

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of Study

English as an international language plays an important role in global communication at various education levels, from elementary school to senior high school. Mastery of English language skills today, especially in oral aspects such as pronunciation, is key to building highly effective communication patterns.<sup>1</sup> In English language learning, especially the pronunciation aspect, often gets special attention because errors in pronunciation can change the understanding of the message conveyed.

One of the important components in pronunciation is the vowels. While English has its complexity compared to Indonesian, namely in terms of the number and quality of sounds. When looking in terms of comparisons such as Indonesian recognises a simpler vowel system, while English has more vowel variations, including monophthongs, diphthongs, and triphthongs.<sup>2</sup> This difference is the underlying cause of many students in Indonesia, especially at the Junior High School level, who certainly have difficulty with the good and correct pronunciation of vowels in English.

The mispronunciation of English vowels can occur due to various factors, such as the influence of the mother tongue. Currently, English language education is still lacking, in addition to limited access to quality pronunciation teaching methods in schools, schools also do not encourage their students to speak international languages in the school environment, in addition to national and regional languages.<sup>3</sup> Formal learning media, such

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<sup>1</sup> Gilakjani, A. P. The significance of pronunciation in English language teaching: A review article. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 2022,7(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.52547/ijree.7.1.1>

<sup>2</sup> Kelly, G. How to Teach Pronunciation (New Edition). *Pearson Education*. 2020

<sup>3</sup> Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. Pronunciation Fundamentals: Evidence-based Perspectives for L2 Teaching and Research (2nd ed.). *John Benjamins Publishing Company*. 2021

as SMP Negeri 10 Kota Serang, is a phenomenon of vowel mispronunciation, which becomes very common because it can still be found in students who are not fully able to pronounce vocabulary in English, especially among class VIII students who are in an important stage of mastering speaking skills.

Previous research shows that junior high school students tend to make mistakes in pronouncing vowel sounds such as /ɪ/ and /i:/, /æ/ and /e/, or /ʌ/ and /ɑ:/.<sup>4</sup> These errors are caused by a lack of comprehensive exposure to correct pronunciation models and the students' low phonological awareness of these sounds.

Based on the initial observation at SMP Negeri 10 Kota Serang, the researcher's observation of one of the public schools in Banten Province makes it one of the most interesting objects to be researched and developed. Because there are still many grade VIII students who show difficulties in the pronunciation of vowel sounds in English words, such as in the case of the word 'want' pronounced as 'wʌnt' or 'friend' pronounced as 'friend'. These errors, if left unchecked, will have a lasting impact, such as a lack of understanding of advanced communication arts in the development of English language skills for future students.

Therefore, it is essential to conduct further error analysis of the pronunciation of English vowels produced by class VIII students at SMP Negeri 10 Kota Serang. This research aims to identify the types of vowel errors that occur most frequently and the factors that contribute to them, allowing for a detailed analytical understanding of how to improve pronunciation teaching methods at the school.

This research uses a qualitative study approach to describe in depth the forms of errors that occur and the factors that influence them. This

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<sup>4</sup> Rahmah, S. A study on pronunciation errors of vowels by junior high school students. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 2023, 11(1), 88–95. <https://doi.org/xx.xxxx/ijll.v11n1p88>

research is expected to contribute to the field of pronunciation teaching at the junior high school level, as well as a reference for teachers in designing more effective and contextualised pronunciation learning methods.

Through this research, it is hoped that English teachers can better understand the needs of students in learning pronunciation and develop more effective learning strategies, and the characteristics of the errors found.

## **B. Identification of Study**

1. The students have a problem with the pronunciation of vowels
2. There is still a lack of focus on the pronunciation aspect in teaching English

## **C. Focus of Study**

This study focuses on analyzing English vowel pronunciation errors made by grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 10 Kota Serang and identifying the factors causing these errors.

## **D. Research Questions**

The formulation of the problem in this study is as follows:

1. What are the types of English vowel pronunciation errors made by grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 10 Kota Serang?
2. What are the factors that cause these English vowel pronunciation errors?

## **E. Objectives of The Study**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify and describe the types of English vowel pronunciation errors made by grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 10 Kota Serang.
2. To determine the factors that cause these vowel pronunciation errors.

## F. Significance of The Research

This research is expected to provide the following benefits:

1. Theoretical Benefits: Contributing to the development of theoretical studies on error analysis in English pronunciation learning.
2. Practical Benefits:
  - a. For Teachers: Providing information on the types of errors that often occur so that they can be used as evaluation material in teaching methods.
  - b. For Students: Helping to increase students' awareness of the importance of correct pronunciation in English.
  - c. For Other Researchers: Being a reference for further research related to error analysis in English learning.

## G. Previous Study

Several previous studies, “an analysis of pronunciation errors of the fourth semester students of IAIN Surakarta in drama performance entitled 'nights are longer in Samarkand' in academic year 2014/2015.” This research used a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the results. Data was collected and analyzed with the guidance of recording and phonemic transcription in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, to describe vowel errors made by students. The result of the study showed that the researcher found some vowel errors. In the vowels, the researcher found twelve vowels that students shift. Those errors occur because some English vowel sounds differ from students’ mother tongue.<sup>5</sup>

The second previous study is “students’ pronunciation error on vowels at spoken English activities (speech) class at English Department, Universitas Negeri Padang.” This study investigated the pronunciation error

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<sup>5</sup> Siti Muawanah, “An Analysis of Pronunciation Errors of the Fourth Semester Students of IAIN Surakarta in Drama Performance Nights are Longer in Samarkand”, *Thesis Degree, IAIN Surakarta*, 2014/2015.2017.

speech performance to get more naturalistic pronunciation as data. This study uses a qualitative method with data sources of six speech recordings delivered by students in speech classes. The recordings were analyzed to obtain pronunciation errors from the speech and then transcribed. The result of this study revealed that [œ], [i:], [a], [au], and [er] were frequently made errors. These sounds were substituted for several sounds.<sup>6</sup>

The third previous study is “pronunciation error produced by the third semester students of STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo.” This study investigates the types of pronunciation errors and the factors that cause them, as seen in the video. In this study, pronunciation errors refer to mistakes made in producing English diphthongs. The subjects were third-semester students of STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo. This study employed descriptive qualitative methods to explore the findings. The researcher utilized the theories of English diphthongs by Gerald Kelly and Yuliyanto Sabat, along with the theories of factors causing pronunciation errors by Ladefoged. The data analysis steps in this study include identification, classification, and description. The results indicate that the researcher discovered two types of pronunciation errors: substitution and omission. Additionally, three factors contribute to pronunciation errors. These factors are, first, the influence of English pronunciation and spelling; second, differences in sound systems between L1 and L2; and third, inconsistencies in English vowels.<sup>7</sup>

This study has several similarities and differences compared to previous studies that also reveal vowel pronunciation errors among second language learners of English. All four studies have the same primary focus: to uncover pronunciation errors (mispronunciation), particularly vowel

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<sup>6</sup> Yon Visoni, and Leni Marlina, “Students’ Pronunciation Errors on Vowels at Spoken English Activities (Speech) Class at English Department Universitas Negeri Padang”, *Journal of English Language Teaching*, Vol. 9 No. 3 488-494, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Anggun Purnomo A. “Pronunciation Error Produced by The Third Semester of STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo”, *Repository.universitaspgridelta*.2019.

sounds in English. Each study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to present the data. Additionally, all studies utilized audio or video recordings as data sources to analyze pronunciation errors. The analysis process relies on phonological theory and phonetic transcription to identify types of pronunciation errors. In addition, the fourth study showed that the differences between the mother tongue (L1) sound system and the English (L2) sound system are one of the main factors responsible for vowel pronunciation errors.

However, some fundamental differences exist between this study and the three previous studies regarding the object, learning context, and focus of sound analysis. This study examines the vowel pronunciation errors of grade VIII students at SMPN 10 Kota Serang. The subjects are junior high school students, who are still in the basic stage of learning English. This contrasts with the three previous studies, all of which focused on college students.

This study not only observed one type of vowel but also examined how junior high school students pronounce long vowels and diphthongs. Consequently, the study's scope was broadened to identify any vowel errors made by these students. The findings of this study are important for developing pronunciation teaching strategies that meet the abilities and needs of junior high school students who are still in the early stages of learning English.