The Students Challenges in Learning Difthong

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Abstract. *This research examines students' difficulties in conveying English diphthongs, especially closing and middle diphthongs. This study was conducted qualitatively with a phenomenological approach through interviews with students in the first semester of the English Language Education Study Program at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The research results show that the influence of mother tongue is very significant on the accuracy of different pronunciations. The main factors include difficult vowel transitions, differences in phonological systems between Indonesian and English, and the substitution of diphthongs for pure vowels. Closing diphthongs such as /eɪ/, /aɪ/, and /oʊ/ were found to be more difficult to pronounce than middle diphthongs because they require faster and more accurate vowel movements. Apart from that, internal factors such as lack of self-confidence also contribute to pronunciation errors. This study suggests the use of intensive practice, learning technology, and immediate feedback to improve diphthong pronunciation accuracy.*

Keywords: *Diphthongs, English Pronunciation, Mother Tongue*

1. BACKGROUND

Pronunciation is an important component of language skills, because it influences the listener's comprehension. Saying something wrong can cause misunderstandings or give a negative impression. Indonesian students face challenges in pronouncing English diphthongs because the Indonesian phonological system only has three diphthongs ([aɪ], [aʊ], [ɔɪ]), while English has eight diphthongs ([eɪ], [oʊ], [aɪ] , [aʊ], [ɔɪ], [ɪə], [ɛə], [ʊə]). (Oxford dictionary, 2004)

A diphthong or double sound (English: diphthong) is two vowels that are pronounced at once and whose quality changes from beginning to end when pronounced. A combination of vowels is called a diphthong if it produces one sound. For example, au in the word town ; ai in the word time. However, the au vowel combination in smell is not a diphthong because it produces two sounds. A vowel combination is called a diphthong if it is still in the same syllable. On the other hand, if they are in different syllables, the vowel combination cannot be called a diphthong. A diphthong is a combination of two vowel sounds whose pronunciation moves from one vowel to another. That is why diphthongs are also known as glide vowels. The word root in ancient Greek means "two sounds."

Diphthongs are complex vowels as opposed to monophthongs – single or simple vowel sounds that don't make your tongue move. According to Roach (1998), diphthongs are divided into two main types: closing diphthongs and centring diphthongs. Closing diphthongs occur when the tongue moves from an open vowel to a more closed vowel, as in /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/,

and /əʊ/. Meanwhile, centring diphthongs involve moving the tongue towards central vowels, such as /ɪə/, /eə/, and /ʊə/. Examples in English word include say (/eɪ/), time (/aɪ/), and coin (/ɔɪ/). (Roach, 1998)

Based on research on President Joko Widodo's speech at the 2014 APEC Forum, it was found that he was able to produce most of the diphthong sounds according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary standards, but still faced several challenges. For example, the diphthong /eɪ/ is often produced as a pure vowel /e/, as in the word ladies which is pronounced as /ledɪs/ instead of /leɪdɪz/. This shows that the vowel transition required to form a diphthong does not always occur perfectly. This problem is largely influenced by mother tongue interference, where non-native speakers tend to replace the diphthong sound with a simpler vowel that is already known in their language. In addition, geographic, social and educational background factors also contribute to variations in pronunciation. (Joko Widodo's, 2014)

However, even though there is a discrepancy in the production of diphthongs in some words, the meaning and purpose of communication in the speech can still be understood

The explanation of several theories above in research makes researchers interested in discussing this problem material. Like research that researchers conducted on several students in the first semester of the English language education study program at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. Based on this research, I found many complaints from several students about the challenges they faced in pronouncing Diphthongs. Among them, the mother tongue plays a large role in the pronunciation of diphthongs, with the main challenges being difficulties in vowel transitions and articulation control. Closing diphthongs tended to be considered more difficult by most participants, although centring diphthongs also posed challenges for some individuals. Suggested solutions center on listening practice, imitating native speakers' pronunciation, and utilizing technology and direct feedback to improve pronunciation accuracy.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research uses a qualitative approach method. The approach used is a phenomenological study. The basis for this research was the complaints and frequent phonological errors made by students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. This research was carried out online on Friday evening for several students.

The source of this research comes from direct research informants who are students. Apart from that, the sources for this research also come from several journals that discuss this material. In collecting data, the technique used was interviews with relevant students. The

purpose of the interview is to dig up information about the problem from the participants' point of view.

3. RESULTS OF RESEARCH

mother tongue,the influencer in pronunciation words that containing diphthongs

In pronunciation of words containing diphthongs, problems are often encountered which are caused by unfamiliarity with the pronunciation of the word. So what gets in the way when you say that word? One of them is the influence of the mother tongue which makes it difficult to pronounce words in English, which is caused by the influence of the mother tongue.

According to researchers' interviews with several students, it can be concluded that one of the biggest obstacles in pronunciation of English words containing diphthongs is the mother tongue. Some students argue that every human being has their own way of pronunciation. This strengthens the statement that mother tongue can indeed influence a person's pronunciation of a word. So what is the reason that the mother tongue is so significant in influencing pronunciation? One of them is the pronunciation patterns, speaking habits, intonation and phonology of the mother tongue which are different from English. This can affect vowel transitions and cause errors in the production of diphthongs. The result of this mother tongue interference is that it causes less accurate pronunciation. That is why non-native speakers have more difficulty pronouncing words containing English diphthongs. For example, English pronunciation has diphthhongs (ai) for the vowel letter (i). Meanwhile, in Indonesian, diphthongs (ai) are not included in the vowels (i). (Nur Hasby, 2016)

Another cause is the difference between English diphthongs and the mother tongue. Because in English, what is read is sometimes not the same as what is written. This is different from mother tongue, especially Indonesian, where most words are read as they are written.

Sundanese learners have difficulty pronouncing some English sounds that are not present in their mother tongue. Mother tongue interference affects the way they produce sounds. In case,Students tend to replace [eɪ] with [e] because there is no diphthong [eɪ] in Sundanese. Example: the word "dangerous" is pronounced as /dengeros/, The sound [æ] is often replaced by [e]. Example: "animals" is pronounced as /enimal/.

In India, many learners of English as a second language have problems with pronunciation. According to Brown, (1994) there are several factors that influence student pronunciation, namely native language, several factors that influence student pronunciation,

namely mother tongue, age, experience, innate phonetic abilities, identity, language ego, motivation, and concern for pronunciation. (Brown, 1994)

The most difficult obstacle that students often encounter

The most difficult obstacle that students often face in pronouncing diphthongs is the replacement of diphthongs with pure vowels and substitution with different vowels. Again, the main cause of this problem is the influence of the mother tongue, also because the lack of practice in pronouncing diphthongs makes it difficult for students to pronounce it.

Based on research conducted on students, there are several obstacles that make it difficult for students to pronounce Diphthongs. As has been mentioned, some of this is the influence of the mother tongue. Some of them said that one of the obstacles was vocal transitions and intonation. There were also those who thought that the biggest obstacle was rapid vowel changes and precise tongue and lip positions that made students have difficulty in pronunciation. Other problems come from internal factors, namely lack of self-confidence. "Fear of making mistakes and lack of self-confidence can affect the ability to pronounce Diphthongs," said one of the students interviewed.

It can be concluded from the statement above that there are several problems which are one of the reasons why most people have difficulty pronouncing Diphthongs. Internal factors such as lack of self-confidence can be overcome by increasing self-confidence. According to health data published by Psychology Today, having low self-confidence tends to make a person always worry about previous mistakes and fear of repeating them, and for problems such as Difficulty in pronunciation, vocal transitions, and the like can be solved by practicing a lot of pronouncing diphthongs.

Diphthong difficulty:A comparative analysis of centering and closing

Based on its classification, diphthongs have several types. One of them is closing Diphthongs and centring Diphthongs. In the researcher's interviews with students, the researcher got several important points about the two types of diphthongs. When asked which was more difficult to pronounce, some students answered that closing Diphthongs were more difficult to pronounce than centring Diphthongs. They reasoned that the pronunciation of closing Diphthongs is more difficult to pronounce because it requires fast and accurate vowel movements. This difficulty is caused by differences in the phonological system between Indonesian and English. This is reinforced by the argument of a journal which contains "This difficulty is caused by differences in the phonological system between Indonesian and English, where the diphthong /oʊ/ is more problematic than /eɪ/". However, not all students answered

like that. Some other students said that centring Diphthongs was as difficult as other Diphthongs.

Suggestions For Learning Diphthongs

Based on research, suggestions can be taken for learning diphthongs, we can do this through interactive practice and using various sources, such as practicing listening and imitating the pronunciation of diphthongs from various sources, and practicing saying diphthongs for a few minutes every day, we can also use several digital applications or media. Another way is to learn diphthongs, and we can also learn through reading books or seeking feedback so we can improve our speech and finally we can do this by recording ourselves so we can see progress in learning changes in diphthongs.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the answers from the five participants regarding the pronunciation of diphthongs, it can be concluded as follows:

Influence of Mother Tongue on the Pronunciation of Diphthongs.All participants stated that mother tongue has a significant influence on the pronunciation of diphthongs. This happens because the pronunciation patterns, speaking habits, intonation and phonology of the mother tongue are different from English. This influence can inhibit vowel transitions and cause errors in the production of diphthongs, especially if the native language does not have the same sound. This kind of mother tongue interference often results in inaccurate pronunciation.

The Most Difficult Obstacle in Pronouncing Diphthongs.The main challenges faced by participants include: Fast and precise vocal transitions, where the tongue and lips must move precisely. Difficulty distinguishing sounds diphthongs, so they are often produced as a single vowel. Mother language interference, which forms certain habitual patterns of pronunciation. Lack of practice and fear of being wrong, which affects self-confidence. Improper articulation, including tongue position and control of vocal movements.

Closing Diphthongs vs Centring Diphthongs.Participants' opinions varied, but most felt that closing diphthongs were more difficult to pronounce because they required fast and accurate vowel movements. However, two participants found centring diphthongs more difficult because they required subtle vowel changes and more precise tongue positioning. This shows that the difficulty in pronouncing diphthongs can vary depending on individual experience and ability.

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