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# الإنجليزية المتأثرة بالعربية والعربية المتأثرة بالإنجليزية ودراسات اكتساب اللغة الثانية

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**Arabic-Accented English  
&  
English-Accented Arabic  
In Second Language Acquisition**

**BY**

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## المخلص

تبحث هذه الورقة في الرد على سؤال تم تجاهله قائماً دون إجابة في أروقة البحث اللغوي مثل اكتساب اللغة الثانية واللغويات التطبيقية ونظرية التعلم وأساليب التدريس... ! والقضية التي نحن بصدددها هي أن كل الأساليب والطرق المعروفة - رغم ما بينها من اختلافات في الأطر النظرية ووسائل التطبيق - في تعليم اللغات الأجنبية تؤكد وبصراحة تامة أن لا مكان لتدريس النطق. ورغم أن هذا لا يذكر صراحة فإن غياب التمارين أو التدريبات أو التوضيحات خاصة النطق لهو خير دليل على ذلك. إن هناك شبه إجماع - وإن لم يكن معلناً - على عدم احتواء هذا المكون الصوتي اللغوي ضمن مفردات المادة المقررة. وفي محاولة هذه الورقة إيجاد تفسير لهذا التساؤل استخدمت مجموعة من الاستراتيجيات تركز على تجريب بعض الخصائص الصوتية التي تتسبب في إحداث أو عدم إحداث اللكنة المنكسرة - عربية كانت أم إنجليزية - والمتأثرة باللغة الأولى - عربية كانت أم إنجليزية - معنى هذا أن هذه الورقة محاولة تجريبية للتعرف على العوامل الصوتية التي من خلالها يتشكل ميزان أو معيار المحاكاة الذي يكشف عن قدرات طلاب عينة البحث على كشف أو محاكاة أو تقليد اللكنة الأجنبية.

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper seeks an answer to a question posited—and still raised—by many researchers in several language disciplines, e.g., Second Language Acquisition, Applied Linguistics, teaching methodologies and learning theories. The constantly-neglected question is, while no approach or methodology to language teaching unambiguously asserts that pronunciation is **not** to be taught, they all largely imply this by not including any type of pronunciation exercises, explanations, drills or any other explicit teaching of pronunciation in their methodologies. In order to attempt a response to such an inquiry, this project implements a number of strategies that experiment with some phonological features that determine an accented variety of the target language. This paper is an attempt to look into a number of factors through the use of a mimicry paradigm which tests the subject learners' abilities to reveal and imitate a foreign accent.

**Keywords:** Foreign Language Accent, Second Language Acquisition, Language Attitude, Language Proficiency, Language Teaching Methodology & Accent Reduction

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Accent & Accent Reduction

A foreign accent can be defined as a set of characteristic pronunciation features, especially ones determined by the phonological practices of the speaker's native language carried over to his/her use of another alien or target language. A common expression in this context is *foreign accent reduction* or *modification*, i.e., endorsing or employing a systematic approach exercised to learn or adopt a new accent. It is a process of learning some of the phonological features of a target language or dialect (Barry 1974). Some crucial steps in this context include identifying deviations in the person's current speech from the desired accent, e.g., pronunciation, speech patterns and speech habits; changing the way the mouth, teeth and tongue are used in sound production; modifying intonation and stress patterns; and changing rhythm. Using this or any similar method, individuals such as those mastering a second language may alter their speech pattern to more closely resemble the accent of a certain group of people, and thus enhance the clarity of their communication mode with those people. Two distinct types of accent reduction coaching are available: the one targeted at telemarketers generally focuses on helping people articulate scripted speech with a more "native-like" accent; and the other type of coaching typically offered to business people is usually geared toward assisting people to minimize miscommunication in spontaneous, conversational speech. The reason this distinction is imperative is that while it is sometimes possible for adults to say limited pre-rehearsed phrases with little or no accent, most experts agree that adults cannot learn to speak with no foreign accent in live, everyday speech (Pennycook 1999). Consequently, a person who receives coaching targeted at scripted situations will sometimes achieve very good results when reading from a script, but will not usually improve in real, everyday speech. On the other hand, a person who receives training

targeted at everyday speaking situations will experience a reduction in miscommunications in live, speaking situations.

## 1.2 Arabic & English Major Phonological Features

Most of the sounds in Arabic are also in English, and vice-versa, e.g., Arabic *Pol*, *Izl*, /k/, /m/, /n/, /f/, /h/ and *III* are all nearly the same in English. The counterpart of *IV* in Arabic is not exactly the same sound as the English one, i.e., the Arabic one is pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth a bit farther back. Similarly, the counterpart of /r/ in Arabic is completely different from English *Ixl* because the Arabic one is trilled, i.e., it is a "rolled r." *IQI* makes voiceless interdental fricative as in *thin*, *thick* or *through*, *161* makes the voiced interdental fricative as in *them*, *there* or *the*. *Ill* makes the voiceless alveopalatal fricative as in *shoot* or *shin*. *Ill*, called in Arabic *id*, is usually silent in modern Arabic. In classical Arabic it is pronounced *III*, the same as the letter. *Ill* the glottal stop is pronounced by stopping the flow of breath at the back of the mouth cavity, the glottis (Abd-El-Jawad 1987, Shaheen 1979 & Khattab 2002). This is common in the English exclamatory word *uh?oh*. *lyl* can be a vowel, always a long vowel, at the end of a word sounding like /I/ in *beet*, or a consonant in word-initial position, e.g., *yesterday* and *yes*. These are Arabic sounds not found in English: *Iql*, a voiceless uvular stop in *?al-qahira* "Cairo;" *III*, a voiceless velarized/emphatic dental stop in *fa?/""Taif*;" /h/, a voiceless pharyngeal fricative in *harami* "thief;" *Id/*, a voiced velarized/emphatic dental stop in *dabit* "officer;" *Is/* voiceless velarized/emphatic alveolar fricative *samt* "silence;" *Izl* voiced velarized/emphatic interdental fricative in *zalim* 'wrongdoer;" /?/ a voiceless pharyngeal fricative in *Carnal* "work;" a voiced velar fricative in /yayib/ "absent;" and /x/ voiceless velar fricative in *xer* "good" (Gairdner 1925 & Davis 1995). These are only English sounds: *hi* love [fj]; /p/ [b]; /g/ [z], except in Egypt where [z] is pronounced like /g/ and there is no [z]; *hi* is very close, however it is always rolled or trilled; Arabic *Iql* is replaced by the corresponding *Ikl*. Thus, most sounds in English and Arabic correspond perfectly (Kirchhoff &

Dimitra 2005 & Lipinski 1997). Finally, Arabic has three long vowels and two diphthongs which are usually formed by a combination of short /a/ with the semivowels *lyl* and *Av/* (Al-Ani 1970 & Holes 2004). Allophony is partially conditioned by consonants in juxtaposition, i.e., within the same word. As a general rule, for example, /a/ and /a/ are: retracted to [a] in the environment of a neighboring *Ixl*, *Ixl*, /y/, *Iql* or a velarized/emphatic consonant; [B] before a word boundary; advanced to [ee] in the environment of: bilabial consonants, /m/, /b/ and /f/; plain, i.e., non-velarized, coronal consonants with the exception of *Ixl*, i.e., *IB/*, *Id/*, *Inl*, *Ixl*, *Id/*, *Is/*, *Izl*, *III*, *If/* and /z~g/; pharyngeal consonants, i.e., *Ihl* and /?/); glottal consonants, i.e., /h/ and *III*; and *HI*, *M* and /w/ (Thelwall 1990 & Watson 1999 & 2002). (Consult Tables 3&4 for Arabic consonant-phoneme and vowel-phoneme inventories).

### 1.3 Post-ALM Teaching Models

This issue of language teaching is mostly discussed in terms of three related aspects: approach, method and technique. Different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learned, i.e., the approach, imply different ways of teaching language, i.e., the method, and different methods make use of different kinds of classroom activity, i.e., the technique. Examples of different approaches are the aural-oral approach, the cognitive code approach, the communicative approach, etc. Examples of different methods which are based on a particular approach are the audiolingual method, the direct method, grammar translation, etc. Examples of techniques used in particular methods are drills, dialogues, role-plays, sentence completion, etc. This paper does not follow any such definitions. Contemporary second and/or foreign language teachers are fortunate because they have a relatively large repertoire of classroom methodologies and approaches from which to choose. English, furthermore, has always been the luckiest language because it was targeted in experimenting with the majority of these approaches. Since



researchers in second language (L2, henceforward) acquisition and classroom language teachers both began to become rather disillusioned in the 1960's and 1970's with the Audio Lingual Model (ALM, henceforward) approach to L2 instruction, numerous new means and ways of teaching second/foreign languages have been employed, with each one developing its own defendants. In the following paragraphs an incomplete list of major post-ALM models will be summarized.

The first approach is the Communicative Approach (Krashen & Terrell 1983; Widdowson 1978; Brumfit & Johnson 1979; Blair 1982; Johnson 1982; Oiler & Richard-Amato 1983; Savignon & Bems 1984), an expression that captures a method which is communicative in design, i.e., emphasizing the use of functional language in the attempt to attain the goal of communicative competence. In other words, the main focus of a communicative approach, which is usually traced back to Hymes (1964), is the speaker's underlying knowledge of the linguistic system and the norms for the appropriate use of language in particular speech situations. According to this method the learner must be acquainted with how to make use of, and respond to, different types of speech acts, e.g., request, apologies, thanks and invitations; with recognizing the social setting, their relationship to the other person(s) and the types of language that can be used for a particular occasion; and with interpreting written or spoken sentences within the total context in which they are used.

The second is Counseling-Learning, aka Community Language Learning (Curran 1976), i.e., another method of second/foreign language teaching considered by some as an application of Counseling Learning to second/foreign language teaching and learning. It uses techniques developed in group counseling to help people with psychological and emotional problems get over such barriers. It concentrates on learning in small or large groups, i.e., the "community." Because the method places emphasis on the learners' personal feelings and their reactions to language education, learners say things which they want to talk about in their native language, and after the teacher or counselor translates the learner's sentences into the

foreign language, the latter then repeats them to other members of the group.

The third is Suggestopedia/Suggestology (aka Lozanov Method), derived from the words *suggestion* and *pedagogy*, a method of foreign-language teaching developed by the Bulgarian psychotherapist Lozanov (1979). Suggestopedia makes use of dialogues, situations, and translation to present and practice language, and in particular, the use of music, visual images and relaxation exercises—all these make learning more comfortable and effective. Suggestopedia is said to be the pedagogical application of suggestology, i.e., the influence of suggestion on human behavior. Lozanov claimed that by using this method one can teach languages approximately three to five times as quickly as conventional methods. The theory applied positive suggestion in teaching when it was developed in the 1970s. However, as improved, it did focus a lot more on "desuggestive learning" and now is often called "desuggestopedia."

The fourth is the Total Physical Response (TPR, henceforward), developed by Asher (1982), another approach in which items are presented in the foreign language as orders, commands and instructions requiring a physical response from the learner, e.g., opening a window or standing up. This method is believed to lead to more meaningful and effective learning. In this method of L2 teaching the learner is initially not required to speak, but rather carries out simple commands in the second language (L2), e.g., *close the door*. The stress-free TPR has been used successfully in thousands of classrooms with children and adults learning languages such as English, Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Hebrew, and even sign languages for the deaf! Asher has been for a long time developing novel applications of TPR that enable children and adults to enjoy stress-free understanding of mathematics.

The fifth is the Silent Way, developed by Gattegno (1972 & 1976) and so-called due to the relative silence of the teacher employing it. The Silent Way makes use of gesture, mime, visual aids, wall charts

and in particular cuisiniere rods, e.g., wooden sticks of different lengths and colors, i.e., tools the teacher uses to help get his students to talk. This innovative pedagogical proposal for teaching and learning mathematics and/or foreign languages, was characterized by several radical propositions based on the minute observation of human learning in many and varied situations. Here are three of such propositions. First, Gattegno noticed that there was an "energy budget" for learning. Human beings have a highly developed sense of the economics of their own energy and are very sensitive to the cost involved in using it. It is, therefore, reasonable to seek ways of learning which are "cheap" in terms of the amount of energy spent. He proposed a unit of effort in learning elementary mathematics. Second, he considered that only awareness is educable in human beings and therefore proposes pedagogical procedures based on awareness. Third, Gattegno suggested that for pedagogical actions to be effective, teaching should be subordinated to learning.

The sixth approach is the Dartmouth Intensive Language Model (DILM, aka the Rassias Method) (Rassias 1967), i.e., an approach committed to teaching language by speaking it, not by learning it by rote, and dedicated to be dynamic, to de-mystify language, to make it simple, to put it in its right place. Rassias considers it an instrument of peace, i.e., language makes understanding between people clearer and with that things works. The DILM method of language instruction during the 1960s was a means of teaching languages to Peace Corps volunteers in their six-week training period before they were sent abroad to serve. Rassias' concepts, which introduced many dramatic techniques to banish inhibitions that impede the acquisition of foreign or second languages, have been adopted by language teachers in hundreds of colleges, universities, and high schools in North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. His Method is being used for instruction in one hundred and eighty languages. Rassias' method has not only been employed at several American colleges since 1967 in introductory "drill" language courses but has gone far beyond the classroom in developing and sharing his innovative approaches to the instruction of

language and culture and to experimentation in hardware for language laboratories.

Finally, there was the Oral Proficiency Movement (abbreviated OPM), aka Proficiency Movement (Omaggio 1986; James 1985; Byrnes & Canale 1987; Higgs 1984, Chalhoub-Deville 2003 & 2001, Fulcher & Bamford 1996 & Fulcher 1997 & 2003). The Proficiency Movement, promoted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (abbreviated ACTFL) (Liskin-Gasparro 2001), emphasizes communicative approaches that promote oral and written communication rather than grammar. It has provided the impetus for curricular and instructional change in foreign language classrooms for approximately twenty-five years (Brown 2003). In addition to assessing the characteristics and preparation of middle school foreign language teachers, the demographic portion of the study also asked whether teachers were acquainted with-the principles of the OPM.

#### **1.4 Post-ALM Models Assessment**

The meticulous readers in language instruction, e.g., applied linguists and educationalists, can easily argue that the majority of these L2 teaching methodologies have been enthusiastically predisposed to models of both Cognitive Psychology (Ausubel 1968; Anderson & Ausubel 1965) and Humanistic Psychology (Rogers 1951 & 1961). Similarly, most of the above-mentioned classroom techniques and/or methods, either partially or entirely, can readily be classified as communicative approaches to L2 acquisition. All versions of communicatively-based language teaching models have these major points of similarity.

- (1) They require the presence of a maximally high amount of what Krashen (1981) calls 'comprehensible input.'
- (2) They stress the meaningful use of an L2 for the purposes of true communication in the classroom.

(3) In Krashen's terms, these models underscore the creation of a classroom environment which produces a maximally low affective filter.

However, another common train of thought running through all of the above mentioned language teaching methodologies, including those that are not really communicatively-based, is the fact that none of these current models makes any genuine endeavor to deal with the teaching of pronunciation in the L2 classroom. It is particularly peculiar that proponents of the so-called Proficiency Movement, while placing a great deal of emphasis on linguistic accuracy in the nascent stages of L2 acquisition include no provision for the teaching of pronunciation in the classroom as is the case of, e.g., Omaggio (1986). Naturally they were trying to avoid the so-called fossilization, i.e., an occasionally-recurring process in which early, incorrect linguistic features become a permanent portion of the way a person speaks or writes a language. Aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary usage and grammar may become too fixed, i.e., fossilized in second/foreign language learning. Fossilized features of pronunciation worsen a person's foreign accent. Terrell (1989:197), accordingly, after surveying different varieties of communicative methodologies, concluded, rightly or wrongly, that "Communicative approaches likewise have not known what to do with pronunciation." While none of the above-mentioned approaches to language teaching unambiguously assert that pronunciation is **not** to be taught, they all largely imply this by not including any type of pronunciation exercises, explanations, drills or any other explicit teaching of pronunciation in their methodologies.

The question that must be asked at this point is why none of these post-ALM language teaching methodologies seems to have selected to embrace the teaching of the sound systems of second languages. After all, spoken language is the association of sound with meaning. Three principal reasons can justify why methodologists have decided not to include the teaching of pronunciation in existing methodologies.

(1) Since most L2 instruction in Europe and the United States accommodates learners who have passed the so-called "ideal age" for language acquisition, it is felt that these adult students have

already lost much of their innate capacity or aptitude to acquire a near-native pronunciation in a L2.

(2) The explicit teaching of pronunciation appeals only to learning, i.e., a term linked to a behaviorist theory of learning and mostly used by educationalists and teachers of L2, and not to acquisition, i.e., another alternative term preferred by linguists, psychologists and applied linguists to enable them to understand the processes used in learning first language, and to identify stages in the developmental process to give a better understanding of the nature of language. It is, therefore, of no significant consequence in a system that is challenging to get students to acquire language; and,

(3) The constant reference to correct pronunciation or the correction of student pronunciation errors as inhibitor of a learner from speaking by raising his/her affective filter.

Because of the issue raised by the first of the above three points, the research topic in this paper was undertaken to endeavor an assessment of some of the perception and imitation abilities of adult L2 learners. This paper is an attempt to look into a number of factors through the use of a mimicry paradigm which tested subject learners' abilities to reveal and imitate a foreign accent.

Most likely everyone has, at one time or another, encountered speech produced with foreign accent. Previous research has established—predictably—the fact that listeners are able to detect foreign accent (Barry 1974), but apparently little, if anything, is known about just what constitutes a foreign accent. There are, of course, measureable physical differences between the speech of native and non-native speakers which can be revealed by instrumental analysis: e.g., Suomi (1976), Flege (1980), Hammond (1988 & 1990) and Flege and Hammond (1982). The principal focus of the present analysis, however, is to report some of the effects of attitude and experience on an individual's ability to perceive and imitate a foreign accent.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Before actually initiating the process of data-collection, a pilot study was carried out to provide some idea of the kind of sound substitutions which occur in Arabic-accented English (AAE, henceforward). It was also hoped that such a study reveal the kinds of substitutions American speakers (who happen to live in Washington, D.C.) might produce when trying to imitate an Arabic accent. Ten English sentences which included a large variety of English sounds which might be mispronounced by native speakers of Arabic were recorded as spoken by native speakers of both Arabic and English. Based on these tapes, nine English sounds likely to be replaced by other sounds in AAE were then chosen (Table 1).

An Arabic accent variant—with the sound which seemed most likely to replace the target English sound in AAE—was identified for each of these nine English target sounds. All nine of these expected Arabic-accent variants are sounds which occur in English in these same phonological environments. The presence of these sounds in AAE can be readily understood in terms of differences in the sound systems of Arabic and English. The nine English target sounds shown in Table 1 were chosen to represent different segment types and positions within the word: word-initial, word-medial, two were word-final consonants, and two were vowels. Each of the nine English target sounds occurred in three different English C(C)VC(C) words (Table 1) which were embedded in both NP slots of the carrier sentence

"The \_\_\_\_\_ is on the \_\_\_\_\_." This yielded a total of 18 test sentences, each

containing two different English target sounds of interest, and allowed a maximum of thirty-six possible Arabic-accent variants by each of the involved subjects.

Subjects for this study were undergraduate American university students in four first- semester Arabic language classes. These students were chosen as subjects because their Arabic instructors were native speakers of Arabic who speak English with what could be described as a heavy Arabic accent. The experiment was carried out in a language

laboratory where the test material was recorded on the same type of Wollensak tape recorders through head-set microphones held at a fixed distance from the mouth. Before recording the test material, each subject filled out an anonymous questionnaire which included questions concerning personal history, i.e., age, sex, place of birth, residence, etc., and twelve questions designed to provide information concerning a subject's attitudes toward and exposure to foreign accent in general, and to AAE in particular (Appendix I). The subjects were asked to read the English test sentences with the 'best imitation of an Arabic accent' they were capable of. They were not given explicit instructions concerning how to produce an Arabic accent, except that they were not to attempt to produce the impression of accentedness by pausing or stumbling. Subjects were asked to read each sentence twice and were allowed to repeat a sentence if they were not satisfied with their production. To avoid the possibility that subjects seated in adjacent booths might influence one another, two different randomizations of the eighteen test sentences were distributed.

Subject selection criteria were developed to ensure a homogeneous as possible population of subjects who were familiar with AAE. From the original population of one hundred and thirty-seven, subjects were eliminated from the study under these conditions.

(1) Their recording did not meet a minimal standard of sound quality;

(2) They were not between the ages of 18 and 30;

(3) They were not monolingual native speakers of English; or

(4) They had not lived in the Washington, D.C. area of the United States for at least the last previous five years (an area in which a large number of native speakers of Arabic reside).

In addition, subjects were eliminated if, according to their own self-report (Questions 1, 3, and 12 on the questionnaire; see Appendix I) they knew no foreigners or had never heard a foreign accent. From the remaining population, twenty-five male and twenty-five female subjects were randomly selected.



The eighteen-hundred English target sounds produced by the fifty-five subjects were then judged independently by two phonetically-trained listening experts as falling into one of the following three discrete categories:

- (1) The target sound was produced as it normally occurs in English, e.g., vice [vays]).
- (2) The target sound was replaced by the expected Arabic-accent variant, e.g., vice [fays]).
- (3) The target sound was replaced by some other than the expected Arabic-accent variant (e.g., vice [ways]).

The two judges agreed initially in 92.2% of cases. The forty sounds, i.e., 2.2% of cases, for which agreement could not be reached after further listening were submitted to a third phonetically-trained judge. To be scored as having produced the Arabic-accented variant a subject needs to have produced it only once during each of the two productions of a test sentence.

Differences in the frequency of production of English-accent variants were scrutinized according to the independent variables of phoneme identity, segment type, its position in relation to the word-boundary, its location in the sentence, and the informant gender. The significance of these differences was then tested by Chi-square analyses. In order to determine if they would correlate with the total number of Arabic-accented variants produced by my subjects, a number of scales were also constructed from responses to the questionnaire, and the values of these scales were examined by a Spearman rank-order correlation analysis.

The experiment's subjects produced a total of five hundred and eighteen Arabic-accented variants, averaging about fifteen per subject and ranging between zero and thirty-two different variants per subject. There was no statistically significant difference between male and female subjects in frequency of production of these Arabic-accent variants. In the total corpus of five hundred and eighty variants, only fourteen 'other' variants, i.e., non-'Arabic-accent' variants, were produced.

### 3 EFFECTS OF ATTITUDE AND EXPERIENCE

The present study is interested only in determining whether familiarity with, or attitude toward, foreign accent would be related to subjects' ability to imitate an Arabic accent. To achieve this objective, a number of scales were constructed from responses to the questionnaire which subjects had to complete before beginning the imitation experiment (Appendix I). The first scale concerned each subject's familiarity with, and/or awareness of, a specific Arabic accent, and the second scale dealt with subjects' attitude toward Arabic accent. The third and fourth scales concerned a subject's attitude toward and familiarity with foreign accent in general, whether it was English or any other foreign or second language. A Spearman rank-order correlation analysis was performed to determine whether there was a relationship between ratings on these four scales and the total number of Arabic-accented variants produced by each subject in the experiment.

#### 3.1 Findings

It has been discovered that neither subjects' awareness and experience specifically with AAE (Scale I, Table 2) nor subjects' attitude toward AAE (Scale II, Table 2) correlated with the number of Arabic-accent variants produced by subjects. Nevertheless, significant correlations between speakers' familiarity with foreigners (Scale III, Table 2) and speaker attitude toward foreign accent in general (Scale IV, Table 2) have been found. Subjects' familiarity with foreign accent in general was positively correlated with the number of Arabic-accent variants produced ( $p < 0.05$ ). That is, the more contact the subjects had with foreigners in general, according to their own self-report, the greater the number of Arabic-accented variants they produced. But at the same time, it was realized that subjects' attitude toward foreign accent was *inversely* correlated with the number of Arabic-accented variants produced. This means that the more negative a subject's attitude was

toward foreign accent, the greater the number of Arabic-accented variants s/he produced ( $p < 0.01$ ) was.

### **3.2 Discussion**

These results seem to indicate that there is indeed a relationship between a person's attitude toward foreign accent and his/her ability to imitate that accent. It is somewhat surprising that neither subjects' familiarity with, and/or awareness of, nor attitude specifically toward AAE, seemed to affect the subjects' abilities to articulate relevant sound substitutions in their attempts to produce English-Accented Arabic. It was expected that a speaker's ability to produce some of the sound substitutions which are characteristic of AAE would have depended to some extent either on how often the subject hears AAE, or how s/he feels either about Arabs or about how they speak English. It is possible that the subjects' self-reports were not accurate because questions touching on these factors were perhaps too direct, especially those regarding attitude toward Arabic accent and particularly in light of the potential social bond formed between (some of) the students and their Arabic instructor. The author did, however, find a slight tendency for greater contact with Arabic accent to correspond to a better imitation of Arabic accent, but this correlation was not really statistically significant.

On the basis of the present preliminary findings, one can probably maintain, at least tentatively, that imitating a foreign accent represents a kind of skill. Arabic accent is, of course, a form of foreign accent, and it was actually found that greater familiarity with foreign accent in general correlated with ability to imitate Arabic accent. It may or may not be the case that a subject's experience hearing, e.g., a Hungarian or Turkish, accent in English would help that person imitate AAE, since it is possible that overall experience with foreign accents in general may make a listener more acutely aware of an additional foreign accent in his/her native language, and may likewise help this same individual in the task of imitating foreign accent. One can, however, probably assume that familiarity with, and/or awareness of,

Arabic accent has increased the subjects' ability to imitate an Arabic accent in English, and that the questionnaire was not sufficiently sensitive in assessing subjects' familiarity with AAE.

Initially, the finding that subjects having a negative attitude toward a foreign accent tended to be better able to imitate an Arabic accent than subjects with a positive attitude might appear to be counter-intuitive if one assumes that dislike or disapproval of a group will lead speakers to pay less attention to the speech of that group. However, the reverse may actually be true if one assumes that the behavior tapped by this experiment is indeed a skill. The more negative an individual feels toward foreign accent, the more closely s/he may attend to it.

Social psychologists discuss a phenomenon known as 'sensitization' which seems to apply to the current findings. For example, Himmelfarb (1966) reports that anti-Semites seem to be better able than unprejudiced individuals to identify photos of Jews. Along this same line, the close attention that members of one social, religious or racial group pay to the characteristics of another group often serves as the source of ethnic jokes, nicknames, and even fossilized and now-accepted expressions, e.g., "to get off Scot-free." Furthermore, some people specifically utilize imitations of foreign accent to deride other national or ethnic groups. This last observation suggests the possibility that persons having a very negative attitude toward accentedness may actually acquire their skill at imitating through practice. Also, a common subjective experience is for the foreign accent of an acquaintance to seem to disappear, or at least one seems to become less overtly aware of it, as s/he develops a friendship or social bond with that person.

An alternative interpretation to the present findings might be that some individuals develop a negative attitude toward accentedness because they are relatively more sensitive to phonetic differences than other people are. However, in the absence of any evidence that some individuals have this kind of hyper-sensitivity, one can probably argue

that differences in attitude toward accentedness may indeed lead to differences in an individual's ability to imitate foreign accent.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

It seems that the ability to imitate foreign accent depends to a certain extent on exposure to foreign accent; that a person's attitudes may be even more important; and that a negative attitude may cause a speaker to attend more closely to phonetic differences between native and non-native speakers. Furthermore, the correlation which was found in the present study between attitudes and familiarity with foreign accent with subjects' ability to imitate foreign accent suggests that an imitation task such as the present one may prove to be a useful indirect method of assessing attitudes toward linguistic differences. Furthermore, a preliminary examination of other data provided by the mimicry paradigm used in the present study suggests that listeners may be more sensitive to misarticulations which occur in certain positions within a word and sentence than they are to others. Obviously, a follow-up study which includes a larger corpus of data must be carried out before such a hypothesis can be maintained. Next, these data suggest that the imitation of foreign accent reflects a set of internal stereotypes which develop as a result of hearing a foreign accent, in light of the fact that (1) subjects in this study were able to produce many sound substitutions which actually occur in AAE; and (2) they produced more of certain sound substitutions than others. Given the fact that all of the Arabic-accent variants produced in this study are sounds which occur in English, a preliminary hypothesis that perception of foreign accent is based at least in part on internal stereotypes, and not wholly on experience, appears to be supported. Finally, with respect to the question of whether adult language learners are able to perceive and produce sounds they hear, the data herein and in other research (for example Flege and Hammond (1982) strongly suggest that at least many adult language learners have not lost the ability to hear many subtle phonetic differences, and in turn, under certain conditions, to articulate such differences. What this information ultimately tells us

about the acquisition of L2 sound systems by adults, or how the teaching of pronunciation should fit into a communicative language teaching methodology, is still an open question. It seems clear, however, that adult L2 learners are capable of far greater powers of perception and sound production than they have been given credit for by many L2 researchers.

English Target		Arabic- accent	Lexical Forms
Sound		Variant	
Vowels	<i>lei</i>	[i]	end, best, sit
	/e:/	[e]	bait, fate, wait
	<i>IQI</i>	<b>M</b>	oops, hook, true
Consonants	<i>Nl</i>	[f] ~ [w]	vice, review, save
	<i>IQI</i>	[s]	theft, both, mathematics
	<i>Ibl</i>	[z]	them, clothes, brother
	/ts/	<b>m</b>	church, recharge, reach,
	<i>IdzJ</i>	[z] - [g]	jump, rejoin, judge, George
	<i>Ipl</i>	[b]	pipe, apple, reach

**Table 1: English sounds replaceable by others in AAE**

	rs	signif.
Scale I: Familiarity with Arabic accent		
Questions 10, 12. Range: 3-8	-0.114	.429
Scale II: Attitude toward Arabic accent.		
Questions 6, 7,11. Range: 0-5	-0.0867	.550
Scale III: Familiarity with Foreign accent.		
Questions 1,3. Range: 4-8	.2843	.045

Scale IV: Attitude toward Foreign accent.		
Questions 2, 4, 5, 8. Range: 4-16	-0.3745	.007

**Table 2: Subjects' experience with foreign accent**

	Bilabial	Inter-dental	Dental	(Alveo-) Palatal	Emphatic dental	Post Alveolar	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Stops	Voiceless			t	t̤		k	q		ʔ
	Voiced	b		d	d̤					
Fricatives	Voiceless	f	θ	s	ʃ	ʃ̤	x		ħ	h
	Voiced		ð	z	ʒ	ʒ̤	ɣ		ʕ	
Nasals		m		n						
Laterals				l						
Rhotic (trill)				r						
Semi-vowels		w		y						

Table 3a: Arabic Consonant-Phoneme Inventory

Short Vowel	Example	Long	Example
i	عيد /ʔidd/ Count	عيد /ʔid/ Feast	
u	عود /ʔudd/ <i>come back!</i>	عود /ʔud/ Lute	
a	عد /ʔadd/ <i>counted</i>	عاد /ʔad/ came back	
aj		عين /ʔajn/ eye	
aw		عود /ʔawda/ return	

**Table 3b: Arabic Vowel-Phoneme Inventory**

### Appendix I

#### Foreign Accent Survey

Speaker number _____	Place of birth _____
Age _____	Mother tongue _____
Sex _____	(native language) _____
Home _____	Foreign language(s) _____
How long _____	spoken fluently _____

Check only one:

1. How many foreigners do you know?

\_\_\_\_\_ NONE    \_\_\_\_\_ A FEW    \_\_\_\_\_ MANY    \_\_\_\_\_ VERY MANY

2. If you were a foreigner, would you try to get rid of your accent?



\_\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_\_\_PROBABLY \_\_\_\_\_MAYBE \_\_\_\_\_NO

3. How many people do you know that speak with a foreign accent?

\_\_\_\_\_NONE \_\_\_\_\_A FEW \_\_\_\_\_MANY \_\_\_\_\_VERY MANY

4. Foreign accents sound

\_\_\_\_\_VERY BAD \_\_\_\_\_BAD \_\_\_\_\_OK \_\_\_\_\_NICE

5. A foreign accent will hurt a person's chances for success. \_\_\_\_\_YES

\_\_\_\_\_PROBABLY \_\_\_\_\_MAYBE \_\_\_\_\_NO

6. An Arabic accent sounds

\_\_\_\_\_VERY NICE \_\_\_\_\_NICE \_\_\_\_\_OK \_\_\_\_\_QUITE NICE

7. Which accent do you like most?

FRENCH SPANISH ARABIC GERMAN

8. If you lived in Europe, would you try to lose your accent?

NO MAYBE PROBABLY YES

9. Intelligent, hard-working people can always lose their foreign accent.

NO

MAYBE PROBABLY YES

10. How often do you talk to people with an Arabic accent?

VERY OFTEN OFTEN SELDOM NEVER

11. Which accent do you like the least?

FINNISH          GERMAN          ARABIC          FRENCH

12. How much do you hear an Arabic accent?

NEVER \_\_\_ SELDOM    OFTEN    VERY OFTEN

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