

Types of Incorrectly-Pronounced Words by EFL Learners

Dini Riandini¹, Faridatun Nida²

{diniriandini@amikompurwokerto.ac.id¹, faridatun.nida@amikompurwokerto.ac.id²}

Universitas Amikom Purwokerto, Indonesia¹²

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Abstract. The correct pronunciation supports the understanding of speaker and listener during communication. However, the different rules of sound becomes the challenge. Indonesian learners must imitate the sound of words as standardized by the natives of English. This research is conducted to reveal the type of words which are still incorrectly pronounced. By involving the participation of students of Amikom Purwokerto University who take a Business English class, the data is collected. Observation, recording and transcription becomes a technique to document the data. Meanwhile, transcription, classification, and patternization becomes the steps of analysis. The analysis presents that the words which are still difficult to pronounce are dominantly the words with diphthong, at the beginning or the end of the words. Whereas, the monophthong is also sometimes become a problem. The familiarity of words plays a consideration for students to pronounce it based on their own understanding. Hence, the findings is expected to fulfill the students needs due to the fact that time limit requires lecturer to set a compact lesson material. Understanding the result of this research can help the lecturer to emphasise the learning by the type of words which are still incorrectly-pronounced by the students.

Keywords: Pronunciation, EFL learners, Types of words

1. INTRODUCTION

The science of language acquisitions suggests that the initial steps begins by imitating the sounds, that is by listening to the natives and produce it as standardized. However, this understanding is sometimes unaware by young-to-adult learners who learn their second or foreign language [1], [2]. Indonesians who learn English language, for example, they tend to just translate Bahasa into English by using translation machine [3]. Hence, the way to pronounce the words is sometimes based on the speakers's perceptions, not as it has been standardized by the natives of English. They tend to pronounce the words by their own understanding or by their familiarity to what they commonly heard, even from the non-natives speakers. In fact, proper pronunciation is prominent to achieve the succesful understanding during communication in the real life situation [4], [5].

On the other set of situation, several research reveals that the pronunciation has been taken into the analysis of the difficulty of speaking foreign language. Research conducted by He discovered that the Chinese speakers difficult to produce the syllable like /l/ at the final of English words [6]. Another difficulty is found in Arabian learners since there are some sounds in English which they do not find in Arabic language, both in vowel and consonants [7]. The similar problems is also found around the middle-eastern country, that is Libyan and Jordanian students who learn English [8], [9]. Meanwhile, in his book, Beňuš described that the natives of Slovak language might not face such difficulties since they have no significant difference to its phonotatic variations [10]. Within his book, it is also inferred that grouping the similar phonotatic patterns of our native language might help us to learn the production of sounds onset. Hence, the assumption is taken as the basis for further examination.

The difficulty and mispronounced of English words is actually a problem that can be minimized by both, speaker and listener in general context, or lecturer and learner during English learning. By giving the materials that is designed by considering the needs, the lecturer can decide what should be emphasized during learning [11], [12]. By reviewing the result of related research, for example, we can understand which parts that should be maximized to discuss in English class. In fact, the research of error pronunciation has been conducted by many Indonesian researcher. However, the alternatives is still found limited.

Concerning on the problems of learners and the review of many existing theory, the present research is designed to focus on characterizing the types of incorrectly-pronounced words by formulating its

sequence of vowel and consonant sounds [13]. The relation between phonemes, syllables and words has been formulated by many theorists. It unravels the approach to implement during the analysis. Interpreting the literature of English phonemic system, the consonant consist of fortis (voiceless articulation) and lenis (voiced articulation), while the vowels can be classified into the checked steady-state, the free steady-state, and the free diphthongs [14]. As producing the consonants /p/ and /b/ individually, it sounds similar. However, if we take it into *pip* and *babe*, the /p/ could be voiceless and the /b/ impossible to be voiced even in weak. Differ from the consonants, the monophthong vowel that is checked steady-state like /ɪ/ will be pronounced simpler by common Indonesian speakers than the free steady-state which has a length mark as in /i:/. Bahasa have no rules for the length of sounds as we called in Arabic as harakat [15]. Similarly to diphthong, such sound seems uncommon in Bahasa. Therefore, getting used to pronounce /æ/ and /eɪ/ is arduous at first.

The classification of vowel and consonants is expected to help the researcher achieve the goals of this study, that is to formulate and pattern the sequence of vocal and consonant sound in the type of incorrect-pronounced words. Futher, the character built by the formula and the pattern is used to group the words by its similar sound as suggested by Beňuš. The grouped words, subsequently, will be considered to be emphasized as material to learn in English class [16], [17]. The findings is regarded as beneficial to the students in English class to train their tongue in producing the sounds that might be unfamiliar during speaking and listening session, so that their communication skills can be elevated. For the larger scale, it can also be applied by any learners who try to speak in standarized pronunciation by familiarize their selves to that way of speaking.

2. METHOD

To complete the study and obtain the appropriate findings, this research is designed qualitatively [18]. The data source, data collection and data analysis is adjusted to the research design. The determination of data source comes from the problem arisen as the background and the reason of why this research should be conducted. Participants of this study are students of Amikom Purwokerto University who join Business English class and take an interview test. Each students are asked to answer the open questions that are commonly asked in the interview session. This context is planned to get the most realistic set of conversation so that the words produced by the students are words that are known by the students and commonly used while communicate to others in English.

From the participants and the setting, we can see that the technique of data collection is by observation and recording [19]. The answer given by the students was recorded and observed to select the words which are still incorrectly pronounced by the students. The words are then written in a list to help the researcher doing analysis.

The analysis will be conducted by three steps; classificatiom, patternization and characterization [20]. The data will be firstly classified based on the similarity of sounds. Looking back to the Introduction, there are two classification of consonant and three of vowel. The sequence is then patterned to recognized the sequence of phoneme that is still difficult to be pronounced by the students. The pattern that has been built among those words are then used to characterize the incorrect-pronounced words. And by this findings, the conclusion can be asserted.

3. FINDINGS

Listening to the answers given by students in the interview session becomes the initial identification of problem that should be studied. Meanwhile, finding the appropriate tools help the researcher to do analysis. The explanation and the description of the analysis is then becomes the way to answer the research question which has been stated as the concern of this research. All of those steps has completed and provides some findings.

The data is generally contains words which are used for daily conversation among the people in social context. However, patterns of words that is still incorrectly pronounced has been arranged. Considering the vowels and consonants theory, the findings will be presented by two subsections. The condiseration also involves the variety of consonant and vowel from many standardized and recognized rules [21].

Incorrectly-pronounced words on vowel

The major data collected shows the mispronounced of vowel. The recording and the transcription reveals that the error happened in each type. However, the interesting but unique fact is that the changes are dominantly towards the single symbols or the checked steady-state.

Table 1. Changes of vowels

Vowel	Words	Sound Changes
ʌ	come	ɒ
ə	focus	ʊ
ɪ	bicycle	e
ɪ	minute	ʊ
u:	music	ʊ
ɑ:	task	ʌ
i:	detail	ɪ
ɜ:	prefer	ə
ɔ:	organize	ɒ
aɪ	find	ɪ
aʊ	account	ɒ
eɪ	same	e
eɪ	enable	ʌ
æ	manage	e
əʊ	post	ɒ
ɪə	here	e/ɪ

Incorrectly-pronounced word on consonant

While the vowel mispronounce to the single symbols, the consonant is more vary. There are changes of sounds, ommision of sounds and addition of sounds. As it was observed, the changes dominantly come from lenis to fortis so that become voiceless. The ommision happend when there is double consonant at the end of the word. While the additional sounds occur in the middle.

Table 2. Changes of consonants

Consonant	Words	Sound Changes
z	design	s
dʒ	strategy	g
f	graphic	p
dʒ	schedule	d
v	invite	f
d	provide	t
ʃ	position	s
ʃ	initiative	t
d	find	-
t	account	-
j	opinion	-
-	listen	t
-	Comfortable	r

4. DISCUSSION

Any language consists of the sounds of vowel and consonant that structuring syllables and words [22]. However, there is possibilities for a language to have some different variation of vowel and consonant from another language. English has voice and voiceless sound in its consonant, but not in Bahasa. English has diphthong in its vowel, but not in Bahasa [23]. The words *silau*, for example, possibly change the last syllable to the sound of /w/, but not *bau* [24]. *Bau* will be pronounced as what is written, without the changes of sounds /w/ at the end. This phenomenon is familiarly called as double vowel. Hence, the challenges arise.

Indonesians as the EFL learners have been observed facing many difficulties in learning English. The error is strongly influenced by the mother tongue [25]. Besides, the inconsistency between English spelling and its sounds become another challenge during the learning [26]. This is not surprised since Bahasa is consistent to its spelling and pronunciation. When we write a word consist of s, a, y, and a, so that it becomes *saya*, we still sound it as /saya/. In English, the word *say*, which consists of s, a, and y, should be sounded as /sei/, even when there is no *e* or *i*. By this rules, the analysis from viewpoints of phonology must be interesting.

Reviewing many studies which concern on pronunciation issue, Indonesian as EFL learners are confirmed facing several difficulties regarding the pronunciation of English words [27]. Febrianto in his research discovered that the error dominantly occurs in vowel [28]. It seems similar to the present research, as we can see on the previous session. Indonesian as EFL learners seems pronounce the vowels simpler. As presented in table 1, the sounds of diphthong dominantly transforms to the single symbols. /ei/ at the beginning of *enable* and /ei/ at the middle of *same* seems experiencing changes and transform its sounds to /e/. It might not really a big problems since the /i/ sounds after /e/ is sometimes unclearly heard [29]. This also become an understandable solution for the EFL when the sound is not exist in Bahasa, so that they tend to shift the sounds into the similar sounds they found in their natives [30]. On the other hand, it can not be applied to the sound /a:/ in the middle of *find*. The changes of sound into /ɪ/ makes the meaning of its word becomes questioning since in English we also have *fin* which is pronounced /fɪn/. In fact, the meaning of *find* is totally different from *fin*. *Fin* is a thin flat part that sticks out from the body of a fish that is used for swimming and keeping balance, while *find* is to discover somebody/something unexpectedly or by chance. By these meaning, *fin* and *find* also have different class of words. *Fin* is noun and *find* is verb. Therefore, the mispronunciation of fin and find should not be intolerable.

Similarly to the changes from /ei/ to /e/ in *enable* and *same*, the /ɑ:/ which is pronounced as ʌ for word *task* shows that there is no significant difference on its meaning. The length is unclearly heard, but the meaning should be kept by sounding the last consonant. This phenomenon is understandable as the effect of mother tongue [31]. However, another finding shows that the similar changes from long to shorter sound seems confusing for the listener [32], [33]. Sometimes, we can not imagine or even refers to certain words with similar spelling as sounds. Hence the long sound can always help the speaker to make a stress on certain part.

Although diphthong and symbols with length mark tends to change to single symbols, the vowel of the single symbols is also possible to change its sounds to another unit of sounds. It commonly occurs when the learner pronounce it by reading the spelling. The word *come*, for example, can unconsciously be pronounced as /kɒm/. We can take it since in Bahasa, the word is sounded based on the spell. Surprisingly, they unconsciously omit the sounds of the last alphabeth. If the learner read it as spelling, *come* might be pronounced as /kɒme/. Similarly to *minute*, /e/ at the end of the word is not sounded. However, the inappropriate change of /ɪ/ to /ʊ/ possibly cause misinterpretation in meaning [34].

Compare to the vowel, the consonants are also possible to change when it is sounded by the learners. Beyond the theory, the changes of sound in consonant not only occurs as shift from one type to another type as seen on vowel. Vowel might change from one type of sound to another type of sound, but consonant possibly change by omission or addition. Both are not available in the type of consonants, that we can see there is only lenis for voiced and fortis for voiceless. Nevertheless, the data is undeniable when certain phenomenon occur beyond the theory.

Dewi and her friends discover through their research that the first language, in this case refers to Bahasa, influence the learner to shift the sound from the voiceless to voiced, from /v/ to /f/, from /ɪ/ to /i/, from /tʃ/ to /t/ and /ʒ/ to /ʃ/ [35], [36]. She also discovered that a consonant sound can transform into many variety of consonant, e.g. from /dʒ/ to /k/, /d/, /t/ and /g/. This is possible since we keep remembering that our mother tongue can affect us while speaking by using our second or foreign language. The similar changes is also found by the researcher as we can see that it is presented in table 2. /dʒ/ change into /g/ in the word *strategy* or /d/ in the *schedule*. The changes on *strategy* is also predictable since Bahasa also has the words and pronounce it as /strategi/.

Referring to table 2, it is presented that the omission can occur during the sounding of word. Omission on the last word for /d/ in *find* and /t/ in *account* is also predictably happen [37]. We do not usually find it in Bahasa that the two consonant put at the end of the word. Therefore, the speaker only focuses on producing the sound of consonant preceded to the vowel.

The last change of sounds is by adding the sound. The addition is actually not because of speaker preference, but based on the spelling of the word. The sound of /t/ happens because there is alphabet t between s and e in *listen* [38]. As a beginner, learner might think that the word is pronounced as /lɪstn/. In bahasa, such sequence of alphabeth is sounded as /listen/. Only few of students who are familiar with the pronunciation will omit the sound of /t/ in the middle of *listen*. The similar addition also found in comfortable, that for the natives /r/ between /o/ and /t/ tend to be removed.

The changes of sounds that is discovered after analysis gives some highlight to the objectives of this research, that is about formulating the pattern of incorrect-pronounced word types. First, a word can be inccorectly pronounced when there is a diphthong, at the beginning, the middle or the end of syllable. By this result, the word prioritize, empasize, and organized which is frequently produced by learner can

be arranged into one set. Meanwhile, the diphthong which occur in the middle of word, as in like, time, and fine, can also be categorized into one set. the pattern on consonant-vocal-consonant-vocal in those words, and the similarity of sequence -i-e can be a key for learners to predict the sound [39]. For another case, vowel which belongs to monophthong is also found tollerable as long as it does not change the meaning. The thought arises due to the issue of shift between Middle English and Modern English [40].

Dealing with the consonant, there is tolerance for the omission and addition as long as the meaning of the word is still understandable. However, to the changes that makes a word become unrecognizable, /z/ which cannot be replaced by /s/ for zoo, it becomes a problem. This is also stated by Suzukida, that the error on voiced consonant can affect the error of voiceless [41] By this example, the set of words that belongs to fortis (voiced consonant) can be emphasized.

At the end of this discussion, we understand that error and mispronounced delivered by learner can give positive viewpoints. It helps the lecturer in arranging and designing the material of lesson and the exercise to support students improvement is pronunciation skill [42]. Looking back to the importance, this skill might challenging and marginalized, but this is the first step that makes our student can communicate with each other. Taking a statement from a wise word, that the quality of pronunciation is more important than the amount of vocabulary we can remember. When we forget about one vocabulary, we can replace it by another word, but when we do not know how to pronounce the word properly, how many times it is repeated, the meaning still can not be understandable.

5. CONCLUSION

Error is an error without any alternatives. Meanwhile, alternatives is only an alternative without implementation. However, taking a bit different viewpoint is a fruitful for further improvement. We understand that there are some differences from the vowel and consonants of English and Bahasa. Many researcher also have proven the error and the overcome. However, this findings is sometimes only stuck as knowledge. This present research is expected to go further. Starting from the phenomenon of EFL learners who produce incorrect pronunciation of many words in English, we can consider the types of words which should be emphasized during learning, especially for speaking. The vowel and consonants which build words in a language can be utilized to formulate the pattern of words which are still difficult to understand. As we can see from the statement on the previous session, Bahasa have no diphthong and it makes the learner sometimes become unaware of it. They might uses diphthong for words which are familiarly pronounced, as five that is pronounced /faɪv/. Even when it is written as 15, they tend to pronounce it /ˌfaɪfˈtiːn/ instead of /ˌfɪfˈtiːn/. This is proven that the familiarity can help the learners to unconsciously remember the sounds [43]. Considering the result of this research, the more exercise is expected to improve their pronunciation skill. Making a group of words which has similar sound and pattern is also expectedly helpful to train the learner so that they do not only see the way to produce sounds, but also comprehend that the similar pattern of words can produce similar sound, as /aɪz/ for any words which ends with -ize. By this point, the further research can analyze the result of this method learning, whether there is a significant improvement for students who are trained by many similar sound which are regarded difficult for them to pronounce.

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