# Placement of English Lexical Stress by Arabic-Speaking EFL Learners: How Computer-Generated Spectrographic Representations of Correct Pronunciations Can Provide a Visual Aid to Learners

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**Abstract :** The assignment of lexical stress in English to its correct syllable is an enormous challenge to EFL learners, especially if their first language (L1) phonology is very different from English phonology. Arabic-speaking EFL learners not only stumble very frequently when it comes to placing the lexical stress in a given word, but they also seem to relegate the role of lexical stress as unimportant, mainly because in Arabic, unlike in English, lexical stress is not phonemic. This study aims at exploring the possible benefits of utilizing spectrographic representations of English words correctly pronounced, for the purpose of finding out how these spectrograms can provide a visual aid to the learners and help them rectify their stress placement errors as they see in real time spectrograms of the correct pronunciations juxtaposed on a computer screen with spectrograms of their own pronunciations for easy comparison. The study involved 120 students from the English Department at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. 60 participants were taught the English lexical stress rules and also received spectrographic guidance on pronunciation; the other 60 received only verbal instruction on the stress rules and verbal feedback on their pronunciations. Statistical results showed that when the learners had the opportunity to 'see' their pronunciation mistakes, they were three times more likely to rectify their placement of lexical stress.

**Keywords :** Arabic-speaking EFL learners, lexical stress, pronunciation, spectrographic representation, stress placement
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