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Abstract

The difference in language sound system between English and Bahasa Indonesia could create errors in speaking. The analysis of English pronunciation errors and the factors affecting them are needed to reduce pronunciation errors in EFL Students. This research aims to identify the most frequent error and to know the factor affecting the error in pronouncing English pure vowel sounds made by EFL high school students. Using Descriptive Qualitative research on 27 high school students in Indramayu, one district in Indonesia, the researchers conducted Pronunciation tests and interviews to collect the data. This study reported that the most error that frequently occurred were vowels [æ], [ə], [ɜ:], [ɑ:], and [ʌ]. The factors that affected the vowel pronunciation error were the mother tongue and the amount of exposure. In terms of mother tongue, the students used the Javanese language (one of the dialects in Indonesia) to communicate in daily life. In terms of the amount of exposure, they only got pronunciation exposure only from several sources. This study is expected to make both teachers and students more aware of their pronunciation. This study is limited to the pedagogical practice of the teacher in emphasizing pronunciation in teaching speaking. This becomes essential to investigate to capture the teaching speaking in the classroom in creating more meaningful communication.

Keywords: English Vowel, Pronunciation, Pronunciation Error, Speaking

Introduction

The issue of pronunciation has always been a serious topic to be discussed by learners of English. Most of the learners have low ability in pronunciation (Antaris & Omulu, 2019). The students do not realize that they make some pronunciation errors when they speak English because not all teachers pay much attention to their students' pronunciation. They just teach the vocabulary found in the text or utterances from the materials and give examples of how to read them but do not follow up the student's pronunciation (Gilakjani, 2016). Therefore, teaching pronunciation in earlier stages of learning should be the first priority for English language teachers.

In fact, learning pronunciation is not easy (Hadroh, 2020; Elumalai et al, 2021; and Plailek & Essien, 2021) because there are many things that students should be mastered. The students should be aware of the various elements of pronunciations. Some of them are stress, rhythm, pitch, and intonation (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

In English, the sound system is usually divided into two main categories, which are vowels and consonants. Smith (2007) (as cited in Ababneh, 2018) states that English has 20 vowels and diphthong. A great part of mastering an efficient pronunciation is mastering the vowel because it can make the meanings clear and understandable. Moreover, according to Ashby (2013), the uniqueness of vowels is

that it is possible to find English words that consist only of vowel-type sounds, or the words can consist of vowels alone (e.g. eye). However, there are no proper English words that consist only of consonants. When an English speaker starts talking, people can often tell within a few syllables where they are from because of the vowels they use (Mustangin, 2017), so, therefore, vowels are urgent for students to learn. However, students often have difficulties pronouncing vowels. For instance, the study from Ercan (2018) stated that 30 Turkey high school students have difficulty pronouncing vowels /u:/, /ɒ/, and /ʌ/. While for Indonesian high school students, most of them have difficulty pronouncing vowel /e/, /i:/, and /ɪ/ (Razak, 2010; Idhar, 2017; and Wangi & Apriliyanti, 2019).

It is very important to know the factors that cause students to make errors in pronouncing English vowels so we can find out the root of the problem and the same mistakes will not be repeated. There are some reasons why students make a lot of errors in pronouncing vowel sounds. The theory from Kenworthy (1987) said that there are some factors that affect pronunciation learning: mother tongue, age, amount of exposure, phonetic ability, attitude, and motivation. The latest study from Fadillah (2020), Elumalai et al. (2021), and Ayman & Salama (2021) said that EFL learners such as Indonesian, Bangladesh, and Arab students have pronunciation problems in the influence of mother-tongue/native language. Furthermore, for senior high school students, the most factor that caused the error is students' confidence. They are quiet, shy, and afraid of making mistakes (Astutik, 2017). Other factors are students' less pronunciation practice and less interest in reading English text (Mustangin, 2017).

Several studies have tried to provide insights into the main pronunciation difficulties EFL learners encounter focusing on vowel production. Najib & Ashari (2021) reported that the higher number of pronunciation errors of university students is vowel /ɔ:/ which are caused by various difficulties related to what they can hear, say, and intonation problems. The second study came from Yazid & Zaiyadi (2017) that reported diploma students made errors for diphthongs and pure short vowels because of diverse ethnic backgrounds. In conclusion, the issues about pronunciation problems focusing on vowel productions are still interesting to be studied until now.

Most of these researchers did research focusing on kinds of pronunciation problems and its factors in university/undergraduate students. Moreover, there are few researchers who analyze it in high school students and the exact factors undergo in their pronunciation errors, so this present study fills this gap by analyzing pronunciation errors in high school students especially in second grade as well as the factors causing the errors. Also, many researchers analyzed all parts of the English sound, but current research focuses on vowel sound only, especially simple/pure vowels. Finally, this research concerned only Indonesian students, who spoke Indonesian as their mother tongue. Based on those gaps, the researchers is interested in finding out the pronunciation error in terms of vowels and the factors of the error made by the second-grade of EFL high school students.

Method

This qualitative research aims to describe, learn, and explain the phenomenon in pronunciation. Gay (1990) (as cited in Anggrarini & Istiqomah, 2019) states that the qualitative method involves collecting the data in order to test a hypothesis or

answer a question concerning the current status of the study. This research was conducted using the Descriptive Qualitative Method. The purpose of this study is to analyze the most pronunciation errors of English vowel sounds made by Indonesian Senior High school students and the factors that caused the errors.

The participants were taken from 27 Indonesian Senior high school students. They were chosen purposively due to the quality of the pronunciation problem the students possessed and the diversity of the student's skills in the English language. In collecting the data, the researchers used two kinds of instruments. They were pronunciation tests and interviews. A pronunciation test was used to investigate how the students pronounce the words / to find out the vowel sounds that are most difficult to be pronounced by the students. While the interview was given to find out the factors of error produced by the students.

The researchers arranged some procedures to ensure the research went well by considering the data needs. To get data about pronunciation errors in vowels, the researchers recorded students' voices during English class. The researchers used PRAAT software to analyze the students' voices. To get the data about factors underlying the pronunciation error, the interview was conducted with the students based on the pronunciation test result. They were categorized into low, mid, and high levels. The interview was then transcribed to determine the factors underlying the errors.

Findings and Discussion

Finding

In this research, the researchers focused on the student's English vowel pronunciation. The researchers used the Analytical Exposition text in pronouncing a list of English words as the instrument of the research. Those English words contained some vowels and consonants, but the writer focused on the vowel errors.

a. The Most Pronunciation Error that Occurred in English Vowel Sound

The data in the table below presents the frequency of error distribution to the English vowel sounds.

Table 1

Vowel Error Pronunciation

	/i:/	/ɪ/	/ʊ/	/u:/	/e/	/ə/	/ɜ:/	/ɔ:/	/æ/	/ʌ/	/ɑ:/	/ɒ/
Frequency	2	2	6	4	11	26	22	4	35	15	17	6
Percentage	1,3	1,3	4	2,7	7,3	17,3	14,7	2,7	23,4	10	11,3	4

Based on the result of the students' transcriptions above, the students still made errors in producing vowel sounds. From 150 errors, the number of each vowel with the highest percentage of pronunciation error is vowel [æ] with 23,4%, vowel [ə] with 17,3%, vowel [ɜ:] with 14,7%, vowel [ɑ:] with 11,3%, vowel [ʌ] with 10%, vowel [e] with 7,3%, vowel [ʊ] and [ɒ] with 4%, vowel [u:] and [ɔ:] with 2,7%, and vowel [i:] and [ɪ] with 1,3%.

b. Factors Affecting the Error Committed by EFL High School Students

The student's ability in pronouncing English words was influenced by several factors. To get the data of the factor affecting the error, the researchers did interviews with the students. The total participant of this study was 27 eleventh-grade high school students. However, only 6 students were selected by the

researchers for the interview section who represented all of the students. The participants were selected based on the results of the pronunciation tests they had done previously.

1) Mother Tongue

The first factor is the use of the mother tongue. Mother tongue is the language a person acquires in early childhood as it is spoken in the family and also used to communicate in daily life. Based on Kenworthy (1987), the rules and patterns of students' mother tongue are unconsciously applied to their second or foreign language, and it might lead to the production of a foreign accent and could affect the pronunciation. In this section, the researchers asked students about the use of the language they applied to communicate in their daily life.

From the data of interview answers given by the researchers, all the participants who took the interview explained that their mother tongue is Javanese. Although they still speak Indonesian, most of them spend their time at home with their families, so Javanese remains a language that they often use in everyday life.

2) The Age

The second factor is age. It refers to the age when the participants start learning English. Based on Kenworthy (1987), someone who has learned English since they were young tends to have better English pronunciation than others who have learned when they are older. He added that the younger the learner starts to learn English, the better are they able to hear, distinguish, and imitate the new sounds so it influences their quality of pronunciation.

From the data of interview answers, all the participants who took the interview said that they started learning English in elementary school. The age of elementary students is 7-12 years (Indonesian Ministry of Education, 2013).

3) Amount of Exposure

The third factor is the amount of exposure. Exposure refers to the contact that the learner has with the language that they are trying to learn, both in verbal or written form. Kenworthy (1987) mentioned that the more learners spend their time with English, the better their English pronunciation will be. The amount of exposure here relates to how much learners are familiar with English in their life. The question related to the frequency of using English in the participant's everyday life.

Based on the interview answers, the frequency of using English of all the participants is rare. It means that they rarely get English exposure so it affects their pronunciation. The source of exposure is from social media, teacher in the classroom, and written text.

4) Attitude

The fourth factor is attitude. Attitude is expression of positive or negative feelings towards a language. Based on Kenworthy (1987), if the learners are positive and open-minded towards English language, they are likely to imitate English accents easily and it will make them have better pronunciation. However, if the learners have some prejudices about the target language, this event will influence their approach to the language and bring a bad influence on their language learning process. The question in this theme was related to the participant's feelings in learning English pronunciation.

Based on the participant's answers, it showed that all of the participants have positive feelings towards English. They like and happy to learn English because English is fun and interesting.

5. Motivation

The last factor is motivation. Motivation is an impulse that triggers a person to do something to achieve a goal. Based on Kenworthy (1987), the highly motivated learner has a better pronunciation performance compared to others. The question in this theme is about what motivates the students to have good English pronunciation.

Based on the answers, all of the participants have vary motivation for learning English pronunciation. There are many reasons that the participants mention which motivate them to have good English pronunciation, such as: to study abroad, get a job, understand the English content in social media, and have a good English score.

Discussion

In the discussion, the researchers answered the research questions, to find out the most errors that frequently occurred in vowel sounds spoken by the students and the factors that affect those errors.

The first, in pronunciation, errors sometimes happen. Deal with the first research question, based on the findings, the most frequent error was vowel [æ] with 23,4%. Mostly the students pronounce it with [e] sound. The error may happen because, in Indonesian, the vowel [æ] does not exist so the participants were unfamiliar with the vowel [æ] in English which made most of the participants mispronounce the words using the other vowels to pronounce the words (as cited in Simangunsong, 2018).

The second, the most frequent error was the vowel [ə] with 17,3%. However, mostly they replaced it with vowel [ɒ] and [ʌ] sounds. The researchers argued that this was caused by students pronouncing these words simply by following the way of pronunciation in the Indonesian language. They read it the same as the alphabetical presentation. The research from Ariyani (2019) showed a similar result to this research. She reported that most of the students' pronunciations were generally influenced by their habit of speaking in Indonesian and Javanese languages as their mother tongues.

The third, the most frequent error was the vowel [ɜ:] with 14,7%. But mostly the students pronounced it with vowel [e] and [ɔ:] sound. The researchers assumed that this happen because the students did a misformation error. Puspitasari (2018) found that most vowel misformation errors happened when the students used the wrong item in pronouncing certain words. In her study, the kind of this error happened in /ɒ/, /ɜ:/, /ʊ/, and /æ/sounds. Those wrong forms were influenced by their less knowledge of pronunciation.

Next, the most frequent error was the vowel [ɑ:] with 11,3%. However, mostly they replaced it with the vowel [ɔ:] sound. The researchers assumed that this happen because of the lack of students' pronunciation awareness. Most of the students replace the words with words and sounds that they are familiar with. Makmur (2020) found that students' pronunciation awareness indirectly influenced the ability of students to communicate. It was because they did not aware that they are lack in English pronunciation. They thought that their pronunciation was right, when in fact they still did the wrong pronunciation.

The last, the most frequent error was the vowel [ʌ] with 10%. However, most of the students replaced it with a vowel [ɒ] sound. The researchers assumed that this happen because of differences between the correct pronunciation that should be pronounced and its writing actually. This is in line with research from Nurhayati (2015) that concluded the first student's problem was pronunciation because

English pronunciation and spelling are different so when the students did not show the correct pronunciation of the English words, they only guess it by using their logic

Deal with the second research question, the researchers tried to find out the factor affecting the errors in students' pronunciation. There are several factors that affect pronunciation: mother tongue, age, amount of exposure, attitude, and motivation. From the data, it was seen that all vowels got errors in terms of pronunciation, but it has different percentages. The highest percentages have been discussed in the previous point. The factor presented here was the overall factor that includes all problems that arise from pronunciation errors.

The first is about the mother tongue. According to Kenworthy (1987), the mother tongue refers to the influence of the native language of the learner on her/his acquisition of the target language. EFL learners used the mother tongue when they communicated at home or with their same ethnic friends. Thus, it influenced their pronunciation when they spoke a second or third language. Based on the interview results data, most of the participants talked in their mother tongue. They preferred to use Javanese in their daily life communication. Although on many occasions, they talked with Bahasa Indonesia as their national language because they used it at formal places such as school. All of those participants use Javanese, which means that the effect of the Javanese language as their mother tongue is strong. This is in line with Fadillah's (2020) study which analyzed the factors influencing Indonesian EFL learners' pronunciation. The result showed that aside from the influence of Indonesian as the national and official language, vernaculars or local languages as the mother tongue cannot be ignored when it comes to pronunciations. It can be concluded that the first theory of Kenworthy (1987), mother tongue, was matched with participants' interview results.

The second is about age. Based on Kenworthy (1987), age means the student's initial time in learning a foreign language. Someone who has learned English since they were young tends to have better English pronunciation than others who have learned it when they are old. Based on the interview results data, all the participants started to learn English in elementary school, which is 7-12 years old. But this result contradicts the fact that even though the participants had learned English in elementary school, they still made errors in pronouncing many English words when they were in high school. The researchers assumed this was because English is not used in participants' daily lives even though they had already learned it in elementary school. In the leadup to maturity, many responsibilities the students got. In school, they not only learn English but also other lessons, whereas in learning any language, consistency is required and of course, takes a long time, so in this study, the age when start learning English does not guarantee the pronunciation that students make will be good as well. In addition, the role of teachers as the companion of language learning in the classroom has not been maximal. Students were more often taught in one-way learning methods. The previous research from Tambunsaribu & Simatupang (2021) investigated the factors that made the students still mispronounce some English words even though they had learned English since they were in elementary and secondary school. The result from that study showed that many students have not been encouraged yet to improve their English language skills, especially in speaking. In addition, their most important obstacle was that some of their English teachers did not actively communicate using English two-

way when they were studying English in the classroom. It can be concluded that the second theory of Kenworthy (1987), age, was not matched with the results of the participants' interviews.

The third is about the amount of exposure. According to Kenworthy (1987), the amount of exposure means the extent to which the learner is being exposed to the other language. The more they spend their time in English, the better their English pronunciation will be. Based on the interview results data, the frequency of using English of all the participants was rare so they rarely were exposed to the English language. They got exposure from English teachers in the classroom, from written text, and from social media they watched like Youtube, Instagram, and Tiktok. From those sources, they get it only from a certain time. So it means the exposure did not much happen in their life, only in some moments, for example when they access social media, mostly the content they watched was not fit to the direct good pronunciation, or at the time they went to school and the schedule about English in which English was not happen everyday, only once a week so it was not maximum. This was in line with the study from Gozali (2017) which said that most Indonesian student seldom practices to speaks English because they just speak English only when they are in English class, and when the teacher asks them to practice in the class. It can be concluded that the participants' interview results was matched with the third theory of Kenworthy (1987).

The fourth is about attitude. According to Kenworthy (1987), attitude means the expression of positive or negative feelings towards a language. If the learners have good attitudes toward the target culture, they can easily develop more accurate, native-like accents. Based on the interview data, all of the participants have positive feelings towards English. They felt English was an interesting field. However, in the fact, they still pronounced some English words in the wrong way. The researchers assumed that students who had a good attitude/feeling of English do not necessarily have good English pronunciation skills as well, maybe they just think English is interesting without making more effort to be able to speak English better. This is in line with the study of Ikhsan (2017) who investigated factors influencing students' pronunciation mastery in 10 West Sumatera EFL students. As the result, he said that the students who have good attitude did not always master pronunciation because normally the students who have a good attitude they certain to learn about pronunciation more so it could make their pronunciation better. It can be concluded that the participants' interview results was not matched with the fourth theory of Kenworthy (1987).

The last is about motivation. Based on Kenworthy (1987), a highly motivated learner has a better pronunciation performance compared to others. If the learner's motivation is strong and if the investment of time and effort is genuine, there will be perceived improvement in the student's pronunciation. Based on the interview data, all of the participants have vary motivations for learning English pronunciation. The participants also mentioned what motivate them to have good English pronunciation were to study abroad, to get a job, to understand the English content in social media, and to have a good English score to get the reward. It was clear that most students want to achieve their goals so they think they should master the pronunciation. Because if they did not master pronunciation they would have difficulty getting those goals. However, in fact, they still made errors in pronouncing English words so it means those motivations that they mentioned were

not enough to make them explore English pronunciation further. The research from Anjomshoa & Sadighi (2015) mentioned that it could happen because motivation determines the extent of active, personal involvement in foreign language learning. Motivation directly influences how much students interact with native speakers, and how long they persevere and maintain foreign language skills after language study is over. It can be concluded that motivation is also influenced by other factors and every person's motivation to learn is flexible rather than fixed. It can be concluded that the last Kenworthy (1987) factor, motivation, was not matched with the participants' interview results.

Conclusion and suggestion

From the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the students still made errors in pronouncing English words. The researchers illustrated that there was a total of 150 vowel errors occurred in this study. It also found that the most common error produced by the students in pronouncing English words were vowels [æ], [ə], [ɜ:], [ɑ:], and [ʌ]. As for the rest, they got a slight average of errors.

For the factors affecting those errors, there were 5 factors influencing the English vowel errors of the EFL learners based on Kenworthy's theory such as mother tongue, age, amount of exposure, attitude, and motivation. In terms of mother tongue, the participants used the Javanese language as their mother tongue, but on some occasions, such as in formal environments like schools, they preferred to use Bahasa Indonesia as the national language. In the point of age, all the participants started to learn English in elementary school, which is 7-12 years old but in fact, they still made errors in pronouncing English words because English is not used in participants' daily lives. So it is no wonder that actually, they have not been able to English because the intensity of learning English is not good as expected. For the amount of exposure, the participants got exposure only from several sources. They were still less exposed to English pronunciation because they got English subjects at school only once a week which means they also lack of the time to meet English teachers who can teach them pronunciation. Then from social media, maybe the content on social media that they watched does not really influence them into the good production of students' pronunciation. The social media they mentioned were Youtube, Instagram, and Tiktok. In terms of attitude, all of the participants have positive feelings toward English but they still pronounced some English words in the wrong way. This may happen because of the lack of effort made by students in learning English pronunciation. For the last factor, it is motivation, all the participants have various motivations for learning English pronunciation. However, they still made errors in pronouncing English words. This may be due to affect from other factors as well, such as: how much students interact with native speakers, and how long they persevere and maintain foreign language skills after language study is over.

The researchers would like to give some suggestions related to the results of the research which hopefully will be useful for students, teachers, and other researchers. The students should make English as a "friend" by practicing English with correct pronunciation in their daily lives. students need to strengthen their motivation to learn and explore English pronunciation. And last, students should be able to utilize various media as their learning resources, so they don't just rely on English subjects and English teachers in schools. Moreover, teachers should better

accommodate their students' need for English, for example by making English Club an extracurricular so the students that are interested in English can join it and hopefully, it can make them have better English pronunciation. And the last, the researchers hope that the next researchers can do similar research on a similar topic on a deeper scale with more participants.

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