Pronunciation challenges: seventh-grade consonant errors in SMP PGRI Walantaka

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Abstract : The study investigated the pronunciation errors of seventh-grade students at SMP PGRI Walantaka Serang, specifically on fricatives and affricates sounds. The research used qualitative methodology with the case study as the research design, and the sample of this research was class VII with a total of 25 students as the participants. The data-collecting techniques used in this research were observation, interview, and documentation. The errors found were misformation errors, with the presentation of 77,77% of total errors that students made, followed by addition at 11,11%, omission errors at 7,40%, and the lowest error misordering error at 3,70%. The source of errors was the involvement of students' native language and accents, challenges in adopting English pronunciation, insufficient facility, lack of teachers, students' learning styles, and teachers' inaccuracy in communicating the subject. The researcher concludes that this qualitative study provides valuable insights for addressing pronunciation errors in schools, specifically fricatives and affricates, and reveal the implication to minimize the errors.

Keywords : *English Consonants, Consonant Sound Production, Pronunciation Errors, Fricatives, and Affricates*

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is how the speaker pronounces a particular word or sound. Leohart (Anugrah, 2019) stated that pronunciation is the act of how a word or language is spoken customarily. Clear English pronunciation is sought after and sometimes necessary for effective communication, ensuring the listener comprehends the speaker's message. Pronunciation is a language component essential in everyday communication (Idhar, 2017). Pronunciation encompasses segmental elements like vowels, consonants, diphthongs, and supra-segmental aspects, including stress, intonation, pitch, juncture, and rhyme.

An error in pronunciation is called a mispronunciation. This phenomenon makes a speaker unintelligible when speaking. Zafary (2021) conveyed that proper pronunciation is required for listening and speaking for intelligible communication. That means pronunciation is one of the most critical aspects of learning English because it is one of the cores and a key for successful communication.

The languages in Indonesia have noticeable differences from English in terms of pronunciation. As stated by Sinurat and Herman (2019), the common challenge faced by Indonesian students in learning English pronunciation stems from the differences between the phonetic systems of Indonesian and English languages. A study by Komariah (2018) indicated that many students struggle to use English with intelligible pronunciation. In the same study, the author exemplified that the students encounter challenges pronouncing English words. For example, the students have problems pronouncing consonants such as /t/, /θ/, /ʃ/, /-t/, /f/, /ʒ/, and /-d/.

The researcher conducted a preliminary observation at SMP PGRI Walantaka in Serang, Banten. The classroom environment for English lessons revealed students' limited interest in pronunciation, difficulties in articulating consonant sounds, and constrained opportunities for practice. This observation suggests that English pronunciation remains challenging for Indonesian students, contributing to speaking and word production errors.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation involves accurately articulating letters to ensure clear verbal communication in English. The concept of pronunciation is intricately linked with phonetics. According to Laila, Adityarini, and Amalia (2019), pronunciation is characterized as the practical application, while phonetics serves as its theoretical foundation. Kristina (2006) stated that pronunciation is the act of how we pronounce words and their manner of it. Put, pronunciation is how to pronounce words so others can understand. Also, Wells (2008) stated that pronunciation refers to how spoken language is expressed, including the correct formation and articulation of speech sounds, the appropriate stress, intonation, and rhythm, and the variation and differences between different pronunciation styles and dialects. Hence, Genelza (2022) exhorts educators, administrators, and school personnel to provide students with increased opportunities to experience sound-word linkages through practice-based assignments and speaking, listening, reading, and writing exercises.

Consonant

Consonants result from obstructing or controlling airflow, creating distinctive sounds upon release. On the other hand, vowels require the vocal tract to remain unobstructed, allowing the air to flow freely out of the mouth. Kelly (Handayani, 2018) stated that consonant sounds are created by impeding or limiting the airflow in the oral cavity during speech. According to Schmitt (2006) in most of the English accents, there are 24 consonant sounds, represented by

21 letters of the regular English alphabet. The sounds are categorized into two: voiced and voiceless. The first is voiced consonants, there are: /b/; /d/; /g/; /v/; /ð/; /z/; /ʒ/; /dʒ/; /m/; /n/; /ŋ/; /l/; /r/; /w/; and /j/. Meanwhile, the voiceless consonants are: /p/; /t/; /k/; /f/; /θ/; /ʃ/; /tʃ/; /s/; and /h/.

The Sources of Error in Pronunciation

According to Brown (2007), errors in language have underlying causes, which can be grouped into four categories. Which is as follows:

1. Interlingual Transfer

Errors in language acquisition often arise in the early stages due to interference from a learner's first language. When learning multiple languages (e.g., L3, L4, etc.), the influence of all previously learned languages may impact the acquisition of the new language, although the extent of this influence can vary (Brown, Principles of language learning and teaching, 2007).

2. Intralingual Transfer

This refers to an error in second language learning that goes beyond the influence of the learner's first language. It is the result of the second language itself. James (1980) refers to intralingual errors as learning-strategy-based errors, and he lists seven types of them as follows: (1) False analogy; (2) misanalysis; (3) incomplete rule application; (4) exploiting redundancy; (5) over-elaboration; (6) hypercorrection; and (7) overgeneralization.

3. Context of Learning

This happens when teachers offer inaccurate explanations or focus solely on memorization without context. Students frequently commit mistakes or errors due to receiving confusing explanations, encountering faulty word presentations in textbooks, or relying on patterns memorized with rote learning techniques without proper contextualization during drills (Brown, 2007).

4. Communication Strategies

Learning styles impact communication strategies, affecting students' ability to express ideas effectively. Brown (2007) stated that communication strategies involve verbal and non-verbal communication mechanisms.

The Kinds of Error in Pronunciation

There are four taxonomies of Error Dulay in (Purwati, 2021) It is classified into several category errors as follows: (1.) Linguistic Category Taxonomy; (2.) Comparative Category Taxonomy; (3.) Communicative Effect Category Taxonomy; (4.) Surface Strategy Taxonomy.

In this research, the focus is on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Surface Strategy Taxonomy is the category that could be used to identify errors in pronunciation. This taxonomy will guide the researcher as he studies students' errors. There are four common errors as follows:

1. Omission

Errors due to omission can be identified by the absence of an expected element in a properly structured sentence. It can occur with any part of speech, but certain ones are more frequently omitted. For instance, "test" is sometimes pronounced as [tes].

2. Addition

The opposite of omission errors is addition errors, identified by extra elements in a well-formed sentence. These errors come in three forms: double marking, regularization, and simple addition. For example, the word 'car' [ka:] is pronounced [kʌr].

3. Misformation

Misformation errors are the term for errors that occur when an incorrect form of a morpheme or structure is used. There are three categories of misformation errors: regularization, archi-forms, and alternating forms. For example, the word 'thin' [θin] is pronounced [tin].

4. Misordering

Errors of misordering occur when the arrangement of morphemes or a group of morphemes in a sentence is incorrect. For example, the word 'ask' [a:sk] is pronounced [a: ks].

METHODS

Research Design and approach of the study

For this research, the researcher employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a study that aims to grasp the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subjects and describe it in the form of words and language (Moleong, 2018). Qualitative research can be carried out by employing different research designs, such as the use of the case study method that was employed in this research and the proposed idea that a qualitative case study is a method that involves a comprehensive and detailed examination, description, and analysis of a particular social unit, phenomenon, or entity. The researcher used the method to analyze and describe students' errors in producing consonant sounds, and then the conclusion was drawn from the interpretation. The data was shown descriptively. The data is in the form of explanations rather than numbers. Case study investigation is highly effective in aiding our comprehension of a complicated matter or subject, and it can broaden our insight or reinforce existing knowledge gained from previous research (Yin, 2014).

Research site and participants

This research, conducted during the academic year 2022/2023, focused on seventh-grade students at SMP PGRI Walantaka Serang. Data analysis involved the entire VII class of 25 students, with five selected for interviews to validate observed errors. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling, and the class was deemed representative of the entire seventh grade. The total number of participants analyzed was 25.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are categorized into two forms: 1) Kinds of Pronunciation Errors and 2) Sources of Pronunciation Errors.

Kinds of Pronunciation Errors

The kinds of errors are based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The findings indicated that the students made four standard kinds of errors. The errors found by the SMP PGRI Walantaka Serang seventh graders were misformation errors, representing 77,77% of the total errors students made. This was followed by addition with 11,11%, omission errors with 7,40%, and the lowest error was a misordering error with 3,70%.

Omission Error

One of the errors that occurred during observation was omission errors, with a percentage of 7,40% of the total errors. Omission errors are instances where specific sounds are omitted while pronouncing particular words.

Table 1 Omission Error Result

Utterances	Errors	Received Pronunciation
Went	/wen/	/went/
don't	/dəʊn/	/dəʊn/

From the research findings, the sound that was omitted is the /t/ sound. Words such as "went" and "do not." During the class, the students demonstrated the occurrence of omission errors solely in the final position. Most students omitted the /t/ sound within the word "went," leading to its pronunciation as /wen/. In the Received Pronunciation, the correct pronunciation of "went" is /fɑːst/, where the final /t/ sound should be pronounced. This happened because, according to the theory by Brown (2007) in Intralingual transfer, this refers to an error in second language learning that goes beyond the influence of the learner's first language. In this case, the students, who are Indonesians, never encountered a word that ended with double consonants, such as the word 'went,' so the students pronounced it as /went/. This phenomenon is categorized as incomplete rule application; incomplete rule application in pronunciation errors can lead to the omission or alteration of word sounds. In this case, it leads to omitting the 't' sound at the end of "went."

Addition Error

Another kind of error that was present in this research has a percentage of 11,11% of the total errors. The addition error here only occurred in the final position. The /s/ sound is a consonant the students frequently associate with. The students included an /at the end of words like "it" in the final position, which caused the word to be pronounced as "its." The word "what" was pronounced as /wʌts/similarly.

Table 2 Addition Error Result

Utterances	Errors	Received Pronunciation
Fifteen	/faɪftiːn/	/fɪfˈtiːn/
It	/dəʊn/	/dəʊn/
What	/wʌts/	/wɒt/

Addition errors are also included in the context of overgeneralization in pronunciation errors in Intralingual Transfer by Brown (2007). Addition refers to inserting an extra sound or syllable into a word that should not be there based on the language's phonetic rules—for example, adding an extra consonant sound in the word "what" could result in pronouncing it as "whats"

which is an addition error. Learners may overgeneralize specific language rules or patterns, leading to the insertion of extra elements. For example, they may generalize a rule from their L1 to the target language, causing them to add unnecessary words or sounds. So, addition is another way overgeneralization can manifest in pronunciation errors.

Misformation Error

The following error that was present the most occurred with the percentage of 77,77% is misformation errors. Misformation errors refer to situations in which speakers produce incorrect forms of sounds, leading to mispronunciations of words.

Table 3 Misformation Error Result

Utterances	Errors	Received Pronunciation
fifteen	/faɪftiːn/	/fɪfˈtiːn/
it	/dəʊn/	/dəʊn/
what	/wʌts/	/wɒt/

This happened because one of the primary causes of misformation errors is the influence of the learner's first language (L1) or native language. Learners tend to transfer grammatical structures, pronunciation patterns, and vocabulary from their L1 to the target language, which can result in misformation errors when these structures do not align with the rules of the target language. This case falls into the category of interlingual transfer, according to Brown (2007).

Misordering Error

The last error that was present the least occurred with a percentage of 3,70%, a misordering error. Dulay (1982) stated that misordering errors occur when the arrangement of morphemes or a cluster of morphemes within a sentence is not in the correct order.

Table 4 Misordering Error Result

Utterances	Errors	Received Pronunciation
fifteen	/faɪftiːn/	/fɪfˈtiːn/
it	/dəʊn/	/dəʊn/
what	/wʌts/	/wɒt/

In this study, a single misordering error was identified, which occurred with a lengthy word, namely "presentation." One student pronounced it as /prɒdʒən/ or /projen/. The researcher conjectured that this error might be attributed to the student's insufficient reading skills. The reason why this happened is that it is linked to interlingual transfer. Learners may transfer grammatical structures or word order patterns from their native language into the target language, resulting in misordering. Also, from the observed situation, when constructing sentences on the spot, students experienced processing difficulties, leading to misordering.

Sources of Pronunciation Errors

Another objective of this research is to investigate the sources of error that might interfere with or cause the students to make errors. The sources of error are based on Brown's (2007) theory, which consists of four categories: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategies.

Students' Native Language and Accents

Based on the school's region is located in Walantaka, Serang, and Banten, where most people speak their regional languages, such as Javanese and Sundanese. The researcher found that most students speak Javanese with Serang dialect, also called "Jawa Serang" and Sundanese. The students still use these languages casually or when talking to friends. A student's native language can significantly affect their pronunciation skills when learning English. Xiao (2019) stated that this impact is often called pronunciation interference.

Challenges in Adopting English Pronunciation

With various language backgrounds, students might have challenges due to phonological differences. These differences also might affect how the students learn a new pronunciation system. A case for this is intralingual transfer, for example, the overgeneralization type. The students sometimes pronounce the word "to" as [təʊ] and not [tu], presumably because other words, such as "go" and "so," ending is pronounced [əʊ]. Another example is "have," which is pronounced [həv], and "that" is pronounced without the voiced th (ð), possibly because of the word "think." From the explanation above, it can be concluded that English has phonological inconsistencies that make it difficult for the students to mispronounce it.

Insufficient Facility, Lack of Teachers, and Students' Learning Styles

The researcher found that most students started learning English in Junior High. This can drastically impact students' skills in learning English. There is not enough time allocated for English language classes; students have limited opportunities for exposure to the language and practice. They will not have enough time to engage in meaningful speaking activities. A shortage of qualified English teachers can lead to larger class sizes and less individualized student attention. When teachers are insufficient or lack proper training, students may receive less personalized guidance and feedback. This can impede their language development, as they may not receive the necessary corrections and guidance to improve their pronunciation. Nel and Muller (2010) stated that teachers who lack proficiency in teaching English pronunciation may be unable to provide students with the necessary skills to improve their English proficiency. Students' answers from the interview were that the communication strategies or the method that the students used to help them learn English were only Google; this exclusivity was exacerbated when most of them only used it when they had homework and were not learning or studying. This is linked to Communication Strategies. Genelza (2021) recommended that language teachers draw the students' attention to the morphophonemic modifications and how amalgamation alters a word's pronunciation. This can be accomplished by providing the students with in-depth instruction or practice using recordings of native speakers speaking morphophonemic altered words.

Teacher's Inaccuracy in Communication the Subject

The situation in the school is a lack of numbers of English teachers. When a teacher is inaccurate or lacks proficiency in teaching English pronunciation, it can negatively impact students. These impacts can affect their language learning experience and overall pronunciation skills. One of the consequences is mispronunciation; students may learn and adopt incorrect

pronunciation patterns from the teacher, leading to the perpetuation of pronunciation errors. Fang (2022) stated that poor English pronunciation can negatively impact students' ability to communicate effectively in English, affecting their comprehension and expression of the language. This case is called Context of Learning

CONCLUSION

The students made errors when pronouncing fricatives and had no problem when pronouncing affricates. The kinds of errors found by the seventh grader of SMP PGRI Walantaka Serang are misformation errors, with the presentation of 77,77% of total errors that students made. This was followed by addition with 11,11%, omission errors with 7,40%, and the lowest error was a misordering error with 3,70%. The source of errors was the involvement of students' native language and accents, challenges in adopting English pronunciation, insufficient facility, lack of teachers, students' learning styles, and teachers' inaccuracy in communicating the subject.

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