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## Difficulties Faced By English Language Students In Phonology Courses

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**Abstract.** *Phonology is an important part of sound or sound in language pronunciation, including in English, because inaccurate pronunciation will result in a misunderstanding in communication. The difficulty faced by students lies in the pronunciation of sounds. As for the research method, the researcher used a type/research approach in the form of Library Research. Literature study is used to collect information and data with the help of various materials in the library such as documents, books, magazines, and historical stories.*

**Keywords:** *Phonology, Language, English*

**Abstrak.** Fonologi merupakan bagian penting dari bunyi atau bunyi dalam pelafalan bahasa, termasuk dalam bahasa Inggris, karena pelafalan yang tidak tepat akan mengakibatkan kesalahpahaman dalam komunikasi. Kesulitan yang dihadapi siswa terletak pada pengucapan bunyi. Adapun metode penelitiannya, peneliti menggunakan pendekatan tipe/penelitian berupa Library Research. Studi literatur digunakan untuk mengumpulkan informasi dan data dengan bantuan berbagai bahan di perpustakaan seperti dokumen, buku, majalah, dan cerita sejarah.

**Kata Kunci:** Fonologi, Bahasa, Bahasa Inggris

## **INTRODUCTION**

The use of foreign languages by language learners certainly will not be without mistakes. However, these mistakes are a part of the learning process. In other words, an error will definitely be experienced by someone who is learning a language because making mistakes is a process of learning, including when learning a foreign language. This also applies to English learners in Indonesia. One of the mistakes that English learners often make is a mistake in pronunciation.

Pronunciation is a process, way, or act of uttering. Smakman, added that pronunciation is an act of using the muscles in the speech system in such a way that speech sounds come out to be heard and interpreted by others. Furthermore, Odden stated that the pronunciation of a language is included in the field of phonology. Based on this definition, it can be interpreted that pronunciation is a process carried out by someone in pronouncing a language sound by involving the speech system they have and is one of the studies in phonology that can be studied.

There are many ways to improve students' English pronunciation skills, one of which is to take part in English courses, especially in the field of speaking. Because the number of varieties of vowel sounds between Indonesian and English is different, mistakes in pronouncing vowel sounds in English cannot be avoided by students. Based on this background, the researcher will examine what kinds of mistakes are made by 'Speaking Class' students at the Language Center of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati in the pronunciation of vowel sounds in English speech. This study aims to describe the forms of pronunciation errors in English vowels made by 'Talking Class' students at the Language Center of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati.

English is one of the languages used by many countries to communicate. Considered an international language, students in Indonesia are also expected to be able to master English in order to survive in the midst of globalization where many sources of information come from abroad and interaction between countries is inevitable. However, as a foreign language that is not used as a Second Language, English is still difficult for Indonesians to pronounce perfectly. One of the causes of these difficulties is the sound of letters in English which are different from the sounds of letters in Indonesian.

The sound of language is the smallest element of language. The term sound of language or font is a translation of the English phone "sound". The sound of language involves air vibrations. The sound occurs when two or more objects slide or collide. As air vibrations, language sounds are sounds emitted by the mouth, then sound waves so that they can be received by the ear. Language sounds or speech sounds are produced by human speech organs such as the vocal cords, tongue and lips. Language sounds or speech sounds are sounds produced by the human speech organ or sounds that are interpreted, then form sound waves, so that they can be received by the human ear.

The sound of a language can be known whether it is good or not from the way a person pronounces a word. Pronunciation is the most prominent element when someone speaks in English. This pronunciation is like a window of a person's ability to speak English compared to other English skills, such as grammar, writing or listening skills. Correct pronunciation can be used as a measure to say someone can speak English or not. As Tomasz P Szynalski said "pronunciation is the biggest thing that people notice when you are speaking English." Research on phonological studies that discusses the difficulties faced by English language education students in phonology courses.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

As for the research method In this study the researcher used a type/research approach in the form of Library Research. Literature study is a study that is used to collect information and data with the help of various materials in the library such as documents, books, magazines, historical stories, etc. The literature study can also study various reference books and the results of similar previous studies which are useful for obtaining a theoretical basis for the problem to be studied. Literature study also means data collection techniques by conducting a review of books, literature, notes, and various reports related to the problem to be solved right. Meanwhile, according to other experts, literature studies are theoretical studies, references and other scientific literature related to culture, values and norms that develop in the social situation under study.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Phonology**

Phonology is one of the courses taught to students of the English Language Education study program. Phonology is the science of language that studies sound systems or sound rules and how to produce them. Phonology is an important part of sound or sound in language pronunciation, including in English, because inaccurate pronunciation will result in misunderstanding in communication. Pronouncing the words correctly is very important for English teachers because teachers are models for their students. Proper English language skills must be prepared by prospective English teacher students since they were in college. Therefore, efforts are needed so that students of the English Language Education study program as prospective English teachers have adequate mastery of phonology.

As for the definition of sound according to Ibn Sina, that actually sound is the waves of air and the holding of air due to force and blows from any cause. In the Indonesian language encyclopedia, it is stated that sound is an impression on the nerve center as a result of vibration of the eardrum which reacts to changes in air pressure. This definition implies that the main element in sound is vibration. What vibration? Air vibration. Why is the air vibrating? Because there is something vibrating or because of friction or collisions between the air molecules. This vibration causes a change in air pressure received by the ear. As for KBBI, sound is defined as something that is heard or can be heard (sound is usually distinguished from sound) sound is produced by objects or animals etc., sound produced by humans. In the linguistic dictionary sound is defined as the result of vibrations of the eardrum which react due to changes in air pressure.<sup>1</sup>

Sound is one of the waves in physics, namely longitudinal waves that can be felt by the sense of hearing (ears). Sound can also be defined as something produced by a vibrating object. Every vibration that occurs will vibrate the molecules or air particles around it, this is what causes the sound. The object that produces sound is called the sound source. Sound is a longitudinal wave, meaning that sound requires a medium for its propagation, the medium can be solid, liquid or gas, sound cannot propagate in a vacuum. Sound has a speed that is not too strong, therefore it takes time to move from one place to another. An example is when there is lightning, then what we first realize is the light from the lightning,

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<sup>1</sup>Lina Marlina, *Introduction to Ashwat Science*(Bandung: Dawn Media, 2019), h. 2-3,

Phonetics is a branch of phonological study that studies the sounds of language without paying attention to whether these sounds have a function as a differentiator of meaning or not.<sup>2</sup>Phonetics is a field of study of science (science) that examines how humans produce language sounds in speech, examines the language sound waves that are issued, and how the human hearing aid receives language sounds to be analyzed by the human brain.

Based on whether there are obstacles to air currents in sound, speech sounds can be divided into two groups: vowels and consonants. Vocal sounds are speech sounds whose air flow is not hindered, the quality of which is determined by three factors: the height and low position of the tongue, the part of the tongue that is raised, and the shape of the lips when forming the vowel. When a vowel is spoken, the tongue can be raised or lowered with the jaw. The part of the tongue that is raised or lowered is the front, middle or back. Vocal quality is also affected by the shape of the lips. For certain vowels, such as [a], the shape of the lips is normal, while for the vowel [u] the lips are protruded slightly and have a slightly rounded shape. For buryi like [i], the corners of the lips are stretched to the side so that their shape widens. With these three factors a vowel sound can be characterized by high, front and stretched lips, for example the sound [i] or high, back and rounded lips, for example the sound [u]. Consonant sounds are made in different ways.<sup>3</sup>In the pronunciation of consonants, there are three factors involved: the condition of the vocal cords, the touching or approach of the various vocal organs, and the way the vocal organs touch or are close together. For most languages, the vocal cords are always together during vowel pronunciation. However, in consonant pronunciation, the vocal cords may be tight but may also be stretched, as previously stated. In other words, a consonant can be categorized as a voiced or a voiceless consonant. For example, [P] and [t] are voiceless consonants, while [b] and [d] are voiced.

Not everything that is heard can be said to be sound, therefore in order to be categorized as sound it must have conditions including:

- a. Categorized as a wave, which is in the form of vibrations that propagate.
- b. Requires a medium in its propagation (cannot propagate in a vacuum).
- c. Its propagation speed is affected by the propagation medium. The denser / denser the medium, the faster the sound propagation.

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<sup>2</sup>Ni Luh Putu Kalpikayanti, *Journal of Linguistics, Improvement of Pronunciation of Sounds in English Conversation of Xi Budi Utama High School Students Through the Audiolingual Method*, ISSN: 0854-9613 Vol. 24. No. 46, 2017, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Akhyaruddin, Eddy Pahar Harahap, et al, *Phonology Teaching Materials* (Jambi: Indonesian Gemulun Community, 2020), p. 39.

d. May experience resonance and reflection.<sup>4</sup>

The speech organs that move to form the sound of a language are called articulators: lower lip, lower teeth and tongue. The areas touched or approached by the articulator are called articulation areas: upper lip, upper teeth, upper gums, hard palate, soft palate, and pharynx. When two lips are closed, the articulation area is the upper lip, while the lower lip acts as an articulator.

As for the form of the phoneme, it has various sound realizations. The more a phoneme is used, the more variation it tends to have. In other words, more or less the number of allophones of a phoneme is influenced by the frequency of use of that phoneme.<sup>5</sup>

The language students learn is English which has a sound system that is very different from the language they have mastered, namely Indonesian and/or regional languages, so the first difficulty they find is pronouncing the sound system of the language they are studying, namely English. It is known that students who study English still make mistakes in pronouncing certain phonemes. However, this is a natural process during their phonological development until eventually they are able to speak fluently according to the correct pronunciation system.

## **2. Learning Speaking Skills (Teaching Speaking Skill)**

Learning is all efforts made by educators so that the learning process occurs in students. Learning must make students learn, then goals must be set before the process is carried out. Its implementation is controlled, both in content, time, process, and results.<sup>6</sup>

Most people who learn foreign languages, especially English, want to develop their speaking skills. Speaking a second language (B2) is a difficult task if we don't try to understand things related to that language. Speaking is done because it has several goals and each goal requires its own skills.

A person can be said to be able to speak if he can pronounce the sounds of a language that can be understood by the listener (other person), masters the rules of the language, and is able to use vocabulary appropriately according to the thoughts and situation (context) in which he speaks. when, to whom, and about what. Speaking skills can also be understood as the ability to express articulated sounds or words to express thoughts in the form of ideas, opinions, desires or feelings to the interlocutor. In a broader sense, speaking is a system of signs that can

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<sup>4</sup>Lina Marlina, Introduction to Ashwat Science, Op. Cit, h. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Yuliana Setyaningsih, Kunjana Rahardi, Indonesian Phonology (Yogyakarta: Sanata Dharma University, 2014), p. 54.

<sup>6</sup>Eveline Siregar, Retno Widyaningrum, Learning and Learning Module 01, h. 43.

be heard and seen that utilizes a number of muscles and muscle tissues of the human body to convey thoughts in order to meet their needs.

In general, speaking skills aim to enable students to communicate verbally properly and naturally in the language they are learning. But of course to reach the communication stage, students must go through adequate activity stages.

Learning to speak a foreign language/English requires knowledge that does not only concern grammar and meaning (semantics) but also knowledge of how native speakers use the language according to the context. Speaking a foreign language is difficult for adults because communicating orally requires the ability to use language according to the social context. Differences in interaction include verbal/oral communication and paralinguistic elements such as pitch, stress, and intonation. In addition, other non-linguistic elements such as gestures and facial expressions always follow someone's speech.

Abdulmajid, has distinguished between saying and speaking. Pronouncing is related to elements of speech organs that do not require much thought. Activities that include saying include:<sup>7</sup>

- a. Repeating sentences spoken by the teacher
- b. Read aloud
- c. Memorize texts both written and heard directly.

The difference in the number of sounds in English and Indonesian results in an unavoidable error. It was found that the sounds that the partners said were difficult to pronounce were letters that did not exist in their first language, Indonesian. For example the sound /s/ in the word 'television' is pronounced between the sounds /s/, /ʃ/ and /z/. The next difficulty is the fossilized pronunciation as a result of repeated pronunciation errors in certain words. This results in partners experiencing difficulties when practicing correct pronunciation individually. For example the sound /s/ in the word 'she' which is often pronounced with the sound /s/, or the sound /z/ in words like 'is, was, and does' which is often pronounced with the sound /s/.<sup>8</sup>In English one letter in English can represent different sounds. An example is the letter C in the phrase Pacific Ocean. The three C's in the above phrase are pronounced differently, namely the sound /s/ in the first letter C in the word 'pacific', the sound /k/ in the second letter C in the same word, and the sound /ʃ/ in the letter C in the word 'ocean' . For words that are familiar and

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<sup>7</sup>Saepudin, An Introduction to English Learning and Teaching Methodology; English Learning Methodology: An Initial Introduction (Yogyakarta: TrustMedia, 2013), h. 138.

<sup>8</sup>Mardiyannah Nasta, Hasriani G, et al, Journal of My Country Servant, English Consonant Pronunciation Training for Bec Fbs Unm Students, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2022, p. 12.

partners often use everyday, partners can easily recognize the sound. However, for new words, partners sometimes pronounce it wrong. One example of a word that is not a foreign word but is mispronounced is 'architecture' and 'literature'.

The speaking skills contain a social element. Conversations will not occur without the speakers and listeners taking turns. A conversation requires a connection between thought processes and context. In speaking there are several processes that must be passed for anyone who will speak. The process is as follows:

- a. Someone is thinking about what to talk about
- b. Choose the rules that match the expression that will give meaning
- c. Choose the right vocabulary
- d. Looking for a language sound system to represent the vocabulary
- e. Move the speech organs so that the sounds of the desired language will come out.<sup>9</sup>

As for one form of error that occurs when someone adds a vowel sound to the pronunciation of English speech among other sounds in an utterance. Pronunciation errors in the form of adding vowel sounds made by students, as shown in the following table:<sup>10</sup>

Speech	Transcription	Pronunciation Error
asked	[ɑ:skt]	[aesed]
dramatically	[drəmatikli]	[dra:ma:tkel]
especially	[ɪspefəli]	[espefəli]
fruit	[fru:ts]	[fru:its]
holiday	[holɪdeɪ]	[holɑɪdeɪ]
immediately	[ɪmi:diətli]	[emedi.əteli]

Speaking skills must be followed by listening skills because someone who speaks sometimes also becomes a listener and vice versa. In addition to listening to what the other person is talking about, students/listeners should also pay attention to gestures that can add information about what or what is being said.

<sup>9</sup>Saepudin, An Introduction to English Learning and Teaching Methodology; English Language Learning Methodology: An Early Introduction, Op. Cit, h. 139.

<sup>10</sup>Ilham Munandar, Dian Indira, et al, Journal of Language and Literature, Errors in Pronunciation of English Vowels in Uin Sunan Gunung Djati's 'Talking Class' Students, Vol. V, No. 2, pp. 157–177 ISSN (Online): 2549-2047, ISSN (Print): 2549-1482, 2021, p. 163.



## **CONCLUSION**

Phonology is an important part of sound or sound in language pronunciation, including in English, because inaccurate pronunciation will result in misunderstanding in communication. Where the meaning of the sound itself is one of the waves in physics, namely longitudinal waves that can be felt by the sense of hearing (ears). Where the language students learn is English which has a sound system that is very different from the language they have mastered, namely Indonesian and/or regional languages, then the first difficulty they find is pronouncing the sound system of the language they are studying, namely English, it is known that students who study English still make mistakes in pronouncing certain phonemes. However, this is a natural process during their phonological development until eventually they are able to speak fluently according to the correct pronunciation system.

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