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# STUDENTS' AWARENESS IN COPING WITH PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS: A STUDY AMONG THE SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT FKIP AT UNIVERSITY OF MATARAM

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Abstract: Students' awareness is one of the challenges in language learning, one of which is aware of strategies used and the problems in pronunciation to be able to correctly produce and pronounce the sounds in the target language. This study aims at analysing how concerned students are with pronunciation problems of English, the problems in English pronunciation, and the strategies used by students in coping with pronunciation problems. Mixed method, both quantitative and qualitative method is applied in this study. There are 20 students of English department in University of Mataram taken as sample in this study. The data reveals that, with the detail 11 items, most of the students are concerned, and 4 more items are the things that they are not concerned about. Meanwhile for the pronunciation problems, dental fricatives were the most common errors made by the students and followed by vowel sound and alveolar fricative as the second most error sounds, also pronunciation type of alveolar plosive, postalveolar fricative, retroflex plosive, affricative, and labiodental fricative were the least mispronounced. Thus students were also interviewed for pronunciation strategies, the result shows that most students used more than one strategies. This result is expected to give the students further information about new alternatives of strategies in coping with pronunciation problems to improve English speaking skill and enhance the theories and methods in the teaching of pronunciation.

**Keywords:** Awareness; Pronunciation Problems; Students' Strategies

### **INTRODUCTION**

Pronunciation is a method of producing sounds that are used to give meaning when a speaker speaks. Language features beyond the level of individual segments, including consonants and vowels (segments), stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, phrasing (segment features), and vocal presentation (speech quality). All of the above parts work together when a speaker speaks (Gilakjani et al., 2016). Thus, problems with one can affect the other, making a person's pronunciation easier or harder to understand.

Pronunciation plays an important role in learning a second language. When learning a foreign language, learners usually have trouble pronouncing the target language

because the new sounds do not always match those of the native language. This is a difficult issue for many teachers and learners to deal with, therefore some have called for it to be expressed explicitly (Çakır & Baytar, 2014). The causes of English learning failures in Indonesia seem to be strongly influenced by learners' mother tongue phonological features. Differences in the phonological features of learners' mother tongue impose some limitations on which learners can afford to perform English skills, especially speaking. Negative emotions and behaviors, such as fear of being laughed at, are a major cause of failure (Arafiq et al, 2020).

Student pronunciation awareness is one of the challenges in language learning. Changing fossilized mistakes is a gradual process that occurs when students recognize their problems and make systematic efforts to overcome those mistakes. It translates the sound from L1 to the closest sound, suggesting that learners should focus on listening. The importance of pre-generative perception has also been emphasized by other researchers, but contact with the target language alone is not sufficient (Luo, 2016). However, pronunciation has a strong relationship with language comprehension. How people sound to interlocutor is neither trivial nor unimportant. This is how people project identity as individuals and how they express belonging to a particular community as social beings. But pronunciation also plays a role in "intelligibility," whether or not a person can get message across (Burns & Seidlhofer, 2019).

According to Pennington and Rogerson (2019), rather than defining pronunciation according to an external criterion or accuracy, nativeness or nativelikeness, or a general model of pronunciation ability, an appropriate way to conceptualize L2 pronunciation is intelligibility, which Munro et al. (2006) define the extent to which a speaker's utterance is actually understood. Articulating spoken words can be difficult for students. Pronunciation changes are related to the phonological level as they relate to the habit of using words in everyday speech. Because Indonesian speaks many languages, especially English, they tend to use English with a different phonetic order than Indonesian (Renanda et al, 2020).

One of the most common foreign language learning problems faced by learners is phonetic and phonemic challenges. Therefore, speaking and communication skills, including properly mastering the correct pronunciation of target languages, seem far ahead. The influence of learners' perceptions of the phonetic and phonological aspects of English on the acquisition of adequate speaking and pronunciation skills is believed to be poorly studied (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2020). The next problem is lack of practice. This indicates that the student is having trouble in speaking. Language limitations for students are poor pronunciation and lack of knowledge of English standards and conventions. Despite their best efforts, students struggle to master the language (Baharuddin et al, 2022).

Strategy is a kind of process or technique to support a situation where to take an action and change it to be better. In learning pronunciation as part of oral communication, there is also strategy that used by the lecturer to manage the learning process to have some modification in their own way. In particular, lecturer uses some method to make the learning process more attractive.

Based on the primary issues mentioned above, the researcher needs a more in-depth

study to examine students in coping with pronunciation problems. This is the reason the researcher needs to investigate it to conduct this study with the title "Students' Strategies In Coping With Pronunciation Problems: A Study Among The Second Semester Students Of English Department FKIP at University of Mataram."

### RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a mixed method. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. According to Ivankova, Creswell, and Clark (2007), using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed researchers to take advantage of the best of both worlds to initiate a detailed analysis of the data and develop a more meaningful and some insight. Mulyani and Sartika (2019) conducted a study using a mixed method approach, quantitative combination and qualitative. A qualitative methodological approach was applied to this study, as interviews were about students' strategies, problems and processes of pronunciation. The purpose of this research was to know students' awareness, strategies and attitudes toward pronunciation of English words. Quantitative method was also used in this research. Students were given questionnaire regarding their awareness of their pronunciation in learning English.

The data pronunciation problems were also taken from their class activity held by the lecturer, which was advertising a brand using audio visual app (YouTube) to promote their brand, and this was to observe and track their awareness and strategies in coping with pronunciation problems, as well as a real proof of this research source of the data. Data for this study was gathered through questionaires, interview and audio visual material. In this step All participants filled out the same questionnaire, and each question or item contained possible answers that the participant must select. Response categories often take the form of rating scales (e.g., 3-point or 5-point rating scales), rankings, semantic differences, and checklists.

The data was collected through a questionnaire seeking students' awareness toward English pronunciation problems. It consisted of items regarding pronunciation to gather data from respondents about their attitudes, experiences, or opinions. In order to derive students' awareness of pronunciation problems, a ranking questionnaire with4point scalewas developed consisting of 15 statements with discrete points of Totally Unconcerned (1), Unconcerned (2), Concerned (3), and Very Concerned (4). The items in the questionnaire were the modified ones from a study by ningrum (2021) and it was produced based on the question and purpose of this study. Meanwhile, the interview was conducted face to face. It took two days to conduct the interview adjusting with the students' midterm schedule and availability. The type of questions were designed to find the students' strategies in coping with pronunciation problems, the reason of students using those strategies and the strategies mostly used by them. This interview was carried out in person with each of the 6 students from class 2A in the English education department. The interview consisted of seven questions. Before starting, a brief explanation of the interview was given to the students using bilingual to ensure clear understanding and facilitate the conversation. The use of visual materials has the benefit that since images are so common in our culture, individuals can relate to them quickly.

Students' assignment in the form of Youtube videos were used as to collect the data in this research.

In this research, the data of students' concerns were collected through the questionnaire process. Questionnaire was sent through online to the students in class 2A. There were 20 students who were available to willingly answer the question, from student 1 (S1) to student 20 (S20) took a week to receive the answers. 7 videos of students talking about their products were used to analyse and acquire the data on the implementation of the prblems of English pronunciation faced by students which took time to 3 days of analysation. On different days, 6 students of class 2A were interviewed for the data of strategies used by students based on the theory of Peterson (2000) classification of pronunciation learning strategies (PLS). This resulted from the situation at the university following the middle semester schedule. As a result, the interview was conducted with S1, S2, and S3 on 12th of April 2023, and with S4, S5, S6 on 14th of April 2023.

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **Findings**

The findings are categorized into three forms, they are 1) Students' awareness about pronunciation problems of English, 2) Problems with English pronunciation made by the students, and 3) The strategies used by students to cope with pronunciation problems.

# 1. Students' awareness on pronunciation problems of English based on total students.

The numbers of data provided below present the percentage of students who express awareness about their pronunciation problems according to the items they chose. The results indicate that a majority of the students are concerned about certain things as provided on the tables. Based on the data, most students are concerned about these things:

### a. Level of Concern

Table 1. The percentage level of students' concern

No	Statement	Top Percentage in
		Level of Concern
1.	I feel like pronunciation is important in communication	100% (20)
2.	I find that my pronunciation can be improved if I start imitating	100% (20)
	correct pronunciation	
3.	I will try to change my pronunciation in a right way as soon as I	100% (20)
	know the correct one	
4.	I feel not confident when someone does not get my point while	95% (19)
	speaking because of my pronunciation	
5.	I do not have enough knoewledge about pronunciation that leads to	95% (19)
	errors in my speaking	
6.	I feel more self-concious about my pronunciation when I am alone	95% (19)
	than in public or with friends and anyone	

7.	I know the definition of pronunciation	90% (18)
8.	It frightens me when I mispronounce words while speaking	90% (18)
9.	I start being not confident when I find myself mispronouncing certain words	90% (18)
10.	I focus more on the point that I am talking about than my pronunciation	90% (18)
11.	I pay so much attention on my pronunciation when speaking	60% (12)

The data indicates that a majority of the students who participated in the questionnaire expressed their awareness regarding pronunciation problems. Specifically, the table above describes the things that they are very aware of from the top to lowest percentage of concern as the proof.

### b. Level of Unconcern

Table 2. The percentage level of students' unconcern

No	Statement	Top Percentage in Level of
		Unconcern
1.	I read aloud, so that it helps me improve my pronunciation	80% (16)
2.	I do not pay attention on phonetic symbols when I pronounce	80% (16)
	English words	
3.	I am always worried making mistakes in my pronunciation	65% (13)
	when speaking in English	
4.	I am concerned when someone mispronounces, but I am not	60% (12)
	when I do the same	

The data above show the most responses in the category of unconcerned, the majority of participants chose following items regarding their awareness of English pronunciation based on their situation and experience about the items they chose.

# 1. Male

The numbers of data provided above present the percentage of total 8 male students who expressed their awareness about pronunciation problems according to the items they chose. The results indicate that there are 11 items that they are concerned about, 2 items that they are not concerned about as provided and 2 more items of the data found that they are equal on both concern and unconcern. Based on the answers, here are the data that shows things which most male students are concerned about from the highest to the lowest percentage:

Table 3. The percentage of male students' concern

No	Statement	Top Percentage in Level
		of Concern
1.	It frightens me when I mispronounce words while speaking	100% (8)
2.	I feel like pronunciation is important in communication	100% (8)
3.	I start being not confident when I find myself mispronouncing	100% (8)
	certain words	

4.	I find that my pronunciation can be improved if I start imitating	100% (8)
	correct pronunciation	
5.	I feel not confident when someone does not get my point while	100% (8)
	speaking because of my pronunciation	
6.	I do not have enough knoewledge about pronunciation that leads	100% (8)
	to errors in my speaking	
7.	I will try to change my pronunciation in a right way as soon as I	100% (8)
	know the correct one	
8.	I focus more on the point that I am talking about than my	100% (8)
	pronunciation	
9.	I feel more self-concious about my pronunciation when I am alone	87% (7)
	than in public or with friends and anyone	
10.	I know the definition of pronunciaton	75% (6)
11.	I pay so much attention on my pronunciation when speaking	63% (5)

There are 8 total males in this research, and based on the data above, majority of male students in the class are concerned about the things mentioned in the table based on the highest to the lowest percentage. However, there are still things that they are not concerned about as what this following table shows:

Table 4. The percentage level of male students' unconcern

No	Statement	Top Percentage in Level of
		Unconcern
1.	I read aloud, so that it helps me improve my pronunciation	100% (8)
2.	I do not pay attention on phonetic symbols when I	87% (7)
	pronounce English words	

This table presents the data of male students who are not concerned about the things mentioned in the table. Surprisingly, there are only two things that most of male students are not concerned about in this study. However, two more things discovered that the male students are equal in the level of concern and unconcern, the amount of total 8 male students equally fall between concern and unconcern as what this following table shows:

Table 5. The percentage level of male students' equal concern and unconcern

No	Statement	Percentage in Level	Percentage in Level
		of Unconcern	of Unconcern
1.	I am always worried making mistakes in my	50% (4)	50% (4)
	pronunciation when speaking in English		
2.	I am concerned when someone	50% (4)	50% (4)
	mispronounces, but I am not when I do the		
	same		

# 1. Problems of English Pronunciation Faced by Students

To find out the problems of English pronunciation faced by students, this research used their assignment in the form of videos as the audiovisual material to collect data from the students' pronunciation in the video. The data was collected based on the researcher's knowledge and analysis of their pronunciation in the videos. The pronunciation was judged using (AE) American English standard. Eighteen (18) sounds of mispronounced words were discovered during the analysation on the videos, the students were speaking in english in the video talking about product advertisement. Seven videos were analysed with the average time length of 1-2 minutes videos of them speaking in English.

Table 6. Types of pronunciation errors

Pronunciation Errors	Frequency
Voiceless alveolar plosive (/t/)	1
Voiceless postalveolar fricative /ʃ/	1
Central mid vowel /ə/	2
Voiceless dental fricative $(\theta)$	3
Voiceless retroflex plosive (/t/)	1
Voiced dental fricative (/ð/)	3
Voiced labiodental fricative (/v/)	1
Voiceless labiodental fricative (/f/)	1
Front open-mid vowel ( $/\epsilon$ /)	2
Voiceless alveolar fricative (/s/)	2
Back open-mid vowel (/ʌ/)	1
Total	18 mispronounced words

The table above presented number of error sounds made in the video that resulted to the total number from each mispronounced words with its pointed error sound on the left colomn of the table. The findings indicate that the highest error sound occured in the videos was achieved by dental fricative. In the videos, among all errors analysed, dental fricatives were the most common errors made by the students which the data presented 3 times repeatedly mispronounced words with the same sound, and followed by vowel sound and alveolar fricative as the second most error sounds. Meanwhile pronunciation type of alveolar plosive, postalveolar fricative, retroflex plosive, affricative, and labiodental fricative were the least mispronounced with 1 number of each word mispronounced. Here are the errors:

Table 7. Pronunciation errors

Words	Sound Types	Incorrect
		(Error Sounds)
Night/naɪt/	Voiceless alveolar plosive	/g/
	/t/	/naɪg/
Deli <u>ci</u> ous /dɪˈlɪʃ.əs/	Voiceless postalveolar	/s/
	fricative /ʃ/	/dıˈlɪs.əs/
Chocolate / tsa:k.lət/	Central mid vowel /ə/	/i/
		/'tʃaːk.lit/
Some <u>th</u> ing /'sʌmˌθɪŋ/, Heal <u>th</u> /'hɛlθ/,	Voiceless dental fricative	/t/
Thousand/'θaυzənd/	/θ/	/ˈsʌmˌtɪŋ/, /ˈhɛłt/,
		/'taʊzənd/
Better /ˈbεtə-/	Voiceless retroflex plosive	/d/

	/t/	/'beda-/
Margarine / /mardʒəˈrin/	Central mid vowel /ə/	/ɛ/
	(Schwa sound)	/mardze'rin/
Without /wi'ðaut/, This /'ðɪs/, That /'ðæt/	Voiced dental fricative /ð/	/d/
		/wi'daut/, /'dis/, /'dæt/
O <u>f</u> /əv/	Voiced labiodental fricative	/p/
	/v/	/əp/
Feel /'fil/	Voiceless labiodental	/p/
	fricative /f/	/'pil/
Regret /II 'giet/, Selected /sə'lektəd /	Front open-mid vowel /ε/	/I/
		/.ıɪˈg.ɪIt/, /səˈlIktəd /
Soy /soɪ/, Icy /'aɪsi/	Voiceless alveolar	/ʃ/
	Fricative /s/	/ʃɔɪ/, /ˈaɪʃi/
Musty /'masti/	Back open-mid vowel/n/	/ə/
		/ˈməstɪ/

# 2. The strategies used by students in coping with pronunciation problems of English

The strategies used by students in this research were categorized based on the theory of Peterson (2000) on the classification of pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) within the framework of Oxford's (1990) learning strategies (LS). Six students from second semester of English education study program were purposively interviewed to questions related to pronunciation learning strategies (PLS). The researcher divided the strategies into six different parts of categories based on the theory of Peterson (2000) within the framework of Oxford's (1990) learning strategies (LS) as follows:

Table 8 . Pronunciation learning strategy

No.	Peterson's PLS	Oxford's LS	Responses
1.	Representing sounds in memory	Memory	3
2.	Practising naturalistically	Cognitive	4
3.	Formally practicing with sounds		
4.	Analysing the sound system		
5.	Using proximal articulation	Compensation	6
	Using electronic devices and other		
	works of reference for help		
6.	Finding out about a target language	Metacognitive	3
	pronunciation		
7.	Setting goals and objectives		
8.	Planning for a language task		
9.	Self-evaluating		
10.	Using humour to lower anxiety	Affective	-
11.	Asking for help	Social	3
12.	Cooperating with peers		
	Total Strategies		19

### a. Memory

Creating the appropriate drawn situation or a thing in memory is one of the crucial elements in speech improvement. Detailed information about memory strategy according to the participants inteviewed as follows:

S2 (Student 2): "I would learn from my mistakes and remember the mistakes I made to recall the memory of it and make a better pronunciation"

### b. Cognitive

By recognizing the significance of these concepts, it can simplify the process of learning pronunciation and make it less overwhelming. As what the students decribed in their cognitive strategies down below:

S1 (Student 1): "By reading story and novel makes me good at pronunciatian and talking to native speaker"

# c. Compensation

When it comes to improving pronunciation, compensation refers to the techniques and strategies people use to tackle challenges when speaking a foreign or second language.

S1: "Watch from movies or YouTube"

S2: "I learn from the internet for m pronunciation strategy"

S3: "Usually, I use Google translation to improve my speaking skills, especially pronunciation, because google translation has pronunciation check option and also watch movies"

In short, compensation is also suitable strategy for improving pronunciation problem, students use it for accuracy and gradually work towards achieving a more natural and native-like pronunciation through continuous practice.

# d. Metacognitive

The awareness and understanding individuals have about their own pronunciation abilities and processes are the definition of metacognitive strategy in the context of to overcome pronunciation problems. This is proven by the students' answers in interview:

S4: "yes, I practice"

S5: "Just talk and speak, that's how I improve my pronunciation

#### e. Affective

Pronunciation strategy in the form of affective is used to overcome problems in pronunciation with fun talk and include emotional feeling in the process of improving pronunciation skill whichhelp self confidence, motivation, mindset and way of thinking during the speaking and pronunciation. Nevertheless, none of the students interviewed used this strategy, they found themselves more suitable in the other strategies.

#### f. Social

In the context of pronunciation, social strategy is a way of communicating ideas with people, helping and asking people or friends to correct one's pronunciation. And here are what students answered based on the strategy:

S2: "I often have my friend to fix my pronunciation when I make mistakes in it"

#### **Discussion**

### 1. Students' awareness on pronunciation problems of English

Question According to Schütz (2007) in the theory of Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, when students are aware with their pronunciation problems, it can be interpreted as the affective filter, it is the emotional and psychological factors that can either help or hinder language acquisition. When students have significant awareness about their pronunciation problems, their affective filter is encouraged, resulting in increased anxiety, self-consciousness, and a lack of confidence in speaking.

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis suggests that these negative emotions can impede language learning by discouraging students from taking risks, practicing speaking, and engaging in meaningful communication. The awareness over pronunciation problems reflects the impact of the affective filter on language acquisition. Therefore, the students should be aware and lead their awareness into positive emotion by strategies they have against the problems. Based on the gender, the awareness of certain problems between male and female is clearly seen and diverse:

#### a. Male

The results indicate that there are 11 items that they are concerned about, 2 items that they are not concerned about and 2 more items of the data found that they are equal on both concern and unconcern.

### b. Female

Meanwhile in the female data, the results indicate that there are 11 items that they are concerned about, and 4 more items of the data found that they are not concerned about.

# 2. Problems Faced by Students In English Pronunciation

Most students over pronounced some words that led to mispronunciation, and the influnce of mother tounge seemed to be the problem as well, some other were affected by their mother toungue due to certain sounds that do not match in the target language that they learned.

#### a. Sasak language speakers

Most of Lombok students tend to mispronounce certain words that have the letter f such as "of" /əv/, and "feel" /fil/ in a sentence to be /p/. The words produce fricative sounds in the letter f as represented in the table below:

O <u>f</u> /əv/	Voiced labiodental	/p/ - /əp/
	fricative /v/	
Feel /'fil/	Voiceless	/p/ - /'pil/
	labiodental fricative	
	/ <b>f</b> /	

### b. Mbojo language speakers

There were two sounds found that the mbojo language speakers mispronounced, voiceless retroflex plosive /t/, and middle central vowel /ə/ were mispronounced with voiced alveolar plosive /d/ and front open-mid vowel / $\epsilon$ / as represented in the following table.

Better / beta-/	Voiceless retroflex	/d/	
	plosive /t/	/ˈbɛdə·/	
Margarine /	Middle central	/ε/	
/mardzəˈrin/	vowel /ə/	/mardzeˈrin/	
	(Schwa sound)		

# 3. Strategies used by students in coping with pronunciation problems

For the last research question, the study found that the participants used 5 strategies to cope with their pronunciation problems according to the theory of pronunciation strategies category of Peterson's (2000) within the framework of Oxford's (1990) learning strategies (LS). As shown on the data, the participants were not interested in using affective strategy as they were more focused on having the other strategies which worked more effective on them. In conclusion, most of students use more than one strategy to cope with their pronunciation, and those were categorized as memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies in the context of pronunciation.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The majority of the students in this research are aware with their pronunciation errors when speaking based on certain things. One particular area of difficulty explored in this research is the production of sounds that prove challenging to pronounce accurately, and most students have more than one strategy, it can be beneficial for the students to take it into positive emotion for better strategy recognition. This suggests that in conducting further research, it need to explore more about students' awareness on pronunciation problems than what was provided in this study. And explore about the existence of IPA symbols help students to pronounce easier, yet it should not be an excuse for students to improve their speaking skills. And this research can be further source and example to investigate more strategies and errors that students make during speaking

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