



# Students' Mispronunciation on English Vowels in Reading Aloud for Senior High School

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## Article history:

**Received:** 21 June 2024

**Revised:** 12 July 2024

**Accepted:** 2 August 2024

**Published:** 9 November 2024

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E-ISSN 2987-7741

## ABSTRACT

This study is about analyzing students' pronunciation abilities. The researcher analyzed pronunciation errors in English vowels produced by male and female students in grade 2 at SMAN 1 Menganti, Gresik Regency. This study aims to find pronunciation errors in English vowels produced by these students. The method used was qualitative descriptive. The data source in this study was 24 students in class X1 IPA 3 SMAN 1 Menganti, Gresik Regency, consisting of 7 male students and 17 female students. Data collection was carried out by conducting a reading aloud test. The results of this study indicate that students at SMAN 1 Menganti, Gresik Regency, often make pronunciation errors in the vowels: /ə/, /æ/, /ɛ/, /ɜ:/, and /ʌ/.

**Keywords:** reading aloud, pronunciation, mispronunciation, English vowels

## INTRODUCTION

One-of the most important element in language is pronunciation to give an information in oral way. Gilakjani (2016) stated, "Pronunciation is the way of someone uttering a word in accepted manner". He-also said that "instruction of Pronunciation is important for oral communication, and it is also a very significant part of communication competence". Every language has own and different pronunciation, its such if how to pronounce Indonesian language is not same with English (Subandowo, 2017). Mostly Indonesian students thought that pronunciation is not important than vocabulary/ grammar. But the reality pronunciation is also very important because Mostly case of misunderstanding in communication are caused by low ability in pronunciation. Let's take a few examples, in Indonesian language every letter representing one phonetic symbol and also representing one sound. such as, in Indonesians pronouncing pencil as /pensil/. But on contrary, in English some written letters pronouncing differently. Every sound presenting more than one letter and reversionary, or maybe it is not representing any sound at all. Let's get an example, the letter ball in English pronounced /Bol/. The distinction between both of them made greatly affect in students' pronunciation ability especially in English.

EFL (English Language as foreign language) is learned in Indonesia. We know students of Indonesia have been studying English language for 6 until 12 years or more, but mostly English students still have problem in pronouncing English because some reasons. This problem stems from the distinction between Indonesian students' original language (mother tongue) and English language as the target. And also these difficulties because they get different pronunciation from each English teacher at elementary or junior high school, problem in pronouncing English made students made misunderstanding in communication (Riadi et al., 2013). In other cases, even when nonnative speakers have excellent vocabulary or grammar but their pronunciation ability is not good, so they cannot communicate effectively and efficiently. There are some reasons make some students produce mispronunciation in English. They do not know the native speaker said and mostly of them rarely look to the dictionary for the correct pronoun.

Mostly mispronunciation are made by students especially in pronouncing English vowels, for example when Indonesian students find the letters they did not produce in Indonesian such as : [a:], [u:], [ʒ], and etc. Ramely in Barokah and Srijono (2020) said that "difficulty in pronouncing English vowels maybe because Indonesian language has five vowels and English language has twelve".

From the arguments above the writer concluded that mostly mispronunciation produced by students are when pronouncing English vowels. they do mispronunciation because they rarely hear and practice the English sound, also the difficulties because they get different pronunciation from each English teacher at elementary or junior high school and there are some differences between mother tongue (Indonesian) vowels and target language (English) vowels.

From the description above, the researcher is has been interested in analysing Students' Mispronunciation on English Vowels in Reading Aloud for Senior High School students.

The scope of this study is the Linguistics. And the limitation of this study will focus on analysing mispronunciation on English vowels

Related with the previous explanation above, the statements of the problem of this research will be formulated into research questions as follow: 1) What is The Mispronunciation on English Vowels produced from senior high school students? And the purpose of this research was: To know the students' mispronunciation on English vowels produce by senior high school students. There are some researches that become the reference for this research.

The first previous study conducted by (Razak, 2010). The title of the research is "The students' difficulties in pronouncing English vowels at the third year of Sman 1 Pitampuana Wajo Regency". This research is qualitative descriptive research that aimed to describe difficulties faced by senior high school students in pronouncing the English vowels. The result of this research showed that the 3rd year students of XII

IPA 1 Of SMAN Pitampuana in academic year 2009/2010 have difficulties in pronouncing: /i:/, /u:/, /ə/ also /ʌ/. This research becomes the reference for the researcher to analyze the data using a qualitative method.

The second previous study conducted by (Retnowati & Adawiyah, 2014) with the title "An Analysis on the Students' Errors in Pronouncing English Vowel". The result of this research showed that the students pronunciation on english vowels were "good". And the total percentage various errors made by students were 34.65%. From this research the researcher interest to make research with a similar Focus, with English vowels as the focus.

From the previous researches above there were same points with this research that the first point was similar from both researches to find error pronunciation on English vowels. Based on the previous research above also showed that there were differences with this research, the first was from the object of the study the second previous study used third semester learners of faculty of teachers training and education Ibnu Khaldun university Bogor in academic year 2011-2012, but in this study the writer used senior high school students as the object, and the second differences was from the second previous study used quantitative but in this research the researcher use qualitative descriptive method and the researcher collect the data used reading aloud test.

According to Oxford dictionary vowel is speech sound in which the mouth is open and the tongue is not touching the mouth or the teeth. The tongue is important role for make the vowels: /ɪ/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /a:/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /u:/, /ə/, /ʌ/, /ɜ/

According to (Ramelan in Razak 20010:11), vowel sounds described below:

1. the part of tongue is raised,
2. the high in the mouth some part of the tongue is raised,
3. the position of the two lips, whether the two lips are rounded or not.

Novelty of this study lies in its focus on the aspect of heartbreak, which is still rarely studied in the context of language education. Previous studies have mostly examined academic anxiety or stress, but have not specifically addressed how these emotional experiences affect students' motivation, concentration and engagement in learning. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring strategies that can help students manage their emotional impact. The research questions in this study are: How does heartbreak affect learning engagement and academic performance of English Education students? and to what extent does emotional distress due to heartbreak relate to academic performance and participation levels of English Education students?

## METHODS

The kind of research method used by the researcher was descriptive qualitative research, and the design of this research was descriptive design because in this research the researcher collects the fact to obtain an accurate description and also did effort to trace the relationship between the fact that provided a deeper insight in phenomena has been analysed.

The data in this research was the students' mispronunciation on English vowels in reading aloud and the source of data was the students in Class of XI IPA 3 Senior High school at SMAN 1 Menganti academic year 2020 - 2021, this class has 24 Students consisting of 7 male and 17 female students. The researcher chooses this class because in this school, this class is familiar that the class has bright learners.

In this research used oral test to know the pronunciation ability of students. In this research, the researcher used read aloud test. The aim from this test was that the students could read very well, when did the observation the researcher record the voice of students by used voice recorder, through voice recorder, the researcher could play the voice recorded again to know mispronunciation produced by students.

There are some procedures of collecting data used by the researcher:

- a. The researcher asked the students to read the text which include some english vowels has been given by the researcher, with the title "owning a dog" the text is intermediate level.
- b. The students read the text one by one
- c. Then, the researcher record students' voice when students did the test.

Procedure to get the data, before gave the test to the students the researcher prepared the material after that asked permission of advisor of English teacher at SMAN 1 Menganti Gresik to did observation in class XI IPA 3.

For analysing the data, the researcher used some steps: first Find out the mispronunciation produced by students, to find out that the researcher listened the test recording. Then the researcher transcribed to the phonetic transcription, the researcher used oxford dictionary by Hornby to decide the result is correct or not.

In analysing the data has been collected the following techniques are conducted:

1. The researcher analysed the students' pronunciation has been transcribed to phonetic.
2. The researcher made category the students' pronunciation based on the right and wrong pronunciation.
3. The researcher made percentage the students' mispronunciation.
4. The researcher found the dominant mispronunciation produced by the students.
5. Drew conclusion and suggestion based on data analysis.

The researcher used "criterion" from Best and Kahn (1997) to know how the quality

of student's pronunciation in English vowels by the table of criterion below:

Category	The percentage of mistake
Excellent,	0 – 25 %
Good,	26 – 50 %
Fair,	51 – 75 %
Poor,	76 – 100 %
Very Poor.	> 100%

To ensure the validity of data collection the researcher used triangulation. According to Lune and Berg (2017) triangulation is a term originally more common in surveying activities, map making, navigation and military practice. There are three kinds of triangulation: references, technique and time. In this research the researcher used some references because references are useful to verify the data. References that the researcher used for this research are from many sources and also from theory related to the topic of this research through journal or thesis.

## RESULTS

The result of this research showed that the students at SMAN 1 Menganti produced some mispronunciations especially in English vowels and these cases can be seen on data analysis from reading aloud test, and then English vowels which were mispronounced are: /i:/ (50%) its good, /ɪ/ (62,5%) its fair, /ɛ/ (145,8%) its very poor, /æ/ (175%) its very poor, /a:/ (0%) its excellent, /ɔ/ (4,16%), its excellent /:ɔ/ (45,8%) its good, /ʊ/ (0%) its excellence, /u:/ (58,3%) its fair, /ʌ/ (83,3%) its poor, /ɜ:/ (95,8%) its poor. and /ə/ (216,6%) its very poor, this calculation is done based on criterion by Best (1981).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that students at SMAN 1 Menganti still experienced several difficulties in pronouncing English vowels correctly, especially /æ/, /ɛ/, and /ə/, which were categorized as very poor based on Best's (1981) criterion. These vowels are not commonly found in the Indonesian phonetic system, which makes them hard to distinguish and produce accurately. The high percentage of errors in these sounds indicates that the students often substitute unfamiliar English vowels with the closest equivalents in their first language. On the other hand, vowels such as /a:/, /ɔ/, and /ʊ/ were pronounced well, categorized as excellent, likely because these sounds are similar to those in Indonesian. This supports Kelly's (2000) idea that L1 interference

strongly influences EFL learners' pronunciation accuracy.

Overall, the results suggest that the main source of mispronunciation among students is negative transfer from their first language and lack of phonetic awareness. Limited exposure to authentic English input and minimal emphasis on pronunciation practice in the classroom might also contribute to these errors. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to provide more focused pronunciation activities, especially on problematic vowels like /æ/, /ɛ/, and /ə/, through listening discrimination tasks and minimal pair drills. By increasing learners' awareness of vowel contrasts and giving them regular practice, their pronunciation accuracy can be gradually improved.

Pronunciation is one of the most essential yet often neglected components in English language learning. While grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension are usually emphasized in formal education, pronunciation is sometimes treated as a secondary skill, taught superficially or practiced only through imitation. However, pronunciation plays a central role in effective communication and language identity. It influences how speakers are understood, how they perceive themselves, and how they are perceived by others. Without adequate pronunciation skills, even the most grammatically correct sentences can fail to deliver the intended message. In this sense, pronunciation is not just a linguistic element—it is a bridge between language accuracy and communicative competence.

One fundamental reason pronunciation matters is that it directly affects intelligibility, the degree to which a listener can understand what is being said. A learner might have a large vocabulary and a good command of grammar, but if their pronunciation is unclear or heavily influenced by their first language, the listener may struggle to comprehend their message. For example, an Indonesian learner who pronounces "ship" as "sheep" or "fan" as "van" may unintentionally create confusion. Such mispronunciations can alter meanings entirely and disrupt communication. Therefore, pronunciation should not be viewed merely as an aesthetic feature but as an indispensable tool for clarity and precision in communication.

Furthermore, pronunciation is intertwined with listening comprehension. A learner who cannot distinguish between similar sounds—such as /ɪ/ and /i:/, or /θ/ and /t/—will likely face difficulty in understanding native speakers or even proficient non-native speakers. Good pronunciation is not only about speaking clearly; it also sharpens the ear. The more accurately learners can perceive sounds, the better they can reproduce them. This reciprocal relationship shows that pronunciation and listening reinforce each other. Developing pronunciation awareness thus enhances overall communicative ability, allowing learners to both express and comprehend English more effectively.

Another critical aspect of pronunciation is its relationship to identity and confidence. Many English learners feel anxious about speaking because of their accent or fear of

mispronouncing words. This anxiety can lead to reduced participation in class, social withdrawal, or even avoidance of English communication altogether. Improving pronunciation helps learners gain confidence and feel a stronger sense of ownership over the language. It allows them to express themselves authentically rather than mechanically. Importantly, pronunciation improvement does not mean erasing one's native accent or adopting a perfect "British" or "American" accent. Instead, it means achieving a level of clarity and naturalness that makes communication effortless and mutual understanding possible.

From a pedagogical perspective, pronunciation is a vital yet challenging area to teach. Traditional language teaching in many countries, including Indonesia, often focuses on reading and grammar because these areas are easier to test and measure. Pronunciation, on the other hand, requires constant auditory exposure, repetition, and feedback—elements that are not always available in classrooms with large student numbers and limited time. However, recent developments in technology, such as language learning apps, speech recognition tools, and online pronunciation models, have made it more feasible to integrate pronunciation practice into learning routines. Teachers can use audio-visual materials, phonetic training, and shadowing techniques to help students become more aware of sound patterns, stress, rhythm, and intonation.

In addition to classroom strategies, it is essential to recognize that English is a global language with many varieties. The goal of pronunciation teaching should not be to enforce a single "standard" accent but to promote intelligibility across contexts. English today functions as a lingua franca among speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, what matters most is not whether one sounds British or American, but whether one can communicate clearly with speakers from other countries. Jenkins (2000) introduced the concept of the "Lingua Franca Core," which identifies pronunciation features crucial for international intelligibility—such as consonant sounds, vowel length, and nuclear stress—while de-emphasizing features that do not hinder understanding. This perspective encourages tolerance of accent diversity while maintaining communicative effectiveness.

Another dimension worth exploring is how pronunciation connects with sociolinguistic and cultural understanding. Pronunciation embodies rhythm, melody, and emotion—it reflects the speaker's social identity, cultural awareness, and even personality. Learning how to use appropriate intonation or stress can convey subtle meanings such as politeness, irony, or enthusiasm. For example, rising intonation at the end of a question can indicate curiosity, while a falling tone may express confidence or finality. In intercultural communication, these nuances can prevent misunderstandings and enhance mutual respect. Therefore, teaching pronunciation should go beyond articulation drills; it should involve sensitivity to how sound conveys meaning in social contexts.

Despite its importance, pronunciation instruction often faces resistance from both

teachers and students. Teachers may feel inadequately trained in phonetics or unsure about which model of pronunciation to adopt. Students, on the other hand, may underestimate its importance or find it frustrating due to fossilized habits from their first language. Overcoming these barriers requires a shift in mindset: pronunciation should be integrated across all language skills, not treated as a separate or optional component. For instance, when teaching speaking or listening, teachers can incorporate pronunciation feedback naturally—highlighting stress patterns, linking sounds, or correcting mispronunciations contextually rather than mechanically.

In practical terms, effective pronunciation teaching involves several key principles. First, students need awareness—they must recognize how English sounds differ from their native language. Second, they require focused practice, repeating target sounds in meaningful contexts rather than isolated drills. Third, feedback is crucial. Learners should receive constructive corrections, ideally through both teacher input and self-monitoring using recording tools. Lastly, motivation plays an essential role. When students understand the real-life benefits of clear pronunciation—better communication, confidence, and professional opportunities—they are more likely to engage actively in practice.

In the Indonesian context, pronunciation challenges often arise from differences between English and Indonesian sound systems. For example, English has sounds like /θ/ (as in think) and /ð/ (as in this), which do not exist in Bahasa Indonesia. Learners tend to replace them with /t/ or /d/, leading to mispronunciations such as tink instead of think. Similarly, English stress and rhythm patterns—where content words are stressed and function words are reduced—contrast sharply with the more syllable-timed rhythm of Indonesian. Consequently, Indonesian learners often speak English with equal stress on every syllable, making their speech sound monotonous or unnatural. Awareness of such phonological contrasts can help teachers design more targeted pronunciation activities.

In higher education and professional settings, pronunciation carries social and career implications. Fluent and clear pronunciation enhances one's credibility, especially in international communication. A teacher, businessperson, or researcher who speaks English intelligibly can connect more effectively with global audiences. On the contrary, unclear pronunciation might unintentionally signal lack of competence, even if the person's ideas are brilliant. Thus, pronunciation training should be viewed as part of professional development, not merely linguistic refinement.

Ultimately, the importance of pronunciation in English language learning lies in its power to connect thought and sound, to make invisible ideas audible and understandable. It is the melody that gives life to words and the rhythm that shapes meaning. A well-pronounced utterance does more than convey information—it builds trust, empathy, and human connection. As English continues to evolve as a global medium, pronunciation teaching must adapt to emphasize clarity, diversity, and communication rather than conformity. Learners should be encouraged to find their

own “voice” in English—one that is clear, confident, and authentic. In conclusion, pronunciation is far more than the correct production of sounds; it is the heart of communicative competence. It bridges linguistic form and human expression, making understanding possible across cultures. For learners and educators alike, recognizing the value of pronunciation is the first step toward more meaningful, effective, and human communication in English. The mastery of pronunciation, therefore, is not the pursuit of perfection but the pursuit of connection—the very essence of why we learn a language at all.

## CONCLUSION

After analysing students’ mispronunciation on English vowels produced by students XI IPA 3 SMAN 1 Menganti, Kabupaten Gresik, the writer wants to give a conclusion of the previous chapters. Based on the result and discussion of this research, the researcher concluded that: class XI 3 IPA of SMAN 1 Menganti Gresik Regency in academic year 2020/2021 mostly produced mispronunciation on some English vowels there are: /ə/, /æ/, /ɛ/, /ɜ:/, and /ʌ/. Based on the conclusion above, the researcher can give some suggestions to the someone who close related to this research. For the English teacher should create conducive situation in reading class through teach pronunciation words by cross-referencing minimal pairs, reading aloud exercise and English phonetic exercise, to improve students’ ability in reading class especially in pronunciation on English vowels.

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