

Mispronouncing English Vowel Sounds on Office Administrative's Students Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to figure out the mispronouncing English vowel sounds that is mostly made by University Students. The data were from 30 students of Office-Administration Study Program Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika as the object of this research. Qualitative method is used for analyzing the recorded sounds that were produced by the students. The vowel sounds investigated in this research were sound of [ɑ:], [ɜ:], and [ɔ:]. The researchers gave 7 words each that contain the vowel sounds. The result indicated that mostly students produced the mispronouncing sound [ɔ:]. They often missed or slip between [ɑ:] and [ɔ:]. This happened when the words tested were unfamiliar for the students.

Keywords: *mispronouncing, vowels, sounds*

1. Introduction

Speaking in English is a good way to communicate around the globe. As an international and most popular language for the entire of the world, English spoken has been used up today. Since English language as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instead of English as a Second Language (ESL) in some Universities, daily spoken English has been less used in the classroom or in an extracurricular event. Moreover, the environment supports someone in speaking language. In some cases, native speaker holds significant enough to speak his/her origin language influencing others to speak the language. Misunderstanding and misinterpreting in spoken English may be happened among students and English instructors. It became possible when they didn't speak in a same language. Hence, EFL students should be trained frequently in order to improve their English-speaking skill.

One of the factors supplemented English speaking is pronunciation. The difficulties to pronounce English vocabularies resulted misinterpretation of the hearers. Common problem to speak English word come from the pronunciation itself, because there are more sounds in spoken English than letters in written English. For example, *buy* /baɪ/ and *bay* /beɪ/. In the context of the sentences; "Let's *buy* some drinks" and "Let's to the *bay*" have different sound. Another example is *cat* /kæt/ and *cut* /kʌt/, as in sentences; Please, feed the *cat*! and Please *cut* this paper, also have difference sounds. Students tend to mispronounce these words. Many cases of misunderstanding in communication were caused by mispronouncing of some words or improper intonation

of the words. If someone pronounces the words fit and feet, cut and cot, pull and pool, for example, with relatively no differences, in some cases can lead to a misunderstanding. Even when the non-native speakers' vocabulary and grammar are excellent, but their pronunciation is bad, they are unable to communicate efficiently and effectively (Riadi et al., 2013). Another expert said also the importance of pronunciation as a source of speaking, pronunciation is also central to language use in social, interactive contexts because pronunciation embodies the way that the speaker and the hearer work together to establish and maintain common ground for producing and understanding each other's utterances (Reed & M. Levis, 2015).

1.1. Research Questions

The research questions for this research are:

1. What vowel sounds are mispronounced by the Office Administrative's Students Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika?
2. What are the causes of the mispronunciation?

2. Literature Review

Since the researchers as English lecturers in a university, they consider about students' English spoken language. In English language learning, teaching speaking aims to enable the learners to use the language for communication (Nugroho, 2019) Pronunciation and Speaking English are two things that cannot be separated. Here, the researchers allow their students to learn and adapt how the native speaker speaks through standard English in a correct way. As stated Gilkajani in (Frijuniarsi, 2018), Speaking process involves the production of sounds using speech organs and it requires continuous practices. Someone is considered speak fluently if he can produce good pronunciation on his utterances because it directly affects his communicative competence and performance. Students have difficulty in speaking. It could happen because lack of motivations of students to pronounce good English words and students were embarrassed to practice their English in daily life. They only speak English when learning English in the classroom if instructed by their teacher and rarely practice outside the classroom (Sadilah, Rizky & Rosianna, 2021). Another researcher also has issued about pronunciation (Putri & Rosa, 2020) said that it is very important to learn the English pronunciation. Language is made of all sounds of voice. People know a certain language and know the sound and how to make it. Pronunciation is a means to make sense. It consists of several segments and aspects of language such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm, voice quality and also gestures and expression in a language.

2.1. Problem of Vowels

The difficulties of learning pronunciation have been faced by some of the authors and lecturers, e.g. Putri and Salsabila (2020) about analysis of English vowel pronouncing, Frijuniarsi (2018) about pronunciation error in informatics students, and Ali (2015) about Elimination of Pronunciation Problems of English Vowels of Saudi

Students. Correct pronunciation of words is largely dependent on the pronunciation of vowel sounds. This fact suggests that pronunciation problems of English vowels can affect the meaning of words leading to intelligibility problems. One of the most important factors affecting the learning of pronunciation of English vowels is the irregular relationship that exists between English vowel alphabets and vowel phonemes of English influences (Ali, 2015). (Riadi et al., 2013) declared that independent of height, vowels can differ in relative frontness of the tongue. The vowel [i] is produced with a front tongue position, whereas [u] is produced with a back tongue position. In addition, [u] is produced with rounding of the lips: it is common but by no means universal for back vowels to also be produced with lip rounding. The back vowels, like the front one, descend from high, through mid, to low, in a continuous sequence. We can observe this by pronouncing the words coot, coat, and cot, and then just their vowels. As we compared [i] and [u] we probably noticed that our lips changed shape as we shifted from the front vowel to the back one. Our lips were rounded as we produced [u]. They were unrounded (spread or neutral) as we produced [i]. As we moved through the series of back vowels, we may also have noticed that lip rounding decreased as we moved from high to low. Three primary heights are generally recognized, namely high, mid and low, with secondary distinctions introduced either under the name tense lax or close open to distinguish vowel pairs such as [i] (seed) vs. [ɪ] (Sid), [e] (late) vs. [ɛ] (let) or [u] (food) vs. [ʊ] (foot), where [ieɪ] are tense (close) and [ɪɛʊ] are lax (open). Tense vowels are higher and often less centralized compared to their lax counterparts.

3. Methods

This section will explain about design, sample, instrument, data collection and data analysis of this research:

3.1. Design

This study was designed by qualitative method which consists of an investigation that produces findings that were not determined in advance. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the “human” side of an issue – that is, the often-contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent. When used along with quantitative methods, qualitative research can help us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation and the implications of quantitative data (Farr, 2008).

3.2. Sample

Sample of this study was the students from Office Administrative Majored in Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika of the fourth semester. Researchers took sample as

many 30 students assigned from two classes with 15 students each. Purposive sampling was used as it is proper to the need

3.3. Instrument

Research instrument a defined as a procedure research that collects descriptive data containing words and written words of the respondents (Madayani, 2019). The instrument used to collect the information about mispronouncing English vowel sounds was the recording of the students.

3.4. Data Collection

The next step is to choose the data collection method(s) that will be used. The most common data collection methods used in qualitative research are (1) observation, (2) interviewing, and (3) document or artifact analysis. Artifacts may include audio and video recordings, photographs, games, artwork, or other items that provide insight related to the context or participants (Ary et al., 2010). The researchers got data from online teaching to their students. The students faced to their computers and talking through headset. Then the researchers as well as their lecturers record the students' voice.

3.5. Data Analysis

Measuring how the faulty of the pronunciation, the researchers used accuracy, accentedness, and nativelikeness. Pronunciation can be seen as a characteristic of performance according to the norms of a certain language or speech community. From this perspective, it is assessed by judgements or goodness of fit measures of the match or the distance between a speaker's pronunciation and that of a model for the language or speech community considered to be the baseline. In this approach, pronunciation might be assessed by evaluating whether a speaker's consonant articulations, vowel articulations, stress, and intonation are correct or accurate; how accurate or nativelike these individual facets of pronunciation are; or how nativelike the speaker's accent is overall. A criterion of correctness or accuracy implicitly assesses pronunciation according to a model language group or speech community whereas a criterion of nativelikeness or accentedness does so explicitly. Error-free, accent free, or nativelike performance has long been considered the ultimate goal of language learning (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). The procedure of this study was conducted by online class. Students should meet with their computer and headset. Then, they recorded their voice to the computer. In addition, the lecturers listen to their audio and analyze the vowel words that indicated phonetic sound of [ɑ:], [ɜ:], and [ɔ:]. See table 1.

Table 1. Long Vowel [ɑ:], [ɜ:] and [ɔ:]

[ɑ:]	[ɜ:]	[ɔ:]
a car	Occur	caught
Dart	Dirt	daughter

Father	further	fault
Far	Fur	pour
Garth	girth	gaunt
Hard	Herd	hoard
Lark	Lurk	walk

On the other hands, the researchers pronounce some words and the students guess what those words are. Researchers stated some vowels words in pair consisting of [ɑ:], [ɜ:] and [ɔ:] sound as a guidance for students to pronounce correct words. These words have been diagnosed by researchers to see the distinguish sound in some written words look like. In order word, the researchers brought to homophones words in order to be learned and practiced by their students.

4. Result & Discussion

4.1. Mispronounced Vowel Sounds

From the analysis, it indicated that mostly students produced the mispronouncing sound [ɔ:]. They often missed or slip between [ɑ:] and [ɔ:]. This happened when the words tested were unfamiliar for the students. The researchers found some errors made by their students. They picked some words that indicated familiar with participants and seemed difficult to pronounce it for non-native speakers. By asking them to distinguish clearly between [ɑ:], [ɜ:] and [ɔ:] of the words and sentences, the researchers showed the result as in table 2.

Table 2. Result of Vowel [ɜ:]

Vowel words [ɜ:]	Number of Students	Correct %	Incorrect %
Bird	30	100	0
Girth	30	93,3	6,7
Curse	30	56,7	43,3
Fur	30	60	40
Word	30	10	90
Turn	30	70	30
Worker	30	6,7	93,3

4.2. Mispronunciation Causes

The result of long vowel [ɜ:] indicated high correctness for some words chosen like *bird* and *girth*. These words are made by inserting *i* word after the consonant, so as to make the students feel familiar and easy to pronounce. On the other side, some words

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such as *curse*, *fur*, *word*, *turn*, and *worker* contributed significant false sound. The words *curse*, *fur*, and *turn* made slip tongue for the students. They mostly read /kurs/ instead of /kɜ:s/ for *curse*, /fur/ for *fur* instead of /fɜ:(r)/, and /turen/ instead of /tɜ:n/ for *turn*. In addition, *word* and *worker* submitted above 90% false sound and have been sounded like what literally written, /w o r d/ and / w o r k e r/. They should be pronounced by /wɜ:(r)d/ and /wɜ:rker/. See table 3.

Table 3. Result of Vowel [ɑ:]

Vowel words [ɑ:]	Number of Students	Correct %	Incorrect %
Cast	30	30	70
Guard	30	50	50
Yard	30	100	0
Bard	30	100	0
Garth	30	100	0
Heart	30	16,7	83,3
Glass	30	43,3	56,7

From table 3, it can be seen that the word *yard*, *bard*, and *Garth* promoted no false sound. Students have easily pronounced without any difficulties. Meanwhile, students made some errors for the word *cast*, *guard*, *heart*, and *glass*. They mostly pronounced *cast* as /kes/ not /ca:st/, *guard* as /guard/ not /ga:d/, and *glass* as /gless/ not /gla:s/. Researchers found students to make mispronounce on these words due to they read loudly what they see in written words. Furthermore, the word *heart* supported significant false as many 83%, they sound like /hert/ instead of /hɑ:θ/. Again, they see in written word and directly pronounce it.

Table 4. Result of Vowel [ɔ:]

Vowel words [ɔ:]	Number of Students	Correct %	Incorrect %
Dawn	30	0	100
Fault	30	63,3	36,7
audience	30	23,3	76,7
Walk	30	66,7	33,3
Awful	30	6,7	93,3
Caution	30	0	100
Pause	30	10,0	90,0

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The last long sound on this research was ɔː sound. This sound has made increasingly error on most students. This is the most difficult part of the sound rather than the previous sounds. The word *dawn*, *awful*, *caution*, and *pause* have supported up to 100% mispronunciation. They thought that the letter *a* was pronounced as well as they saw on written words. They should be pronounced /dɔː n/ not /daun/ for down, /ɔː fl/ not /auful/ for awful, /kɔːʃn/ not /kausyien/ for caution, /pɔːz/ not /paus/ for pause. Similar with the word *awful*, even some of the students pronounce correctly, the word audience contributed 76% of mispronunciation. Since their habit to pronounce what they see in written words, they still made mistake on pronounce these words. Less mistake on pronouncing the word *fault* and *walk* has surprisingly the researchers. They have been asked by researchers to why these words had successfully pronounced for up to 30% something. Some of them answered that they were familiar with this word and frequently heard these sound.

5. Conclusion

Looking backward to this study, the researchers have found final statements. When students randomly read some words that they never seen before, they will pronounce as they see. For students whom non-English native speaker, it became problematic in teaching pronunciation. Some factors that influence mispronouncing are mother tongue interference, slip of the tongue, less English-speaking practice, and listening comprehension. This conclusion has been strengthened by another researcher; the problematic sounds are classified per category in terms of place of articulation, manner of articulation as well as distinctive features for the production of English consonant sound. On the other hand, openness of the mouth, tongue elevation, position tongue elevation, lip's shapes, as well as length of vocalization were used as parameters for the production of English vowel sounds (Kaharuddin et al., 2020).

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