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## ANALYSIS OF COMMON ERRORS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS IN PRONOUNCING VOWEL SOUNDS

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to analyze common errors of English language learners in pronouncing vowel sounds. This study was conducted on grade 11 IPA 2 and IPS Al Wasliyah students using a qualitative approach with in-depth interview methods and direct observation in the classroom. The results showed that difficulties in pronouncing vowel sounds were caused by linguistic interference from the mother tongue, lack of speaking practice, and less interactive learning methods. The vowel sounds most often mispronounced by students include /e/, /o/, /æ/, /i:/, /ɪ/, /ʌ/, and /ə/. Direct practice-based learning methods, the use of audiovisual media, and a supportive classroom environment have proven effective in improving students' pronunciation skills. In addition, positive acceptance of feedback and students' initiatives in correcting pronunciation errors also support the learning process. This study recommends the implementation of more interactive learning strategies, such as group discussions, roleplay, and the use of speech recognition technology to help students overcome vowel pronunciation difficulties and increase their confidence in communicating in English.*

**Keywords:** *Pronunciation Errors, Vowel Sounds, English Language Learning, Linguistic Interference, Interactive Learning Methods*

### INTRODUCTION

Empowerment of pronunciation mastery in English is often a major obstacle for learners in Indonesia, especially because of the fundamental differences in the phonetic systems between English and Indonesian.(AMALIA, 2020). This difficulty is especially evident in the pronunciation of vowel sounds, where vowels in English display much wider variations compared to vowels in Indonesian. These pronunciation errors not only affect language fluency, but also students' confidence in communicating. According to research conducted by Febriani & Sya (2022), low motivation and habits of speaking English contribute to this difficulty. On the other hand, Muslich (2018) shows that inconsistencies between spelling and pronunciation in English also exacerbate this pronunciation problem.

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A study by Jaya (2012) revealed that students often replace English vowel sounds with more familiar sounds from their own language, indicating interference from their mother tongue. Oktavia (2018) added that students' low mastery of segmental and suprasegmental phonemes is the main cause of pronunciation errors. Furthermore, research by Suwartono (2019) shows that learning methods that do not incorporate active speaking practice tend to worsen these pronunciation errors.

Most of the existing studies have discussed various aspects of pronunciation errors in English, but there is still a lack of specific analysis related to the vowel sounds that are most often mispronounced by Indonesian learners. Therefore, this study is designed to fill this gap by identifying and analyzing specific vowel errors and developing exercise recommendations that can help students improve their pronunciation.

This study was designed with the main objective to address the problem of vowel pronunciation that is often mispronounced by English language learners in Indonesia, by identifying the most frequently problematic vowel sounds and compiling and providing exercise recommendations that can help students improve their pronunciation. The hope of this study is to contribute to the development of more effective English language learning methods, especially in improving the quality of students' pronunciation. It is hoped that the results of this study will increase students' awareness of the importance of correct and accurate pronunciation in English, enable teachers to design and implement more effective learning methods in teaching vowel pronunciation, and provide more specific and focused exercise resources to help students correct their pronunciation errors. Through this initiative, this study aims to facilitate substantial improvements in English language teaching and learning, ensuring that students can develop their English language skills more competently and confidently.

### **THEORETICAL STUDY**

#### **1) Linguistic Interference Theory**

Linguistic interference is a phenomenon that occurs when the structure of the mother tongue influences the way a person learns and uses a second language. In the context of learning English by native Indonesian speakers, many students tend to have difficulty with vowel pronunciation due to significant phonetic differences between the two languages. For

example, in English, there are vowel sounds such as /æ/ that do not exist in the Indonesian phonetic system, so students often replace them with more familiar sounds, such as /a/ or /e/.

This interference is not only limited to the replacement of vowel sounds but also affects intonation and rhythm in pronunciation. Indonesian speakers may find it difficult to adopt English intonation patterns that tend to be more varied. In addition, the position of syllable stress in words often differs between the two languages, which can change the meaning of English words if not pronounced correctly.

To address this problem of linguistic interference, English language education in Indonesia needs to include in-depth phonics lessons, teaching students not only about individual sounds but also about how those sounds interact in words and phrases. Instruction should include intensive listening practice and repeated pronunciation practice, allowing students to hear and imitate accurate pronunciation models.

Strategies that teachers can use to reduce the effects of this interference include using technology such as speech recognition software that can provide students with instant feedback on their pronunciation. In addition, working with native speakers or using audio and video materials from native English speakers can provide direct and relevant examples of correct language use. (Tilman & Nurhayani, 2019).

## **2) Communicative Process Model**

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model focuses on the functional use of language in real situations as the primary means of language learning. This approach emphasizes the importance of speaking and listening as skills that must be developed through meaningful practice. In practice, CLT requires students to engage in tasks that require them to use English actively, such as role-plays, discussions, and collaborative projects.

However, the implementation of CLT in Indonesia is often hampered by the lack of opportunities for students to practice speaking in real situations. Many classes are still dominated by passive grammar teaching, where students listen and take notes but rarely speak. To overcome this, teachers can create more communicative situations in the classroom, for example by setting tasks that require students to ask and answer questions in English, or organizing debates and presentations.

Teacher training also needs to be improved, with a focus on methods to encourage student interaction and spontaneous, natural use of the target language. The use of interactive media and online resources can also be very supportive, providing a platform for students to interact in English more broadly and deeply.

The measurement of success in this communicative approach is not only seen from grammatical accuracy but also from the students' ability to communicate effectively. Continuous evaluation and constructive feedback are important to help students improve and perfect their speaking skills.(Munandar et al., 2021).

### **3) Psychology of Learning Motivation**

Motivation is a key component in language learning, influencing how much students are willing to engage in the learning process and how much effort they put into improving their skills. In the context of English language learning, motivation can come from a variety of sources, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsically motivated students may enjoy the learning process itself or feel a sense of accomplishment in mastering a new skill, while extrinsic motivation may stem from a desire for good grades, recognition from teachers or parents, or future career prospects.

Teachers can increase student motivation by making lessons more relevant to their lives, connecting the material being taught to its use in real-life situations. This can include topics that are of interest to students, such as popular culture, music, or technology. Additionally, setting clear, achievable goals can help students feel more directed and motivated to achieve those goals.

The use of rewards and incentives can also be effective in increasing motivation. This can be verbal praise, certificates, or other forms of recognition that demonstrate student achievement. However, it is important for teachers to balance this with promoting intrinsic motivation, so that students learn to value the learning process itself and are motivated to continue developing their English skills even without external rewards.

### **4) Contrastive Phonetic Theory**

Contrastive Phonetics Theory is useful in identifying and explaining phonetic and phonological differences between two languages that may affect second language learning. In

the Indonesian context, this is particularly relevant because many English sounds, such as /θ/ and /ð/, do not exist in Indonesian. Understanding these differences can help teachers design lessons that focus on specific aspects of pronunciation that may be difficult for students.

This approach also helps in predicting the pronunciation errors that students are likely to make based on the phonetic structure of their native language. By knowing the types of errors that students tend to make, teachers can be more proactive in providing exercises and feedback that can address those specific problems before they become habits that are difficult to break.

To implement this theory effectively in teaching, teachers can use tools such as articulation charts, audio recordings of native speakers, and speech analysis software to demonstrate and correct how students produce certain sounds. Practices such as repeating words containing the target sounds, as well as integrating the phonemes into sentence and conversational contexts, can improve students' pronunciation fluency and accuracy.(Azura Fazira et al., 2023).

## **5) Utterance Error Analysis**

Error Utterance Analysis (EAU) is a technique used to understand the errors that learners make in speaking a second language. EAU involves identifying, categorizing, and analyzing errors to understand the reasons behind them and determine the most effective teaching strategies to address the problem. These errors can be phonetic, grammatical, or lexical, and often provide valuable insights into the ongoing language learning process.

In practice, EAU can help teachers identify consistent error patterns among a group of students, allowing for the development of targeted interventions that can be integrated into lesson plans. For example, if a group of students consistently mispronounce a particular sound, the teacher might decide to spend more time on that phoneme, using techniques such as pronunciation drills, songs, and stories that highlight that sound.

In addition, error analysis can be used to tailor individual teaching approaches, recognizing that each student may have unique needs and different errors. This allows for a more personalized and responsive education that can facilitate faster and more effective language development.

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By strategically applying the principles outlined by these theories, teachers can significantly improve students' English pronunciation skills in Indonesia, helping them to communicate more clearly and effectively in a global context.(Dimas Dimas et al., 2023).

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with data collection methods in the form of in-depth interviews and direct observations in the classroom. Interviews were conducted with students of grade 11 IPA 2 and IPS Al Wasliyah to explore their experiences in learning English pronunciation, the difficulties they faced, and the learning methods that were considered effective. The questions asked were designed to explore more deeply the influence of the mother tongue, the frequency of speaking practice, and students' responses to feedback given by teachers and friends. In addition, observations in the classroom were conducted to record students' behavior when practicing speaking and how the classroom environment affected their confidence in pronouncing English vowels. The data obtained were analyzed descriptively to identify the most frequent pronunciation error patterns, the learning methods preferred by students, and the factors that influenced their abilities. This analysis was also used to formulate recommendations for learning strategies that can help students improve their pronunciation effectively. Data validity was strengthened through data triangulation from interviews and observations, as well as verification of the results with respondents through the member check technique to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information obtained.

### **RESEARCH RESULT**

Based on the results of in-depth interviews conducted on grade 11 IPA 2 and IPS Al Wasliyah students, data was obtained that showed various common difficulties in pronouncing English vowel sounds. These difficulties arise due to various factors, including the learning methods applied, the learning environment available, and the influence of the mother tongue that affects students' articulation abilities. The following are the results of an expanded and more detailed analysis:

#### **1. Difficulty Pronouncing Vowels**

- a) /ε/ sound: Azhari stated, "The /ε/ sound in the word 'bed' is often confusing for me, especially when speaking fast." This shows that in fast speaking conditions, students have difficulty maintaining pronunciation accuracy. This difficulty can be caused by the lack

of intensive practice in pronunciation as well as the habit of speaking in Indonesian which does not have similar vowel variations.

- b) /ʊ/ sound: Revan said, "The /ʊ/ sound in the word 'foot' is a bit difficult for me because I'm used to shorter sounds." This confirms that the habit of pronouncing short vowels in Indonesian has a significant impact on pronouncing vowels in English.
- c) The /æ/ sound: Inaya admitted, "The /æ/ sound like in 'cat' is sometimes difficult for me to pronounce correctly." Pronunciation of the sound /æ/ which does not exist in Indonesian causes students to replace it with the sound /a/ or /e/.
- d) /i:/ and /ɪ/: Farhan and Miza often get the words "sheep" and "ship" mixed up. Farhan says, "Sometimes I pronounce it wrong as /ɪ/ like in 'ship'. It's confusing." This is because the distinction between long and short vowels is not recognized in Indonesian.
- e) Sound /ʌ/: Nabila said, "It sounds like in 'cup', which is /ʌ/. It feels weird on the tongue, like... it just doesn't fit." This difficulty arises due to the tongue's unfamiliarity in forming middle vowel sounds that are not common in Indonesian.
- f) /ə/ sound: Rian complained, "The /ə/ sound, like in 'banana'. Sometimes I'm confused about when to use it." This schwa sound is often ignored because it is not stressed in pronunciation, leaving students confused about its use.
- g) Sounds /æ/ and /ʌ/: Intan said, "Sometimes I mispronounce sounds like 'cat' and 'cut.' It's hard to tell them apart because they're so similar." The difficulty in distinguishing between these two sounds occurs because of the very subtle differences in articulation.

## 2. Student Interaction and Classroom Environment

- a) Self-confident

Inaya and Rian showed high levels of confidence because they often interacted in online games with foreign players. Inaya said, "I learned from playing online games. Talking to players from other countries is very helpful."

- b) Influence of Classroom Environment

Azhari stated, "The supportive classroom atmosphere makes me more comfortable in practicing." The interactive and supportive environment strengthens students' confidence in speaking English.

## 3. Preferred Learning Methods

- a) Audiovisual

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Miza loves learning through movies and TV shows. "I love watching English movies and TV shows. It makes me more interested in learning," she said. Audiovisual media helps students understand the context of more natural pronunciation.

b) Group Discussion

Azhari feels more comfortable with group discussions. "I often try to talk to my friends," he said. Group discussions encourage students to actively participate in learning.

c) Hands-on Practice

Rian said, "I usually talk to foreign friends, they sometimes correct my pronunciation." Direct practice has proven to be effective in correcting pronunciation errors.

d) Audio Media

Farhan admitted that he is more comfortable learning with podcasts. "I can repeat it over and over again until I really understand how to pronounce it."

#### **4. Response to Feedback**

a) Positive Acceptance

Farhan said, "The teacher often corrects our pronunciation. It helps a lot." Direct correction from the teacher allows students to immediately recognize and correct their mistakes.

b) Repair Strategy

Nabila said, "Sometimes I record my voice, then listen to it again to find out where the mistakes are." This shows high self-awareness and a strong desire to improve.

#### **RESEARCH DISCUSSION**

English vowel pronunciation which is still an obstacle for students in Indonesia is inseparable from various influencing factors. In this discussion, several aspects that contribute to this difficulty will be explained in more detail.

First, linguistic interference is the dominant cause of students' difficulties. Vowel sounds in English that do not have an equivalent in Indonesian cause students to have difficulty in pronouncing them. For example, Farhan and Miza have difficulty distinguishing the sounds /i:/ and /ɪ/, which results in errors in pronouncing the words "sheep" and "ship." This difference is often overlooked because in Indonesian there is no concept of long-short vowels.



Second, the learning methods used in class affect students' pronunciation skills. Direct practice-based learning, such as that experienced by Inaya and Rian through online games, is more effective than passive learning. The experience of speaking directly with foreign speakers helps them hone their speaking skills and correct mistakes.

Third, a supportive classroom environment has a positive influence on students' courage to practice speaking. An interactive classroom atmosphere encourages students to be more confident, as felt by Azhari. Teachers need to create a friendly learning atmosphere so that students are not afraid to make mistakes.

Finally, feedback from teachers and peers is very important. Farhan stated that corrections from teachers helped him improve his pronunciation. Meanwhile, Nabila took the initiative herself by recording her voice to detect mistakes.

By identifying these factors, it is hoped that teachers can apply more effective methods in teaching English vowel pronunciation and help students overcome their difficulties.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the difficulty in pronouncing English vowels among students of grade 11 IPA 2 and IPS Al Wasliyah is caused by several main factors, namely linguistic interference from the mother tongue, lack of speaking practice, and less interactive learning methods. Vowel sounds such as /ɛ/, /ʊ/, /æ/, /i:/, /ɪ/, /ʌ/, and /ə/ are the biggest challenges for students because they do not have similar equivalents in Indonesian. Direct practice-based learning methods, the use of audiovisual media, and a supportive classroom environment have proven effective in improving students' pronunciation skills. Positive responses to feedback from teachers and friends and students' initiatives in correcting pronunciation errors are the main supporting factors in the learning process. Therefore, a more interactive and practice-oriented learning strategy is needed, such as group discussions, roleplays, and the use of speech recognition technology, to help students overcome difficulties in pronouncing vowels and increase their confidence in communicating in English.

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