Pronunciation Problems of Indonesian EFL Learners: An Error Analysis

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Abstract

Mispronunciation is the act of pronouncing linguistic expression incorrectly or unconventionally. In English as Foreign Language (EFL) context, it has become the concern for it can lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misperception among participants. In Indonesian pedagogical context, English Language Teaching (ELT) is more focused on improving students' mastery of grammar without considering the pronunciation. This research is aimed to analyze English learners' ability to pronounce English words. The research is conducted with 30 English Language and Culture student respondents of Universitas Bunda Mulia.

Keywords: *mispronunciation, phonetics, English language teaching*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Mispronunciation can be simply defined as the act of pronouncing linguistic expression in the ways that are regarded wrong, incorrect, or unconventional. It has become the concern in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) because mispronunciations can lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misperception among participants of communication. Therefore, in Indonesian pedagogical context, improving EFL learners' awareness about their mispronunciation is absolutely important.

Learners' native language affects the way English speech sounds are pronounced. Unconsciously, the native speakers of Indonesia will use Indonesian phonotactic and phonological system to pronounce English expressions. A famous example would be some Indonesian native speakers will automatically pronounce /sarək/ for 'shark' because there is no English '*sh*' (phonetically transcribed /ʃ/) in Indonesian phonotatic or phonological system. The reason of using /s/ sound

because the sound is considered closely resemble to /ʃ / in English phonotactic system.

Mc Arthur (1998) states that among native speakers, mispronunciation of particular English expressions are generally appear because the speakers hear the expressions unfamiliar. The expressions sound exotic or derive from other languages (such as Latin or Greek). The speakers pronounce the words by using sounds that are available in their native phonological systems because it is more familiar to be used and pronounced (Mc Arthur, 1998).

In Indonesian pedagogical context, ELT is more focused on improving students' mastery of grammar without fundamentally considering their pronunciation. It implies that Indonesian-English language learners are forced to improve their abilities to construct linguistic structure correctly or flawlessly but not to pronounce English expressions. Realizing the importance of improving students' pronunciation, this research is aimed to analyze students' mispronunciation of some English words. This writing is based on the research done by Silalahi (2016) with 40 student respondents of English Language and Culture Department, Universitas Bunda Mulia, Jakarta.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Considering the importance of improving students' pronunciation this research is fundamentally aimed to analyze students' mispronunciation of English sounds. In order to achieve this objective; this research is aimed to answer the following questions.

1. What are the factors influencing mispronunciation?
2. What are the sounds in English that students often mispronounce?

2. Theoretical Framework
2.1 English Speech Sounds

The speech sounds are produced by creating the stream of air flowing from the lungs goes out through trachea and passes by the vocal folds in which they

vibrate and making sounds and then escapes through oral or nasal cavity (Delahunty and Garvey, 2010). The moves of organs of speech in oral and nasal cavity influence the types of speech sounds produced.

Basically, English speech sounds can be classified into consonants and vowels. Delahunty and Garvey (2010) states that consonants are the speech sound produced with obstruction in the organs of speech. It can be classified in terms of the voicing, place, and manner of articulation (Delahunty and Garvey, 2010).

Voicing is a term used to characterize speech sounds into voiced and voiceless. Voiced consonants are the consonants that are produced with more vibration in the vocal folds. Voiceless sounds do not apply vocal folds in their productions.

Voiced	**Voiceless**
Bark [b]	**p**en [p]
Met [m]	
Win [w]	
Van [v]	**f**an [f]
The [ð]	mou**th** [Ɵ]
Deep [d]	**t**ip [t]
Noon [n]	
Zip [z]	
Lip [l]	
Right [r]	

The place of articulation is a term used to classify consonants based on the area at which the closure or constriction occurred (Delahunty and Garvey, 2010). They can be classified into several types.

a. Bilabial is a consonants that is made by bringing lips closer.

   Park [p]   **b**ark [b]   **m**ark [m]

b. Labiodental is a consonants that is made by bringing the teeth closer to the bottom lip.

   Fan **[f]**   **V**an **[v]**

c. Interdental is a consonants that is made by placing the tip of the tongue between teeth

Too**th** [Ө]   **th**en [ð]

d. Alveolar is a consonants that is produced by bringing the tongue closer to the alveolar ridge

Pa**t** [t]   pa**d** [d]   tee**n** [n]   pea**ce** [s]   **z**oo [z]
row [r]

e. Alveo-palatal is a consonant is made by bringing the tongue to alveo-palatal area

Sharp [ʃ]   gar**age** [ʒ]   pit**ch** [tʃ]   bri**dge** [dʒ]

f. Velar is a consonant that is created by by bringing the back of the tongue closer to velum

King [k]   **g**un [g]   ki**ng** [ŋ]

g. Glottal is a consonant that is created by narrowing the vocal folds

Hope [h]

Delahunty and Garvey (2010) classify the manner of articulation into:

a. Stops are a consonant produced with full closure of airstream.

Pit [p] **b**it [b]   **m**eat [m]

b. Fricatives are a consonant produced with airstream constriction and produce friction.

Hu**ff** [f]   **v**ow [v]

c. Affricates are a consonant produced by with the full closure of the airstream and then followed by an immediate release.

Chick [tʃ]   **j**eep [dʒ]

d. Nasal is a consonant produced with the air escape through nose cavity.

Met [m]   **n**ap [n]   thi**ng** [ŋ]

e. Liquid is a consonants where the airstream is partially obstructed

Lip [l]   **r**ope [r]

f. Glide is a consonant produced with the tongue approaches to particular articulator but it does not move close enough.

Watt [w]   sa**y** [j]

Consonants classification above is depicted through the following table.

Figure 2.1 English Consonants

		place of articulation												
		bilabial		labiodental		interdental		alveolar		alveopalatal		velar		glotal
		vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl
manner of articulation	stops	b	p					d	t			g	k		
	fricative			v	F	ð	θ	z	s	ʒ	ʃ				j
	affricates									dʒ	tʃ				
	nasal	m						n				ŋ			
	liquid							l		r					
	glides	w								j					

*   Vl = voiceless

Vd = voiced

Vowels are produced without obstruction of airflow (Delahunty and Garvey, 2010). The sounds can be classified in terms of their tongue height, front and back, and lip rounding. Tongue height is a term used to classify vowels based on the height of the tongue from the neutral position. It can be classified into

a. Upper high

b**ea**r [i]   **Boo**k [u]

b. Lower high

    p**i**t [I]   g**oo**d [ʊ]

c. Upper mid

    p**ay** [e]   sell**er** [ə]   p**o**at [o]

d. Lower mid

    H**ea**d [ɛ]   b**u**t [ʌ]   l**a**w [ɔ]

e. Low

    p**a**t [æ]   Sp**a** [ɑ]

Delahunty and Garvey (2010) state that vowels can be also classified into

a. Front: [i], [I], [e], [ɛ], and [æ]

b. Central: [ə] and [ʌ]

c. Back: [u], [ʊ], [o], [ɔ], [ɑ]

Rounding is a term used to classify vowels based on the shapes of the lips. It can be classified into rounded and unrounded (Delahunty and Garvey, 2010). Rounded vowels are produced with the round shaped lips. [u], [ʊ], [o], and [ɔ]. The other vowels are classified into unrounded for the lips are unrounded as the vowels produced.

2.2 English Stress

Stress is the production of speech sounds with a greater muscular energy. Trujilo (2013) states that there are three possibilities about stress (a) primary stress is the stress with the highest prominence, (b) secondary stress is a stress that is weaker than the primary but stronger than neutral, and (c) an unstressed is the absence of prominence.

3. Research Methodology

This research is aimed to investigate the mispronunciation made by EFL learners. The research was conducted with 30 student respondents from English Language and Culture - Universitas Bunda Mulia. The students are asked to

pronounce the lists of words. They contain the lists of similarly-spelled word as follow:

Lite

Liter

Pear

Pearl

S**pear**

Fin

Fine

Finite

Ice

D**ice**

V**ice**

Nov**ice**

Coward**ice**

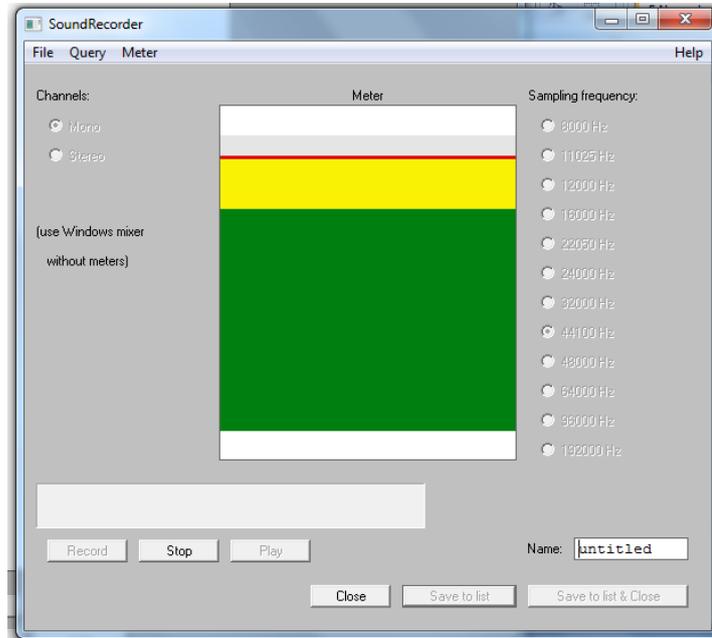**Face**

Pre**face**

Inter**face**

Vice

Novice

Sign

De**sign**

De**sign**ate

The sounds are recorded by using PRAAT 6.0.06. designed by Boersma and Weenink (2015) by using 44100 Hz sampling frequency and converted to WAV format.

Figure 3.1 PRAAT 6.0.06 Sound Recorder (Silalahi, 2016)

After that, the recorded sounds were segmented into words and transcribed.

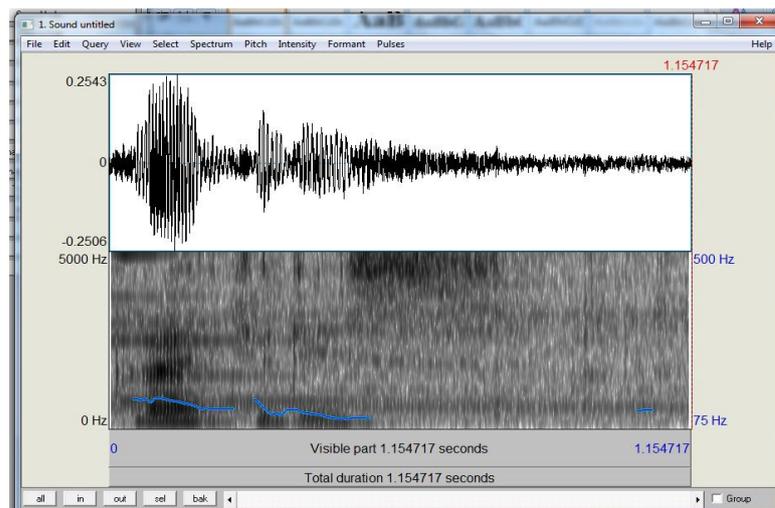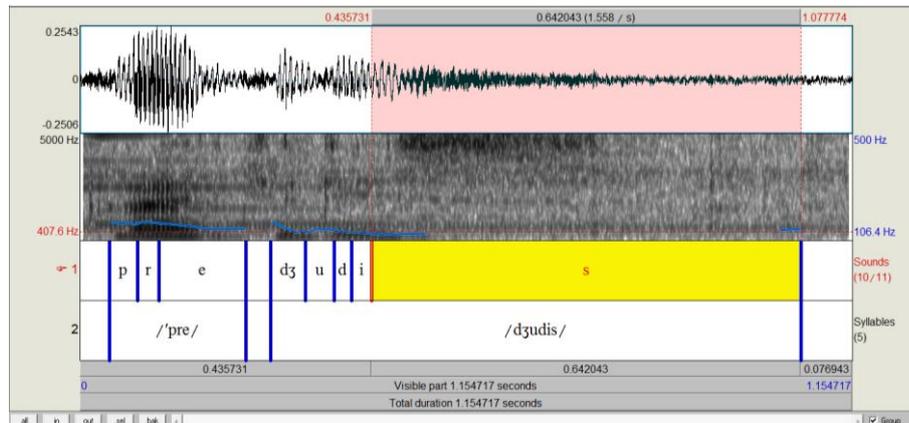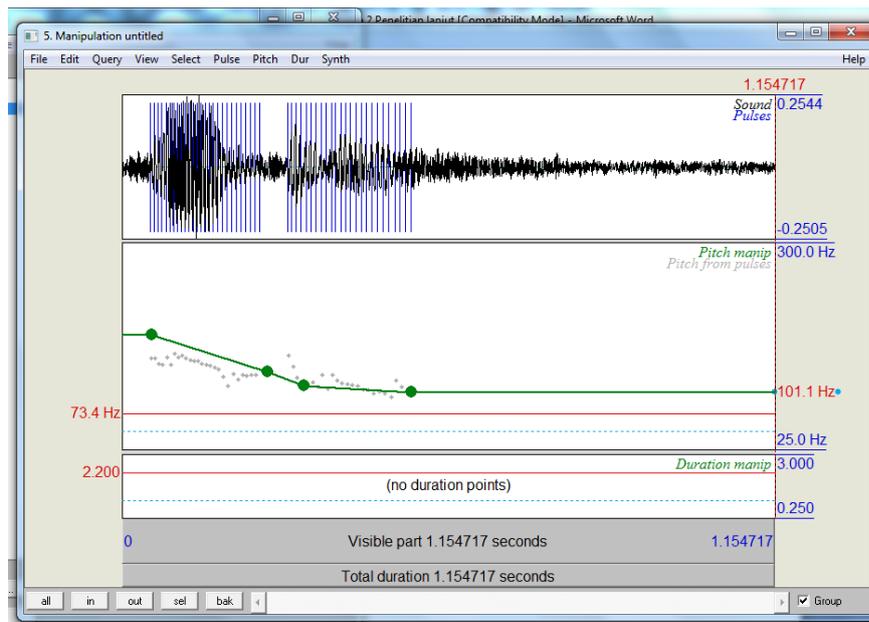**Figure 3.2 Segmentation (Silalahi, 2016)**

Figure 3.3 Segmentation and Transcription (Silalahi, 2016)

Lastly, the transcribed sounds are manipulated to identify the position of the stress in the words.

Figure 3.4 Manipulation (Silalahi, 2016)

4. Data Analysis

Thirty students are asked to pronounce (by using British or American accents) 20 words prepared by the researcher.

Table 4.1 IPA Transcription

No	Words	British Accent	American Accent
1	Lite	/ˈlaɪt/	/ˈlaɪt/
2	Liter	/ˈliːtə/	/ˈliːtər/
3	Pear	/ˈPeə/	/ˈper/
4	Pearl	/ˈpɜːl/	/ˈpɜːrl/
5	Spear	/ˈspɪə/	/ˈspɪr/
6	Fin	/ˈfɪn/	/ˈfɪn/
7	Fine	/ˈfaɪn/	/ˈfaɪn/
8	Finite	/ˈfinɪt/	/ˈfaɪnaɪt/
9	Ice	/ˈaɪs/	/ˈaɪs/
10	Dice	/ˈdaɪs/	/ˈdaɪs/
11	Vice	/ˈvaɪs/	/ˈvaɪs/
12	Novice	/ˈnəʊvɪs/	/ˈnɒvɪs/
13	Cowardice	/ˈkauədɪs/	/ˈkauədɪs/
14	Caprice	/kəˈpriːs/	/kəˈpriːs/
15	Face	/ˈfeɪs/	/ˈfeɪs/
16	Preface	/ˈprefɪs/	/ˈprefəs/
17	Interface	/ˈintəfeɪs/	/ˈintəfeɪs/
18	Sign	/ˈsaɪn/	/ˈsaɪn/
19	Design	/dɪˈsaɪn/	/dɪˈzaɪn/
20	Designate	/ˈdezɪgneɪt/	/ˈdezɪgneɪt/

The table above shows that there are ten words that are pronounced similarly by using British or American accents.

The researcher used PRAAT 6.0.06 to find students' mispronunciations from 20 words tested. The result shows that from 600 words tested, there are 176 mispronunciations produced by the students.

Table 4.2 Mispronunciation

No	Words	Mispronunciations	
		Amount	Percentage
1	Lite	0	0,00%
2	Liter	15	50,00%
3	Pear	10	33,33%
4	Pearl	19	63,33%
5	Spear	10	33,33%
6	Fin	0	0,00%
7	Fine	0	0,00%
8	Finite	0	0,00%
9	Ice	0	0,00%
10	Dice	0	0,00%
11	Vice	0	0,00%
12	Novice	23	76,67%
13	Cowardice	25	83,33%
14	Caprice	22	73,33%
15	Face	0	0,00%
16	Preface	26	86,67%
17	Interface	2	6,67%
18	Sign	0	0,00%
19	Design	0	0,00%
20	Designate	24	80,00%
	Total	176	29,33%

The results shows that the respondents can pronounce the simple words (such as *lite, fin, fine, finite, ice, dice, vice, face, sign,* and *design*) correctly by using British or American accents. The words can be perfectly pronounced because the words are commonly found and used by the respondents. However, this simple word spelling affects the pronunciations of other complex words. The respondents apply simple words pronunciation to pronounce other words. The example is the

word *preface* which was pronounced with /prifeIs/ because the word is ended with *face* (feIs). The following is list of the affecting and the affected words.

Table 4.3 Affected and Affecting Words

No	Affecting Words	Pronunciation	Affected words	Correct Pronunciation	Number
1	**Lite**	/laɪt/	**Lite**r	/ˈliːtər/	50,00%
2	**Pear**	/ˈPeə/	**Pear**l	/ˈpɜːl/	63,33%
			Sp**ear**	/ˈspɪə/	33,33%
3	**Ice**	ˈaɪs/	No**vice**	/ˈnɒvɪs/	76,67%
			Coward**ice**	/ˈkauədɪs/	83,33%
			Capr**ice**	/kəˈpriːs/	73,33%
4	**Face**	/ˈfeɪs/	Pre**face**	/ˈprefəs/	86,67%
			Inter**face**	/ˈintəfeɪs/	6,67%
5	**Sign**	/ˈsaɪn/	De**sign**ate	/ˈdezɪgneɪt/	80,00%

According to the students, their mispronunciations are generally caused by several reasons. (a) The students follow the pronunciation of basic words, (b) it sound correct and appropriate, (c) the words are rarely or even never used before, (d) they imitate the wrong pronunciation from his/her teacher.

The respondents tend to put the stress in the syllables that is spelled similarly with the basic words. In the word *preface* for examples, 26 out of 30 respondents pronounce it incorrectly by putting the stress in the second syllable where the syllable *face* is occurred.

Table 4.4 Stress

No	Affecting Words	Pronunciation	Affected words	Correct Pronunciation	Number
1	**Ice**	ʹaɪs/	Nov**ice**	/ʹnɒvɪs/	76,67%
			Coward**ice**	/ʹkauədɪs/	83,33%
			Cap**rice**	/kəʹpriːs/	73,33%
2	**Face**	/ʹfeɪs/	Pre**face**	/ʹprefəs/	86,67%
			Inter**face**	/ʹintəfeɪs/	6,67%
3	**Sign**	/ʹsaɪn/	De**sign**ate	/ʹdezɪgneɪt/	80,00%

5. Conclusion

Mispronunciation is commonly occurred in the non-native context. In EFL context mispronunciations are generally caused by several reasons. Firstly, the students follow or apply the pronunciation of basic words. Secondly, students tend to use their native phonotatic rule. Thirdly, the mispronounce words are rarely used by the students. Lastly, they imitate the wrong pronunciation from their teacher. Relating to the production of the stress, the students tend to put the stress in the syllables that are spelled similarly with the basic words. Students' lack of understanding about suprasegmental features is the reasons of stress mispronunciation. Improving student's ability to pronounce English expression can be done by using suitable and authentic materials. Drilling the similarly-spelled words can be applied to improve their phonotatic and phonological awareness. The writer suggests English Language and Culture Department in Universitas Bunda Mulia to give more credits in English Pronunciation class.

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