

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS DIFFICULTIES IN
PRONOUNCING ENGLISH VOWELS IN READING DESCRIPTIVE
TEXT IN SEVENTH GRADE AT SMP NEGERI 1 TARUTUNG IN
ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/2023**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the factors that make the students are difficult to pronounce English vowels of seventh grade students at SMP N 1 Tarutung in academic year 2022/2023. The data of the study is qualitative data. The qualitative data was taken from questionnaire. The data was taken from a class wich consisted of 32 students and from this research, the researcher got the data by questionnaire 1. 11 students (59,375%) said that english teaching is very interesting; 2. 17 students (53,125%) said that the right pronunciation in speaking English is very important; 3. 24 students (75%) ever got difficulty in reading English text; 4. 24 students (75%) ever or not got difficulties in reading English vowel; 5. 15 students (46,875%) said confused with the pronouncing of English vowel; 6. 14 students (43,75%) said confused with descriptive text; 7. 20 students (62,5%) said that learning pronunciation english vowel is rather difficult; 8. 13 students (40,625%) said that learning descriptive text is pleasant; 9. 22 students (68,75%) asking their teacher if they got difficulties in pronouncing English vowel while studying in the classroom; 10. 18 students (56,25%) said that ever be taught of pronunciation well. The Seventh Grade of SMP N 1 Tarutung in academic year 2022/2023, they got some difficulties in pronouncing English vowel. The factors are: they confused with the sound or to pronounce it and when they were studying about pronunciation, they were unserious.

Keywords: *pronounce, qualitative data, descriptive text.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Every human being has a language. It is used to convey messages to other people and without a language the people will find it difficult to communicate and express their ideas, thought and wishes. According to Finocchiaro (1974: 3), "Language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols, which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact."

In Indonesia, people speak Indonesian as their second language to communicate with anyone (Indonesian) whatever his first language

he speaks (Javanese, Madurese, Bataknese, etc.), but when they want to speak to other people coming from other countries, they cannot use Indonesian as a means of communication. English is a way to solve the miscommunication between Indonesian and people from other countries since English is used as an international language.

The Indonesian government has chosen English as the first foreign language. It means that it is taught in all educational institutions at all levels from elementary school up to university. Besides, as stated above English is used as lingua

franca, as it is an international language used in many countries throughout the world. For this reason, millions of Indonesian students want to learn English in order to be able to speak English.

The Problem of the Study

Based on the background above, some problems need to be answered from this research: What factors make the students difficult to pronounce the English vowels in reading descriptive text of seventh grade students at SMP N 1 Tarutung in academic year 2022/2023?

The Objective of the Study

The objective of the research was to find out the factors that make the students are difficult to pronounce English vowels of seventh grade students at SMP N 1 Tarutung in academic year 2022/2023.

The Scope of the Study

The scope of the research was focused on the vowel sounds of dhiptongs are difficult to be pronounced in reading descriptive text of seventh grade students at SMP N 1 Tarutung in academic year 2022/2023.

The Significances of the Study

The research is expected to have contributions for:

1. Teachers.
To help them to find out the students' difficulties in pronouncing English vowel in order that they will teach their students well.
2. Students.
They will be able to know their weakness in order that be easily to solve them.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pronunciation

Pronunciation is one of the important aspects in English, especially in oral communication. Every sound, stress pattern, and intonation may convey meaning. The non native speakers of English who speak English have to be very careful in pronouncing some utterances or he may create misunderstanding.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, pronunciation is a way in which a language or a particular word or sound is spoken. According to Lado 1964: 70, pronunciation is the use of a sound system in speaking and listening. Here, pronunciation is merely treated as the act that happens in speaking and listening, Lado doesn't mention how the sounds are produced. Pronunciation is the act or manner of pronouncing words; utterance of speech. In other words, it can also be said that it is a way of speaking a word, especially a way that is accepted or generally understood.

Vowel

Defenition of Vowel

A vowel is speech sound in which the mouth is open and the tongue is not touching the top of the mouth and the teeth. According to Oxford Dictionaries, vowel is a speech sound which is produced by comparatively open configuration of the vocal tract, with vibration of the vocal cords but without audible friction, and which is a unit of the sound system of a language that forms the nucleus of a syllable.

According to Connor (1980) said that vowels are made by voiced air passing through different mouth shapes; the differences in the shape of the mouth are caused by the different position of the tongue and lips. Vowels can be either front or back. In front of a vowel, such as *as/i/* or */æ/*, the front part of the tongue is pushed forward, and the tongue can be easily seen in a mirror. In the back vowel such as */u/* or */a/*, the highest point of the tongue is back and the whole tongue moves back in the mouth.

Vowels Letter

A vowel letter is a letter that represents a vowel. A vowel is a speech sound in spoken language which is pronounced with an open vocal tract so that there is no build-up of air pressure at any point above the glottis.

In general there are 26 letters, letters are divided into two parts, namely vowels and consonants. The English language includes six vowel letters: *A, E, I, O, U*, and sometimes *Y*. The letter *Y* is only sometimes a vowel because it can be pronounced as a consonant (such as in the words "yellow," "yam,") and sometimes as a

vowel (such as in the words “sky,” “thyme,” and “lovely”). It’s a consonant when it involves blocking the airflow out of your mouth, and it’s a vowel when it doesn’t. English consonants are: B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y (sometimes), Z.

English Vowels

Vowels are phonemes that are produced without any appreciable constriction or blockage of airflow in the vocal tract. Vowel letters consist of a, e, i, o, and u. But there are many kinds of vowels based on their sounds when we spell them.

The kinds of vowels are Monophthongs, Diphthongs, Close vowel, Open vowel, Front vowel, Back vowel, Rounded vowel, Undrounded vowel, Tense vowel, and Lax Vowel. But English vowels are divided into two major classes, there are Monophthongs (simple/pure vowels) and Diphthongs (William in Wasis Tri Puspita, 1997: 36).

Monophthongs

A monophthong is a pure vowel or single vowel. A monophthong is where there is one vowel sound in a syllable. A pure vowel is a sound that is articulated at the beginning and end of the word. It is relatively fixed and will glide in the up and down direction.

There are 12 pure vowels or monophthongs in English – [ɪ], [i:], [ʊ], [u:], [e], [ɜ:], [ɔ:], [ə], [ɑ:], [ɒ], [ʌ], and [æ]

Example:

- [ɪ], as in *lip* /lɪp/, is pronounced in the front part of the vocal tract, with the tongue half-closed to the roof of the mouth and the lips in a spread position.
- [i:], as in *sheep* /ʃi:p/, is articulated in the front part of the vocal tract, with the tongue close to the roof of the mouth and the lips in a spread position.
- [ʊ], as in *cook* /kʊk/, is produced in the back part of the vocal tract, with the tongue close to the back of the roof of the mouth and the lips in a rounded position.
- [u:], as in *fool* /fu:l/, is articulated in the back part of the vocal tract, with the tongue close to the roof of the mouth and the lips in a rounded position.

- [e], as in *ten* /ten/, is produced in the **central** part of the vocal tract, with the tongue **close** to the roof of the mouth and the lips in a **rounded** position.
- [ɜ:], as in *girl* /gɜ:l/, is pronounced in the **central** part of the vocal tract, with the tongue **partly opened** and the lips in an **unrounded** position.
- [ə], as in *among* /ə'mʌŋ/, is articulated in the **central** part of the vocal tract, with the lips **partly opened**.
- [ɔ:], as in *cord* /kɔ:d/, is articulated in the **back** part of the vocal tract, with the tongue **partly opened** and the lips in a **rounded** position.
- [ɑ:], as in *bard* /bɑ:d/, is pronounced in the **back** part of the vocal tract, with the tongue **completely open** and low in the mouth, and the lips in a **spread** position.
- [ɒ], as in *fog* /fɒg/, is produced in the **back** part of the vocal tract, with the tongue **open** and low in the mouth, and in a **rounded** position.
- [ʌ], as in *nut* /nʌt/, is pronounced in the **back** part of the vocal tract, with the tongue **half-open** and the lips in an **unrounded** position.
- [æ], as in *man* /mæn/, is articulated in the **front** part of the vocal tract, with the tongue **half-open** and the lips in a **spread** position.

Diphthongs

The diphthong is a sound formed by two vowels that are articulated like a single syllable. Usually it begins with a vowel, then moves on to other vowels as we spell out the syllable.

Examples:

- /aɪ/ Creates a speech sound similar to “eye” and usually includes the letters /i/, /igh/, and /y. Examples: *my*, *cry*, *light*, *like*
- /əʊ/ Creates a speech sound similar to “boat” and usually includes the letters /ow/, /oa/ and /o/. Examples: *tow*, *loan*, *though*
- /eɪ/ Creates a speech sound similar to “great” and usually includes the letters /ey/, /ay/, /ai/ and /a/. Examples: *steak*, *pain*, *weight*

- /aʊ/ Creates a speech sound similar to “ow!” and usually includes the letters /ou/ and /ow/. Examples: *town, found, cow*
- /ɪə/ Creates a speech sound similar to “ear” and usually includes the letters /ee/, /ie/ and /ea/. Examples: *leer, tear, pier*
- /eə/ Creates a speech sound similar to “air” and usually includes the letters /ai/, /a/, and /ea/. Examples: *hair, lair, bear*
- /ɔɪ/ Creates a speech sound similar to “boy” and usually includes the letters /oy/ and /oi/. Examples: *oil, coy, roil*
- /ʊə/ Creates a speech sound similar to “sure” and usually includes the letters /oo/, /ou/, /u/, and /ue/. Examples: *cure, pure, cur*

Reading

Defenition of Reading

According to (Tarigan (1990:7) in Jaenal 2010) argues that reading is a process that is carried and used by readers who want to get the message delivered by the author through the medium of words or written language.

reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When we read, we use our eyes to receive written symbols (letters, punctuation marks and spaces) and we use our brain to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something to us. Reading can be silent (in our head) or aloud (so that other people can hear).

Reading Descriptive Text

Descriptive text has the purpose to describe an object or a person that the writer is interested in. Thus, in writing a descriptive text the writers should know well what they want to describe.

Then, the students are required to list the characteristics of something and usually deal with the physical appearance of the described thing. In other words, a particular person, place or thing is described in details in this composition. The description tells the object as the way it is without being affected by the writers’ personal opinion. Before telling what they have caught through their sensory system, a mental activity is involved. They firstly identify certain imagery or real object which is located somewhere. Through

the words, then they describe the thing they have in mind.

Defenition of Descriptive Text

Descriptive Text is a text which says what a person or a thing is like. Its purpose is to describe and reveal a particular person, place, or thing.” A descriptive text is considered as the simplest and easiest writing form compared to narrative, recount, or procedure, particularly for the beginning writers.

Generic Structure of Descriptive Text

There are two generic structure of descriptive text, they are :

1. Identification;

Identifying the phenomenon to be described. Beside, identification is the part of paragraph that introduces the character.

2. Description;

Ddescribing the phenomenon in parts, qualities, or/and characteristic.

Language Feature of Descriptive Text

1. Using attributive and identifying process.
2. Relational process.
3. Using specific noun.
4. Using figurative language.
5. Using simple present tense.

The Example of Descriptive Text

1. A stray cat ad: “It has a black body and white legs, except the right front, and an orange collar. It responds to the name of Napoleon”.
2. An ode to the lips of the loved one: “Your lips are rose petals that bloom hidden from my gaze, sweet and fleshy, they have the color of a spring sunset.”

Research design

This research used descriptive qualitative research. In this study, the researcher analyzed the students’ difficulties in pronouncing English vowels in reading dscriptive text. This research design belongs to the descriptive study. This research was a case study research using a qualitative descriptive method. This research was descriptive qualitative because it explains the analysis and the results in words, not numbers.

The Subject of the Research

According to Sugiyono (2008), the research subjects were people who were sampled in a study included in the study. According to Sugiyono (2015), in qualitative research does not use a population, because qualitative research departs from certain cases that exist in certain social situations and the results of the study will not be applied to the population, but transferred to other places in social situations that have similarities to the social situation in the case studied. The sample in qualitative research is not called the respondent but as a resource or participant, informant, friend, and teacher in the study.

Based on the explanation of purposive sampling by Sugiyono (2015), the researcher chose the seventh grade students at SMP N 1 Tarutung as the subject of the research.

Instrument of Collecting Data

In conducting this research, instrument for collecting data is absolutely important. The accuracy of the result of the result of the research is mostly dependent on how accurate the use of instrument for the data collection should be well prepared.

Related to the problem, the researcher used questionnaires in collecting data. It can also be multiple choice where the respondent chooses the answer that is closest to his own opinion. The respondent's choice is limited to the set of choices provided to find out the factors make the students difficult to pronounce the English vowels

The method of obtaining research data is by filling out a questionnaire that has been provided by the researcher. The use of this questionnaire can collect a number of relevant information. In this study, the researcher used closed-ended questions. Closed questions limit the respondent to the set of alternatives that are offered. Because closed questions help respondents to answer quickly, and also makes it easier for researchers to analyze data and tabulate the results of the entire questionnaire collected. This study uses "multiple-choice" "to find out the factors that cause students to make mistakes. This type of question has the answer provided by the researcher and the respondent just has to choose the appropriate answer. The advantage of this type of question is

that it is not difficult for the respondent to choose the answer.

Procedure of Collecting Data

The data collected through the following procedures, namely:

1. The researcher prepared the questionnaire
2. The research explained the questionnaire
3. The researcher distributed the questionnaire
4. The researcher asked the student to write down the name on the questionnaire's paper
5. The research gave student time to do
6. Then, the research collected the questionnaire.

Technique of Analyzing Data

This study was conducted by using qualitative data. The qualitative data is taken from the questionnaire sheets. After collecting data, the research analyzing it by applying the hand analyzing of qualitative data (Creswell, 2008:246) it means that research reads the data, make it by hand, and divided into parts.

The researcher use certain criterion based on Best's (1981). The criterion is follows:

Categories	Number of mistake in percentage
Excellent	0-25 %
Good	26-50 %
Fair	51-75 %
Poor	76-100

Data and data analysis

The Data

As the research explained at the previous chapter, the data were collected data by used questionnaire to find out the factors make the students difficult to pronounce the English vowels of SMP Negeri 1 Tarutung.

The data of the study was qualitative data. The qualitative data was taken from questionnaire. The complete questions conveyed in the questionnaire can be seen on Appendix 1. The data was taken from a class wich consisted of 32 students. The researcher had been done in a meeting.

The Qualitative Data

The qualitative data were taken from the responses of students upon the questionnaire given to them. The questionnaire was distributed to the Seventh grade of Junior High School. Based on the obtained information the data were analyzed.

Data Analysis

Table 4.2.1

The students' opinion about English teaching in SMPN 1 Tarutung.

No	Responses	F	%
	Verry interesting	11	59,375
	Interserting	19	34,375
	Less interesting	2	6,25
	Uninteresting	0	0
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.1 above shows that from 32 students, there were 11 students (59,375%) said that english teaching is verry interesting especially in SMP N 1 Tarutung, and 19 students (34,375%) said english teaching is interesting. There were 2 students said that english teaching is less interesting and none of them said that uninteresting. They said that because they interesed to English subject.

Table 4.2.2

The students' opinion about the right pronunciation is important in speaking English.

No	Responses	F	%
	Verry important	17	53,125
	Inimportant	15	46,875
	Less important	0	0
	Unimportant	0	0
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.2 above shows that from 32 students, there were 17 students (53,125%) said that the right pronunciation in speaking English is very important, and there were 15 students (46,875%) said that the right pronunciation in speaking English is important. Then, none of them said that the right pronunciation in speaking English is less important and unimportant. They said like that because pronunciation is very important in speaking English.

Table 4.2.3

The students' opinion if they ever or not got difficulties in reading English text.

No	Responses	F	%
	Ever	24	75
	Never	7	21,875
	Often	0	0
	Seldom	1	3,125
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.3 above shows that from 32 students, there were 24 students (75%) ever got difficulty in reading English text, 7 students (21,875%) never got difficulty in reading English text, and none students often got difficulty in reading English text and there were a student (3,125%) got difficulty in pronouncing English text.

Table 4.2.4

The students' opinion if they ever or not got difficulties in reading English vowel.

No	Responses	F	%
	Ever	24	75
	Never	7	21,875
	Often	0	0
	Seldom	1	3,125
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.3 above shows that from 32 students, there were 24 students (75%) ever got difficulty in reading English vowel, 7 students (21,875%) never got difficulty in reading English vowel, and none students often got difficulty in reading English vowel and there were a student (3,125%) got difficulty in pronouncing English vowel.

Table 4.2.5

The students' opinion that made them difficult in pronouncing English vowel

No	Responses	F	%
	Seldom to hear it	14	43,75
	Confused with it	15	46,875
	Never to hear it	3	9,375
	Lazy to study	0	0
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.5 above shows that from 32 students, there were 14 students (43,75%) said seldom to hear the pronouncing of English vowel.

15 students (46,875%) said confused with the pronouncing of English vowel, 3 students (9,375%) said never to hear the pronouncing English vowel and none of them said lazy to study English vowel.

Table 4.2.6

The students' opinion that made them difficult in reading descriptive text.

No	Responses	F	%
	Seldom to read it	11	34,375
	Confused with it	14	43,75
	Never to hear it	7	21,875
	Lazy to study	0	0
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.6 above shows that from 32 students, there were 11 students (34,375%) said seldom to read descriptive text. 14 students (43,75%) said confused with descriptive text, 7 students (21,875%) said never to hear descriptive text and none of them said lazy to study descriptive text.

Table 4.2.7

The students' opinion in learning pronunciation English vowel.

No	Responses	F	%
	Difficult	10	31,25
	Rather difficult	20	62,5
	Very difficult	2	6,25
	Not difficult	0	0
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.7 above shows that from 32 students, there were 10 students (31,25%) said that learning pronunciation English vowel is difficult, 20 students (62,5%) said that learning pronunciation English vowel is rather difficult, there are 2 students said that learning pronunciation English vowel is very difficult, and none of students said that learning pronunciation is not difficult.

Table 4.2.8

The students' opinion in learning reading descriptive text.

No	Responses	F	%
	Pleasant	13	40,625
	Difficult	16	50
	Just normal	3	9,375
	Not difficult	0	0

	TOTAL	32	100
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Table 4.2.8 above shows that from 32 students, there were 13 students (40,625%) said that learning descriptive text is pleasant, 16 students (50%) said that learning descriptive text is difficult, there are 3 students said that learning descriptive text just normal, and none of students said that learning descriptive text is not difficult.

Table 4.2.9

The students' way if they got difficulties in pronouncing English vowel

No	Responses	F	%
	Open the dictionary	9	28,125
	Asking to the teacher	22	68,75
	Asking to the friends	1	3,125
	Doing nothing	0	0
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 4.2.9 above shows that from 32 students, there were 9 students (28,125%) open the dictionary if they got difficulties in pronouncing English vowel, 22 students (68,75%) asking their teacher if they got difficulties in pronouncing English vowel while studying in the classroom. 1 students (3,125%) asked their friends, and none student doing nothing if they got difficulties in pronouncing English vowel.

Table 4.2.10

The students' opinion if they ever or not be taught of English vowel well.

No	Responses	F	%
	Ever	18	56,25
	Never	0	0
	Often	8	25
	Seldom	6	18,75
	TOTAL	32	100

Table 20 above shows that from 32 students, there were 18 students (56,25%) said that ever be taught of pronunciation well, none of students said that never be taught of pronunciation well, 8 students (25%) said that often be taught of pronunciation well, and 6 students (18,75%) said that seldom be taught that.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be clearly that 1. 11 students (59,375%) said that english teaching is very interesting; 2. 17 students (53,125%) said that the right pronunciation in speaking English is very important; 3. 24 students (75%) ever got difficulty in reading English text; 4. 24 students (75%) ever or not got difficulties in reading English vowel; 5. 15 students (46,875%) said confused with the pronouncing of English vowel; 6. 14 students (43,75%) said confused with descriptive text; 7. 20 students (62,5%) said that learning pronunciation english vowel is rather difficult; 8. 13 students (40,625%) said that learning descriptive text is pleasant; 9. 22 students (68,75%) asking their teacher if they got difficulties in pronouncing English vowel while studying in the classroom; 10. 18 students (56,25%) said that ever be taught of pronunciation well.

The researcher concluded that the Seventh Grade of SMP N 1 Tarutung in academic year 2022/2023, they got some difficulties in pronouncing English vowel. The factors are: they confused with the sound or to pronounce it and when they were studying about pronunciation, they were unserious.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher suggested that:

1. The students should learn more about pronunciation because it is important to make us clearer in speaking.
2. The teacher should give the explanation clearly in English lesson, especially the pronunciation of the word.

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