

**AN ANALYSIS OF
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' ABILITY
IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH FRONT VOWEL SOUNDS**

THESIS

*Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
to Obtain Strata One (S1) Degree*



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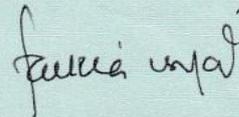
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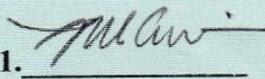
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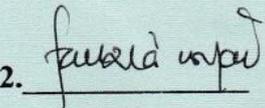
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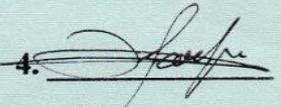
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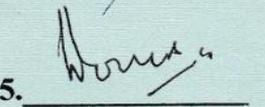
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ABSTRAK

Yuhana, Widya. 2015. *An Analysis of English Department Students' Ability in Pronouncing English Front Vowel Sounds*. Skripsi. Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris dalam mengucapkan *English Front vowel sounds*. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Populasi penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa tingkat III Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris tahun masuk 2012 Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Padang. Sampel penelitian ini berjumlah 23 orang yang dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik *cluster sampling*. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam pengumpulan data adalah oral tes. Dalam tes tersebut mahasiswa diminta untuk mengucapkan 80 kata yang mengandung bunyi /i:/, /i/, /e/, and /æ/, yang mana setiap bunyi tersebut terdiri dari 20 kata untuk kemudian direkam dengan menggunakan laptop. Data penelitian ini berupa transkrip dari pengucapan mahasiswa yang telah direkam serta persentase mahasiswa yang memiliki kemampuan sangat tinggi, tinggi, sedang, rendah, dan gagal. Dari penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa 60% (12 mahasiswa) mempunyai kemampuan rendah dalam mengucapkan bunyi /i:/, 70% (14 mahasiswa) gagal dalam mengucapkan bunyi /i/, 60% (12 mahasiswa) mempunyai kemampuan tinggi dalam mengucapkan bunyi /e/, dan 50% (10 mahasiswa) mempunyai kemampuan tinggi dalam mengucapkan bunyi /æ/. Jadi, dapat disimpulkan bahwa mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris mempunyai kemampuan rendah dalam mengucapkan bunyi /i:/ dan /i/, dan mempunyai kemampuan tinggi dalam mengucapkan bunyi /e/ dan /æ/.

Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan agar dapat memberikan kontribusi kepada dosen untuk lebih fokus pada pengajaran *vowel* pada perkuliahan *speaking* dan *pronunciation*. Selain itu, mahasiswa juga diharapkan untuk lebih meningkatkan serta mengembangkan kemampuan dalam mengucapkan *vowel sounds* terutama *front vowel*.

Kata kunci: *pronunciation, sound, vowel, front vowel sounds*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Pronunciation is one of the language features that influences speaking ability. According to Nation (2009), one of language features involved in language focus learning is pronunciation. Pronunciation is the way certain sound is produced. Pronunciation is an important aspect in speaking because by having a correct pronunciation, the listener will understand what the speaker say. On the contrary, incorrect pronunciation will create misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener. In fact, it is one of the problems faced by non-native speakers of English.

In order to achieve a correct and good English pronunciation, the speaker should know the sounds of English itself. Sounds of English consist of Vowels and Consonants. Generally, English has twelve vowels and twenty four consonants. Both vowels and consonants are important in learning pronunciation but if they are compared, vowels are more important than consonants. As Wustice (2004) writes, “Consonants are useless without vowels. People would not be able to speak if there is no vowel”. However, many non-native speakers around the world are unable to pronounce some of English vowel sounds accurately.

Pesce (2014) says that there are 7 worst pronunciation mistakes made by students around the world. One of them is pronouncing the short “i”. The

short “i” or /i/ as pronounced in words like *live, sit, fit, hit* usually poses a problem as students may be inclined to pronounce them as *leave, seat, feet, or heat*.

In accordance with what was discussed above, there are some problems faced by English Department students in pronouncing some of English vowel sounds according to Syafe’i (1988). First, the students are not familiar with the sounds, so they make them difficult to pronounce the words. This may happen because Bahasa Indonesia does not have vowel sound symbols as many as English vowels. Generally, English has twelve vowels sound symbols, namely /i/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /ə/, /ʌ/, /ɜ:/, /a:/, /u:/, /ʊ/, /ɔ:/, and /ɒ/, while Bahasa Indonesia has only five vowels, namely a, i, u, e, and o.

Second, the students are not able to differentiate between long and short vowel, like /i:/ and /i/ as presented in words *leave* and *live*. Many students pronounce the word *leave* by using the vowel /i/, instead of /i:/. In fact, they do not know how to pronounce them appropriately, whether they pronounce with /i:/ or /i/. This can be caused by the fact that in Bahasa Indonesia there is no difference between long and short vowel. In other words, long or short vowel does not affect the meaning. For instance, in Bahasa Indonesia, people have the same way to pronounce the word *atap* and *rak*. There is no difference in pronouncing those words.

Besides, they often get difficulties in pronouncing vowel sound /æ/, like in word *bag* and *mass*. Most of English Department students pronounce it by using vowel sound /e/, like in word *beg* and *mess*. In fact, their

pronunciation is not as what it is supposed to be. However, it is natural because they seldom use or they do not exist in Indonesia. As a result, most of Indonesian students are not sure with the pronunciation of the words.

The irregular spelling of the language is being another problem in pronunciation. In Bahasa Indonesia, people only need to pronounce a word like what is being spelt in it, for instance the word *kapas*, the word never pronounce with the vowel /æ/, like /kæpæs/. On the other hand, English has a difference between spelling and its pronunciation, for example the word *book* and *run*. The spelling of the word is not the same as the way it is spoken. In other cases, the problem can be caused by interference (negative transfer) from the first language to the target language. The interference could be in the form of stress and intonation. Many non-native speakers of English are often affected by their first language. They speak like in the way they are communicating with their own language.

Actually, the students of English department had studied pronunciation in the first semester, and Phonetic and Phonology in the third semester but they still get difficulties in pronouncing certain words. The students often do not know how to pronounce the words of English correctly, especially the sounds that are not found in Bahasa Indonesia, such as /i:/, /æ/, /ɜ:/, /ʌ/, /ɑ:/, /u:/, /ɔ:/, and /ɒ/.

Thus, because of the limitation of the time, the researcher would like to analyze the students' ability of UNP English Department in pronouncing only some of English Front vowel sounds. It is because not all of the vowel sounds

are difficult to be pronounce by the students. So, the researcher just focus on the sounds that are frequently mispronounced by the students. Also, if the reseacher analyze all of the sounds it will take more time. Furthermore, the focus of the research is the way to pronounce the sounds, not reading comprehension.

B. Identification of the Problem

The various vowels selected in this section are those that are most likely mispronounced and confused by Indonesian learners according to Syafei (1988). The selection is based on the most common mistakes made by Indonesian learners in learning English. According to Syafei (1988), not all of the vowels are difficult for Indonesian learners. The sounds that are often mispronounced are /i:/, /æ/, confusion between the quality of the vowels /i:/ and /i/, confusion between the vowels /e/ and /æ/, confusion between the quality of vowels /u:/ and /u/, and confusion between vowels /a:/ and /ʌ/.

Those mistakes and difficulties might be caused by the fact that in Bahasa Indonesia there are only five vowels (a, i, u, e, o), while English has twelve vowels. However, not all of the vowel sounds selected in the previous explanation are analyzed in this research because of the limitation of the time.

C. Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification stated above, this study is limited to the analysis of the third year students' ability of English Department of UNP in pronouncing English Front Vowel sounds /i:/, /i/, /e/, and /æ/.

D. Formulation of the Problem

Dealing with the limitation of problem discussed above, the problem is formulated as: "How is the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing English Front Vowel sounds?"

E. Research Questions

Based on the formulation stated above, there are five research questions of this study, they are:

1. How is the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /i:/?
2. How is the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /i/?
3. How is the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /e/?
4. How is the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /æ/?

F. Purpose of the Research

Related to the research question stated previously, the purposes of the research are:

1. To find out the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /i:/.
2. To find out the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /i/.
3. To find out the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /e/.
4. To find out the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /æ/.

G. Significance of the Research

It is expected that the result of this study gives contribution to the lectures in writing a lesson plan of speaking and pronunciation. It means the lectures are expected to pay more attention in teaching English vowel sounds. It also gives information to the lectures about mistakes made by students in pronouncing English vowel sounds, especially English Front Vowels so that they can provide their students with the information about how to pronounce vowel sounds appropriately. Besides, it also gives valuable contribution to the students to know their ability, so that they can improve and develop their pronunciation skill in pronouncing the sounds /i:/, /i/, /e/, and /æ/.

H. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding on some conceptual terms in this research, the researcher provides some definitions of them.

1. Pronunciation : The way in which language is spoken, a way of the person speaks the word
2. Pronunciation ability : A skill or power in pronouncing a certain sounds.
3. Vowels : Sounds made without stopping of the breath by the tongue, lips, etc.
4. Front Vowel Sound : Sounds which are produced in the front part of the tongue.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusions

As it was mentioned in Chapter I, the purpose of this research are to find out the ability of the third year students of English Department of UNP in pronouncing /i:/, /i/, /e/, and /æ/. So, based on the collected data through two instruments which were oral pronunciation test and recorder, it was found that the third year students of English Department of UNP had low ability in pronouncing /i:/, failed in pronouncing /i/, and had high ability in pronouncing /e/ and /æ/.

Though the students had high ability in pronouncing vowel sounds /e/ and /æ/, it is believed that they still have to improve their pronunciation ability. Therefore, it is believed that English Department of UNP still need to be aware and to concern more on how to improve the pronunciation ability of those in level of moderate, low, and failed.

B. Suggestion

Based on the research analyst, findings, discussions, and limitation of the research, the researcher would like to give some suggestions.

1. It is advisable for the English Department of UNP to develop both materials and media which can help the learners improve their pronunciation ability.

2. For the students, it is better to widen their knowledge about the way to pronounce a certain words correctly. They also have to learn how to differentiate between long and short vowel, such as /i:/, and /i/, and between vowel /e/, and /æ/.
3. It is advisable for the next researcher to manage everything related to the research, especially the instrumentation and the technique of data collection. The words provided in test should be familiar with the students.
4. It is advisable for the students of linguistic and literature to study about why the students make mistakes in pronouncing English vowel sounds especially English front vowel.

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