most used language in international business, politics, internet communication, technology, science, commerce, and education etc. and it is learned and taught almost all over the world. Its importance is growing with each passing day[2]. Likewise, it is now learned and taught in Arab countries as well e.g. UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar etc. even hire native English speakers to teach English in their institutes and universities. Besides, during the Iraq and Syria Wars, a huge number of Arabs migrated to Europe and America who are now bilingual using both English and Arabic in everyday life.

As far as Arabic is concerned, it is learned by English speakers and taught in English speaking countries due to their increased business with Middle Eastern Arab countries. Moreover, Arabs living in English countries also learn how to read and write Arabic. Hence, we see both the English and the Arabs learning both English and Arabic for different purposes.

However, it is observed that the way English is compared with other languages on different linguistic levels, it has not been compared with Arabic language. Although either of them belong to different language

family, yet the comparison between them will be useful for the learners of either of the language.

Statement of the Problem

As many studies prove that learning a second language is influenced by the native language of the speakers especially in speaking accent. The Arab students who are learning English as a second or foreign language and the English students learning Arabic language are superimposed by the influence of their mother tongue. In Pakistan, the focused aspects in English classes are mostly grammar and translation. Both the teachers and the students focus on reading and writing to prepare and pass the exams. Pronunciation, listening and speaking skills receive less focus. As a result, students remain weak in listening and speaking skills. English is one of the complex languages to learn especially when it comes to listening and speaking. The reason is the discrepancies between the letters and their sounds. It has twenty-six letters while the sounds forty-four including individual sounds and diphthongs. Some letters give more than one sounds; on the other hand, one sound is represented with more than one letter or combination of letters. In this case, comparison of English language with a language that has a better and comprehensive sound and letter system seems enlightening. However, the English linguists have not yet focused on Arabic from this perspective

Research Questions

Q. 1.   How far do the phonological patterns of English language differ from the patterns of Arabic and how do they align with each other?

Q. 2.   How similar or different do the organs of speech interact while articulating Arabic and English vowels?

Research Objectives

- To investigate as to what extent the phonological patterns of Arabic and English language are identical or distinctive

- To explore whether and in what ways the places of articulation for English and Arabic vowels are different or similar

Significance of the Study

Research comparing the target and the native languages is always helpful for the students learning either of the languages. Therefore, this study is beneficial for the students of both English and Arabic. The English speakers learning Arabic as well as the Arabs learning English would find it supportive in comprehending and pronouncing the sounds of target languages. In this regard, it also assists the teachers of both languages. The current study presents a comparison between Arabic and English vowel sounds which can be the foundation for further research exploring further phonological and phonetic or linguistic comparisons.

Delimitation

The current study focuses on the following areas:

- Firstly, it is delimited to the patterns of Arabic and English phonology.

- Secondly, it is delimited to comparison and contrast of vowel sounds of Arabic and English languages with their places of articulation.

- Thirdly, it is delimited to the dialects of Received Pronunciation in English and Classical Arabic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Contrastive Linguistics

Contrastive Linguistics can never be ignored due to two facts: firstly, it provides the linguists with profound insights into the weaknesses and

strengths of the language being studied. Secondly, it assists teachers and students in teaching and learning that language. For second language learners, it is now an accepted phenomenon that mother tongue always interferes. Second language learners mostly struggle with the grammar and sounds of the target language because they try to use to the system of mother tongue and adapt the target language accordingly. The most common areas of intersection are the sounds and sentence structures. They match them with their mother tongue and get confused at some / many points because of differences or somewhat similarities.

Exploring and describing the differences and similarities between the mother language and the target language is beneficial in learning and comprehending the sound similarities / differences and other phonological features. When they are able to differentiate and relate them, it helps them avoid mingling and confusing the languages' sounds and patterns and committing errors[3]. Here comes the role of Contrastive Linguistics which makes the language learning and teaching more effective by describing the similarities and difference among the languages.

Comparative studies between Arabic and English Languages

Following the tenets of comparative linguistics, many comparative studies have been conducted to compare English with other languages. One such research was carried out by Haq at National University of Modern Languages under the topic *"Comparative Study of Phonology and Proverbs of Potohari and English Languages."* In that study, after comparing the histories of the selected languages, she highlights the differences and similarities between the alphabet and sounds of both the languages. The researcher also draws a comparison among the proverbial expressions used in English and Potohari languages. After comparing their histories, she

concludes that both Potohari and English belong to the same language family i.e. Indo-European Family of languages. The researcher also discovers that a certain number of Potohari phonemes do not exist in English. However, all English phonemes do exist in Potohari language. Where English language has forty four sounds, Potohari has sixty phonemes. Both English and Potohari have a rich treasure of proverbs[4].

Another comparative study in languages with the topic was: *Construction of Simple Sentences in English and Arabic: A Comparative Study.* It explains and compares the components of sentence structure in English and Arabic languages; how they are joined to build the sentences in either of the languages. It also explicates and compares the kinds of sentences in both the languages. Moreover, the agreement of subjects with their verbs and predicate in terms number and gender is another highlighted aspect in the mentioned study. The researcher finds out both similarities and differences in the parts of speech and their combination in the construction of sentences as her main concern was to delineate the convergence and divergence in sentence structures of Arabic and English languages[5]. In a comparative study, the stress patterns of Pashto and English languages in bi-syllabic, tri-syllabic, tetra-syllabic and penta-syllabic words have also been explored. The results show that the stress falls mostly upon the initial syllables in English language whereas on the last syllables in Pashto[6].

Rahman compared Arabic and English Linguistics and focused on their historical perspective. He draws a comparison between English and Arabic languages from the linguistic perspective. He focuses on phonology, phonetics and syntax of both the languages. He explains the history of Arabic Linguistics, highlights the contribution of the Holy Quran in the development of Arabic linguistics and the historical account of every

branch of linguistics in Arabic. Through this detailed comparison, he wants to explore which of these languages has more precise rules in its linguistic system and whether that advantageous language can benefit the other in simplifying its system. The results show that Arabic language has more explicit rules that have no ambiguity. Moreover, it can guide in simplifying the system of English language and making it less ambiguous. He proposes placing a specific diacritical mark on the English letter (that gives different sounds) to identify which the particular sound it gives at that place. This will reduce the discrepancies among English letters and sounds; it will also assist in making pronunciation of English language easy for learners[7].

The study by Al-Hattami, a Ph.D. Candidate at Hodeidah University is more relevant to this research. He focuses on phonetic and phonology of the consonants of English and Arabic. He first gives details about the consonants of Arabic and English languages with their distinctive features. After that, he compares the consonant sounds of Arabic and English languages describing both the differences and the similarities. He also aims at helping the Arabic students in comprehending the sounds and learning English language. He suggests that the teachers should make the lesson plans keeping in mind dissimilarities between the consonants of Arabic and English languages. They should include such activities that can assist the learners in understanding more effectively. In this way, the problems created by such differences can be avoided[8].

The current study is different from all the previously mentioned research. The researchers focus on sound patterns of the selected languages and more precisely the vowel sounds. Chomsky's theory of 'Universal Grammar' (1965) provides the theoretical basis for this study. It aims at describing the vowel phonemes of Arabic and English languages with their characteristics

explained by the respective linguists. After the presentation of data, the researchers highlight the differences and similarities between the vowel sounds of Arabic and English. They also explain the symbols which are used in written language to present the vowels in both languages and then compare them in detail. Moreover, they also describe how the vowels are arranged in the combinations to make the words and what the similarities and differences are in those arrangements when we compare Arabic and English languages. Considering these aims the current study is different from the previous research, yet a new addition to the existing body of knowledge.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The nature of the current study is comparative. The data for the current study has been collected in the form of text that is why it is qualitative research. Besides, the collection of date has taken place in naturalistic setting: no hypothesis, results or pre-planned designs have been stated in the start. In addition to that, the researchers' role does not remain objective as after collecting the non-numerical narrative data, the researchers have interpreted and analysed the data to draw out the findings and conclusion depending upon their observations. **Data, Data Collection and Rationale** The data for the current study has been collected from Arabic and English languages. The works by Jones (1918)[9], Roach (1983)[10] and Rahman (2012)[11] have been used for data collection. Arabic is the sacred language in Islam; majority of the Pakistani population is Muslim which is why they consider it a very sacred and prestigious language for them. It is learnt and taught in all over Pakistan. While English remains the language of education and the official language in Pakistan even in postcolonial period which is also widely taught and learnt in the country. The comparison

between the vowel sounds of Arabic and English is indeed a beneficial study for the learners of both the languages and also insightful for the linguists.

Research Method

The current employs Contrastive Analysis as a method for analysing the phonological patterns of Arabic and English language. Moreover, the data has been presented in parallel description which is a common practice in the contrastive analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The researchers have analysed the using the theory of "*Universal Grammar*" given by Chomsky. This theory states that all the languages of this world have some similar underlying rules. These principles are termed as *Universal Grammar*. Then this *Universal Grammar* or particular set of principles have two different types. The first one is those rules which are shared by all languages equally and these principles are named as *Absolute Universals*. A specific rule of *Absolute Universals*, relevant to this study, is that all the languages have a limited set of phonemes (sounds). These phonemes comprise both consonants and vowels of a language and then those sounds are joined in a very organised way to make combinations to form the words[12].

The other kind of rules in *Universal Grammar* are those that many, not all languages, share and these principles are called *Relative Universals* or *Universal Tendencies*. These rules are connected with phonological patterns e.g. the syllables in some languages have vowel in nucleus like English while others do not. Some of the languages do not have nasal stops while others have them. If we take the phonological features into consideration e.g. the places of articulation for the sounds and the

arrangement of sounds in words that make sense, each language is distinctive partly or completely from the other in its systems and patterns of sounds or structures[13].

Irrespective of the types, both these universals play a crucial role in grasping and comprehending the nature of any language. This significant feature of "*Universal Grammar*" directs us to the discussion of what is recognised as "*Contrastive Analysis*". The type of *Relative Universals* leads us to investigate the grammatical features that are similar or different in languages and for that investigation, contrastive analysis helps comparing two languages to explore the similarities and difference between their systems. Hence, we have reached the point that it is the universal theory on which contrastive analysis is based upon. In fact, it is the second approach for contrastive analysis which is relevant here. Contrastive analysis has two approaches: firstly, taxonomic approach which is based on structuralism. Primarily, Contrastive studies were conducted in the structural model or framework. This approach states that the contrastive analysis relies upon the order of description, which means the same model of description can be used to present the systems of both the languages.

Here we reach the conclusion that the roots of contrastive analysis are traced in 'structuralism'. Sridhar argues that when we use taxonomic contrastive analysis to present the similarities and differences in languages, it depends upon two aspects: one is the form, and the other is distribution of comparable units[14]. This whole process requires detailed scientific descriptions of the selected language and its various patterns or rules; however, the disparities among languages are innumerable to the extent that for a linguist, it seems impossible to devise a system of classification which is appropriate for all languages[15].

The second approach to contrastive analysis is based upon a different theory of generative grammar and this approach rejects the previous taxonomic approach. This approach argues that the universal aspects that are common in all or many languages should be the base for contrastive analysis[16]. The hypothesis that all the languages share same features at an abstract level at least provides a reason and base for comparison.

DATA ANALYSIS

As it is mentioned in the previous section, all the languages in the world share some features and differ in some ways; the belief that provides a reason to compare the languages and explore those patterns[17]. The researchers have analysed and compared Arabic and English vowel sounds to explore the similarities and differences respectively.

Similarity in Vowels & Place of Articulation

The researchers observed that all the long and short vowels, and diphthongs in Arabic represented by 'madda letters', 'harakahs', or 'leen letters' respectively have their alternates in English 'long vowels', short 'vowels' and 'diphthongs' respectively. The place of articulation for vowels in both Arabic and English is same as of mouth cavity. It is named as 'Jauf e dahan' in Arabic language. While articulating the vowels, air passes through the mouth cavity without any blockade or obstruction which is same in both the languages. Air passes through only the mouth cavity; the soft palate in the raised position completely blocks the nasal cavity. Moreover, the vowels are produced with changing the shapes of the mouth cavity in both English and Arabic. While articulating the vowels, in both the languages, it is considered mispronunciation if they are produced with nasalized sounds unless they have a following nasalized consonant.

Arabic Harakats and English Short Vowels

Arabic has three diactrical signs or harakats: 'damma', 'kasra' and 'fathah'. These signs represent short vowels of Arabic. In English short vowels, we find the identical alternates to these three short Arabic vowels.

(a) Fathah: ‒ The short vowel sound denoted by this sign is similar to the English short vowel sound /ə/. Both these short vowels are uttered with neutral position of lips, not with spread or rounded lips. English vowel /ə/ lies half way between close and open[18]; while Arabic vowel represented by fathah is also articulated with open voice but not to the extent of alif madda[19] (in English /ɑ:/). So, these two short vowels are identical to each other. Their examples with phonetic transcription are provided in the table 1.

Table.1

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with vowel symbol 'Fatha' ‒	Description in phonetic symbols	English words with the vowel /ə/
/wədʒədə/	وَجَدَ (wajada)	/ɑ:ftə/	After
/kədərə/	قَدَرَ (qadara)	/leɪtə/	Later
/rəkəbə/	رَكَبَ (rakaba)	/fɑ:ðə/	Father

(b) Kasra; ╱ This short Arabic vowel represented by kasra sign is identical with the short English vowel /ɪ/. These short vowels are distinctly different from long vowels /i: / in English[20] and 'yaa madda' in Arabic. English vowel is produced with tongue position between close and half-close with lips spread[21] while Arabic vowel is articulated with dropping sound which means tongue from low position is raised towards palate to the extent that it does not touch

the palate[22]. Similar to short English vowel /ɪ/, kasra is also articulated with lips in spread postition, not rounded[23]. Examples are provided in the table 2.

Table.2

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with vowel symbol 'kasra'	Description in phonetic symbols	English Words with the vowel /ɪ/
/ɪzɪnɪ/	إِذِن (izini)	/grɪp/	Grip
/ɪrɪmɪ/	إِرِمِ (irimi)	/sɪt/	Sit
/kɪzɪ/	قِظ (qizi)	/ɪksept/	Except

(c) Damma; ُ This Arabic short vowel represented by Damma sign is equivalent to English short vowel /ʊ/. These are noticeably shorter than long vowels in English /uː/ and 'wao madda' in Arabic. English vowel /ʊ/ is pronounced with the position of tongue between close and half-close. The lips are in close and round position[24]. Damma is also articulated with round lips, while the tongue is raised towards palate[25]. Examples of these vowels with phonetic transcriptions are shown in table 3.

Table.3

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with vowel symbol 'damma'	Description in phonetic symbols	English Words with the vowel /ʊ/
/rʊsʊlʊ/	رُسُل (rusulu)	/gʊd/	Good
/kʊtʊbʊn/	كُتُبٌ (kutubun)	/lʊk/	Look
/kʊtʊbʊ/	قُطُبُ (qutubu)	/kʊd/	Could

(a) Arabic Madda Letters and English Long Vowels

There are three long vowels in Arabic language that are represented by three madda letters. They are 'wao madda' (inverted damma), 'yaa madda' (standing kasra), and 'alif madda' (standing fatha)[26]. Their substitutes in English language are, /uː/, /iː/ and /ɑː/ respectively. Mouth cavity that is called 'Jauf e dahan' in Arabic is the place of articulation for both English and Arabic vowels.

a) The written symbol for alif Madda is (اے) (aa). Alif madda and English long vowel /ɑː/ are identical. Both are prominently longer than the short vowels. The place and manner of articulation for these vowels are same in both Arabic and English. To produce /ɑː/, air passes through the fully opened mouth cavity without any obstruction and the tongue remains low[27] while alif madda is also articulated with fully open-air passage and voice. The lips remain in neutral, not rounded position during the articulation of both the vowels[28]. The examples with phonetic transcription are stated in table 4.

Table.4

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with Alif madda	Description in phonetic symbols	English Words with the vowel /ɑː/
/kɪtɑːbə/	كِتَاب (kitaaba)	/hɑːt/	Heart
/lɑː/	لَّا (laa)	/lɑːf/	Laugh
/ɪlɑː/	اِلٰى (ilaa)	/gɑːd/	Guard

b) The written symbol for Wao Madda is (ﻭﻣ) (oo). Wao madda and English vowel /u:/ are similar in features. They are long vowels, not short. Wao madda must be prolonged, or it turns out to be 'damma'. While the main difference between English vowel /u:/ and /ʊ/ is the length of the former. Wao madda[29] and /u:/ are articulated from the same place that is mouth cavity and round lip position[30]. The examples are shown in table 5.

Table.5

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with Wao madda	Description in phonetic symbols	English Words with the vowel /u:/
/kɑ:nu:/	كَانُوْا (kaanoo)	/ku:l/	Cool
/rədu:/	رَضُوْا (radoo)	/fu:d/	Food
/dɑ:wu:də/	دَاؤدَ (daawooda)	/su:p/	Soup

c) The written symbol for Yaa Madda is (ﻲﺣ) (ee). Yaa madda and English vowel /i:/ are similar. English vowel /i:/ and yaa madda are longer than kasra and /ɪ/ respectively. Both are uttered with lips spread, not rounded. The tongue is nearly close to palate while producing English vowel /i:/[31] and in articulating yaa madda, it is also close[32]. The examples are stated in table 6.

Table.6

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with yaa madda	Description in phonetic symbols	English Words with the vowel /i:/

/kiːlə/	قِيْلَ (qeela)	/liːf/	Leaf
/kədiːrʊ/	قَدِيْرُو (qadeeru)	/siːd/	Seed
/fiːhɑː/	فِيْهَا (feehaa)	/kiː/	Key

(b) Arabic Leen Letters and English Diphthongs

In Arabic language, there are two diphthong that are called leen letters: 'wao leen' and 'yaa leen'. While articulating these diphthongs, lips and mouth cavity start from one position and finish in different position. Both yaa leen and wao leen can be compared with English diphthongs /aɪ/ and /aʊ/ respectively.

a) The written symbol for wao leen is (ـَوْ) (ao). Wao leen and English diphthong /aʊ/ are similar. During articulation, both vowels have a glide starting with the position of /aː/ and ending in the position of /ʊ/. English diphthong is produced with neutral lip position in beginning and round lips in the end[33]; same happens in articulating wao leen, starting with neutral lips and shifting to rounded position[34]. Mouth cavity also shifts in the same manner. Examples are shown in table 7.

Table.7

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with wao leen	Description in phonetic symbols	English Words with the diphthong /aʊ/
/məʃaʊ/	مَشَوْا (mashau)	/aʊt/	Out

/ʒaʊmə/	يَوْمِ (yauma)	/haʊ/	How
/təraʊnəhʊm/	تروْنَهُم (taraonahum)	/taʊn/	Town

b) The written symbol for Yaa leen is (ای) (ai). Arabic diphthong Yaa leen and English diphthong /aɪ/ are similar. They start from the position of one vowel and end in the position of another vowel. In the mouth cavity, this shift happens in both diphthongs. Both mouth cavity and lips are neutrally open, and they shift towards spread position[35]. Examples are shown in table 8.

Table.8

Description in phonetic symbols	Arabic words with yaa leen	Description in phonetic symbols	English Words with the diphthong /aɪ/
/baɪtə/	بَيْتِ (baiti)	/taɪm/	Time
/baɪnɪ/	بَيْت (baini)	/daɪ/	Die
/mələkaɪnɪ/	مَلَكَين (malakaini)	/maɪ/	My

English long vowels and Arabic Madda letters are prolonged in special cases

English diphthongs and long vowels are prolonged: when they come in the end of an open syllable and when they occur in a syllable which ends with a final voiced consonant[36]. Likewise, Arabic leen letters and madda are additionally prolonged to a certain limit in four conditions. In this case, 'madd sign' is placed over the letters. Due to four conditions / rules, the

madd sign has four names. These are madd e aridh waqfi, madd e lazim, madd e munfasil, and madd e muttasil. It is madd e muttasil when madda letter occurs in the same word before the letter hamza ء e.g.

جَآءَ (jaa'a), غُثَآءً (ghusaa'an) etc.[37]

It is named madd e munfasil when the letter hamza occurs in a different word after the madda letter e.g.

لَآ إِلٰهَ (laa ilaaha), يَتْبَعُهَا أَذًى (yatba uhaa azan) etc.[38]

Madd e lazim comes before a letter which has a connecting shadd sign ــّـ or sign ــْـ in the same word or in the beginning of the next word e.g.

ضَّآلِّيْنَ آللّٰهُ آلْئٰنَ (aalaana, aalaahu, daaleena)etc.[39]

Madd e aridh waqfi comes when the harakah sign on the following letter changes to sukoon or connecting sign due to stop sign e.g.

وَالتِّيْنِ ۬ مَشْهُوْدٍ ۬ مِنْ خَوْفٍ ۵ (min khaufin, mashhoodi, watteeni) etc.[40]

In this fourth condition, the leen letter or madda is prolonged without placing madd sign on them. In all the above conditions, they are prolonged from four to six seconds which is substantially more than that of fully longed English vowels[41]. The resemblance lies here only in having the special cases to prolong the vowels and diphthongs. If we consider the length, there is remarkable difference.

Note: Along with other stop signs, circle ○ is a stop sign used in the Holy Quran. There are also many.

Differences

Apart from the mentioned similarities, there exist many dissimilarities among English and Arabic vowels. A few major disparities are recorded in the succeeding pages.

Number of English Vowels is Greater

English and Arabic do not have same number of vowels. English vowels are twice more in number than Arabic vowels. In English, pure vowels are twelve; whereas, in Arabic, they are six. The table of English and Arabic pure vowels is given below.

Table No.9

English pure vowels	Arabic pure vowels
/iː /	(حِـيْ)
/ɪ/	ﹷ
/e/	X
/æ/	X
/ɑː/	(ﹷا)
/ɒ/	X
/ɔː/	X
/ʊ/	و
/uː/	(ﹹوْ)
/ʌ/	X
/ɜː/	X
/ə/	ﹷ

The number of diphthongs is also different. English language has eight diphthongs[42] while Arabic has only two diphthongs. English has six extra diphthongs. The diphthongs are shown in table 10.

Table No.10

English Diphthongs	Arabic Diphthongs
/eɪ/	X
/aɪ/	(ے ي)
/ɔɪ/	X
/aʊ/	(ے و)
/əʊ/	X
/ɪə/	X
/eə/	X
/ʊə/	X

The English vowels different from Arabic vowels

In English, we have twelve extra vowel sounds which do not exist in Arabic or precisely standard Arabic: six pure English vowels and six diphthongs. According to the linguists, even standard Arabic has two kinds of accents: accepted one, it is called 'Mahroof' and rejected one, it is called 'Majhool'. In Majhool pronunciation, one or more features of a vowel are mixed with those of the other which is not acceptable. We find a few more English vowels in Arabic majhool pronunciation. For instance, pronouncing kasra ﹻ with /e/ sound and wao madda with /əʊ/ sound is done in majhool pronunciation. Moreover, pronouncing yaa madda or standing kasra like diphthong /eɪ/ is majhool form. The only place where it is allowed is in the Holy Quran i.e. كَجَبَرَهَا (majrehaa). Remianing English vowels and diphthongs i.e. /ɜː/, /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/ and /ɔɪ/ have no alternates in Arabic.

Representation of English and Arabic Vowels

There is also a noticeable dissimilarity between how English and Arabic vowels are represented in written script. A limited number of diacritical

signs or combinations of letters and diacritical signs represent Arabic vowels. Every sign or sign and letter indicate one vowel sound whether pure vowel or diphthong; that vowel or diphthong is not represented by any other sign. However, English language has more vowel sounds than letters that represent them. Every vowel is represented by more than one letters or combinations of letters and similarly one letter denotes more than one vowel. This is problematic for language learners especially second or foreign language learners.

The following instances show how one vowel sound is represented by different letters of combinations of letters[43].

Vowel Sound	Possible representation in letters
/i:/	i, ey, eo, oe, ea, ie, ee, e, uay, and ei in the words police, key, people, phoenix, leaf, believe, been, he, quay and conceive respectively.
/e/	ai in said, by e in yes, ea in head, ay in says, a in many, and ie in friend etc.
/ɪ/	ie in carried, y in vary, u in busy, e in pretty, i in hit, a in private, ui in built, o in women etc.
/æ/	ai in plait and a in hat
/ɑ:/	er in clerk, au in guard, a in father, au in laugh, ar in part and ear in heart.
/ɒ/	au in fault, ow in knowledge, a in false, o in foreign, and ou in cough
/ə/	all the vowel letters and different combinations of vowels.
/ɔ:/	al in walk, a in call, ar in warm, aw in law, oar in board, or in for, ore, our, oor, ough, oa and au.
/ʊ/	x u in bush, oar in board, oul in could and o in woman

/uː/	ue in blue, u in rude, ou in wound, oo in spoon, ew in drew and ui in suit
/ʌ/	oo in blood, ou in young, o in colour, oe in does, and u in cut
/ɜː/	or in word, ur in turn, er in her, our in journey, eur in amateuretc etc.
Examples of diphthongs	
/eɪ/	ey in they, ei in eight, ay in day, a in safe, ea in great, au and ai
/aɪ/	i, eye, ie, igh, ig, y, ui, ei, uy, ais and ye
/ʊə/	ur, oo, ure, and our
/ɔɪ/	oi, uoy and ou
/ɪə/	eo, ear, eir, ea, eu, ior, ere, ier, er, and eer
/əʊ/	ol, o, oo, oa, au, ou, ow, and oe
/eə/	air, ear, are, eir, a, and ere
/aʊ/	ow and ou etc.

No pure vowel or diphthong in English has just one letter or one combination to represent it[44]. This shows that there are discrepancies between spoken and written varieties of English. English alphabets do not represent all the sounds. The reader needs to rely only upon memorizing where and which letter represents which sound. For this reason, English is hard to learn for foreign learners.

Arabic vowels and diphthongs

.‌ ﹼ , ﹷ , و , اﹷ(,)ﹹو(,)ﹷيْ(,)حﹷيْ(,)حﹷ(,)حﹹوْ(

Arabic vowels and diphthongs have these diacritical signs and letters. Each one symbolises only one vowel sound and that vowel is articulated only by that sign or letter. There is no discrepancy in Arabic symbols and sounds which is why no different phonetic transcription is required to learn for

spoken Arabic and this makes Arabic easy to learn as compare to English language.

Velarisation in Arabic sounds

A group of Arabic consonants have a special feature of velarisation which means during their articulation, the back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate and the front is lowered. The larynx is also raised that causes the laryngeal constriction. It is discussed here because this feature extends to all the vowels that instantaneously follow them. Hence, all Arabic vowels also have the feature of velarisation. These seven letters are joined in the group form[45].

(خُصَّ ضَغْطٍ قِظْ) (khussa daghtin qiz)

Under some conditions, (ر) and (ل) also have the feature of velarization. (ر) is velarised when it has damma or fathah sign or when it carries jazm (connecting sign) and the preceding letter has damma or fathah. (ل) is velarised in the word (الله) when the preceding letter contains damma or fathah. In these situations, the vowels following (ر) and (ل) will be velarized. The consonant letters and the vowels following them are always articulated without velarization. Thus, in Arabic language, all vowel sounds are pronounced either with velarisation or without it[46]. However, English vowels are articulated in one and the same way. Some English vowels are produced with back part of the tongue in raised position. Yet, they are different from velarized Arabic vowels because while articulating these vowels the lips are rounded whereas in pronouncing Arabic velarised vowels, the lips remains neutral, not rounded.

Differences in the Arrangement of vowels in Words

English vowel by itself can make a syllable or be a word e.g. /ə/, /eɪ/, /aɪ/ or /əʊ/ etc. English vowel is an integral part of a syllable. A syllable can be split in three segments: onset, rime, and coda. Onset and coda are consonants while rime is always a vowel which is also named as 'nucleus'. A syllable can be without onset or coda but not without nucleus[47]. However, in Arabic language, vowels or diphthongs can never stand alone as a word; they always come with consonants. If a word is a single letter, it consists of at least a vowel and a consonant e.g.

قِ /kɪ/. It means 'save'. This is a verb in imperative form. The word is just one letter which contains two sounds: consonant sound ق /k/ and vowel sound denoted by Kasra sign ⎯ /ɪ/. Hence, Arabic language in a word has at least a vowel and a consonant.

English words may start with a vowel or a consonant, while Arabic word never has a vowel in initial position. It always begins with a consonant followed by a vowel because Arabic vowels are diacritical signs which are always used with consonants. They cannot stand individually without consonant. Examples are shown in table 11.

Table No.11

Phonetic description	Arabic word	Phonetic description	English words
/mɑː/,/kʊtɪbə/	مَاكُتِبَ (maa kutiba)	/ɑːtə/	After
/mən/,/kɑːnə/	مَنْ كَانَ (man kaana)	/eɪd/	Aid

Similarly, Arabic consonant also do not occur without vowels. An Arabic consonant is always followed by a short or a long vowel except when it contains a connecting sign 'Jazm' ⸺ on it e.g. in

فِى الْكِتَٰبِ (filkitaabi) /fɪlkɪtɑ:bɪ/ the consonant /l/ has no vowel following it. All the other consonants have vowels following them.

English consonants sometimes occur without vowels as well e.g. in onset or coda when it is consonant cluster such as rest /rest/, pray /preɪ/, , text /tekst/, spray /spreɪ/ etc. Arabic language can have such examples on temporary bases e.g. when the speaker stops his voice on a consonant and the preceding letter carries a connecting sign 'Jazm' ⸺ e.g.
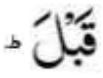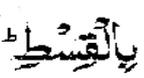
قَبْلَ (qabla) /kəbl/, بِالْقِسْطِ (bilqisti) /bɪlkɪst/ etc.

CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

The current study has been conducted to explore the similarities and differences between Arabic and English vowels and their patterns. Individual sounds, their places of articulation and arrangement in words have been compared and discussed in detail. While analysing and comparing, similarities have been discussed first and then the differences. Following are the key findings from the analysis:

1. As Chomsky's (1965) theory of *Universal Grammar* states, the research demonstrates that Arabic and English have the vowels that are similar and the vowels that are distinctive to each language. English has more vowels than Arabic and all Arabic vowels are found in English, but some English vowels do not match Arabic vowel. So, similarities exist as well as differences. Then in the

identical vowels, the qualities are not entirely same. The way of vowels' representation in Arabic and English is different. Arabic has more explicit rules of representation. The way vowels are arranged in words is not totally different; it shares some similarities.

2. As per the first aspect of Chomsky's (1965) theory, *Absolute Universal,* both Arabic and English contain a limited set of phonemes (sounds): vowels and consonants which are joined in an organized way to form words. *Relative Universal*, the second aspect of *Universal Grammar,* is also demonstrated in this research because it reveals that in phonological patterns e.g., individual sounds, places of articulation and the arrangement of sounds into meaningful words, Arabic and English are partially different from each other.

3. The current study affirms that vowels and their phonological patterns in Arabic are more explicit and clearer. While English vowels and their phonological patterns are relatively confusing. First, English vowels are four times more in number than vowel letters which causes discrepancies between written and spoken forms. A vowel sound is symbolised by many different letters or combinations of letters. While individual letter denotes different vowel sounds in different words. This situation causes confusion and difficulties for ESL learners. Arabic vowels have two advantages: their number is less, and they are always symbolised by fixed signs or letters. Then the number of Arabic vowels and vowel signs is same.

Recommendations

1. English phonological patterns can be made explicit and easier by following Arabic model. For instance, diacritical signs can be introduced for English letters to determine when they represent a specific vowel sound.

2. Instead of using those signs all the time, they can be utilized only in education for foreign learners as in Arabic language, the signs are used for such purpose not for all the time.

Endnotes

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