Errors Committed by Tikrit University Students in Using Linking /r/

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ABSTRACT

The majority of Tikrit university students do not use linking in their speech. The total number of their correct replies (136, 23%) islower than that of the incorrect ones (464, 77%). This verifies the first hypothesis of the study.They encounter more difficulty at the spoken performance. Thus, thetotal number of their correct responses of the written performance (340, 28%) is more than that of the spoken one (232, 26%). This confirms the second hypothesis. They encounter more difficulty at the production level. For this reason, the total number of their incorrect responses at the production level (955, 80%) is higher than that of the recognition one (573, 64%). This confirms the third hypothesis.

Keywords:	Tikrit university, Linking /r/, Errors Committed, students

1. Introduction

When Tikrit university students listen to the speech of Englishnative speakers, they have difficulty to understand it. This is related to many reasons. One of these reasons is that native speakers of English use linking. The problem lies in the fact that linking is not found in their native language. In addition, it is quiet difficult for learners to use linking in their speech. First of all, if they are reading aloud a written text, there is no visual reminder of linking. Secondly, there are specific rules for linking. Not all the words of a phrase, or a clause, or a sentence undergo the rules of linking. It depends on what sounds get placed next to each other. Consequently, the learners find difficulty to put these rules into practice (Kenworthy, 1990:115).

This study aims at:

1.   Assessing Tikrit university students' achievement in recognizing and producing linking.
2.   Assessing their achievement in the written and spoken performance of linking.
3.   Identifying the points of difficulty which they encounter in using linking.
4.   Finding out the reasons beyond their errors and the suitable solutions posited to deal with such errors. In view of the preceding aims, it is hypothesized that:
1-   Most Tikrit university students do not use linking in their speech.
2-   The total achievement of such students of the written performance is expected to be better than their achievement of the spoken one.Their performance at the recognition level is anticipated to be better than theirs at the production one.
3-   Any words of a sentence are enunciated with linking.
The researcher adopts the following steps to achieve the objectives of this study:

1-   Producing, an exposition of English linking depending on the literature Available in this field.

2-   A test has been submitted to Tikrit university students in order to pinpoint the difficulties they face in using linking.

3-   Analyzing the results of the test, on the bases of which conclusions have been presented. This study is limited to second year students, Department of English,College of Education, University of Tikrit during the academic year (20014-2015).

They have been taught this topic during this year.

2.Linking

Linking is one of the aspects of connected speech. When English speakers talk they produce a number of phonemes that belong to the words. They are using in a more or less continuous stream; the listener in turn recognizes them (or most of them) and receives the message. However, phoneticians have felt that it is necessary to draw attention to the way the end of one word is joined to the beginning of the next word (Roach, 2002:47).Ken worthy (1990: 9) states that English people do not generally pause between words when they speak, but they transfer smoothly from one word to the following one.The most common liaison phenomena involve /r/ appearing in non- rhotic speech in post-vocalic contexts. A rhotic speaker will pronounce words like far as /fɑːr/, whereas a non-rhotic speaker does notpronounce /r/ at all unless followed by a vo For rhotic speakers this is just because far has an /r/ in it, but for non-

For rhotic speakers it appears because the first word ends with a vowel and the second word begins with a vowel – the /r/ links the two words together. In such cases, [r] forms a syllable with the following vowel in connected speech and therefore occurs in a syllable onset – such syllabification across word boundaries is a general feature of connected speech in English. The [r] occurring in this context is usually referred to as Linking R, for the simple fact that there is <r> in the spelling. For speakers of non-rhotic accents /r/ is not pronounced after vowels.

However, in these accents, when words that are spelled ending with an
<r> or an <re> come before a word beginning with a vowel, the /r/ is usually pronounced. This is linking /r/. In rhotic accents the /r/ is also pronounced when the words are in isolation so cannot be termed linking Examples:

Intrusive /r/

Intrusive /r/ also involves the pronunciation of an /r/ sound, but this time there is no justification from the spelling as the word's spelling does not end in <r> or <re>. Again this relates to non-rhotic accents; rhotic accents do not have intrusive r. Like Linking /r/ Intrusive /r/ isfound in word-final position in phrases such as *law* /r/ *and order* [lɔːr ənd ɔːdə], *the idea* /r/ *of it*, *spa* /r/ *is* in which [r] is inserted after the set of non-high vowels [ə, ɑː, ɔː].

The idea of it   /ði aɪdɪə əv ɪt/   >   /ði aɪdɪər əv ɪt/

Thus, link a final /ə/ or even /ɑː, ɔː/ to an initial vowel in the same sense group by inserting an r-sound even if there is no r in the

spelling. The /r/ added in this way is known as Intrusive /r/.

A banana or an apple   /ə bənɑːnər ər ən æpl̩/
China and India   /tʃaɪnər ən ɪndɪə/

http://linkingphonetics.wordpress.com/tag/intrusive/r/.

Definition of Linking
Linking is a term used in phonology to denote a sound which appears
between two syllables or words, for ease of pronunciation, as in the English linking **r** in **"for ever"** (Crystal, 2003a:464).It is a process in continuous speech which joins the final sound of one word or syllable with the initial sound of the next one. In English, words ending in a tense vowel and the next word or syllable begins with a vowel are usually linked with a glide. Therefore, a phrase like **"better off"** sounds as /bet rɒv /. In some varieties of English, an intrusive /r/ is inserted between two words. The first word ends with a vowel sound and the next one begins with a vowel, as in "**saw Emmy"** or **"media event".** When a word or syllable ends in a consonant cluster and the next word launches with a vowel, the final consonant of the cluster is often pronounced as part of the following Syllable. For instance, "**right arm"** is usually enunciated as if it were "**right arm"** (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 312). In English, the linking *r* is the most common example of this process, as when the *r* in **cigar** is pronounced before a word or syllable beginning with a vowel. (Crystal, 2003b: 274).

Rules of Linking
In this section, we deal with rules of linking. Such rules are of significance to manage linking.

Vowel to Vowel Linking
When one word terminates with a vowel sound and the next word begins with a vowel sound there is a smooth link between the two to ease

the transition between the two words. Vowel to vowel linking encompasses the following:

Linking r
Some accents of English are described as rhotic, which means that the letter *r* is enunciated wherever it occurs (as in **actor** or **card)**, the /r/ phoneme is articulated in these words (as in /dɒktər/ and /kɑːrd/). Most dialects of American English, Irish and certain British regional accents areexamples of rhotic accents. Other accents are non-rhotic, and do not enunciate the/r/, so we get /dɒktə/ and /hɑːd/. RP (Received Pronunciation) is non-rhotic. However, when there is a written *r* at the end of a word and it occurs between two vowel sounds, speakers with non-rhotic accents often articulate phoneme /r/ to link the preceding vowel to a following one (Kelly, 2000: 111)."Her English is excellent." /hɜːr'ɪŋglɪʃ/. "My father always /'fɑːðər'ɔːlweɪz/ does wrong deeds at the wrong time." (ibid.).

2.2.1.2 Intrusive /r/
Where two vowel sounds meet and there is no written letter *r*, speakers of non-rhotic accents insert the /r/ phoneme in order to ease

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Where two vowel sounds meet and there is no written letter *r*, speakers of non-rhotic accents insert the /r/ phoneme in order to easeTransition. This happens when the first word ends in /ə/, /ɑː/ or /ɔː/ and then next word begins with a vowel sound. Speakers with rhotic accents tend not to do this (Gimson, 1970: 97):"America and Canada." /əmerɪkərən / "Low and order." /lɔːrən/ (ibid.)"I saw it happen." /sɔːrɪt/"The media are to blame." /'miːdɪərɑː/ (Kelly, 2000:111)The difference

between linking and intrusive /r/ is that linking /r/ isReflected in the written form, whereas intrusive /r/ is not. Intrusive /r/ does notexist in rhotic accents (where 'r' in the spelling is always enunciated) (Underhill, 1994: 66).

3.Data Collection

A diagnostic test has been designed in order to reveal the difficulties encountered by Tikrit university students in manipulating linking and to identify the causes behind such errors. The test consists of two questions (see Appendix I). The first question measures the subject's response at the production level, whereas the second question measure their responses at the recognition one. Moreover, the first question measures the subject's written achievement, whereas the second question measures the subject's spoken achievement. The first question includes five items in which students are asked to underline the words that are uttered with linking. The second question consists of five items in which these learners are asked to transcribe the words that are uttered with linking. The third question is composed of five phrases in which students listen to the recordings of British native speakers and write down the words that are articulated with linking. After many Endeavour's, the researcher has obtained only five phrases in the second question. Also, the second question should be included in order to unearth whether or not Iraqi student understands a native speaker when he uses linking. Finally, the first question is constructed

of five items in which students read the sentences paying particular attention to the words which are uttered with linking and the researcher records their speech.Some items of the test have been taken from How to Teach Pronunciation by Gerald Kelly (2000), English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course by Peter Roach (2000), Teaching English Pronunciation by Joanne Kenworthy (1990), and Sound Foundations by Adrian Underhill (1994). The items cover different types of linking. The subjects have studied this topic in the second year in Roach's book English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course where the author devotes a section to this topic entitled "linking". Also, the test has been approved by the head of English dept at University of Tikrit.

4.Data Analysis

This section deals with the analysis and discussion of the results ofthetest. These errors are identified and shown statistically. Endeavours have been made to point out the plausible sources of these errors so as to get some insights into the nature of the difficulties Tikrit university students have encountered in this area. In addition, this section produces the results of the subjects' performance at each question of the test in particular and at the entire test in general, with regard to the recognition and production levels as well as the written and spoken performance of linking. The following table shows the results obtained after analyzing the subjects' performance at each item in the first question.

Table (1)
Subjects' Achievement of the First Question

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	33	55	27	45
2	16	27	44	73
3	15	25	45	75
4	37	62	23	38
5	41	68	19	32
Total	142	47.5	159	52

The results denote that the total number of the correct responses (**142**, **47.5**%) is lower than that of the incorrect ones (**159**, **52**%). It is obvious that the subjects do not know where linking occurs. Table (2) displays the subject's response to the items of the second question:

Table (2)
Subjects' Achievement of the Second Question

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	26	43	34	57
2	2	3	58	97
3	16	27	44	73
4	23	38	37	62
5	29	48	31	52
Total	96	32	204	68

From the table above, it can be concluded that most subjects have flunked to recognize the words that are enunciated with linking. It is clearthat the subjects have difficulty to understand spoken English which is uttered by native speakers of English, since the total number of their correct responses (96, 32%) is lower than that of their incorrect ones (204). The subjects' total achievement of the written and spoken performance of linking can be recap on the following tables.

Table (3)
Subjects' Achievement of the Written Performance

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	142	47.5	159	52
Total	142	47.5	159	52

In the written performance of the linking, the results obviously show that the subjects can identify easily the words that are articulated with linking, but they have encountered real difficulties in the transcription of the words that are uttered with linking, since the highest average of their in correct responses in the first question is (159, 52%).The subjects' total achievement of the spoken performance of the linking can be summed up in the following table:

Table (4). Subjects' Achievement of the Spoken Performance

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
2	96	32	204	68
Total	96	32	204	68

students encounter difficulties in this respect because they do not use linking appropriately in their speech. Therefore, the total number of their incorrect responses (204, 68%). is more than that of the correct ones (96, 32%).

The following tables clarify the subjects' total achievement at the production and recognition levels:

Table (5)
Subjects' Achievement at the Production Level

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	142	47.5	159	52
Total	142	47.5	159	52

Here, it can be concluded that such students encounter difficulties at the production level because they do not know how to produce linking appropriately.

Table (6)
Subjects' Achievement at the Recognition Level

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
2	96	32	204	68
Total	96	32	204	68

From the results above, it can be concluded that Tikrit University.students can recognize the words that are uttered as linking. This does not mean that they do not encounter difficulties in this level because the total number of their incorrect responses (204, 68%) is more than that of the correct ones (96, 32%).Some Tikrit university students think that the phenomenon of linking can occur with any word of a sentence. Most of them do not know that linking occurs with some (not all) words. Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis which reads: **Any words of a sentence are enunciated with linking** is verified. This part displays the results of the subjects' performance of the entire test. The tables below present the results at all levels.

Table (7)
Subjects' Achievement of the Written and Spoken Performance

Performance	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Written	142	47.5	159	52
Spoken	96	32	204	68
Total	238	15.5	363	24

The highest average of the subjects' incorrect responses including eschewed responses of the written and the spoken performance of linking is (363, 24%). This means that Tikrit university students encounter more difficulties at the spoken performance, since the total number of their correct responses in this level (96, 32%) is lower than that of their correct ones of the written performance (142, 47.5%).The subjects' total performance at the recognition and production levels can be summarized in the following table.

Table (8)

Subjects' Achievement at the Recognition and Production Levels

Performance	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Production	142	47.5	159	52
Recognition	96	32	204	68
Total	238	15.5	363	24

By the same token, the highest rate of their incorrect answers including avoided responses (363, 24%) is higher than that of their correct ones (238, **15.5**%). This result indicates that Tikrit university students have faced more difficulty at the production level, since the total number of their correct responses at this level (142, 47.5%) is lower than that of their correct ones at the recognition level (159, 52%). These results can be verified by using certain measures such as mean, as the mean for the spoken performance (11.04) is lower than that for thewritten one (16.1). This confirms the second hypothesis which reads: **The total achievement of such students of the written performance is expected to be better than their achievement of the spoken one.**Similarly, the mean for the production level (72) is lower than that for the recognition one (46). This verifies the third hypothesis which states: **Their performance at the recognition level is anticipated to be better than theirs at the production one.**

5. Sources of Errors

This section deals with error analysis and the sources of errors whichare committed by Tikrit learners in using linking. All learners commit errors at different stages of language learning. Errors are natural processes of language learning. Interference from the students' own language into the target language is not the only reason for making errors. There are other categories of errors which are called developmental errors such as over generalization. The instructor must realize that all learners make errors. These errors enable them to learn something new about the language (Harmer, 2000:62). Therefore, this section deals with the identification of errors and the reasons beyond committing certain types of errors as far as these errors are related to the learners' wrong use of linking. In this study, most errors are attributed to interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategies.

Ignorance of rule restriction i.e. "applying rules to contexts to which they do not apply" (Richards and Sampson, 1974: 70).

Incomplete application of the rules involves the avoidance of thelearner to use more complex sorts of structure or forms because the learner believes that he can communicate effectively by using relatively simple rules or forms, and **false concepts hypothesized** that may derive from wrong comprehension of a distinction in the target language (Brown, 1987: 81-3and Chanier et al., 1992: 134).Intralingual errors are the most popular

source of the subjects' errors. To demonstrate, the reason beyond the wrong use of linking in item (1) of the first question and item (3) of the second question may be ascribed to overgeneralization.Item (3) *Lisa visits her uncle*.

Twenty students (33.33%) have thought that linking occurs with the word

visits /vɪzɪts/ instead of *her aunt* /hɜ:rɑ:nt/.The researcher concludes that most of them have envisaged that the phenomenon of linking can occur with any words of a sentence. Most ofthem do not know that linking occurs with some (not all) words of a phrase or a sentence. In other words, they generalize the rules. Also, some subjects envisage that linking can occur with any words of a sentence or a phrase even if they are not contiguous with each other as in item (4) of the first question. Such errors may be attributed to **ignorance of rule restriction.**Item (4) . Fifteen students (25%) have thought that linking occurs with the words *sawof* instead of *saw is*. Some of the errors in the second question may be attributed to **incomplete application of the rules**, as shown in item (3):It is intelligible, from the item above, that some of Tikrit university students know where linking occurs but the problem is that they do not know how to transcribe or utter the words that are enunciated with linking.**False concepts hypothesized** and **ignorance of rule restriction** may Also be the reason beyond some of the subjects' incorrect use of linking toItem (4) of the first question, item (2) of the second question.

5.3.Guessing.

(When the learners are in doubt about the correct answer they begin to guess (Brown, 2001: 309). This strategy has been used in the subjects' answers especially in item (5) of the first question**.** Item (5) *Beth saw it diving.* There are eight students (13.33%) who have resolved this item in the following way: *Bill saw it burning.* The total number of errors that may be related to using such strategiesis (374, 24.47%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Conclusions

In the light of students' responses, it can be concluded that:

1.The majority of Tikrit university students do not use linking in their speech. The total number of their correct replies (136, 23%) islower than that of the incorrect ones (464, 77%). This verifies the first hypothesis of the study.

2.They encounter more difficulty at the spoken performance. Thus, thetotal number of their correct responses of the written performance (340, 28%) is more than that of the spoken one (232, 26%). This confirms the second hypothesis.

3.They encounter more difficulty at the production level. For this reason, the total number of their incorrect responses at the production level (955, 80%) is higher than that of the recognition one (573, 64%). This confirms the third hypothesis.

4.The majority of Tikrit university students do not know where linking occurs. In short, they think that linking can occur with any words of a phrase or a sentence. Thus, the total number of their correct responses (327, 36%) is lower than that of the incorrect ones (573, 64%). This verifies the fourth hypothesis.

5.The majority of Tikrit university students face difficulties in using linking. This can be confirmed by the low rate of their correct responses (572, 27%) in comparison with the total number of their incorrect ones (1528, 73%).

There are five sorts of errors which are committed by the sample of the present study. The errors can be summarized as

1. Follows:
   a. Wrong choice of linking (61.5%).
   b. Providing correct choice, but wrong transcription (38.3%).
   c. Failure to recognize the spoken linking (68%).
   d. Incorrect pronunciation of the required linking (77%). e-Giving no answer (55.3%).

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APPENDIX I

State types of / r / by usage a phonetic Transcriptions

1. **Lisa visits her uncle**
2. **Her Italian is broken**
3. **I saw Anna yesterday**
4. **He lives far away home**
5. **He is better of**

Listen to the following words. Then, write down the words with which linking occurs.

1. **Her apple is rotten**
2. **His sister is dummy**
3. **Her aid was exciting**
4. **Never again**
5. **later on**