

## **An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing English Diphthong at The Twelve Grade of SMA Negeri 8 Jambi City**

Riyanda Tri Hardi, Efa Silfia, Ridho Praja Dinata

English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Batanghari University

### **ABSTRACT**

This research was aimed to find out the students difficulties and factor causes students difficult to pronounce English diphthongs at the Twelve Grade of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi. The research methodology of this study was quantitative descriptive research which involved population and sample. The total population of this research was the XII IPS 5 students of SMAN 8 Kota Jambi, which consisted of 42 students. In collecting the data, this research gave test and interview at the class. The result of the research showed that the twelve grade students of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi got difficulties in pronouncing English diphthongs sounds. The students' difficulties in pronouncing diphthongs are producing sound (/ʌʊ/, /eə/, and /ɪə/). The highest percentage of the students score was 95,23% and the lowest was 15,23%. Where the mean score of the students test was 10 with a poor categories and percentage of students score test were /ʌʊ/ 15,23%, /eə/ 16,19%, and /ɪə/ 17,14%. The factors of students' difficulties in pronouncing English fricative consonant are; the influence of students mother language, the lack of students knowledge about English sound system and the unsuccessful in using borrowed English words.

**Keywords:** *Students Difficulties, Pronouncing, Diphthongs*

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are four basic skills in English that learn such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking is one of the English skills that are very crucial to learn by the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners like students in Indonesia. In speaking, there are some elements that include like pronunciation, intonation, expression, stress and many else. One of them that important and really crucial is pronunciation. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) states students must aware of pronunciation elements because English pronunciation is the most important sub-skills in speaking skill. It means that pronunciation is a field that crucial to learn properly and having a good pronunciation of the language is essential for effective communication and particular intelligibility. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners difficult in learning English pronunciation (Gilakjani, 2012). Pronunciation itself includes many features for instance, supra-segmental aspects which consist of stress, intonation, and pitch. In segmental aspects consist of vowels, diphthongs, consonants, manner of articulation, and place of articulation. One of them is diphthongs. According to Ramelan (1985) is a

vowels sound in which there is an intentional glide from one vowel position to another vowel position and which is produced in one single impulse of breath. Aspects that make diphthongs different from pure vowels are there is a glide from one speech sound to another speech sound and it consists of two speech sounds combined. While supra-segmental feature is more likely into something outside the composition of word, for example: stress, and intonation. In short, English diphthongs sounds are the interesting features to be learn. Based on this research experience in teaching practice, many students at the Twelve Grade of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi face difficulties in pronouncing the diphthongs sounds. They could not pronounce these sounds appropriately and correctly. For example, the students pronounce "dialects" /'daɪələkts/ into /'dɪələkts/, and "clearly" /'klɪəli/ into /'klɪli/. In this case, the students are pronounced the diphthong sound of /ɪə/ uncorrectly. Those examples are pronounced differently from which they are spelt. It is caused that the sounds are not used and heard by students in daily life. They mostly rare hear those sounds in their language because system of pronouncing English sounds is very different from Bahasa Indonesia. Moreover, the eleventh Grade

students of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi do not learn about those sound or symbol in detail, they are just learned as general knowledge. The students are more focused on writing and reading skills beside speaking or even pronunciation. Unfortunately, the students rarely to do a practice of pronunciation either it in a class or other place and then there is no also the specification highlight of a teacher in a school to teach pronunciation in English subject. And then, students are difficult to place speech organ in the right place and manner. These explanations are the reason why the students pronounced the words incorrectly.

According to the problem above, this research interested to identify those problems and this research would like to do the research entitled "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing English Diphthongs at the Twelve Grade of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi."

## **PRONUNCIATION**

Pronunciation is one of the most crucial elements in learning English especially in speaking skill. A manner of people pronounces the words can indicate his/her speaking skill. As states by Brown (2001), there are some criteria of good speaking skill, for instance; grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and pronunciation. Pronunciation is being part of the criteria because it will be risky to change the meaning when someone mispronounces the word. If the meaning is not delivered, misunderstanding will be occurred. The worst is misunderstanding often breaks down communication and relationship. Contrast, people who have a good pronunciation, people can easy to communicate with others. It is important for people to have a good pronunciation because they can convey their opinions, thoughts, ideas, feelings, and so on properly.

According to O'Connor (1980), pronunciation is the study of how speech organs work in English, so it will produce the English word properly which can easy to understand by listener based on the phonetic symbol. Meanwhile, Nunan (2003) says that pronunciation is the way sound of the language is made, how and where stress is placed, and how pitch and intonation is used for showing how about our feeling and meaning

## **STUDENTS DIFFICULTIES**

According to Hornby (2014), difficulties are something or state that have a difficult quality. It means that difficulties are situation or condition that make something not good or hard happen. In addition, difficulties are something that hard to do or apply which deals with understanding. In other words, difficulties are something which is not easy to understand or a thing that is hard to find out the way. On the other hand, Difficulty is something that complicated to do (Richard 2007, as cited in Wahab 2012). It will be seen from students' mistake or error learning process. In fact, many senior high school students often find the difficulties in pronouncing words. These difficulties result the student's poor performance in pronunciation practice.

### **Pronunciation Difficulties**

Ramelan (1999) says that there are five pronunciation difficulties faced by Indonesian students when they learn English pronunciation, they are:

#### **1. Transfer of Linguistic Habit**

In English learning process, most of foreign language students found the difficulties in speaking skill. In fact, learning process in Indonesia more focus on receptive skills than productive skills.

#### **2. Different Elements between Native Language and Target Language**

There are many kinds of sounds in English. The English sounds are separate in initial, medial, and final. For instance the medial sound of the English diphthongs consonant sound word "birthday" /'bɜ:(r)θdeɪ/. Indonesian students will find difficult to pronounce that sound since their speech organs have never been trained or moved to produce it. Others example is on the sound of /ð/. So, instead of pronouncing /ð/ as in father [fʌðə] they will say /de/ [fader]. Automatically, it can make misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener because most of Indonesian people clueless and familiar with some sounds in English.

#### **3. Same Phonetic Feature in Both Language but Differ in Their Distribution**

Phonetic feature in English and Indonesian are same, however both have a different in their distribution. That is where and when they may occur in an utterance. For

instance sounds /b.d.g/ which are found in both English and Indonesian, but differ in their distributions.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research chose qualitative as a research design and descriptive as research methodology of this study. According to Johnson and Christensen (2007), qualitative research is a research that relies on the collection of qualitative data. Meanwhile, Ary (2010) states that the qualitative inquirer deals with data that are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers and statistics. And then, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) state that qualitative research is descriptive which the data is collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Data in the form of quotes from documents, field notes, and interviews or excerpts from videotapes, audiotapes, or electronic communications are used to present the findings of the study.

According to Gay (1981), population is a group of this research interest, the group to which he or she want to know and like to see the result of the study generally. Thus, this research took XI IPS of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi as population of the research. According to Creswell (2012), sample is a researcher plans for studying for generalizing a sub-group of the target population. The method of sampling which will use by this research is cluster sampling. Cluster sampling is a sampling that used when in statistical population the group is homogeneous yet internally heterogeneous evident (Kerry, 1998). Meanwhile, cluster sampling is a sampling in which groups are randomly selected not in individuals and all of

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

the members have same characteristics when they selected

(Gay, 1981). Thus, the sample of this research was XII IPS 5.

The techniques of data collection for this research were test and interview. This research measured the students' transcript pronunciation by using test and collected the data by using interview to know factors caused students difficulties in pronouncing English diphthongs sounds at the twelve grade of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi. According to Borg (1991), test is an instrument for assessing individual differences along one or more that given a dimension of behavior. Meanwhile, according

to Brown (1994), test in plain words is a method to measure a person's ability or knowledge in a given domain which a numerical score can be assigned. Based on some expert opinions about test, this research concluded that a test is a set of techniques, procedures, and items that use to assess the ability of individuals differences along one or more which numerical score can be assigned. Next, this research prepared pronunciation test such a list of words which contained of English diphthongs sounds /aɪ/, /eɪ/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/, /eə/, /ɪə/, /ɔɪ/, /ʊə/. The test contained of 40 words of 5 words each diphthongs sound. These words were randomly taken by this research based on the closing and centering diphthongs sounds in Longman Dictionary and online phonetic dictionary. Therefore, Borg (1991) states that interview is a research method in survey research that involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individual. In other words, according to Sugiyono (2012), interview is an activity of two people for exchanging information and idea through the question and responses, resulting in communication and join construction of meaning about a particular topic. It means that, interview is an oral question and answer between two or more people directly for collecting the information about particular topic. Interview is used for getting data about the students' difficulties in pronouncing English diphthongs sounds by using semi structure interview.

This research used a manual mathematic formula to elaborate the percentage. This research achieved the data from a pronunciation test of twenty words that contained English diphthongs sounds. This research provided a rubric as the tool for defining errors in participants. This research compared the participants' pronunciation with the standardized pronunciation such as Longman online dictionary as the English standard pronunciation. Then, this research transcribed the data according to the participants' voices in phonetic transcription or International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Sudjiono (2008) suggests that this research uses the formula as follow:

P= Proportion

F= The total number of subjects made mistake

N= The total number of the subjects

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

This research conducted toward the twelve grades at SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi in academic year 2021/2022. This research did the research for a week to prove the students difficulties in pronouncing English diphthongs. This research took the XII IPS 5 as a sample class. This research presented the data from the test and interview. Test in this research was pronouncing of English diphthongs and then interview did for knowing the background of the difficulties of the students in pronouncing English diphthongs. In the test, the diphthongs sounds that tested represented 8 symbols and testing 5 words for each. It represented by this research and helped by English phonetic transcript by Longman online dictionary as a tool for this research to check the correct the students' pronunciation.

The percentage of the students' difficulties is based on the result in pronunciation tests. In analyzing the percentage of the students score, this research calculated the amount in each English diphthong sounds of correct pronounced by 42 students. The result of the students' pronunciation test in diphthong sounds describe in the following table:

**Table 1**  
**Correct Percentage of English Diphthongs Sound**

| English Diphthongs Sounds | %      | English Diphthongs Sounds | %      |
|---------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|
| /aɪ/                      | 74,76% | /eə/                      | 16,19% |
| /eɪ/                      | 55,71% | /ɪə/                      | 17,14% |
| /əʊ/                      | 46,19% | /ɔɪ/                      | 95,23% |
| /ʌʊ/                      | 15,23% | /ʊə/                      | 48,57% |

From the 42 respondents, the table shows that respondents revealed the percentage of the sound /aɪ/ as much as 74,76%, the sound /eɪ/ as much as 55,71%, the sound /əʊ/ as much as 46,19%, the sound /ʌʊ/ as much as 15,23%, the sound /eə/ is 16,19% and then /ɪə/ is 17,14 % and the last each /ɔɪ/ and /ʊə/ are 95,23% and 48,57% . This research did a statistic data using

a manual process. From the test that the student did to pronounce 40 words, it found that the highest score was the student number 35 and 28 where they got the correct score 35 and 37 from the total correct score 40 with the percentage 92,5% and 87,5%. Next, in a middle position, it was sitting by students number 34 and 39 where the percentage for each are 47,5% and 45% and the lowest score was the student number 17 and 18 which got a correct score percentage of 7,5% and 10%. The Mean (X bar) was 10 where it was a poor categories. From this evidence, it can conclude that the students are difficult to pronounce the English diphthongs sounds properly. Further, to present detailed data, the pronunciation of each sound and its deviation presented below.

### The Deviation of Diphthongs Sounds

**Table 2**  
**Deviation of Diphthongs Sounds**

| English Diphthongs Sounds | Deviations   | English Diphthongs Sounds | Deviations |
|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|------------|
| /aɪ/                      | /aɪ/ and /ɪ/ | /eə/                      | /e/        |
| /eɪ/                      | /eɪ/ and /e/ | /ɪə/                      | /ɪ/        |
| /əʊ/                      | /o/          | /ɔɪ/                      | /ɔɪ/       |
| /ʌʊ/                      | /ʌʊ/ and /o/ | /ʊə/                      | /u/        |

From the table we know that there were 2 sounds that the students pronounce when pronouncing /aɪ/, it was /aɪ/ which correct and /ɪ/. For example, there are a lot of students that pronounce the word find and pie into /fin/ and /pi/, however the correct pronunciation were /faɪn/ and /paɪ/. Next was the second sound /eɪ/. It was same like the first one there were students that pronounced it /eɪ/ and /e/. In the test, the words day and bake deviated into /e/ sound like /deɪ/ and /beɪ/ in case of /deɪ/ and /beɪ/. After that, the next sound is /əʊ/. Mostly the students pronounced it into /o/ sound like the words close /klaʊz/ into /kloz/. The students have a habit to pronounce the words in English same like the words that appear, where it is contrast with Bahasa Indonesia. So that the mistake happened.

Next was /ʌʊ/ sound. In the words it can be on sound and crown. There were

students that pronounced it into o like /krown/ and /sound/ instead of /krʌʊn/ and /sʌʊnd/. After that is /eə/ sound. It mostly changed to /e/ sound like chair a d lair, the students pronounced it into /cher/ and /ler/. However, the correct pronunciation is /cheər/ and /leər/. Next was the most mistake sound also. It was /ɪə/. It pronounced /i/ in the students. For instance the words clear /klɪər/ they deviated it into /klɪr/. Next is sound that rarely or mostly perfect to pronounce by the students. It was /ɔɪ/ sound. The students pronounced it appropriately. The last is sound /ʊə/, where it changed to /u/ like cure and pure. It should be /kʊər/ and /pʊər/ but in this case the students mostly pronounced it /kur/ and /pur/.

### **The Students Difficulties Factors**

Based on the interview that has been done by this research, there were several factors that made students difficult to pronounce English diphthongs sounds. The factor described below;

In the first and second question, “Are diphthongs sounds easy to pronounce?” and “What are your difficulties when you pronounce diphthongs sound words?”, mostly the students said that they were quite difficult to pronounce this sounds and there are some words that they faced difficulties to pronounce it. There were just 2 people answer it was easy where it was a highest score people.

Student 28: “It is easy Miss.”

Student 35: “It is quite easy, Miss.”

However, the students argue that they were difficult to pronounce it. The middle and lowest score student says,

Student 34: “It is quite hard, Miss.”

Student 39: “It is difficult, Miss.”

Student 18: “It is difficult to pronounce sounds /eu/ and /au/.”

Student 19: “It is difficult to pronounce words like close, code, scarce, and curious. If you do not correcting me, I think my pronunciation is already correct but in fact it is not.”

It means that the students face the difficulties to pronounce the diphthongs sounds, and it was strengthen with the factual

number of percentage in previous. After that, to know the factors caused for those difficulties, this research asked question number 3, “What are difficulties factors when you pronounce the diphthongs sound?” The highest score students answer;

Student 28: “In my opinion, the difficulties factors are the lack of knowledge because in classroom it is never to study in detail about how to pronounce word appropriately and then the teacher also seldom to talk about that and last I thought that it because of inhabit activity to speak English.”

Student 35: “In my opinion, the difficulties factors are because of inhabit to pronounce the words in English so that my mouth like breezing when pronounce it”.

And then, the lowest students score says;

Student 18: “In my opinion, the difficulties factors are because of my mouth is breezing and I am rarely to exercise my pronunciation.”

It means that mostly the factor caused came from 2 sides, it was internal and external. The internal factor comes from their selves that rarely to practice pronunciation and from external factor from English learning activity at classroom. So that, this research asked in a next question “Is your teacher often teaches you about pronunciation in a class?” and in fact, all of the interviewers answered No, he/she was rarely to teach pronunciation. They just focus on a receptive skill such as reading and doing exercise in textbook or students’ worksheet. It was the reason why many students are difficult to pronounce dental and labiodental sounds because not only from the students side that monotonous in the way practicing pronunciation but the teacher also provides the background why the students faced it. In case, the teacher must be aware not only in receptive skills but also the productive skill like pronunciation. So that, it could not be an familiar issues the students were not know

much about pronunciation in school so that they did not get a clue to do more outside the classroom.

Moreover, based on chapter 2 about factor caused. There was mentioned about mother language that affects the difficulties of students' pronunciation. In proof, this research asked them a question "Are you always use mother language on your daily communication?" they were answers mostly; "It is always, Miss."

Thus, the production of manner and place articulation of the students were disturbing in case of their habit to communicate using their mother language. So that, the students were not usual to pronounce some words appropriately since the students' child in English and then their mouth can be breezing when do that. Moreover, they were just learn pronunciation from listening music, playing game watching movie or scrolling social media without searching a source from native like the most answer of question number 7.

Student 34: "It comes from watching movie and playing Mobile Legend game." "It comes from watching western movie and watching song lyrics on Youtube." It comes from watching movie."

However, even though they were often to practice the pronunciation, the way to learn was very monotonous. Listening music and watching movie were not the proper answer for those who want to be the media to practice the pronunciation. As a result of the method, they were get the difficulties and some mistake in pronouncing diphthongs sounds. In case, they could use the media YouTube to watch the native speaker pronounce the word properly. So, the students know their ability in pronunciation and also the students can know how the way to pronounce the words correctly. Moreover, even the students often to practice pronunciation without they know the correct one, they can continuously do the mistake in pronunciation. So that, it can be a factor that caused the difficulties of the students' pronunciation of diphthongs sounds.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

Based on instrument that has been used in this research that contain of test and interview. It was found that XII IPS 5 students of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi have three

dominant difficulties in pronouncing diphthongs sounds. The description of the explanation below was from the result of students' pronunciation test, interview sessions, and researcher analysis. The data that has been collected already presented and processed in the previous findings which also will be discussed in the further section. Therefore, to answer the problem statement in chapter one, this research provided the discussion as follow:

Based on the findings, it was shown that there are three kinds of English diphthongs difficulties that mostly made by the students. According to the result of the pronunciation test, it found that the sound which occupies the first place as the most frequently encountered error in students' pronunciation is the /ʌʊ/ sound. The total of students who could pronouncing these sounds appropriately is about 15,23% students, where most of the students who made mistake in this sound changed it with another diphthongs that sounds similar /o/.

Meanwhile, the second place as the correct pronunciation by the students was just followed by the /eə/ sound. Where about 16,19% of difficulties are found in this sounds. Most of the students mispronounced the word changed the /eə/ to be the /e/ sound, in other words, they pronounce it based on it written form. This kind of mistake could be happening because of the lack of the students' knowledge in understanding the rules of pronouncing diphthongs sounds and students practice. Therefore, the students still got confused and made some mistake when pronounced the sound that do not exist in the students mother tongue. And the last was sound /ɪə/ where just 17,14% students can pronounced it correctly. It changed from /ɪə/ sound into /i/ sound.

After analyzed the result of the interview session, this research got information about the factor causes of difficulties by the students in pronouncing English diphthongs sounds. As stated in chapter II, the influenced of students mother language were factor caused of the interference of the students mother tongue or native language. There was a strong relationship between the students' native language and target language which causes them intertwined with one another. In other words, comparing the language system that exists in students' mother tongue and apply them in the foreign language which has been

learning already becomes a common fact. As a result interference of this matter will bring up a new problem. Of course, it comes from the lack of understanding the foreign language.

The evidence could be seen at the most errors found in the pronunciation test, where the errors have mostly happened in the sounds that do not exist in either Indonesian or their regional language. In Bahasa Indonesia, it just include one vowel not like diphthongs that include 2 vowels on one sound. So that, it is not really familiar by EFL learner like in Indonesia. From this result, it can be seen that the absence of certain sounds in students native language was being replaced with similar sounds. In other words, a mistake occurs because of the differences between the students' native language and target language.

From the interview session, this research found that the students who got high score in pronunciation test admitted that they are quite often to speak English with their friends or practice their pronunciation by using a media like watching some videos or movies to increasing their skill while the students who got the lower score admitted that they did not have any specific time to study pronunciation and occasionally to use English in their daily conversation. As stated by Miller (1999), non-linguistic factors related to the individual personality and learning goals, attitude towards the target language, culture, native speakers, and type of motivation which are beyond the teacher control. In this respect, changing and not changing speech patterns is affected by how much responsibility the student takes, how much the student practices outside of class, and how ready the student is.

In other words, the more often their study or practice time the better their pronunciation would be. Although there are still several aspects which might be the effect of their skill, such as situation and process including students learning environment, curriculum, educators, facilities, etc. furthermore, this cannot always be the determining aspect.

On the findings of the interview above, this research already mentioned that almost all the respondents involved on this study stated that pronunciation is one of difficult subjects but they were rarely to learn this skill in a school so that they have a lack in pronunciation knowledge. As stated by Aliaga (2019, 52) English pronunciation is one of the most

difficult skills to acquire and learners should spend lots of time to improve their pronunciation. Besides, understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learners competence because with good pronunciation leads to learning while bad pronunciation promotes to great difficulties in language learning. According to Abbas and Mohammad on their research, there are several factor that effecting pronunciation to become one of the most difficult parts for a language learner, such as; the interference of students accent; stress, intonation, and rhythm; different sounds and features; students' motivation and exposure towards the subject; the attitude of students to the target language, and many more. However, many teachers still are not aware of the importance of pronunciation. Mostly teachers only pay enough attention to grammar and vocabulary in learning a foreign language or only help learners to become skillful in listening and reading. As the result, this becomes one of the major reasons for the students' pronunciation errors because they did not have enough knowledge about this skill. In the same way the students' perfective on the subject are also suspicious to be one of their lacks in pronunciation. Their thought of pronunciation to be one of difficult subject indirectly could limitations their ability, because they program their brain to think so. Therefore, the students have to monitor their self-talk, if the students keep think and go around to telling people that pronunciation is so difficult for them or their pronunciation is so horrible, etc. It will surely inhibit the development of their pronunciation as a consequence they cannot improve their self. In conclusion, both teachers and students has important role in developing student pronunciation skill. The teachers expected to give more attention on this subject because expert guidance is extremely needed in this case. Likewise, the students also have to be more confident with their ability and most importantly they should take care with their self-talk because the way they think could effects their ability

## **CONCLUSIONS**

After doing the research, this research concluded that the students' difficulties in pronouncing English Diphthongs at the Twelve Grade of SMA Negeri 8 Kota Jambi as follow:

1) The students' difficulties in pronouncing diphthongs sounds are producing sound (/ʌʊ/, /eə/, and /ɪə/). The highest percentage of the students score was 95,23% and the lowest was 15,23%. Where the mean score of the students test was 10 with a poor categories.

2) The factors of students' difficulties in pronouncing English diphthongs are; the influence of students' mother language, the lack of students' knowledge and practice about English sound system and the unsuccessful in using borrowed English words.

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