

**ERROR ANALYSIS ON ENGLISH  
DIPHTHONGS PRONOUNCED BY  
INDONESIAN STUDENTS IN  
ENGLISH DEBATE COMPETITION  
POSTED IN YOUTUBE**

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**Abstract**

This study is to analyse the diphthong mispronunciation of debate participants from Indonesia especially students in Senior High School of North Aceh Regional. This research uses descriptive qualitative method. The writers use A.C Gimson (1970) and Ramelan (1999) theory about English pronunciation to support the study of diphthong. The source of data in this research is the English debate

competition video in Aceh entitled “English Debate Senior High School and Equivalent Level Aceh Regional” as posted in Youtube on April, 2015 from Al Azhar Thaha Youtube account with 930 total subscribers. The writers use some techniques to collect the data such as: downloading, listening carefully, and transcribing the debate video from Youtube. To analyse the data the writers use Dividing Key Factors Techniques. The steps are: identifying, categorizing, and drawing the conclusion. The writers find that there are 3 most mispronounced diphthong based on its occurrence such as [eɪ], [əʊ], [aɪ]. The errors in pronouncing English diphthong are assumed to be affected by 4 factors which are: misimitating, mispronouncing caused by cultural sound adjustification, and dialect.

**Keywords:** error, diphthongs, pronunciation

## **A. Introduction**

In Indonesia, English is the foreign language mainly learned and used by people in Indonesia. English is important for dealing with the era of globalization, because it is recognized as the international language. Many people in Indonesia use English for speech, debate, telling story, advertisement, and business. However, because of different dialect influenced by the mother tongue, it causes difficulties for Indonesian people to produce the correct pronunciation which leads to problems in communicating such as message misunderstanding.

Debate in English has been prominent among students in Indonesia. There are many English debate videos recorded and posted in Youtube coming from students of various levels of education such as Junior High School, Senior High School, and University. Unfortunately, there is abundance of pronunciation

problem found in those debate videos, especially in the pronunciation of diphthong, since diphthong is one of the most problematic features in pronunciation for debaters as found in the videos, based on the data taken from Youtube especially in Senior High School and equivalent Aceh regional level.

In the video there are many mispronunciations, because they do not pronounce carefully influenced by dialect there. This study analyzes the errors found in diphthong pronunciation spoken by ‘debaters’ from Senior High Schools in Aceh equivalent and regional level. This video was taken in Al Muslim University in order to compete for the rotating trophy of the rector of Al Muslim University in academic year 2015. The concept of debate competition in schools of Aceh is simple and easy for people to understand. Based on the reasons, the writers are interested in finding out the errors in diphthong pronunciation.

The writers focus this study on two types of English diphthong that are closing diphthong and centering diphthong. The examples of closing diphthong are [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ] [aʊ], [əʊ] and the examples of centering diphthong are [ɪə], [eə], [ʊə]. To analyze the diphthong pronunciation error found in Indonesian debaters, especially as posted in video Youtube, the theory of A.C Gimson about English pronunciation is used. To support the study Ramelan’s theory about English pronunciation is also used.

## **B. Literature Review**

In this study, the writers use some theories related to pronunciation, diphthong, types of diphthong, mispronunciation, and reasons for pronunciation problems.

### **1. Pronunciation**

According to Lado (1964: 70):

“Pronunciation is the act or manner of pronouncing words; utterance of speech. In the 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”.

Pronunciation is one of the most important aspects in learning the language, especially in speaking skill. Meanwhile, Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 7) state that pronunciation is one expression of that person’s self-image, because words can be spoken in different ways by various individuals or groups and depends on such as in their education, their social interaction, and their area where they life.

## 2. Diphthong

Gimson (1970: 126) states that diphthongs are those which form a glide within one syllable. They may be said to have a first element (the starting point) and second element (the point in the direction of which the glide is made). Ramelan (1999: 81) says, “A diphthong is a kind of vowel sound with a special feature, that is there is a deliberate glide made from one vowel position to another vowel position, and which is produced in one syllable”. Meanwhile, Roach (2009: 19) says, “Diphthongs are like the long vowels, and the most important thing to remember about all the diphthongs is the first part is much longer and stronger than the second part”.

## 3. Types of Diphthong

The total number of diphthong is nine. The easiest way to remember them is in terms of two types of diphthong. They are closing diphthongs and centering diphthongs.

### a. Closing Diphthongs

Gimson (1970: 126) divides diphthong into two types, one of them is closing diphthong. Closing diphthong is diphthongs of which second vowel is more 'close' than the first vowel. They are falling with length and stress on the first element and closing diphthong is gliding from a more open to a closer position. The closing diphthong consists of five elements: [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ] [ʊɔ], [əʊ]. These are examples from closing diphthong.

1) Diphthong [eɪ]

Diphthong [eɪ] is a front-front closing diphthong. First the tongue starts from the position for the vowel [e], a front vowel which is a little lower than the half close position. Then, the tongue moves in the direction of vowel position of [ɪ], which is a little above the half close position, though it is not necessarily reached. The lips are spread and gradually closing, for examples: late [leɪt], day [deɪ], pail [peɪl], fail [feɪl], save [seɪv].

2) Diphthong [aɪ]

Diphthong [aɪ] is a front-front closing full diphthong. First, begins at a point slightly behind the front open position, i.e [a] and moves in the direction of the position associated with RP /I/, although the tongue is not usually raised to a level closer than [ë]; the glide is much more extensive than that of /eɪ/, the closing movement of the lower jaw is being obvious, for examples: mine [maɪn], file [faɪl], rice [raɪs].

3) Diphthong [ɔɪ]

Diphthong [ɔɪ] is a back-front closing full diphthong. First the tongue glide begins at a point between the back half open and open positions and moves in the direction of /ɪ/, generally not reaching closer than [ɛ̃]. The tongue movements extends from back to centralized front, but the range of closing in the glide is not as great as for /aɪ/; the jaw movement, though considerable, may not, therefore be as marked as in the case of /aɪ/. The lips are open rounded for the first element, changing to neutral for the second, for examples: soil [sɔɪl], point [pɔɪnt].

4) Diphthong [aʊ]

Diphthong /aʊ/ begins at a point between the back and and front open positions, slightly more fronted than the position for RP /a/ moves in the direction of RP /ʊ/ , though the tongue may not be raised higher than the half close level. The glide is much more extensive than that used for /əʊ/ and is symmetrically opposed to the front glide of /aɪ/. The lips change from a neutrally open to a weakly rounded position, for examples: house [haʊs], sound [saʊnd].

5) Diphthong [əʊ]

Diphthong [əʊ] begins at a central position, between half-close and half-open, and moves in the direction of RP /ʊ/, there being a slight closing movement of the lower jaw; the lips are neutral for the first element, but have a

tendency to round on the second element. The starting point may have a tongue position similar to that described for /ɜ:/, for examples: old [əʊld], folk [fəʊk].

b. Centering Diphthongs

Gimson (1970: 141) states that centering diphthong is diphthongs of which second vowels are more 'center' than the first vowels. When the diphthong occurs in final position, the position of the second element becomes lower, and in some dialects it may be even as low as /ʌ/. Centering diphthong consists of three elements: [ɪə], [ɛə], [ʊə].

1) Diphthong [ɪə]

Diphthong /ɪə/ begins with a tongue position approximately that is used for /ɪ/ centralized front half-close, and moves in the direction of the more open variety of /ə/ when /ɪə/ is final in the word in non-final position, the glide may not be extensive, the quality of the /ə/ element being of a mid-type. The lips are neutral throughout, with a slight movement from spread to open, for examples: dear [dɪə(r)], tear [tɪə(r)].

2) Diphthong [ɛə]

Diphthong /ɛə/ begins in the half open front position and moves in the direction of the more open variety of /ə/, especially when the diphthong is final; where /ɛə/ occurs in a syllable closed by consonant, the /ə/ elements tends to be of a mid [ə] type, for examples: bear [beə(r)], fair [feə(r)].

3) Diphthong [ʊə]

Diphthong /ʊə/ begins a tongue position similar to that used for /ʊ/ towards the more open type of /ə/, which forms the end-point of all three centering diphthongs with again a somewhat closer variety of [ə] when the diphthong occurs in closed syllable. The lips are weakly rounded at the beginning of the glide, becoming neutrally spread as the glide progresses, for examples: pure [pjʊə(r)], curious [ˈkjʊəriəs].

#### 4. Mispronunciation

According to Nordquist (2017: 1):

“Mispronunciation is the act or habit of pronouncing a word in a way that is regarded as nonstandard, unconventional, or faulty. Words and names are sometimes deliberately mispronounced for comic or malicious purposes”.

Meanwhile, Silalahi (2016: 12) states:

“Mispronunciation in students are generally caused by several reasons, those are: The students follow the pronunciation of basic words, it sounds correct and appropriate, the words are rarely or even never used before, they imitate the wrong pronunciation from his/her teacher”.

The effects of mispronunciation according to Ramelan (1999: 4-5) are different mother tongue since childhood influence difficult to pronounce English words which has been deeply implanted in him as part of his habits and they bring till adult, then causes mispronunciation and misunderstanding between two people or many people translate correct English words.

#### 5. Reason for Pronunciation Problems

Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, there will be some pronunciation



problems faced by Indonesian students when they learn English. According to Ramelan (1999: 5-7), pronunciation problems are caused by some reasons. They are:

- a. Transfer of linguistic habit
- b. Different elements between native language and the target language
- c. The same phonetic feature in both language but differ in their distributions
- d. Similar sounds in the two languages, which have different variants or allophones
- e. Similar sounds in two languages which differ only slightly in their phonetic features

### **C. Method of Investigation**

The writers use descriptive qualitative method. The source of the data in this study is video on Youtube about the debate competition in province of Aceh entitled “English Debate Senior High School and Equivalent Level Aceh Regional” posted on April, 2015 from Al Azhar Thaha Youtube account with 930 total subscribers. The data are taken from his account, which consists of 4 videos. Those are:

1. English Debate Competition Group 1 Session 1
2. English Debate Competition Group 1 Session 2
3. English Debate Competition Group 1 Session 3
4. English Debate Competition Group 1 Session 4

The data are English diphthongs pronunciation those are pronounced by the debate participants. In this study, the writers use phonetic identity method, which are downloading, listening, and transcribing the data.

After collecting the data, the writers analyse it by using descriptive qualitative which covers description and interpretation the data. In doing this, the writers relate it to English phonetics theories.

They are explanation of pronunciation and the explanation of diphthong with the types of diphthong and how to pronounce it. This analysis uses Dividing Key Factors technique (Muhammad, 2011: 239). The steps are identifying, categorizing, evaluating, and drawing the conclusion.

#### **D. Findings and Discussion**

The findings discuss about the result of error analysis on English diphthongs and factors caused by the students in English Debate Competition posted in Youtube. In this analysis, it is found that the most errors in diphthong based on its occurrence are located in diphthong [eɪ], [əʊ], [aɪ], [aʊ], [eə], [ɪə], [ɔɪ], and [ʊə]. The speakers mispronounce 112 of 254 diphthong [eɪ], 76 of 129 diphthong [əʊ], 60 of 164 diphthong [aɪ], 43 of 81 diphthong [aʊ], 22 of 35 diphthong [eə], 6 of 6 diphthong [ɪə], 4 of 5 diphthong [ɔɪ], and 2 of 3 diphthong [ʊə]. In this research, the writers focus on the top three most error pronunciation. They are [eɪ], [əʊ], and [aɪ].

The mispronunciation on diphthong [eɪ] found in the words *okay*, *ladies*, *make*, *take*, *mistake*, *save*; meanwhile diphthong [əʊ] can be found in *okay*, *so*, *know*, *most*, *over*, *social*, *mobile*, *phone*, *hold*; and in the words *profile*, *mobile*, *financial*, *apply* mispronounced found on diphthong [aɪ].

The errors in pronouncing English diphthongs are assumed to be affected by many factors such as misimitating, mispronouncing caused by cultural sound adjustification, and dialect. According to Ramelan (1999: 4-5), one of the factors is the habit of the debate participants in pronouncing the word that contains diphthongs.

### 1. Misimitating

According to Ramelan (1999: 5), the habit in pronouncing a word can be affected by imitating someone in pronouncing that word. The students are disposed to imitate someone whom they believe in perfectly. It can be a teacher, an actor or actress in an English movie, the English singer, or the others. Error in pronouncing words happens when they copy the wrong models such as teacher as the only model found in school. Wrong imitation can also be caused by mishearing the word, so that the student produced wrong diphthong pronunciation.

### 2. Mispronouncing Caused by Cultural Sound Adjustification

Mispronouncing can be happened if someone mishears or misimitates particular words. Based on previous research it is true that mispronouncing makes it difficult for students to say a particular word that contains diphthong properly and correctly.

Error pronunciations happen when the students hear the pronunciation clearly, but it is hard to imitate. It can be because the elements do not exist in the native language. English has 8 diphthongs, but Indonesian only has three diphthongs. They are diphthong [aɪ], [aʊ], [ɔɪ]. (Waridah, 2008:4). This positive transfer answers why debate participants almost didn't make an error in pronouncing them. However, for the other diphthong beyond [aɪ], [aʊ], and [ɔɪ], the debate participants have to adapt hardly. The error can occur in the words with diphthong [oʊ] as o as the orthography of the diphthongs. In Indonesia the utterances are pronounced as it is written in the orthography writing. This negative

transfer caused the errors in pronouncing diphthong [ou]. In addition, pronouncing vowel [ɔ] is easier for the Indonesian students especially the debate participants than diphthong [ou]. In this case, the students did not aware of ‘different element means different meaning’.

Based on the results of the analysis carried out by the writers, almost all speakers when pronouncing words from English, the speaker uttered the simplification of the sound which caused the pronunciation of diphthong to be imperfect make is [meɪk], then the speaker makes a mistake which is saying the word make with the wrong phonetic transcription, like this [mek]. Then not only on diphthong [eɪ] but concluding the pronunciation in diphthong occurs in the other diphthong. That case can be said as Cultural Sound Adjustment.

The writers find several negative transfers of diphthong pronunciation caused by cultural sound adjustment, such as:

- a. /eɪ/ was adjusted as /ɛ/, such as found in make [mɛk], take [tɛk], ladies [lɛdis], mistake as [mɪstɛk], okay as [ɔ'kɛ], available as [ə'veləbəl], statement as [stɛtment], save as [sev].
- b. /əʊ/ was adjusted as /o/ such as found in hold [hɔld], most as [mɔst], okay as [ɔkeɪ], know as [nɔʊ], social as [sɔʃɪəl], video as [vɪdɪɔ], cooperation as [kɔpərəɪʃn], motivate as [mɔtɪveɪt].
- c. /aɪ/ was adjusted as /ɛ/ or /i/, such as found in profile [prɔfɪl], mobile [mɔbeɪl], apply as [ə'pleɪ], reply as [rɪpleɪ], mobile as [mɔʊbeɪl], like as [leɪk], carbohydrate as [kɔrbəhɪdrət], time as [them]

When the students are not used to pronouncing certain words, they are disposed to pronounce the words as they are written in the orthographic writing form. However, the orthographic writing is not consistent to be pronounced. It sometimes represents different sounds in different words, for examples: make, now, and know (Ramelan, 1999: 9).

### 3. Dialect

Based on the results of the analysis, one of the factors of incorrect pronunciation is dialect. According to Trudgill (1989: 220), dialect is a variety of language associated with a particular group of speakers and mutually intelligible with other varieties. It can be said that the language of one area is different from another but still related. Mutual intelligibility is a relationship between languages or dialects in which speakers of different area still understand each other without intentional study or special effort. Francis (1985: 80) states that dialect is a variety of language spoken in one part of country or by people belonging to particular social class which is different in some words, grammar and pronunciation from other forms at the same language. Thus, dialect is associated with particular accent.

In this research, the dialect here can be associated with the speakers' intonation. Their intonation is not similar to the nature of speaker. The writers find that it causes wrong stress and unstressed of the words in which will influence the pronunciation. From the data, it is found that most of the speakers still use Aceh dialect when they speak using English.

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on the facts above, the writers can conclude that most error in diphthong based on its occurrence is located in diphthong, [eɪ], [əʊ], and [aɪ]. All of speakers of English debate competition in Al Azhar Thaha account Youtube mispronounce 112 of 254 diphthong [eɪ], 76 of 129 diphthong [əʊ], and 60 of 164 diphthong [aɪ]. From the analysis, it is found three factors which cause mispronunciation by debate participants. They are: misimitating, mispronouncing caused by cultural sound adjustment, and dialect.

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