THE ERROR ANALYSIS OF VOWELS PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Learning English as a foreign language forces students to accept and deal with its new sounds, which are absent from their original tongue. Pronunciation is the main aspect in oral communication competency. Pronunciation refers to ability employ the correct stress, rhythm, and intonation of a word in a spoken language. The aim of this study is to analyze the errors of vowels pronunciation that mostly occurred made by the fifth semester of English Department students, Riau University. The focus of this study is to identify errors in the way the fifth semester English Department of Riau University students pronounce English vowels.to investigate the research, the researcher used qualitative approachment. The research participants as the subject of this research were 14 students from 5A class. For collecting the data, the researcher used students' voice recording as the primary data. Every students had been given the same words that contained vowels to record their voices. This research focuses on the errors in pronouncing vowel sounds made by fifth-semester students of the English Department at Universitas Riau. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through recordings of 15 students reading 24 words containing both long and short vowels. The results showed a total of 155 errors, with the highest occurrence in /ɔ:/ and the lowest in /u/. This indicates the need for improved pronunciation instruction with a focus on phonetic awareness and practical speaking activities.

Keywords: vowels pronunciation , pronunciation errors, phonetics, qualitative analysis

ANALISIS KESALAHAN PENGUCAPAN HURUF VOKAL MAHASISWA JURUSAN BAHASA INGGRIS

ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggris masih dianggap sebagai bahasa asing oleh kalangan masyarakat Indonesia. Dalam prakteknya, kaidah pengucapan bahasa inggris menekankan pada kemampuan untuk menggunakan tekanan, ritme, dan intonasi yang benar dari sebuah kata pengucapan bahasa Inggris. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis kesalahan pengucapan huruf vokal yang paling sering terjadi yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa semester lima Jurusan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Riau. Fokus dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi kesalahan dalam cara pengucapan huruf vokal bahasa Inggris oleh mahasiswa semester lima Program Studi Bahasa Inggris Universitas Riau. Partisipan penelitian yang menjadi subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah 15 mahasiswa dari kelas 5A. Untuk mengumpulkan data, peneliti menggunakan rekaman suara siswa sebagai data primer. Setiap siswa diberikan kata-kata yang sama yang mengandung huruf vokal untuk direkam suaranya. Penelitian ini berfokus pada kesalahan pengucapan bunyi huruf vokal yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa semester lima Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Riau. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui rekaman 15 mahasiswa yang membaca 24 kata yang mengandung huruf vokal panjang dan pendek. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan total 155 kesalahan, dengan kemunculan kesalahan tertinggi pada huruf vokal /ɔ:/ dan terendah pada huruf vokal /u/. Hal ini mengindikasikan perlunya peningkatan instruksi pengucapan bahasa Inggris dengan fokus pada kesadaran fonetik dan kegiatan praktek bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: pengucapan huruf vokal, kesalahan pengucapan, fonetik, anilisis kualitatif

INTRODUCTION

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English pronunciation, especially vowels, plays a crucial role in effective communication. Many English learners, particularly Indonesian students, face difficulties in pronouncing certain vowels that do not exist in their native language. This study aims to analyze the types of vowel pronunciation errors made by students and determine which vowel sounds are most problematic. The findings are expected to contribute to better instructional strategies in English phonetics and pronunciation   teaching.

English learners, are expected to pronounce all english phonemes correctly. According to Flege & Hillenbrand (2014), A common pronunciation problem exists when learners have difficulties in making the right sounds to duplicate. Pronunciation plays an essential role for English Department student, because they are expected to be master in main english skills, such; reading, listening, and especially speaking skill. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) emphasized that accurate pronunciation is essential for intelligibility, and a lack of it may lead to communication failures, especially in language learners.

In Indonesia, English is categorized as a foreign language. This makes the learning process more challenging, especially in terms of pronunciation, because there is minimal exposure to native-like pronunciation outside the classroom. One of the most common issues faced by students is their tendency to pronounce English words as they are spelled, influenced by Indonesian phonetic patterns.

Moreover, accurate pronunciation is not only a matter of academic achievement but also a key factor in ensuring mutual intelligibility in communication. Gilakjani (2016) stated that if the speaker has unnaceptable pronunciation, their utterances were not be comprehensible to listeners and as a result, they were not be succesfull in their communication. Missuderstanding may occur when words are innacurately pronounced or stressed. Mispronunciations can cause breakdowns in conversation and negatively affect students' confidence, especially during oral assessments, interviews, or public speaking. This is why it is important for educators to recognize which aspects of pronunciation, particularly vowels, pose the greatest difficulty for learners and how these issues can be addressed effectively.

In reality, students can speak the english words but they don't really know the vowel sound of each word. For example, the word apple (/ˈæp.əl/). oftenly, students pronounce apple without the correct sounds, such; /ˈap.əl/, or /ˈeip.əl/. by the case above, they pronounce English words in the same way as they prononounce Indonesian words. Hence, it can be seen that the students also have mistakes in discerning two words which have similar vowel sound.

There are still many students who still need helps about pronunciation phonemes correctly. The problems of pronunciation in English Department students is the error that students made when pronounce phonemes. In Indonesia, English is still considered as foreign language. It will be difficult for them to adjust the words spoken in English with the correct pronunciation, because they are not used to pronouncing them according to the correct rules, and also this phenomenon can happen because English is not a language used in everyday conversation.

LITERATURE REVIEW
A. English Pronunciation
The manner in which a word or a language is spoken is known as pronunciation. It describes how a language's sounds are created and put together. The way a particular person pronounces a word

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or language is known as pronunciation. Pronunciation can also refer to generally accepted sequences of sounds used to speak a certain word or language in a particular dialect. Pronunciation ability support learners to be more confident on how they speak. According to Fraser (1999:1), One the one hand, accuracy in pronunciation enables speakers to communicate with native speakers, which is crucial for all facets of language development. Based on the statement above, pronunciation is one of the main aspects to achieve the succed of english speaking.

Brown (2008) in (Szyszka, 2015) examines desire, aptitude, and opportunity are three factors linked to effective language learners as they relate to acquiring pronounciaton. People who can acquire a language rapidly and effectively are called effective language learners. They frequently have an easy time picking up pronunciation. In other words, speakers present an image of themselves to others through their speech, and pronunciation can be considered as a key element of face-to-face communication (Tergujeff, 2013:1).

B. Student's Error

Errors brought on by the general characteristics of rule learning are also referred to as intra language errors, while inter language errors are those brought on by the influence of the learners' mother tongue (Wicaksana & Rachman, 2018:4). The students will undoubtedly make blunders or faults during speaking exercises, particularly while pronouncing the words. Students may make blunders and errors due to the diverse linguistic systems. In order to study English as a foreign language, students' pronunciation errors need to be examined. Making the distinction between errors and mistakes ought to be crucial.

Richards (1974) explained thare are three sources of competences errors as it follows:

-1. When speaking another language while using elements from another, interference errors happen.

-2. The typical aspects of rule learning, such as incorrect generalization, partial application of the rules, and failure to understand the circumstances in which the rules apply, are reflected in intralingual errors.

-3. When a student makes assumptions about the target language based on scant knowledge, it is called a developmental error. The similarity between the two languages will make learning easier, while the disparities will make learning more challenging. Consequently, a student's native language might have positive or negative impacts on their target language.

C. Vowels

A vowel is a sound produced by voiced air moving through various mouth shapes. According twhere they are formed in the mouth, the vowels are listed in the phonemic chart in ascending order. Daniel (1962) in Puspita, (2007:29) explained that a vowel is defined as a voiced sound in which the air exits the mouth and pharynx in a continuous stream without restriction or constriction. Vowels in the top row are formed high in the mouth, those in the middle row are formed in the center, and those in the bottom row are formed low in the mouth. Similar to how the vowels on the left side of the chart are spoken, those on the right are pronounced in the rear of the mouth, and those in between are pronounced in between. As a result, the chart can act as a helpful reminder to learn about pronunciation.

English vowels are separated into two terms: length vowels and short vowels. Long vowels are /I:/,/∂:/,/a:/,/u:/,/o:/, meanwhile short vowels are /I/,/e/,/æ/,/∂/,/Λ/,/u/,/o/. Vowel classification depends

on the part of the tongue that made the sound.

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D. Phonetic Symbols

Phonenetic symbols, sometimes referred to as phonetic notation or phonetic transcription, are a system of symbols used to consistently and uniformly represent the sounds of speech. The individual sounds (phonemes) that make up words in spoken language are represented visually by these images. For linguists, language students, and speech specialists who need to research, dissect, or instruct language sounds, phonetic symbols are especially helpful. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is the most widely used system of phonetic symbols. It was developed in the late 19th century and has undergone various revisions since then. The IPA assigns a unique symbol to each distinct sound found in human speech, regardless of language. This allows for a precise and universal way of representing the sounds of all languages.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research employs a qualitative descriptive design. The participants were 15 fifth-semester students of the English Department at Universitas Riau. The main instrument was a pronunciation test, where students were asked to record 24 English words containing specific vowel sounds. These words covered long vowels (/iː/, /ɔː/, /ɜː/, /uː/) and short vowels (/ɪ/, /ɒ/, /ə/, /ʊ/). The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified 155 vowel pronunciation errors across the 15 students. The most frequent error was in pronouncing the long vowel /ɔː/, which accounted for 55.8% of the total. Short vowels such as /ə/ and /ɪ/ also showed high error rates, indicating that students struggled with distinguishing minimal pairs and vowel length distinctions.
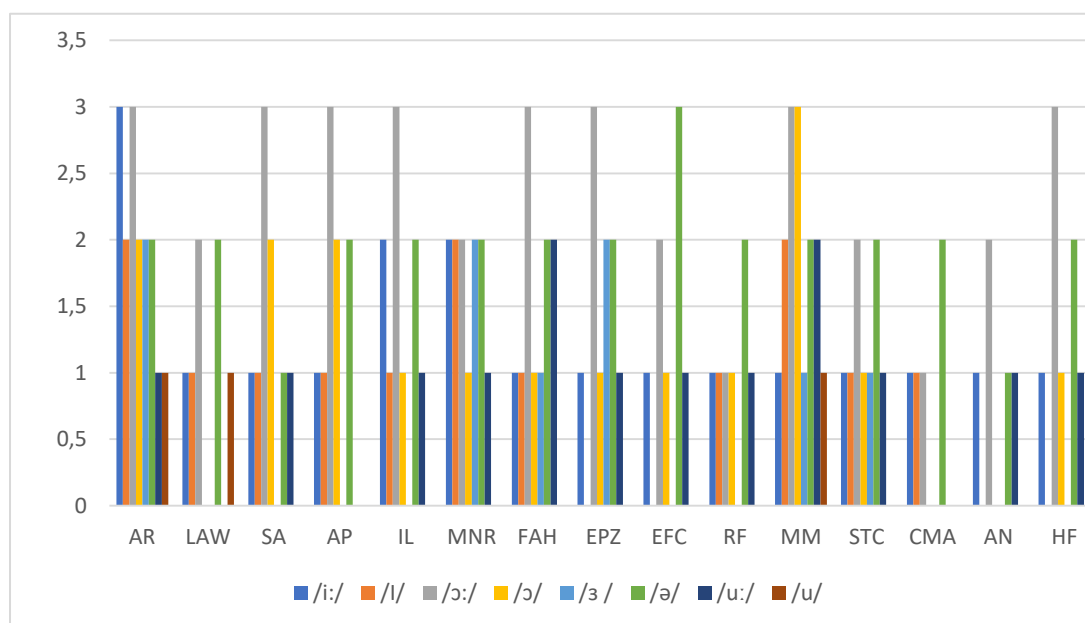
Common errors included substitution of vowel sounds with their closest Indonesian equivalents, omission of length distinction in vowels, and overgeneralization based on spelling. For example, students often pronounced 'tool' /tuːl/ as /tol/ and 'bird' /bɜːd/ as /berd/. These findings reflect a lack of awareness in phonetic distinctions and the importance of phonemic training in pronunciation instruction.

These errors are not only phonetic but also reflect a deeper cognitive pattern shaped by the learners' first language. Indonesian does not differentiate vowel length phonemically as English does, which makes it difficult for students to recognize the importance of vowel duration in distinguishing meaning. For example, the difference between 'ship' /ʃɪp/ and 'sheep' /ʃiːp/ is often overlooked, leading to confusion.

Another factor influencing mispronunciation is the lack of consistent phonetic training and listening practice. While students may have been introduced to IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols in earlier semesters, their practical application in daily speech remains limited. Gilakjani (2016) stated that "if the speaker has unacceptable pronunciation, their utterances will not be comprehensible to listeners and as a result, they will not be successful in their communication." This quote emphasizes that even small vowel errors can significantly affect intelligibility in spoken English.

Reinforcement through active listening, shadowing techniques, and peer correction can improve phonetic awareness and reduce errors. This suggests that pronunciation should not only be taught theoretically but must also be practiced regularly in an interactive environment.

The chart below shows the frequency of vowel pronunciation errors based on the analysis of 15 students' recordings: Frequency of Vowel Pronunciation Errors by Type Graphic of Students' Error

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Based on the chart above, it is clearly mentioned there are difference number of errors that created by students. The level of errors made by students in pronouncing vowels /ɔ:/ is the biggest compared to another vowels, meanwhile the least mistakes is pronouncing /u/ vowel. The significant difference can be seen if vowel /ɔ:/ and /u/ are dumped, it will be so much different. Students can't really differentiate the vowel sound, moreover based on the recording, the researcher found that students just read the words as it is written, not as it is sound.

As explained in previous chapter, tongue, jaw, and lip posture as well as air passage through the vocal tract all shape vowels pronunciation. Particularly those vowels are not prevalent in native language, little adjustments in these positions might produce rather diverse sounds, which may be difficult to recognise or recreate.(source: student voice recording analysis, 2024)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research concludes that vowel pronunciation errors remain prevalent among English department students. The significant number of errors, especially in long vowels, highlights the importance of integrating explicit phonetic instruction into the curriculum. Students should be given more exposure to phonetic transcription and authentic listening practices to improve their pronunciation skills.

Based on the result of the data analysis that researcher has interpreted, the researcher concludes as follows: 1. The fifth semester students in English Department of Riau University mispronounced the vowels /i:/, /i/, /ɔ:/, /ɔ/, /ɜ/, /u:/, and /u/. From 15 speakers, there were many types of errors based on the voice recording. The most errorr found in the vowels /ɔ:/, meanwhile the least errors /u/. 2. Students mispronounced the vowels by pronouncing the wrong sound. In vowel /ɔ:/ students pronounce it as /ɒ/, or /ʌ/. In vowel /ɔ/, students pronounce it as /u/ or /a/. For pronouncing the vowels /u/ and /u:/, the researcher found that students didn't produce many errors compare to the other vowels. From some of the errors the students make, where some of them say the words wrong, it is clear that the students still lack familiarity with the language. English vowels are often spoken by the students in the way they would say in their mother tongue. Though the word actually is not spoken lengthy, the students also tend to say the word longer if the term has double similar vowels. If the students have only one vowel, they also usually pronounce every word shortly.

Another factor affecting students' vowels' skill is their lack of oral actions in pronunciation. The students here as the subject in this research are the fifth semester of English Department students have studied the major/subject on pronunciation in deep, but in fact they got lack of listening comprehension practices on

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their own aside from learning in the classroom.

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