



## Sound stress patterns of nouns ending in *-ion* produced by English education students

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the appropriateness and patterns of sound stress on nouns ending in *-ion* produced by students of English education study program. The research is designed as a descriptive study. There are 40 English students from Universitas Bengkulu and Universitas Negeri Padang who were selected purposively out of 240 students as the research participants. The data was gathered by using a pronunciation test comprises of 40 nouns ending in *-ion* with the category of 2, 3, 4, and 5 or more syllables. The participants' utterances were recorded in an audio form, then the sound stress was analyzed using the Audacity application. Based on data analysis, it was discovered that: 1) only 34.44% of students produced the sound stress appropriately, while the rest (65.56) did not; and 2) the pattern of sound stress on noun ending in *-ion* pronounced by the students varied, with the *no stress* category dominating. It proves that the more syllables of nouns ending in *-ion*, the more difficult it is for the students to produce sound stress accurately. Finally, the English students are expected to raise their awareness of practicing sound stress, as it is important for the lecturers to provide more chances for the students in the learning activities.



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**Mastery** of English language skills as for students of English education is an absolute requirement. These skills are not only used as a communicative function but also competencies as models because English education students

are projected as teachers in the future. English teacher is one of the major learning references in the context of English as a foreign language (Huang, 2021; Shinga & Pillay, 2021). Thus, the students in English study program need to master language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Of the four English skills above, speaking ability has its own privilege because a person's speaking ability becomes a direct assessment of one's performance to communicate in direct situations. Speaking is the skill that students want most to master (Darancik, 2018) and becomes the main concern that the students are encouraged to develop more than others (Richards & Renandya, 2002). In fact, many learners consider fluency in verbal communication more important than the ability to read or write. The tendency to prioritize speaking mastery is reflected in the view that speaking skills are used as a measure of one's English mastery (Shing & Seng, 2020).

When speaking, pronunciation is a very important thing to pay attention to (Gilakjani, 2012). Pronunciation relates to the ability to use the correct stress, rhythm, and intonation in a word orally that is acceptable in accordance with applicable language rules (Saldiraner & Cinkara, 2021). The purpose of mastering the pronunciation of words is so that students are able to pronounce English correctly. According to Harmer (2000), awareness of the importance of pronunciation will benefit students not only in producing good speech but also in understanding spoken English. Similarly, Gilakjani (2016) states that incorrect pronunciation makes learning a language much more difficult, while good pronunciation enhances learning.

However, learning pronunciation for second language learners can be challenging (Baker, 2021). Pronouncing English sounds in Indonesian context can be more difficult because there are typically no differences between spelling a letter and pronouncing a sound in Indonesian language (Donal, 2016). English learners often have problems placing sound stress (emphasis) correctly (Lasut, 2015). Burges and Spencer (2000) state that most of the difficulties of learning English is the placement of sound stress. Improper placement of sound stresses in English can lead to fatal errors (Liu, 2017). As an illustration, the word *address* can have two meanings: the first is 'location of one live' as a 'noun' and second 'to call someone' as a 'verb'. These meanings can be distinguished by placing the syllable stress correctly like for 'noun' in the first syllable, and for 'verb' in the second syllable. This difficulty occurs because the placement of sound stress in English has very strict rules.

There are some rules in placing the sound stress proposed by experts. Kelly (2000) formulates 4 rules: core vocabulary, affixes, compound words, and words having more than one forms. The first is core vocabulary. Many colloquial nouns and adjectives consist of two syllables. The emphasis is on the first syllable, for example: BROther, MOther, WATer, PApEr, TABle,

LOvely. Next is Affixes (prefix and suffix). The stress sound is not placed at the affixes, for example: QUIetly, oRIGinally, deFEctive (there are exceptions among the prefixes, such as BIcycle and DISlocate); The third is compound words. Words that are formed from the combination of two words tend to be emphasized on the first word, for examples POSTman, NEWSpaper, TEApot, CROSSword. The final rule of stress is a word that can have more than one form. In the case of words that can be used as nouns or verbs, nouns will tend to be emphasized on the first syllable (according to the 'core vocabulary' rule above) and the verb on the last syllable, for examples: IMport (noun), imPORT (verb); REbel (noun), reBEL (verb); and INcrease (noun), inCREASE (verb). In addition, Roach (2009) mentions that one of the rules in placing stress is the number of syllables. The words with more than one syllable must follow various stress placement patterns. Accordingly, a two-syllable word is stressed on the first syllable, for example, 'PERfect', while a three-syllable noun is stressed on the second syllable, for example perFEction.' Based on the division of categories, it is important to make a distinction between strong and weak syllables to be identified in English.

A field study on word stress placement has been carried out by Sabaruddin and Kurniawan (2016). They conducted descriptive research by recording the pronunciations of words performed by 27 students of English education study program at the Teacher Training and Education of Universitas Bengkulu (FKIP UNIB). The results of the study found that many students placed the emphasis of sound on syllables incorrectly. In addition, there were also students who did not predict the stress at all, or on the contrary, there were those who said more than one emphasis on one word which should only have one emphasis. Moreover, Pareza and Ratmanida (2019) studying similar topic found word stress errors made by students of English department at Universitas Negeri Padang. The word stress errors are related to misplace that happened to 81.8% from total respondents.

Based on preliminary observations in the speaking class at the English Education Study Program, FKIP UNIB, students often make mistakes in the placement of sound stresses that have affixes. Affixes that often appear are nouns ending with *-ion*. The examples of words ending in *-ion* are *action*, *introduction*, *complementation*, *prediction*, and hundreds of others. Theoretically, the pattern of placing stress on words ending in *-ion* is on the last two syllables. In other words, how few or how many syllables there are, the stress should always precede the suffix *-ion* (Tokar, 2019). Meanwhile, students more often pronounce words ending in *-ion* by treating them all the same, namely being in the initial position. This can be done by students who have conceptual knowledge that the sound stress of nouns is on the first syllable. Around 65% of students seem not to place any emphasis at all. Similarly, the same cases were also found in the conversation class of English

Education at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). UNIB and UNP share the same characteristics of English language learners in which the students who study there have a cognate language.

Accordingly, the sound stress pattern on nouns ending in *-ion* produced by students has not been studied widely. A study of placing sound stress on words ending in *-ion* becomes a very interesting issue. So, the questions of this study are: (1) How is the appropriateness of the sound stress pronounced by the students of English Education Study Program? and (2) what are the patterns of sound stress syllables that the students produce?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research was carried out with a descriptive method design because the intended data are based on individual or groups exploration (Creswell, 2014). Particularly, the objectives of the study are: 1) to find out the appropriateness of the sound stress on nouns ending in *-ion* pronounced by students of the English education study program; and 2) to investigate what patterns of the sound stress that the students of the English education study program produce on nouns ending in *-ion*.

This research was conducted at Universitas Bengkulu and Universitas Negeri Padang. Both universities have an English Education Study Program which became the research target. The research was carried out from July to December 2021.

The research involved all the fifth semester students of the English education study program involving Universitas Bengkulu and Universitas Negeri Padang (240 students). The purpose of determining the 5th semester is that the students at this level are assumed to have passed the entire series of basic courses, especially speaking courses. Furthermore, 40 students (20 from each university) were selected as the sample of the study purposively.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

The data of this research was the recording of the students' pronunciation. In gathering the data, the students were asked to read a list of words (once per word). Each student pronounced the words one by one in an offline meeting, and had eight to ten minutes. The students' pronunciation was recorded in the form of audio. They referred to a pronunciation test. Next, the results were processed in the Audacity application as the research instruments.

#### ***Pronunciation test***

The pronunciation test contains a list of nouns ending in *-ion* consisting of 2, 3, 4, and 5 or more syllables. The last category of syllable is determined as the

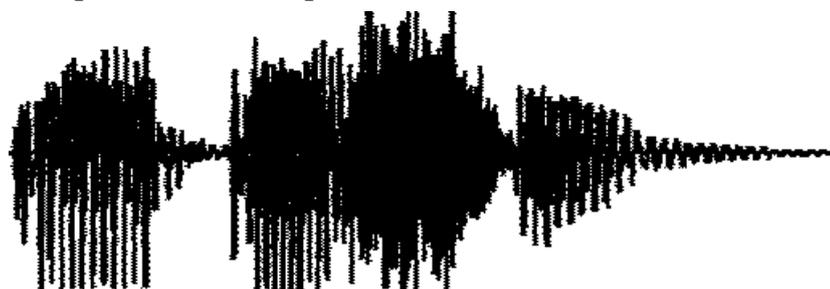
greatest number of syllables. There are 40 words which are divided equally based on the number of syllable categories as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. List of words in pronunciation test**

2 syllables	3 syllables	4 syllables	≥ 5 syllables
Function	Proportion	Conversation	Communication
Nation	Conclusion	Generation	Consideration
Vision	Injection	Information	Participation
Version	Regression	Publication	Identification
Option	Cohesion	Integration	Classification
Notion	Audition	Interruption	Dissatisfaction
Tension	Direction	Transportation	Internationalization
Faction	Solution	Intonation	Organization
Sanction	Selection	Graduation	Determination
Question	Tradition	Interpretation	Continuation

### *Audacity Application*

The sound recordings were converted using the Audacity application. Audacity is an application that can analyse sound and show amplitudes that indicate the sound stresses produced in the form of images. Figure 1 illustrates the example of sound amplitudes.



**Figure 1. Screenshot of Audacity from Respondent's record**

The above figure portrays the sound amplitude as the correct sound stress in pronouncing the word 'audition.' From the three sounds of syllable, the most weighted stress falls on the second syllable that precedes *-ion*.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The researchers conducted several procedures in analyzing the data. After converting the audio into amplitude form in the Audacity application, the data were reviewed and explored several times to group the amplitude based on the categories as follow:

**Table 2. Number of syllable category**

No	Number of Syllable	The position of Stress
1.	Two syllables	1st/ 2nd/ No stress
2.	Three syllables	1st/ 2nd/ 3rd/ 1st and 2nd/ 1st and 3rd/ 2nd and 3rd/ No stress
3.	Four syllables	1st/ 2nd/ 3rd/ 4th/ 1st and 2nd/ 1st and 3rd/ 1st and 4th/ 2nd and 3rd/ 3rd and 4th/ 1st, 2nd, and 3rd/ No stress
4.	Five or more syllables	1st/ 2nd/ 3rd/ 4th/ 5th/ 1st and 2nd/ 1st and 3rd/ 1st and 4th/ 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 1st, 2nd and 4th/ 1st, 3rd, and 4th/ 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 5th/ 1st, 3rd, and 5th/ 1st, 4th, and 5th/ 2nd and 3rd/ 2nd and 4th/ 3rd and 4th/ 3rd and 5th/ No Stress

## FINDINGS

### The Appropriateness of Sound Stress

The first analysis is to determine the correct placement of the sound stress of nouns ending in *-ion* produced by English education students from both Universitas Bengkulu (UNIB) and Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). Table 2 presents the results of the sound stress appropriateness analysis.

**Table 3. The results of sound stress appropriateness analysis**

No	Number of syllables	Appropriate		Inappropriate	
		f	%	f	%
1	Two	214	53.50	186	46.50
2	Three	132	33.00	268	67.00
3	Four	124	31.00	276	69.00
4	Five and more	81	20.25	319	79.75
	<b>Total</b>	551	34.44	1049	65.56

As presented in Table 2, the total number of inappropriate sound stress (65.55%) occurs more than that of the appropriate one (34.44%). If viewed in more detail based on the number of syllables, the largest number of incorrect words produced by students was in words ending in *-ion* which consist of 5 syllables (79.75%) followed by 4 syllables (69.00%). The only syllable category that can be pronounced appropriately with stress sound is two syllables with 53.50%. From these results, it is concluded that the more syllables in a noun ending in *-ion*, the greater the number of inaccuracies in sound stress pronounced by the students.

### The Patterns of Sound Stress

Next is the sound stress pattern. In the data findings of this section, the patterns of sound stress produced by the students were calculated. The words

that consist of two syllables actually should be stress in the second one. Based on the data, there are three patterns of sound stress that occurred for words consisting of 2 syllables produced by students. The general pattern is for the first syllable (53.50%). The next pattern is without emphasis (43.25%). The last pattern is for the second syllable (3.2%). In conclusion, more than half of the sound stress patterns of nouns ending in *-ion* produced by the students are in acceptable patterns. These results shown in the following table:

**Table 4. The sound stress pattern of two syllables words**

No	Syllable stress pattern	f	(%)
1	1st	214	53.50
2	2nd	13	3.25
3	No Stress	173	43.25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Furthermore, the group of nouns ending in *-ion* consists of 3 syllables. Basically, in nouns ending in *-ion* consisting of 3 syllables, the sound stress is on the second syllable, but it can be seen in Table 4 that there are 7 patterns of sound stress produced by the respondents. The emphasis falls on syllables 1, 2, 3, 1 & 2, 1 & 3, 2 & 3, and no stress. Of the 7 existing patterns, the respondents mostly mentioned without emphasis (36.50%).

**Table 5. The sound stress pattern of three syllables words**

No	Syllable stress pattern	f	(%)
1	1st	33	8.25
2	2nd	132	33.00
3	3rd	13	3.25
4	1st and 2nd	58	14.50
5	1st and 3rd	10	2.50
6	2nd and 3rd	8	2.00
7	No Stress	146	36.50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

For data results on nouns ending in *-ion* with 4 syllables, there are 11 existing patterns. However, most respondents mention this group of words with no stress, which is 32.00%. The correct pattern is in the third syllable and only 31.00% can pronounce it correctly. The example of the word is 'conversation' (kɒn.və'seɪʃən).

**Table 6. The sound stress pattern of four syllables words**

No	Syllable stress pattern	f	(%)
1	1 <sup>st</sup>	15	3.75
2	2 <sup>nd</sup>	29	7.25
3	3 <sup>rd</sup>	124	31.00
4	4 <sup>th</sup>	19	4.75

No	Syllable stress pattern	f	(%)
5	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup>	5	1.25
6	1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup>	22	5.50
7	1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup>	4	1.00
8	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup>	26	6.50
9	1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , and 3 <sup>rd</sup>	16	4.00
10	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup>	12	3.00
11	No Stress	128	32.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The last group of words is nouns ending in *-ion* which consist of 5 or more syllables, for example the word 'communication' (kə,mju:ni'keɪʃən) Supposedly, the sound stress falls on the 4th syllable. However, the data shows there are 19 patterns in which no stress became the dominant one.

**Table 7. The sound stress pattern of five and more syllables words**

No	Syllable stress pattern	f	(%)
1	1 <sup>st</sup>	31	7.75
2	2 <sup>nd</sup>	22	5.50
3	3 <sup>rd</sup>	11	2.75
4	4 <sup>th</sup>	81	20.25
5	5 <sup>th</sup>	7	1.75
6	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup>	5	1.25
7	1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup>	4	1.00
8	1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup>	49	12.25
9	1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , and 3 <sup>rd</sup>	12	3.00
10	1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup>	2	0.50
11	1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.25
12	1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.25
13	1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.25
14	1 <sup>st</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.25
15	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup>	16	4.00
16	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup>	8	2.00
17	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup>	1	0.25
18	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup>	4	1.00
19	No Stress	143	35.75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## DISCUSSION

This study discovered that although more than half of the students were able to produce stress on two-syllable nouns ending in *-ion* appropriately, the students still struggled to produce stress on three-, four-, and five-syllable nouns ending in *-ion*. This was consistent with the findings of Liu (2017), Ghorbani (2019), and Jaiprasong and Pongpairroj (2020), who found that EFL learners, such as Indonesian, Thai, Iranian, and Chinese, have difficulties in assigning English word stress.

Further finding of this research indicates that of the four types of syllable numbers (syllables of two, three, four, and five), the students dominantly pronounce the words with no stress. In line with this, Yana (2017) found that when Indonesian students pronounce English words containing more than one syllable, they tend to produce stress on each syllable equally. In addition, Weda (2012) reveals not only no stress syllable, but she also found that Indonesian students misplace the stress.

Moreover, the variety of stress patterns produced by the students also become an important highlight in this result. The students make a variety of stress sounds ranging from the first to the end of the syllable. The stressed sounds vary. The varieties are 3 patterns in the words of two syllables, 7 patterns in the words of three syllables, 11 patterns in the words of four syllables, and 19 patterns in the words of five syllables. The students surprisingly put sound stress in many places to a particular word despite each word in English having only one stress. This case may strike native speakers as odd or unusual (Sabaruddin & Ildi, 2017).

The misplacement of English word stress produced by the students might be due to the students' first language interference. The students' L1 might affect the way they produce English word stress. A study conducted by Altmann (2006) proves that native language stress properties influenced the second language acquisition of primary word stress. Therefore, the similarities and differences between the stress pattern of learners' L1 and L2 affect their word stress acquisition (Malghani & Bano, 2014; Peperkam & Dupoux, 2002).

Additionally, less knowledge of English word stress rules is also a factor of inappropriateness in assigning English word stress. Generally, the pronunciation, particularly word stress, appears to be of little concern in English classes in Indonesia (Arienintya, 2017). However, unlike the Indonesian language, not all syllables in English are assigned with equal stress (Van Zanten & Goedemans, 2009). Consequently, Indonesian students are not familiar with the sound stress as it does not exist in Bahasa Indonesia (Widagsa et al., 2019). The difference has resulted in confusion for Indonesian students in placing the stress of English words (Yana, 2017). Therefore, being aware of the importance of knowing the rules in placing English sound stress as proposed by Kelley (2000), Roach (2009), and Tokar (2019) is very important for both teachers and students.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the majority of students of the English Education Study Program in both universities do not place sound stress on nouns ending in *-ion* appropriately. Of the 4 types of nouns ending in *-ion* based on the number of syllables (two,

three, four, and 5 syllables) the students dominantly pronounce words with no stress. The patterns of the sounds stress on nouns ending in *-ion* produced by the students appear variously on the words containing multiple syllables. Therefore, the more syllables in a particular word, the higher the level of difficulty encountered by the students.

Eventually, the results of this research can contribute to raising the students' awareness of producing the sound stress appropriately according to the syllable numbers with *-ion* suffixes in the form of nouns. Besides, it is also useful for lectures to provide more comprehensive instruction and practice for the students when teaching pronunciation, especially about word stress. However, the issue of this study is limited in the aspects of cultures, genders, and ages. Accordingly, further studies are recommended to investigate the stress sound nouns ending in *-ion* produced by students based on their backgrounds related to the abovementioned scopes.

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