



Students' Phonological Awareness and Their Strategy in Pronouncing Words

*Tri Sekar Buana, Lalu Ari Irawan

Faculty of Culture, Management, and Business, Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika, Jl. Pemuda No. 59A, Mataram 83125, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author e-mail: sekarbuana@gmail.com

Received: March 2021; Revised: April 2021; Published: May 2021

Abstract

The result of the study revealed that the students have difficulties in pronouncing words that were categorized into three parts, those were consonant, vowel, and diphthong. In consonant, the students made errors /p/, /b/, /dʒ/, /z/, /f/, /v/, /d/, /s/, /r/, /k/, /ʃ/, /t/, /ð/, /θ/. In vowels, the students made errors /ɔ/, /æ/, /e/, /ʊ/, /ɪ/, /ɜ/, /i:/, /ʌ/. In diphthong, the students made error /aɪ/, /ɪə/, /ɜə/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/. Furthermore, the students' strategy in their reading activity was categorized into three namely low, middle, and high categories. For low category, the strategy in reading activity was by checking the difficult word in a dictionary, asking the lecture how to pronounce the difficult word, and practicing to read the word continuously. For middle category, the strategy in reading activity was by doing repetition to every single word, listening the pronunciation of the words using u-dictionary, and always practicing to pronounce every single word. For high category, the strategy in reading activity was guessing based on their knowledge pronunciation and make a relation with the word that the same sounds.

Keywords: phonological awareness, pronouncing words

How to Cite: Buana, T. S., & Irawan, L. A. (2021). Students' Phonological Awareness and Their Strategy in Pronouncing Words. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 1(1), 51–56. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v1i1.528>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v1i1.528>

Copyright © 2021, Buana & Irawan

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) License.



INTRODUCTION

The nature of language as a system implies that a language is composed of two systems: a system of sounds and a system of meaning. The relationship between those two systems is very important because in human verbal communication meaning or message is conveyed or received primarily through sounds or vocal symbols. These vocal symbols are expressed in the form of words (vocabulary) and arranged in certain grammatical structures (grammar). In terms of oral language, there must be message (meaning), grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Additionally, another feature of human communication is that language is a cultural transmission. It denotes that a communication system must be discovered through communicative interaction with other users of the language. This suggests that not only features of a language can be totally acquired, but also some parts of the language should be learnt. Thus, language learning is also needed.

The consequence of both features of human language above is that in any language programs, including English language education, pronunciation as a part of system of sounds should be propositionally treated as two other dominant components of language, namely grammar and vocabulary. However, the current situation, particularly English

language in Indonesia, shows that most people who are involved directly or indirectly in English language teaching and learning programs only concentrate on their attention to the last two components. This situation actually contrasts with the nature of language itself which requires a balanced deal of language system and meaning (Tudor, 2001). We shall, therefore, include pronunciation as a part of our language teaching programs because paying no or less attention to pronunciation teaching does eventually affect students' language mastery and the process of the whole communication, particularly when Indonesian EFL learners utilize the target language in real situations later.

At the beginning level, the insufficient capability of pronunciation, of course, does not always have a significant impact on the process of communication but at higher levels of oral communication it does. The reappraisal of pronunciation teaching in EFL contexts is also in line with the globalization which increases the role and status of English. Nowadays, English really becomes a global language. English is one of the main languages for oral communication (Crystal, 1997; Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002).

According to Geudens in Fikri (2014: 10), phonological awareness defined as sensitivity to the sound structure of language. The ability is the effort to turn one's attention to sounds in spoken language while temporarily shifting away from its meaning (Yopp and Yopp, 2009). This means that phonological awareness is the ability to attend to the phonological structure of language as distinct from its meaning.

Ingram (1986: 223) stated that phonological ability improve through an increase in the ability to produce adult sounds and combine them into more complex phonological structures. Phonological are interested in the sounds patterns of particular language, and in what speakers and hearers need to know, and children need to learn, to be speaker of those language (McMahon, 2002: 13). The same things that utterances by Trehearne (2003), she stated that phonological awareness refer to "an understanding of the sound, structure of language that is, that language is made up of words, syllables, rhymes and sound (phonemes)". Those theories may indicate that phonological awareness is the deep thinking skill of language that shown from sound that utterance by the speaker and the meaning interpreting by the hearing or interlocutor in speaking process.

Phonological awareness is the awareness of basic units of sound and is measured in terms of the ability to compare and manipulate the units of speech within words and syllables (Shah, 2002). It is the ability to carry out mental operations on these units. Phonological awareness is not reading, it is not phonics, it is the awareness of words as entities separate from the meanings attached to them (Denton, Hasbrouck, Weaver, & Riccio, 2000). Different researchers argued that phonological awareness describes children's developing sensitivity to the sublexical, segmental structure of the phonological domain of language, including sensitivities to larger and smaller units (Justice, Bowles, & Skibbe, 2006). Geudens (2006) referred to "phonological awareness" in a general sense as an umbrella term and used the term "sensitivity" instead of "awareness" to refer to tasks that do not require breaking up the speech stream intentionally (implicit phonological knowledge). The term "explicit phonological awareness" was used whenever he referred to tasks that require the ability to break up the continuous speech stream and identify and isolate phonological units intentionally (explicit phonological knowledge).

Phonological awareness is critical for learning to read any alphabetic writing system. Previous studies show that poor phoneme awareness and other phonological skills is a predictor of poor reading and spelling development. Ehri et al., 2004 and Troia, 1999 asserts that phonological awareness is critical for learning to read any alphabetic writing system. Phonological awareness is even important for reading other kinds of writing systems, such as Chinese and Japanese. There are several well-established lines of argument about the importance of phonological skills to reading and spelling. English uses an alphabetic writing system in which the letters, singly and in combination, represent

single speech sounds. According to Liberman & Shankweiler, 1985 and Troia, 1999, people who can turn words to sounds and put them together have the basic skill of using the alphabetic. Without phoneme awareness, students may be mystified by the print system and how it represents the spoken word. Phoneme awareness facilitates growth in printed word recognition. Even before a student learns to read, we can predict with a high level of accuracy whether that student will be a good reader or a poor reader by the end of third grade and beyond (Good and Kaminski, 2007 and Torgesen, 2000).

METHOD

Research design refers to the schema or plan that constitutes the entire research study. In conducting this research, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research describes phenomena in the form of words. This research belongs to qualitative because Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 2002:3) defines that qualitative research is a research which yields the descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from observing people and behavior. This implies that in qualitative research the data and the meaning emerge organically from the research context.

Qualitative research is a research technique that is used to gain insight into the underlying issues surrounding a research problem by gathering non-statistical feedback and opinions rooted in people's feeling, attitudes, motivations, values, and perceptions often from samples also called soft data. Qualitative method yield descriptive data that are appropriate with characteristic of the qualitative research. As stated by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006: 12), descriptive method aims at documenting an event, situation, or circumstance. In line with the statement above, Moloeng (2002:6) states that one of the characteristics of qualitative study is descriptive.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this data presentation, the researcher presented the data based on the result of observation and interview. The observation and interview conducted on August 10th-25th 2020 at fifth semester of English Department at undergraduate students of Mandalika University of Mataram. The first step done by the researcher was observation in the classroom. The researcher came to the campus directly and chose the students to be respondents of the research based on the criteria that the researcher determined. The criteria to be respondents were 1) they are ready to participate in the research, 2) they are good in English especially pronunciation, and 3) they have Grade Point Average (GPA) more than 3.00.

By doing observation, the researcher found out which one is proper to be the respondents of the study. So, the researcher took six students to be the respondents of the research. Then the researcher gave the student text and they read it to record their pronunciation. After recording them, the researcher analyzed the text that has been read and made their phonetic transcription. Then, the researcher was comparing their phonetic transcription with Receive Pronunciation (RP) to find out students' phonological awareness in their reading activity.

In finding out the students' phonological awareness in their reading activity, the researcher compared students' phonetic transcriptions with Receive Pronunciation (RP). The result of students' phonetic transcriptions in reading the text can be seen below.

| ə ,sætədi ,ɑ:ftənu:n m nəʊ'vembə wəz ə'prəʊtʃɪŋ ðə 'taɪm əv 'twailaɪt | ənd ðə vɑ:st trækt
əv unenclosed waɪld nəʊn əz egdɒn hi:θ embrownd ɪt'self 'məʊmənt 'baɪ 'məʊmənt ,əʊvə'hed ðə 'hɒləʊ
streɪtʃ əv 'waɪtʃ 'klaʊd 'ʃlɑ:ɪŋ aʊt ðə skaɪ wəz əz ə tent wɪtʃ həd ðə 'həʊl hi:θ fər ɪts flə: |

| ðə 'hevn 'bi:ɪŋ 'spred wɪð ðɪs 'pæɪlɪd skri:n ənd ði 'z:θ wɪð ðə 'dɑ:kɪst ,vedʒɪ'teɪʃn | ðeə meeting-line ət
ðə hə'raɪzn wəz 'kli:li mə:kt | m sʌtʃkən'trɑ:st ðə hi:θ wɔ: ði ə'pɪərəns əv ən ,ɪn'stɒlmənt əv naɪt wɪtʃ həd
'teɪkən 'ʌp ɪts pleɪs bɪ'fɔ:r ɪts ,æstrə'nɒmɪkl 'aʊə wəz 'kʌm | 'dɑ:knəs həd tu ə ,ɡreɪt ɪk'stent

ə'raɪvd hereon | wail 'deɪ stɒd dɪ'stɪŋkt m ðə skɑɪ | | 'lʊkɪŋ 'ɒpwɒdz | ə furze-cutter wɒd həv bi:n m'klaɪnd tu kən'tɪnju: 'wɜ:k | 'lʊkɪŋ daʊn | 'hi: wɒd həv dɪ'saɪdɪd tu 'fɪnɪʃ ɪz 'fæɡət ənd 'gəʊ həʊm | ðə 'dɪstənt rɪmz əv ðə 'wɜ:lɪd ənd əv ðə 'fɜ:məmənt si:mɪd tu bi ə dɪ'vɪʒn m 'taɪm 'nəʊ les ðən ə dɪ'vɪʒn m 'mætə | | ðə feɪs əv ðə hi:θ 'baɪ its mɪə kəm'plekʃn 'ædɪd hɑ:f ən 'aʊə tu 'i:vɪŋ | 'ɪt kəd m laɪk 'mænə rɪ'tɑ:d ðə dɔ:n | 'sædn nu:n | æn'tɪsɪpeɪt ðə 'fraʊnɪŋ əv stə:mz 'skeəsli 'dʒenəreɪtɪd | ənd m'tensɪfəɪ ði əʊ'pærsɪti əv ə 'mu:nləs 'mɪdnɑɪt tu ə kɔ:z əv 'feɪkɪŋ dred |

| m fækt | prɪ'saɪsli ət ðɪs træn'sɪʃnəl poɪnt əv its 'naɪtli rəʊl 'ɪntə 'dɑ:kneɪs ðə ,ɡreɪt ənd pə'tɪkjələ 'ɡlɔ:ri əv ðə egdɒn 'weɪst bɪ'ɡæn | ənd 'nəʊbədi kəd bi 'sed tu ,ʌndə'stænd ðə hi:θ 'hu: həd nɒt bi:n ðər ət sɑtʃ ə 'taɪm | 'ɪt kəd best bi felt wen 'ɪt kəd nɒt 'klɪəli bi 'si:n | its kəm'pli:t ɪ'fekt ənd ,eksplə'neɪʃn ,lɑ:ŋ m ðɪs ənd ðə sək'si:dɪŋ 'aʊəz bɪ'fɔ: ðə nekst dɔ:n | ðen | ənd 'əʊnli ðen | dɪd 'ɪt tel its tru: teɪl | | ðə spɒt wɒz | m'di:d | ə nɪə rɪ'leɪʃn əv naɪt | ənd wen naɪt fəʊd ɪt'self ən ə'pærənt 'tendənsi tu 'ɡrævɪteɪt tə'ɡedə kəd bi pə'si:vd m its feɪdz ənd ðə si:n | ðə 'sɒmbə streɪʃ əv 'raʊndz ənd 'hʊləʊz si:mɪd tu raɪz ənd mɪ:t ði 'i:vɪŋ ɡlu:m m pʃəʊ 'sɪmpəθi | ðə hi:θ eks'heɪlɪŋ 'dɑ:kneɪs əz 'ræpɪdli əz ðə 'hevɪz prɪ'sɪpɪteɪtɪd 'ɪt | ənd 'səʊ ði əb'skjʊərɪti m ði 'eər ənd ði əb'skjʊərɪti m ðə 'lænd kləʊzd tə'gedə m ə blæk ,frætənəɪ'zeɪʃn tə'wɔ:dz wɪtʃ i:tʃ əd'vɑ:nst hɑ:f weɪ |

| ðə pleɪs bɪ'keɪm 'fʊl əv ə 'wɒtʃfəl m'tentnəs nəʊ | fə wen 'ʌðə 'θɪŋz sæŋk 'brʊ:dɪŋ tu sli:p ðə hi:θ ə'prɪəd 'sləʊli tu ə weɪk ənd 'lɪsn | 'evri naɪt its taɪ'tænik 'fɔ:m si:mɪd tu ə'weɪt 'sʌmθɪŋ | bət 'ɪt həd 'weɪtɪd ðʌs | ʌn'mu:vd | 'dʒʊərɪŋ 'səʊ ,meni 'sentʃəɪz | θru: ðə 'kraɪsɪz əv 'səʊ ,meni 'θɪŋz | ðæt 'ɪt kəd 'əʊnli bi ɪ'mædʒɪnd tu ə'weɪt wʌn lɑ:st 'kraɪsɪs ðə 'fɑml ,əʊvə'θrəʊ |

Based on students' phonetic transcription, there were several pronunciation errors especially in vowel. For example, the word “was” was pronounced by using vowel [ə] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [ʌ] [wʌz]; the words “Hollow” was pronounced using vowel [ʌ], it should be pronounced [ɑ] ['haləʊ]. Furthermore, the words “Itself” was pronounced using vowel [eɪ], it should be pronounced [ɪ] [ɪt'self], the word “moment” was pronounced using vowel [ɛ], it should be pronounced [ə] [moʊmənt], the word “overhead” was pronounced using vowel [ɪ] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [ɛ] ['oʊvər,hɛd].

Furthermore, the students' pronunciation error in diphthong. For example, “Saturday” was pronounced by using vowel [ʌ] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [æ] [ə sætədi]; the word “November” was pronounced by using vowel [ɔ:], the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [əʊ] [nəʊ'vembə]. Furthermore, the words “face” was pronounced using vowel [ɛ], it should be pronounced [eɪ] [feɪs], the word “Approaching” was pronounced using vowel [ɔ], it should be pronounced [oʊ] [ə'prəʊtʃɪŋ], the word “vast” was pronounced using vowel [ɛ] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [æ] [væst]. the words “Itself” was pronounced using vowel [eɪ], it should be pronounced [ɛ] [ɪt'self], the word “as” was pronounced by using vowel [ɛ], the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [æ] [æz]. Furthermore, the words “Itself” was pronounced using vowel [eɪ], it should be pronounced [ɛ] [ɪt'self].

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of data analysis in chapter iv, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the students have difficulties in pronouncing words was categorized into three parts, those were consonant, vowel, and diphthong. In consonant, the students made errors /p/, /b/, /dʒ/, /z/, /f/, /v/, /d/, /s/, /r/, /k/, /ʃ/, /t/, /ð/, /θ/. In vowels, the students made errors /ɔ/, /æ/, /e/, /ʊ/, /ɪ/, /ɜ/, /i:/, /ʌ/. In diphthong, the students made error /aɪ/, /ɪə/, /ɜə/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/.

Furthermore, the students' strategy in their reading activity was categorized into three namely low, middle, and high categories. For low category, the strategy in reading activity was by checking the difficult word in a dictionary, asking the lecture how to pronoun the difficult word, and practicing to read the word continuously. For middle category, the strategy in reading activity was by doing repetition to every single word, listening the pronunciation of the words using u-dictionary, and always practicing to

pronounce every single word. For high category, the strategy in reading activity was guessing based on their knowledge pronunciation and make a relation with the word that the same sounds.

RECOMMENDATION

Some suggestions and recommendation which might be useful for students, lecturers, and further researcher who are interested in the same study especially in finding out students' phonological awareness in their reading activity. The researcher suggests to lecturers to improve students' phonological awareness by using interested method and good media. Students are expected wisely to practice more to improve their phonological awareness in their reading activity. For the further researcher who wants to investigate the same topic, it is very important to undertake the research by focusing on students' pronunciation difficulties.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Researchers would like to thank the rector of UNDIKMA for providing research grant to carry out research activities. Researchers also express the deepest appreciation and gratitude to English lecturers from the Master of English language education as research partners to accomplish this study.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (3th ed.). USA: Prentice Hall.
- Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. doi:10.1191/
- Carr philip. 1993. *Modern linguistics series*. London; The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Creswell, John W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education. Inc.
- Frankel, J. R., & Wallen, E. (2006). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Readford & Andrew (2009). *Linguistics An Introduction*. Second Edition. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Daniel Hirst and Albert Di Cristo. 1998. *Intonation Systems*. United kingdom at the university Press, Cambridge.
- Castro ME. *Aquisição do onset complexo no desenvolvimento fonológico típico em crianças entre 2;6 e 5;11 de idade, estudantes de uma creche-escola municipal de Maceió-AL*. [Dissertação] Maceió (AL): Universidade Federal de Alagoas; 2015.
- Mezzomo CL, Vargas DZ, Cuti LK, Lopes SG. The intervening variables in the production of consonant clusters by syllabic analysis. *Rev. CEFAC*. 2013;15(5):1247-58.
- Daniel, J. (1986). *The Pronunciation of English*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, Judy B. 2008. *Teaching Pronunciation: Using the Prosody Pyramid*. Cambridge University Press. USA.
- Geudens, A. (2006). Phonological awareness and learning to read a first language: controversies and new perspectives 25-44. In: van de Craats I, Kurvers J, Young-Scholten M (Eds.) *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition*. Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium. Tilburg University August 2005, Utrecht, The Netherlands: LOT.
- Shah, S. (2000). Home Literacy and Phonological Awareness as Predictors of Reading Ability. *The UCI Undergraduate Research Journal*, 55-63. [Online] Available:

http://www.urop.uci.edu/journal/journal00/pagemaker_pdf_export/06_sheela.pdf

- Denton, C.A., Hasbrouck, J. E., Weaver, L. R., & Riccio, C. A. (2000). What do we know about phonological awareness in Spanish? *Reading Psychology*, 21, 335–352. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/027027100750061958>.
- Justice, L.M., Bowles, R.P., & Skibbe, L.E. (2006). Measuring preschool attainment of print-concept knowledge: a study of typical and at-risk 3- to 5-year-old children using item response theory. *Language, Speech, & Hearing Services in Schools*, 37, 3, 224-35. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461\(2006/024\)](http://dx.doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461(2006/024))
- Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S. R., Willows, D. M., Schuster, B. V., Yaghoub-Zadeh, Z., & Shanahan, T. (2001). Phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's metaanalysis. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(3), 250–287
- Good, H. R., & Kaminski, R. A. [Eds.]. (2007). *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (6th ed.). Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Assessment. Available: <http://dibels.uoregon.edu>.