

The Role of English Loanwords in Kurdish EFL Pronunciation Challenges

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Abstract—The present study aims at investigating the role of English loanwords in Kurdish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pronunciation challenges while speaking English. To explore the pronunciation challenges and difficulties, a questionnaire is designed which consists of 20 items focusing on issues associated with the mispronunciation of English loanwords of Kurdish EFL learners. The questionnaire is given to the students at English department, College of Education, Charmo University and the collected data are analyzed statistically. A study hypothesizes that Kurdish EFL learners may have challenges and difficulties in pronouncing English loanwords when speaking English meanwhile the first language affects pronouncing the loanwords while they speak English. Hence, the students should avoid using pronunciation rules of the first language to pronounce the English loanwords while communicating in English. This helps the Kurdish EFL students pronounce the English loanwords correctly and communicate accurately. According to the findings and conclusion of the present study, it is suggested that Kurdish EFL students should be aware of pronouncing English loanwords and use the original pronunciation of the loanwords when speaking English.

Keywords—Encounter, Kurdish learner, Loanwords, Mispronunciation, Pronunciation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Languages usually borrow words from each other. In this regard, Kurdish language borrowed some English words, and they became loanwords in Kurdish. Generally, the pronunciation of the loanwords changes, and they are not pronounced the same as the original sounds. Hence, it is kind of a challenge for Kurdish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner to pronounce the loanwords correctly. In the modern world, all non-native speakers of the second-language have pronunciation problems. Furthermore, the Kurdish EFL learners of English have the same problem, which becomes a common challenging strategy (Ghafar et al., 2023). In other words, typically second-language learners do not pronounce the second-language words correctly. Particularly, pronouncing the loanwords of a language is kind of challenging as the loanwords are assimilated into the phonetic system of the target language. Undeniably, English language is the global and universal language and, nowadays it is the most used language in communication. On an everyday basis, English language has a strong effect on other languages (Šarić et al., 2022). This study aims to find the answers to the following questions:

1. Do Kurdish EFL students face mispronunciation of English loanwords when speaking English?

2. Does the Kurdish pronunciation affect the pronunciation of the English loanwords?
3. Whether the lack of equivalent sounds in the Kurdish language produce mispronouncing English loanwords?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a linguistic phenomenon that is called loanwords, which brought the courtesy of linguists. In this process, the meaning and form of words were borrowed from a language to a new language, and they conformed with some adaptation to the new language's sound system. Accordingly, the process of changing the phonological sound system of the loanword is called adaptation (Abdulrasoul Salman, 2020). According to Crystal (2015), "Loanwords are those items that are borrowed with both form and meaning; the words are typically modified or assimilated with the phonologic system with some change of the language borrowed to, for instance, sputnik" (p. 286). Moreover, an enormous vocabulary in any language and dictionary of languages are loanwords. Even numerous words are essential, and the words are used in daily interaction. This means every language has some loanwords borrowed from other languages (Durkin, 2014).

The process of taking new words from one language to another is borrowing. It means, through the borrowing process a language borrows words from different languages, for instance, English language has taken numerous words from other languages, including Latin, Arabic, German and French (Yule, 2010). In other words, there is a linguistics and universal phenomenon that is found in every language, languages are not excluded from it, the language is not closed and it takes words from other languages. Hence, in the Kurdish language numerous English words are used, borrowing a word from the source language to a second-language is called a loanword (Ghafar and Mohamedamin, 2023; Mohammed, 2023). Taking a word without translation from a source language into a recipient language is a loanword or borrowing. Nowadays, due to interconnections between countries and globalization, the countries in the areas of science, technology, culture, politics and economics are connected (Zhou, 2016).

A. Pronouncing Loanwords

An essential skill in verbal language is pronunciation, and it is fundamental for effectual interaction. Pronunciation is frequently considered the most unnoticed facet of learning languages, and it affects the levels of speakers' confidence (Mahmood, 2024).

One of the significant elements of communication is pronunciation, through sound, it enables the transmission of beliefs and ideas to understand by listeners and EFL learners. English pronunciation requires devotion and effort, as attaining and modifying pronunciation present challenges to second-language learners (Muhammed, 2024).

Phonetically, the words borrowed from other languages are pronounced differently in the target language. Since the sound systems of the donor and recipient languages vary. According to scholars, the words borrowed from other languages are not pronounced the same as the original words, and they do not preserve the original pronunciation rather, the loanwords are adapted to the recipient language and the sound system of that language. Thus, the purpose behind the adaptations is to conform the non-native words to the phonological structure of the native language (Abdulsattar, 2015).

B. Mispronouncing Loanwords

Commonly, the loanwords maintain pronunciation features of the original language, which might not appropriate the phonetic patterns of the target language. In other words, the pronunciation of loanwords can vary based on language rules and knowledge. Hence, due to phonetic and sound differences, Kurdish EFL Learners might mispronounce English loanwords. The Kurdish EFL learners apply the native phonetic rules to the English loanwords, thus leading to variants in pronunciation and stress. This results in mispronunciation of English loanwords and can be a challenge encountered by Kurdish EFL learners (Ghafar et al., 2023).

It is undeniable that the first language has a great role in the second language. The transfer process appears in some

aspects, for example, pronunciation, word, and syntax. In terms of pronunciation, predominantly, the first language affects the second language learners when pronouncing the words of the second language. Similarly, the sound pattern of the first language influences the second language pronunciation; this leads to mispronouncing of the words and loanwords as well (Cheng, 2023; Muhammed, 2023).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants of this study consist of (117) first, third, and fifth students from the English department, college of Education- Charmo University. 68 of the participants are female, and 49 of them are male. Furthermore, they are students of the academic year 2024–2025.

B. The Research Instrument

This is a quantitative study in which a questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. An online questionnaire (Google form) was sent to the students through Google Classroom. The questionnaire was in the form of a five-point Likert scale. It was designed to obtain data about the students' perspectives on the role of English loanwords in Kurdish EFL pronunciation challenges. The questionnaire had four sections; each section consisted of 5 statements and five options were listed from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree to strongly disagree. The students were required to choose one of the options, which illustrate the extent of their approval of the statement.

C. The Procedure

To ensure the design of the questionnaire and the statements' clarity, the researcher conducted a pilot survey. Then, the questionnaire was sent to the respondents through Google Classroom. The aim of the study was explained to them, and the students were assured that their information would be kept confidential.

D. Issues of Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0.637 for the study offers valuable insight into its internal consistency. In the realm of social science research, this score suggests that the survey items have a degree of coherence in measuring the construct related to English loanwords and English pronunciation. The moderate reliability indicates that the study's instrument captures consistent information. Overall, this reliability score underscores the importance of careful data interpretation and potential methodological enhancements.

E. Data Analysis

To gain a deeper understanding of the questionnaire's components, we utilized Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to analyze the collected data and examine the responses. The study implemented suitable statistical techniques for analyzing the quantitative data collected. The

researcher conducted a scrupulous examination to gather Kurdish EFL students' viewpoints on the role of English loanwords in their pronunciation challenges. To achieve this, we constructed a survey containing questions categorized into four themes, and they are pronunciation, loanwords during speaking, loanwords and communication skills, and loanwords phonetic pronunciation.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey included a total of 117 participants, showcasing a nuanced gender distribution. Females comprised the majority, with 68 individuals representing 58.1% of the total sample, while males accounted for 49 participants, making up 41.9%. This distribution indicates a relatively balanced representation, with a slight bias toward female respondents. The near-even split suggests that any gender differences in the study are unlikely to be significantly skewed, providing a solid foundation for analyzing the potential impact of English loanwords on Kurdish EFL pronunciation across genders. The balanced nature of the sample enhances the reliability of the research findings, allowing for more comprehensive insights into how gender may interact with linguistic borrowing and pronunciation patterns.

The survey covered three different semesters as shown in Table I. The largest group consisted of third-semester students, with 46 participants, accounting for 39.3% of the total sample. The fifth-semester students represented 33.3% of the participants, with 39 individuals. The smallest cohort was the seventh-semester students, who numbered 32 and represented 27.4% of the sample. This distribution across semesters offers an interesting cross-sectional view of students at various stages of their academic journey, potentially providing insights into how linguistic exposure and academic progress affect pronunciation and language learning.

The correlation analysis in table II reveals several intriguing relationships among the variables in the study. The most significant finding is a moderate positive correlation between the impact of loanwords on communication and their influence on phonetics ($r = 0.379$, $P < 0.01$). This suggests a meaningful connection between how loanwords affect communication and phonetic structures. There is also a strong positive correlation between the impact of loanwords on speaking and communication ($r = 0.415$, $P < 0.01$), indicating that loanwords significantly influence overall linguistic performance. Interestingly, pronunciation shows a weak but statistically significant positive correlation with phonetics ($r = 0.194$, $P < 0.01$), which hints at a subtle relationship between these linguistic aspects. The

TABLE I
SEMESTER

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
3	46	39.3	39.3	39.3
5	39	33.3	33.3	72.6
7	32	27.4	27.4	100.0
Total	117	100.0	100.0	

correlation between the impact of loanwords on speaking and phonetics is positive but not statistically significant ($r = 0.148$, $P > 0.01$), suggesting that the relationship between these variables is less definitive. Overall, the analysis provides empirical evidence that English loanwords have nuanced effects on different linguistic dimensions, with the strongest interconnectedness found between communication and phonetic aspects. These findings suggest that loanwords do not uniformly impact all aspects of language but instead have complex, differentiated influences on various linguistic domains.

The analysis of variance table III offers a statistical evaluation of the overall significance of the regression model, which examines the relationship between loanwords and pronunciation. The key findings present a detailed picture of the model's performance. Specifically, the regression model explains 1.393 of the sum of squares out of a total of 32.449, with three degrees of freedom for the predictors. The mean square for the regression is 0.464, while the residual

TABLE II
CORRELATIONS

	Pronunciation	Loan words on speaking	Loan words on communication	Loan words on phonetics
Pronunciation				
Pearson correlation	1	0.028	0.010	0.194*
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.761	0.912	0.037
n	117	117	117	117
Loan words on speaking				
Pearson correlation	0.028	1	0.415**	0.148
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.761		0.000	0.111
n	117	117	117	117
Loan words on communication				
Pearson correlation	0.010	0.415**	1	0.379**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.912	0.000		0.000
n	117	117	117	117
Loan words on phonetics				
Pearson correlation	0.194*	0.148	0.379**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.037	0.111	0.000	
n	117	117	117	117

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

TABLE III
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE^a

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significant
1					
Regression	1.393	3	0.464	1.689	0.173 ^b
Residual	31.056	113	0.275		
Total	32.449	116			

a. Dependent variable: Pronunciation. b. Predictors: (Constant), loan words on phonetics, loan words on speaking, loan words on communication

TABLE IV
COEFFICIENTS^a

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Significant
	B	Standard error	Beta		
1					
(Constant)	2.124	0.296		7.184	0.000
Loan words on speaking	0.032	0.104	0.032	0.312	0.756
Loan words on communication	-0.102	0.127	-0.087	-0.803	0.424
Loan words on phonetics	0.219	0.098	0.222	2.230	0.028

a. Dependent variable: Pronunciation. b. Predictors: (Constant), loan words on phonetics, loan words on speaking, loan words on communication

mean square is 0.275. The F-statistic of 1.689 indicates a weak relationship between the predictor variables and pronunciation. Most importantly, the significance $P = 0.173$ exceeds the standard significance thresholds of 0.05 and 0.01, demonstrating that the model is not statistically significant. This suggests that the loanword variables (phonetics, speaking, and communication) do not have impact on pronunciation.

The Coefficients in table IV provides valuable insights into how each predictor variable influences pronunciation. The constant (intercept) value is 2.124, indicating the expected pronunciation score when all predictor variables are set to zero, and this value is statistically significant ($P = 0.000$). When analyzing the specific variables related to loanwords, the findings reveal distinct patterns. The relationship between loanwords and phonetics appears to be the most promising, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.219 and a standardized coefficient beta of 0.222, resulting in a $t = 2.230$ and a significance level of 0.028, which is statistically significant at 0.05 level. This implies a weak yet meaningful positive association between loanwords and phonetics in relation to pronunciation. In contrast, the connection between loanwords and speaking shows an unstandardized coefficient of 0.032, a standardized coefficient beta of 0.032, a $t = 0.312$, and a significance level of 0.756, indicating no significant relationship. Similarly, the analysis of loanwords in terms of communication reveals an unstandardized coefficient of -0.102, a standardized coefficient beta of -0.087, a $t = -0.803$, and a significance level of 0.424, which also points to a slight negative and statistically insignificant relationship with pronunciation. Overall, the findings suggest that while phonetics-related loanwords do have a small but significant impact on pronunciation, other linguistic aspects of loanwords do not significantly predict pronunciation, and the overall explanatory power remains limited.

V. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the role of English loanwords in Kurdish EFL pronunciation challenges from students' perspectives in the English department, College of Education, Charmo University, Chamchamal, Kurdistan Region-Iraq. The research showed that phonetics-related loanwords have a significant impact on pronunciation. Related to the first question, the study revealed that Kurdish EFL students face mispronouncing English loanwords while speaking English, which is a challenge for EFL learners since pronouncing

loanwords is not easy when used in the original pronunciation. Concerning the second question, the research indicated that the sound and pronunciation system of the first language affects pronouncing English loanwords when pronouncing and using them in English. Regarding the third question, the study showed that Kurdish does not have the equivalent sounds of English, leading to mispronunciation of the loanwords when Kurdish EFL students speak English. Consequently, Kurdish EFL students mostly face mispronouncing English loanwords, whereas communicating in English, lead to misunderstanding in communication and affect the perception of effective communication. For example, when Kurdish people pronounce the word organization, they pronounce it differently from the original pronunciation, as they use this word in Kurdish as a loanword, the Kurdish pronunciation affects pronouncing the word inaccurately.

A. Recommendations

According to the findings and conclusions of the present study, it is recommended that Kurdish EFL students should be aware of pronouncing English loanwords and use the original pronunciation of the words when speaking English. It is also suggested that Kurdish EFL learners should avoid using the pronunciation rules of their first language to pronounce the English loanwords while communicating in English. This helps the Kurdish EFL students to pronounce the English loanwords correctly and communicate accurately. Furthermore, Kurdish EFL learners should be encouraged to socialize and interact with native English speakers to get the original pronunciation of the loanwords. Finally, the students should improve their pronunciation and identify the pronunciation problems and challenges that they encounter in using loanwords when speaking English.

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