ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

PRONUNCIATION OF DIPHTHONGS BY SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The differences between the English and Indonesian phonemes especially in vowels sounds can cause Indonesian students face difficulties in pronuncing words in English containing certain vowels. So, it will be important for the Indonesian students to learn about English vowels sound.

Therefore, a research by using qualitative method was arranged in order to know the production of diphthongs sounds by the students. This research was conducted in a private class which consists of 10 students. The students are seventth grade students of Junior High School.

Based on the analysis of the production of diphthongs, it can be seen that diphthongs [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ] can be produced correctly by those ten students. Meanwhile, diphthongs [əʊ], [aʊ], [eə], [ɪə], [ʊə], [ɔə] can not be produced perfectly by the students. Those diphthongs were produced like simple sounds or monophthongs. It means that the students found difficulties in producing some English diphthongs.

Key words: English vowels, simple vowels, diphtongs

ABSTRAK

Perbedaan fonem bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia terutama pada bunyi vokal dapat menyebabkan pembelajar berbahasa Indonesia kesulitan dalam mengucapkan kata-kata yang mengandung beberapa bunyi vokal bahasa Inggris, terutama pada bagian diphthongs. Jadi, sangatlah penting bagi pembelajar untuk mempelajari bunyi vokal berbahasa Inggris.

Oleh sebab itu, sebuah penelitian dilakukan dengan metode kualitatif untuk mengetahui pengucapan bunyi diphthongs oleh siswa yang sedang belajar bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan pada sepuluh orang siswa kelas tujuh yang mengikuti bimbingan belajar bahasa Inggris.

Dari penelitian ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa bunyi diphthongs [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ] bisa diucapkan dengan baik oleh siswa. Namun, diphthongs [əʊ], [aʊ], [eə], [ɪə], [ʊə], [ɔə] tidak bisa diucapkan dengan sempurna oleh siswa. Diphthongs tersebut diucapkan seperti bunyi vokal sederhana (monophthongs). Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa, siswa menemukan kesulitan dalam pengucapan bunyi diphthongs.

Kata Kunci: Bunyi vokal bahasa Inggris, bunyi vokal sederhana, diphthongs

ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Language can be used to communicate and establish social relationship. Language has been defined as a means of communication which uses speech sounds as the medium. It can be conveyed by using various ways; oral, written, or signal languages. Nowdays, English becomes an international language which is used for communicating. Therefore, many people need to learn English language if they want to know about science and technology which is delivered in English. This language can be learned as the first language, second language or as foreign language in a country.

As it happens in Indonesia, English language is used as the foreign language. It is taught from earlier stage of education to university. Mastering the English skills are not as easy as we think. In real condition, teaching English faces many problems. Their difficulties are caused by many factors. It is beacuse there are some differences of English and Indonesian language. Those differences are found in syntax, phonemes, pronunciation, meaning, grammar, and tenses. But, the interesting one to be discussed here is the differences between the English and Indonesian phonemes especially in vowels sounds. It is because, we often see that Indonesian people face difficulties in pronuncing words in English containing certain vowels. Therefore, it will be important for the Indonesian students to learn about English vowels sound (simple or *diphthong*s vowels). Therefore, this paper will be focused on discussion of production of *diphthong*s by the students.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Vowels

Delahunty and Garvey (2010: 98) stated that vowels are distinguished from consonants in several ways. Consonants are produced by constricting the airstream to various degrees as it flows through the oral tract. Meanwhile, vowels are produced with a smooth, unobstructed airflow through the oral tract. Vowels are produced with the vocal tract open. They are articulated without any kind of obstruction in the oral cavity and usually occur in syllable central position. Unlike consonants, in which the airstream is constricted somewhere in the vocal tract, vowels are pronounced without any constriction at all in the airstream.

1.2.2 The English Vowels

In vowels there is considerably more dialectal variation. For this reason, the discussion in this section will be restricted to the vowels found in British English which is called Received Pronunciation (RP). English vowels are divided into two major types, simple vowels (also called pure vowels or monophthongs) and diphthongs (Dobrovolsky and Katamba, 1996: 35-36). Simple vowels do not show a noticeable change in quality.

ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

Simple Vowels
[i:]
[I]
[e]
[ɜ:]
[u:]
[ʊ]
[ɒ]
[ɔ:]
[æ]
[ʌ]
[ɑ:]
[ə]

Meanwhile, diphthongs are vowels that exhibit a change in quality within a single syllable. English diphthongs show changes in quality that are due to tongue movement away from the initial vowel articulation towards another vowel position. The first part of a diphthong is much longer and perceptually more salient than the second.

*Diphthong*s
[eɪ]
[aɪ]
[ɔɪ]
[əʊ]
[aʊ]
[eə]
[ɪə]
[ʊə]
[ɔə]

Dobrovolsky and Katamba (1996: 35-36) state that in standard British English, there are nine diphthongs and they fall into two classes:

a. Centring diphthongs

The vowel in which the highest point of the tongue moves quickly towards the centre of the mouth during final phase of the vowel articulation. There are four centring diphthongs, namely:

- [ɪə] as in dear, cheer and clear;
- [eə] as in rare, wear and air;
- [ʊə] as boor, sure and dour; and
- [ɔə] as in oar, shore and roar.

Nowadays, [ʊə] and [ɔə] are disappearing from RP and many other varieties of British English. They are being replaced by [ɔ:]. As a result, words like paw, pore and poor rhyme with each other. They all come out as [pɔ:].

b. Closing diphthongs

In closing diphthongs, the tongue starts in a relatively low position and ends up in a high position either in the palatal area at the front of the mouth in the region where the glide [j] is articulated, or at the back of the mouth in the velar area where the glide [w] is produced. There are three closing diphthongs that end in [ɪ]. They are [eɪ] which is found in way, weight and tail; [aɪ] which is found in tie, buy and my; and [ɔɪ] which is found in oil, boy and

ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

coin. There are only two diphthongs rising to [ʊ], namely [əʊ] as in no, go and slow and [aʊ] which occurs in proud, town and round. Observe also that in all cases, the diphthongs are somewhat longer than the short simple vowels.

1.2.3 Place of articulation

In Delahunty and Garvey (2010: 98) the differences in vowel quality are produced by different shapes of the oral cavity. Characteristic vowel qualities are determined by:

a) The height of the tongue in the mouth.
These degrees distinguish high, mid, and low vowels. In this case, when we try to pronounce the words *eat* and *at* and we focus on the wovels, it can be seen that from *eat* to *at* our mouth will open. The degree of the openess of the mouth will be different from one These degrees distinguish high, mid, and low vowels. In this case, when we try to pronounce the words *eat* and *at* and we focus on the wovels, it can be seen that from *eat* to *at* our mouth will open. The degree of the openess of the mouth will be different from one vowels to the other. So, the tongue height of vowels can be high vowels, mid vowels and low vowels. The following example can be seen for more understanding:

eat	[i:]	High
ate	[e]	Mid
at	[æ]	Low

b) The part of the tongue raised.
When we produce the [i], the front (blade) of your tongue raised toward your palate. If you draw in your breath as you make this vowel, you will feel the cold air against your palate. Meanwhile, when we produce [u], you will find yourself raising the back of your tongue. Because of the relative positions at which these vowels are made in the mouth, phoneticians call the vowels as front, central and back vowels. The example can be seen as follow:

Front	Central	Back
beet [i:]	but [ʌ]	food [u:]

c) The configuration of the lips.
When we pronounce [i] and [u] it can be seen that your lips changed shape as you shifted from the front vowel to the back one. Your lips will be rounded as you produce [u] and they will be unrounded (neutral) as you produced [i]. So, the shape of the lips can be rounded or unrounded when we pronounce vowels.

Unrounded	Rounded
Sheet [i:]	shoot [u:]

d) The tension of the muscles of the oral tract.
They are produced with a placement of the tongue that results in greater vocal tract constriction than that of non-tense vowels; in
addition, tense vowels are longer than non-tense vowels. Some vowels of English are made with roughly the same tongue position as the tense vowels, but with a less constricted

ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

articulation. They are called lax vowels. (katamba)

Tense	Lax
bee [i:]	hit [I]

1.2.4 The production of English vowels

In Delahunty and Garvey (2010: 98), the production of English vowels are influenced by the height of the tongue in the mouth (high, mid and low vowels), the part of the tongue raised (front, central and back vowels), the configuration of the lips (unrounded and rounded vowels); and the tension of the muscles of the oral tract (tense and lax vowels).

2.1 The production of simple vowels:

	Front		Central		Back	
	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
High	i: ɪ					u: ʊ
Middle	e ɜ:		ə ʌ			ɒ ɔ:
Low	æ				ɑ:	

.

The production of simple vowels above can be explained as follow:

a) the position of [i:] is in high front unrounded tense
b) the position of [I] is in high front unrounded lax
c) the position of [e] is in mid front unrounded tense
d) the position of [ɜ:] is in mid front unrounded lax
e) the position of [u:] is in high back rounded tense
f) the position of [ʊ] is in high back rounded lax
g) the position of [ɒ] is in middle back rounded tense
h) the position of [ɔ:] is in mid back rounded lax
i) the position of [æ] is in low front unrounded lax
j) the position of [ʌ] is in mid central unrounded lax
k) the position of [ɑ:] is in low back unrounded lax
l) the position of [ə] is in mid central unrounded lax

3.2.2 The production of diphthongs:

a) Diphthong [eɪ]
the starting position is [e] with tongue in mid position at front of mouth then moves the tongue up.
b) Diphthong [aɪ]
the starting position is [æ] with tongue in low front of

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E-ISSN 2548-7639

mouth then moves to high front.

c) Diphthong[ɔɪ]
the starting position is [ɔ:] with tongue in mid back position and the mouth is rounded then it moves forward and up.

d) Diphthong [əʊ]
the starting position is [ə] with tongue in mid-central position then it moves back and up.

e) Diphthong [aʊ]
the starting position is [æ] with tongue in low front then it moves to back high with rounded mouth.

f) Diphthong [eə]
the starting position is [e] with tongue in mid position at front of mouth and it moves back to mid central position in your mouth.

g) Diphthong [ɪə]
the starting position is [ɪ] with tongue in high position at front of mouth and it moves back to mid central position.

h) Diphthong [ʊə]
the starting position is [ʊ] with tongue in back high position and the mouth rounded then it moves forward to mid central position.

i) Diphthong [ɔə]
the starting position is [ɔ] with tongue position in middle back with rounded mouth then moves forward to middle central position.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Method

There were three methods used in this research, they were; data source, method and technique of collecting data, and method and technique of analyzing data.

2.1.1 Data Source

The qualitative method was used in this research in order to know the production of *diphthong*s by the students. The data were taken from the seventh grade students who are able to read English words well. They are ten students who join the private English class. They learnt how to pronounce vowels in English then they pronounced some words to see their ability to pronounce English vowels.

2.1.2 Method and Technique of Collecting Data

This study used qualitative method while data were collected through library research. It was done in several steps: (1) finding and classifying the kinds of vowels, identifying how the vowels (*diphthong*s) are produced, finding the words that consists of English vowels, (2) asking the students to pronounce those words, (3) recording the students' sound, (4) listening to the students' recording, (5) transcribing the speech orthographically and in the form of phonetic transcription.

ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

2.1.3 Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

The technique which was used in analyzing the data is qualitative. The production of English vowels based on theory from Delahunty and Garvey (2010). The ability of students in pronouncing vowels was analyzed based on Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. Then the result was presented in words.

III. DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the students' ability in producing diphthongs sound. After the data was found, then the data was analyzed based on the pronounciation of Oxford standard. The ability of students in producing diphthongs must be relevant to the Oxford standard. If their pronounciation is relevant to Oxford standard, it means that they are able to pronounce the words correctly. The analysis of this study is only focused on the production of diphthongs. Those analysis will be presented as follow:

a. The sound [eɪ]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Way	/weɪ/	/weɪ/

Diphthong [eɪ] starts with an open vowel and then moves to a close vowel. The starting position is [e] with tongue in mid position at front of mouth then moves the tongue up. *Diphthong* [eɪ] in the word ***way*** was produced correctly by the ten students. They pronounced [weɪ] for this word by starting open vowel [e] and then moves to a close vowel [ɪ]. It means that they could produce the word ***way*** based on Oxford standard.

b. *Diphthong* [aɪ]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Eye	/aɪ/	/aɪ/

The starting position of *diphthong* [aɪ] is [æ] with tongue in low front of mouth then moves to high front. This sound was pronounced correctly by the ten students in the word ***eye***. They pronounced [aɪ] for this word by starting open vowel [æ] and then moves to a close vowel [ɪ]. It means that their pronunciation is consistent with the Oxford standard.

c. *Diphthong* [ɔɪ]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Toy	/tɔɪ/	/tɔɪ/

Diphthong [ɔɪ] was produced correctly for the word ***toy***. They prounced it as //tɔɪ/ which is relevant with Oxford standard. The starting position of sound [ɔ:] with tongue in mid back position and the mouth is rounded then it moves forward and up.

d. *Diphthong* [əʊ]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Slow	/sləʊ/	/sləʊ/, /slɔ:/

ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

This sound can be found in word ***slow***, which should be pronounced as /sləʊ/. This *diphthong* starts in an open vowel and then moves to a close vowel. The starting position is [ə] with tongue in mid-central position then it moves back and up to the sound [ʊ]. Two students pronounced it well. Meanwhile, the others pronounced it as /slɔ:/. It means that they couldn't produced *diphthong* [əʊ], they prefer to produce [ɔ:] which is in mid back rounded position.

e. *Diphthong* [aʊ]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Now	/naʊ/	/naʊ/, /nɔ:/

The students were given the word ***now*** [naʊ] to be pronounced. Seven students could produce *diphthong* [aʊ] correctly. It means that they could produce this vowel based on Oxford standard. The starting position of this *diphthong* is [æ] with tongue in low front then it moves to back high with rounded mouth. Meanwhile, three of them pronounced [ɔ:] rather than [aʊ]. In which [ɔ:] is in mid back rounded position.

f. *Diphthong* [eə]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Chair	/t ʃeə(r)/	/t ʃe(r)/

The word ***chair*** have to be pronounced as /t ʃeə(r)/ which can be seen in Oxford dictionary. But the students produced it as /tʃe(r)/ which is not relevant to Oxford standard. It means that *diphthong* [eə] couldn't be pronounced by the students. The sound [eə] that should be started with tongue in mid position at front of mouth then should be moved back to mid central position in the mouth only produced as [e] which is in mid front unrounded position.

g. *Diphthong* [ɪə]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Clear	/klɪə(r)/	/klɪə(r)/, /klɪ(r)/

The students were given the word ***clear*** /klɪə(r)/ to be pronounced. *Diphthong* [ɪə] should be in high vowel [ɪ] then moves to central vowels [ə] But, nine of them produced it as /klɪ(r)/. It means that they couldn't produce *diphthong* [ɪə] correctly. They substitued it by the sound [ɪ] with tongue in high position at front of mouth. This sound did not move again. It stopped in that position. Meanwhile, this sound starts with position is [ɪ] with tongue in high position at front of mouth and it moves back to mid central position.

h. *Diphthong* [ʊə]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Sure	/ʃʊə(r)/ /	/ʃʊə(r)/, /su:(r)/

Diphthong [ʊə] for the word ***sure*** should be pronounced as /ʃʊə(r)/ which is based on Oxford standard. The starting position is [ʊ] with tongue in back high position and the mouth

ISSN 2442-6865
E-ISSN 2548-7639

rounded then it moves forward to mid central position. Only four of students produced this sound correctly. The others, substitued sound [ʊə] with sound [u:], in which this is a simple sound in high back rounded position. It means that they could produce this *diphthong* correctly.

i. *Diphthong* [ɔə]

Word	Oxford Transcription	Students' Pronunciation
Door	dɔə(r)/	dɔə(r)/, dɔ(r)/

Diphthong [ɔə] was pronounced incorrectly by the students in the word ***door***. The starting position of this sound is [ɔ] with tongue position in middle back with rounded mouth then moves forward to middle central position. Most of them pronounced [dɔ(r)] for this word which is inconsistent with the Oxford standard. Based on Oxford dictionary, this word must be pronounced as /dɔə(r)/. It means that *diphthong* [ɔə] is produced as simple vowel [ɔ] which is in mid back rounded position.

IV. CONCLUSION

From this reserach, it can be concluded that kinds of English vowels can be divided into simple vowels (also called pure vowels or monophthongs) and diphthongs. Simple vowels consist of 12 vowels, they are [i:], [I], [e], [ɜ], [u:], [ʊ], [ɒ], [ɔ:], [æ], [ʌ], [ɑ:], [ə]. Meanwhile, there are only nine diphtongs, they are [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ], [əʊ], [aʊ], [eə], [ɪə], [ʊə], [ɔə]. The production of English vowels are influenced by the height of the tongue in the mouth, the part of the tongue raised, the configuration of the lips; and the tension of the muscles of the oral tract. Based on the analysis of the production of diphthongs, it can be seen that diphthongs [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ] can be produced correctly by those ten students. Meanwhile, diphthongs [əʊ], [aʊ], [eə], [ɪə], [ʊə], [ɔə] can not be produced perfectly by the students. Those diphthongs were produced like simple sounds or monophthongs. It means that the students found difficulties in producing some English diphthongs. The next study, must be focused on giving solution to the teacher in teaching English vowels. Therefore, the students will be able to produce English vowels correctly, especially diphthongs.

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