

PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS AND FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PRONUNCIATION OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS AND STUDENTS FROM ABROAD

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to find out some of the problems that often occur related to English pronunciation and solutions regarding how to pronounce words correctly. Both students from Indonesia and students from abroad. We compared the pronunciation of these students and analyzed the location of the mistakes that often occur in pronouncing the words we have prepared. We chose this title because we want to know the differences in English pronunciation between Indonesian students and students from abroad who make English as their second language. We conducted this analysis relying on our friends who are students from Malaysia and the Philippine. Of course, each one of them has a different pronunciation, due to their knowledge and daily speaking. It can be concluded that there are differences in the sound system between English and the native language as well as several factors including phonetic ability, native language and learning English pronunciation.

Keywords: English Pronunciation, Phonetic ability, native language, Sound System

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the communication tools commonly used by human to interact with each other. Language is very important for humans communicate with other people to convey what they want to convey and to make other people understand. In communicating, correct pronunciation has an important role to ensure communication runs smoothly and understand each other.

Pronunciation is the sound of a spoken language. Pronunciation will determine meaning to be conveyed to the other person, because if we mispronounce the word, it will cause listeners to misunderstand and it can even hinder communication from running smoothly. English pronunciation is not simple, not only taking about how to pronounce words, but we need to know that English pronunciation is relatively difficult because saying words is different from writing a few words. This is caused by complex English. Jones in his book argues that, "good pronunciation is produced by organ speech

as way of speaking that is clear and can be understood by everyone and vice versa bad speech will lead to bad meaning (1909:4). Difficulties in pronouncing words in English occur because of variations in the backgrounds of different people. Everyone has a different pronunciation style depending on the knowledge they have acquired about English and this can be due to differences such as locality, early social environment and also the way it is applied by an individual. Pronunciation needs to be continuously trained and built, because it is pronunciation that will determine whether the listener will clearly receive the meaning of pronunciation. Correct pronunciation is very good for oral communication, but we do not have to speak like native speakers to have good pronunciation, we just need to speak and know where the difficulties are in speaking English. Someone will be considered successful in speaking English when the other person can understand what is being said. Actually, difficulties in speaking English are caused by several factors such as: mother tongue, location of residence, ethnic group, social class and everyday social environment.

METHOD

In this study we used the interview method where we gave a few words to several students, including 2 Indonesians students, 2 students from Malaysia, and 1 student from the Philippines. The way we interviewed the three students was by online interview via the Zoom application and continued with voice recordings which we then used as materials for analysis. After listening to recordings of their voices, we found several errors in the pronunciation of each word given, from the stressed of word, intonation, and aspiration.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

By analyzing as well as collecting the respondent answer, we find out that there many kinds of problem faced by the Indonesians students and students from abroad in learning English especially in pronouncing words in English

Table 1. Indonesian Students

WORD	IPA	STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION
Consist	/kənˈsɪst/	/konsist/
Determine	/dɪˈtɜːrmin/	/dɪtɜrmain/
Emphasize	/ˈemfəsaɪz/	/emfəsaiz/
Deserve	/dɪˈzɜːrv/	/deːzɜrv/
Catch	/kætʃ/	/cach/
Present	/ˈpreznt/	/ˈpreznt/
Review	/rɪˈvjuː/	/rɪːviu/
Stranger	/ˈstreɪndʒər/	/ˈstreɪndʒər/
Hesitate	/ˈhezɪteɪt/	/ˈhezɪteɪt/
Around	/əˈraʊnd/	/əːraʊnd/

THE ə VOWEL (“SCHWA”)

The most frequently occurring vowel in English is a, which is always associated with weak syllables. In quality it is mid (i.e., halfway between close and open) and central (i.e. halfway between front and back). It is generally described as lax - that is, not articulated with much energy. Of course, the quality of this vowel is not always the same, but the variation is not important. Not all weak syllables contain a, though many do. Learners of English need to learn where a is appropriate and where it is not. To do this we often have to use information that traditional phonemic theory would not accept as relevant - we must consider spelling. The question to ask is: if the speaker were to pronounce a particular weak syllable as if it were strong instead, which vowel would it be most likely to have, according to the usual rules of English spelling? Knowing this will not tell us which syllables in a word or utterance should be weak - that is something we look at in later chapters - but it will give us a rough guide to the correct pronunciation of weak syllables. Based on the table above, students who do not have much knowledge of English have no difficulty in pronouncing schwa.

Table 2. Malaysian Students

WORD	IPA	STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION
Consist	/kənˈsɪst/	/kənˈsɪst/
Determine	/dɪˈtɜːrmin/	/dɪˈtɜːrmin/
Emphasize	/ˈemfəsaɪz/	/ˈemfəsaɪz/
Deserve	/dɪˈzɜːrv/	/dɪˈzɜːv/
Catch	/kætʃ/	/kætʃ/
Present	/ˈpreznt/	/ˈpreznt/
Review	/rɪˈvjuː/	/rɪˈvjuː/
Stranger	/ˈstreɪndʒər/	/ˈstreɪndʒə/
Hesitate	/ˈhezɪteɪt/	/ˈhezɪteɪt/
Around	/əˈraʊnd/	/əˈraʊnd/

As we can see from the table above, almost all of the words they said were correct, both from the schwa and the placement of the stress. However, they cannot pronounce words that contain elements of aspiration because they have background that is not an English education student, they do not know the characteristic of the word aspiration and they only mention words they usually hear.

THE NATURE OF STRESS

Stress has been mentioned several times already in this course without an explanation of what the word means. The nature of stress is simple enough: practically everyone would agree that the first syllable of words like “stranger”, “catch”, “present” is stressed, that the middle syllable is stressed in “review”, “consist”, and that the final syllable is stressed in “around”, “hesitate”. Also, most people feel they have some sort of idea of what the difference is between stressed and unstressed syllables, although they might explain it in different ways.

The production of stress is generally believed to depend on the speaker using more muscular energy than is used for unstressed syllables. Measuring muscular effort is difficult, but it seems possible, according to experimental studies, that when we produce stressed syllables, the muscles that we use to expel air from the lungs are often more active, producing higher subglottal pressure. It seems probable that similar things happen with muscles in other parts of our vocal apparatus.

LEVELS OF STRESS

Up to this point we have talked about stress as though there were a simple distinction between “stressed” and “unstressed” syllables with no intermediate levels; such a treatment would be a two-level analysis of stress. Usually, however, we have to recognize one or more intermediate levels. It should be remembered that in this chapter we are dealing only with stress within the word.

PLACEMENT OF STRESS WITHIN THE WORD

In order to decide on stress placement, it is necessary to make use of some or all of the following information:

- i. Whether the word is morphologically simple, or whether it is complex as a result either of containing one or more affixes (i.e., prefixes or suffixes) or of being a compound word.
- ii. What the grammatical category of the word is (noun, verb, adjective, etc.).
- iii. How many syllables the word has.
- iv. What the phonological structure of those syllables is.

Table 3. Philippines Student

WORD	IPA	STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION
Consist	/kənˈsɪst/	/kənˈsɪst/
Determine	/dɪˈtɜːrmin/	/dɪˈtɜːrmin/
Emphasize	/ˈemfəsaɪz/	/ˈemfəsaɪz/
Deserve	/dɪˈzɜːrv/	/dɪˈzɜːv/
Catch	/kætʃ/	/kætʃ/
Present	/ˈpreznt/	/ˈpreznt/
Review	/rɪˈvjuː/	/rɪˈvjuː/
Stranger	/ˈstreɪndʒər/	/ˈstreɪndʒə/
Hesitate	/ˈhezɪteɪt/	/ˈhezɪteɪt/
Around	/əˈraʊnd/	/əˈraʊnd/

The pronunciation of student from the Philippines is almost the same as that of Malaysian students because what they have in common, is to make English as a second language. However, the stressed on the words and aspirations are still the main thing that must be improved. There are several aspirational words such as “consist”, “catch”, and “present” which she cannot pronounce correctly.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language, so most of them are not fluent in English. However, the Indonesian students we interviewed proved that English in Indonesia is not bad as they think because they are able to read the given words even though they are not completely correct. Based on the entire table above, students' difficulties in pronouncing words that have elements of aspiration. Most of them pronounce the aspiration words in a flat way. Not only the aspiration words, but also the stressed on the word also does not sounds perfect. Even though Malaysian students and student from Philippines are accustomed to using English in their daily lives, they still only pronounce words according to the way they usually hear or can be said to be the pronunciation of their mother tongue.

CONCLUSION

Because English is still a "foreign language" to Indonesian student's mind, many students have not been encouraged yet to improve their English language skills especially in speaking. In addition, their most important obstacle is because some of their English teachers and lecturers did not actively communicate using English when they were studying English in the classroom. They are more often taught in one-way-learning method. The were usually only asked and forced to memorize vocabularies and then have them to write some sentences or stories in English.

From the interview results, more than 50% of the respondents had stated some reasons why they still lacked or did not understand the pronunciation of English words. Here are their statements related to the reasons why they still did not have enough skills in pronouncing English word:

1. They were rarely trained by teachers in schools regarding to English pronunciation.
2. They rarely practiced speaking and reading aloud English texts in the classroom.
3. They only learned how to make sentences instead of listening and speaking practices at school.
4. Learning methods of their teachers in schools were very passive.
5. They were only asked to memorize vocabularies including Verb-I, Verb-II and Verb-III when learning English at school.
6. They were only required by the teacher to learn independently by looking up English dictionaries and told them to memorize some vocabularies related to their English lessons.
7. Their teachers also seldom spoke actively using English while teaching English in the classroom.

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