

EFL STUDENTS' PRONUNCIATION ERROR ANALYSIS ON ENGLISH SHORT VOWEL SOUNDS

Monica Feby Fadhilah

monicafeby98@gmail.com

Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

Fauzi Miftakh

fauzi.miftakh@unsika.ac.id

Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

Mobit

mobit@fkip.unsika.ac.id

Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

Abstract

The purposes of this research are to identify the most frequent error and to know the significant source of error in pronouncing english short vowel sounds made by efl students. The researcher used qualitative approach and interpretative study in order to answer formulation of the research problem. The participants in this research are five students at the second grade of a vocational islamic boarding school cianjur. Test and interview were used by the researcher in collecting the data. The results of this research showed that the most frequent error in pronouncing english short vowel sounds is the /æ/ sound with the percentage 36.15% and the significant source of error in pronouncing english short vowel sounds is inter-lingual transfer with the percentage 62.65%. By analyzing the pronunciation error of the students, english teacher can know the weaknesses of the students so english teacher can provide the correction. In addition, the students who have the correction can be more aware of their pronunciation so they will not have the same error in the future.

Keywords: *English short vowel sounds, error, pronunciation.*

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is one of the main aspects of improving speaking skill. It is inline with Ellis (1997) as cited in Sahatsathatsana (2017) points out that good pronunciation is a key to have good speaking. In communication process, good pronunciation can avoid verbal misunderstanding. People can communicate easily by pronouncing English words clearly. At the same line, Gilakjani (2011) said that people who had incorrect pronunciation would not be successful in communication. However, it is not easy to be mastered in English pronunciation. Most of the students have serious problems in acquiring understandable pronunciation (Gilakjani, 2011). At the same line, Fraser (2000) believed that many adult students considered pronunciation as the hardest aspect in English language.

According to the preliminary observation conducted by the researcher, some of students had difficult in pronouncing English language. They pronounced the

English words based on the way English word is written. For example the letter “u” in the word “study” is pronounced as /u/ instead of /ʌ/. This case also happened in the research by Ramasari (2017:44) who found most of students pronounced /data/ for the word “data” which should be pronounced /dɛtə/.

There are two main factors that influencing English pronunciation error made by the students. The first factor is the English teachers. According to Yoshida (2016), most of English teachers point out that there is no time for teaching pronunciation. In their limited class time, most of English teachers considered to teach grammar and vocabulary instead of pronunciation (Harmer, 2007:248). The second factor is the students themselves. There is lack of motivation for the students to learn English pronunciation (Nurhayati, 2015). It is because they think that they do not use English language in daily conversation.

Based on the problems above, the researcher was interested to conduct the research entitled “EFL Students’ Pronunciation Error On English Short Vowel Sounds”. There are some references from the previous research which related to this research. The first previous research was conducted by Ramasari (2017) who focused on the students’ pronunciation error in segmental features, they are English vowel and consonant. The second previous research was conducted by Cahya (2017) which has the same focus with the third previous research conducted by Ali (2013). These two previous researches focused on the students’ pronunciation error in English vowel, that is pure vowel and diphthong. However, this research expected to describe the most frequent error and source of error in pronouncing English short vowel sounds error made by the EFL students. This research was only focused on English short vowel sounds aspect (/ɪ/ /ʊ/ /ə/ /e/ /æ/ /ʌ/ /ɒ/). The purposes of this research were to know the most frequent error and the significant source of pronunciation error on English short vowel sounds made by EFL students at the second grade of a Vocational Islamic Boarding School.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way of producing particular sounds (Richard and Schmidt, 2002 as cited in Ramasari, 2017:38). According to Yates (2002) as cited in Gilakjani (2016:2), pronunciation is making meaning by using sounds production. Hence it can be concluded that pronunciation is the way of sounds production which has meaning. Having meaning in producing sounds here means every sound gives the significance meaning. In teaching and learning English language, pronunciation can leads students to understand the meaning in different sounds and also improve their speaking skill.

This research is only focussed on the pronunciation aspect of short vowel sounds. There are seven sounds of short vowel (Kelly, 2000), they were /ɪ/, /ʊ/, /ə/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/, and /ɒ/. English short vowel is a basic of English vowel in pronunciation. Correct pronunciation of English words depends on English vowel sounds. For example the English word of present (verb) is pronounced /pri'zɛnt/ while present (adjective) is pronounced /'prɛz(ə)nt/. If the students do not know how to pronounce these English short vowel sounds, it may create misunderstanding in pronunciation. Thus, the English teachers have to give the

material of pronunciation for the students. Also, it is necessary to identify students' individual pronunciation difficulties (Harmer, 2007:252). Teachers can ask students about which words students find difficult to pronounce so students are probably more aware of their pronunciation. Teachers also can promote phonemic symbol with explanation about where the sounds are made. If students can read phonemic symbol, they can know how the word is pronounced correctly (Harmer, 2007:250).

2. Error and Sources of Error

The students will do error or mistake in their learning process, especially in the pronunciation. Brown (2000:226) defined that mistake is a deviation which is made inconsistently. Mistake refers to the use of the language system incorrectly that caused by the students' carelessness, memory lapses, and physical condition. The students will be inconsistent while making mistake. Sometimes, the students get it right but wrong in another time. When making mistake, the students usually recognize their own mistake.

However, error must be different from mistake. Brown (2000:226) stated that error is a deviation which is made repeatedly by the learner who has not learned something. Error refers to the use of the language system incorrectly that caused by the students' lack of knowledge. When making an error, the students usually cannot recognize their own error. Thus, students will be consistent while making an error if there is no correction from the others. According to Richards (1971) as cited in Brown (2000:232), four sources that causing an error in learning second/foreign language are inter-lingual transfer, intra-lingual transfer, context of learning and communication strategy. This research is only focused on inter-lingual transfer and intra-lingual transfer source of error which discussed about the learners' error in using second/foreign language influenced by mother tongue of the learners and caused by the language system itself.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied qualitative approach and interpretative study as a research design. According to Ary et al (2010:420), qualitative approach is the way for understanding behaviour meaning or action meaning by human in particular social setting. Ary et al (2010:453) also point out that interpretative study is a study to describe phenomenon that appeared in humans' experience which is occurred naturally. This research was designed to describe phenomenon of students' pronunciation error with non-numerical data.

The participants of this research were five students as the most intelligent students at the second grade of a Vocational Islamic Boarding School Cianjur, who recommended by English teacher. In taking participants, the researcher used criterion sampling as a type of purposive sampling technique which sets senior/vocational high school as the criterion of education level of participants. It is because the researcher had to know the intelligent students who have been studying English for a long time have pronunciation error or not.

The instruments of this research were pronunciation test sheet, interview guidance, and recorder. Pronunciation test sheet was very useful to help the

researcher to know the most frequent short vowel sounds error made by the students, interview guidance was used to direct the researcher in conducting interview to focus on the questions, and recorder was used to help the researcher to listen repeatedly the students' pronunciation ability in pronunciation test and the students' answer in interview session.

The research data collected from pronunciation test and interview. Lloyd et al (1984) as cited in Huxham et al (2012) point out that oral test is a type of test which is suitable for assessing spoken performance. Since pronunciation ability can be seen as spoken performance, oral test was used by the researcher in collecting the data. In pronunciation test, the students were asked to pronounce 49 words which contained English short vowel sound. Furthermore, Ary et al. (2010:438) said that interview is activity that is used to obtain the data about opinions, beliefs and feelings of participants in their own words. In interview session, the students were asked to answer 7 questions related into the students' experience and knowledge in pronouncing English language. During test and interview, the students' pronunciation and answer were recorded by the researcher. Then, the researcher analyzed the results qualitatively with three steps by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014:8) as follows:

1. Condensing the data
In this step, the researcher transcribed recording of the students' pronunciation ability in pronunciation test and the students' answer in interview session to the written form.
2. Displaying the data
In this step, the researcher described and explained deeply about the information of the result in the form of text and table as the research finding and discussion.
3. Drawing conclusion
In this step, the researcher presented the result briefly as the research conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Most Frequent Error In Pronouncing English Short Vowel Sounds

The pronunciation test results showed that the students made some errors in pronouncing 26 out of 49 English words which contained English short vowel sounds. It can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. English Short Vowel Sounds Pronunciation Error

Short Vowel Sounds	/ɪ/ sound	/ʊ/ sound	/ə/ sound	/e/ sound	/æ/ sound	/ʌ/ sound	/ɒ/ sound
English Words Error	English	could	success	head	passion	month	shot
	/ɪ/ → /e/	/ʊ/ → /ɒ/	/ə/ → /ʌ/	/e/ → /ɪ/	/æ/ → /e/	/ʌ/ → /ə/	/ɒ/ → /ʊ/
	reply	wolf	submit	event	bad		watch
	/ɪ/ → /e/	/ʊ/ → /ɒ/	/ə/ → /ʌ/	/e/ → /ə/	/æ/ → /e/		/ɒ/ → /ʌ/
	pretty	push	misery		happy		

	/ɪ/ → /e/	/ʊ/ → /ʌ/	/ə/ → /e/		/æ/ → /e/		
	build		today		cat		
	/ɪ/ → /ui/		/ə/ → /ʊ/		/æ/ → /e/		
	busy				back		
	/ɪ/ → /ʌ/				/æ/ → /e/		
	wind				fact		
	/ɪ/ → /ai/				/æ/ → /e/		
	live				absent		
	/ɪ/ → /ai/				/æ/ → /e/		
					/æ/ → /ʌ/		
Frequency of Error	17	9	14	6	30	5	2
Percentage of Error	20.48 %	10.84 %	16.87 %	7.23 %	36.15 %	6.02 %	2.41 %

In English short vowel /ɪ/ sound, the majority of the students mispronounced the letter “i” of the words “wind” and “live” as /ai/. It is inline with the research by Jam et al (2014:141), they found that the participants mispronounced the word “hidden” as /haɪdən/ instead of /hɪdən/. The students already known spelling rule about the letter “i” with /ai/. Then, they were overused this rule in pronouncing English words which contained the letter “i”. The other students had an error in pronouncing the letter of English words same as they pronounced the letter in Indonesian language system. For example the letter “e” of the words “English”, “reply”, “pretty” pronounced with /e/ by the students and the letter “ui” of the word “build” pronounced with /ui/ instead of /ɪ/. It was also happened in another English short vowel sound. In the /ʊ/ sound, the letter “o” of the word “wolf” pronounced as /ʊ/. In the /ə/ sound, the letter “e” of the word “misery” pronounced as /e/. In the /æ/ sound, the letter “e” of the word “absent” pronounced as /e/. In the /ʌ/ sound, the letter “o” of the word “month” pronounced as /ʊ/. In the /ʊ/ sound, the letter “a” of the word “watch” pronounced as /ʌ/. This case was appeared in the research by Ramasari (2017:44) who found that the participants had an error in pronouncing the word “data” /deɪtə/ as /data/. It was happened because the students used Indonesian language system in pronouncing English words.

Furthermore, the other students tend to pronounce English short vowel sounds in English word by another word. Some of them had an error in pronouncing the word “could” as /kʊld/ instead of /kɒld/. However, the students should be pronounced as /kɒld/ for the word “cold”. The same case was happened in another short vowel sounds. In the /e/ sound, the word “event” mispronounced as /ivən/ for the word “even”. In the /ʊ/ sound, the word “shot” pronounced as /ʃʊt/ for the word “shoot”. Also, the students pronounced incorrectly the words “today” /tədeɪ/, “head” /hed/, and “month” /mʌnθ/ as /tʊdeɪ/, /hɪd/, and /mənθ/. It is inline with the research by Ababneh (2018:251) who found that the participants mispronounced the words “late” /leɪt/ as /let/ which should be referred for the words “let”. Harmer (2007:249) point out that the majority of students were still confused about where the sounds produced exactly.

On the other hand, most of the students produced the /ʌ/ sound for the letter “u” in the words “busy”, “push”, “success”, and “submit” as /bʌsɪ/, /pʌʃ/, /sʌkses/

and /sʌbmɪt/ which should be pronounced as /bɪzɪ/, /pʊʃ/, /səkses/, and /səbmɪt/. This case was occurred in the research by Purba et al (2019:186) which the participants pronounced the letter “u” in the words “busy” as the /ʌ/ sound. It was happened because the students overused the /ʌ/ sound for the letter “u” in English words. Moreover, the English short vowel /æ/ sound was the most difficult to be pronounced by the students. Most of the students changed the /æ/ sound with the /e/ sound. In the /æ/ sound, the students mispronounced the words “passion” /pæʃən/, “bad” /bæd/, “happy” /hæpɪ/, “cat” /kæt/, “back” /bæk/, “absent” /æbsənt/ and “fact” /fæk/ as /peʃən/, /bed/, /hepɪ/, /ket/, /bek/, /ebsent/, and /fek/. This problem was happened in the research by Kartiyastuti (2017:70) who found that the participants pronounced incorrectly the word “had” /hæd/ as /hed/. It was happened because there is no /æ/ sound in Indonesian language. The unfamiliarity of the /æ/ sound made the students produced the /e/ sound.

2. The Significant Sources of Error

The researcher classified English words error based on four error sources by Richards (1971) as cited in Brown (2000:232) in order to know the source of error. According to the interview result, all of the students claimed that they never had English pronunciation material from their English teacher. They stated that English teacher only taught them about vocabulary and grammar, gave some exercise in LKS and also practice in four English skills (listening, reading, writing such as making text, and speaking such as storytelling). Also, many students said that they only used English dictionary for learning part of speech and they never checked pronunciation in dictionary. There was no pronunciation error found in recording of the students caused by context of learning and communication strategy. Thus, this research only focused on inter-lingual and intra-lingual transfer. The percentage of inter-lingual and intra-lingual transfer as the pronunciation error sources can be seen in the following table below:

Table 2. The Percentage of Inter-lingual and Intra-lingual Source of Error

Source of Error	Words Error	Short Vowel Error	Frequency of Error	Percentage of Error
Inter-lingual Transfer	English	/ɪ/ → /e/	3	62.65 %
	reply	/ɪ/ → /e/	1	
	pretty	/ɪ/ → /e/	4	
	build	/ɪ/ → /ui/	3	
	wolf	/ʊ/ → /ɒ/	5	
	misery	/ə/ → /e/	1	
	absent	/æ/ → /ʌ/	2	
	month	/ʌ/ → /ɒ/	4	
	watch	/ɒ/ → /ʌ/	1	
	passion	/æ/ → /e/	4	
	bad	/æ/ → /e/	4	
	happy	/æ/ → /e/	5	
	cat	/æ/ → /e/	5	
	back	/æ/ → /e/	4	
	absent	/æ/ → /e/	2	
	fact	/æ/ → /e/	4	
Intra-lingual Transfer	could	/ʊ/ → /ɒ/	3	37.35 %
	event	/e/ → /ə/	4	
	shot	/ɒ/ → /ʊ/	1	

today	/ə/ → /ʊ/	4
head	/e/ → /ɪ/	2
month	/ʌ/ → /ə/	1
busy	/ɪ/ → /ʌ/	3
push	/ʊ/ → /ʌ/	1
success	/ə/ → /ʌ/	4
submit	/ə/ → /ʌ/	5
wind	/ɪ/ → /aɪ/	1
live	/ɪ/ → /aɪ/	2

Inter-lingual transfer was occurred because of the first language interference. Brown (2000:97) point out that interference is the process which involved previous language system into the present language. In inter-lingual transfer, the students mispronounced English short vowel in the words “English”, “reply”, “pretty”, “build”, “wolf”, “misery”, “absent”, “month”, and “watch” based on the way of those vowels were pronounced as its written same as in Indonesian language system. This case was referred into inter-lingual transfer because the students still used Indonesian language system as their first language in pronouncing English short vowel sounds.

The other inter-lingual transfer case was replacing English short vowel sound of /æ/ into /e/ such as in English words by the students. Cahya (2017:6) said that this error was appeared because the students do not know about vowel sounds in English language. The students changed the /æ/ sound with /e/ sound because of the /æ/ sound does not available in Indonesian language. Thus, the students used the /e/ sound as the closest sound with the /æ/ sound. This case also referred into inter-lingual transfer because of Indonesian language as the students’ first language was involved in pronouncing English short vowel sounds.

Beside inter-lingual, intra-lingual transfer was appeared in this research as the source of error. Intra-lingual transfer refers to the unsuccessful learning English language as the foreign language. The English words “could”, “event” and “shot” were pronounced incorrectly by the students. They produced /kɔld/ for the word “could” which should be referred for the word “cold”, produced /ivən/ for the word “event” which should be referred for the word “even”, and produced /ʃɒt/ for the word “shot” which should be referred for the word “shoot”. Purba et al (2019:187) said that this error was occurred because the students didn’t have the material about phonetic symbols yet. They still confused how to pronounce English short vowel sounds in English words correctly.

The next source of error in intra-lingual transfer was overgeneralization. Overgeneralization is the process of overusing particular rule incorrectly in target language (Brown, 2000:98). For example the letter “o” can be pronounced as /ʊ/ and /ə/ sound such as in the words “wolf” /wɒlf/ and “person” /pɜːnsən/. This rule leded the students overused /ʊ/ and /ə/ sound for the letter “o” in English words. According to the data gained from pronunciation test, most of the students mispronounced the letter “o” of the word “today” as /ʊ/ instead of /ə/ sound and the letter “o” of the word “month” as /ə/ instead of /ʌ/.

Furthermore, most of the students overused the rule about the letter “u” that can be pronounced as /ʌ/ sound such as in the words “run” and “stuck”. In this research, the letter “u” in the words “busy” /bɪzɪ/, “push” /pʊʃ/, “success” /səkkses/,

and “submit” /səbmit/ mispronounced by the the students as /ʌ/. Some of the students also had an error in pronouncing the letter “ea” in the word “head” because of overgeneralization the rule in pronouncing the word “lead”. This case also was happened in the research conducted by Cahya (2017:6) who found that the participants pronounced incorrectly the word “student” as /stʌdənt/ instead of /studənt/ and the word “great” as /grit/ instead of /greit/.

The other source of error in intra-lingual transfer was appeared because of spelling interference. Most of the students pronounced the English words like they were spelled. For example, they produced the /ai/ sound for the letter “i” in the words “wind” and “live” instead of /ɪ/ sound. The same case was happened in the research conducted by Jam et al (2014:141). They found the participants produced the /ai/ sound for the letter “i” in the word hidden instead of /ɪ/ sound. It was happened because of overgeneralization spelling rule in pronouncing English short vowel sounds.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it showed that the /æ/ sound is the most frequent error in pronouncing English short vowel sounds made by the students with the percentage 36.15%. The English short vowel /æ/ sound was the most difficult to be pronounced by the students because there is no /æ/ sound in Indonesian language. The unfamiliarity of the /æ/ sound made the students replaced the /æ/ sound with the /e/ sound. Also, the researcher found that inter-lingual transfer is the significant source of error in pronouncing English short vowel sounds made by the students with the percentage 62.65%. Rather than intra-lingual transfer, inter-lingual transfer is the source of error that the most appeared because most of the students still tend to use Indonesian language system in pronouncing English words.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the students who have been studying English for a long time even the most intelligent students had pronunciation error because they had never been taught pronunciation from their English teacher. The researcher recommends the English teachers can give the students some explanation about where the sounds are made in learning pronunciation and its phonetic symbols even without specific pronunciation teaching in syllabus. Also, the English teachers can give the students some corrections as feedback when the students had an error in pronouncing English language.

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