

How Phones in English Words Are Pronounced

Yohana Eden Narwastu J.

English Language Education Department, University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

Received: day month 201x, Revised: day month 201x, Accepted: day month 201x

Published: day month 201x

Abstracts: English Language Education students do not see the necessities to speak in English like a native speaker. This phenomenon wakes the researcher to find out how certain phones are pronounced by ELED student. The term phone in this research refers to individual speech sound. This research used qualitative research and employed qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected by recording students' performance while reading. The research revealed the students tended to add /ə/ between cluster consonants, and pronounced profound /r/ at the end of words. The students also omitted phones in cluster consonants and the phone /t/ at the end of words. Furthermore, the research revealed that the students replace unfamiliar phones, such as /ɪ/ → /e/ or /i/, /ʃ/ → /s/, /θ/ → /t/, /v/ → /f/ or /p/, /ð/ → /t/. The students also shorten or simplify long phones as in /oʊ/ → /ə/ or /o/.

Keywords: pronunciation, phonetic, phone, qualitative descriptive design

1. Introduction

Mastering a language involves a wide knowledge, such as its vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. One aspect is not necessarily more important than the others, which means each of these departments is equally significant. Nair, Krishnasamy, and de Mello (2006) cited that poor pronunciation will hinder the speaker to be understood despite being familiar with wide range of vocabulary and grammatical rules in target language. Fasser cited in the same paper mentioned that the main problem faced by English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners is the pronunciation, in spite of years of learning the language. On that premise, this research focuses on the pronunciation aspect especially on how certain sound is pronounced by participants of the research. The use of the word "sound" itself may

differ depending on contexts; hence, the researcher from this point forward refers individual speech sound as *phone*.

A pilot survey was conducted to three students of ELED of a private university to give a rudimentary understanding regarding the level of attention given by students of ELED of this private university toward pronunciation. The result of this pilot survey revealed that the participants rarely discuss or correct their pronunciation when they speak in English. Furthermore, they believe that only native speakers can speak Standard English. Therefore, they do not see the necessities to speak in English like a native speaker. A question emerged from this phenomenon: *How Phones in English Words Are Pronounced*, especially by the students of the private university where the research took place.

2. Related Works/Literature Review

International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA). International Phonetic Alphabet or IPA is essentially a set of symbols to represent every possible phones occur in languages in the world (Landefoged, 1990). The International Phonetic Association (2003) mentioned that the IPA is based on Roman alphabet with some letters and other symbols. Roman alphabet is chosen because it has the advantage of being widely known, however the variety of phones in languages in the world is greater than the number of letters in Roman alphabet, thus, the additional letters and symbols. Bischoff and Fountain (2011) state that IPA was developed as a way for writing phones so there exactly one letter for exactly one phone. However, not every and each of the phonetic symbol shown on the IPA chart is used in English.

This research focuses on phone as an individual in oppose to its role in word meaning (phonemic). Bischoff and Fountain write that phone is a single speech sound unit and each phone is represented by one particular symbol in IPA chart (2011). For example, “M-I-N-D” is an orthographic representation, which means it is a standard spelling of the word “mind”, phone on the other hand is every individual sounds

produce by a speaker and represented by IPA symbols. In this case, the word “mind” has four phones or sounds represented by /m/ - /aɪ/ - /n/ -/d/, /maɪnd/.

Yiing (2011) wrote a research project about how the mother tongue of six Chinese students affects their English pronunciation. In “An Analysis of Pronunciation Errors in English of Six UTAR Chinese Studies Undergraduates”, the researcher found that Chinese students tend to change short sounds, such as /ʌ/, /ɪ/, /ʊ/ into long sounds, such as /ɑ:/, /u:/, /i:/. Not unlike English, Chinese has time-based vowels which intrigued Yiing to choose six Chinese students as her participants in the research. Another study was carried out by Yulianti. Yulianti (2014) on her paper addressed Indonesian English learners’ tendency on adding schwa, omitting, or replacing phones on consonant clusters. Yulianti mentioned that Indonesian learners lean toward simpler pronunciations than try to pronounce the consonant clusters as they should be pronounced.

3. Methodology and Data Analysis

The research is a qualitative research which employed qualitative descriptive design. The researcher focused on four students of English Language Education Department of a private university in Yogyakarta. The research was meant to find out how four research participants pronounce forty-five English words, twenty one of which are English words that have been adapted into Indonesian language.

Four students participated in this research and were recorded to collect data. Four participants were from different cities in Indonesia for the researcher tried to avoid cultural stereotype which might lead to socio-linguistics point of view. The participants were chosen based on the criteria that they had to be those who were in their final year in the assumptions that they had completed every compulsory subject in the English Language department. Furthermore, the participants had to be students who speak actively either in the classroom or outside the classroom or both. More importantly, the researcher required someone who already had a teaching experience to participate in this research. Therefore, the participants had had the experience of

teaching pronunciation and seen the struggle faced by language learners first handedly.

Harrington (2010) explained in his book that phonetic analysis is a method in which a learner's or speaker's speech is analyzed phonetically based on traditional speech phones using IPA and being compared to the standard speech of the target language. Therefore, the researcher employed phonetic analysis, which analyzed the differences between the phones in each words pronounced by the participants and how the standards pronunciation of the words provided by GA (General American) and RP (Received Pronunciation). The researcher did so by comparing the transcriptions from the recording and the IPA provided in this research which she acquired from Oxford dictionary. In this manner, the researcher tried to categorize the differences found.

4. Finding and Discussion

There are three apparent patterns that occur in findings of the research. Participants tended to add, omit, and replace when they pronounced certain phones in words used as the instrument in this research.

Adding. In the findings of this research, adding occurs in two occasions: adding /ə/ between consonant clusters and profound /r/ in words that have "r" as word-final stop or coda. The words of which these phenomena transpire are "globe" and "department". Participant two pronounced the word "globe" as /gələb/ in each of the recordings. Participant two added /ə/ between /g/ and /l/. Interestingly, Participant one added /ə/ at the end of the word "globe", making an impression of Participant one pronouncing "e" at the end of the word. Bischoff and Fountain in their book *Linguistics: A Brief Introduction* (2011) mention that sometimes speaker of a non-native language tend to fixate on the orthographic representation of words. Participant one makes a minor relapse by pronouncing the letter "e" at the end of the word "globe" as Participant two may have been fixated into the spelling of the word, and not the pronunciation. Participant one and Participant two pronounced the word

“department” /di'pɑ:rtmənt, di'pɑ:tmənt/ as /di'pɑ:rtəmən/ and /depa:rtəmən/ respectively. This proves the theory poses by Yulianti (2014) regarding Indonesian English learners' tendency to add vowel sound between consecutive consonants.

English has two ways on pronouncing /r/, which are pronounced when it appears before a vowel sound and silent when it appears before a consonant sound or at the end of a word (Hudson, 2013). On the other hand, Indonesian does not possess this kind of rule on pronouncing /r/. Therefore, in words that have the letter 'r' as word-final stop, all participants pronounced the letter 'r' profoundly despite the sound should be silent. The finding showed that all participants pronounced the word “year” /'jiə, jɜ:/ with profound /r/ at the end of the word. However, although 'r' is not the last letter of the word “exposure” /ɪk'spəʊʒə, ɪk'spəʊzə/, all participants pronounce it with rhotic /r/ in the end of the word which may occur because the participants are under the assumption that “e” at the end of the word is silent. Therefore, these participants unconsciously eliminate the /e/ sound.

Omitting. Indonesian language allows limited consonant clusters, which cause participants, who are of Indonesian origin, face difficulty in pronouncing consonant clusters at the end of a word. Aside from adding vowel sound, especially /ə/, the finding reveals that participants omitted some sound at the end of consonant clusters. /t/ sound often absents at the end of consonant clusters. This pattern occurs in words such as “department”, “subject”, “detergent”, and “joint”. This finding in aligns with Yulianti (2014) who also mentioned that Indonesian language lean towards an easier pattern that consist of consonant-vowel pattern and tend to eliminate sounds in consonant clusters.

In Indonesian Language, a consonant cluster or *gugus konsonan* (Indonesian) consists of no more than two consonants, rarely three consonants, for example in the word *struktur* (structure) to construct a syllable (Prihantini, 2015). Therefore, when an Indonesian speaker is challenged by three or more consonants in a cluster in onset position, she or he tends add schwa between consonants or omit one or more

consonant sounds. Participant one and Participant two omit /t/ at the end of the words. Indonesian language acknowledges “ng” /ŋ/ as the only consonant cluster as word final stop, in result, elimination of the /t/ sound in the end of the words occurs in this finding.

This occurrence also appears in pronouncing plural words and past form of verbs such as the words “months”, “naturalized”, and “granted” as the participants omitted the phones /d/ and /θ/.

Replacing. Indonesian language has simpler and less phones in pronouncing both consonants and vowels (Whiteman, 2010). This create a barrier when it comes to pronouncing certain phones that absent in Indonesian phonetics, such as /v/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /ð/, /θ/, /z/ in consonants, and many more in vowels. The findings show that the participants replace “harder” phones to simpler ones as follow:

/ɪ/	→	/e/ or /i/	in “efficiency” and “impulsive”
/ʃ/	→	/s/	in “efficiency”, “Polish” and “French”
/θ/	→	/t/	in “theme”
/v/	→	/f/ or /p/	in “impulsive”, “kelvin” and “visiting”
/oo/	→	/ə/ or /o/	in “Polish”
/ð/	→	/t/	in “their”

Indonesian and English have five vowels orthographic representations, which are, A, I, U, E, O with Y in English as an exception in some words, such as fly, dry, rhythm, etc. Indonesian people pronounce vowel as a sound per letter pattern, except in vowel cluster au, ai, oi which pronounced as /Au/, /Ai/, and /Oi/ respectively (Agussalim, 2016). In a word such as “*maaf*”, both vowels are pronounced /mʌʔʌf/. However, when it comes to pronouncing the vowels, English has more ways to pronounce them. These pronunciations include long vowels, such as /ɑ:/, /ɜ:/, /i:/, /ɔ:/, and /u:/, diphthongs, and triphthongs, which the last one absents in Indonesian language. Therefore, participants tend to shorten and simplify the pronunciations of

time-based (long) phones and triphthongs. This phenomenon can be seen when the participants pronounced words such as “Polish” /'pɒlɪʃ/ and “term” /'tɜ:m/.

In addition, participant three demonstrated a unique phenomenon with his/her inconsistency of pronouncing /f/ which is pronounced as /f/ in the beginning of a word and /p/ in the middle of in the end of a word. The participant also showed that participant pronounced /v/ in the middle of a word or at the end of a word as /b/.

English is a widely spoken language. The number of non-native English speakers is growing rapidly and with that, the variations of English dialects as well. With the increase of non-native speakers that come from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds, fixating on enforcing Standard English pronunciation toward non-natives speakers seems to be somewhat redundant.

However, English is a lingua franca which is a language that has been agreed as a common language between speakers with different native language. With that in mind, understanding the Standard English is important for a non-native speaker to be understood, or intelligible. Intelligibility in English means the speaker’s pronunciation is recognized as English to help the listener to understand the meaning or –in other words– being comprehensive. In this research, researcher tried to point out the difficulties faced by the participants and map the pattern without supposing their pronunciation as “the wrong one”. Furthermore, the number of participants of this research was too small to justify the findings as representative of the entire ELED students. Therefore, the findings presented in this chapter are exclusive for the students as participants of the research.

5. Conclusion

Previous part presents an explanation regarding participants’ tendency to add the phone /ə/ between consonant clusters and pronounce the sound /r/ (rhotic) at the end of words such as year and exposure. Furthermore, consonant clusters seem to be a challenge for participants. This research revealed not only do the participants add

vowel sounds to help the pronunciation; the research found out that participants omit sounds in a consonant cluster, especially /t/ or in past tense words such as, granted. Participants tend to replace unfamiliar phones, such as /v/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /ð/, /θ/, /z/ and shorten or simplify long phones, diphthongs and triphthongs.

References

Agussalim, D. (2016, March). *Fonologik linguistik umum*. Retrieved 2017, from fonologik5: <http://fonologik5.blogspot.co.id/2016/03/gugus-fonem-dan-deret-fonem-gugus-fonem.html>

Bischoff, F. (2011). *Linguistics: A brief introduction*. Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne and University of Arizona.

Gilakjani, Pourhosein. (2012). A study of factors affecting EFL learners' English pronunciation learning and the strategies for instruction. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 120.

Harimoto, M. (2007). *Lexical strata of Indonesian vocabulary*. Arizona. Retrieved 2014, from <http://sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf8/hiramoto2007lexical.pdf>

Hudson, J. (2013, May 21). *Silent /r/*. Retrieved 2018, from Pronunciation Studio: <https://pronunciationstudio.com/silent-r-british-pronunciation/>

International Phonetic Association. (2003). *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association : A guide to the use of the international phonetic alphabet*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Nair, Krishnasamy, de Mello. (2006). Rethinking the teaching of pronunciation in ESL classroom. *The English Teacher Vol XXXV*, 27-40.

Prihantini, A. (2015). *Master Bahasa Indonesia: Panduan tata Bahasa Indonesia terlengkap*. Yogyakarta: B. First.

Yuliati. (2014). Final consonant clusters simplification by Indonesian learners of English and its intelligibility in international context. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 513-517.