

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS DIFFICULTIES IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH VOWEL

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Abstract: *This research is a descriptive-quantitative research design which is aimed at investigating the difficulties of second semester students' English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Riau in pronouncing English vowel. The subjects of this study were the second semester students' English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Riau. 32 students employed in this study were given the Pronunciation Test. The findings of this study revealed that the student knew about their difficulties in pronouncing English vowel. This result showed that the participants had good pronunciation skill. Based on this research the mean score of second semester students of English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Riau were good.*

Key Words: *Pronunciation, English Vowel, English Education Study Program.*

MENGANALISIS KESULITAN MAHASISWA PENDIDIKAN BAHASA INGGRIS UNIVERSITAS RIAU DALAM MENGUCAPKAN VOWEL

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini adalah desain penelitian deskriptif-kuantitatif yang bertujuan menyelidiki kesulitan Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris siswa semester kedua di Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Riau dalam mengucapkan vokal bahasa Inggris. Subjek penelitian ini adalah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris mahasiswa semester kedua di Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Riau. 32 siswa yang dipekerjakan dalam penelitian ini diberi Tes Pelafalan. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa siswa tahu tentang kesulitan mereka dalam mengucapkan vokal bahasa Inggris. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa peserta memiliki keterampilan pengucapan yang baik. Berdasarkan penelitian ini, skor rata-rata siswa semester kedua Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Riau baik.

Kata Kunci: Pronunciation, English Vowel, Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris.

INTRODUCTION

English consists of four language skills; they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They are also classified into two kinds, the first kind of skill is productive skills such as speaking and writing, and the second one is receptive skills such as listening and reading. Every single skill is to make learners good in English.

In learning activities or teaching-learning process, it has been known that language has a function as a tool for communication. For example, when they have comprehended English very well they can communicate with people around the world. One aspect that is important for the students to be able to communicate in English very well is they have to be good at pronunciation. By listening to someone's pronunciation, it can be known whether the speaker is a native or nonnative speaker. Celce-Murcia (2006) states that pronunciation is the language feature that most readily identifies speakers as nonnative. If speakers make an mistake when pronouncing a word, the communication will not run well, it will make a misunderstanding.

Pronunciation is the ability to use the correct stress, rhythm, and intonation of a word in a spoken language. We may judge people by the way they speak, and so people with poor pronunciation may be judged as incompetent, uneducated, or lacking in knowledge (Kelly, 2000).

Pronunciation is one of the most parts of English to communicate with others since there are differences between the symbol and its sounds. When we communicate with other people we should not only have good pronunciation. Therefore, it is important to teach pronunciation. As Harmer (2000:183) states "that for all these people, being made aware of pronunciation issues will be of immense benefit not only to their products but also to their understanding of spoken English". Teaching pronunciation involves a variety of challenges. To begin with, the teacher often finds that they do not have enough time in class to give proper attention to this aspect of English instruction. When they do find the time to address pronunciation.

It might be difficult for Indonesian students to pronounce English words correctly, even they are asked to pronounce the word "*diamond*" for example, they might pronounce /diamon/. It is because of the difference between their mother tongue and English. The degree of difficulty in learning is also determined by the degree of difference between the two languages. The greater similarity between them, the fewer difficulties will be for students to learn the foreign language (Ramelan, 1985:5). The students often need to find a problem with pronunciation when they speak, read, or listen to English words. It might be caused by some internal and external factors. The internal factors came from the learner, such as motivation, interest, attitude, and intelligence. While, the external factor came from the outside of the learner, such as the situation and condition of the environment, and learning materials.

English pronunciation is a very essential role in communication because when speakers mispronounce some words or phrases, people can misunderstand. To reduce it, the teacher must equip the learners with a certain degree of accuracy and fluency in understanding, responding, and expressing himself in the language in speech for the learners communicatively in using the language.

Based on the previous explanation, I need to know the difficulties of the second-semester students in pronouncing the English vowels. The main point in this research is to know what vowel sounds are difficult to pronounce and what factors make the

second-semester students difficult to pronounce English vowel at English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty Universitas Riau.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted to the second semester students of English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Riau. Second semester students were selected as the sample of this research by using total sampling technique with the same rights and opportunities in a whole as a population. In this research, the amount of the sample is 38 students. But the writer only got 32 samples and from 38 samples there were 6 samples that failed because they did not complete the test. So, the total sample in this study was only 32 samples. The specific objective of this research was to find out the difficulties of second semester students of English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Riau in pronouncing English vowel.

In conducting the research, the writer collected the data by giving the Pronunciation Test. The result of this research, students' correct answers are calculated by using Microsoft Excel 2010 formula.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Students Pronunciation Test

In order to find out the difficulties, students' correct answers are calculated using Microsoft Excel 2010 formula. Based on the result, the pronunciation of semester students of English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Riau are classified into categories as presented in Table above

Pronunciation of /ɪ/

Table 1. Pronunciation of /ɪ/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|---------------------------------|----|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Bit | 14 | 43,8% | Good |
| 2 | Pinned | 12 | 37,5% | Good |
| 3 | I like to beat my finger | 2 | 6,3% | Excellent |

Table 1 above shows that there were 14 students (43, 8 %) out of 30 students mispronunciation in word "bit" "/bɪt/", some of them pronounce /bet/ in this word, this is good enough. There were 12 students (37,5%) out of 10 students mispronunciation in the word "pinned" this is good also. There were 2 students (6,3 %) of 32 students mispronunciation in the word "beat" this is excellent.

Pronunciation of /e/

Table 2. Pronunciation of /e/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|---------------------------------|----|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Bet | 17 | 53,1% | Fair |
| 2 | Mental | 5 | 15,6% | Excellent |
| 3 | These birds are so small | 15 | 47,0% | Good |

Table 2 above shows that there were 17 students (53,1 %) out of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "bet" /bit/, some of them pronounced /bed/ in this word, this is fair remark. There were 5 students (15,6%) out of 32 students mispronunciation in the word "mental" but this is excellent remark. There were 15 students (47,0 %) of 32 students have difficulties in the word "birds" this is good enough remark.

Pronunciation of /æ/

Table 3. pronunciation of /æ/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|----------------------------------|----|-------|--------|
| 1 | Bat | 25 | 78,1% | Poor |
| 2 | Mandarin | 10 | 31,3% | Good |
| 3 | Pattern words are too pat | 24 | 75,0% | Fair |

The table 3 above show that there were 25 students (78,1%) of 32 students made mistake in pronouncing "bat" /beg/, theirs pronounce is /be'g/ this is poor remark. Only 10 students (31,3%) of 32 students mispronunciation in word "mandarin" this is good remark. For the word "pat" 24 students or (75%) have difficulties to pronounce these words and it is fair.

Pronunciation of /ʌ /

Table 4. Pronunciation of /ʌ /

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|------------------------------------|---|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Rush | 4 | 12,5% | Excellent |
| 2 | Somebody | 0 | 0 | Excellent |
| 3 | Some of us are sleeping now | 0 | 0 | Excellent |

The table 4 above shows that only 4 students (12,5%) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing "rush" but it is excellent remark and there were no students made mistake in pronouncing "somebody" and "some" it is excellent also.

Pronunciation of /ɒ/

Table 5. Pronunciation of /ɒ/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|--|----|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Gone | 26 | 81,3% | Poor |
| 2 | Cross | 12 | 37,5% | Good |
| 3 | She is not my enemy, we are friends | 7 | 21,9% | Excellent |

Table 5 above shows that there were 26 students (81,3 %) out of 32 students mispronunciation in the word "gone", some of them have difficulties in pronouncing this word, this is poor. There were 12 students (37,5%) out of 10 students have difficulties in word "cross" this is good also. There were 7 students (21,9 %) of 32 students mispronunciation in the word "not" this is excellent remark.

Pronunciation of /ʊ/

Table 6. Pronunciation of /ʊ/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|-------------------------------|---|------|-----------|
| 1 | Pull | 2 | 6,3% | Excellent |
| 2 | Push up | 0 | 0 | Excellent |
| 3 | You have a good family | 1 | 3,1% | Excellent |

The table 6 above shows that there are 2 students (6,3%) of 32 students made mistake in pronouncing vowel /ʊ/ in the word "pull" /pʊl/, there is only 1 student (3,1%) of 32 students has difficulties in pronouncing the word "good" /gʊd/ and there are students did not have difficulties in pronouncing word "push up" this is excellent remark for all of the students.

Pronunciation of /i/

Table 7. Pronunciation of /i/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Peace | 13 | 40,6% | Good |
| 2 | Meaningful | 0 | 0 | Excellent |
| 3 | It's nice to meet you both | 10 | 31,3% | Good |

Table 7 above show that 13 students (40,6%) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing words "peace" it is good enough remark. There is no difficulties made by them in pronouncing the word "meaningful" it is excellent remark but 10 students (31,3%) also have difficulties pronouncing the word "meet" and it is good enough remark also.

Pronunciation of /ɜ:/

Table 8. Pronunciation of /ɜ:/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|---|----|-------|--------|
| 1 | Bird | 11 | 34,4% | Good |
| 2 | Pursue | 14 | 43,8% | Good |
| 3 | He dropped the shirt and stepped over to her | 17 | 53,1% | Fair |

Table 8 above shows that there are 11 students (34,4%) of 32 students made mistake in pronouncing word “bird” it is good enough, There were 14 students (43,8%) have difficulties in pronouncing the word "pursue" and it is good also. Int the end 17 students (53,1 %) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word “shirt” this is fair remark.

Pronunciation of /ɑ:/

Table 9. Pronunciation of /ɑ:/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|--|----|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Card | 15 | 46,9% | Good |
| 2 | Password | 16 | 50,0% | Good |
| 3 | He has been like a father to me | 7 | 21,9% | Excellent |

Table 9 above shows that there were 15 students (46,9%) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing word “card” and 16 students (50,0%) have difficulties in pronouncing the word "password" but it is good enough remark. There were 7 students (21,9%) from 32 students made a mistake pronouncing the word "father” and this is excellent remark.

Pronunciation of /ɔ:/

Table 10. Pronunciation of /ɔ:/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|---|----|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Horse | 6 | 18,8% | Excellent |
| 2 | Boarding | 5 | 15,6% | Excellent |
| 3 | She is a talented singer and also a good actress | 15 | 46,9% | Good |

Table 10 above shows that there were 6 students (18,8%) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "horse” /hɔ:s/. There were 5 students (15,6%) of 32 students who have difficulties in pronouncing vowel “ɔ:” in the word “boarding”. There

were 15 students (46,9%) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "also", it is excellent.

Pronunciation of /u:/

Table 11. Pronunciation of /u:/

| No | Words/sentences | F | % | Remark |
|----|--|----|-------|--------|
| 1 | Food | 15 | 46,9% | Good |
| 2 | Nose | 22 | 68,8% | Fair |
| 3 | It's not too late to change your mind | 24 | 75,0% | Fair |

The table 11 above shows that there were 15 students (46,9%) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "food" /fu:d/ and it is good remark. There were 22 students (68,8%) of 32 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "nose" and 24 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "too" but it is fair remark for both.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data of the results of this research showed that the second semester students of English education study program teacher training and education faculty of Universitas Riau got some English vowels is difficult to pronounce by the students are /ɒ/ (81,3%) it is very poor, /æ/ (78,1%) it is poor, /ɪ/ (43,8%) it is good, /e/ (53,1%) it is fair, /ʌ/ (12,5) it is excellent, /ʊ/ (6,3%) it is also excellent, /i/ (40,6%) it is good enough, /ɜ:/ (53,1%) it is fair, /ɑ:/ (50,0%) it is good, /ɔ:/ (46,9%) it is good and /u:/ (68,8%) it is fair.

In most languages, including Indonesian language, pronunciation follows predictable rules but not in English . Spelling is not a reliable guide to know how a word is pronounced. English must surely rank among the most irritating language when it comes to pronunciation. The same also happen to second semester students of English study program at teachers training and education faculty of Universitas Riau, the students still found difficulties in pronouncing English words especially in pronouncing English vowel. Furthermore, Baker (1982) says students of different mother tongue have different pronunciation problems.

Finally, the finding of this research shows that there was a difficulties of the second semester students of English education study program teacher training and education faculty of Universitas Riau in pronouncing English vowel. The data analysis shows that the t-test was found the difficulties of the second semester students of English education study program teacher training and education faculty of Universitas Riau in pronouncing English vowel.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions, the researcher has drawn some conclusions as follows to answer the research objective in the introduction. The result of the pronunciation test for the second semester students' English Education Study Program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Universitas Riau, out of 32 students sample 26 of students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "gone" and 25 students have difficulties in pronouncing the word "bat". This result shows most students that are taken as samples have difficulties in pronouncing English vowel.

Recommendation

Concerning the conclusion above, the researcher suggests the students to increase their pronunciation even though the mean score of students are excellent but there were few students' scores are poor. And also for other researchers, the writer suggests continuing this research to find out how to increase students' ability in pronouncing English vowel. Another suggestion is to continue this research to find out the difference students difficulties in pronouncing English vowel in Universitas Riau and other universities in Riau and the reasons for its differences. Hopefully, this study can give a new inspiration to the next researcher.

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