

## **The Analysis of Students Pronunciation Error**

**Horia Siregar, Melisa Zuriani Hasibuan**

Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan, Indonesia

Email: horiasiregar@gmail.com

**Abstract**—This research is conducted to analysis of students' pronunciation error of English silent letters. The problems should be answered in this research are: How is the students' pronunciation ability of silent letters in English words and what are the students' common errors in pronouncing English silent letters. The subject of the research is 40 students of Economic department at UMN Medan. The objects of this research are the students' ability in pronouncing English silent letter and the students' common error in pronouncing English silent letter. To collect the data, the writer applied technique the test. Then, the data is analyzed in descriptive qualitative method. The result of this research shows that mean score of students' ability in pronouncing English silent letter is 61.05% that means in fair category. There are 20 kinds of silent letter in English and he writer get 14 of the the Students' common error of silent letter.

**Keywords:** Silent Letter; Students' Pronunciation; Error

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

English spoken language is commonly used by people around the globe. English is widely-spread and mostly used in communication between people from different countries. "It is a familiar story, in the history of the English language, though operating now on a global scale"(Crystal, 2003, p. 177). The possibility of English to become the language of the world is on the progress. In the era of globalization, spoken English has a big role in communicating ideas between individuals. Thus, the competence of spoken English becomes a necessity. In order to perform fully-understandable English, the phonological terms of English must be considered. Phonology according to McMahon "is the language-specific selection and organisation of sounds to signal meanings" (2002, p. 2). Phonology concerns the rules of spoken language in a particular language. Those rules are different from one language to another. Dardjowidjojo states that "Phonology does not deal with how sounds are formed, produced, or perceived, but how they are arranged in relation to other sound" (2009, p. 16). Phonology is different from Phonetics. Whereas Phonetics deals with the production of sounds, Phonology is related to the actualization of those sounds. The Phonology of a language is distinct from other languages. English and Indonesian phonological systems have their own characteristics of Phonology.

English and Indonesian phonological systems are different in certain aspects. In English, we have words containing consonant clusters [l] and [p] in the final position such as *scalp*, *pulp*, and *help*. However, those clusters are always situated in different syllables in Indonesian, such as in the word *al-pa*, *pul-pen*, and *tel-pon*. Therefore, Indonesians have difficulty in pronouncing those combinations and tendency to spell those words by adding schwa [ə] between [l] and [p]. In this case, Indonesian speakers have a problem in pronouncing English words regarding to the limitation of Indonesian phonological rules. This phenomenon can cause pronunciation error for Indonesian students who perform English spoken language.

The problem in pronouncing English words can be found in the words containing silent letters such as *debris*, *psychology*, and *subtle*. Error is a phenomenon related to the influence of the mother tongue on the learning process. Error which made by the learners in the learning process is inevitable. However, the errors made by the learners are systematic and not random. Therefore, by studying the pattern of the error, the occurrence of the error can be prevented (Corder, 1982, pp.65-66). In this study, the researcher only focused on the error of the second language learner. According to Richard (2002) error is the use of a linguistic item, such as a word, a grammatical item, or a speech act, in the way a learner of the language shows incomplete learning (p. 184). The error phenomenon indicates not only the effectiveness of the learning technique applied, but also the learner's 'levels' in mastering a language. The errors made by learners, referring to Richard in Ellis (1994, p. 58), is related to three things as follows. Interference error, which occurs as the result of applying the rule of L1 on L2; Intra-lingual error, which occurs as the result of faulty generalization, incompetence application of rules, and failure to learn condition under which rules apply and development error, which occurs when the learner attempts to conclude the rule of a particular language based on a limited experience.

In this study, the researcher is observing the error made by non-English department students in pronouncing silent letters in English words. According to Richard, the aim of error analysis is to find the causes of learner errors (2002, p. 184). Then, the use of error analysis as the theoretical grounds of this study is appropriate in order to identify the factors causing the error made by English learners. Silent letter is a letter which is present in spelling but omitted in the pronunciation. According to Podhaizer (1998), "letters that are not heard making their "usual" sound in a word as silent" (p. 88). Silent letter that is completely un-pronounced in the actual speech is called empty letter. In English we have words containing empty letter as "b" in "debt", "w" in "wreck", and "l" in "walk" which are pronounced as [det], [rɛk], and [wɔ:k]. English silent letters were introduced in the Middle English and Early Modern English period which is marked by major changes in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. Most of the words which contain silent letters comes from Latin and French. The introduction of silent letter at that time was a

solution since every letter had to be pronounced. Therefore, silent letters enable people to stop pronouncing long consonants (Pospíšilová, 2014).

This study is conducted to encourage the students to acknowledge errors in pronouncing English words containing silent letters and urge them to pronounce more appropriate English. This study also aims at finding the influence of the mother tongue in learning English. As English has become the standard language in academic world, it is essential for students in higher education to comprehend fully-understandable English. According to Crystal, English has become familiar for people from around the globe and its presence is in every domain. "Similar attitudes will be encountered in all parts of the world where English is developing a strong non-native presence, and at all levels" (2003, p. 176).

Therefore, acquiring fully-understandable English, particularly in spoken English, becomes a necessity. The results of the study are the possibilities in what position of silent letter the learner made the error, the type of error the learner made in a particular position of silent letter, and the factors causing the error. Thus, this study can be used to identify the error made by the learners in a particular position of silent letter. The study explains in what position the learners perform most pronunciation error. Then, the study explains why such error occurs.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Data Collection**

In this study, the researcher applied a purposive sampling method the use of this method is to purposefully select the participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. The participants chosen were non-English department students that is 40 students from economic department of UMN Medan. The data were the audio recording of the pronunciation of the participants. The researcher used a voice recorder, a Longman English Pronunciation Dictionary, and the test sheet to collect the data.

### **2.2 Data Analysis**

Corder and Ellis (1994) says that there are 5 steps that used in the Error Analysis research. Those steps are, (1) collection of sample of a learner language, (2) identification of errors, (3) description of error, (4) explanation of error, and (5) evaluation of error. In the study, the researcher only uses the first, second, and the fourth step. The first step of analyzing the data was collecting the result of the pronunciation test of the words containing silent letter "h" and "w". Then, the results of the test were transcribed using TranscriberAG (version 1.6.0), Phon (version 2.1.8), and Longman English pronunciation dictionary referring to IPA. The researcher focused on the silent letters of the words and omitted error of other letters of the words. The result of the pronunciation was categorized into two parts based on the silent letter contained. Then, the words were divided into three positions: initial, medial, and final.

### **2.3 Conceptual Framework**

Commonly many students wrong in pronouncing the word. Especially containing silent letters. Some of students incorrect to pronounce them. Because silent letter is an informal term for a letter of the alphabet ( or a letter combination) that is usually left unpronounced. for example when they want to say —fruitl the alphabet —il is exist there, but not little of them pronouncing with —il. And as we know that —il is silent letters in that word. In this research, the researcher will research students' error in pronouncing the word containing silent letters. Because many case found if the learners have low motivation in learning English because they think that English is a difficult subject. That is why they not really understand about english subject. And many of them have no confidence because they rarely to speak English. Not only that, the learners think that English is difficult to pronounce because there are different sound system between English and their language. For example, in their home they will using bahasa or using Bataknese so that they feel difficult to speak English. They pronounce the word based on their mind without learning to understanding the correct pronunciation.

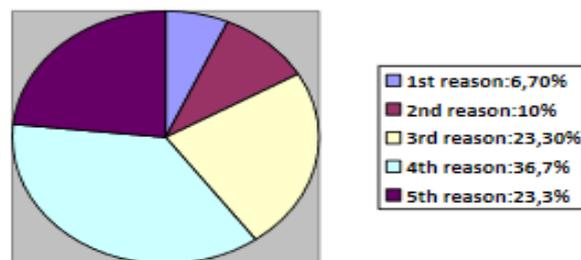
## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the result of the analysis, the researcher concludes that the non-English department students made many errors in the pronunciation of the words containing silent letters. There are several types of silent letters based on the common errors in pronouncing the word. The writer categorizes the result of observation list into some categories. In this part, the writer categorizes the letter on the words pronounced incorrectly by the students into some categories. There are some types of silent letters, they are *Exocentric diagraph*, *Endocentric diagraph*, *Empty letter*, *Silent diagraph*.

There are 20 silent letters in English, the writer obtains 14 letters that are mis-pronounced by students. Based on the type of silent letter, researchers obtained 27 incorrect pronunciation words. It was categorized it into 4 silent letter type, namely 3 words as Exocentric diagraph, , 21 words categorized as empty letters, and 3 words as silent diagraphs. Empty letters are the most difficult to pronounce, which makes students confused when reciting the letters, for example: scene, wrist, laugh and isle. Then there were 22 students who mis-pronounced the letters [w]

and 11 letters [gh]. A total of 7 students mislabeled in each letter. That is [b], [g], [o],[p], [e], [k], [l], [r], [s], [t], and [u]. This research shows that the dominant mistake of students in the pronunciation of English especially silent letter is in the letter [w].

After handing out questioners to students obtained the results of research on the causes of student failure in pronouncing mute letters in English. From the questionnaire, researchers categorized there are 4 main causes of student failure to pronounce mute letters in English, namely: questions no. 1 and 2 relating to the native language of speakers, questions 3rd and 4th about learning English pronunciation, questions number 5 through 8 about student motivation, and questions number 10 to 14 about students' knowledge of mute letters. From the graph above it is known that 6.7% of students find English a difficult language because they do not understand the words, 10% of students did not write the reason why they had difficulty in reciting English, 23% stated that they had no difficulty in reciting because they had studied before, 36.7% stated they had difficulty because the writing and pronunciation were english, and the next reason was 23.3% stated that English was not their native language. These reasons are important factors that make it difficult for students to pronounce English, especially the pronunciation of silent letters. Students need to familiarize themselves with English which in fact is not a native language / mother used in daily life. There are many obstacles to mastering english pronunciation well. Therefore, it takes determination and strong motivation in order for students' pronunciation to be better over time.



**Picture 1.** The Students' Response

Furthermore, teachers (lecturers) can help correct student pronunciation errors in English by always correcting student pronunciation in the classroom. The teacher reminds students directly about the mispronunciation they make so that students can easily remember the mistake in the hope that they will not repeat the mistakes pronunciation.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Pronunciation errors that occurred were not exclusively intended do by learners. They are several reason why students incorrect to pronounced the words. The first one is lack of exposure to English Listening Vocabulary, the second is lack of knowledge of english phonemic transcription, The third is habit to producing the wrong sound of the given words. The forth is lack to interest in learning English pronunciation. The fifth is lack of motivation by the teachers to give stress on listening skills, then, lack of requisite time hour to practice English vocabulary and pronunciation and the last is lack of appropriate knowledge by the teachers to train the students in English. Thus, To motivate the students in avoiding the mispronunciation, there are several things that should be done by the english teachers (lecturers). They should give much practice about students pronunciation and explain the letter that omitted and the letter should pronounce. Therefore students can applytheir knowledge in the real context of pronunciation and their pronunciation will be better than before.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Adila, Sherly dan Refnaldi. 2019. Pronunciation Errors Made by Senior High School Students in Speaking Performance. *Journal of English Language Teaching* Volume 8 No. 3.
- Brown, H. Douglas. 2000. *Principles of Language Teaching and Learning*. San Francisco: Longman.
- Odden, D. 2006. *Introducing Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tambunsaribu, Gunawan. 2019. Analisis Pelafalan Mahasiswa Dalam Melafalkan Irregular Verbs Bahasa Inggris. *Journal of Language and Literature*. Vol 7, No 2 (2019)
- Wendana, Diva dan Suryani, Suci. 2016. Analisis Kesalahan Berbahasa Inggris Pada Tataran Fonologis. *Prososdi*. Volume x, Nomor 2, juli 2016.
- Brinton, Laurel J. & Donna M. Brinton. (2010).*The Linguistics Structure of Modern English*.Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Creswell, Jhon. (2007). *Research Design Qualitative,Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publication Inc.Carney, Edward. (2012).*A Survey of English Spelling*. New York: Routledge.
- Ellis, Rod. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition(Oxford Applied Linguistics)*. Philadhelpia: Oxford University Press.

- Gilakjani, Abbas P. (2016). English Pronunciation Instruction: A Literature Reviw. Lahijan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Lahijan, Iran.
- Hasyim, sunardi. (2002). Error Analysis in the Teaching of English. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Kristen Petra.
- Hyman, Lary M. (2018). Phonology Theory and Analysis. Holt, Rineheart and Winston.
- Kelly, Gerald. (2000). How to Teach Pronunciation. Blueston Press, Charlbury, Oxfordshire, UK.
- Mahaputra, Bishnu P. (2017). The Problem of Silent Letters in ESL Teaching and Learning. Dept. Of Basic Science & Humanities.
- McMahon, April. (2002). An Introduction to English Phonology. Edinbugh University Press.
- Muslich, Masnur. (2008). Fonologi. Bumi Aksara.
- Sahulata, Daniel. (1988). An Introduction To Sounds And Sounds Systems Of English. Departemen Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Pengembangan Lembaga Pendidikan Tenaga Kependidikan Jakarta.
- Sugiono. (2016). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D. Alfabeta, cv.
- Syafei, Anas. (1988). English Pronunciation: Theory and Practice. Department Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Proyek Pengembangan Lembaga Pendidikan Tenaga Kependidikan Jakarta.