

PRONUNCIATION ERRORS IN STUDENTS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study is entitled Pronunciation Errors in Students' English-Speaking Performance. It aims at analyzing pronunciation errors found in students' speaking performance. Besides, this study also investigates the factors that cause pronunciation errors in student speaking performance. The data of this study were obtained from the results of a speaking test conducted on 8th Grader of Class C Students of SMP Negeri 2 Blahbatuh, Gianyar Regency, Bali, Indonesia. The test was done by asking students to briefly told their experiences during the holidays. The documentation method was used to obtain the data from oral material (speaking performance). A note-taking technique was applied to mark down the relevant data for the study. The data of the study were qualitatively analysed based on theory of phonological errors by Keshavarz (2012), and factors causing errors by Brown (2000). The analysis of this study was presented in informal methods. In the informal method, each problem in this study was presented narratively to make the analysis understood easily. The finding reveals that there are several errors found in students' speaking performance. Errors include pronunciation errors of English vowels, consonants, and diphthong. The cause of errors in pronunciation of English consonants and English vowels is the intralingual and interlingual factors. Pronunciation errors of English consonant are mostly caused by interlingual factors, while vowel pronunciation errors tend to be caused by intralingual factors.

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1. Introduction

Speaking skill is one of four language skills that are very important to master. Ur (1996:120) considered speaking as the most important skill among four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) because people who know a language, are referred to as speakers of that language. Speaking is intended to be getting something done, exploring ideas, working out some aspects of the world, or simply being together. If the students can speak English fluently that can help them to easy communicate and also explore their idea. Speaking English well also helps students to access up-to-date information in fields including science, technology and health and so on (Richard, 2008: 19).

According to (Cameron, 2001: 40; Brown, 2004: 140) Speaking is a productive skill in the organs of speech to express meaning which can be directly and empirically observed. There are three important points within this definition of speaking skills. First, by productive skill is meant the ability of a person to actively produce the language by coordinating the organs of speech such as the lips, tongue, teeth, vocal cords, larynx, pharynx, etc. Second, to express meaning means that the purpose of producing language in verbal communication is to deliver ideas and experiences so that the speaker can convey meaning to the listener and others. Third, being able to be directly and empirically observed means that the implementation of speaking can be directly heard or seen and empirically measured in the speaking process by looking at the correctness

and effectiveness of the speaker.

Almost students in Indonesia, who learn English as Foreign Language, create their mindset for learning English as a negative stereotype specially to speak English. Most people especially English learners, speaking a foreign language has often meant a difficulty (Nunan, 2003:342).

It is inevitable that learners make mistakes in the process of foreign language learning. These errors are part of the learning process (Brown, 2000). This also happened to English learners in Indonesia, including the 8th grader class C students at SMP Negeri 2 Blahbatuh. Based on preliminary observations, students still make errors when speaking English, especially in the pronunciation aspect.

Odden (2006) states that word pronunciation is included in the area of phonology. Phonology is a branch of linguistics that examines the structure of sound in a language. Furthermore, according to Odden, phonology includes two fields of study, phonemic and phonetic. Phonemic is a field of study that studies distinctive sound; while phonetics is the field of science that studies speech sound or how a sound is pronounced (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1992).

Pronouncing words correctly is essential in English because different pronunciations can give different meanings. For example, the words now, know, and no. English learners often pronounce the words the same as pronounce [no]. The pronunciation error will certainly lead to errors in understanding the speaker's speech to the person who hears the utterance. As a result there will be a misunderstanding for both participants in communication (Wedana & Suryani, 2016).

This article describes the errors in pronunciation of consonants and vowels in English made by 8th grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Blahbatuh and the factors that cause those errors. Error analysis, mainly on pronunciation aspect at the phonological level is important to be done in order to provide information for teacher or language instructor regarding deficiencies in the existing learning process, teaching and training that have been done, to plan remedial teaching programs and to be able to know aspects of language that have not controlled by students.

2. Theoretical Framework

A. Vowel and Consonant in English

As in other languages, the sounds in English are divided into two major groups, namely vowel and consonant. When viewed from the letters, then English has five vowels, namely A, I, U, E, O. But when viewed from the aspect of sound, then English has many variations of vowel sounds. American English vowels and British English vowels has little difference (Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo, 1998).

In general, English has 22 vowels that are divided into two, namely monophthongs and diphthongs (Swan and Smith, 2001). Monophthong is vowel sounds symbolized by one sound symbol, such as vocal sounds [ɒ] and [ə].

The second vowel group is diphthongs. Diphthongs are vowel symbolized by two sound symbols such as [ei] and [ɔi]. Besides English also has a group of vowels called triphthongs, namely vowel sounds symbolized by three sound symbols such as [ɛɪə] and [aʊə].

English learners from Indonesia often have difficulty in pronouncing some English vowels that are different or even not possessed by Indonesian. Some of the difficulties experienced by English learners are as follows (Swan and Smith, 2001; Ur, 1996):

1. English has long and short vowel sounds like [i] and [i:] in the words *bit* and *beat*, but English learners in Indonesia often say both vowels in a separate way.
2. English language learners in Indonesia say the sound [æ] and [e] with the same, as the word *hat* should be pronounced [hæt] but pronounced [het].
3. Learners often have difficulty pronouncing the sound [ə] as in the word *away*.
4. Learners also often pronounce diphthong sounds as monophthong sounds like the sound [ei] in the spoken word *we*.

English has twenty-four consonant. There is no difference between the American English and British English consonants. Consonant variations are only in allophones or variations in several phonemes (Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo, 1998).

With regard to consonant sounds, learners have no difficulty in reciting / pronouncing consonant sounds that also exist in Bahasa Indonesia such as [t] and [n]. But for consonant sounds that are not in Bahasa Indonesia, learners often have difficulty in saying them. In detail the difficulties experienced by English learners in Indonesia are as follows (Swan and Smith, 2001; Ur, 1996):

1. Learners often have difficulty pronouncing th sound that has two variations, namely [θ] and [ð] so that it is replaced by the sound [t] as in the word [θln] spoken [tln]
2. English learners often say [p], [t], and [k] almost the same sound [b], [d], and [g]. In addition, they say the sounds [p], [t], and [k] equally well when they occur at the beginning, middle and end of words.
3. Learners cannot pronounce sounds [b], [d], and [g] as voiced sounds.
4. Sound [v] is rarely used in Bahasa Indonesia, so learners often say [v] with [f] like the word [faiv] pronounced [faif]
5. The sound [ʃ] is often replaced by [s] as in the word *sheep* [ʃlp] pronounced [slp].

B. Errors Vs Mistakes

A distinction has been made between errors and mistakes. Errors are considered to be systematic, governed by rule, and appear because a learner's knowledge of the rules of the target language is incomplete (Keshavarz, 2012). Thus, they are indicative of the learner's linguistic system at a given stage of language learning. They are likely to occur repeatedly and not recognized by the learner. Thus, only the teacher or researcher can locate them (Gass & Selinker, 1993).

Systematic errors reveal something about the learner's underlying knowledge of the target language to date, i.e., his transitional competence. Errors are regarded as rule-governed since they follow the rules of the learner's interlanguage. For instance, a Persian-speaking learner of English who makes frequent use of subject-verb inversion in indirect questions (e.g. I don't know where does he live) does, in fact, follow the grammar of his interlanguage which allows the use of such structures at that particular stage of development.

In contrast to errors, mistakes are random deviations, unrelated to any system, and instead representing the same types of performance mistakes that might occur in the speech or writing of native speakers, such as slips of the tongue or pen, false starts, lack of subject-verb agreement in a long-complicated sentence, and the like (Keshavarz, 2012).

Mistakes, which are due to non-linguistic factors such as fatigue, strong emotions, memory limitations, lack of concentration, etc., are typically random and can be corrected by the language user if brought to his attention. Corder (1973 in Keshavarz, 2012) seems to be right in assuming that native speakers and second language learners are subject to similar external conditions (i.e., memory lapses, tiredness, etc.) when using first or second language, respectively. However, Corder appears to have overlooked the fact that the effect of such non-linguistic factors on first and second language users is not the same. Anyone who has attempted to express himself in a second or foreign language under such conditions would agree that he could have performed far more effectively in his native language (Keshavarz, 2012).

C. Phonological Errors

There are several types of phonological errors. Four main types of phonological errors are (Keshavarz, 2012: 93):

1) Phonological Errors Lack of Certain Target Language Phonemes

Some phonological errors are caused by certain phonemes (vowels and consonants) in the target language in the learner's mother tongue. For example, the English phonemes [θ], [ɪ], and [ð] are not in Bahasa Indonesia. This causes native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia to have difficulties in learning English. For example, they might pronounce think [θɪŋk] to [tɪŋk] or then [ðen] to [den].

2) Differences in syllable structures of L1 and L2

Phonological errors are also caused by differences in syllable structure in the target language and the learner's native language. Compared to English, Bahasa Indonesia has a smaller range of syllable types. Bahasa Indonesia has 11 syllable types, while English has 18 syllable types. This makes it difficult for my English learners to recite words that do not have syllable structures in Bahasa Indonesia.

3) Differences in spelling and pronunciation of words

The third source that causes phonological errors is the spelling pronunciation of word. Learners tend to pronounce words according to the spelling of the word. For example, *wild* is pronounced [wɪld], *top* is pronounced [tɒp], *flood* is pronounced [flud], *watched* is pronounced [wɑtʃed].

4) Problems in silent letters

The fourth cause of phonological errors, similar to the third type of error, is the problem of silent letters. In English, certain letters are spelled but not pronounced. This causes many problems for learners of English as a foreign language because learners tend to pronounce these silent letters. For example, *bomb* is pronounced [bamb], *calm* is pronounced [kalm], and *honest* is pronounced [hanest].

D. Cause of Error

Error is a form of deviation that can be observed from second language learners which reflects the level of learner competency. Errors must be distinguished from mistakes. When making an error the learner cannot correct the mistake himself. Meanwhile, when someone makes a mistake, he can correct his own mistakes when the error is shown (Brown, 2001).

Brown (2000) defines the causes of errors into four parts, namely interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategies. The same thing was stated by James (in Abi Samra, 2003: 3). According to James (1998), the factors that cause errors are interlingual, intralingual, and induced errors. This study only limits the errors caused by intralingual and interlingual factors.

Interlingual factors refer to interference factors from the mother tongue or learner's first language. This error occurs because of differences in the mother tongue system and the language system studied (Wilkins, 1980). This happens at an early stage in the second language learning process. Before learning a second language/foreign language, learners have mastered the mother / first language system, so that when producing sentences in the language they learn, learners still tend to use the mother tongue / first language system (Brown, 2000).

The second cause of errors in learning English is intralingual transfer factor. This factor refers to errors that occur because of the language system being studied. Brown (2000) states that this factor is the main factor of mistakes made by learners. For example, the *g* in the word *finger* is pronounced / dʒ / so the pronunciation becomes / flɪŋdʒər / Error because this factor occurs because the learner generalizes the rules in the language he is learning (McKeating, 1981; Brown, 2000). Linguists classify four factors included in intralingual transfer, namely overgeneralization, ignorance of rules restriction, incomplete application of rules, and false concept hypothesized" (Richard, 1974).

Relating to errors in phonological aspects, especially how to pronounce / pronounce words in English made by English learners, Ur (1996) states that several things that cause these errors include:

1. Certain sounds in English are not owned by Bahasa Indonesia so learners tend to replace them with other sounds that are similar to the sound [ð] which is replaced by sound [d].
2. Certain sounds which are separate phonemes in English but are not separate phonemes in Bahasa Indonesia, such as sound [ɪ] and [i:]. In Bahasa Indonesia there is only one type of sound [ɪ] so learners often do not distinguish *ship* and *sheep* pronunciation.

3. Methods

The research method of this study includes the data source, method and technique of collecting data, method and technique of analyzing data, and also method and technique of presenting data. Each part of research method is explained further in the following section.

A. Data Source

Data from this study were obtained from the results of speaking tests conducted on 8C grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Blahbatuh, Blahbatu sub-district, Gianyar Regency, Bali, Indonesia. The test is done by asking students to briefly describe their experiences during holidays. Students take turns conveying their experiences verbally in front of the class.

B. Method of Collecting Data

The method of collecting data used in this study was documentation method. Documentation method was used to obtain the data from oral material (speaking performance). Note taking technique was applied in order to mark down the relevant data for the study. There are several stages in order to collect the data. Firstly, students are asked to talk about activities carried out on holidays, student speech are recorded with a voice recorder. Secondly, students' voice recordings are listened carefully to get the pronunciation errors made by students. Thirdly, the pronunciation mistakes made by students are recorded. Then, the data obtained are grouped based on vocal, consonant, and diphthong sound errors to make it easier to analyze. The data were analysed based on the theories adopted in this study.

C. Method of Analysing Data

The data of the study were qualitatively analysed. Qualitative means that the data is analysed by using deep explanation or description and not involving measurement or statistics. This study applied triangulation technique. The data collected was checked and rechecked whether the data were valid or not, then doing cross-check on the data through some theories.

D. Method of Presenting Analysis

The analysis of this study was presented in informal methods. In the informal method, each problem in this study was presented narratively in order to make the analysis understood easily.

4. Results and Discussions

A. Pronunciation Errors of English Consonant

There are some errors in vowel pronounced by students. One of them are errors in the pronunciation of sound / θ / and sound / ð /.

[tɪŋk]	[θɪŋk]	think
[wɪt]	[wɪθ]	with
[təɡeðər]	[təgeðər]	together
[dæt]	[ðæt]	that

From the table above it can be seen that the most mistakes made by students are errors in the interdental sound pronunciation, namely [θ] and [ð]. When saying a word that contains interdental sounds, students replace the sound with alveolar sound, which is the sound [t] and [d] as in words *think* and *with*, *together* and *that*.

This error occurs because of differences in the consonant sound system in bahasa Indonesia or Balinese as the learner's first language with the consonant sound system in English as the target language. Indonesian

does not have *th* voiceless interdental sounds [θ] and *th* voiced sound [ð], so to pronounce words that contain these sounds, students replace the two sounds with sounds that are close to, namely [t] for [θ] and sound [d] for [ð].

[dɪpɪt]	[dɪfɪt]	defeat
[pri]	[fri]	free
[paɪər]	[faɪər]	fire

Students also make mistakes in pronouncing the sound of consonants [f] whether found at the beginning of a word or the middle of a word. Students tend to pronounce the sound [f] with the sound [p]. In data 1, students pronounce the words *free* [pri] and *fire* [paɪər] which are ideally free to pronounce [fri] and fire to recite [faɪər]. In addition, the same error is found in the pronunciation of defeat [dɪ'fɪt] which is pronounced by students as [dɪ'pɪt]. In this case, the students recite the sound [f] which is a labiodental consonant, fricative, noiseless with the sound of bilabial [p], inhibited, noiseless. This error occurs due to the absence of both sounds in the local language (for example Balinese) even though it is in Indonesian.

The sound that is also often mispronounced by students is the alveopalatal sh [ʃ] sound. This sound is often pronounced the same as the alveolar sound s [s] as in the words *she* and *shock*.

[si]	[ʃi]	she
[sək]	[ʃək]	shock

This error is due to the differences in the consonant sound system in Indonesian or the learner's first language and English. In Indonesian or the learner's first language there is no alveopalatal sound [ʃ] so students replace the sound with alveolar sound [s] which is considered the same as alveopalatal sound [ʃ]. In addition to the sounds that are not possessed by the Indonesian language system or the learner's first language, students as English learners also make mistakes in pronouncing the sounds that are in Indonesian, namely [z] sounds. For these sounds, the wrong pronunciation done by students is on the vibration removal of the vowel cord when pronouncing both sounds, so that the [z] sound that should be voiced is pronounced like the sound [s] which is voiceless sound. Incorrect pronunciation of the two sounds occurs when the position of the two sounds is in the middle and end, as in the word *represent*.

[rɛprɛsɛnt]	[rɛprɛzɛnt]	represent
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This error occurs because in the Indonesian system the sound [z] is never in the middle or final position. Therefore, when meeting words containing one of these sounds in the middle or final position, students tend to recite the sound [s].

B. Pronunciation Errors of English Vowel

The vowel sound that is also often incorrectly pronounced by learners is the sound [æ]. When saying this sound, the learner tends to simplify it and replace it with the sound [ɛ]. Sound [æ] is a combination of sound [a] and sound [ɛ], so as to pronounce correctly, the learner has difficulty and simplifies it by replacing the sound with an approaching sound, as in the following example:

[dɛt]	[ðæt]	that
[hɛpi]	[hæpi]	happy
[hɛv]	[hæv]	have
[fɛmili]	[fæmɒli]	family

Vowel sound mistakes that are also often made by learners is vowel / ɒ / which are pronounced as / ɔ / . Both sounds have the same orthographic form, "o". From the data obtained, this sound pronunciation error is found in the words *work* and *concern* below:

[wɔrk]	[wɜrk]	work
[kɔnsɜrn]	[kɒnsɜrn]	concern

The letter o in both words should be pronounced with / ɒ / in the word *concern*, and / ɜ / in the word *work*, but learners pronounce it with the sound / ɔ / . This happens because students tend to pronounce words such as the orthographic form in bahasa Indonesian.

Another pronunciation error in monophthong that was also found was the pronunciation of the letter u. In the English system the letters "u" have several variations of pronunciation, including / ə / as in the word yogurt [jəʊgɜrt], / ju / as in the unit words [ju:nɪt] and / ʌ / in the bug [bʌg]. Students tend to pronounce all words containing the letter u with the sound / u / , as in the following data:

[usuəl]	[juzuəl]	usual
[dɪfɪkʌlt]	[dɪfɪkəlt]	difficult

From data above it can be seen that the letter u in the usual word that should be pronounced [ju] is pronounced as [u] by students. Likewise, difficult words should be read [ə], but read [u].

The next error related to vowel pronunciation is pronunciation of diphthongs. In pronouncing diphthong sounds, English learners tend to replace them with monophthongs sounds, or single sounds. Some errors obtained from the data are as follows:

[əgo]	[əgəʊ]	about
[mɒbɪl]	[məʊbaɪl]	mobile
[mɒtɔr]	[məʊtər]	motor

From the table above, it can be seen that in reciting the sound of diphthongs, students tend to replace them with monophthong sounds. Like "o" in the words *ago* and *mobile* should be pronounced as diphthong [əʊ], but students pronounce it as monophthong [o]. This also occurs in diphthongs [aɪ] in the word *car* [məʊbaɪl] which is pronounced /ɪ/. In pronouncing the diphthong sound, students replace the diphthong sound with a monophthong sound that resembles the diphthong.

C. Factors that Cause Pronunciation Errors in Student Speaking Performance

Data analysis shows that the occurrence of consonant sounds pronounced by 8th grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Blahbatuh are mostly caused by interlingual factors, namely differences in English systems and first /second language learners, in this case discussing Bali and Indonesian. However, some forms of pronunciation of consonants are also caused by intralingual factors, which are factors in the English system itself.

Interlingual factors that cause errors in pronunciation of consonant sounds are the absence of some consonant sounds in Indonesian, such as interdental sounds [ð] and sounds [θ], alveopalatal sounds [ʃ]. Another interlingual factor is the difference in how to pronounce voiced and voiceless sounds. In the English sound system, the pronunciation of voiced and voiceless sounds such as [b] and [p] sounds are very different in the vibrations of the vowel cord, but in Indonesian, or in Indonesian, these voiced and voiceless sounds are not too different in their pronunciation.

While intralingual factors are factors in the English system itself. Based on the analyzed data, students were likely errors for generalization. Students also faced difficult to distinguish between the phoneme [ð] and [d]. The difference between the spelling of a word and its pronunciation makes the learner make a mistake,

such as when actually saying the word, the letter t which should be pronounced [tʃ] but spoken [t] by the learner. This often causes learners to make mistakes.

For vowel pronunciation errors, data analysis shows that the occurrence of pronunciation errors in English vowels by English Literature study program students is mostly caused by intralingual factors, namely factors within the English system itself. Vowel sound system in English has more variations than the sound system in Indonesian. In addition, the inconsistency of the English vowel sound system also causes learners to make mistakes.

5. Conclusions

From the above analysis it can be concluded that the forms of pronunciation of English consonant sounds made by 8C grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Blahbatuh include replacing certain consonant sounds that are not found in Indonesian with consonant sounds that are approaching.

The forms of pronunciation errors in English vowels by 8C grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Blahbatuh include vowel sound replacement, and simplification of vowel sounds. The cause of errors in pronunciation of English consonants and English vowels is the intralingual and interlingual factors. Consonant pronunciation errors are mostly caused by interlingual factors, while vowel sound pronunciation tends to be caused by intralingual factors.

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