

## STUDENTS' ERRORS IN PRONOUNCING OF ENGLISH VOWELS

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the second-semester English students' errors in pronouncing English vowels. This was a descriptive quantitative study. The sample of this study was 25 students of the English Study Program of the University of Pasir Pengaraian. This study's data were collected using a pronunciation test consisting of 20 English vowel sounds. The error analysis focused only on the two types of vowel sounds: long and short. Then, the rubric of pronunciation by the Council of Europe was used to analyze the data of this study. The findings of this study revealed that the students made 267 pronunciation errors. The researcher gave 60 words given in the test, and it was found that there were 15 words (25%) pronounced at more than half accurate level, 25 words (41,6%) pronounced at half accurate level, and 20 words (33,3%) pronounced in less than half accurate level. Thus, it could be concluded that not all students can pronounce English vowels accurately.

**Keywords:** Error Analysis, Pronunciation, Vowels

### INTRODUCTION

Learning a target language for college students is challenging. Even though they are English students, they still face difficulties. The difference between the target language system and their mother tongue is why they get problems using their target language. It is merely seen when they pronounce the target language words, specifically English words. Many college students lack English knowledge, primarily in pronouncing English words accurately

and correctly. Then, the rules of English are also complicated, including pronouncing the words. For that reason, students must master English pronunciation well.

In fact, as an essential language, pronunciation plays a big role. Good grammar cannot guarantee whether people will truly understand what others say if they have bad pronunciation. Then, it results in bad communication. In fact, in understanding what people say, the correct

pronunciation is the greatest attention and must be considered. In other words, good grammar is not enough without accurate pronunciation. For English students, studying pronunciation is a must. This skill is commonly included in speaking classes.

English students need to master pronunciation skills. Sembiring & Ginting (2016) supported that pronunciation should be taught in all English subjects because the basic purpose of using language is communication. However, it should also be remembered that the only way to improve pronunciation skills is by listening so that we can know the correct pronunciation of words.

Some examples of pronunciation can be taken. For example, the situation is in a restaurant when someone says soap /səʊp/ instead of soup /su:p/. From that example, it is known that the pronunciation is incorrect, so that it will build a misunderstanding. Thus, the correct pronunciation must be known by students to avoid misunderstanding, like the problem above. However, it will be difficult for speakers of different languages to understand the incorrect pronunciation. For this reason, studying pronunciation skills is a must for students.

Furthermore, Zhang and Yin (2009) explained the effects of poor pronunciation on students: low self-confidence, limited

Journal of English Education Vol. 9 No. 1, 2023  
<http://journal.upp.ac.id/index.php/JEE>  
 P-ISSN: 2459-9719, E-ISSN 2597-7091  
 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30606/jee>

friend, and the bad view from others. Exley (2005) supported that in English classrooms taught by teachers from Australia, Indonesian students feel afraid of making mistakes, so they become passive, shy, and quiet. They do not want to involve in-class participation because they fear their friends will laugh at them.

Students would face difficulties with English pronunciation because it is not their first language. Like the Indonesian language, they pronounce English like they pronounce Indonesian words. In other words, they read them as a group of letters. For instance, the word *knife* in English is pronounced as /naïf/ because the first letter of the word is silent. However, in Indonesian, the first letter is also pronounced so that it will be /kənaif/.

Another example is the word *scene*. In English, it is pronounced as /si:n/. However, Indonesian students usually mispronounce the word to be /ski:n/. These two examples show that the student's first language influences their target language in pronunciation. For this problem, students need to learn pronunciation. It aims to avoid misunderstanding because wrong pronunciation will lead to wrong messages for speakers and listeners in different languages.

Making pronunciation errors or mispronunciation is a common issue in

learning a language. According to Darus (2009), one of the linguistic studies focusing on students' mistakes is error analysis. Those errors will cause mispronunciation. Students' knowledge about the rules of English pronunciation will be known by doing the error analysis. After obtaining the errors and grouping them based on their types, teachers, for example, can decide what should be done for the students to decrease making errors. The students must be able to differentiate the English pronunciation from their first language pronunciation to avoid making errors.

As a matter of fact, In English vowel pronunciation, the second-semester English students at the University of Pasir Pengaraian face some problems. In pronouncing English words accurately, they faced difficulties. There were some

causes of the student's difficulties, such as their first language was not English, so their daily communication did not use English. Then, students' neighborhoods also did not support them using English frequently, which was why they only used English during class or on certain occasions. Their English teacher mainly focused on their vocabulary mastery when they studied English in elementary school until senior high school. Moreover, the lack of strategies and methods used in the classroom became why students could not pronounce English words correctly.

Based on the problems explained, the purpose of this research was to find out the types of Errors in Pronouncing English Vowels made by the second-semester students of the English Study Program at the University of Pasir Pengaraian.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1. The Concepts of Errors**

There are many definitions of error stated. Brown (2007) explains errors as deviations due to the lack of competence of students in using the target language. Errors can be known explicitly and are useful for educators to improve the teaching method. Then, students can use the errors to study

more by knowing their incorrect use of the target language rules.

The two almost similar deviations are errors and mistakes. Jabben (2015) compares them that errors are the results of students' lack of knowledge of the linguistic system of the target language, and the students cannot correct the errors. Meanwhile, mistakes result from

carelessness or anxiety in using the target language, and students can correct mistakes because they know the linguistic systems well.

From the definitions above, the researcher concludes that if the students use deviant utterances and then they can correct them, it is a mistake. However, it is an error if the students use anomalous reports and cannot fix them. If the students make mistakes, they need a qualified teacher to correct them.

## 2.2 The Concept of Pronunciation

The use of speech organs in producing sounds is called pronunciation. Adult Migrant English Program Research Centre [AMEP] (2002) explain that pronunciation consists of certain sound that has meaning, speech aspects outside individual sound level, and quality of voice. In addition, Eripuddin and Kasyulita (2019), pronunciation is undeniably important in communication. A learner with good pronunciation in English is more likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas. Pronunciation is greatly important for English education students.

Niati and Nurhasanah (2018) also suggest pronunciation is important, especially in speaking skills. A key to communication in which the listener will

catch what is said is pronunciation. It is the technique of how to put language in sounds. Therefore, practicing and studying pronunciation systematically will help students to be successful in pronunciation. Yates (2002) in Abbass (2016) state that the sound production that has meaning is called pronunciation. Richard and Schmidt (2006) added that the way of English sound production is called pronunciation. A misunderstanding will appear if the speakers pronounce incorrectly in delivering information. Thus, English pronunciation must be learned seriously to avoid misunderstanding.

## 2.3 English Vowel

Oral language with two competing definitions changed into a sound is called vowel in the phonetics system. Commonly, it is used as an open vocal tract so that the tongue does not touch the lips, teeth, or roof of the mouth. The phonetics are as ah" /ɑ:/ or "oh" /oʊ/. Building-up of air pressure at any point above the glottis does not occur here.

In addition, Ambalegin and Arianto (2018) explain that by passing the discussion through the mouth's diverse forms with the tongue and lips' different positions, the discussion stream is moderately stopped by the short subjects at the glottis, and vowel sounds are delivered. However, in terms of

length, vowels are commonly explained. The length determines the stress given, and the mouth position was also considered whether it works from low to high, back to front. The rounded lips level also can make it. In English, when stressed, short vowels can be long. Thus, based on the explanation, it is known that vowel is the production of human speech organs in the forms of sounds

when the teeth, tongue, or lips do not block the breath flowing out through the mouth.

Moreover, compared to consonants, vowel phoneme pronunciation has many variations. Twelve monophthongs and eight diphthongs based on the British English variety have been selected. Firstly, the description of the systems is done, and the calculation of the differences is done later.

**Table 1. Vowel Sound and Example**

No	Vowel Sounds	Example
1.	/ i: /	Eat, seed, and see
2.	/ I /	It, sit, and city
3.	/ e /	Egg, get, and went
4.	/ æ /	Like, add, and cat
5.	/ ɑ: /	Art, father, and far
6.	/ ɒ /	Lot, hot, and not
7.	/ ɔ: /	Call, four, and raw
8.	/ ʊ /	Put, could, and to
9.	/ u: /	Too, blue, and food
10.	/ ʌ /	Cup, luck, and up
11.	/ ɜ: /	Learn, turn, and sir
12.	/ ə /	Ago, mother, and away
13.	/ eɪ /	Rain, say, eight
14.	/ ɒə /	Go, home, and oat
15.	/ aɪ /	Five, fight, and high
16.	/ aʊ /	House, out, and now
17.	/ ɔɪ /	Boy, join, and oil
18.	/ Iə /	Near, here, and beer
19.	/ eə /	Where, air, and there
20.	/ ʊə /	Pure, tourist, and sure

#### a. Long Vowels Sound

The association of vowels with two X-slots within the syllabic nucleus is

known as long vowels. Vowel /i/ in the word *heed* pronounced as /hi: d), and vowel /ɔ:/ in the word *hall* pronounced as /hɔ: l/) can be examples of long vowels (Mc. Cully, 2009). It was known that side by side in a syllable, two or three vowel sounds appear. A nucleus is the vowels sound inside a word. However, the second or third vowel is not pronounced when vowels sound work as a group to produce a long vowel sound. The sound is also longer than the short vowel because of the technique to pronounce them. The words “make” /meɪk/, “mate” /meɪt/, ‘twine’/twain/, ‘note’/nəʊt/, and ‘cube’ /kju:b/” are examples of long vowel sounds. Around high-low and front-back vowels, long vowels are produced. The five long vowels are first introduced here, and in the same situation, these vowels are, of course, longer than the short vowels. According to Jones D (2016) and Arquitectura et al. (2015), the situation is said because, in the next explanation, various lengths of all English vowel sounds depending on the situation: sound types, addition, omission, or stress.

The symbols consisting of one vowel symbol plus a length mark made of two dots [:] shows that these vowels are long. Those are [i:], [ə:], [ɪ:], [ɔ:], and [u:]

explained by Jones D. (2020). These vowels are, of course, not similar to short vowels in terms of length and quality. The comparison can be seen in these examples: [i] with [i:], or [u] and [u:] or [ɪ] and [a:]. The tongue shape and position and lip position cause the difference.

Based on the explanation above, it is known that long and short vowels have different symbols. Even if the length mark is omitted, the long and short vowel symbols would still not be similar. The mark is used only to make students know that those are long vowels or short vowels.

Related to the quality, vowels [ɜ:] and [ə:] are almost the same. The reason for this should exist. The sound will be as long as it will be seen later, especially in syllables if the syllable's coda is ended by a letter or sound [r].

i = Front High Vowel [di:p]

a:=Back Low Vowel [ka:]

ɔ:= Back Mid-Low Vowel [dɔ:]

u: =Back High Vowel [ku:k]

ə: = Front Central Vowel [ðə: ]

Thus, it can be concluded that long vowels have longer sounds compared to other vowels.

## **b. Short Vowels Sound**

According to Mc. Cully (2009), a simple vocalic segment occurring within a syllable's nucleus is called a short vowel sound. When a vowel sound in a word, the short vowel is produced. Of course, the pronunciation of this vowel is shorter than the previous long vowels. It can be seen in the following examples: 'mat' /mæt/, 'pet' /pet/, 'twin' /twin/, 'not' /nɒt/ 'cub' /kʌb/. From those examples, it is known that the sound is not long. Lip rounding, tongue placement, and tongue height not so significantly higher and lower, not so in back and front, not so closes and opens determine the short vowel location. Compared to Indonesian vowel sounds, the sounds are different.

Moreover, ambiguities in detecting and identifying short vowels are faced by English students. For example, in the following sounds: sounds [ɒ], [o] [ʌ] in word body, sounds [ə], [ɜ], and [e] in word nurse, they usually keep in suspense of the exact locations. Those ambiguities can be solved by looking at the simplicity of one of them that can represent another sound (s). An example is the word *body*. It can be explained as the sound in [bɒdi] and the

nurse in [nɜ:z]. The process of diphthong construction can also avoid ambiguities. It was done by grouping short vowels and ending by centering and closing.

The simplicity of short vowels can be perceived when the problem is deciding and identifying what sound should be found. Nevertheless, the present study is better ended until the case is in the consonant, syllable, stress, and intonation for the understanding in having a good performance even in producing and comprehending the sounds. The kinds of vowel sounds, such as long vowels, diphthongs, and triphthongs, are also explained in this study.

Theoretically, Hadfield (1984) explains that if the [e] sound is a nucleus with a single onset as a voiced consonant and the single coda is a vocal consonant, For sound [e] is more consistent. In the words can [kæn], have [hæv], and back [bæk], the sound [æ] can be seen. Sound [bæk] is a little bit longer, while sounds [kæn] and [hæv] are a little bit shorter. As well as possible and slower, it can be practiced.

## METHODS

This was a descriptive quantitative study. Creswell (2013) explains that a quantitative study provides numerical data, and the calculation is obtained through questionnaires, surveys, or other instruments using statistical analysis. This study aimed to find the second-semester English students' errors in pronouncing English vowels at the University of Pasir Pangaraian. One class consisting of 25 students from the English Study Program was chosen as the sample of this study. The instrument of this study was in the form of a test consisting of 60 words. The data of this study were collected through the following stages: *Firstly*, the materials about English vowel pronunciation were given to the students. *Secondly*, a pronunciation test was given to the students. It aimed to obtain the students' Errors in pronouncing English vowels. *Thirdly*, the researcher asked them one by one to pronounce all the words in the instrument of the research. *Fourthly*, they are pronounced when they pronounce the words are recorded in audio form.

Furthermore, the data were analyzed by doing these four stages:

### 1. Identifying Errors By the Raters

Here, the researcher compared the students' pronunciation with the correct phonetic transcription based on the raters' analysis.

### 2. Describing Errors

The errors were described and grouped into their types after they were obtained.

### 3. Explaining Errors

The researcher explained why errors occur based on the factor causing the error. It could be described from the interview result of the students in the test.

### 4. Error Evaluation

Based on the results, evaluating and concluding was the last stage in analyzing errors. However, it was confusing which type of errors needed to pay attention to and studied in the classroom.

The guidance from the following scoring rubric for pronunciation taken from the Phonological scale revision process report, Council of Europe (2016), was used to obtain the scores of the student's pronunciation.

**Table 2. Rubric Scoring For Pronunciation**

Score	Description
1	Virtually, All Inaccurate
2	Mostly Inaccurate
3	Slightly Less Than Half Accurate
4	Half Accurate



5	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
6	Mostly Accurate
7	Virtually All Accurate
8	All Accurate

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### 3.1 Students' Errors in Pronouncing English Vowels

In this study, the raters gave a score on the students' pronunciation of English

vowels. Three raters analyzed students' pronunciation. From the students' pronunciation of English vowels, the researcher wrote students' scores in the following table.

**Table 3. Students' Pronunciation Quality**

No	Vowels Sound	Type of Vowel	Words	Average Score	Description
1	/ i: /	Long Vowel	Eat	4,3	Half Accurate
			See	5,6	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Seed	4	Half Accurate
2	/ I /	Short Vowel	City	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Sit	3,3	Less Than Half Accurate
			It	3,3	Less Than Half Accurate
3	/ e /	Short Vowel	Egg	4,3	Half Accurate
			Get	4,6	Half Accurate
			Went	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
4	/ æ /	Short Vowel	Like	5,6	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Cat	4,3	Half Accurate
			Add	5	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
5	/ a: /	Long Vowel	Father	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Far	3,3	Less Than Half Accurate
			Art	4,3	Half Accurate
6	/ ɒ /	Short Vowel	Hot	5,6	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Not	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Lot	4,6	Half Accurate
7	/ ɔ: /	Long Vowel	Boy	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Raw	4,3	Half Accurate
			Four	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Put	4	Half Accurate

8	/ʊ/	Short Vowel	Could	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			To	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
9	/u:/	Long Vowel	Blue	4,3	Half Accurate
			Food	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Too	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
10	/ʌ/	Short Vowel	Cup	4	Half Accurate
			Luck	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Luck	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Learn	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
11	/ɜ:/	Long Vowel	Turn	4	
			Sir	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Ago	4,3	Half Accurate
12	/ə/	Short Vowel	Mother	4,6	Half Accurate
			Away	4	Half Accurate
			Say	4,3	Half Accurate
13	/eɪ/	Long Vowel	Rain	5	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Eight	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Home	5,6	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Oat	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
14	/əʊ/	Long Vowel	Go	5,6	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Fight	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			High	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
15	/aɪ/	Long Vowel	Five	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Out	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Now	4,6	Half Accurate
			House	4,6	Half Accurate
16	/aʊ/	Long Vowel	Join	5,3	Slightly More Than Half Accurate
			Oil	4,6	Half Accurate
			Join	4,6	Half Accurate
17	/ɔɪ/	Long Vowel	Here	4,3	Half Accurate
			Beer	4,3	Half Accurate
			Near	4,3	Half Accurate
			Where	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
18	/ɪə/	Long Vowel	Air	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			There	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Sure	4,3	Half Accurate
19	/eə/	Long Vowel			

20	/ ʊ ð /	Long Vowel	Pure	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate
			Tourist	3,6	Less Than Half Accurate

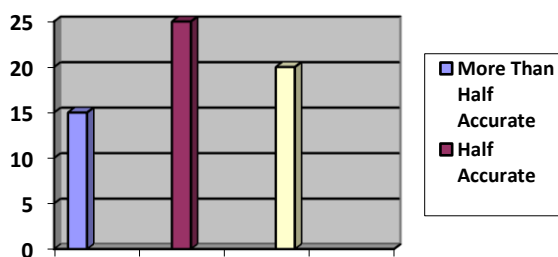
Based on the calculation of the scores from the raters, the finding revealed that the average student's quality in pronouncing the English vowels in this research was not fully accurate. Their best result was more than half correct in pronouncing English vowels. To explain it,

the researcher put them into the following table and diagram. From 60 words given in the test, it was obtained that there were 15 words (25%) pronounced more than half accurately, 25 words (41,6%) pronounced half accurately, and 20 words (33,3%) pronounced less than half accurately level.

**Table 4. Percentage of Students' Pronunciation**

No	Pronunciation Quality	Quantity	Percentage
1	More Than Half Accurate	15 Words	25%
2	Half Accurate	25 Words	41,6%
3	Less Than Half Accurate	20 Words	33,3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Diagram 1. Students' Pronunciation of English Vowels**



From the diagram above, it is known that there were 15 words (25%) pronounced more than half accurately, 25

words (41,6%) pronounced at half accurately, and 20 words (33,3%)

pronounced at less than half accurately level.

### Discussion

From the data analysis about pronouncing the English vowels by the students, the researcher found several numbers of an error made by every student. The focus was on the long and short vowel errors from 20 English vowels. The finding revealed that the students made 496 pronunciation errors in long vowel sounds. Meanwhile, for long, short vowel sounds, it obtained 267 pronunciation errors. From 60 words given in the test, it obtained that the average of the students' result in pronunciation was 15 words (25%) pronounced at more than half accurate level, 25 words (41,6%) pronounced at half accurate level, and 20 words (33,3%) pronounced in less than half accurate level.

Meanwhile, Donal (2016) conducted a study in Indonesia and found

that students face difficulties pronouncing diphthongs [av] because the student's first language is Indonesian. Not only that, their English knowledge was limited. In addition, relating to borrowing their target language, they failed at it. It can be seen in the word *horizon*, [hə:raizn]. For that word, of course, the students utter that word like how to utter an Indonesian word.

If it was compared with the research finding above, there was a similarity where most students had difficulties pronouncing English words correctly. Based on the findings of this study, it was known that in pronouncing long and short vowels, many students could not do it accurately. It is caused by their lack of using English as their daily communication language, so students rarely listen and pronounce English words. Then, the lack of motivation to improve their English skills, especially speaking, leads them to lack English pronunciation ability.

### CONCLUSIONS

From the findings, no students could pronounce all of them correctly from 60 words consisting of long and short vowels. From the results of the analysis, it was found that there were several numbers of errors made by every student. This study focused on the long and short vowel errors from 20

English vowels. In long vowel sounds. The finding revealed that the students made 496 pronunciation errors.

Meanwhile, it was known that the students made 267 pronunciation errors for long and short vowel sounds. Moreover, the finding is 975 pronunciation errors made by

students for long vowels, while for short vowels, there were 525 errors. Furthermore, it was known that the quality of average students' pronunciation of English vowels in

this research was not entirely accurate. Their best result was more than half correct in pronouncing English vowels.

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