

## **Difficulties of learning intonation in tonality, tonicity, and tones among Iraqi EFL students**

### **ABSTRACT**

Learning intonation is one of the most important aspects of language learning. At the same time, learning the intonation is one of the most difficult parts of language learning and teaching. Therefore, this study investigated the difficulties of learning intonation, i.e. tonality, tonicity, and tones, among Iraqi undergraduate EFL students in Thi-Qar University. The study employed an embedded research design to collect data from diary notes, interviews, and focus group discussions. The sample of the study consisted of 40 third-year undergraduate students from the English Department of Faculty of Education, Thi-Qar University. The data were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. The findings showed that there were two types of problems in learning intonation, namely, external and internal issues. The external difficulties were a) condition difficulties included lack of communication, low proficiency of the partner, lack of learning materials, lack of practice, lack of understanding of the intonation, and old learning instruments, b) Arabic language influence, including intonation differences between Arabic and English languages, as well as the influence of mother tongue, c) learning condition, including lack of training, lack of interaction, and poor training. On the other hand, internal difficulties were a) personal issues including shyness, lack of confidence, and soft voice, b) confusing use of intonation, stressed syllabus, and lack of attention in long conversations. Recommendations and suggestions for future research are presented at the end of the article.

**Keyword:** Learning intonation; Learning difficulties; Tonality; Tonicity; Tone; EFL students