

# An Analysis on Students' Pronunciation in Delivering a Speech

**Fatmawaty Alimuddin<sup>1\*</sup>**

Master's Program English of Education, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia.

---

## **ABSTRAK**

*English pronunciation is often a challenge for Indonesian students because many English sounds are not found in Indonesian. As a result, students often mispronounce certain words when speaking English. This study aimed to analyze the English vowel pronunciation produced by third-semester students of the English Department at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar when delivering speeches. This study employed a descriptive analysis approach. Data were collected through a pronunciation test, in which students were asked to read a prepared speech script, then their reading was recorded for analysis. The data were processed through three stages: identifying pronunciation errors, grouping error types, and evaluating the frequency of each vowel pronunciation error. The results of the study showed that students made 120 pronunciation errors from the 16 words tested. The most frequent vowel sounds pronounced incorrectly were found in the words Important (12.5%), Also (11.6%), Enough (10%), Another (9.16%) and Family (8.33%) - In and Read were pronounced correctly by all students. In conclusion, students still encounter difficulties pronouncing English vowels due to their L1. This study is useful to the teaching of English pronunciation by identifying vowel sounds that may need more direct attention and learning for learning English in Indonesia.*

## **Kata Kunci:**

*EFL Students, Pronunciation, English Vowel Sounds, Error Analysis, Speech Production.*

---

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the era of globalization and increasing academic and professional mobility, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become a crucial requirement for students in many countries, including Indonesia. English functions not only as an international language but also as the primary medium of instruction in academia, technology, and cross-cultural communication. Consequently, mastery of English speaking skills is considered an important indicator of success in foreign language learning at the tertiary level.

While vocabulary and grammar knowledge contribute to one's speaking skills, the way that speech sounds (pronunciation) is an equally important aspect of the ability to communicate orally. Even if the speaker uses correct grammar and appropriately chooses their words, they won't be fully understood if they do not pronounce the words correctly. In addition, pronunciation is a common struggle for many students when they study a new language as it involves learning how to produce sounds from a different letter or sound system than what the student has previously used.

In Indonesia, English is regarded as one of the most difficult foreign languages to master, particularly in the aspect of pronunciation. Since English is not used as a medium of daily communication, it cannot be acquired naturally in the same way as the mother tongue. As a result, students must consciously learn English vocabulary, grammar, and sound system. The significance of pronunciation in communication is vital to being understood. Poor pronunciation often results in miscommunication between parties communicating. Thus, Indonesian students have difficulty producing English sounds for which their inventors are not trained, and since they are unable to produce these sounds, pronunciation is one of the hardest aspects of English language acquisition for these students.

According to Oxford Dictionaries, pronunciation is defined as "the way in which a word is pronounced." Because pronunciation must be learned through continuous practice, spelling alone cannot determine how words should be spoken. This indicates that effective pronunciation learning requires sustained

exposure, appropriate modeling, and guided practice. While students have acquired the fundamental principles of English pronunciation, many still find it difficult to pronounce English words correctly. Furthermore, pronunciation problems exist even among those university students who have completed courses that deal with pronunciation. This indicates that pronunciation problems frequently extend beyond what students learn in formal classroom settings.

At Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, very little research has been conducted into how accurately students pronounce words when they speak in class, especially when they are giving speeches as part of a conversation with an audience. Because it is important to understand how well a student can pronounce words in an academic environment, we can then identify what problems the student has in pronouncing certain sounds or words, and to what degree (if at all) the student applies his or her learning in regards to pronunciation.

The definition of realistic learning goals for students, when addressing pronunciation issues, is very important. According to Kenworthy (1987), the goal of pronunciation learning should not be for a student to speak with a native-like accent, but rather for a student to achieve a level of comfortable intelligibility. This refers to a level of pronunciation that allows listeners to accurately understand the speaker with little effort or obstruction. Kenworthy stresses that the clarity of speech cannot be achieved by exact phonetic realization alone but also through the use of proper stress, rhythm and intonation to make the message more clear and easily understandable. Besides, pronunciation goals may vary with different communicative contexts. For instance, some professionals will need a high degree of clarity more than others, for example, English teachers or air traffic controllers.

Furthermore, intelligibility is influenced not only by the accurate production of individual sounds (segmental features) but also by suprasegmental elements such as stress, rhythm, and intonation. Kenworthy highlights that errors in suprasegmental features often have a greater impact on listener comprehension than segmental errors. This view is supported by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), who assert that effective pronunciation instruction must balance both segmental and suprasegmental components to ensure comprehensible and natural speech.

Pronunciation problems may also be partly attributed to the interference from one's first language. Lado (1957), in his Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, suggested that differences between the sound systems of the first and the target language can create systematic and persistent pronunciation errors. For example, English sounds which do not exist in Indonesian such as /θ/, /ð/, or vowel length distinctions, very often become a source of difficulty to Indonesian learners, so they end up replacing these sounds with the nearest ones in their mother tongue.

Though there has been an increase in the amount of research on pronunciation in Indonesia, the majority of earlier studies have concentrated on figuring out the reasons behind pronunciation problems or on the analysis of phonological errors as separate occurrences. They have lacked a focus on students' real pronunciation performance in communicative speaking tasks. Hence, there is still a gap in our knowledge regarding the way students implement their pronunciation knowledge in real speaking activities.

To fill this gap, the study looks at how well the third-semester students in the English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar pronounce words when they are giving a speech. Basically, the study focuses on finding out the kinds of pronunciation mistakes the students make and to give an account of the degree of correctness in their pronunciation of English words and vowels. We hope that the results of the

study will help to better understand learning English pronunciation by Indonesian students and offer teachers and researchers some useful hints for coming up with more efficient pronunciation methods.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive analysis approach to analyze students' pronunciation, specifically their articulation of English vowel sounds in delivering a speech. In this design, the researcher administered a pronunciation test to the participants to describe their ability to pronounce vowel sounds correctly and clearly. The population of this research was the third-semester students of the English Department at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, consisting of 208 students. A class (Class G) with 23 students who had considerably low pronunciation results based on early observation was purposely chosen to be the sample. The instrument used in this study was a pronunciation test in the form of reading a prepared speech aloud. The students' performances were recorded to identify their pronunciation difficulties, especially in producing English vowel sounds. The data of this study were analyzed descriptively by listening to and interpreting the recordings to describe the students' pronunciation performance in delivering the speech. The analysis focused on identifying common pronunciation errors and determining the frequency of mispronounced vowel sounds to provide an overview of students' pronunciation ability.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the frequency of incorrect pronunciation of selected English vowel sounds produced by third-semester students. The results are summarized in Table 1, which presents the number and percentage of incorrect pronunciations for each target word.

**Table 1.** Table 1. Frequency of Incorrect Pronunciation of English Vowel Sounds among Third-Semester Students

No	Word	Correct Pronunciation	Number of Incorect Pronunciations	Percentage (%)
1	all	/ɔ:l/	10	8.33%
2	in	/ɪn/	0	0%
3	about	/ə'baʊt/	6	5%
4	important	/ɪm'pɔ:tənt/	15	12.5%
5	audience	/'ɔ:diəns/	6	5%
6	at	/æt/	6	5%
7	also	/'ɔ:lsəʊ/	14	11.6%
8	been	/bi:n/	6	5%
9	our	/aʊə(r)/	7	5.83%
10	have	/hæv/	2	1.66%
11	read	/ri:d/	0	0%
12	enough	/ɪ'nʌf/	12	10%
13	as	/æz/	9	7.5%
14	another	/ə'nʌðə(r)/	11	9.16%
15	love	/lʌv/	6	5%
16	family	/'fæmli/	10	8.33%

The data illustrates that the highest frequency of mispronunciation occurred at important (12.5%), followed by also (11.6%), and enough (10%). On the other hand, in and read were pronounced correctly by all

students. These results suggest that students have difficulty pronouncing English vowels that are not found in Indonesian, for example; /ɔ:/, /æ/, and /ʌ/.

Pronunciation is an important component of speaking skills, encompassing the production of language sounds at both the segmental (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, and intonation) levels. According to Reed & Levis (2015), mastery of pronunciation determines the speaker's level of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and fluency, especially for students of English as a second language.

The results of the study, the students have not yet achieved proficiency of English vowel pronunciation. Errors occurred with particular frequency with vowels encountered in words in which the vowel symbols were unfamiliar, to be specific, the vowels /ɔ:/, /æ/, and /ʌ/. The English vowels /ɔ:/, /æ/, and /ʌ/ cannot be pronounced correctly without distinctions that do not exist in Indonesian. Vowels that are closer to their Indonesian equivalents to suffices, such as /i:/ in in and /e/ in read, were produced accurately by every one of the participants.

Several factors may explain these difficulties:

1. Differences between English and Indonesian phonological systems.  
English has a larger number of vowel contrasts, some of which have no counterpart in Indonesian. Thus, students often substitute unknown sounds with the nearest L1 equivalents.
2. Limited awareness of phonetics and inadequate practice.  
Students may not have adequate exposure to, or direct guided practice with, the new phonetic tension.
3. Reliance on spelling.  
English orthography is misleading for students. When they read aloud, they often rely on spelling, leading to the wrong sounds.

The results support previous research. (Sudrajat, 2016), titled "An Analysis of English Pronunciation Based on Student Speech Community at English Education Program" certain English sounds /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ɑ:/, /ə/, /u:/, /ɜ:/, /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /θ/, /ʃ/, /n/, /z/, /r/, /dʒ/, and /f/ were produced in an incorrect manner by the Mee-speaking participants, and the participants who were Javanese also had difficulty with /eə/, /əʊ/, /ð/, /ʒ/, /z/, /dʒ/, /d/, /b/ and /g/. These results correlate with the study current study which demonstrated that certain vowel sounds that do not exist in Indonesian presented challenges while pronouncing those sounds. Similarly, (Kirkova-Naskova, 2010) in "Native Speaker Perceptions of Accented Speech: The English Pronunciation of Macedonian EFL Students", discussed that the three most frequently occurring markers of foreign accent among Macedonian EFL students were final obstruent devoicing, vowel shortening and replacing English dental fricatives with Macedonian dental plosives. These findings further confirm that vowel and consonant substitutions are common across non-native English students whose native languages lack equivalent sounds. Similarly, (Aminullah et al., 2015), in his study "An Analysis on the Students' Speaking Performance in Giving Presentation", reported that most third-semester English education students demonstrated only moderate speaking abilities. His results revealed that 64% of the participants scored below or equal to 2 in the content aspect and 40% scored at the same level in the delivery aspect. This finding supports the present study's observation that pronunciation difficulties contribute significantly to lower speaking performance and fluency.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Overall, the students did not reach sufficient pronunciation levels in the delivery of a speech, particularly with regard to students' production of English vowels sounds. The main pronunciation challenges presented in the form of students' vowel sound production can primarily be explained with mother tongue transfer and little or no contact with native speakers of English. Students typically mispronounced the vowel sounds i.e., the distinction between /ɔ:/ and /æ/ as in the word important, while all pronounced /in/ and /read/ accurately. In order to address students' vowel sound pronunciation, it is essential to teach English vowel sounds, which are absent in Indonesian, model accurate pronunciation with the teacher and audio/visual materials, present opportunities for continuous or frequent speaking, provide confidence-building activities, and afford students access to native speaker input. Future studies need to include a broader student sample and include other phonological features, such as consonants, to provide greater insight into learners' pronunciation difficulties.

#### 5. REFERENCES

- Aminullah, F., Apriliawati, R., & Arifin, Z. (2015). An analysis on students' speaking performance in giving presentation. *Journal of English Education*, 3(2), 45–53.
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Derwing, T. M. (2003). *The Effects of Pronunciation Instruction on the Accuracy, Fluency, and Complexity of L2 Accented Speech*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234570703>
- Kenworthy, J. (1987). *Teaching English pronunciation*. Longman.
- Kirkova-Naskova, A. (2010). Native Speaker Perceptions of Accented Speech: The English Pronunciation of Macedonian EFL Students. *Research in Language*, 8, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10015-010-0004-7>
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures: Applied linguistics for language teachers*. University of Michigan Press.
- Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Pronunciation*. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries.
- Reed, M., & Levis, J. M. (Eds.). (2015). *The handbook of English pronunciation*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Shak, P., Lee, C. S., & Stephen, J. (2016). Pronunciation Problems: A Case Study on English Pronunciation Errors of Low Proficient Students INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY. *International Journal of Language Education and Applied Linguistics*. <http://ijleal.ump.edu.my/>
- Sudrajat, A. (2016). *An Analysis of English Pronunciation Based on Student Speech Community at English Education Program.teaching-english-pronunciation*. (2016).