



**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

**College of Post Graduate Studies**

**College of Languages**



**Investigating the Difficulties of Using English Weak**

**Forms among Sudanese University Students**

*(A case study of 4<sup>th</sup> year Sudan University of Science  
and Technology)*

التحقق من الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب الجامعات السودانية في استعمال

الأشكال الضعيفة في اللغة الإنجليزية

A Research Submitted in partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of M.A  
Degree in English language (Linguistics)

**Submitted By:**

**Abdelrhman Ahmed Hamid Hussein**

**Supervised By:**

**Dr. Sami BallaSanhori**

**(2021)**

# **Dedication**

To my family all

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all I want to Express my full thanks and praising to Allah who Enable meto complete this work and I hope that this work will please him and receive his acceptance.

I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude and Deep regards to my supervisor Dr. Sami Balla Sanhori for his Exemplary guidance and constant Encouragement throughout this work. Lastly I want to Express my Deep sense of gratitude to my friends and colleagues specially my friend Mohammed ZaInAbDElkrIm Musa for the continuous Encouragement and valuable helps.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to investigating the ability of bachelor degree students to process some aspects of connected speech by identifying the sounds of functional words through using them in the sentences. The main concern is to evaluate the students' performance in using the weak and strong forms of grammatical words correctly. The method of this study is descriptive analytical method, it was performed by designing a test for collecting data from 4th students of English Language at Sudan University of Science and Technology and the test has revealed that the bachelor degree students at University of Sudan for Science and Technology seems to have some problems of understanding the functions of strong and weak forms. The test has tried to depict the comprehension level of students regarding these forms and to elicit the speaking difficulties that they are likely to face in using English language in natural communications. The results confirmed that almost all the tested students are not only unaware of the significance of weak forms learning, but also they are unable to identify some weak and strong forms well in their pronunciation. As a practical contribution, the study leads to some recommendations concerning the teaching of weak forms , and there must be qualified teachers in all levels who will make the learners stronger in familiarizing the aspects of English language sound system, students should apply the first skill of an English language in non-native groups to accustom saying the words as well as natural speech through native speakers directly, if possible to compare the pronunciation of single and connected words in the same time to avoid misperceptions of sounds.

## ABSTRACT ARABIC VERSION

هدفت هذه الدراسة لتقصي قدرات الطلاب السودانيين في استخدام أصوات الأشكال الضعيفة في كلمات الوظائف في اللغة الانجليزية بشكل صحيح والهدف الأساسي من هذه الدراسة الاهتمام بتقييم اداء طلاب البكالوريوس بتمييزهم لكلمات الوظائف في اللغة الانجليزية مثلاً متى تكون هذه الكلمات قوية ومتى تكون ضعيفة عند استخدامهم لها في جمل بشكل صحيح وقد استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي وتم جمع البيانات لهذه الدراسة عن طريق الاختبار الطلاب البكالوريوس الجامعة السودان للعلوم التكنولوجيا قسم اللغة الانجليزية حيث وجد أن لديهم بعض المشكلات في استخدام هذه الكلمات بل غير مدركين تماماً لأهمية تعلم هذه الكلمات واستخدامها في محادثاتهم بصورة صحيحة بالإضافة لذلك هذه الاشكال نادرا ما يتم استخدامها في خطابات المعلمين بصورة صحيحة منذ بداية تعلم هذه اللغة في السن المبكر وايضا عدم وعي الطلاب بأهمية تعلم هذه الاشكال واستخدامها بشكل صحيح كاصحاب اللغة وبعد اجراء الاختبار والنتائج تم التاكيد بان الطلاب غير مدركين لأهمية تعلم نطق كلمات الوظائف مما يقودنا الى بعض الوصايا التي تخص تدريس هذه الأشكال الضعيفة منها ينبغي توفر مساعدة لغير الناطقين بها في السن المبكر قبل دخول الطلاب الى الجامعات وايضا يجب وجود معلمين مؤهلين في كل المستويات التعليمية لتقوية الطلاب في مجال اصوات اللغة الانجليزية كي يستطيعوا تكلم هذه اللغة كما يفعل اهلها.

## Table of contents

	<b>Content</b>	<b>Page on</b>
I	Dedication	I
II	Acknowledgements	II
III	Abstract	III
IV	Abstract Arabic Version	IV
<b>CHAPTER One</b>		
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>		
1-1	Overview	1
1-2	Statement of the problem:	1
1-3	The question of the study :	1
1-4	<b>Hypotheses of the Study:</b>	<b>2</b>
1-5	<b>the Significance of the Study:</b>	<b>2</b>
1-6	<b>Limits of the Study:</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>		
<b>Literature Review &amp; Previous Studies</b>		
2-1	Introduction	4
2-2	definition of Weak forms	4
2-3	The use of Weak forms	5
2-4	Manner of Phonological Modification	7
2-4-1	Vowel Reduction	7
2-4-2	Sounds Loss	7
2-5	The Reason for Weakening Functional words	8
2-6	Weak Forms and Listening Perception and It is Impact on Developing Speaking Skill	11

2-7	Factors Related to the Characteristics of Weak forms	12-13
2-8	Connected Speech	14-16
2-9	Definition of Connected Speech	17
2-10	Function of CSPs in English	17
2-11	Connected speech Features	17
2-12	Factors Related to Foreign Language Learning	17
2-12-1	General Linguistics Knowledge	18
2-13	Previous Studies	20-22
<b>CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY</b>		
3-1	3-1 Introduction	23
3-2	3-2 Methodology of the Study	23
3-3	3-3 Research Tools	23
3-4	3-4 Research Sampling	24
3-5	3-5 Procedures and Descriptions of the Study	25
3-6	3-6 The Validity and the Reliability of the Study	26
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>		
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND THE DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS</b>		
4-1	Introduction	29-36
<b>CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION OF THE RESULT</b>		
5-1	Introduction	38
5-2	Findings	38
5-3	Recommendations	39

5-4	Suggestions	39
5-5	Conclusion	40
	REFERENCEAPPENDIX	41-43



**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION**

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1-1 Overview:

Foreign language learning has been regarded as the mastery of the four skills speaking, reading, listening and writing so speaking and writing belong to the category which is called productive skill and on the other hand listening and reading belong to the category which is called receptive skill ,thus learning another language often requires tremendous effort for learners that is to say learners need to require a wide range of linguistic features in the target language in order to master the language which including many fields such as grammar ,phonetics ,phonology , semantics ,syntax and pragmatics ,and one of the most challenge areas for EFL Learners is speaking skill. .

This study focuses on the importance of understanding and learning how to use English functional words when they come in connected speech because it is the major way to speak English language as the native speaker. .

### 1-2 Statement of the Study:

In dealing with the notion of weak forms and their importance in listening and speaking, it is inevitable to refer to the aspect of spoken language namely connected speech, this characteristic represents a big proportion of the difficulties which foreign learners are overwhelmed while speaking English naturally so implies words in connected speech are pronounced in chains without any noticeable gaps between them.

The problem that the researcher has noticed comes from the researcher's personal experience as one of the E F L learners.

The researcher noticed that Sudanese university students cannot say the pronunciation of the weak forms correctly so that made them fail to draw a link between the weak sounds they have to use in their natural speech

And the weak forms that correspond to it which they already know.

It is important for learners to grasp the aspect of weak and strong forms to improve the speaking skill and listening comprehension ability and this study will be limited to the importance of using weak forms in natural speech.

### **1-3 Questions of the Study:**

The present study attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How far the lacks of familiarity of weak forms result in difficulties in understanding utterances?
2. What are the problems that face Sudanese university students in using English weak forms accurately in their speaking?

### **1-4 Hypotheses of the Study:**

1. Sudanese university student lacking the familiarity of weak forms will result in difficulties in understanding utterances
2. Sudanese university students have problems in using English weak forms.

### **1-5 Objectives of the Study:**

The researcher attempts to deal with EFL learners, so the objectives are:

1. To find out the problems that Sudanese university student's meet while speaking English naturally.
2. To address the issues of directing Sudanese university students attention to the importance of learning English weak forms for speaking and how the awareness of this will improve their listening comprehension ability

### **1-5 To find out the suitable solution for this problem the Significance of the Study:**

The present study stems from it is attempt to highlight the importance of learning how and when to use weak forms among Sudanese university students and its impact on understanding native speakers in natural communication .

The researcher takes a look at the problems that face the students in speaking English naturally.

The researcher is targeting all the parties that are involved in the process of mastering speaking skill and it will be targeting all EFL learners as well.

**1-6 Limits of the Study:**

This study is limited to investigate the problems that encounter by EFL learners in Sudan University of Science and Technology in using English weak forms ,thus this study will be conducted in specific time and only on small sue of population who have been studying English language for at least six years and study phonetics ,and phonology for at least two semesters at Sudan University of Science and Technology and this study also confined to auxiliary verbs ,prepositions , pronouns and conjunctions therefore the result of it will be generalized for larger groups.

**CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE  
REVIEWS & PREVIOUS  
STUDIES**

## Chapter two

### Literature Reviews & Previous Studies

#### 2-1 Introduction:

In this chapter, the researcher will deal with the problems of pronouncing English weak forms of functional words in connected speech. It is about theoretical.

#### 2-2 Definition of Weak Forms:

Weak forms refer to a phenomenon that commonly observed in the informal speech of native speakers. Celce -Muria, Brinton and Goodwin (1996: 230) explain that these forms involve unstressed vowels ,omitted sounds and other alternations of the full form ,such as assimilation ,contraction and blending .

Weak forms are belonged to category of words which is called functional words, do not have a dictionary meaning the way that content words have and the distinction between content and functional words underlies the concept of reduced forms.

Content words which carry information tended to receive stress ,while functional words which signify grammatical relationships tented to be unstressed and consequently reduced and functional words include articles ,auxiliary verbs ,personal pronouns ,possessive adjectives ,demonstrative adjectives ,prepositions and conjunctions .e.g. in the sentence don't talk = the sound (t) at the end of the first word is omitted out to be don talk ) (Murcia –et al (1996 ,153-154)

Mortimer in (1985) states that a good practical grasp of the weak forms of English is essential for good pronunciation and perception of listening.

Nearly all functional words have two pronunciation forms a strong and the weak ones ,the strong is stressed and it is the pronunciation form that is usually found in the dictionary entry of words Brown and Kondol (2006,33 ).

It is the first form to which foreign learners are usually introduced, while the weak form is unstressed, less prominent, and phonemically different from the

strong form in both quality and quantity. Roach (2002 :88) states that this is variance of pronunciation is a significant characteristics of the English pronunciation is modified . Some functional words have more than one weak form when the same functional word occurs in the different contexts the phonological environment exerts significant effect on the way it is weakened .e.g. the word (your ) is pronounced |ja | before a vowel sounds and |jar| if it occurs before consonant sounds . Generally the decision to use one form or other is ruled – govern it related to the position where the word occurs, and it is intended and emphasis the meaning. From productive point of view all native speakers use them regardless of the level of formality and for foreign learners who want to speak as natural as native speakers the learning of weak forms become obligatory and from perceptual point of view it is more important the knowledge which listener have about weak forms facilitates perception and comprehension of speech.

### **2-3 the Use of Weak Forms:**

There are rules that are used to identify where a functional word is to be used on it is weak form and where the strong one has to be used since in English the weak forms are the normal pronunciation form of functional words and they are more frequently used, it is a good way to focus on the exceptions where the weak form is not use in order to get a clear image of these rules. Hence the researcher will mention only the conditions under which the strong and weak form is more suitable.

The weak form is used when the functional word is used in the first or at the middle of sentence while the strong form is used when the functional word occurs in isolation. i. g . Out of context the strong form is used when word occurs in the final position of the sentence. i. g. the word from where are you from? |from| strong form cause it came at the end of sentence I'm home from work . |fram | it used it is weak form cause it came at the middle of the sentence. When the

functional words are quoted they pronounced strongly. i.g. The word –and – is a conjunction |aand | . When the word emphasized in the utterance it is stressed to show an intended meaning .i . g. Is Ahmed present? –Yes, he is present in connected speech if a functional word precedes a pause it is pronounced in its strong form. i. g. It is a .....erem it is a good idea |ei| |a| For auxiliary verbs if they occur in their negative sense they are always strong . i.g.

She has not found her keys yet |haaz when the word must is used in the sense of concluding something it is usually stressed .i.g. He does not reply to the phone calls, he must be in a meeting .|mAst| (Roach: 1998) In addition to this there are some functional words which are regularly stressed. These are particularly demonstratives like (this ,that ,those ) and interrogatives like (where ,who, which ,how) Collin and Mees (2003 ) stated that an interrogative such as these do not have a weak form and if the word is used in a relative clause it is not stressed ,but as a demonstrative it is stressed



**Table 2.1**

**Table 1 Strong and Weak Forms of Common English Functional Words from (Roach, 1998.102)**

Functional words	Strong form	Weak Form(s)	Examples	
			Strong Form	Weak Form
'A' 'An'	ei / æn	ə / ən	l:t ən æpl	ri:d ə buk
Am	æm	əm	əz əuld əz ai æm	wai əm ai hlə
And	ænd	ənd/ ən/nd	"ænd lɜ ə kændʒʌŋkʃn	kʌm ən si: /fiʃn tʃɪps
Are	ɑ:	ə/ər	ðə smlθs ɑ:	hlər ə ðə pleɪts
As	æz	əz	ðæts wɒt ɪt wəz səuld æz	əz mʌtʃ əz pɒsɪbl
At	æt	ət	wɒt ə ju lʊkɪŋ "æt	ɑjɪ si: ju ət lʌntʃ
But	bʌt	bət	ɑj sed "bʌt nɒt "æt	ɪts gʊd bət ɪkspensɪv
Can/Could	kæn/kʊd	kən/kəd	ai θɪŋk ai kæn	ðeɪ kən weɪt
Do/Does	du:/dʌz	də/du:/dʌz	sʌm pi:pl du:	wəɪ də ðeɪ lɔɪk ɪt
For	fɔ:	fə/fər	wɒts ðæt fɔ:	ti: fə tu:
From	fɹɒm	fɹəm	wear ɪt keɪm fɹɒm	ɑɪm hæʊm fɹəm wɜ:k
Had	hæd	əd	ɑj θɔ:t wi hæd	məʊst əd gɒn hæʊm
Has	hæz	əz	ɑj θɪŋk ʃi hæz	wɪtʃ əz bi:n best
Have	hæv	əv	jes wɪ hæv	wɪtʃ əv ju si:n
He	hi	i	hɪ keɪm leɪt	ai hɜ:d ðæt ɪ wəz ɪl
Her	hɜ:r	hə/ə	ɪts "hɜ: dɪsɪʒn	ɑ:sk ə tə kʌm
Him	hɪm	ɪm	tɔ:k tə "hɪm nɒt tə hə	li:v ɪm ələʊn
Must	mʌst	məs/məst	ʃi sɜ:tnli mʌst	ju məs traɪ hɑ:də
			Strong Form	Weak Form
Of	ɒf	əv/ɒv/v	sʌmwʌn aɪv hɜ:d ɒv	məʊst əv ɔ:l
Shall/Should	ʃæl/ʃʊd	ʃəl/ʃl/ʃəd	ai θɪŋk wi ʃæl	wɪ ʃl ni:d tə hʌri
She	ʃi:	ʃi	hu: ɪz "ʃi:	ʃl wəz blɪz
Some	sʌm	səm	ɑɪv gɒt sʌm	hæv səm mɔ: ti:
Than	ðæn	ðən	hau tə spel "ðæn	hi lɜ tə:lə ðən yu:
That	ðæt	ðət	lʊk ət "ðæt	seɪ ðæt ʃi wəz aʊtsald
The	ðɪ	ðə	weɪt fə ði "end	ʃʌt ðə dɔ:
Them	ðem	ðəm/əm	ʃə əv tə lʊk fə "ðem	ɪl,v ðəm hiə
There	ðeə /ðeər	ðə/ðər	pʊt ɪt ðeə	ðə ʃʊd bi ə ru:l
To	tu:	tə/tu	tə lɜ ðə wɪ:k fɔ:m v "tu:	traɪ tə stɒp
Was	wəz	wəz	jes ʃl wɒz	ʃl wəz ʌpset
We	wɪ:	wɪ	"wɪ: ə gəʊɪn	wɪ məs du ɪt
Were	wɜ:	wə/wər	ðei wɜ:nt əz kəʊld əz wɪ: wɜ:	θə peɪpəs wə leɪt
You	ju:	ju	hau ə ju;	wɒt də ju θɪŋk
Your	jɔ:	jər	ɪts "jɔ:z	wear lɜ jə kɑ:

## 2.4 Manner of Phonological Modification:

The way functional words are modified in speech depends on a number of factors. Brown, J. D., & Hilferty, A. (2006:40). The Effectiveness of Teaching Reduced Forms for Listening. The same functional word may be reduced into two or more distinct forms if it occurs in different phonological environments. Sometimes the degree of reduction is bound to the level of formality. In formal styles, reduction tends to be lighter than in less formal ones. Sometimes, the degree of reduction is linked to factors such as fatigue and laziness, but there is no doubt that it is used in all styles. Here are some common patterns of reduction that are shared by weak forms of English:

2.4.1 Vowel reduction: this feature is found in almost all weak forms. The vowel of the citation form is replaced by another vowel which is weaker. There are three common weak vowel sounds in the English weak forms: The /ə/ as in „from“ , „but“ , „and“ . /frəm/ /bət/ /ənd/. The /ɪ/ as in „bee“ , „she“ , „he“ . /bɪ/ /ʃɪ/ /hɪ/. The /ʊ/ as in „you“ , „to“ . /jʊ/ /tʊ/.

2.4.2 Sound loss: it is the diminution of the sound quantity of a word. This is done through the omission of sounds from the strong form. Technically this is called „elision“ and it has three types:

2.4.2.1 Omission of initial consonant as in „has“ „them“ ; /əz/ /əm/. The consonant /h/ is usually omitted in pronouns unless they occur at the beginning of the sentence. Hence, „him“ „his“ and „her“ will become /ɪm/, /ɪz/, /ə/ or /ər/ respectively.

2.4.2.2 Omission of final consonant as in „and“ , /n/ or /ən/.

2.4.2.3 Omission of vowel sound as in „was“ , „can“ /wɪz/ /kn/. In addition to these common features, the weak form is affected by neighboring sounds. Whether the next word starts with a consonant or a vowel makes a “ variable“ which specifies which weak form is to be used. For instance , the word „for“ has two weak form

s:/fə/ and /fər/. If the following word begins with a consonant, the /fə/ form is more suitable. If it begins with a vowel, then the /fər/ form will be used instead. For some words, reduction will result in the appearance of syllabic consonants (e.g. I can pile them). Also, like all the other words in connected speech, functional words may undergo different ways of assimilation, linking, and elision.

## **2.5 The Reasons for Weakening Functional Words:**

In connected speech, the normal pronunciation of functional words is the reduced form. Till now, the treatment of the notion of weak forms in English has been at the segmental level i.e. at the level of phonemes. It was explored the areas which determine how functional words are normally weakened and have stated the factors which specify how they are weakened such as the word class, phonological environment etc. It is not the phonological environment, however, nor the word class that count for the reason of reduction. The weakening is usually linked to supra-segmental aspects of the English phonological system. English is a stress-timed language. By this is meant that, at the sentence level, the stress pattern is time-related, having equal intervals between stressed syllables. To maintain this regularity, some syllables have to be compressed in a way that fits this 'rhythm'. Because of that, functional words are normally reduced to achieve this rhythmic regularity. For Dretzke (1998:102-3), the rhythmic pattern of English is bound to the correct use of weak forms. He stated: "...the full pronunciation of [functional words] would distort the rhythmic pattern of English and could lead to constant misunderstanding" (1998: 102-3). It means that the rhythm will be distorted as a result of choosing not to use the weak forms, and, therefore, the 'up and down' rhythmic model will become 'up' only. Hence, the use of weak forms is a logical consequence of the English rhythmic pattern. Similarly, reducing functional words is a logical result of how English sentence stress is established. Regular weakening of functional words helps the listener to perceive the prominent (stressed) words in the text and, thus, getting a correct interpretation of the intended meaning. If all the words are pronounced with stress, the prominence feature will simply 'vanish' and there would be no distinction between stressed and unstressed words; likewise, the sentence-stress pattern will be lost. Dalton and Seidlhofer suggested that weak forms and sentence-stress are -as inseparable as two sides of a coin (1994: 113).

They further advocated the integration of the two in course-books by treating them simultaneously under the same heading; otherwise, the learners will miss the point. Another reason for weakening functional words is to achieve a maximum ease of pronunciation.

Speakers tend to modify the sounds in different contexts and in different ways in order to facilitate pronunciation Brow and Kondo, (2006: 35). The speed at which speakers deliver their message affects the way different words are articulated. Generally, in the stream of speech, there is a relatively limited time within which each word is to be pronounced. Given this, in moving from one sound to another or from one word to another, it would be difficult for the speaker to pronounce every word as accurately as it is pronounced in isolation. According to Buck, -The modification to pronunciation that takes place during fast speech is quite extensive. Hardly a word is left unaffected (2001: 117). That is why words, namely functional words, are open to a considerable set of phonological modification. If we consider the amount of meaning that functional words carry, we can notice the third reason for their weakening in speech. Compared to content words, functional words convey relatively very little information. Content words are stressed namely because speakers consider that they are more important than grammatical words which, in contrary, are often left unstressed. Take for instance the sentence; I--- student--- University --- Oxford. In this „sentence“ , even if the

Functional words are omitted we can understand its meaning. Content words convey almost all the meaning and are, consequently, more important. We can even use the knowledge about the grammar of English and about the speaker as compensatory types of knowledge - using the top-down processing mode- and guess the exact missing words (though this is not always possible). Therefore, the weakening of functional words in this case is a result of the amount of meaning they carry compared to content words. That is why most of the conditions under

which the full forms are used are examples of emphasis in meaning.

## 2-6 Weak Forms and Listening Perception and Its Impact on Developing Speaking Skill:

In dealing with the notion of weak forms and their importance in listening perception, it is inevitable to refer to aspects of spoken language, namely connected speech. This characteristic represents a big proportion of the difficulties which foreign learners are overwhelmed by while listening to naturally spoken English. As its name implies, words in connected speech are pronounced in chains without any noticeable gaps between them as provided in the written language Buck, (2001:117). Words overlap between one another and they are linked in many different ways that are referred to as „aspects of connected speech“ . These include, but are not limited to, „assimilation“ , „linking“ , „elision“ , „juncture“ , and so forth. These are examples of how the pronunciation of individual words alters in spoken language. Foreign learners usually fail to break down chunks of utterances in connected speech, and find it difficult to recognize even the words that they already know. According to Lynch (2009:31), -The major problems in

listening to connected speech are lexical segmentation -recognizing where one word ends and the next one begins (2009:31). Although weak forms are usually treated as a separate criterion in English pronunciation books, many scholars who have approached them stressed that they are one aspect of connected speech just like any of the ones we have just stated (Brown and Kondo, 2006; 33) Dretzke (1998:1023); Dalton and Seidlhofer, (1994:113). In different realizations of the weak forms, there is at least one of the aspects of connected speech that is involved, and through which the reduced form is produced, or by which it is affected. Through the aspect of „elision“ , we have seen how the sounds in the citation form are eliminated to create the weak form. The word „and“ , for instance, is usually reduced by eliding the consonant /d/, the vowel /æ/, or both. Through „assimilation“ , and this is more frequent, weak forms are modified by the neighboring sounds. For example, the weak form of the word „can“ is usually listed as /kən/, but the last sound can be modified if the next word starts with a bilabial sound as in -I can by it where the /n/ becomes /m/. In addition, weak forms are „linked“ to the words next to them especially using the /r/ sound as in „for us“ /fər ʌ s/. Therefore, the weak form of any functional word can be treated from two perspectives. First, as we have just explained, it can be treated as one of any of the other words that occur in connected speech in which it is open to a wide range of modifications through assimilation, elision, linking etc. and, hence, the weak form contributes to the lexical segmentation problem that foreign language learners encounter. This is due to the fact that functional words are usually monosyllabic and, therefore, linking them to other words makes them sound as parts of words rather than words by themselves. Defining the words“ boundaries, in this case, becomes extremely difficult for foreign learners. Secondly, and more importantly, a weak form can be treated as an aspect of connected speech which by itself makes a barrier for learners in listening to spoken English. That is, weak forms have

central characteristics which make them go unnoticed in spoken language. The main problem for learners is that they cannot perceive accurately the weak forms and fail to draw a link between the sound-form they hear and the citation form that corresponds to it, and which they already know. Weak forms are just everywhere- there is no conversation or discourse, be short or long, that does not contain grammatical words. The fact that they are the commonest words in speech makes it necessary for foreign language learners to learn about their use.

Otherwise, perception will be difficult Lynch, (2009:31). Many phoneticians have called for work on weak forms by foreign learners to enhance their listening ability Brown and Kondo, (2006; 33) Brown, & K. Kondo- Brown, Perspectives on Teaching Connected Speech to Second Language Speakers. Dretzke; Mortimer, (1984; 158) Dalton and Seidlhofer, (1994:133).( Roach (1998:64) acknowledged that weak forms are important in both production and perception. However, he gave more importance to learning weak forms for perception rather than for production and supported this view by stating that learners would not find problems in producing utterances with full forms; their pronunciation would still be understood. However, according to him, any lack of familiarity concerning their use will result in difficulty in understanding utterances in which they are actually used. Hewings (2004:96) went one step further by giving priority for less advanced learners. He claimed that for this category of students it is more important to grasp the aspect of weak forms to improve the listening skill; and he suggested leaving the production part for more advanced learners by encouraging them to use this feature, along with other features of connected speech, in their actual performance. Mortimer (1985:87) devoted an entire introductory unit to weak forms and emphasized the work on this aspect for listening perception. He suggested the „practice“ of reduced forms through activities including examples and recordings where



students would be required to listen to and repeat those forms. Some see that since the use of weak forms in connected speech has to do with the supra-segmental aspects of English, such as rhythm and sentence stress, it is imperative to teach them along with these aspects inseparably Dalton and Seidlhofer, (1994:113). Brown and Kondo (2006:33) used the term „reduced forms“ to refer to all connected speech phenomena including –citation and weak forms (2006: 1) and claimed that there are many reasons because of which connected speech aspects should be taught. Among the reasons, they argued that learners need to make improvements in their overall inter-language, and this can be achieved by the ability to understand and use connected speech. They added, –...the understanding of connected speech can...help language learners understand aural language input (Brown and Kondo, (2006: 33). Rost (1990) cited in Lynch, (2009:55) considered the ability to discriminate strong and weak forms, and the phonemic change at word boundaries as an enabling skill in the process of listening to running speech.

## **2.7 Factors Related to the Characteristics of Weak Forms:**

Weak forms have three main characteristics which make them difficult to understand as the all speakers expect to hear them and recognize without obstacle and these three features are: Phonological modification, physical characteristics and neutralization.

Phonological Modification: it is one of the factors that lead to confusion as to the perception of weak forms, and words in connected speech in general, are phonologically modified. Weak forms are realized through a mere application of phonological rules that specify how they should be modified. Sounds of the full form are replaced, reduced, or simply dropped resulting in a „new shape“ . Phonologically speaking, there is no correspondence between the functional words“ dictionary pronunciation and the modified shape that occurs in running speech. For instance, if the weak form of the word „and“ (/n/) occurs in

isolation, it is impossible to identify it as a variation of „and“ . The fact that these forms are not identical makes it difficult for the foreign learner to recognize the modified shape as a model of a functional word. Learners are especially influenced by the written form of the words. As they listen to running speech, they wrongly expect to hear the full form - the one which they deduce from the way the word is written- and thus fail to perceive the weak form. Therefore the problem of perception that learners face is partly due to the sound modification exerted over functional words. According to Buck, -...it is not the sounds themselves...that cause the most perception problem but the way they vary in normal speech (2001: 117). In addition, weak forms are further modified by the words that occur around them. This means that even the weak forms will change in different environments and, therefore, resulting in a number of new variants that add more difficulty to foreign learners in segmenting speech and identifying functional words.

### **Physical Characteristics:**

From the acoustic point of view, the perception of weak forms is affected by their sound quality and quantity. Vowels and consonants are reduced, i.e. they are replaced by weaker ones or totally eliminated. Such reductions are done because, among other reasons, speakers tend to articulate with less trouble in connected speech by making sound simplifications. Field (2005:132) claimed that, -these simplifications would seem to make life easier for the speaker but harder for the listener (2005: 132). As for the sound quality, speakers spend less energy in producing weak forms and this will affect their Prominence in the utterance. For the quantity factor, given the fact that the majority of weak forms are monosyllabic, these reductions make them even shorter. Learners, as a result, will find difficulties in „hearing“ these words and identifying them from the flow of speech signal. According to Gilbert (2008:142): The fact that structure words are commonly reduced explains why learners often do not

notice these words when they listen to others speak. Reduction obscures the words, making them difficult for learners to hear (2008: 143). The schwa /ə/ is a common vowel that is found in the majority of weak forms. In English, whenever the schwa is the centre of a syllable, this syllable is considered weak. Characteristically, this vowel is relatively very short; its quality is mid and central (in the mouth cavity) and it is –generally described as lax, that is, not articulated with much energy (Roach, (1998: 76). These characteristics make it obscured, lower in volume, and, thus, difficult to hear. For instance the sentence –they are playing around is pronounced as /ðei ə pleɪɪŋ əraʊ nd/ in natural speech. The fact that the weak sound /ə/ replaces /ɑ :/ makes the word unnoticeable, as if the learner heard only –they playing around. In addition, the schwa is represented by so many letters and combinations of letters in written English. Learners who do not expect to hear such sound will not be able to notice it. Gilbert (2008:143) illustrated this point claiming that the schwa stands as a barrier for listening perception to learners who rely on the written language. Similarly, the weak forms that do not contain the schwa are reduced through the Replacement of strong vowels by other weaker ones which are also difficult to hear like /u:/ and /ʊ /, /i:/ and /ɪ/, plus syllabic consonants which are the peak of weak syllables such as in /kæn/ and /kn/. Grammatical words are weak in speech namely because they are unstressed compared to content words. Since stress in English is usually linked to prominence, it follows logically that weak forms are less or not prominent. That a syllable is stressed or unstressed is bound to the physical characteristics that can be perceived from the incoming sound signal. According to Roach (1998:76), among the characteristics of prominence, we find „loudness“ and „length“ , which implies that non prominent syllables (weak forms) are shorter than and not as loud as other words. For instance, in the next sentence only the content words are written in bold: I went to the market and bought some food and a couple of things for the poor

woman that I've met on the street. This presentation is analogous to a great extent to the way this sentence is transmitted through the acoustic medium. The functional words will be less prominent and difficult to perceive from the part of the foreign learner, but not for a native speaker. This can be compared to a situation where two persons reading the same sentence from a board but from different distances. The one who is nearer- and in this case will represent the native listener who is equipped by other linguistic and non linguistic information sources - will be able to read the sentence with ease. The other one who stands in a farther position representing the foreign listener who has many linguistic constraints- will have difficulties in reading it.

### **Neutralization:**

In some instances the weak forms of different functional words are identical. That is to say, the same weak forms may represent not only one, but a number of grammatical words. When such weak forms occur in different environments, listeners have to decide which functional word corresponds to the weak forms they heard. Generally, such decision cannot be made by relying solely on the sound. Listeners are obliged to use their knowledge about the context to eliminate no suitable choices. That is to say, there is a need for the top-down processing model to be activated. For instance, the pronoun „her“ , and the article „a“ are commonly reduced as /ə/. In the sentence /Itsəka :/ it is extremely difficult for the listener to guess the exact word if the sentence is used out of context. For foreign learners, this might cause a problem for them. According to Dalton and Seidlhofer, Non native speakers are often insecure in their judgments about the plausibility (reasonability) and relevance of the forms they are hearing. There is also a second kind of contextual information which feeds into the understanding of speech...nonnative speakers make up for their lack of competence ...by being more analytical. They rely-often exclusively- on the acoustic information alone (1994: 133-4). Dretzke (1998:27) has emphasized the

importance of knowing about these similarities and suggested a list of regularly occurring neutralized functional words in speech. Sometimes, the listener may infer the right word even if it is used out of context. By applying the knowledge about the linguistic system, it is possible to realize that in the sentence /teIkəwiθju:/, the schwa /ə/ refers to „her“ , but not to „a“ . The linguistic knowledge is, therefore, an enabling factor; but for most foreign learners, it is the major source of problem.

### **2-8 Connected Speech:**

Connected Speech Processes (CSPs) are the differences from citation pronunciations that occur when words occur in normal spoken discourse. Words spoken in context (in connected speech) often sound quite different from those same words when they are spoken in isolation (in their citation forms, or dictionary pronunciations). The pronunciation of words in connected speech may leave vowel and consonant sounds relatively intact, as in some types of linking, or connected speech may result in modifications to pronunciation that are quite dramatic, including deletions, additions, or changes of sounds into other sounds, or combinations of all three in a given word in context. These kinds of connected speech processes (CSPs) are important in a number of areas, including speech recognition software, text-to-speech systems, and in teaching English to second language learners. Nonetheless, connected speech, in which segmental and supra segmental features interact strongly, lags far behind work in other areas of segmental and suprasegmentals in second language research and teaching. Some researchers have argued that understanding CSPs may be particularly important for the development of listening skills (Field, (2008); Jenkins, (2000); Walker, (2010), while others see CSPs' production as being particularly important for more intelligible pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, (2010); Reed & Michaud, (2005). Once a word is spoken next to other words, the way it is pronounced is subject to a wide variety of processes. The changes may derive from linguistic context (e.g., can be said as *cam be*), from speech rate (e.g., *tomorrow's temperature runs from 40 in*

the morning to 90 at midday, in which temperature may be said as tɛ mpɪ ətʃ ə, tɛ mpətʃ ə, ɔrtɛ mtʃ ə, depending on speed of speech), or from register (e.g., I don't know spoken with almost indistinct vowels and consonants but a distinctive intonation in very casual speech). When these conditioning factors occur together in normal spoken discourse, the changes to citation forms can become cumulative and dramatic. Connected speech processes based on register may lead to what Cauldwell, (2013) calls jungle listening. Just as plants may grow in isolation (in individual pots in a greenhouse), they may also grow in the company of many other plants in the wild. The same is true of words. Typically, the more casual and informal the speech register is, the more the citation forms of words may change. As a result, the pronunciation of connected speech may become a significant challenge to intelligibility, both the intelligibility of native speech for nonnative listeners, and the intelligibility of nonnative speech for native listeners. Connected speech, perhaps more than other features of English pronunciation, demonstrates the importance of intelligibility in listening comprehension. In many elements of English pronunciation, nonnative speakers need to speak in a way that is intelligible to their listeners, but connected speech.

processes make clear that nonnative listeners must also learn to understand the speech of native words that may sound quite different from what they have come to expect, and their listening ability must be flexible enough to adjust to a range of variation based not only on their interlocutors but also on the formality of the speech

## **2.9 Definitions of Connected Speech:**

Hieke, (1987) defined connected speech processes as "the changes which conventional word forms undergo due to the temporal and articulatory constraints upon spontaneous, casual speech" (p. 41). That is, they are the processes that words undergo when their border sounds are blended with neighboring sounds Lass, (1984). Citation form pronunciations occur in isolated words under heavy stress or in sentences delivered in a slow, careful style. By contrast, Connected speech forms often undergo a variety of modifications which cannot always be predicted by applying phonological rules Anderson-Hsieh, Riney, & Koehler, (1994); Lass, (1984); Temperley, (1987). It may be that all languages have some form of connected speech processes, as Pinker, (1995) claims: In speech sound waves, one word runs into the next seamlessly; there are no little silences between spoken words the way there are white spaces between written words. We simply hallucinate word boundaries when we reach the edge of a stretch of sound that matches some entry in our mental dictionary. This becomes apparent when we listen to speech in a foreign language: it is impossible to tell where one word ends and the next begins. (pp. 159-160) Although CSPs are sometimes thought to be a result of sloppy speech, they are completely normal Celce-Murcia et al., (2010); Henrichsen, (1984). Highly literate speakers tend to make less use of some CSPs Prator & Robinett, (1985); however, even in formal situations, such processes are completely acceptable, natural and a very essential part of speech. Similar modifications to pronunciation also occur within words (e.g., input pronounced as imput), but word-based modifications are not connected speech since they are characteristic pronunciations of words based on linguistic context alone (the [n] moves toward [m] in anticipation of the bilabial stop [p]).

## **2.10 Function of CSPs in English:**

The primary function of CSPs in English is to promote the regularity of English rhythm by compressing syllables between stressed elements and facilitating their articulation so that regular running speech timing can be maintained Clark & Yallop, (1995). For example, certain closed class words such as prepositions, pronouns, and conjunctions are rarely stressed, and thus appear in a weak form in unstressed contexts. Consequently, they are ‘reduced’ in a variety of processes to preserve the rhythm of the language. Reducing speech can also be attributed to the law of economy where speakers economize on effort, avoiding, for example, difficult consonant sequences by eliding sounds Field, (2003). The organs of speech, instead of taking a new position for every sound, tend to connect sounds together using the same or Intermediate articulatory gestures to save time and energy Clarey & Dixon, (1963). One problem that is noticeable in work on connected speech is the types of features that are included in the overall term. Both the names given to the connected speech processes and the phenomena included in connected speech vary widely in research and in ESL/EFL textbooks. Not only are the types and frequency of processes dependent on rhythmic constraints, speech register, and linguistic environment, the types of connected speech processes may vary among different varieties of English

## **2.11 Connected Speech Features:**

It appears that certain social and linguistic factors affect the frequency, quality, and contexts of CSPs. Lass, (1984) attributes CSPs to the immediate phonemic environment, speech rate, the formality of the speech situation and other social factors, such as social distance. Most researchers distinguish two styles of speech: casual everyday style and careful speech used for certain formal occasions, such as presentations. According to Hieke (1984), in casual spontaneous speech, speakers pay less attention to fully articulating their words, hence reducing the distinctive



features of sounds while connecting them. Similarly, when examining linking for native sounds and non-native sounds of English, Anderson-Hsieh et al. (1994) found that style shifting influenced the manner in which speakers link their words and performed more linking in spontaneous speech tasks than those involving more formal sentence reading. However, other studies have found that while there was some evidence that read speech was less reduced, unscripted and scripted speech show great phonological similarity Alameen, (2007); Shockey, (1974). The same processes apply to both styles and nearly to the same degree Native speakers do not seem to know that they are producing speech which differs from citation form. In Alameen (2007), NNSs as well as NSs of English did not have significant differences between their linking performance in text reading and spontaneous speech tasks, which indicates that a change in speech style may not entail a change in linking frequency. Furthermore, Shockey (2003) noted that many CSPs occur in fast speech as well as in slow speech, so -if you say 'eggs and bacon' slowly, you will probably still pronounce 'and' as [m], because it is conventional - that is, your output is being determined by habit rather than by speed or inertia (p. 13).

Other factors, such as social distance, play a role in determining the frequency with which such processes happen Anderson-Hsieh et al., (1994). When the speaker and the listener both belong to the same social group and share similar speech conventions, the comprehension load on the listeners will be reduced, allowing them to pay less attention to distinctive articulation.

Variation in degree is another feature that characterizes CSPs. Many researchers tend to think of connected speech processes in clear-cut definitions; however, speakers do not always produce a specific CSP in the same way. A large study of CSPs was done at the University of Cambridge, results of which appeared in a series of articles e.g. Barry, (1984); Wright, (1986). The results showed that most CSPs produce a continuum rather than a binary output. For instance, if the process

of contraction suggests that do not should be reduced to don't; we often find, phonetically, cases of both expected variations and a rainbow of intermediate stages, some of which cannot be easily detected by ear. Such findings are insightful for CSP instruction since they help researchers and teachers to decide on what CSP to give priority to depending on the purpose and speech style. They also provide a better understanding of CSPs that may facilitate the development of CSP instructional materials.

## **2.12 Factors Related to Foreign Language Learners:**

The factors related to foreign language learners which make the weak forms comprehension hard to understand are two factors in general respectively first is general linguistic knowledge the last is the knowledge about phonological system .

### **2-11-1 General Linguistic Knowledge:**

The linguistic ability of learners is an essential factor in listening. It is suggested that there are a number of linguistic information-sources that interact together in a systematic way and upon which the listener builds an interpretation of the text. Among the most important ones, Buck (2001:117-8) lists five types of knowledge: phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics and discourse analysis. Processing natural speech in real time requires from the listener to be proficient in almost all of these linguistic features, otherwise, perception might break down. For instance, the ability to perceive different words of an utterance is not sufficient in constructing the intended meaning. The understanding of the message should be supported by a parallel proficiency in other linguistic areas in addition to the knowledge about the phonological system. Foreign learners are in the first position to face perception problems caused by the insufficiency of knowledge about the target language system. As their linguistic system (inter-language) is not adequately developed, it is common that they suffer greatly from the complexity of the language features and -more problems arise due to insufficient knowledge of the linguistic system. ||

(Buck, 2001:48).

### **2-12-2 Knowledge about the Phonological System:**

Knowing about the phonological system is of primary importance in listening. Buck (2001:48) raised the problem of complexity of the phonological system claiming that it is important to learn in order to facilitate the listening task. He confirmed by stating that –any lack of such knowledge is likely to be reflected in reduced perception. Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan (2006:67) suggested that the phonological system is a basic requirement in listening comprehension because learners have to understand the supra-segmental aspects of speech in addition to the segmentation of words into sounds. Since speech is encoded in the form of sounds, decoding depends heavily on the knowledge about phonology. Consequently, insufficient knowledge about the system – and this is true of the majority of language learners – will be reflected in a partial or even total breakdown in perceiving natural spoken language. As a matter of fact, each language has its own phonology (phonological rules) i.e. the relevant sounds and the acceptable combinations of these sounds differ from one language to another. For foreign learners, this difference could be a source of confusion in understanding and producing utterances in the target language. They face new sounds and new rules that could all hinder the perception of words, in addition to the interference of their mother-tongue sound system. Even worse, the modification of sounds in connected speech is just another major obstacle. Learners should be, of course, taught the sound system of the target language and understand that it is important to know about it just like the importance of knowing about the grammar of the language. Jordan (2006:87) claims that knowing about the sound system would be treated in the same way as the semantic features of the language. She adds, Phonological systems are elaborate dances that every human speaker and listener has to master and which usually determine habitual ways of

producing and receiving speech sounds (2006: 87). The rules that determine the use of weak forms are beyond any doubt important to master if the perception of spoken English is aimed at. Learners must know about the phonological properties of weak forms and how they are used in connected speech. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994:113) claimed that weak forms are essential for the right sound of English and should not be separated from other aspects of the English sound-system. Learners need to know that weak forms are a necessary part of how the phonology of English works and understand that they occur in all types of spoken language regardless of the level of formality.

### **2.13 Previous Studies:**

The 40 essential weak-form words: Hector Ortiz Lira (2008) University of Santiago said that Weak forms are an essential feature of English pronunciation. Students, who wish to acquire a high level of oral performance, as is the case of future teachers of English, must be aware of their existence, since failure to produce them will affect English rhythm quite considerably and even lead to misunderstanding. There is a small group of about 35 to 40 very common structural words in English which are pronounced in mainly two different ways—a weak form and a strong form; some of these words have more than one weak form. In general, weak forms are much more common than strong forms; in fact, weak forms are the normal pronunciations and for this reason students should identify them and use them from the very early stages. The most complete and updated information concerning the pronunciation of weak-form words can be found in the two standard pronunciation dictionaries: Wells (2008) and Roach, Hartman & Setter (2006). Here users may find out about regular, occasional and fairly unusual forms. Aspects of connected speech in English language: Mr. Mohamed Laoubi (2009) Mentouri University said that the results obtained from the data analysis demonstrate that 3rd year students do have difficulties in listening to connected

speech regarding the perception of weak forms of grammatical words. As for their knowledge concerning the basics of using weak forms, the questionnaire results have, surprisingly, shown that almost all of them have a serious lack of competence as their scores are very low. This is despite the fact that they have been given lessons concerning reduced forms. The analysis of the definitions they have provided for weak forms reveal that they have very broad information about them. In addition, their performance in the questionnaire show that they are unaware of the reduction rules that govern the use of this category of words in naturally spoken English especially the exceptions of rules. As it was expected, except for one student, all the students are unaware of the importance of weak forms in listening. The teachers' focus on the pronunciation level only with neglecting the perceptual one might have contributed to this state. The students answers concerning the significance of learning about weak forms have been all focused on the productive level which, according to their answers, boosts their ability to articulate appropriately. The only student who has answered that knowing about weak forms is important in listening have had the highest score in the close test. Whereas, among the remaining students, only five students have had above average scores (in the test) and all the others have had below average scores. This suggests that a logical link between the students' awareness and their perceptual abilities is proved to exist. That is, the analysis of the data confirms our hypothesis which is that the students who are aware of the importance of weak forms in listening will perform better than those who are not. Some of the students have had similar high scores in the test despite that they are unaware of the importance of weak forms in listening, and that they have obtained low scores in the questionnaire. An interpretation to this may lead us to think of other variables which could have played a role in facilitating the task for these students rather than Others such as the degree of exposure and familiarity and individual training to

listen to connected speech Sally Butterfield MRC Applied Psychology University, Cambridge United kingdom :( Received 30 June 1993; revised 18 October 1994; accepted 24 October 1994) Strong and weak syllables in English can be distinguished on the basis of vowel quality, of stress, or of both factors. Critical for deciding between these factors are syllables containing unstressed unreduced vowels, such as the first syllable of automata. In this study 12 speakers produced sentences containing matched sets of words with initial vowels ranging from stressed to reduced at normal and at fast speech rates. Measurements of the duration, intensity, F<sub>0</sub>, and spectral characteristics of the word-initial vowels showed that unstressed unreduced vowels differed significantly from both stressed and reduced vowels. This result held true across speaker sex and dialect, the vowels produced by one speaker were then cross-spliced across the words within each set, and the resulting words' acceptability was rated by listeners. In general cross-spliced words were only rated significantly less acceptable than unspliced words when reduced vowels interchanged with any other vowel. Correlations between rated acceptability and acoustic characteristics of the cross-spliced words demonstrated that listeners were attending to duration, intensity and spectral characteristics together these results suggest that unstressed unreduced vowels in English pattern differently from both stressed and reduced vowels, so that no acoustic support for a binary categorical distinction exists; nevertheless listeners make such a distinction, grouping unstressed unreduced vowels by preference with stressed vowels.

CHAPTER THREE  
Methodology

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction:**

This chapter is followed by we gives a short background about the Research tools, samples, and procedures, description depending on the validity and reliability of the study tools.

#### **3.2 Method of the Study:**

The methodology of this research is analytical it was performed by designing the test for collecting data from 4th years students of English Language at University of Sudan for Science and Technology to verify the awareness of the importance of using functional words in connected speech . The research sample and tools is a test which was administered to the same category of students to collect the relevant data. Forty students were asked to answer the questions that survey the knowledge about the use of strong and weak forms of functional words in English which consisted of sentences to say that targeted a specific kind of the knowledge with one major purpose which will enable the researcher to know about students awareness in exploring rules that determine the use of weak forms in natural connected speech and explain the facilitations of learning these functional words in English as well as native speakers do in phonetics and phonology.

#### **3.3 Research Tools:**

One major tool was used in this research is a diagnostic test that was administered to the same category of students to collect the relevant data. Twenty statements to say according to the students point of views and according to what they have studied before and according to the functional words occurrence in sentences, likewise their view point in process of learning weak forms to verify the matter of how non-native speakers will learn these forms when spoken by native speakers.



The reason for doing this is to avoid making the students aware of the answers required in the test. More precisely, the researcher intended to get a clear idea through the test about whether the students are aware of the importance of using weak forms in their natural speech or not. By this way, the students' answers were reflected in a better way of their precise using of weak and strong forms in English language.

### **3.4 Research sampling:**

The research community consists of 40 students. The field study was conducted on a sample of the community according to the chosen and appropriate method of study.

The sample of the study was randomly selected from the study population. The researcher distributed (40) test to the target audience of teachers and teachers of the universities stage and the test was distributed .Forty students will be given a test according to the research tools and they will use strong and weak forms in the test to survey their knowledge about the usage of strong and weak forms of functional words in English language the test is a sets of sentences for students to say them in a recorder and these sentences are to identify the students knowledge about weak forms and also to check the students' abilities in pronouncing English weak forms in natural connected speech correctly with one major purpose which will enable the researcher to know the awareness of these students in using strong and weak forms in natural connected speech. The students were allowed to answer in English language only

### **3.5 Procedures and Descriptions of the study:**

The informants in this study are forty students from the college of languages at Sudan University of Science and Technology they have received specific instruction about the use of strong and weak forms in English module of Phonology. In addition to their previous knowledge when they were young including four years at the university

implies that they have at least an average or above average proficiency of English language phonetics and phonology purpose of testing the students' ability to use weak forms of functional words in natural spoken English. The informants were instructed to record twenty sentences spoken naturally. Each sentence consisted of one two or three functional words pronounced in its weak or strong form. To know whether they were able to identify weak and strong forms or not hence, the test's results translated students, ability and disability of dealing with weak and strong forms in connected speech sentences.

According to their ability to say the words in the test it would be directly related to the degree of successful language processing. To avoid any interference from the context on which the students relied on guessing the correct sound of the item in the sentence. In evaluation of students, performances however the functional words were the only items that were marked. The test was taken from English phonetics /and phonology by Peter Roach which focuses on teaching connected speech and weak /strong forms for upper intermediate learners of English language. The researcher has selected twenty sentences from different exercises, to avoid wasting time in searching for each sentence during the test, In addition, all the sentences sound quality without any background. First, they recognized the word sound then they said it/them down. During the test, the students were allowed to say each sentence only one.

3-6 the validity and reliability of the study tool:

The researcher used the descriptive analytical method by describing the study society and analyzing its data by following the means of collecting the initial data which were in the test with some of the respondents.

The researcher has designed a test for collecting data in doing this research, and the test is verified by Dr.HILAR PETER and Dr SAWSAN ALFDIL in addition to the supervisor, and teachers related to the study of this field. After that calculated the reliability and validity by using SPSS to achieve the objectives of the study and verify the study axes, the researcher used the following statistical methods:

**1. Graphic formats**

**2. Recurrence tables and percentages**

**3. Alpha Cronbach coefficient in measuring the reliability and stability of the questionnaire**

The researcher used the (SPSS) Statistical Package for Social Science program.

The veracity of the test has been confirmed in two ways:

**A. Believe content or virtual honesty.**

To verify the veracity of the content of the study tool and to ensure that it serves the objectives of the study, it was presented to a group of arbitrators.

And a number of specialists professors, Experts, and asked them to study the tool and give their opinions in terms of: The extent of the paragraph to the content, the number of questions, their comprehensiveness, the diversity of their content, the assessment of the level of language and output, the adequacy of the study tool in terms of the number of paragraphs, their comprehensiveness, diversity and output, or any observations they deem appropriate with regard to modification, change or deletion as the arbitrator deems necessary; The amendments were made in the light of the recommendations and opinions of the arbitral tribunal, such as: modification of the content of some questions and modification of some questions; to be more

appropriate and delete some questions, correct some spelling errors and punctuation marks, The above modifications serve as a virtual, truthful and truthful content of the tool that the tool is valid for measuring what has been developed for it.

**B) The internal consistency of the test paragraphs is true:**

- Alpha Cronbach Method:

Alpha Cronbach: A measure or indicator of consistency of the test as a second method of measuring stability. Therefore, the researcher calculated the stability coefficient for all the terms associated with the test.

The stability of the study instrument was studied by the value of the Cronbach Alpha stability coefficient for each dimension. This coefficient measures the internal consistency in the resolution sections. According to the study, until the stability of the tool, the coefficient of the Cronbach alpha must be greater than or equal to 0.60.

The validity of the internal consistency of the study instrument and each of its axes has been verified and the extent of the correlation of these constituent parts with each other and to ensure that they are not overlapping. The researcher investigated this by finding correlation coefficients using the Alpha Cronbach coefficient, and the results are as follows:

**Table (2): Correlation coefficients using alpha-cronbach coefficient**

(Cronbach's Alpha)	(N of Items)
.841	40

**Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **Data analysis and the Discussion of the results**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Data analysis and the Discussion of the results:

#### 1-1 Introduction

This chapter will be explaining the data analysis in form of tables to carry out the whole percentages and total explanations according to respondents, decision in this test of twenty statements to say loudly.

#### Analysis of the test:

##### Question one:

**Table (1): chips are what am fond of**

Valid	Frequency	Percent %
Correct	2	5.0%
Incorrect	38	95.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure show that the answer of most participants are incorrect by (95%) whereas a few of them get correct answers which its percentage is (5 %) this means that the majority of students have problem in using weak forms correctly.

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (2):.The letters from him not to him**

Valid	Frequency	Percent %
Correct	0	0.00%
Incorrect	40	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure show that all of the participants get incorrect answers with percent (100%) this means that the students cannot differentiate between weak and strong forms.

**Table (3): Come and see**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	3	7.5%
Incorrect	37	92.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure show that 37 of the participant's answers are incorrect answers which its percentage is (92.5%), while percentage of correct answers is (7.5%). this means that the students are not aware of how to use English weak form correctly.

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (4): Wait for the end**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	0	0.0%
Incorrect	40	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

Seen from the table and the figure of the sample that all participants get incorrect answers which its percentage is (100 %).



**Table (5): Better than ever**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	22	55.0%
Incorrect	18	45.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2020

The table and the figure are obviously proved that (45%) of the participants get incorrect answers, While the percentage of correct answers is (55 %).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (6): Take her home**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	2	5.0%
Incorrect	38	95.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure are obviously proved that (95%) of the participants get incorrect answers, While the percentage of correct answers is (5 %).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (7): How can we get there**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	29	72.5%
Incorrect	11	27.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure proved that students get incorrect answers which its percentage is (27.5%), whereas who get correct answers which its percentage is (72.5 %).

**Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021**

**Table (8): Thanks for asking**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	15	37.5%
Incorrect	25	62.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure show that the participants who get incorrect answers which its percentage is (62.5%), whereas who get correct answers which its percentage is (37.5 %).

Resource: prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (9): I will see you at the launch**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	20	50.0%
Incorrect	20	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

Seen from the table and the figure of the sample that the participants get incorrect answers which its percentage is (50%), while percentage of correct answers is (50%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (10): Take your time**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	2	5.0%
Incorrect	38	95.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

Seen from the table and the figure of the sample that the participants get incorrect answers which its percentage is (95%), while percentage of correct answers is (5%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (11): Fish and chips**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	1	2.5%
Incorrect	39	97.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2020

The table and the figure illustrate that the (97.5%) of the participants get incorrect answers, whereas percentage of correct answers is (2.5%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (17): When does it arrive?**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	22	55.0%
Incorrect	18	45.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2020

The table and illustrate that the (45%) of the participants get incorrect answers, whereas percentage of correct answers is (55%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (12): Shut the door**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	32	80.0%
Incorrect	8	20.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

Seen from the table and the figure of the sample that the participants who get incorrect answer which its percentage is (20.7%), while percentage of correct answers is (80 %).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (13): Take his name**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	2	5.0%
Incorrect	38	95.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure illustrate that the (95%) of the participants get incorrect answers, whereas percentage of correct answers is (5%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (14): You must try harder**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	27	67.5%
Incorrect	13	32.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure illustrate that the (32.5%) of the participants get incorrect answers, whereas percentage of correct answers is (67.5%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (15): What is that for**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	14	35.0%
Incorrect	26	65.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure are obviously proved that (65%) of the participants get incorrect answers, While a percentage of the correct answers is (35%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (16): It is good but expensive**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	30	75.0%
Incorrect	10	25.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

Seen from the table and the figure of the sample that participants who get incorrect

answer which its percentage is (25%), while percentage of correct answers is (75%).

**Table (18): We don't some but some people do**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	10	25.0%
Incorrect	30	75.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure illustrate that the (75%) of the participants get incorrect answers, whereas percentage of correct answers is (25%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (19): I think we shall**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	32	80.0%
Incorrect	8	20.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 202

The table and the figure obviously proved that (53.3%) of the participants get incorrect answers, While percentages of the correct answers is (46.7%).

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

**Table (20): I should forget it**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Correct	26	65.0%
Incorrect	14	35.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021

The table and the figure obviously proved that (35%) of the participants get incorrect answers, while percentages of the correct answers is (65%).

## **Hypotheses Verification:**

**These three hypotheses were reliable, and have fulfilled the goal in the importance of learning and understanding how to use weak forms in connected speech of English language sentences while using English language in normal speech.**

Resource: Researcher prepare of the test in 2021



# **Chapter five**

## **Discussion of the Results**

## **Chapter five**

### **Discussion of the Results**

Findings, Suggestions, Recommendations and Conclusion

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter includes findings, suggestions, recommendations, and the conclusion of the research.

#### **5.2 Findings**

By the end of this research the researcher has found the following findings.

1- The results revealed that most of the students have problems that made them use the weak forms strongly while speaking English language in their normal conversations, so they do not know how to identify and use the reduced forms of functional words in connected speech from sentences in English language

2- In some cases, the researcher found that in many sentences of the test the answers were wrong answers in their pronunciation of the sentence words.

3- The misunderstanding of weak forms in English phonetics and phonology reveals that this unfamiliarity factors which the researcher has already discussed in the theoretical part have shown the details of these patterns in addition to the students' typical answers that inability of breaking down the chunks of sentences is one of the factors that caused the misuse of weak forms while speaking.

4- In many cases, the students' answers indicated that they have been unable to differentiate between where to use the weak form and the strong ones to catch up the word's real sound to identify whether they are weak or strong forms during the test.

### **5.3 Recommendations :**

According to these research findings and suggestions the researcher has made the following recommendations for the importance of learning how to use weak and strong forms in English language's phonetics and phonology.

1-Students should do a lot of practice in order to master the speaking skill of the English language to accustom pronounce the words as well as natural speech through native speakers directly, if possible to compare the pronunciation of single and connected words in the same time to avoid mispronunciations of sounds.

2-Universities must focus on phonetics and phonology and must focus a lot on connected speech specially weak forms and there must be qualified teachers in all levels who will make the learners stronger in familiarizing the aspects of English language words, sound system.

3-Connected speech and specially weak and strong forms must be taught at early stage in details in order to help students to extend their knowledge about E English phonology.

### **5.4 Suggestions :**

According to the research findings the researcher has come up with the following suggestions for further studies in this field to facilitate the ways for nonnative speakers of English language in process of learning and teaching weak and strong forms of functional words of English language.

1-language teaching materials must include exercises on CSPs with clear priorities about which CSPs are most important for mastering the foreign language.

2-It is better for the educational intuitions to replace the teaching language of the old English with the language in use for today.

3- University should be responsible of implementing best programs of teaching in non-native English countries to encourage students of the non-native speakers in learning how to use weak and strong forms in the early age of learning English language.

## **5.5 Conclusion :**

This research dealt with the pronunciation abilities of functional words concerning of how to pronounce weak and strong forms of grammatical words in natural connected speech, on the light of their awareness, and the significance of knowing the use of these words in speaking process. In addition, the researcher has questioned the sufficiency of knowing about the rules, only, to enable the students to use the reduced forms in natural speech as the native speakers.

The results showed that the students have difficulties in some cases in recognizing when to use the reduced forms and in some cases they have a lack of awareness of the significance of weak and strong forms in speaking. The results also revealed that being aware is very significant as a teacher in helping the students to deal with weak and strong forms well in natural spoken English. In addition to other factors such as training, familiarity and exposure etc. It is a fact that foreign learners are taught how to be proficient writers, speaker, and may be good readers too but they do not teach how to speak English as native speaker. This study has focused only on how to use weak forms of English correctly which focused on the students ability to imitate the native sounds of weak forms of functional words in sentences through natural spoken English by native speakers and how to identify them. More precisely, this piece of research has been devoted to gain a thorough understanding an actual effects of students, awareness in the importance of learning weak and strong forms and the effects of their ability to say such words as in their right place

## REFERENCE

- Alameen, G. (2007). The use of linking by native and non-native speakers of American English
- Anderson-Hsieh, J., Riney, T., & Koehler, K. (1994). Connected speech modifications in the English of Japanese ESL learners.
- Lass, R. (1984). Phonology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buck, G. (2001). Assessing Listening. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, J. D., & Kondo-Brown, K. (2006). Introducing connected speech. In J. D. Brown, & K.
- Collins, B., & Mees, I. M. (2003). Practical Phonetics and Phonology: a resource book for students. London: Routledge.
- Dalton, C., & Seidlhofer, B. (1994). Language Teaching: Pronunciation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dretzke, B. (1998). Modern British and American English Pronunciation. Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh
- Field, J. (2008). Bricks or mortar: Which parts of the input does a second language listener rely on? TESOL Quarterly.
- Hewings, M. (2004). Pronunciation Practice Activities. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, T. (2006). Academic Listening: Marrying Top and Bottom. In E. U. Juan, & A. M. Flor (Eds.), Current Trends in the Development and Teaching of the Four Language.
- Lira, o.p. (2008) Weak forms are an essential feature of English pronunciation. University of Santiago .

- Laoubi ,M. (2009) Aspects of connected speech in English language. Mentouri University.
- MRC ,S ,B.(1993) degree of exposure and familiarity and individual training to listen to connected . Psychology University, Cambridge United kingdom .
- Mortimer, C. (1985). Elements of Pronunciations: Intensive Practice for Intermediate and more Advanced Students. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. -
- Roach, P. (2002). A Little Encyclopedia of Phonetics.Oxford University Press.
- . (1998). English Phonetics and Phonology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . (2000). English Phonetics and Phonology.Cambridge University Press. Lira ,o,p.
- (2008) forms are an essential feature of English pronunciation.University of Santiago

## Appendix

Sudan University of Science and Technology College of Languages- Department  
of English MA Diagnostic test for students in phonology

Read the following sentences loudly:

1. Chips are what am fond of
2. The letters from him not to him
3. Come and see
4. Wait for the end
5. Better than ever
6. Take her home
7. How can we get there
8. Thanks for asking
9. I will see you at the launch
10. Take your time
11. Fish and chips
12. Shut the door
13. Take his name
14. You must try harder
15. What is that for
16. It is good but expensive
17. When does it arrive ?
18. We don't have some but some people do
19. I think we shall
20. I should forget it