



## English Education Students' Perception of Pronunciation Difficulties at Universitas Pancasakti Tegal

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### ABSTRACT

*Indonesian students often find problems with pronunciation when they speak in English due to the difference between L1 and L2 and several other factors. This study aims to analyze students' perceptions and to find out the factors that affect students' difficulties in pronouncing English words. This research is qualitative research using a descriptive case study. The participants in this study were 4th semester students of English Education at Universitas Pancasakti Tegal. Data collection is done by questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 27 items divided into 9 categories. The results show that the majority of answers in criteria 1, 6, 7, and 8 are neutral (40%-47%), while the majority of answers in criteria 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9 are agree (47%-63%). The conclusion of this study is that the factors that affect students' difficulties in pronouncing English words are difficulty distinguishing words that have the same pronunciation, the scarcity of practice causes speech errors, a lack of vocabulary mastery causes difficulties in understanding English, regional accents lead to incorrect pronunciation, difficulty pronouncing new words, English vowel inconsistency, and spelling effects on pronunciation.*

**Keywords:** Pronunciation, Difficulty, English words

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant aspects of English that is used for communication is pronunciation. When communicating with others, a person needs not only have a solid vocabulary and grammar, but also good pronunciation. Furthermore, all foreign language learners want to be able to communicate correctly and successfully. Effective communication, on the other hand, is impossible without good pronunciation. According to Simatupang (2021), "Pronunciation is the most obvious linguistic trait that distinguishes nonnative speakers." Pronunciation is just presented as an act that occurs during speaking and listening; the act or style of pronouncing words; emission of speech is referred to as pronunciation. In other terms, it is a method of expressing a word, particularly one that is widely recognized or understood.

In addition, pronunciation is the way of language to be spoken. Ahmed (2017) asserted that "having good pronunciation of the language can help in normal communication, particularly intelligibility" when learning a language. It is essential for achieving full

communication skills. In general, we all know that we are learning how to pronounce the words correctly and clearly. We make the correct sounds of the words when we pronounce them by placing the organ of speech in the correct location of the words. The sounds will be pronounced appropriately, clearly, and understandably by the audience.

Everyday communication is critical in human life. It will be tough to adapt and even get to know each other in this life if there is no communication. We can express our ideas to others for certain goals through communication. We can also exhibit manifestations of sentiments or thoughts for others through communication. It will assist us as humans in avoiding miscommunications when communicating instructions, orders, or judgments to others. Furthermore, communication serves as a channel in the process of meeting the needs of each individual.

It is difficult for Indonesian students to pronounce English words correctly, for example when they are asked to pronounce the word “diamond” /'daɪəmənd/ they will pronounce /diamon/. It is because of the difference between their first language and their second language (English).

The students often find problem with pronunciation when they speak in English. It might be caused by some factors. There are internal and external factors. The internal factors come from the learner themselves, such as: motivation, interest, attitude, and intelligence. While, the external factors come from the outside of learner, such as the situation and the condition of the environment, and learning materials.

The researchers chose a sample from students of fourth semester in the English Education study program at Universitas Pancasakti Tegal because they have received deeper learning material and practice on pronunciation. In addition, they are required to understand the pronunciation itself and also taught to communicate using English with the lecturers.

The researchers also consider to find out about the students' perceptions of what factors make pronunciation difficult for them to understand about stressing, segmental features, supra segmental features, etc.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In conducting this research project, the researchers refer to some previous studies as follows; first one is a research entitled “Pronunciation Problems: A Case Study on English Pronunciation Errors of Low Proficient Students” by Shak et al. (2016) from Malaysia Sabah University. They found that pronunciation is critical for employability. Graduates are frequently unfairly judged when they fail to persuade others of their abilities due to poor

pronunciation and a lack of language skills. It is critical to improve students' pronunciation, especially those with low oral proficiency levels, in order for them to present confidently to impress potential employers or increase mobility. The first step in dealing with this issue is identifying students' pronunciation issues. The purpose of this research is to identify the specific sounds that Malaysian students with low oral proficiency frequently mispronounce. The qualitative methodology was used in this study, and the data was in the form of voice recordings that were read aloud. According to the thematic analysis, the students frequently mispronounced vowels (pure short vowels, pure long vowels, and diphthongs), consonants (plosives, fricatives, and affricates), silent letters, and the '-ed' form. Based on the findings, this study suggests that the commonly mispronounced sounds be used as the content in the production of an instructional pronunciation video to assist low oral proficiency students in the twenty-first century in addressing their pronunciation problems.

The second research is entitled "Pronunciation Problems Faced by Indonesian College Students Who Learn to Speak English" by Simatupang (2021) from Universitas Kristen Indonesia. This study looks into the English pronunciation errors made by Indonesian college students in Indonesia. The qualitative method was used in this study, which was conducted in Jakarta. Data from purposive sampling were gathered from 50 Gunadarma University students. The researcher typed the mispronunciation words and recorded their voice while they were speaking in front of the class. It was discovered that: 1) the English language has many different sounds for a vowel letter; 2) The Indonesian language lacks silent consonant and silent-vowel letters (such as silent. a, k, and e); 3) In bahasa Indonesia, plosive consonant letters, such as *tidak*, *bebek*, and *sebah*, are not clearly pronounced. As a result, Indonesian students struggle with English words like think, philosophy, psychology, bright, and so on. To summarize, many college students in Indonesia are perplexed when it comes to pronouncing some English words because they have such inconsistent sounds for vowel letters, vowel-letter combinations, silent letters, and the sounds of two or three consonant letter combinations.

The next relevant study by Al-Zayed (2017) from Middle East University is "Non-Native Pronunciation of English: Problems and Solutions". The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the issues that English learners in Jordan face when it comes to pronunciation. These issues are caused by Jordanian interference, learners' age, attitude, and a lack of knowledge of the English language's phonology and phonetics systems. Oral interviews are a method of data collection that is particularly effective because it involves sound, which is best understood when pronounced. The sample includes 30 Jordanian

students majoring in English language and literature at two private universities. The results show that the sounds that exist in Arabic are easier to read, whereas the sounds that do not exist in Arabic but do exist in English caused some confusion for the students, causing them to pronounce the closest sound from the Arabic phonemes to the English phonemes.

Further research is by Ibrahim (2016) entitled "English Pronunciation Problems Encountered by Indonesian Advanced Students". This study looks at the segmental pronunciation issues that advanced students at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University in Malang face. The term "segmental pronunciation" refers to how consonant and vowel sounds are produced in terms of phonetics. The advanced students are represented in this case by students from the English Language and Letters Department who are presenting their thesis proposals. They are chosen as research subjects because this study aims to identify English sounds that are difficult to understand even for those who have studied English for a long time. The purpose of this study is to describe how segmental English sounds are incorrectly pronounced by the research subjects using descriptive qualitative inquiry. Based on the findings of this study, the research subject has a number of segmental pronunciation issues involving consonants and vowels, including pure vowels and diphthongs. The substitution of the sounds [v], [ð], [θ], [tʃ], [ʒ], [ʃ] [z] and deletion of the sounds [k], [g], [t], and [s] were the problems with consonant sounds. The substitution of the sounds [i], [i:], [ɛ], [u], [ʌ], [ɜ:], [ɒ], [ɔ:], and [ə] and the insertion of the sound [ə] between two consonant sounds are the problems with pure vowel sounds. The issue with diphthongs is the monophthongization of the sounds [aɪ], [aʊ], [eɪ], [ɪə], and [əʊ], as well as the replacement of [eɪ] and [ɪə] with other diphthongs.

Moreover, a research by Sahatsathatsana (2017) from Mahasarakham University entitled "Pronunciation Problems of Thai Students Learning English Phonetics: A Case Study at Kalasin University" is aimed to: 1) look at what issues pupils have with acquiring phonetics, and 2) identify factors causing students' problems in phonetics learning. The sample consists of 12 undergraduate English for International Communication students of an English Phonetics course, 6 of whom were specifically chosen for an interview. A questionnaire and a semi-interview form were used as research instruments. The results of the students' opinions revealed that certain sounds, particularly [θ], [ð], and [ʒ], caused serious problems with phonetics learning at the segmental level in students. It was also reported that linking caused serious problems with supra segmental phonetics learning. Furthermore, phonetic ability was reported as the most common cause of problems in phonetics learning. It was concluded that the students' problems with phonetics learning were caused by their

perception of a difference in sound systems between English and Thai, as well as other factors such as phonetic ability, native language, prior English pronunciation learning, instruction, and motivation.

Adeline (2020) conducted a study entitled "Pronunciation Problems of Indonesian EFL Learners in Pronouncing /g/ Sound". Pronunciation is critical when delivering a speech. However, because the students speak Indonesian as their first language, pronouncing English words is difficult. The common issues may be caused by differences in the sound systems of the languages, particularly in the /g/ sound. The purpose of this study is to determine how well students master the /g/ sound and the common problems they face. This study focuses on two research issues: (1) how well fourth semester students pronounce the /g/ sound and (2) what problems they encounter when pronouncing the /g/ sound. It is a descriptive qualitative study that uses triangulation data on twenty-five fourth semester students from the English Language Education Program at the Faculty of Cultural Studies at Universitas Brawijaya. The instruments are a pronunciation test, a recorder, an assessment rubric, and a questionnaire. Data were analyzed statistically and descriptively. The study found that (1) most students' mastery of the /g/ sound in all positions is good (81.5 percent) with the following details: excellent (pronouncing silent /g/ before /n/ at the end of a word, silent /g/ before /n/ in the same syllable, soft /g/ sound); good (pronouncing silent /g/ before /n/ at the beginning of a word and hard /g/ sound); (2) issues encountered by fourth semester students include differences in sound systems between their native language and their foreign language, as well as students' motivation to correctly pronounce the /g/ sound (such as checking pronunciation or phonetic transcription in a dictionary).

## METHOD

The researchers employ a qualitative approach in this study. It is a type of research that entails collecting and analyzing non-numerical data. Qualitative research methods are defined as research that employs a combination of data collection methods and data analysis by more than one person.

The research type used in this study is a case study. A qualitative case study is a research methodology that aids in the exploration of a phenomenon within a specific context using various data sources, and it does so using a variety of lenses to reveal multiple facets of the phenomenon. The data were collected using an closed-ended questionnaire. According to Cakrawati (2017), the data from the closed-ended questionnaire are to be statistically computed to determine the percentage of each statement and then descriptively interpreted.

The questionnaire used in this study is a Likert-Scales questionnaire. It is a type of closed-ended question because respondents only need to fill out a checklist based on the level of agreement and disagreement column provided. The researchers created an online questionnaire through Google Form to learn about English Education students' perception of pronunciation difficulties. The questionnaire was tested using SPSS 22 to ensure its validity and reliability. The number of invalid and untrustworthy questions is reduced.

According to Tama (2017), the population is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects, or members that meet a set of criteria. Population is a group of potential participants to whom the researcher wishes to generalize the study's findings. The population of the research is students of English Department of Universitas Pancasakti Tegal and the sample is fourth semester of English Department of Universitas Pancasakti Tegal taken using sample random sampling.

The Bivariate Pearson correlation is a testing technique that is frequently used by researchers to test the validity (Pearson Moment Product). This analysis is carried out by comparing the scores of each item to the total score. The sum of all items yields the total score. Question items that are significantly correlated with the total score indicate that they can help you reveal what you want to reveal. Valid if the  $\geq r$  count  $r$  table (2-sided test with sig. 0.05) shows that the instrument or question items have a significant correlation with the total score, then the instrument or question items have a significant correlation with the total score (declared valid).

While the reliability test of the questionnaire is carried out using Cronbach's Alpha, if the Cronbach's Alpha value is  $> 0.60$ , the questionnaire item is declared reliable or consistent. The researchers eliminate and remove the questionnaire items that are not valid or unreliable. After getting validity and reliability tested, only the valid questionnaires were distributed to the respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The general results of the questionnaire can we read in the table 1.

**Table 1 The general results of the questionnaire**

NO.	CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWER					TOTAL
			SA	A	N	D	SD	
1	Difficulties to distinguish the words that have the same pronunciation.	Learning homophones and homographs confuses me.	0	4	5	1	0	10
		I understand what homophones are.	0	4	2	4	0	10

NO.	CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWER					TOTAL
			SA	A	N	D	SD	
		I understand what a homograph is.	0	2	5	3	0	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	0	33%	40%	27%	0	100%
		Since I seldom ever practice speaking English, my pronunciation is still incorrect..	0	6	2	2	0	10
2	Practice scarcity causing speech error.	Even if I can pronounce English words properly, I lack the courage to do so in front of others.	2	4	2	2	0	10
		Because my friends encourage me to speak English, I like doing so.	0	5	3	2	0	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	7%	50%	23%	20%	0	100%
		When speaking English, I often consider the upcoming vocabulary.	2	8	0	0	0	10
3	A lack of vocabulary mastery caused difficulties in understanding English words.	I watch English movies to try to expand my vocabulary.	2	7	1	0	0	10
		Playing games helps me strive to expand my vocabulary.	1	4	2	3	0	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	17%	63%	10%	10%	0	100%
		I struggle to speak English since Javanese is my first language.	0	5	4	1	0	10
4	Regional accent caused incorrect pronunciation.	Since I was never encouraged to speak English from an early age, I find it challenging to do so.	1	4	4	1	0	10
		Because I still pronounce "Medhok (the Javanese spoken character)" in English, I feel uneasy.	2	5	2	0	1	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	10%	47%	33%	7%	3%	100%
		I'm simply assuming how to say a new vocabulary that I don't know how to pronounce.	0	7	2	1	0	10
5	Difficulties to say a new word.	I made an effort to ask a friend who is fluent in English how to pronounce the new words.	2	6	1	1	0	10
		I attempt to ask a friend who speaks English well how to appropriately stress the new vocabulary.	1	6	2	1	0	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	10%	63%	17%	10%	0	100%

NO.	CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWER					TOTAL
			SA	A	N	D	SD	
		I often watch English-speaking lessons that are broadcast in their original tongue to avoid picking up on my Javanese accent.	1	3	6	0	0	10
6	Interference with the Mother Tongue	I haven't discovered a way to speak English with less of a Javanese accent.	1	4	2	3	0	10
		Despite the fact that my friends often tease me about having a Javanese accent, I remain confident.	1	2	4	3	0	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	10%	30%	40%	20%	0	100%
		An Instagram influencer who speaks English with confidence despite having a Javanese accent inspires me.	1	2	5	2	0	10
7	Differences in Sound Systems Between L1 and L2	I am always eager to study English so that I may speak it fluently one day.	0	2	6	2	0	10
		Not all Indonesians are Medhok (the Javanese spoken character) when speaking English.	5	2	3	0	0	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	20%	20%	47%	13%	0	100%
		Speaking English words with distinct vowels that are lined together confuses me (ex: Laugh, speak, fault, etc.)	0	5	4	1	0	10
8	English Vowel Inconsistency	Despite the fact that I don't know how to pronounce the vowels in a word, I feel comfortable speaking in English.	0	2	7	1	0	10
		I often rely on guesswork while pronouncing vowels in words.	0	6	3	1	0	10
		<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	0	43%	47%	10%	0	100%
		Because the sounds of spoken English do not match the letters of written English, I am perplexed..	0	8	1	1	0	10
9	The Effect of Spelling on Pronunciation	I'm perplexed by the varied pronunciations of certain terms that are generally pronounced the same way, such as lead, which is pronounced /led/ in one sentence but /li:d/ in another, "lead pipe".	1	5	2	2	0	10

NO.	CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWER					TOTAL
			SA	A	N	D	SD	
		Some terms, like rain and reign, which are both pronounced with the same sound but have distinct spellings, have puzzled me..	2	5	3	0	0	10
TOTAL PERCENTAGE			10%	60%	20%	10%	0	100%

NB: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), N (Neutral), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree)

As we can see in the general results in criteria 1, most respondents (40%) choose neutral (between agreeing and disagreeing) that they find it difficult to distinguish words that have the same pronunciation. But 33% of the total respondents answer agree that they find it difficult to distinguish words that have the same pronunciation, and the rest do not agree (27%).

While in criteria 2, more than half of the respondents (57%) agree that practice scarcity causes speech errors, and 20% of the total respondents do not agree that practice scarcity causes speech errors. The remaining 23% of the total respondents answer neutral.

In criteria 3, more than half of the respondents (63%) agree and strongly agree (17%) that a lack of vocabulary mastery caused difficulties in understanding English words. The remaining 10% of the total respondents do not agree that a lack of vocabulary mastery causes difficulties in understanding English words, and the other 10% answer neutral.

In criteria 4, more than half of the respondents (57%) state agree that the regional accent causes incorrect pronunciation. Meanwhile, 33% of the total respondents answer neutral and 10% answer disagree with regional accents causing incorrect pronunciation.

While in criteria 5, more than half of the respondents (73%) agree that they have difficulty speaking new words, 10% disagree, and 17% said neutral.

In criteria 6, 40% of the total respondents agree about interference with the mother tongue, while the rest answer neutral (40%) and disagree (20%).

In the next criteria, which is criteria 7, there are 47% of the total respondents who feel neutral about the differences in sound systems between L1 and L2. The rest, no more than 40% agree and 13% disagree.

In criteria 8, 47% of the total respondents answer neutral about English vowel inconsistency. The remaining 90% agree on the English vowel inconsistency, while 10% disagree.

In the last criteria, which is criteria 9, more than half of the total respondents (70%)

agree about the effect of spelling on pronunciation. The remaining 20% answer neutral and 10% disagree.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing and investigating the data on students' perceptions of difficulties in pronouncing English words, some conclusions can be drawn as follows.

Respondents have answered 27 questions in the questionnaire. After the data were analyzed, it can be concluded that the fourth-semester students still feel confused about homophones and homographs, so they find it difficult to distinguish the words that have the same pronunciation. They also agree that they still don't speak English frequent enough, so when they do, they find problem with pronunciation.

They speculate that when they speak English, they are still thinking about the next vocabulary, so they don't think too much about pronunciation, which can lead to errors in their pronunciation. They think they find it difficult to speak English because their first language is Javanese. They find it difficult to speak a new language or a foreign language such as English, because since childhood they have been in an environment where people speak Javanese.

In addition, according to 4th semester students of English Education at Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, they find it difficult to speak English because English words are not the same as their pronunciation. Therefore, they feel confused when speaking English.

There are some factors that affect students find it difficult to pronounce English words:

- a) Difficulties to distinguish the words that have the same pronunciation.
- b) Practice scarcity causing speech error.
- c) A lack of vocabulary mastery caused difficulties in understanding English words.
- d) Regional accent caused incorrect pronunciation.
- e) Difficulties to say a new word.
- f) Interference with the Mother Tongue.
- g) Differences in Sound Systems between L1 and L2.
- h) English Vowel Inconsistency.
- i) The Effect of Spelling on Pronunciation.

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