

PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH HOMOPHONES: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE EFL STUDENTS

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study are to find out students' knowledge and pronunciation about homophone by students of eighth semester of English education study program at Bengkulu University. It employs qualitative research methods to collect data, including knowledge test and pronunciation test by using Praat and Live transcribe application. The result of this research revealed that in the knowledge test there are 36.5% students are in the excellent category and 32% students in the good category. Furthermore, 14.9% in the enough category, 16.2% students in the category of poor and 1.4% students in the category of very poor. While, in the pronunciation test there are 2 students in the good pronunciation, 2 students in the close to good pronunciation, and 6 students in the not good pronunciation. Moreover, there were 2 vowel, 2 consonant, and 3 diphthongs that the most students' difficulty in pronouncing homophone, the phoneme are vowel /ə/, and /u/; consonant /t/, /d/, diphthong /ʊə/, /əʊ/ and /eɪ/. Based on the findings, the researcher found that students of eighth semester of English education study program still not good enough in mastering homophone.

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INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is one aspect of the English language that helps people interact with each other and because there is a difference between symbols and their sounds. In order to interact effectively with others, it is important to have a strong vocabulary and clear pronunciation. This is in accordance with what Gilakjani states (2016:2) "Pronunciation is the production of sounds that are used to make meanings". Without adequate mastery of pronunciation, it is impossible for someone to speak English well. In Indonesia itself, English is a foreign language which is considered most important for the purpose of accessing information, absorbing and developing knowledge, developing technology, teaching arts and culture and fostering relations with other nations. Therefore, it is important to learn English including learning English pronunciation so that miscommunication does not occur. As Bachman (1990) stated

that mastery of the target language pronunciation or English sound system is theoretically and practically considered very important.

In mastering English pronunciation is a fundamental element because it can determine whether students are successful or not in speaking English. According to Burn (2003:5) The speaker's voice and the listener's response are referred to as pronunciation. If students want to speak in English, they have to say the word apparently. This is because when students can pronounce the correct pronunciation, it will be easier for them to convey the meaning of what they say. So that miscommunication between sender and receiver does not occur.

In this situation, many students tend to mispronounce English words as stated by Hidayatun (2009). In research conducted by Toci (2020) he stated that many students are not aware of the wrong pronunciation of their English. Moreover, for students who are very attached to their local language, it will be easier to mispronounce. Students are sometimes confused and don't know how to pronounce English correctly because English is a complex language. Lots of confusing vocabulary, for example words that are homophones. Homophones are words that sound similar but have different spellings, for example alms - arm, so - sew, no - know, eye - I (Crystal, 2017: 2). If students do not study this pronunciation further, students will misunderstand if they pronounce the wrong word when they speak English. It will be challenging for them to comprehend sense connection, especially homophone, as first-year English learners. Students will believe that a sound will stand in for a word. Yet, a sound in English can be associated with more than one word. For instance, students may mistakenly assume that the sound /hiə/ represents the word "hear," but it can also be associated with the word "here." The students will make a mistake due to the sound's ambiguity.

The purpose of this research is to find out students' knowledge and pronunciation about homophone for consonants, vowels, and diphthongs by the students of eighth semester of English education study program at Bengkulu University. Because, based on the researchers' observations of eighth semester students of the English Education Study Program at the University of Bengkulu, there were students who pronounced certain English words incorrectly, particularly when using homophones. Therefore, the researcher understands how crucial it is to look into students' pronunciation and enhance the process of learning English, throughout the teaching and learning process.

The studies related to analysis pronunciation skills is the study by Sayekti, Hardiah, & Lubis (2021). entitled "Pronouncing Inert Letters: What can we learn from undergraduate EFL students". They analyzed about the error pronunciation of inert letters of the sixth semester students of English Education Study Program at Bengkulu University. The purpose of this study was to determine the most common pronunciation mistakes made by English education students as well as the contributing variables. There are differences and similarities with the research that will be carried out in this study. The similarity is the analyzing students' pronunciation in this study. Meanwhile, the differences are in the focus of the study on English homophone, the subject, and the application that used in this study that is Praat application.

The researcher expected this research to improve students' ability in pronunciation on English homophone. While, the lectures will encourage them to

improve students' pronunciation learning as well as students' knowledge of phonology and homophones by adding special lessons on pronunciation. Hopefully, it will help students can learn pronunciation more deeply.

According to the justification, the research questions of this research question of this research were: 1) How is the students' knowledge about homophones words in English of eight semester of English education study program at Bengkulu University? ,and 2) How are the students pronouncing the English homophone for consonants, vowels, and diphthongs of eight semester of English education study program at Bengkulu university?. The objectives of the research were to find out students' knowledge about homophone by students of eighth semester of English education study program at Bengkulu University and to know the pronunciation of English homophone for consonants, vowels, and diphthongs by the students of eighth semester of English education study program at Bengkulu University.

METHODS

Research Methodology

Qualitative methodology was the study's design. Creswell (2012) states that qualitative research may be used to discover and comprehend the significance that certain people or groups assign to social human problems. The research process involves developing study questions and methods, gathering data from participants in their environment, inductively evaluating the data, building from specifics to general themes, and interpreting the significance of the findings. The final report's writing style is adaptable.

The participants in this study were eighth-semester English Education Study Program students from Bengkulu University. There are 96 students from 3 classes. The sample divided into two parts in knowledge and pronunciation test. In knowledge test, there were 74 students who filled out the test in google form and 10 students selected for examined the pronunciation for this research. As stated by Gay, LR and Diehl, PL (1992) states that the minimum sample in the descriptive study is 10%. Based on this theory, the researcher decided to take a sample of 10% of the total population using systematic sampling that the sample to be selected has the highest, moderate, and lowest English phonology test scores on average from 3 classes of eighth semester students of English Education Study Program at Bengkulu University.

Instruments

The researcher used some instruments for this research such as test, recorder, live transcribe, and praat application. A test is a set of questions, exercises, or other instruments intended to evaluate a person's or group's skills, knowledge, intellect, abilities, or capabilities (Arikunto,1996:138). While, the audio recorder of documenting pronunciation homophones came from the students' work and native speaker. Also, the list of word is based on the oxford dictionary. Furthermore, this research used application for checked students' pronunciation whether it was correct or wrong with Live transcribe. Live transcribe is an application that record speech and voice, then convert it into text in various languages, one of which is English. The

researcher also checked the students' pronunciation using Praat application. Praat application is an open software tool for the analysis of speech in phonetics.

Data Analysis Procedures

In analyzed the data in knowledge test ,the researcher used a formula by Arikunto (2009) in determining the score and classification as below:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Students correct answer}}{\text{Total number of item}} \times 100$$

Table 1 Classification Students' Score

Criteria Score Interval	Classification
30-39	very poor
40-55	poor
56-65	enough
66-79	good
80-100	excellent

RESULT

Students' knowledge of English Homophone

The researcher collected test result that have been given previously through the Google form. To calculated the score of each student and categorized using the formula and classification from Arikunto (2009). The results obtained can be seen in the table below.

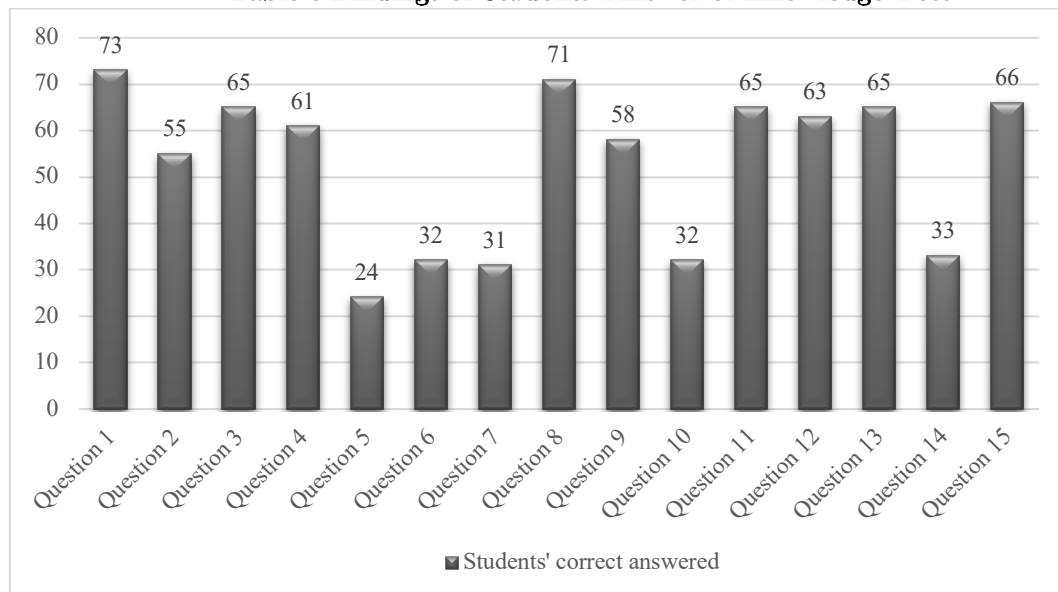
Table 2 Findings of Students' Knowledge of English Homophone

No	Students' Score	Student's Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	30 - 39	Very poor	1 student	1.4%
2	40 - 55	Poor	12 students	16.2%
3	56 - 65	Enough	11 students	14.9%
4	66 - 79	Good	23 students	31%
5	80 - 100	Excellent	27 students	36.5%
Total			74 students	100%

The result of the knowledge test showed that students' knowledge by the eighth semester students of English education study program at Bengkulu University was good enough. Furthermore, it was found that 27 students or 36.5% in the excellent category with the range score of 80-100, 23 students or 31% in the good category with the range score of 66-79, 11 students or 14.9% in the enough category with the range score of 56-65, 12 students or 16.2% in the poor category with the range score of 40-55, and 1 student or 1.4% in the very poor category with the range score of 30-39.

The researcher analyzed that a lot of students can answered the question correctly. It can be seen in each question, as below:

Table 3 Findings of Students' Answer of Knowledge Test



Based on this data, the researcher get 5 questions that are most often answered correctly by students. There are; first question with 73 students correct answer, third question with 65 students correct answer, eighth question with 71 students correct answer, thirteenth question with 65 students correct answer, and fifteenth question with 66 students correct answer. The homophone are “mourning vs morning” with the phonetic symbol of /mɔ:.nɪŋ/ , “birth vs bard” with the phonetic symbol /bɜ:θ/, “whine vs wine” with the phonetic symbol /wam/, “hare vs hair” with the phonetic symbol /heə(r)/, “peak vs peek” with the phonetic symbol /pi:k/. The researcher also found five question that was can’t answer correctly.

The researcher was found that students' incorrect answers is five questions., there are number 5, 6, 7, 10, and 14. The homophone are “flour vs flower” with the phonetic symbol /'flaʊ.ə(r)/, “write vs right” with the phonetic symbol /raɪt/ “scent vs sent” with the phonetic symbol /sent/, “site vs sight” ” with the phonetic symbol is /saɪt/, “made vs maid ” with the phonetic symbol /meɪd/.

Students' Pronunciation of English Homophone

The researcher analyzed students' pronunciation by using an application that can see whether the words spoken by students are correct by looking at the frequency of each word. The application is Live transcribe and Praat application. To make it easier to compare sounds based on frequency and duration numbers in the study, the researchers determined the number limit of whether the sounds matched those of native speakers or not, as below:

- 1) The sound frequency between students and native speakers is stated to be the same or close to native speakers if it is not more than 500 Hz.

- 2) The sound pitch duration is not more than 0.1 second. After the sounds are compared based on F1, F2, and duration.
- 3) The students' voices are said to be “same as native speakers” if they fulfill at least 2 categories correctly. Students who are “close to native speaker” if they fulfill only 1 category correctly. And Students who are “different from native speaker” if they don’t fulfill any categories.

Therefore, to see how well students can pronounce homophone, researchers have analyzed students' voice recordings with the praat application.

Table 4 The Example of The audio by student 1 in Praat App of sound F1 “Alms”

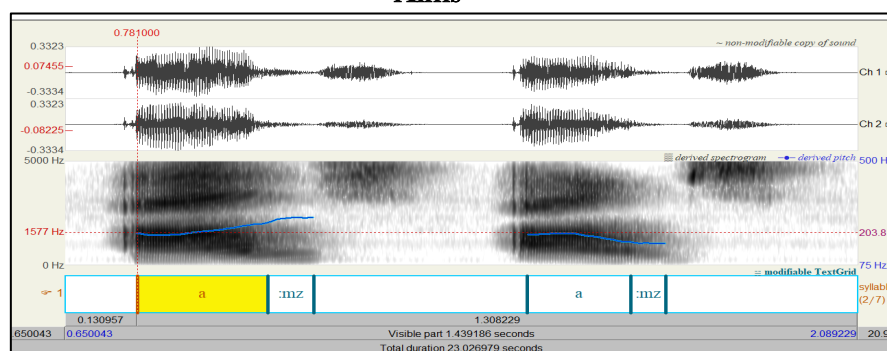


Table 5 Students’ Result Test

Students	Correctly	Close correctly	Incorrectly	Result
Student 1	3	4	3	Close good
Student 2	5	3	2	Good
Student 3	1	2	7	Not good
Student 4	5	1	4	Good
Student 5	4	3	3	Close to good
Student 6	1	1	8	Not good
Student 7	1	4	5	Not good
Student 8	3	3	4	Not good
Student 9	1	4	5	Not good
Student 10	3	3	4	Not good

Note: *Good: same as native speaker’s sound,*
 Close to good: almost as close as a native speaker’s sound,
 Not Good: different from the native speaker's sound

In the results of the analysis conducted by the researcher it was found that 2 students whose pronunciation is in accordance with native speakers or good

pronunciation. While, 2 students whose pronunciation is close to native speaker or close good. Then, 6 students whose pronunciation is far from native speakers or not good pronunciation.

Some of the students were actually correct in pronouncing one of the homophones, but they did not pronounce it with the same pronounced as the homophone pair of that word. Based on the data finding, most students pronounce the word “towed vs toad”, and “source vs sauce” differently as described below:

- 1) “towed” as /təʊd/ = right
“toad” as /taʊd/ = wrong
- 2) “great” as /greɪt/ = right
“grate” as /gæ t/ = wrong
- 3) “source” as /sʊə s/ = wrong
“sauce” as /sɔ : s/ = right

Not only that, in the finding data it was also found that several words had the wrong pronunciation of both homophones. There are “Dew vs Due” as described below:

- 1) “dew” as /diu/, /daʊ/, and /ju/ = wrong
“due” as /diu/, /daʊ/, and /ju/ = wrong

Actually, the correct pronunciation is /dju: /

DISCUSSION

Based on the finding which has been described by the researcher, it can be seen that the knowledge about homophone by eighth semester students of English Education study program is good enough, but the pronunciation by the students is not good enough. Many students can do the knowledge test well. Whereas, almost all students when doing the pronunciation test, they pronounce the homophone incorrectly.

In the first test, the researcher found that students’ knowledge about homophone is good enough. The researcher concluded that a lot of the students are confused to distinguish some homophone with the word with phoneme of diphthong “əʊ” between vowel “ɔ”, consonant “t” between consonant “d”, and diphthong “eɪ” between vowel “æ”. Based on this result, it can be said that homophone is confusing for students as stated by Crystal (2017).

In the second test, it was found that students’ pronunciation of the homophone is not good enough. The student can’t correctly pronounce the word with phoneme of diphthong /eɪ/, diphthong /əʊ/, vowel /ɔ/, vowel /u/. As said by Maulina & Wenyta (2021), in their research they said that vowels and consonants are difficult for students to pronounce. This is in accordance with the result of this study, most of students’ difficulty in pronouncing homophone with the phoneme of consonant and vowel.

Therefore, based on the two results test that has been done by the researcher it can be concluded that students’ pronunciation of English Homophones words by the students eighth semester of English Education at Bengkulu University is not good

enough. The result show that, students' difficulty in pronouncing homophone with the phoneme of vowel /ɔ/, and /u/; consonant /t/, /d/, diphthong /ʊə/, /əʊ/ and /eɪ/.

Based on the two tests that have been done, it can be seen that between students' knowledge and students' pronunciation results are related. For the students who get excellent and good scores, their pronunciation falls into the close good and good category. While students who get poor and very poor scores, their pronunciation falls into the not good category. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between knowledge and pronunciation about homophones by eighth semester students of English Education study program. This is in accordance with Gimson (1970: 1), that knowledge of the sound system of language is an essential requirement for foreign language students if they want to speak well orally in the target language. the more students' knowledge, the greater the possibility that students' pronunciation will be better.

This also according to Kenworthy (1987) in chapter 2, that the amount of exposure can affect students' pronunciation. The success of the learner will be greatly influenced by their exposure to the target language. Students must be given many chances to hear information that they can understand. Besides that, motivation is also a factor that can affect student pronunciation. If students' learning motivation in knowledge and pronunciation practice is high, the results will be good. Otherwise, if students' learning motivation is low, the results will not be good.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on results and discussions in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that students of eighth semester of English education study program still not good enough in mastering homophone and still have many difficulties in pronouncing homophone. there were 2 vowel, 2 consonant, and 3 diphthongs that the most students' difficulty in pronouncing homophone, the phoneme are vowel /ɔ/, and /u/; consonant /t/, /d/, diphthong /ʊə/, /əʊ/ and /eɪ/. Also, the researcher concluded that the students' knowledge can affect students' pronunciation of homophone. Besides that, the amount of exposure and learning motivation also can affect students' pronunciation of homophone.

SUGGESTION

Several suggestions were addressed to several parties. For the students, a students need to enrich their knowledge and pronunciation of homophone. They also need to increase their motivation and interest in learning vocabulary well. In so doing, the students will have more knowledge about homophones and how to pronounce them. For the lectures, the lectures have to improve students' pronunciation learning as well as students' knowledge of phonology and homophones by adding special lessons on pronunciation. For the next researcher, the researcher can analyze more deeply the errors in the pronunciation of English homophones based on vowels, consonants, and diphthongs and also analyze other factor aspects that affect students' pronunciation of English homophone.

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