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The Production of Weak Forms by Iraqi Secondary School Teachers

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Article information	Abstract
	The present study sheds light on the production of weak forms by Iraqi Secondary School Teachers (ISSTs). A weak form is one of two possible pronunciations for a word in the context of connected speech. It is the result of a word being unstressed (Crystal, 1991). This study aims at presenting and identifying the different weak forms that are found in standard English. It explains the rules of using weak forms. Moreover, the study aims at testing the teachers' (ISSTs) linguistic performance in their attempt to produce weak forms according to the variable of age - both on the sentence level and on the utterance level. So, (45) teachers were tested. These were divided into three groups: Young (25-36), middle-aged (37-49) and old teachers (50 years and over).Their speech has been recorded, listened carefully and then analysed. It is found that those teachers face difficulty in using weak forms. They often tend to use strong forms and they neglect to apply the correct rules of using weak forms. Moreover, it is observed that young teachers followed by old, used more weak forms than middle-aged teachers.

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انتاج اشكال ضعيفة من قبل معلمي المدارس الثانوية العراقية

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المستخلص :

تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على طريقة انتاج الاشكال الضعيفة من قبل معلمي المدارس الثانوية العراقية. فالشكل الضعيف هو احدى الاحتمالات الممكنة للفظ الكلمة في سياق الكلام المتصل وهو نتيجة كون الكلمة غير مشددة. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى تقديم و تحديد الاشكال المختلفة الضعيفة التي توجد في اللغة الإنكليزية وشرح طريقة استخدامها. بالإضافة الى ذلك تهدف الدراسة الى معرفة مدى استخدام المدرسين العراقيين للأشكال الضعيفة حسب متغير العمر ولكلا المستويين مستوى الجملة ومستوى النص، لذا تم اختيار (45) مدرس ومدرسة و تم تقسيمهم الى مجاميع كالاتي: صغار السن بعمر (25-36)،

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متوسطي العمر (37-49) وكبار السن (50 سنة واكثر)، وتم تسجيل كلامهم وتحليله. لقد وجد ان هؤلاء المدرسين يواجهون صعوبة في استخدامهم للأشكال الضعيفة وهم غالباً ما يلجؤون الى استخدام الاشكال القوية ويتجاهلون تطبيق القواعد الصحيحة لاستخدام الاشكال الضعيفة. بالإضافة الى ذلك لوحظ ان صغار السن-يتبعهم كبار السن كانوا اكثر استخداماً للأشكال الضعيفة مقارنة بمتوسطي العمر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاشكال الضعيفة-التلفظ-الكلام المتصل-الكلمات الوظيفية-صعوبات-الاشكال القوية-المدرسين.

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1. **Introduction:**

The use of weak forms is an essential part of English speech. It is the unstressed pronunciation of the grammatical word when it occurs in a continuous rapid speech (Ladefoged and Johnson, 2015: 117). For example, words like "was"/wDz/, and "for" /fɔ: / are not pronounced alone and they usually are not stressed in a meaningful sentence. So, the pronunciation of these words should be /wəz/ and/fə/, i.e. with vowel /ə/ not /D/ and /ɔ:/.

Weak forms are considered one of the aspects of connected speech[1] They constitute most of the important function words in the language and they should be correctly taught from the very beginning of any course including spoken English. And the pronunciation of these forms almost fifty in number must be totally acquired before practising other aspects of pronunciation (Wright, 1973:26 and Kelly, 2000: 72). Function words are words that do not have a dictionary meaning in the way that we normally expect nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. These function words such as auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, etc. are in certain circumstances pronounced in their strong forms, but which are more frequently pronounced in their weak forms (Kelly, 2000: 73; Underhill, 2005: 70 and Roach, 2009: 89).

This study will concentrate on how these weak forms will be presented by Iraqi Secondary School Teachers (ISSTs) who are teaching English in the city of Mosul. It tries to classify these weak forms according to their function. The different phonetic shapes of these weak forms will also be identified in different sentence positions and the different modifications of vowel qualities in these weak forms will be dealt with in this study[2].

2. **The Aims of the Study:**
The study has the following aims:

a. To present and identify the different weak forms that are used in standard English and to explain the different rules of using them.

b. Testing the teachers (ISSTs) linguistic performance in their attempt to produce weak forms in standard English both on the sentence level and on the utterance level.

c. Interpreting and analysing the errors made by (ISSTs) in producing weak forms and deciding whether these errors are conditioned by the variable of age.

3. **The Problem:**

(ISSTs) of English face numerous pronunciation problems as far as weak forms are concerned. In most cases, they produce some function words in their strong forms not in their weak forms. So, they do not take into consideration the context in which the word occurs.

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[1] Connected speech is a continuous sequence of sounds forming utterances or conversations in spoken language. In connected speech, some changes and modifications happen for some linngistic units. The words that are modified will seem different in connected speech than in citation form (Ward, 1972: 180; Wilkins 1972:24 and Internet: 1).

[2] Weak forms may have one shape at the beginning of a sentence (initial), another at the end (final), a separate form before or after a vowel and yet another when none of these conditions obtains (See, Wright, 1973: 27).

4.   **The Hypothesis:**

It is hypothesized that the use of weak forms poses difficulty for (ISSTs) since many teachers neglect pronunciation and they only concentrate on grammar and lexis[3].

5.   **The Value of the Study:**

This study may be of some value since pronunciation is an essential component of learning a new language. First, increases the intelligibility of the speaker and second, it increases and improves the confidence for the speaker.When native speakers of English speak naturally, they connect words. In this connected speech, a mixture of strong and weak forms is used.

Weak forms are really important pronunciation points. Learning about weak forms can help a learner speak fluently and can also make a big difference in his listening.So, when foreign learners have in their minds a knowledge of the correct rules of pronunciation, this would help them in making successful communication (Kelly, 2000: and Internet: 1).

Moreover, the use of weak forms in speech is important because if someone only uses the strong form of words, this would make his pronunciation unnatural and foreign sounding [4]. Besides, speakers who are not familiar with the use of weak forms often find difficulty in understanding those speakers who do use weak forms since all native speakers of British English use them. (Roach, 2009: 89).

So, learners of English should first have an exposure to connected speech phenomenon and then they should be given the features of connected speech in more depth throughout an appropriate context. By doing so, learners or students may not be frustrated when they listen to a rapid speech of a native speaker.

In this respect, Ur (1987: 10 cited in Celce- Murcia, 2010: 175) says:

"Students who do not receive instruction or exposure to authentic discourse are going to have a very rude awakening when they try to understand native speakers in natural communicative situations".

Besides, a speaker who is not trained to use weak forms, and who always emphasises unimportant words and syllables, he weakens the important words. Unfortunately, some (ISSTs) try to encourage their students to stress every single word in a sentence as (Ward, 1972: 184) says:

" I have heard the pronunciation of this kind in schools where the teacher encourages his pupils to speak each word and syllable distinctly and not to slur them."

This makes their speech unintelligent in which all the syllables have equal Value.

So, (ISSTs) must have an awareness of the features of connected speed, since they are the appropriate models for their students. They also must have a working knowledge of articulatory phonetics, theories of second language phonological acquisition, a number of techniques and procedures to use in the classroom.

6.   **Strong Forms and Weak Forms:**

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[3] In his very comprehensive history of language teaching (Kelly, 1969 cited inCelce- Murcia, 2010:2) states that linguists have studied grammar and vocabulary much longer than pronunciation. For this reason, grammar and Vocabulary have been much better understood by most language teachers than pronunciation which began to be studied systematically only a short time before the beginning of the twentieth century.

[4] The norm of pronunciation used here is the (RP) model which is internationally intelligible.

In English, when a word is said in isolation, it has at least one syllable which is fully stressed and it has no reduction of the vowel quality. But, in connected speech many changes may take place. Some words like "and", "to" and "him" may be altered. They will be totally unstressed. The vowel may be reduced to /ə/ and one of the consonants may be dropped. Thus, "and" may be pronounced as [ənd], [ən] or [n] in its reduced form.

There are in English many words which are rarely said in their citation form in conversational speech. These words are most often function words filļing in between content words and making sentences work grammatically (Ladefoged, 1993: 107 and Kelly, 2000: 72).

These words may be said to have two different forms of pronunciation: a strong form which is used when the word is stressed and a weak form which is used when the word is an unstressed position. In many varieties of spoken English, it is normal to use weak forms since this would make sentences easier to say (Jenkins, 2000: 146; Underhill, 2005:64 and Scrivener, 2010: 282).

The essential thing to remember about weak forms is that they are rarely stressed, unless a special meaning or emphasis is intended [5]. It is because of their characteristic unstress that the vowel qualities in weak forms undergo some changes and modifications (Wright, 1973:27).

(ISSTs) should be fully aware of how these weak forms are produced since their speech would be the essential model for their students. If the teacher has wrong ideas about the pronunciation of these weak forms, then his pupils are going to acquire a pronunciation which will sound foreign in some indefinable way to the ordinary English man.

Since the student's native language (i.e., Arabic) does not have vowel reduction, the use of weak forms would be difficult for those students, and would; therefore, requires strenuous attention from the teacher and a good acquaintance with their rules.The teacher also should be conscious of the phonetics of connected speech.

In this respect, (Wilkins, 1972:39) says:

"The teacher who is relatively uninformed about phonetics risks transmitting quite serious errors to his pupils, especially in the earlier stages of language learning".

The teacher who has difficulty in speaking English will not succeed in giving his pupils a good command of spoken language or be able to teach communicatively (Al-Mutawa and Kailane, 1989:28).

According to Jenkins (2000: 146 f.), weak forms are small structural items which possess both a strong form in which a full vowel quality is retained, i.e.the word is pronounced as in citation form, and a weak form in which the vowel quality is modified and the length is reduced resulting in the vowel Schwa which is the most frequent sound in RP.

He mentions that through the speakers' weakening of these items, the listeners' attention would be on the more important content words. Moreover, he claims that despite the fact that there are clear rules for using weak forms, they are still unteachable in the classroom[6](Jenkins,2000:147).

In general, the appropriate use of weak forms is essential to smooth and rhythmical speaking, to the clarity of prominent and non-prominent syllables and also to clarify meaning (Underhill, 2005:64).

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[5] For more details, see (Roach, 2009: 89 f.).
[6] For more details about these rules, see (Ladefoged, 1993:108f.).

Teachers of English as a foreign language should support their students with the different rules of using weak forms and encourage them to apply these rules in their speech since this will give them insight into the speech of native speakers of English and helps to improve their listening skill and confidence.

(Table: a) show the most common strong and weak forms that are used in standard English.

Table: a   Strong Forms and Weak Forms in Standard English

Grammatical category	Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Examples of Weak Forms
Verbs	am	æm	əm – m	Am I hurting you?
	are	*a*:	ə	What are you doing?
	is	Iz	əz – s – z	Where is he from?
	was	wɒz	wəz	There was no answer.
	were	w3:	wə	They were new ones?
	do	du:	dʊ – də – d	What do they say?
	does	dʌz	dəz	Where does he live?
	have	hæv	həv – əv – v	The boys have gone.
	has	hæz	həz – əz – z – s	Ali has broken the door.
	had	hæd	həd – əd – d	He had already gone.
	can	kæn	kən	Who can tell?
	could	kʊd	kəd	I could see him tomorrow.
	shall	ʃæl	ʃəl – əl – 1	What shall I do?
	should	ʃʊd	ʃəd	I should make a new one.
	will	wIl	əl – 1	What 'll you do?
	would	wʊd	wəd – əd - d	What would you pay?
	must	mʌst	məst – məs	I must open the doors.

(Wright, 1973:39- 72; Christophersen, 1973: 172 f. and Kelly, 2000: 74).

Grammatical category	Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Examples of Weak Forms
Pronouns	you	ju:	jʊ	What do you think?
	your	jɔ:	jə	What is your favourite game?
	he	hi:	hI– i:	Where does he work?
	him	hIm	Im	I'll give it to him late.
	she	ʃi:	ʃI	Why did she readit?
	her	h3:	hə – ə (r)	I'll give it to her later.
	us	ʌs	əs – s	Send us a post card.
	them	ðem	ðəm	Give them a glass.
	that	ðæt	ðət	It's the goodness that counts.

	there	ðeə	ðə	There should be a rule.

Grammatical category	Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Examples of Weak Forms
Prepositions [7]	to	tu:	tə - tʊ	Leave it to me.
	at	æt	ət	I'll see you at nine.
	of	Dv	əv	That was good of you.
	for	fɔ:	fə	Sam saved it for me.
	from	frDm	frəm	He came from London.

Grammatical category	Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Examples of Weak Forms
Conjunctions	and	ænd	ənd – ən – n	Touch and go.
	as	æz	əz	She was as cold as ice.
	but	bʌt	bət	I like sugar but not too much.
	than	ðæn	ðən	It's later than you think.

Grammatical category	Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Examples of Weak Forms
Articles	a	eI	ə	He is a teacher.
	an	æn	ən	He bought an egg.
	the	ði:	ðə – ðI	He is the best student in the class.

Grammatical category	Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Examples of Weak Forms
Indefinite Adjectives	any	eni:	əni:	Have we got any biscuits?
	some	sʌm	səm	I'd like some cake, please.
	such	sʌtʃ	sətʃ	It's not such a big deal, really.

([7]) The prepositions "in" and "on" are not listed. These words have no weak forms.

The important rules of using weak forms in standard English:

1. For the auxiliary verb "has", the form [əz] is used after /s, z, ʃ, Ʒ, tʃ and dƷ/; the form [s] is used after /p, t, k, f, Ө/ and the form [z] is used elsewhere. (O' Connor, 1980: 93 and Roach, 2009:94).

2. For "do", the weak form /də/ is used before a consonant and the weak form /dʊ/ is used before vowels and /d/ is used with the pronoun "they"(O' Connor, 1980:93).

3. For "your", the weak form /jə/ is used before a consonant; before a vowel, the weak form /jər/ is used, for example: Take your apple (Roach, 2009:91).

4. For "her", the form /hə (r)/ is only used in initial position (Wright 1973: 33 and Roach 2009: 92).

5. For "to" the weak form /tʊ/ is used before avowel and the weak form /tə/ is used before a consonant.Thus, one says"To France" /tə fr*a*: ns/, but "To England" /tʊIŋglənd/ (Christophersen, 1973: 150).

6. For "and", the form /ənd/, is mostly used when the following word begins with a vowel. Before a consonant the form is more often /ən/ or /n/ (Christophersen 1973: 174)

7. The weak form /ðə/ is used before a consonant and the weak form /ðI/ is used before a vowel. Thus, ones ays: "The book" /ðəbʊk/, but "The orange" /ðIərIndƷ/ (Christophersen, 1973: 150).

8. The word "is" is pronounced /s/ after/ p – t – k – f – Ө/; /z/ after vowels and voiced consonants except /z, Ʒ and dƷ/. The strong form /Iz/ is used after /s, z, ʃ, Ʒ, tʃ and dƷ /(O' Connor, 1980: 93)

7. **Method:**

7.1 The Subjects:

The subjects of this study were (45) teachers who are teaching English at secondary schools in the city of Mosul, schools for boys and girls[8]. They were native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and they were both males and females. The subjects were of different age groups: fifteen teachers of the age (25 – 36); i.e. young; fifteen teachers of the age (37 – 49) i.e., middle-aged and fifteen teachers of the age (50 years and more), i.e. old.

7.2 The Data:

The data needed for this study was divided into two parts. The first part was related to the study of (ISSTs') production of weak forms on the sentence level. So, a number of sentences were chosen (15 sentences). They were simple and compound sentences and were taken from Roach's (2009) English Phonetics and Phonology and O'Connor's (1980) Better English Pronunciation.

The sentences with their correct transcriptions are the following:

1. We can wait for the bus.

/wi 'kən 'weIt fə ðə 'bʌs/.

2. She took her aunt for a drive.

/ʃi 'tʊk ər'*a*: nt fər ə 'draIv/.

3. He wants to come and see us at home.

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[8]For more details about the schools, see Appendix: 4.

/hi ˈwɒnts tə ˈkʌm ən ˈsiː əs ət həʊm/.

4.   Did he win?

/dɪd iː win/.

5.   Read his book and write some notes.

 /ˈriː d ɪzˈbʊk ən raɪt səm ˈnəʊts/.

6.   I shall take as much as I want.

/aɪʃlˈteɪkəzˈmʌtʃəzaɪˈwɒnt/.

7.   In a short time, the house was ful of children.

/ɪnəˈʃɔː t ˈtaɪmðəˈhaʊs wəz fʊl əvˈtʃɪldrən/.

8.   They waited and waited for the train, but it was late.

/ðeɪˈweɪtɪdənweɪtɪdfəðə ˈtreɪnbətɪt wəzˈleɪt/.

9.   The girls are beautiful.

/ðə ˈgɜː lzə ˈbjuː tɪfl/.

10.   The place has changed.

/ðə pleɪs əz tʃeɪndʒd/.

11.   The men have gone.

/ðəˈmen əv ˈgɒn/.

12.   He is from Iraq.

/hiː zfrəmɪˈr*a*ː k/.

13.   When does the train leave?

/wendəzðətreɪn liː v/.

14.   Train your child to take care of the traffic.

/ˈtreɪnjəˈtʃaɪldtə ˈteɪkˈkeəəvðəˈtræfɪk/.

15.   It's sad that the weather is bad.

/ɪts sædðətðəweðə zbæd/.

The second part; on the other hand, is related to the study of (ISSTs) production of weak forms on the utterance level. So, a short text was chosen.The text consisted of (18) lines which included 94 occurrences of weak forms. These grammatical words were isolated from the text, listened carefully and analysed. The text selected was taken from Jone's <u>Phonetics Readings in English</u> (1962: 61).See (Appendix: 1).

7.3 The Procedure:

A number of sentences (15 sentences) were given to (ISSTs). Also, a short text selected was presented to them. The teachers were asked to read aloud both the sentences and the text presented to them. Their speech has been recorded by using a mobile phone, transcribed, and then analysed.

7.4 Data Analysis:

Throughout the analysis of data, it is found that (ISSTs) of English encounter many problems in mastering the proper use of weak forms. Most of them have great difficulty in using weak forms correctly. In most cases, they tried to present a strong form in their speech whereas the weak form

should be used. Most of them ignored entirely the changes which sound undergo in connected speech under the influence of stress and rhythm. This may be due to lack of exposure to the foreign language and also may be related to interference from their native language viz. Arabic[9].

On the sentence level, it is observed that young, middle-aged and old teachers resort in most cases to pronounce function words strongly, i.e., they make these words stressed. It can be said that for those teachers, pronunciation can be an overlooked area of language teaching partly because they may feel more uncertain about it than about grammar or lexis. And they do not have enough pronunciation rules to help their students appropriately.

It is observed that (ISSTs) ignore the rules of using weak forms; for example, the word "and" has different forms, i.e. /ənd/, which is used before a vowel and /ən/ which is used before a consonant. (ISSTs) of English do not apply such a rule, so they produced /ənd/ before a consonant and this is something not formal or common. Some of them used the strong form /ænd/ as in sentence No.3. **He wants to come and see us at home** where only 53%of them produced it correctly.

Also, in sentence No. 5 **Read his book and write some notes,** only 13.3% of the teachers produced it correctly. The teachers also substituted the vowel of the weak form with another vowel, for example, they said /æn/ instead of /ən/"and"/sʌm/ instead of /səm/"some" which is not acceptable.

The teachers also did not recognize the rule of using "to", since this preposition has two different weak forms, i.e. /tə/ before a consonant and /tʊ/ before a vowel. Most of them used the form /tʊ/ before a consonant. So, in sentence No.3. **He wants to come and see us at home,** only 8.88% of the teachers were able to produce this form correctly, i.e. /tə/ which is the form that should be used before a consonant (For more details, see Roach, 2009: 93).

Also, in sentence No.14 **Train your child to take care of the traffic,** only 6.66% of the teachers used the correct form of "to", i.e./tə/.As for the grammatical word "of", it is found that all teachers produced incorrect forms, i.e. they produced the strong form /ɒv/or they sometimes produced /ɒf/ which is neither a strong form nor a weak form. They avoided using the correct weak form of"of"i.e./əv/ for example, in sentence No.7.**In a short time, the house was full of children** and in sentence No. 14 **Train your child to take care of the traffic,** none of them were able to use the weak form /əv/.

Concerning the auxiliary verbs "has" and "have", it is found that (ISSTs) made incorrect use of weak forms, i.e. they said /həz/ or /hæz/ and /həv/ or /hæv/ where /əz/ and /əv/ should be used. So, they used the inappropriate form of the weak form since when has and have occured in the middle of a sentence, they should be pronounced without "h" (See Wright, 1973: 30 and Roach, 2009:94).Thus, in sentence No. 10 **The place has changed,** no one of the (ISSTs) was able to apply the correct rule of using weak forms, and in sentence No.11. **The men have gone,** only 4.44% of them used /əv/.

Similarly, the pronoun "he" was pronounced as /hi: / or /hi/ by most of the teachers in sentence No. 4. **Did he win?;**whereas, it should be pronounced as /i: /, i.e.,without"h" since it occurs

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[9] Function words in Arabic do not have two forms. The vowels of such words do not change when they occur in unstressed positions. Therefore, teachers use strong forms of function words when the weak forms should be used (Kenworthy, 1990: 124).

medially in the sentence (See Christophersen, 1973: 172 and O' Connor, 1980: 93).Only 13.3% of the teachers were able to pronounce it correctly.

As for the word "for", it is rarely pronounced in its weak form. Most of them used the strong form /fɔ: / and another incorrect form,i.e./fD/ instead of /fə/.For example, in sentence No.1.**We can wait for the bus,** only 13.3% of the teachers pronounced this word correctly,i.e./fə/ since it comes medially before a consonant[10].

Similarly, in sentence No.2.**She took her aunt for a drive,** the word "for" was correctly pronounced by only 20% of the subjects, i.e. /fə/ and in sentence No.8.**They waited and waited for the train, but it was late,** only 13-3% of the (ISSTs) pronounced it correctly.

Concerning the auxiliary verb "is", it is observed that most (ISSTs) produced it as a strong form, i.e. /Iz/ since only 31% of them pronounced" is" as /z/.

In this study, it is observed that on the sentence level, young teachers (25 - 36) years old used more weak forms in their speech than middle-aged and old teachers i.e. 46.62% of them used weak forms correctly.

As for the middle-aged teachers (37–49) years old, it is observed that only 34.82% used weak forms correctly. Finally, the percentage of old teachers' (50 years and more) correct use of weak forms was 44. 14% (See Appendix: 2).

On the other hand, and on the utterance level, it is observed that young, middle-aged and old teachers rarely use weak forms in their pronunciation. They often tend to pronounce words in their strong forms. Moreover, most of them do not apply the correct rules for using weak forms. They do not take into consideration that there are different shapes for the same grammatical word.So, they often face difficulty in determining which form they have to use and how the function word should be pronounced according to the context in which it occurs. For example, most of the (ISSTs) pronounced "the" as /ðə/ before a vowel in the phrase "the empty dish" and they said*/ðə empty dIʃ/;whereas, the definite article "the" should be pronounced as /ðI/ before a vowel,i.e./ðI empty dIʃ/ (See Roach, 2009: 90).

Similarly, most of the (ISSTs) pronounced "to" as /tʊ/ before a consonant and not as /tə/. They said for example, */tʊsli: p/ and */tʊ̨ spend/ instead of̨ /təsli: p/ and /tə spend̨/"to sleep","to ʂpend" respectively. So, they did not apply the correct rules of using weak forms.

Also, the preposition "at" and the conjunction "as" were pronounced as */æt/ and */æz/, by most of (ISSTs),whereas the correct pronunciation should be /ət/ and /əz/ since they occur in the middle of a sentence.Besides, other function words like"a", "was", "his" and "for" were pronounced as*/æ/, */wæz/, or /wDz/, */hIz/, and */fɔ: r/; respectively, whereas the correct pronunciation should be /ə/, /wəz/, /Iz/ and /fə/ as they occur medially.

It is observed that the percentages for the correct use of weak forms by (ISSTs) on the utterance level were as follows: Young teachers: 25.48%, middle-aged 17.4 % , and old teachers 22.01% (For more detail, see Appendix: 3).

Depending on the results obtained, it can be said that teachers of English need special qualifications and training in relation to weak forms. They must have adequate proficiency in all the areas of pronunciation. They also need a knowledge of phonetic rules, further practices, and

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[10] When "for" comes medially before a vowel, it should be pronounced /fər/ (See Roach, 2009: 92)

professional skills. A teacher who is incompetent will be unable to teach English communicatively.

8.   **Conclusions:**

The present study has dealt with weak forms. It tackled how these weak forms were produced by (ISSTs) of English. The weak forms constitute most of the important function words in the language and they should be correctly taught from the very beginning of any course including spoken English. These weak forms are important features of ordinary everyday speech and Iraqi students should have the opportunity of becoming accustomed to use them and they should receive feedback on their production from a teacher in order to be able to produce these forms correctly, (Wilkins, 1972: 54) says:

"Even with modern aids available, it is the teacher's language which remains the principal model for the pupil".

It can be said that a great deal of intelligibility is based on correct pronunciation and immediate recognition of weak forms. The mastery of weak forms can result in substantial progress in understanding the languages, The use of weak forms is essential for those who wish to speak English correctly. Without weak forms, the rhythm would be wrong and it would be difficult to distinguish between strong and weak stresses which is a characteristic of English. Foreigners who make insufficient use of weak forms sound stilted, that is unnatural and very formal.So, a lack of awareness of the rules of using weak forms or the inability to apply them may add to students' difficulties in understanding native speakers' speech.

Kelly (2000: 13) said that any analysis of language that disregards pronunciation is incomplete.Similarly, a lesson that focuses on particular language structures or lexis needs to include features of pronunciation in order to give students a better chance of being able to communicate successfully.

The role of the teacher is crucial. He is instrumental in creating the conditions for learning. Thus, a teacher who has difficulty in speaking English will not succeed in giving his pupils a good command of spoken language.

In this study, it is found that (ISSTs) of English face difficulty in using weak forms. Most of them tried to avoid pronouncing function words in their weak forms and they produced these words in a strong form. In general, young (25-36) years -old, middle-aged (37-49) years- old and old (50 years and more) teachers did not take into consideration the different rules of using weak forms since the analysis of the test that was presented to the teachers showed that teachers often neglect applying the rules of using weak forms and they were not able to determine which form they have to use.

It is observed that young teachers used more weak forms in their speech than middle- aged and old- teachers.On the other hand, middle- aged teachers rarely use weak forms. So, on the sentence level, the following percentages of using weak forms were observed: young (46.62%) middle-aged (34.82%) and old teachers (44.14%).

As for the percentages on the utterance level, they were as follows: young (25.84%), middle-aged (17.4%) and old (22.01%).

9.   **Recommendations and Suggestions:**

The followings are some recommendations and suggestions that may help (ISSTs) in teaching weak forms:

1.   Teachers should be appropriate models for their students, they must have an awareness of the features of connected speech. They should regard features of pronunciation as integral to language analysis and lesson planning.

2.   They must have a working knowledge of articulatory phonetics, theories of second language phonological acquisition and a number of techniques and procedures to use in the classroom.

3.   They should try to develop particular habits about using weak forms, so the students become familiar with such teaching habits and after a certain amount of repeated exposure to these weak forms, students will know when these forms will be used.

4.   They should help their students to note, remember and use these grammatical words. (ISSTs) should notice that when the words are unstressed, the weak forms are much more common than the strong forms. So, the teacher should encourage his students to decide which syllables are stressed or not.

5.   They should be able to use weak forms correctly in order to help their learners to understand what they hear, they should take into consideration the different rules of using weak forms and being able to apply them in their speech since the teacher's role is so essential in creating the conditions for learning.

6.   He should give his students a chance to hear the grammatical words naturally spoken in the context of a typical short phrase or sentence. Then, he should allow the students to repeat the phrase and give them honest feedback if there seem to be problems.

7.   He should provide his students with a model for imitation. For example, learners should be exposed to living speech (live or recorded) such as conversations, radio broadcasts, plays and the like. In addition, constant practice and more excercises are necessary to master the pronunciation.

8.   Finally, he should be interested in the teaching process and he should be professionally well-informed.

Appendix -1-

The Dog and the Pig

A dog and a pig were once together on board a vessel which was bound on a long voyage. They soon became very good friends and used to eat out of the same dish. But there was one thing that occasionally spoiled their friendship for a short time. The dog had a comfortable kennel to sleep in, while the unfortunate pig had to spend the night on the cold deck. So, the pig made a habit of getting into the kennel at dusk. If he got in before the dog, he could not be turned out; but if the dog got in first, the pig had to spend the night on deck as before.

One night when the weather was very cold and wet, the pig thought he would make for the kennel in good time, so as to ensure having a comfortable bed. He found, however, to his disgust, that the same thought had occurred to the dog, who was already lying fast asleep in the kennel. So, he set his wits to work, and formed a plan. He took the dish which they ate their meals out of, and placed it near the kennel; he then turned his back to the dog and made a noise as if he were eating. This woke the dog up. He listened for a minute or two, and then, as he felt hungry, thought he would come out and share the supper. The pig at once rushed into the kennel, and left his friend outside with the empty dish. (Taken from Jones' Phonetics Readings in English, 1962: 61).