Journal of English Education and Teaching (JEET)
e-ISSN: 2622-5867
p-ISSN: 2685-743x
Volume 8 number 4, 2024
Page 816 - 830

EFL Students' Ability in Differentiating English Homophone

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Abstract

Homophones are when one or two written forms share the same pronunciation. Homophones often cause difficulties for students, especially for EFL students in listening skills because these words can be mistaken by students in listening because the word had same pronunciation. From this phenomenon, this study wanted to see the ability of students to differentiate homophones. This research design is descriptive research. In this research the population is the fifth-semester student of English education Department the researchers choose this population because this population had passed the listening class. The sample in this research used Cluster Sampling. There are 30 students selected as the sample of the research. The data was taken from a listening test with 30 items of question. Based on the analysis of the students' results it is found that the overall score of the students was quite diverse. The test results indicated that students' ability to Differentiate homophones test was very good. This can be seen from the result from the test and overall score from most students got a very good predicate from the results of classifying scores using a score interval. From the findings above researchers had concluded that student's ability in differentiating English homophone is very good.

Keywords: *Homophone, EFL, Students Ability.*

Introduction

In semantic Analysis, the focus is always on a sentence's conventional meaning. In linguistic Analysis, researchers is interested in homophone phenomena. In this phenomenon, Yule (2008) also stated that a homophone is when two or more different (written) forms have the same pronunciation. Another Definition of Homophones is

words with two meanings but one pronunciation (Barr, Biederman & Nickels, 2022). For instance, "bear" and "bare" sound the same. Another definition is from Herbert (2019). He stated homophones is the words that sound alike but differ fundamentally in meaning, origin, and Spelling. Another explanation of homophones is stated by Homer (2021). He said in his paper that a homophone is when a writing system differentiates two words that sound the same with different spellings. The phenomena result is a pair of heterographic homophones, for instance, leak/leek, whale/wail, ate/eight. Townsend (1975) in his Handbook of Homophones in the handbook as a list of words that sound the same (or nearly the same) but are spelled differently. Hobbs (2006) Homographs are words with different accents, definitions, and origins but the exact Spelling. In contrast there is some difference between British and American English have also come about because of the American tendency to substitute a t-sound (t) for a d-sound (d) in the middle of words (e.g. city is pronounced SID-ee). So, the words metal and medal are often pronounced the same way in American English. In contrast, the two are usually said differently in British English—mainly due to a t-sound (or sometimes a glottal stop) in the word metal. (Brown, Laurence. 2014).

Students frequently struggle to grasp words with identical pronunciations due to the potential for multiple meanings, leading to confusion and varied interpretations. The challenge is evident in predicting the intended meaning in specific situations (Rahmanita & Simatupang, 2022). According to Gorfein, Vivian, and Leddo (1982), homophones primarily complicate lexical judgment tasks. In classroom settings, misunderstandings in sentence comprehension arise from words having multiple meanings, with individuals often misinterpreting one meaning for another (Amelyana, Lutfiyanti & Romauli, 2022). As a result, many students find it challenging to differentiate homophones, leading to errors in grammar or typography, ultimately hindering the effective communication of a sentence's message. This issue is particularly pronounced for non-native English speakers, making corrections more challenging, and addressing writing errors related to homophones becomes crucial (Manus, Samola, Olii, 2022).

This topic is essential for students of English education because they are prospective educators who teach language. This issue is vital because when learning language or words in a language, it is a delivery that students can understand the teacher if he does not understand or know exactly what is being conveyed. This lack of knowledge

causes difficulties when teaching in the classroom. In a study conducted by Ahmad Yani (2012), he stated that a teacher is a model person for most students. Most students believe their teacher is doing the right thing. The same perception probably occurs in most parents. Parents believe that teachers teach their children the proper things.

In this subject, there are various interconnected studies conducted by different researchers. Perkasa (2012) focused on EFL students at the University of Bengkulu, examining their ability to differentiate English homophones. Conwell (2017) explored how utterances directed at children exhibit acoustic differences that can aid in distinguishing homophone meanings. Abdul Ibrahim's research (2018) highlighted that students struggle to use and comprehend homophones in writing contexts, emphasizing their inability to employ homophones effectively in prose. Tiali, Spinelli, Meunier, Palluel-Germain, & Bertolotti (2021), in a study titled "Influence of homophone processing during auditory language comprehension on executive control processes: A dual-task paradigm," hypothesized that a behavioral cost would be observed in a dual-task scenario involving both verbal and non-verbal complex processing.

Therefore, this can also affect their ability to compose a sentence, which is appropriate when confronted with a homophone word. From this, the researchers see a gap in researching students' ability to distinguish homophones in listening. This topic interest researchers to see whether students can use the right homophone word in making a sentence. Researchers are interested in researching this topic because homophones themselves are rarely introduced to students, and very few students understand what homophones are and how to distinguish the same pronunciation, which departs from the results of previous research related to homophone topics. The study indicates that students have difficulties with homophones, which is also the reason for researchers to find out whether students at universities in Bengkulu have the same difficulties when dealing with them. From The Background above, the researchers stated the research question How is the ability of a fifth-semester English Education Study Program student at the University of Bengkulu in Differentiating Homophones Words?

Method

This research design is descriptive research, according to Gay (2012); descriptive research determines and describes how things involve collecting numerical data to test hypotheses or answer question about the current subject of

study. The researchers chose this method because being able to describe trends means that the research problem can best be answered by research in which the researchers seek to determine the overall trend in responses from individuals and note how this trend varies among people. Population is in which a group of individuals possesses one characteristic that distinguishes them from other groups (Creswell, 2012). In this research the population is the fifth-semester student of English education Department, researchers chose the Population because the fifth-semester English education program students at the University of Bengkulu have completed the Listening class subjects. The total population in fifth-semester students is 128 students. The sample in this research used Cluster Sampling. According to McMillan (1996), Cluster sampling involves the random selection of naturally occurring groups or areas and then the selection of individual elements from the chosen groups or areas. The researchers selects students from A class for the group of population and takes samples from the students who are available and wanted to help the researchers with the research at the time. The researchers goes to their class to conduct the listening test, and those who cannot attend but wanted to help can access the test via Google Forms. The reason why researcher take this group/class is because this class had the most students in population and this can improve the number of the sample, when collecting data inside the class.

The researchers collected the data by using a listening test on English homophones. The homophone word that is used is the homophone pair. The test used in this research is adopted from Annida (2023). The researchers adopted the instrument because the topic in this research is the same. The instrument is suitable for testing student ability in differentiating homophones. In collecting the data researchers used listening homophones test by making audio based by the instrument adopted, the instrument choices converted in audio form each word audio were downloaded from the Cambridge Dictionary Online https://dictionary.cambridge.org/. The audio compiled from the dictionary used as the choices for the test, in constructing the, the listening test researchers also used AI text to speech program PlayHT Application. From that researchers made the listening test, and in collecting the data, answer sheet was given to the students with 30 choices and this sheet only show the answers A and B, the choices delivered by the audio, and students can choose the similar pronunciation from the audio and choose the most similar sound in the answer sheet.

The research also used Google Form in case the student didn't attend that day inside the class they do the test online Identification In this part the correct and incorrect answers from the students collected and researchers identified whether they had answered correct and incorrectly. From the result of the identification researchers given the score to the answer sheet. The identification was also conducted to find the all the correct and incorrect choices occurred in the test. Calculation After the Answers are identified as the right and wrong answers, a calculation is made to see the frequency of right and wrong answers and then convert them into percentages. The calculation intends to find the frequency correct and incorrect answer found in each the answer items, and the total of correct and incorrect answer occurred in the test.

Data display After doing calculations, the data be displayed in the form of tables and Pie Diagrams. The table used to display the score, frequency, total of the answer and overall score from the result of the research. Drawing Conclusion From the results of identification, calculation and display of the data, the conclusion of the test results is illustrated for the score test, for example the student test score is 80 and above, which can be categorized into the "Very Good" index, and it can be concluded that students have an excellent ability to distinguish homophones and vice versa. For the overall percentage of answers concluded with the highest percentage, if most students answered incorrectly, this indicates that students have difficulty identifying the homophone.

Table 1

Score Interval Category

Score interval	Category
91-100	Excellent
81-90	Very Good
71-80	Good
61-70	Average
Below 60	Poor

The researchers adapted the table from Schaefer (1996).

Research Procedure In the preparatory part, the researchers makes: Audio for use in tests. Prepare for the test and create an answer sheet and Google form for the test. Implementation In implementing the test, the researchers attended their class to conduct the data collection, and the students who cannot attend that day can access a Google form to do a listening test Analysis and preparation of reports After the data obtained from the study, an analysis is carried out to see the study results. The data obtained is in the form of values from the listening test. Data analysis is done descriptively. After the data results are analyzed, research results are compiled based on the data obtained.

Findings and discussion

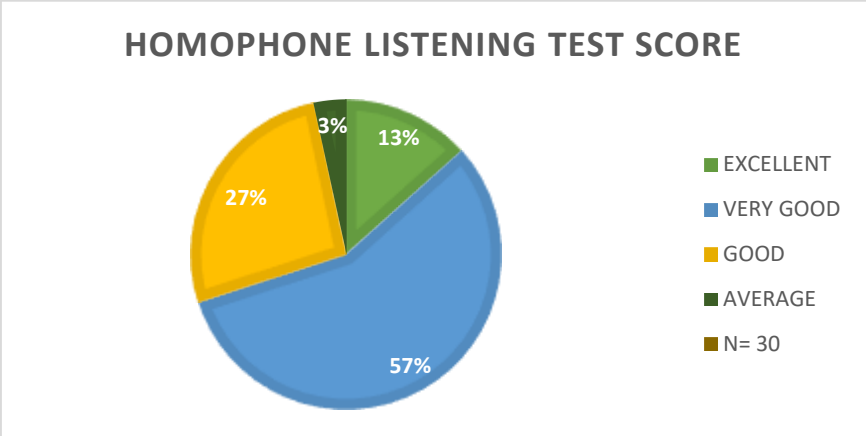
Findings

The research sample is a fifth-semester English Department University of Bengkulu student. Researchers gave them a listening test with a homophone word test to choose which words they considered homophones, and which had the same sounds as the words they heard. This test was given so that researchers can identify students' ability to distinguish which words are homophone and which words are not.

Students Results on Homophone Test

In this section, the researchers provides an overall assessment of the results of each student and the evaluation is carried out to classify the score interval, After the researchers assessed each answer sheet, the student's test results obtained the following results:

Chart 1
Homophone Listening Test Score



From the data displayed in the table above, students get various grades ranging from average to excellent. With the breakdown of the results of the number of students who get excellent predicates, there are four students which means that the students with excellent predicates are 13.33% of the total sample. The number of students who received the very good predicate were students 17 students and the students that achieved very good predicates are 56.67% of the total sample. The number of students who get the good predicate is 8 students, which means that the students who achieve good predicates are 26.67% of the total sample. Finally, for students with an average predicate one means that the students who achieve average predicate are 3.33% of the total sample.

Table 2

Homophone Listening Test Assessment Results Data

	Homophone Listening Test Assessment Results Data				
Total	Correct Amount	Wrong Amount	Total Answer	Score Average	Overall Category
	762	138	900		
Percentage	84.67%	15.33%		84.42	Very Good

Then, from all the results that have been collected, researchers took an average value "from all the number of samples obtained, namely 30 students with an average score of 84.42 with a Very Good predicate for the average value of the sample.

Students Score in each instrument item

In this section, the researchers displays the data obtained for the number and frequency of students who answered right and wrong on each choices number on the test. After obtaining data and doing calculations, researchers can explain the results as follows:

In this section the researchers groups the results of the data found from a table that contains information about the number and percentage of each correct and

incorrect answer from each test item, here the researchers describes the results in the form of a range and groups the result of each choice then gives the predicate with poor, average, good, very good and excellent.

Table 3

Test item with poor predicate

No	In audio	Homophone Choice (**Bolded** Word is the correct Choice)	Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer Frequency	Incorrect Answer Frequency
27	Mall	Moll/**maul**	8	22	26.67%	73.33%
29	Steak	**Stake**/stick	17	13	56.67%	43.33%

First starting with the poor predicate, in this predicate the correct answer achieved by the students is below 60%. There are two choices where most students answer incorrectly in differentiating homophones, at number twenty-seven and twenty-nine in these choices the majority fail to answer correctly on these choices. In number twenty-seven students answered incorrectly was twenty-two students with a percentage of 73.33% and the students answered correctly was eight students with a percentage of 26.67%. Then number twenty-nine there are thirteen students answered incorrectly with the percentage 43.33% and students answered correctly is seventeen students with the percentage 56.67%.

Table 4

Test item with average predicate

No	In audio	Homophone Choice (**Bolded** Word is the correct Choice)	Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer Frequency	Incorrect Answer Frequency
7	Sent	**Scent**/send	18	12	60%	40%
10	Site	Side/**sight**	19	11	63.33%	36.67%
20	Coward	**Cowered**/cowherd	21	9	70%	30%

Then the average predicate which has a range of the percentage of students who answer correctly is 61-70% in this grouping there are several choices that have a bad predicate, it is numbers seven, ten, and twenty on the choices the majority of students answered correctly on the choices has a range of 18 - 21 students who can answer the choices correctly and students who answered incorrectly have a range of 9 - 12 students. Researchers give a bad predicate because students still lack in answering the choices.

Table 5

Test item with good predicate

No	In audio	Homophone Choice (**Bolded** Word is the correct Choice)	Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer Frequency	Incorrect Answer Frequency
4	Sole	**Soul**/sold	24	6	80%	20%
6	Write	Ride/**right**	22	8	73.33%	26.67%
12	Daze	**Days**/daisy	23	7	76.67%	23.33%
14	Made	Mad/**maid**	24	6	80%	20%
24	Toad	Tod/**towed**	22	8	73.33%	26.67%
25	Know	**Now**/naught	22	8	73.33%	26.67%

Then the good predicate with the range of the percentage of students answered correctly was 71%-80%. Researchers found several choices with good predicates, it is numbers four, six, twelve, fourteen, twenty-four, and twenty-five. The range of students answered incorrectly was 6-9 or 20% - 26.67% of students answered incorrectly and the range of students correctly answered 21-24 students.

Table 6

Test item with very good predicate

No	In audio	Homophone Choice (**Bolded** Word is the correct Choice)	Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer Frequency	Incorrect Answer Frequency
9	Coarse	**Course**/chores	27	3	90%	10%

11	Heal	**Heel**/hail	26	4	86.67%	13.33%
15	Peak	**Peek**/pike	27	3	90%	10%
21	Freeze	Priest/**frieze**	27	3	90%	10%

Then the very good predicate with a grouped percentage range of 81 - 90%, researchers found several choices that had a very good predicate it is numbers nine, eleven, fifteen, twenty-one. The numbers of students answered correctly had a range of 26-29 students and students answered incorrectly is 3.33- 13.33% or 1-4 students.

Table 7

Test item with excellent predicate

No	In audio	Homophone Choice (**Bolded** Word is the correct Choice)	Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer Frequency	Incorrect Answer Frequency
1	Mourning	**Morning**/warning	28	2	93.33%	6,67%
2	Feint	Pain/**faint**	30	-	100%	-
3	Birth	**Berth**/bard	30	-	100%	-
5	Flour	Floor/**flower**	30	-	100%	-
8	Whine	Wane/**wine**	28	2	93.33%	6.67%
13	Hare	**Hair**/hire	28	2	93.33%	6.67%
16	Pore	**Pour**/port	29	1	96.67%	3.33%
17	Whey	**Way**/wade	28	2	93.33%	6.67%
18	Four	Fur/**fore**	29	1	96.67%	3.33%
19	Chili	**Chile**/silly	30	-	100%	-
22	Meat	Maid/**meet**	28	2	93.33%	6.67%
23	Rude	**Rood**/root	28	2	93.33%	6.67%
26	Weather	Wider/**whether**	30	-	100%	-
28	Pray	**Prey**/ray	28	2	93.33%	6.67%
30	Flu	**Flew**/clue	29	1	96.67%	3.33%

Finally, the excellent predicate with 91-100% correct answer. Researchers found that most of the students answered correctly and perfectly with 100% percentage, the number of students answered incorrectly are below 10% with only 1-2 students.

Discussion

From the results of the test, researchers found that the overall scores found by each student were quite diverse and the test results indicated that students' ability to identify homophones from the listening test very good. Most students got a very good predicate from the results of classifying scores using a score interval, this result in line with the research in Annida (2023) in her study with the same instrument he found that most of the student in his research are mostly get the score range between good-excellent (66-100).

In the study there are few similarities, the student are majoring in English education and take place in university of Bengkulu, Indonesia they were also EFL students the difference is the number of participants the previous study participant is 74 participants, and, in this study, there are 30 participant another difference is in delivering the test the previous test by Annida was delivered by written form and in this research the test is delivered in listening form.

In the study there was also a concern of researchers related to samples who did the test directly in class and online, researchers looked back at their scores looking at the overall scores of students who did online and gave their average score of 81.31 with the very good score category and researchers saw the average score of students who took the test directly in their class obtained an average of 88.57 with the very good score category.

This is a consideration because with differences in places of work and limited control of the sample, researchers review whether there are significant differences related to their results, but after re-observation, researchers can conclude that these differences do not have an impact or spike in the scores of students who work online, this can be proven by comparing the average students who work directly in class and students who do work online. This may occur due to the lack of supervision from researchers to students who take online tests, the possibility of students taking tests less seriously because they are not supervised. another possibility is that students are in

conditions that make their performance decrease such as illness or are in certain activities so that they cannot focus on the test, and the last possibility is that students do not understand the concept of homophone and what homophone is.

Another research with the same form of test was conducted by Khalil (2012). In the study, there are tests in homophone recognition or to differentiate homophones. The study was conducted on EFL College students at the University of Baghdad, and the number of participants was 50 students. In this research, there are two tests conducted. This research found that the students had good scores in the homophone recognition test, the other test is homophone production test. This study found that students with better performance in the recognition test (75%) are in better performance and in the production test only (15%). These results are also in line with the results of this study that student have most good performance or good score in the test where their ability to recognize or differentiate homophone words are in good performance. This previous research by Khalil sample is also an EFL college student.

Another research on homophones was conducted by Nailufar (2017), this research was conducted in IAIN Salatiga and targeted English Education Department students. The research uses a listening test, but the test used in this research has context in the form of a sentence, and then the students fill in the correct homophones to correct the sentences. Based on the findings in this research, the ability of the students to differentiate homophones is quite good.

These findings have similar results to this study the subject is EFL college students; in her study, students' scores are mostly excellent and good average (72% of the students) and (28% of the students) are bad and fair level; these results are similar to the research conducted by the researchers in score that students achieve inability to differentiate homophone the research conducted found the students have majority in excellent and very good score (70% of the students) and good - average score (30% of the students).

Based on the findings that the researchers has described, the knowledge about homophone words by fifth-semester students of the English Education study program is very good. Still, some students have scores below other students. Most of the students can answer the test and have the score results very good predicate, and most of the subjects used in the previous research are EFL college students.

The researchers also found from the data above that there is some word the students have the most incorrect answer; the researchers found in choices number 7, 12 students had answered the choices incorrectly, and ten also found it difficult to differentiate the homophone there are 11 students had the answer wrong, in choices no 27 mostly or 22 students had the answer wrong and the last is no 29, there are 13 students that had answer the choices wrong.

In those questions researchers concern about students' ability in identifying how those word pronounce or produced, and therefore researchers concerns that students are still not able to distinguish the word by their phonetic symbols, vowels, consonants, and articulation manner that must be clear when identifying certain word such as homophone despite the word have similar pronunciation, but those words had differences to precise when identifying. In another previous study by Ibrahim (2018) stated that "researchers observed that the students are not able to use homophones in the written text", this makes the researchers find that the knowledge the ability to differentiate the correct homophones and use them also depends on the context. Still, the meanings are different, which can lead to misunderstanding and some of the pupils' errors caused them to struggle with differentiating between the proper homophones.

Conclusion

From the results of the research that has been done, to answer the problems of the research that has been carried out to determine the ability of EFL English students, especially fifth semester students at the University of Bengkulu, using research instruments in the form of tests that have been carried out, and researchers have analyzed and described the findings that have been obtained in the study, researchers can conclude that the ability of students to distinguish or Identifying homophones is very good. Researchers concluded from the results of data collected from 30 samples of fifth-semester students, and researchers found that students obtained various grades and predicates based on each student's ability; researchers find most of the students had very good score predicate.

Suggestion

For future researchers, they can use another form of instruments and deliver the test by written form and test the production of homophone by subject. For the

teacher's homophone can confusing, despite the good score, some of the students still had, low score in the test, this also concern the English teacher to help students with homophone words, and students can choose the correct word when constructing a sentence. For the students, being aware of homophone words can help in making sentences and construct a good sentence.

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