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## THE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE AND PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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**Abstract:** Individual's English pronunciation is influenced by various causes such as locality, early influences, and environment. Specifically, native Indonesians who learn English since they are in elementary school reveal that they still have problems to pronounce some English words. Hence, this study was conducted under the consideration of the important role of pronouncing English well by focusing on students' perspective and problems in English pronunciation, and their causes. This study employed descriptive qualitative by collecting the data from the questionnaire and interview with 10 students in the first semester at one of the higher education institutions in Cirebon. This study aims at discovering the problems faced by students in pronouncing English words and their causes appeared. The result shows that based on students' perspective in learning pronunciation, 50% of students claimed that pronunciation course had a significant effect for their pronunciation and the rest 50% believed that there was no effect in their pronunciation. Additionally, based on their pronunciation problems, 60% of students always found difficulty in pronouncing English words, while the rest 40% found it easy. The causes of their problems were their mother tongue interference, sound system differences between LI and L2, and unknown how to read the phonetic transcription.

**Keywords:** students' perspective, problems in pronunciation, phonetic transcription.

### INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language where most countries in the world use English in everyday life and some others study English as their second language. Additionally, in this modern era, the need to speak English is very high because this language is very useful in various fields such as in technology, education, science,

industry, business, etc. as a means of communicating verbally and written. In line with this, to be able to compete globally, Indonesian people are strongly encouraged to understand and use English in daily life by speaking in English.

In speaking skill, pronunciation takes an important role so that the interlocutor can understand the messages delivered by the speakers. It is in line with Brown (2000), the existence of pronunciation aims at creating understanding conversation clearly and comprehensible. Pronunciation goal focuses on elements that enhance and improve communication. In speaking English, the communication between the speaker and interlocutor has a mutual relationship which affects each other. It means that to make interlocutor understand the message that has been said, the speaker has to speak clearly.

Dalton & Seidlhofer (1994) state that pronunciation plays an important role in doing conversation in communication as the production of significant sound in two senses. First, pronunciation is as the production and reception of sound speech, and second, pronunciation is as a reference to acts of speaking. It can be defined that pronunciation as a part of speaking skill is used to produce the speech and achieve meaning in the context of use. Additionally, when it talks about skill, parts in it can be learned, so is pronunciation.

Pronunciation in the mother tongue, sometimes, still has frequent errors, whereas in second language pronunciation, in this case, is English. In learning English pronunciation, some aspects may make non-native learners produce some errors. The effect is not only because English is not their native language but also because of some factors. Cunningham (1998) contributes the following important factors that can influence the teaching-learning pronunciation, namely age, amount and type of prior pronunciation instruction, aptitude, learner attitude and motivation, and native language or mother tongue. Those factors sometimes threaten students to learn English deeply, so that those factors must be overcome soon to avoid the continuous fear to learn English, especially pronunciation.

In line with this, learners will have difficulty to speak with native-like pronunciation. Though some studies have been conducted related to students' perspective on English pronunciation, this study attempts to identify the problems in the area of pronunciation and their exact reasons to carry out those problems and discover appropriate techniques that can help the Indonesian students to speak English with better pronunciation in which Indonesian people have had various mother tongues and accents that can be the fundamental barriers in learning English pronunciation. It is interesting to observe the perspective about Indonesian people who learn English as their second language especially in phonetics and phonology and discover the students' problems in producing English pronunciation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Pronunciation plays an essential role in speaking. To make the interlocutor understand the message in a conversation, besides having systematic sentences, the speaker must have good pronunciation too. Good pronunciation needs the

understanding of phonetic and phonology. Phonetic is a subfield of linguistics which studies the sound system of a specific language or set of languages. It is about the physical production and perception of the speech sounds. Meanwhile, phonology describes the way sounds function within a given language or across languages. It tends to be the physical production of the writing (Herman, 2016; Roach, 2000).

According to Boyer (1997), pronunciation involves how the words in a particular language produce right sounds, and how the sounds are produced in the flow of speech (not just in isolated words). Besides that, the important part of intelligible pronunciation in English also comprises how to stress words correctly and use intonation appropriately. In this case, the accent is a prevalent term to describe how individuals pronounce a particular language, and give the reason that languages always have to be pronounced when speaking (Andersson, L. & Trudgill, 1990).

Cunningham (1998) contributes the following important factors that can influence the teaching-learning pronunciation, namely age, amount and type of prior pronunciation instruction, aptitude, learner attitude and motivation, and native language or mother tongue.

Age, according to Cunningham (1998), is considered as the first factor affecting teaching-learning pronunciation. There are various controversial cases over the effect of age-related to language acquisition, specifically pronunciation. Some experts say the younger the students, the better the second language acquisition. It indicates that adults find pronunciation more difficult than children and that they probably will not achieve native-like pronunciation. However, the result of a number of researches revealed different results.

In addition, teaching-learning pronunciation is also influenced by the prior experiences of students and teachers. Their experiences are related to the instruction achieved by the students and given by the teachers. Pronunciation instruction may affect students' success with current efforts to achieve their proficiency level. Learners at higher language proficiency levels may have developed habitual-systematic pronunciation errors. Therefore, the amount and type of prior pronunciation instruction must be concerned by the students and teachers.

Another important factor that can affect the teaching-learning pronunciation is aptitude. Each individual has their capacity in learning a language: both their native language and their second or foreign languages. This capacity becomes controversial so that some research has been conducted to discover the results. Some researchers believe that all learners have the same capacity to learn a second language because they have learned a first language.

Besides aptitude, to achieve the understanding of learning pronunciation, attitude and motivation play an essential role. They include nonlinguistic factors that must be paid attention by learners. Attitude focuses on individual's personality toward the target language, culture, and native speakers, while motivation focuses on an individual's learning goals. Additionally, the degree of acculturation (including

exposure to and use of the target language) and personal identity issues can also support pronunciation skills development.

After the aforementioned factors that come from the individual, most researchers agree that mother-tongue also support the success of teaching-learning pronunciation. Individual's first language affects the pronunciation of the target language and becomes a significant factor in accounting for the accents of target languages. Sometimes, it is difficult for learners to pronounce English words because those words pronunciation are different from their native language pronunciation. If they cannot say the correct version of a particular word then they cannot conduct communication correctly. The instruction of pronunciation helps students to have a better understanding of native speakers and develops their ability to conduct communication easily and effectively (Gilakjani, 2016).

Some reports revealed the problems of the second language learner. For example, it is discovered a few difficulties regarding pronunciation. Students have difficulties in making foreign sounds in other languages with their organ of speech. Moreover, students also find difficulties in producing the sounds in proper places with accurate usage of pitch, stress, and length (Jones, 1972; Ghorbani, 2019; Pardede, 2018).

Goldsmith (1995) mentions that teachers in some languages still discover contrastive analysis (CA) useful, and phonology is one of them. In phonology, transfer exists more than any other area. Besides that, phonology can figure the first language speaker through his or her accent while speaking or reading aloud using a second language. Indonesian scholars of language have tried to compare and distinguish various aspects of the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) with those of English. These comprise brief contrastive analysis (CA) outlines to comprehensive analyses.

Dardjowidjojo (1978) tries to explain the pronunciation problems of Indonesian students in learning English. It is revealed that the sources of those problems reside in the differences between the two languages. Overcome several problems of them is by doing exercises based on careful contrastive analysis. It can be the best solution for the teaching of pronunciation, and the findings of the disparities and similarities.

Furthermore, in some hurdles appear in the teaching-learning pronunciation, Brown (2000) claims that the interference of the first language system with the second language system becomes the fundamental hurdles to second language acquisition. A scientific-structural analysis of the two languages would result in the taxonomy of linguistic contrasts between them which in turn would permit the linguist to predict the difficulties that students or learners would encounter.

Storkel (2007) confirms that grammatical structure becomes the major source of difficulty experienced by the students in learning another language. If the structure of the second language is similar to students' first language, they will not feel difficult in transferring the grammatical structure. However, Abayazeed and Abdalla (2015) state if the grammatical structure between their first language and second language is different, they will usually have difficulty in transferring and rendering the message. If it happens, its function will not function satisfactorily before they change the message.

Based on the aforementioned explanation about the problems faced by the students in learning the second language, this study was conducted to discover the problems faced by students in pronouncing English words and their causes appeared. Hopefully, the result of this study can solve the students' problems that create troubles or difficulties to the Indonesian students of the English Department.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used descriptive qualitative to explain, describe, and analyze data, which were displayed in the form of field-notes. According to Alwasilah(2008), descriptive research does not only provide the reader with the facts but also the interpretation of what phenomenon is being investigated. To collect the data, this study used questionnaire and interview developed by Harmer (2007) and modified from Begum and Hoque (2016). The instruments used are a questionnaire and interview answered by 10 students in the first semester at one of the higher education institutions in Cirebon. Those 10 students had already passed pronunciation practice course for L1 and L2. It means that they have already been taught the English phonological systems. However, in the end, those students still have problems in understanding and implementing the English phonological system. This case led the researcher to conduct this study to discover why students face barriers to pronounce English words or sentences correctly, and what makes them gain problems in speaking English. Hence, by choosing a qualitative descriptive method, this study was intended to explain the findings data descriptively.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this study, 10 students in the first semester at one higher education institution in Cirebon were investigated to discover their problems in English pronunciation and their reasons for carrying out the problems. They were given a set of written questionnaires and a set of interview questions. The finding is described in the following table.

**Table 1. The Analysis Perspective and Problems in Learning English Pronunciation**

No	Questions	Students Responds
1	Students' interest in a pronunciation course	50 % of students have very high interest 40% of students have a high interest 10% of students have good interest
2	Difficulties in learning pronunciation	40% of students rarely find difficulties 30% of students sometimes find difficulties 30% of students always find difficulties
3	Frequencies in facing the problem of learning pronunciation	60 % of students always find problems 30% of students sometimes find problems 10% of students rarely find problems
4	The scopes in facing the problem	60 % of students face very little problem

	of learning pronunciation	20% of students face little problem 20% of students face average problem
5	The intensities in repeating pronunciation learning	60% rarely train to their pronunciation 20% always train to their pronunciation 20% sometimes train to their pronunciation
6	Frequencies in using a dictionary to check the spelling	30% always use a dictionary 20% rarely use a dictionary 30% often use a dictionary 20% sometimes use a dictionary
7	The abilities in reading phonetics transcription	70% quite able to read 20% can't read 10% able to read
8	Frequencies in making mistake in spelling	50% rarely make mistakes 40% sometimes make mistakes 10% always make mistakes
9	The effective of learning pronunciation	40% very improve 40% improve 20% average
10	The importance of learning pronunciation	90% very important 10% important
11	The first experience of students when facing the new word	50% very good 40% good 10% quite good
12	Students understanding in native speaker	40% very understand 30% understand 30% quite understand
13	Students perspective of the accent influence in speaking English	40% quite influence 50% does not give influence 10% influence
14	The Intensities of students in using English	90% sometimes use English 10% rarely use English
15	The abilities in writing phonetics transcription	40% quite good to write 30% able to write 30% cannot write

Based on the table above, the result reveals that students chose to adjust the spelling from the source language to the target language in speaking English. An example is 'location' in English to be 'lokasi' in Bahasa Indonesia. This is carried out to avoid errors in pronunciation of words which can then produce different meanings as well. Spelling in English is quite different from spelling in Bahasa Indonesia, but some

words in Bahasa Indonesia are adapted from English. Therefore, their pronunciation is a bit similar.

Regarding pronunciation, during conducting this study, students listened to particular words first, and then repeat the pronunciation of those words. The repetition of the pronunciation is performed by adapting the pronunciation of the native speaker directly or checking them from the audio dictionary.

Based on the age factor, all students who participated in this study had started learning English since elementary school. It can be seen that learning English in Indonesia has started at the elementary school level, the average grade is 3. Therefore, all students must already know the basics of English pronunciation.

Related to the difficulties experienced by students in pronouncing English words, accents, new words, and phonetic transcripts are quite difficult problems to overcome. This is because Indonesian people have hundreds of different accents that will affect pronunciation in English. In addition, new words that arise during learning become a difficult challenge to conquer. Besides that, English phonetic transcripts that are different from Indonesian phonetics add to the difficulties faced by students.

In this regard, based on responses from questionnaire and interview, their interest to learn pronunciation in a pronunciation course is very high. This is because 30% of students stating that they always found difficulties such as words misspelling, phonetics transcriptions misreading, nescience of new words, and native speaker misunderstanding, and lack of speaking English intensity.

Words misspelling was always done by 10% of students. Others just did it sometimes and rarely. Most of students know how to pronounce a particular word because they always listen to Western music and watch movie. Therefore, to overcome this problem, they check the word in the dictionary. It happened for 30% of them who always did it.

In addition, phonetics transcriptions misreading was only carried out by 20% of students. This problem affected them in writing phonetics transcription in which 30% of students cannot write phonetics transcription. Hence, they overcome it by read a lot of phonetics transcription and repeat pronunciation learning. There is 20% of students train their pronunciation to improve their pronunciation.

Furthermore, the nescience of new words was overcome by 40% of student by checking how to spell the word in the dictionary and ensuring the word pronunciation to their friends, instructors, and or teacher, etc. These two ways are really effective to improve their pronunciation stated by 40% of students and, at the same time, they could understand the meaning of the words.

Misunderstanding native speaker when they speak English was experienced by 30% of students. They stated that the speaker was to fast in speaking; there are a lot of new words they did not understand; they could not catch the right spelling of the speaker. Besides that, the speaker used different accents so that it added heir difficulty in understanding the speaking. To overcome this problem, they trained their pronunciation by reading phonetics transcription.

Additionally, 90% of students said that they sometimes used English in their daily conversation, even the other said rarely used it. They tended to use Bahasa Indonesia of mother tongue. To overcome this problem, they listened to the English conversation, watched movies, wrote phonetics transcriptions, and then read them loudly more frequent to check their pronunciation.

Students realized that learning pronunciation is very important to support their conversation in English. In addition, the ability to pronounce English is very closely related to their intensity in speaking English. Thus, the pronunciation of English words must frequently be done well and correctly.

According to students, pronunciation is a way to spell words in English, so that they must say the pronunciation properly and correctly. Hence, the message when they are having a conversation can also be delivered well.

As the aforementioned explanation, students faced difficulties when they encountered unfamiliar or complicated words. Those words were considered as foreign or complicated words because they have never read or heard those words before.

Another problem that makes students difficult to pronounce is the interference with the mother tongue as their first language. Indonesia has around 300 mother tongues, hence, Bahasa Indonesia becomes the second language and English becomes the foreign language. Thus, in this case, mother tongues will certainly interfere with the pronunciation of the mother tongue. Although fluent in the mother tongue is a reinforcing factor for learning a foreign language, the mother tongue can also interfere with increasing proficiency in foreign languages.

In addition, the difference between the sound system between L1 and L2 is a crucial determinant. This can interfere with the pronunciation of words in a foreign language. It is supported by many researchers and linguists state that a conflict will always appear between L1 and L2 (Hassan, 2014). It is because there are a lot of difficulties in differing sound system between a native language and the second language. Hence, it is noted that Indonesian students establish habits of their mother tongue.

After having known the problems appeared in learning English pronunciation, the students still have their perspectives related to the problems in learning a second language (L2) in general and English pronunciation in particular. Besides that, this study tries to identify the exact reason behind such errors and finally discover the suitable techniques and strategies that help the students improve their English pronunciation.

In this qualitative research, the data collection gathered from the questionnaire in the first semester at one of the higher education institutions in Cirebon. Then, all the 10 students had already passed pronunciation practice L1 and L2. It means that they had already been taught the phonological systems of English especially pronunciation or the respondents had had basic knowledge in English pronunciation.

The data results were taken based on the questionnaires consisting of 10 questions. It was discovered that the majority of students had a big interest in learning English, especially in pronunciation course. It can be seen from the data that 90% of



students were in very high and high interest in learning English pronunciation and 90% of students stated that pronunciation course was very important for their skill in speaking. To support the findings, those students also answered that they have big passion for learning English in interview session. Besides that, they have been learned English since elementary level, even some student also had extra time to learn English from a private lesson.

Related to the difficulties or problems experienced by the students in learning English pronunciation, the data shows that 60% students always found the problems and 60% thought that the frequencies of the problem appeared when they pronounced English words. Additionally, 60% of students believed that English pronunciation was not a big problem or, in other words, easy for them. The reasons for their problems were their mother tongue interference, sound system differences between L1 and L2, and unknown how to read the phonetic transcription.

Based on the answers from the questionnaire, the students were asked about their strategies and effort to master in English pronunciation. The result reveals that only 20% of students who always trained themselves in repeating some difficult word improved their proficiency in English pronunciation. Based on the result, 60% of students always or sometimes opened the dictionary if they found the complicated or new vocabulary that they did not know how to spell. Therefore, the data shows 70% of students were able to read and write phonetics transcriptions.

. While they pronounced English words, about 10% of students stated that they rarely made errors and 10% of students always made errors in pronouncing English words. One of the strategies that can be used to improve students to be able to learn from was to do exercises. This strategy is based on the result of the study conducted by Dardjowidjojo (1978) which revealed that exercises based on a careful contrastive analysis are the best solution for the teaching of pronunciation, and the findings of the disparities and similarities.

As stated at the table, 80% of students believed that learning English pronunciation through pronunciation course was effective. It is shown by 40% of students who thought their skills improve and the rest 40% also improve their pronunciation after attending a pronunciation course. Then, the students' perspective in English pronunciation, 50% of students claimed that accent gave significant influence in mastering pronunciation and half of them claimed accent did not give influence in it.

In contrast with their opinion in accent, 70% of students were easy to understand with native than L2 speaker in speaking English. To verify and emphasize their answers, the students were asked deeply in the interview session. The result shows that the majority of students more understood L2 speaker talks rather than a native speaker. It is because the L2 speaker speaks slower than the native speaker when they are speaking. This problem was also found by Jones who stated that students had to make the foreign sounds with their organ of speech. Moreover, it is also a difficulty that students have to learn to use the sounds in precise places with accurate usage of pitch, stress, and length (Jones, 1972).

Broadly speaking, the students realized that learning English including pronunciation is a challenge to face. Initially, something they only know about learning pronunciation is the way of spelling English words to help them understand what their interlocutor said. Additionally, it is better to learn from the same language speaker than an L2 speaker.

## **CONCLUSION**

After having been collected and analyzed, the data result leads to the conclusion that students' perspectives on English pronunciation are that English pronunciation is quite difficult to understand and implement due to several factors such as mother tongue interference, accent varieties, different sound systems between L1 and L2, and unknown phonetic transcriptions. This phenomenon then leads to another conclusion that their participation in the English pronunciation course became very important and helpful. It is seen that 50% of students stated that the English pronunciation course had a significant effect on pronunciation and also 50% believed it did not affect their pronunciation.

However, it is also important for the teacher to recognize the aforementioned difficulties and the attitudes towards speaking English and English accents so that the students can create a plan for exercising themselves to overcome these problems. The goals of a pronunciation course must improve the students to speak English better with good pronunciation to order minimize misunderstanding in speaking. The students of higher education in Cirebon have been realized that learning English pronunciation is very important for English learners.

Additionally, they also know that they should not have the same accent as a native speaker to communicate. They only need to understand the differences among the accents of English. However, as long as they can communicate by producing the correct pronunciation, they can be understood and their message can still be delivered. This kind of attitude can be a good value to master English pronunciation or improve their speaking skill.

Learning pronunciation significantly contributes English speaking. Good and correct pronunciation will produce the correct pronunciation as well. Conversely, if the pronunciation is wrong, it will cause false or ambiguous meaning of words and then lead to misinterpretation. Therefore, it will be great if students are taught how to pronounce a particular word properly and correctly. It would be better if the pronunciation of that word is compared with the pronunciation of other words that have a similar pronunciation.

In addition, in order that the students can improve their vocabulary, when they train themselves to pronounce the English words, it will be better for them to memorize their meaning, collocation, and use on several occasions. Thus, they can get a lot of benefits.

Based on the results, this study recommends several recommendations. First, teaching must focus on both recognition and production meaning that teachers or

lecturers should recognize the pronunciation errors made by the students, and correct and teach the students how to pronounce the sounds correctly. In addition, as stated by Goldsmith (1995), many language teachers still discover that contrastive analysis (CA) is useful. In phonology, the transfer is present more than any other area and it is caused by the fact that individuals can guess the first language of a speaker through his or her accent while speaking or reading a second language. Indonesian scholars of language have tried to compare and distinguish various aspects of Bahasa Indonesia with those of English.

The difficulty of sound system production should be minimized by doing basic training routines in producing consonants and vowels; this practice helps them to realize the right place of articulation of each sound in English, and finally, they can improve their spelling word in English also.

The study suggests that there should be pronunciation course ranking the same as lessons in other skills e.g. grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure to draw the attention of the importance of pronunciation in learning English. It will be better that the pronunciation course is facilitated in the school or institution to ease students to study.

For students, it is OK to always check the dictionary to know the correct pronunciation of English words to avoid misspelling. Besides that, reading the English article, listening to English songs, and watching an English movie will be useful in improving English pronunciation.

For teachers, especially the teachers in pre-university, it is a must to have good knowledge of phonetics and phonology since this skill will provide fundamental knowledge for them to pronounce a particular word correctly. It is also able to identify the physical reasons for inaccurate approximations of foreign language sounds, enabling them to give precise instructions which help the English learners correct their errors in English pronunciation.

Besides that, the teachers must have a wonderful and interesting way and strategy to be implemented in the class to encourage and support students learning English. It is because if learning pronunciation itself cannot be passed by students, then students will be scared or even lazy to learn English further. This is certainly not very beneficial for students because, in the modern era, English is very needed in various aspects.

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