

## **STUDENTS' ERRORS IN PRONOUNCING THE WORDS CONTAINING SILENT LETTERS AT EFL CLASS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purposes of this study were to determine the types of errors that Senior High School students make in pronouncing words silent letters and the causes that influence students to make errors in pronouncing words containing silent letters. The approach used in this research was qualitative descriptive. The research subject by using purposive sampling technique were class XI students at SMA Negeri 1 Campalagian in the 2022/2023 academic year. The data was analyzed by using analytical technique of Miles and Huberman, namely by reducing data, displaying data and drawing conclusion/verification. The results of this study indicated that the types of errors made by students in pronouncing words containing silent letters exist two, pre-systematic errors and Systematic errors. The results of this study also showed that the causes that influence students in made errors were the lack of experience of students in learning English, pronunciation viewed as one of difficult subject, influenced by the mother tongue and students learning model. From the results of this study, it can be concluded that there are still many students who made errors in pronouncing words that contain silent letters and do not understand how to pronounce the sounds of these words correctly. Researchers believe that it is important for readers especially students to enrich their information and knowledge about English vocabulary through listening materials at school, it helps them to reduce their mispronunciation habits in some English vocabulary and helps students to increase their motivation in learning pronunciation.

**Keywords:** Student Errors, Pronunciation, Silent Letters

### **INTRODUCTION**

**A**s an international language, many people learn and speak using English as a communication tool. Some countries also use English as a second language and are considered a communication bridge between people from different countries. Where, communication can help anyone to deliver our ideas, knowledge, feelings, incident, information, experienced, etc. In mastered English, there are 4 skills to be considered, there are reading,

listening, writing, and speaking. Infected in speaking, there is a very important language component rule that needs to be learned in English. The important language component rule is pronunciation.

Pronunciation is an important element in studying a foreign language due to pronunciation is production skills in speaking that produce sounds to make communicative meaning. On other hand, Pufarani, et al., (2021) stated that "Pronunciation is the way of someone pronounce or speak out the words that accepted or understood in a particular language". Additionally, to know how to correctly pronounce the words learned in English, pronunciation must be the first rule that is considered, this is supported by the statement from Istiqomah and Anggraini (2009) who cited the Brown that the goal of the language learners is to make sure that they can communicate what they have in mind effectively; they have to be understood when the uttering the words. Therefore, pronunciation is necessary for students to learn to produce words correctly. From that statement, we know that pronunciation is the main key to mastering English so that speakers can produce words well, and also can understand the meaning of produced utterances. It can be concluded that without pronunciation, communication will not occur properly among people.

To learn how words are produced correctly. Phonology is the main study that should be known, Katamba (1989, p.1) argues that "Phonology is the branch of linguistics which investigates how sounds are used systematically in different languages to form words and utterances". Phonology is widely studied as the basis for speaking English. Pronunciation, sounds, and how words are formed to produce pronunciation are studied in phonology. However, phonology in different countries is different due to it being adapted to their respective languages. This is one of the reasons why in the learning process many Indonesian students have difficulty pronouncing words in English because English is not their mother tongue.

In addition, when students made mistakes in speaking English, it is said to be an error in pronunciation. Pronunciation errors that occurred were not exclusively intended to be done by learners. Students' error pronunciation can be seen from an analysis. Hasyim (2002) who cited Crystal argued that error analysis is a technique for identifying, classifying, and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics. One example of pronunciation errors that students usually make is when they pronounce the word "scene" with produced /ski:n/ where it should be pronounced as /si:n/, and the word "dead" should be pronounced as /ded/ but some of them produced as /dead/ or /did/.

In a similar study, Syaputri (2014) found that student pronunciation error was defined into three types. They were pre-systematics, systematics, and post-systematic errors. The causes of errors were interference, intralingual and developmental error. Interference errors were dialect, accent, and the similarities in pronouncing the words between L1 and L2. Intralingual error was the

result of the student's generalization. The developmental error was the student's result of a lack of interlanguage knowledge. This proves that there are still many students who cannot pronounce English properly as they should.

Additionally, based on the researchers' observation at SMAN 1 Campalagian during PLP on 2021, September - December, as well as interviews with some English teachers and based on my observations teaching English in class, it can be said that some of them are still difficult to pronounce the words in English and there were several reasons why students incorrectly pronounced the words in English. The first is the lack of providing English vocabulary listening material at school. Second, is the lack of students' interest in learning pronunciation. Third, is the lack of knowledge about phonetics. Fourth because of the students' habit of pronouncing English words incorrectly without any improvement from the teachers or friends. Fifth, lack of motivation from teachers to provide listening skills to students. Even though there was material on how to pronounce words in English teachers, the teacher had little time to explain and practice it for students in class.

Thus, based on the previous explanation, the researchers want to examine the pronunciation errors made by students and describe the reasons that make them pronounce incorrectly. To make it easier to analyse error pronunciation, the researchers limited the variables and focused on pronunciation errors in words containing silent letters. Therefore, this research was focus on;

1. What types of errors are made by students in pronouncing words containing silent letters?
2. What are the causes that influence the students' errors in pronouncing words containing silent letters?

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the most important thing that must be considered in communicating. In communication, the listener will catch what the speaker says and pronunciation is the main key in the communication process. Pronunciation plays an important role in communication because pronunciation errors can affect the clarity of a person's delivery. If someone makes an error in pronouncing some words in conversation, it can disturb the communication. Richard and Schmidt (2002 as cited in Pourhose in Gilakjani, 2016) defined pronunciation as the method of producing certain sounds. Pronunciation is very important to improve by people in English speaking activity since it can highly influence the meaning of utterances.

### **Silent Letters**

Silent letters are letters which is present in spelling and writing but omitted in the pronunciation. According to Brown (2019), Silent letters are those that do not represent any sound in the pronunciation. Hundreds of words in English contain silent letters, which if sounded will

greatly disrupt the audience's understanding, Silent letters influence the meaning of the word that someone produces, when silent letters are sounded could be said that the word that produces is not meaningful or has error meaning. Simplify, silent letters are letters that are not pronounced in words, such as the 'b' in *doubt*, the 'c' in the *scene*, the 'g' in *foreign*, the 'gh' in *high*, and the 'l' in *should*.

### **Error Analysis**

The word error is related to the terms uncertainly and not associated with wrong or mistakes, it can be found in writing and speaking. To find out if there is an error in someone speaking or someone writing, then an error analysis is used to know it. According to Hasyim (2002) " Error analysis is an activity to identify, classify, and interpreted or describe the errors made by someone in speaking or in writing English". Three types of error by Corder can understand from each function:

1. The pre-systematic error occurs when the students cannot explain why a particular form is chosen.
2. The systematic error occurs when the students cannot correct the error but can explain the rule applied.
3. The post-systematic error occurs when the students can explain the correct rule.

### **Causes of Errors in Pronunciation**

Learning English pronunciation as an English Foreign Language is not easy because the sounds of English are tremendously different from students' mother tongue. Thus, there are some factors which are influencing learning pronunciation, those are; native language/mother tongue, age, experience in studying English, attitude and identity, motivation, learning model.

- a. Age; Age plays an important role in remembering the rules in learning the second language.
- b. Mother tongue. The Mother tongue of the learners is the main reason for learning foreign languages, this is because the accent, intonation, or rhythm of the students is not the same as the foreign language studied by them.
- c. Attitude and Identity; Students' attitudes related to an individual's personality and learning goals can influence achievement in pronunciation
- d. Learning Model; The second language learning process carried out by students is very important to reduce error pronunciation, this must be considered from the learning model, methods, and material studied by students both from teachers, books, or dictionaries.
- e. Motivation; Motivation is important for students and teachers (Dimiyanti. 2006, p. 85).
- f. Language Use; This is related to the habits of language speakers in their environment. the amount of conversation in English at work or school can affect students' foreign accents (Piske et al, 2001).

- g. Experience in Studying English; According to Piske et al. (2001) students who usually attend foreign language classrooms in English courses, and students who take the course may be able to reduce students' pronunciation errors.

## **METHOD**

This research was using qualitative research to support the research. According to Yusuf (2014), qualitative research is an inquiry strategy that emphasizes conducting meanings, understanding, concepts, characteristics, symbols, and descriptions of a phenomenon; focus and multi metode, nature and holistic; prioritize quality, use several ways and served narrative. The source of data that was being used in this research is the primary source. Sugiyono argued that the primary source is a data source that directly provides data to data collectors (2013). Primary source obtained from informants, in this case, class XI students of SMAN 1 Campalagian act as informants.

There are two instruments used in this research, namely tests and interviews. A test is something that is done to measure a person's ability and interview is a question-and-answer activity conducted by two or more people to obtain information. In conducting the interview, the researchers used the type of semi-structured in-depth interview, in which the researchers asked questions to the students with a freer implementation and in-depth interviewing students.

In analyzing the data, the researchers looked at the instrument of student test results and interviews related to students' errors in pronouncing the words containing silent letters. The results of the pronunciation test were help in identifying the types of errors made by students in pronouncing the words containing silent letters. Then, interview is used to obtain information on what are causes that influence the students to make an error in pronouncing the words containing silent letters.

In analyze data the researchers used data analysis technique from Miles and Huberman in (Sugiyono, 2018), there are 3 activities to analyze data, namely:

### **1. Data Reduction**

According to Sugiyono (2018) reducing data means summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the important things, looking for themes and patterns, and discarding unnecessary ones. Based on that definition, the researchers will predict data that is by the objectives and data that is not needed, so that the researchers can take only the data that is needed.

### **2. Data Display**

Data display is the second step in data analysis techniques. After reducing the data, the next step is to present the data. Data can be presented in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, graphs, diagrams, flowcharts, or tables. The purpose of the data

display is to make it easier to understand the situation that occurs and after displaying the data, the reduced data will see the differences.

3. Drawing conclusion and verification.

Verification or concluding is the third step in the qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman. Conclusions are drawn to answer the problem formulations that have been identified by the researchers.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Types of Errors Made by Students in Pronouncing Words Containing Silent Letters**

**Table 1. Types of Error Made by Students**

No.	Words	Types of Error			Total Students
		Pre-systematic	Systematic	Post-Systematic	
1	Writing	4	6	-	15
2	Should	2	4	-	
3	People	-	1	-	
4	Island	11	1	-	
5	Date	1	4	-	
6	Tea	-	-	-	
7	Honest	8	3	-	
8	Listen	4	2	-	
9	Answer	12	3	-	
10	Hour	5	6	-	
11	Could	5	3	-	
12	Building	6	2	-	
13	Since	4	2	-	
14	Head	4	2	-	
15	Cause	3	5	-	
16	Enough	6	1	-	
17	Know	1	1	-	
18	Key	9	1	-	
19	Line	-	-	-	
20	Talk	6	2	-	
<b>Total Error</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>0</b>	

Based on table above, the researchers found that the words that include the types of error. Most of students made pre-systematic error and systematic error. No one students made post-systematic error.

### ***Pre-systematic Error***

An error made as a result of the learner not yet knowing the rule. On the other hand, students do not know the rules or how to read a word, so they make pronunciation errors. The students do not know the rules because they have never studied or been taught how to pronounce a word. These errors type occurred when the students were unaware and out of control while pronunciation. According to Corder in Astuti, et al (2020), this error occurred when the learner was unaware of the existence of a particular rule in the target language. The learner could not give any account of why a particular form was chosen. They tended to ignore the way how pronouncing the words by using correct pronunciations, so that when they pronouncing the words, they were not feeling for incorrect pronunciation made by themselves.

In this error types, the researchers found ninety-one error made by students that were pronounced incorrectly by them. There were seventeen words with repetition, they were: writing, should, island, date, honest, listen, answer, hour, could, building, since, head, cause, enough, know, key, and talk. From those data, the researchers stated that there were many words that were errors pronounced by students. When the researchers clarified the student's error by interviewing them one by one, the fact was they did not realize at all the errors. The students only pronounce the word according to their feelings, they do not pronounce the word based on the rules because they have never been studied and taught. In addition, they were not fully aware to evaluate and correct the pronunciation by themselves.

### ***Systematic Error***

This error occurred for the students who had got the comprehension about the rule of language function: they had errors for the practice. The students have studied these words but still make errors by accident, they know that they made errors but cannot correct the errors because they accidentally made error in pronouncing the words. They realized their pronunciation error when it was clarified. The students fully aware the rule of phonological symbols in pronunciations, but they could be errors in pronouncing the words. They also could unable to evaluate and correct the errors. According to Corder in Astuti (2020, p. 154) the systematic error occurs when the students cannot correct the error but can explain the rule applied. Corder's opinion is the same as what the researchers found where the students were unable to correct the errors but could explain the mistaken and used.

Then, the researchers found there were 49 systematic errors made by students in pronouncing the words containing silent letters. The words were: writing, should, people, island, date, honest, listen, answer, hour, could, building, since, head, cause, enough, know, key and talk.

The fact was students did errors continuously, when the researchers asked them to correct the pronunciation, they had difficulties to pronounce the word well. For example, the word hour was pronounced by students as /h ur/ or /har/. Even though, the correct pronunciation and proper phonological word should be /'aʊr/. Hereafter, the word talk was also error pronounced by most students. They often pronounced the word talk as /t lk/ and /talk/. The proper phonological word must be /tɔ:k/. The researchers found that, even though students have studied how to pronounce the words, because students often use their mother tongue, they are used to sounding English words based on to their written. Actually, they had known to pronounce the words well. However, because of the familiarity they pronounce the words incorrectly. Finally, the students who were categorized into systematic errors had a self-reminder when they did errors.

In addition, no one students made error in post-systematic types of errors in pronouncing words containing silent letters. It can be seen from the data above; the researchers described that student did two types of error in pronouncing words containing silent letters. In conclusion, it could be said that the types of error made by students was pre-systematic and systematic error. There were, ninety-one words were categorized into pre-systematic errors that students pronounced and fourth-nine words were categorized into systematic errors that pronounced by students.

### **The Causes That Influenced the Students' Errors in Pronouncing Words Containing Silent Letter**

After analyzed the types of error made by students in pronouncing words containing silent letters, the researchers also used interview to get further information about the causes that influenced students class XI SMAN 1 Campalagian made errors in pronouncing words containing silent letter. The researchers found several factors of the most influenced students made errors in pronunciation by used Interview:

#### ***Students Experience in Studying English***

After conducted the interview item 2, out of 15 students there were only five students who took the English course where the three students who took the English course for a year were the students who made the fewest pronunciation errors. Meanwhile, the two students who took English course for a month were the students who made the most errors. The students who have an English course for a month made the most pronunciation errors as did 15 students who do not have an English course, around 9 to 15 pronunciation errors. This proves that the duration or experience of students in learning English influence their pronunciation, where students who take longer in learning English prove that they can reduce their pronunciation errors.

#### ***Pronunciation Viewed as One of Difficult Subject***

On the findings of the interview above, the second causes that influenced students made error pronunciation is they viewed pronunciation as one of difficult subject. Almost the student



participants involved on this research stated that pronunciation is one of difficult subjects. According to Aliaga in Yatriani (2020), English pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learner's competence because with good pronunciation leads to learning while bad pronunciation promotes to great difficulties in language learning. Then, students said in interview that "pronunciation is difficult because the way of spell and write it is different," some words in English are very hard to pronounce like the word queue".

In the same way students' perspective on the subject are also suspicious to be one of their lacks in pronunciation. Mostly students were made error pronouncing words containing silent letters in the interview said that pronunciation subject are very difficult to learn. Their though of pronunciation to be one of difficult subject indirectly could limitations their ability, because they program their brain to think so.

### ***Mother Tongue***

On the result of the interview, that students make error in pronunciation because it is influenced by their mother tongue where students rarely practice their pronunciation, they only practice if it is taught at school. Therefore, students may not be familiar with English words which causes them to made error in pronunciation. Besides, the mother tongue that is often used will continue to be attached to the way they pronounce English because they rarely practice their pronunciation. In the result of pronunciation test, researchers found that most of students pronounced the words containing silent letters as the way written. For example in the word of answer, the students pronounced it as /*Δnswər*/ where it should be /*'ænsər*/ and the word of talk, the students pronounced it as the way the word written /*talk*/ where it should be /*tɔ:k*/. They also made error in pronounced the word of island where it should be /*'aɪlənd*/ but their pronounced it as the word written /*island*/. The word of honest and hour, where it should be /*'ɒnɪst*/ and /*'aʊər*/ but the students mostly pronounced the words as the written /*hanɪst*/ and /*hʌʊr*/. As stated by Gilakjani (2011, p. 79) mother tongue influence mispronunciation of words by nonnative speakers reflect the influence of the sounds, rules, stress, and intonation of their native language. All of the students of SMA Negeri 1 Campalagian especially the class XI using their mother tongue (Regional and Indonesia language) in daily conversation, as we know either Indonesian or students' regional language could be read based on it spelling while in English it couldn't. Between Indonesia and English have different language features and systems, if we rarely practice it, the target language will also be difficult to use. In conclusion, most of the pronunciation errors that students made were because they pronounce English words based on the way it written, where in English it is different when pronounce and write it. In the end, because they often use their mother tongue which is Indonesian then it influences the way the students pronounce words in English.

### ***Students Learning Model***

Student learning model is very important in their learning process, especially in learning English pronunciation. As stated Sa'adah (2012) "if the model, method and teaching material is not appropriate, it will have an impact on the quality of the students". In the interview results, the researchers found that students only used monotonous learning strategies such as memorizing vocabulary, learning to write words in English and most of them using Google translation to learn pronunciation, moreover they were not sustainable in learning pronunciation. This influenced student to make pronunciation errors, where students should be able to use other ways to learn pronunciation such as repeating words that they do not know the pronunciation of on an ongoing basis, using more specific applications such as English pronunciation, watching English podcast on YouTube where there are many ways to improve pronunciation besides just memorizing vocabulary and using Google translate.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and discussions in the previous pages, it can be concluded that the result of the data showed that the fifteen students SMA Negeri 1 Campalagian as participants are still having some errors and trouble in their pronunciation. The researchers found there were two types of errors made by students in pronouncing words containing silent letters. First, the researchers found that there were 91 pronunciation errors made by students in pronouncing silent letters which included pre-systematic, and there was 49 systematic error pronunciation made by students in pronouncing silent letters. In fact, of the three types of errors according to Corder, namely pre-systematic, systematic, and post-systematic. The researchers only found two types of pronunciation errors, namely pre-systematic and systematic, then no one students made post-systematic errors.

Then, after analyzing the background information of the participants by used interview, the researchers found 4 causes that influenced the students made error in pronunciation. The first causes were students experience in studying English were the students who took longer in learning English to make fewer pronunciation errors. On the other hand, if students did not have experience in English, students made more pronunciation error. Second causes were the students viewed pronunciation as one of difficult subject, in the interview session students said that they had difficulty in pronouncing and writing in English so that they felt that pronunciation was a difficult subject. This reduces students interest in learning, so students made errors in their pronunciation. Third causes were the students learning model, most of students said in the interview before that their way of learning English was very monotonous. The last causes that researchers found were students mother tongue, their mother tongue influence their pronunciation in English where most students made error in pronunciation because they pronounce English silent letters words based on the way the words written which should not be done in English.

Researchers believe that it is important for students to enrich their information and knowledge about English vocabulary through listening materials at school, it helps them to reduce their mispronunciation habits in some English vocabulary and helps students to increase their motivation in learning pronunciation.

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