Effect of Attitude on Foreign Language Acquisition: Arabic Pronunciation as   Case Study

Nasser Saleh AlMansour

Department of Linguistics and Translation Studies
College of Languages and Translation
King Saud University

Abstract

This study aims at investigating how attitude influences foreign language acquisition. In fact, the present study focuses on the relationship between the pronunciation proficiency of some of the American students learning Arabic at the Georgetown University, and their attitude toward Arabic speakers. The study also reveals and points out some fundamentally related elements, such as the exposure to Arabic Language and Arabic environment, to eliminate, or at least to reduce, the students' negative attitudes that may hinder the process of pronunciation acquisition. The sample of the study consisted of 6 students (4 females and 2 males) randomly chosen from Georgetown University. A five-point likert scale attitude questionnaire and an achievement test were used to collect data from the students who participated in this research. Results showed that the students who have good attitudes towards Arabic speakers, and have visited or stayed in an Arabic-speaking country, have the best pronunciation performance, while those who have neither good attitudes nor stayed a long time in an Arabic-speaking country, have the poorest performance.

Key Words: acquisition, Arabic pronunciation, attitudes, foreign language, Georgetown University students, performance, pronunciation

1. Introduction and Background

Pronunciation is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master. Lenneberg (1967) believes that this is the result of a neurologically-based phenomenon. According to Taylor (1974) there is no cognitive reason for justifying that children are better than adults in learning language. Upshur (1968) and Spolsky (1969) provide adequate data, supporting the notion that the second language pronunciation of adults can reach the level of native speakers.

Lambert and Gardner (1972) reject the notion that some people have tonally sensitive hearing. That is to say that some have a natural aptitude for second language learning or even an ear for language. They raise the question "why do people master their native language if the difference in language is due to neurological or cognitive factors?" They also argue that the language learners' beliefs about other ethno linguistic communities should be considered as a case point in language acquisition. In other words, if one accepts some culture specific propensities of a specific people, one may also accept their language which is a part of their culture. Therefore, Lambert and Gardner conclude that mastering a second language at a near native level depends on the willingness of the learner to be associated and integrated with the speakers of the target language. They state that:

> We find that an integrative and friendly outlook toward the other group whose language is being learned can differently sensitize the learner to the audio-lingual features of the language, making him more perceptive for the forms of pronunciation and accent than in the case for learners without this open and friendly disposition. If the students' attitude is highly ethnocentric and hostile, we have seen that no progress to speak of will be made in acquiring any aspect of the language. Such a student not only is perceptually insensitive to the language, but apparently is also unable to approximate the new pronunciation responses required in the other language (Lambert & Gardner, 1972: p. 134).

Guiora et al (1972: p. 112) believe that learning a second language is to leave the old world for a new one. Using their words, it is "an act of extending the self so as to take on a new identity", which is significant to second language learning. They have observed that the psychological demands of language learning are related to pronunciation skills. In addition, they argue that pronunciation is the most outstanding expression of language ego, the hardest skill to acquire in a new language, and the most difficult to lose in one's native language.

Furthermore, some linguists, like Rainer (2011) and Edwin (1990) consider pronunciation as consisting of a discrete feature which they call phonemic distinctions, while others like, Perinbanayagam (2010) and Krauss (1997) view it as a manifestation of the interaction of underlying feelings, entities, attitudes, and various psychological rules. In other words, when an individual learns a second language, his/her views and attitudes towards the culture of the target language will result in the way he/she tries to produce the sounds of that language.

Literature Review

With reference to the present research, it becomes precisely inevitable that the word 'attitude', the most relevant concept with which the study is guided, is defined in terms of language learning, in order to eliminate any ambiguities that may occur with its use. The word

can have many contextual meanings and is likely to be associated with words such as 'motivation', 'beliefs', or 'impression'. But for the sake of the present study the word needs to be focused on one single meaning which relates to the concepts of perception, culture, past experiences, assumptions, or beliefs. One of the most quoted definitions for the word is that of Sarnoff (1970: 279), who defines it as "a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects". Based on this definition, attitudes can be either positive or negative.

According to Eagley and Chaiken (1998: p. 269), "An attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour."

Sarnoff, Eagley, and Chaiken (1998) define attitude as possessing dual characteristics. They either have to be positive or negative. According to Bordens and Horowitz (2013: 158), "The concept of attitudes is central to explaining our thoughts, feelings, and actions with regard to other people, situations, and ideas." This definition appears is too general and vague. Allport (1954: 45) comes out with a more elaborate definition. He says that attitudes are "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response towards all subjects and situations with which it is related." This definition signifies that attitudes can have perceptible influences on the individual's behaviour.

Baker (1992) relates attitudes the external object to which it is denoted, a foreign language for example. He says that it has to do with thoughts and beliefs. Tension between these components can take place, stresses Baker.

According to *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1989), attitude is "a way of feeling or thinking about someone or something, especially as this influences one's behavior".

Attitudes play a major role in language teaching and learning. The relationship between the two is very intricate. "Interest in attitude research can also be explained by wide acknowledgement of the relationship between attitudes and successful learning" (Bartram, 2010: p. 33).

It is pertinent here to explicate and define the role of attitude with regard to second language acquisition, which can be termed as the 'linguistic attitude'. The *linguistic attitudes* concept is enlisted and explained in the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (1992) as follows:

Linguistic attitudes are: the attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language . (p.198)

Understanding the effect of attitudes on L2 and foreign languages is not an unexplored area in language teaching enquiries (Bartram, 2010: p. 33). There is certainly a relationship between language proficiency and attitudes towards the language. After having previously

approached the concept of attitudes from different sides, it is clear by now that attitudes are observable behaviors. Though, Gardner (1985: p. 9) believes that "attitudes are related to behaviour, though not necessarily directly".

Attitude in relation to language learning is defined in details in Chambers' (1999) quote:

> Attitude is taken to mean the set of values which a pupil brings to the FLL [1] experience. It is shaped by the pay-offs that she expects; the advantages that she sees in language learning. The values which a pupil has may be determined by different variables, such as the experience of learning the target language, of the target language community, experience of travel, the influence of parents and friends, and the attitudes which they may demonstrate and articulate. (p. 27)

Moreover, Ellis (2000) clarifies that positive attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers can be expected to enhance learning while negative attitudes almost certainly impede it. Learners' attitudes have an impact on the level of L2 proficiency achieved by individual learners. Therefore, learners with positive attitudes, who experience success, will have these attitudes reinforced. Similarly, learners' negative attitudes may be strengthened by the lack of success..

In addition, Baker (1988) suggests that attitudes are complex constraints. There may be both positive and negative feelings attached to a language situation. According to Dittmar (1976) attitudes consist of three major components: cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive component refers to an individual's belief structure, the affective component refers to the emotional reactions, and the conative component refers to the tendency to behave in a certain way towards the attitude. Finally, Fasold (1984) asserts that attitudes towards a language are often a reflection of attitudes towards members of various ethnic groups.

The present study will not solely focus on the impact of biology, age aptitude, or intelligence on pronunciation, but rather it will generally discuss the relationship between pronunciation proficiency and attitudes. Moreover, it will shed light on some elements, such as exposure to the Arabic language and Arabic environment, in order to eliminate, or at least reduce, the students' negative attitudes that may hinder the process of pronunciation acquisition.

Statement of the Problem

Because students' attitudes and their effect on foreign language acquisition should be an important part of the university curriculum, and especially because the influence of students' attitudes on foreign language acquisition, namely pronunciation performance, has not been widely studied, this has empowered the researcher to investigate whether students' attitudes have an effect on students' foreign language acquisition. The purpose is to study the relationship between the pronunciation proficiency of some of the Arabic Language Learners from Georgetown University and their attitude toward Arabic speakers.

Significance of the Study

In the current environment of research-based practices, the influence of attitudes on foreign language acquisition has not been fully tackled. The rationale of the present study is to evaluate the significance and efficacy of studying such issue and provide a road map for its successful acquisition. To the best knowledge of the researcher, this is one of the first few studies

undertaken to determine whether or not students' attitudes do affect their foreign language acquisition. Therefore, it is hoped that:

• It will help researchers involved in the educational process gain insights into students' attitudes and their effect on foreign language acquisition and seek to improve it overtime.
• It may encourage further research, which in turn, may lead to the cultivation of positive attitudes among language learners and monitor its influence on foreign language acquisition in general, and foreign language teaching and learning in particular.
• It will help teachers to better understand the issue and integrate it into their classroom routine in general and in the pronunciation class in particular.
• The findings of this study may be able to open the mind of the students towards the importance of their attitudes about foreign language speakers so as to improve their pronunciation performance.
• It is also expected that this study will familiarize foreign language students with the relationship between the pronunciation performance of students who frequently visit Arabic-speaking countries and their attitudes towards Arabic speakers.

Objective of the Study

Lasagabaster and Sierra (2003) believe that researchers should take into consideration the opinions and attitudes of students and language teaching experts on foreign language acquisition. They place more importance, nevertheless, on the attitudes of second language learners because students are potential contributors to the development of the language learning tools. Moreover, Lasagabaster and Sierra state that a strong relationship has been found between students' attitudes and their performance. Therefore, the entire corpus of the present study attempts to examine this unique linguistic phenomenon with regard to second language acquisition. In fact, for the sake of bringing this research into specific and clear focus, and to cohere its findings the researcher has specifically dealt with the issue of the relationship between the pronunciation proficiency of a few Georgetown University students, as a case study, and their attitude toward Arabic speakers.

Questions of the Study

The present study attempts to answer the following two questions:
1. What is the students' attitude towards Arabic speakers?
2. How well is the students' Arabic pronunciation (reading level and vocabulary level)?
3. To what extent do their attitudes towards Arabic speakers influence their pronunciation performance?

Variables of the Study

The variables of the present study include the following:
1. The independent variable is the students' attitudes towards Arabic speakers.
2. The dependent variable is the students' performance in pronunciation.

Limitations of the Study

Although the findings of this study may appear sound and important with reference to the field of foreign language acquisition in general and the influence of their attitudes towards

Arabic speakers, in particular, it has some limitations. In fact, the constancy of the findings of this study may be limited by the following factors:

- This study is restricted to only one group of students learning Arabic at Georgetown University.
- The findings are bound by the time limit for the period in which the study was conducted.
- Another obvious limitation of the present study is the limited sample size.
- The data of the study were collected from only one part of the United States of America; other areas were not involved in the study.

Sample, Instrument and Procedures

The population of the study consisted of a few students of Arabic language from Georgetown University. The sample of the study consisted of 6 male and female students (2 males represented in this study as V and Z and 4 females represented in this study as U, W, X, and Y) who were chosen randomly through the random sampling techniques in the statistical package SPSS. All students are Americans except for student Y who is from Europe. All of them are in their second year of studying Arabic and they were selected on the basis of their performance on their written exams. Each student's pronunciation and his/her attitude towards Arabic speakers were tested to obviously find out whether their attitude has any impact on their L2 pronunciation ability.

In order to collect data of the study, the researcher used two instruments: an attitude questionnaire and two pronunciation tests.

1. The Attitudes Questionnaire

To arrive at an objective understanding of the students' L2 learning propensities and their experiences with and responses to the target language, the researcher adopted Gardner and Lambert's (1972) attitude questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 12 items concerning the general attitude towards Arabic speakers. The items of the attitude questionnaire were set on a five-point Likert scale (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3= don't know, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree). The means were classified as follows: Strongly disagree between 1 and 1.49, Disagree between 1.5 and 2.49, Undecided between 2.5 and 3.49, Agree between 3.5 and 4.49, and strongly agree between 4.5 and 5. Moreover, some other points such as the students' desire to get involved in Arabic activities are considered in this study as a means of showing, indirectly, the students' attitudes towards Arabic speakers.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to a jury of four professors (two at Georgetown University and two at King Saud University), to elicit their views as to the accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness of it. Then the instrument was reviewed and modified according to their recommendations. Moreover, 20 students were piloted to establish the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach-Alph which was found to be 0.83.

For the sake of objectivity, and providing more freedom to the students, the researcher did not himself go to the classroom which obviously made the students give truthful responses to someone they did not know. The researcher asked one of his American friends to distribute the questionnaire to his students, offer explanations, and answer students' questions, if any, and collect the completed questionnaires in the course of one one-hour class session. Furthermore, to identify and group the students in separate units, each student's paper was numbered according to his/her row and seat numbers. This is to say, the student sitting in the first row on the first seat

(counting from right to left) was given the number 1:1 while the student in the second row on the second seat was given the number 2:2, and so on. To decode the numbers, the names of the students were entered on the response papers. This procedure was taken up in order to group the students in units that can be placed on a five-point Likert scale chosen from the study. The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire individually and independently in order to give them a space to identify their own choices without any influence from other participants. After that, the data were processed and statistically computed and analyzed using the statistical package SPSS, and then the outcomes were concluded.

2. The Pronunciation Tests

In order to measure the students' Arabic pronunciation, two types of pronunciation (a reading test and a vocabulary test) tests were administered. First of all, four weeks after the distribution of the attitude questionnaire, the researcher asked the same teacher to administer the reading test. Each student was asked to read 10 lines from their textbook, *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic 2*, by Peter Abboud et al (1983). The students' textbook reading, which was conducted in class, was tape-recorded. The students were informed that their Arabic pronunciation would be evaluated and that they would be informed about their deficiencies on an individual basis. They were also informed that proper techniques for overcoming pronunciation errors would be given to each student according to his/her needs. To perform the evaluation, two native Arabic speakers were asked to rate the selected students' readings against a five-point Likert scale: (a) perfectly understandable; (b) mostly understandable; (c) fairly understandable; (d) poorly understandable; and (e) not understandable. Secondly, the vocabulary test consisted of thirty Arabic words with initial, medial, and final sounds that do not exist in the English phonetic inventory. These thirty words were administered to the six students individually. Their vocabulary readings were tape-recorded and rated by the same two Arabic native speakers against three-point Likert scale: (a) completely correct; (b) partially correct; and (c) incorrect.

The usability of the two tests was tested through a pilot study of 20 students who were excluded from the sample. The reliability coefficient of the test was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha and found that it was 0.85.

3. Analysis of the Responses and Discussion

In order to enhance the authenticity of the research and analyze and understand the relationship between the role and influence of learners' attitudes and the acquisition of pronunciation of a second language, it is pertinent to evaluate and explain the responses of the learners and to generate a discussion as to the feasibility and efficacy of the research. This has been achieved through the following process of seeking the learners' responses through asking questions and then embarking on a discussion based on the responses.

The First Question

The first question investigates the students' attitudes towards Arabic speakers. The data were collected through an attitude questionnaire and analyzed via the statistical package SPSS. Table 1 represents the results.

Table 1
Students' Attitudes towards Arabic Speakers

Statements	Students					
	U	**V**	**W**	**X**	**Y**	**Z**
Social	5	5	5	4	5	3
Warm-hearted	5	5	5	4	5	3
Creative	5	5	5	4	5	3
Considerate of the feeling of others	5	5	3	4	5	3
Sincere	5	5	4	2	5	3
Honest	5	5	4	2	5	3
Trustworthy	5	5	4	2	5	3
Dependable	5	5	4	2	5	3
Friendly	5	5	5	5	5	3
Hospitable	5	5	3	3	3	3
Kind	5	5	5	4	3	3
Generous	5	5	5	4	3	3
Total	**60**	**60**	**54**	**42**	**54**	**36**

Table .1 shows the students' attitudes towards Arabic speakers. The researcher used a five-point Likert scale in which 5 and 4 show positive attitudes; 2 and 1 show negative attitude; and 3 is a neutral attitude in which the students claim that they do not know whether Arabic speakers have certain attributes or not. Table1, also shows that students U and V got the highest total point of 60. Student X had four negative attitudes towards Arabic speakers. She believes that Arabic speakers are not sincere, honest, trustworthy, and dependable; nevertheless, she has many positive attitudes towards Arabic speakers. Student Z claims that he does not know anything about Arabic speakers. He got all threes. Not knowing a single positive attitude about the native speakers of the target language is a kind of negative attitude. In other words, this student may not be integrated with Arabic speakers because he does not have any positive attitudes towards these people.

When each student's attitude points were summed up, student Z got the lowest results (36 points) which indicate that his attitudes towards Arabic speakers are the worst. The highest score was 60, which was obtained by students U and V. Student W has an overall positive attitude towards Arabic speakers, except for the fact that she is not sure whether Arabic speakers are considerate of the feeling of others. She obtained a score of 54. Student Y is not sure that Arabic speakers are hospitable, kind, or generous. However, the researcher has considered the three-point scale as a negative attitude.

It can be further concluded that student U always likes to speak Arabic with anyone who knows it. She speaks Arabic in school, home, and sometimes at Arabic nightclubs. She enjoys living in Arabic-speaking countries, and has visited and lived in several Arab countries. She greatly enjoys watching Arabic TV programs, attend Arabic plays, and visiting Arabic speaking people. Moreover, she always likes to get acquainted with Arabic speakers. The more she learns

about Arabic-speaking people, the more she likes them. Her parents also help and encourage her to practice her Arabic as much as possible. This is why her attitudes towards Arabic speakers are positive.

Student V has visited three Arabic-speaking countries. His attitude towards Arabic speakers and learning Arabic is highly positive, but he does not want to be always involved in the activities with Arabic speakers. He does not want to attend Arabic Club meetings or speak with Arabic families. His parents feel that he should really try to learn Arabic. They think it is worth his time and they encourage him to study it.

Student W's attitude towards Arabic speakers is generally positive regardless of her lack of experience with Arabic-speaking society. She likes reading Arabic magazines, watching Arabic TV, and going to Arabic plays. Moreover, if there was an Arabic club in her school, she would attend the meetings regularly. Her parents show considerable interest in anything that has to do with her studying Arabic, and they encourage her to pursue her studies thinking that it is worth her time.

Student X is the only member of her family to learn Arabic. Her Arabic is conducted in the environment of her class, i.e. it is spoken neither at home nor outside her home. She has visited one country where Arabic is spoken. However, X has certain negative attitudes towards Arabic speakers and towards learning Arabic as well. She does not try to integrate with Arabic speakers or get involved in the activities of Arabic speakers. She believes that the Arabic-speaking people are not sincere, honest, trustworthy, or dependable. Moreover, she disagrees that some of the best citizens can be from Arabic-speaking families. As far as the Arabic language is concerned, she prefers learning other subjects rather than Arabic. If there were an Arabic Club in her school, she would not join it. She also would not spend much of her time watching Arabic TV or reading Arabic magazines, even if she knew Arabic. She does not want to speak with Arabic families if she has the opportunity to improve and practice her Arabic. Her parents do not encourage or help her in anything related to her Arabic.

Student Y speaks a European language as a native language and she once visited an Arabic-speaking country. Her attitude towards Arabic speakers and learning Arabic is generally positive, but she does not want to be involved in the activities and real life of Arabic speaking people such as joining Arabic clubs or speaking with Arab families, in order to practice her Arabic. It seems that her lack of involvement in Arabic activities is due to the amount of effort she exerts in the participation of these activities. Moreover, she confirms that she does not enjoy hard work. In addition to that, her parents neither show considerable interest in her studying Arabic nor encourage her to practice it.

Student Z lives with his father-in-law, whose native tongue is Arabic. The former speaks with his father-in-law in Arabic while they are at home. Z's parents learned French before they learned any other language, but he leaned English as a native language. He has never travelled to any Arabic-speaking country and he does not know a single positive characteristic about Arabic speakers. He does not enjoy being involved in Arabic activities or spending his time with Arabic speakers. He believes that he may not gain any respect for Arabic speakers from his knowledge of Arabic nor does he know about any importance that Arabic will have for him after finishing

his school. His parents do not help him or encourage him in learning Arabic and they do not feel that he should continue studying it.

The researcher suggested that parents' impact on their children's negative attitudes towards the target language needs further investigation. It is not clear in this study whether the students' negative attitudes towards Arabic speakers are inherited from their parents or are only the students' personal creation.

The Second Question

The second question investigates how good the Arabic pronunciation of Georgetown University students is. The data were collected through two pronunciation testes (a reading test (table 2) and vocabulary test (table (3)) and analyzed via the Statistical Package SPSS. Tables (2) and (3) represent the results.

In the text reading test, the students were asked to read a new lesson in their textbook and tape-record their readings. Then, two native speakers of Arabic were asked to play the tape and measure each student's reading against five-point Likert scale: a) perfectly understandable; (b) mostly understandable; (c) fairly understandable; (d) poorly understandable; and (e) not understandable. Table (2) represents the results.

Table 2
Students' Text Reading Measurements

Students	Criterion				
	Perfectly Understandable	Mostly Understandable	Fairly understandable	Poorly understandable	Not understandable
U		X *			
V		X *			
W			X *		
X			X	*	
Y			*	X	
Z				X *	

X = rater 1   * = rater 2

Table 2 shows the measurement of the text readings given by the six students. These students represent different groups of language learners in the class. The selection of these students was made on the basis of their written exam performances. The first two students (U and V) are A students; the second two (W and X) are B students; and the last two students (Y and Z) are C students with regard to their writing grades.

As Table 2 indicates, students U and V were mostly understandable according to both raters; student W was fairly understandable to both raters; and student Z was poorly understandable by both raters. The only disagreement between the two raters lay with students X and Y. They are measured as either fairly understandable or poorly understandable. Moreover, it might have been expected that students representing as X would have attained a score of fairly understandable in order to be on the same level with students representing as W, because they

got B's on their written exam. But X dropped one grade – to be poorly understandable. This degradation, which is shown by the text reading measurement, can be interpreted as a strong evidence of X's negative attitudes towards Arabic speakers. Similarly, Y's relatively positive attitudes towards Arabic-speaking people lifted her from poorly understandable to fairly understandable. That is to say, Y's normal position would have been poorly understandable since she got a C grade in her written exam.

In the vocabulary reading test, the students' pronunciation of the thirty Arabic words were categorized as correct, partially correct, or incorrect. The pronunciation of a word is considered "correct" if the student pronounces it perfectly; it is "partially correct" when the student has some problems in pronouncing the sounds which are not available in the English language; and it is "incorrect" when the rater cannot recognize it at all. Table 3 represents the results.

Table 3
Vocabulary Reading Measurements

Students	Criterion							
	Correct		Partially Correct		Incorrect		Correct %	
	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 1	Rater 2
U	26	26	10	1	4	3	87	87
V	21	21	4	5	4	5	70	70
W	18	18	3	4	9	8	60	60
X	15	14	5	7	10	9	50	47
Y	13	14	4	5	13	11	43	47
Z	11	11	6	7	13	12	37	37

Table 3 shows that both raters gave the highest scores to U and V (26 and 21 respectively). They gave the lowest to Z (11). The score given to by both raters is the same (18). But the discrepancy occurs in the scores assigned to X and Y. student X received a "B" grade in her written exam, while student Y received a "C" in the same exam. Rater 1 has shown that student X's Arabic pronunciation is better that that of student Y, where they correctly pronounced 50 % and 43% of the vocabulary items, respectively. But according to rater 2, each of them corrected 47% of the words. It seems that either student X dropped from level "B" to level "C" or student Y moved from level "C" to level "B".

Furthermore, table 3 shows that student W, who got a "B" in her written exam, was measured by both raters as a "B" student in her vocabulary test. Student W's pronunciation is better than X's because the former's attitude towards Arabic speakers is highly positive, while the latter's attitude towards Arabic speakers is equipped with negative charges. Both students Y and Z obtained a "C" on their written exam. But student Y's pronunciation performance is higher that of student Z's because of the former's positive attitude towards Arabic speakers.

What is interesting in this study is that the pronunciation test has shown what the written test could not. For instance, students U and V got "A's" in their written exam, but in the

pronunciation test student U corrected 87% of the words, while student V corrected 70% of the words. Similarly, students W and X got "B's" on the they earned 60% and 50%, respectively according to rater 1, and 60% and 47% respectively according to rater 2. Moreover, students Y and Z got "C's" on the written exam, but they earned 43% and 37% respectively according to rater 1, and 47% and 37% respectively according to rater 2.

Although attitudes do have a certain impact on pronunciation performance, there may be other factors such as staying in the country of the target language, which may play an important role in affecting pronunciation performance. For example, both students U and V have positive attitudes towards Arabic speakers, but still the former's pronunciation performance is better than the latter's pronunciation performance. It seems that the difference is due to the frequent visits to the Arabic speaking countries or the length of the period of stay in these countries.

The Third Question
The third question investigates the extent to which the students' attitudes towards Arabic speakers affect their pronunciation performance. Table 4 represents the results.

Table 4
Relationship between Students' Performance, Frequent Visits to Arabic- Speaking Countries and their Attitudes towards Arabic Speakers

Students	Criterion								
	Performance			Attitude			Visit		
	Excellent	Good	poor	Excellent	Good	Poor	Several	Single	No
U	X			X			X		
V	X			X			X		
W		X			X				X
X		X				X		X	
Y			X		X			X	
Z			X			X			X

Table 4 shows that students' performance in the Arabic test was affected by either their attitudes towards Arabic-speaking people, the frequency of their visits to Arabic-speaking countries, or the length of their stay in these countries. For instance, the performance of students U and V is "excellent" ("A" students) because their attitude towards Arabic-speaking people is "excellent" and each of them have visited several Arab countries. Student U visited more than seven Arab countries on more than six trips. Student V visited more than four Arab countries in more than two trips. Students W and X's performance is "good". The overall attitude of student W towards Arabic-speaking people is "good", although this student has not visited any Arabic-speaking country. This may have lowered this student's performance to a "B" grade.

Student X's attitude towards Arabic speakers has several negatives. But her visit to an Arabic-speaking country has neutralized her negative attitudes. Although student Y's performance is "poor", her attitude towards Arabic speakers is "good". It seems that her positive attitude towards Arabic speakers has raised her level of performance. Student Y's visit to an

Arabic speaking country did not greatly influence the pronunciation of her Arabic because she stayed for only one month in that country. Student Z's performance is "poor" due to his lack of any positive attitudes towards Arabic speakers and his lack of a visit to any Arabic speaking country.

Although Gardner & Lambert (1972) concluded in their Louisiana study that parents' support and attitudes towards the students' target language played an important role in the students' motivation, it is still apparent from this study that those with negative attitudes did poorly in Arabic.

In conclusion, we can safely predict that those who have good attitudes towards Arabic speaking people and have visited or stayed an adequate period of time in an Arabic-speaking country have the best pronunciation performance, while those who have neither good attitude nor stayed a long time in an Arabic-speaking country have the poorest performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In view of the discussions and the data presented, there were some conclusions that were reached regarding the impact of attitude on foreign language acquisition. Arabic learners should be introduced to the Arabic culture before starting their Arabic classes. This culture introduction should be in a position to correct the students' negative attitudes towards L2 speakers. Even when the student cannot swallow certain aspects of the L2 culture, their attention should be drawn to the notion of appreciating different cultures to diminish any biases they may have against those cultures.

If the teacher giving the orientation of L2 culture is himself/herself charged with negative attitudes, he/she would harm the process of pronunciation acquisition rather than heal it. Making all the necessary accommodations and facilitation for the student to visit frequently or live in L2 speaking countries will reduce the students' negative repertoire.

Cross-cultural dialogue is needed to overcome cultural fatigue. That is to say, negative attitudes can be presented with "affective vaccinations". Sensitive and perceptive teachers can play a therapeutic role in helping learners to overcome their negative attitudes towards L2 speakers.

Foreign language teachers can help student learning Arabic as a foreign language in dispelling myths about the Arabic culture and its people, and replacing it with a realistic understanding of the Arabic culture as one that is different from the English culture, and one that has to be respected and valued.

Negative attitudes usually emerge from false stereotyping or from ethnocentrism. In order to resolve this, Bloom (1978) remarks that learners of a foreign language should go through three stages:

Awareness and Responding

Valuing

Understanding and Appreciation

This study represents a preliminary effort to empirically examine the effect of attitude on foreign language learning. For the sake of brevity, precision, and attainment of a tangible and empirical result, a limited number of American students learning Arabic at the Georgetown University, were selected for the study. In spite of the fact that the results achieved in this study are sound and significant, the researcher found many areas of further inquiry within the framework of this study. There were questions still unanswered about this issue which could be answered in further studies. Therefore, further research is needed for a thorough understanding of this issue and for confirming its findings. This is especially true when conducting research with more variables than those in the present study. It is also recommended that this study be replicated with a larger number of participants and over the whole semester or the whole year. In addition, it would be interesting to compare results across levels of proficiency as well as age and social status of the participants. The researcher may study other skills of language that might be affected by attitudes, in addition to studying the implications if experiments were carried out with younger or older school students. The researcher also recommends the clinical application of the attitude questionnaire, developed in this study, on students learning Arabic, to elicit their perceptions towards the Arabic language and Arabic-speaking people. Students learning Arabic as a foreign language should be given a pronunciation test in order to give a fair grade to each student, because written tests customarily taken by students are basically morphological, syntactical, and semantic, and not phonetic or phonological.

About the Author
Dr. Nasser Saleh Al-Mansour is an associate professor of applied linguistics at the Department of Linguistics and Translation Studies, College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia.

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