

An Investigation of Error in Velar Consonant Pronunciation Performed by University Students

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| Received: 23/04/2024

| Revised: 28/05/2024

| Accepted: 01/06/2024

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Abstract

Pronunciation refers to the manner in which humans articulate the sounds of a particular language. Language proficiency is crucial for effective communication with others. In the event that our pronunciation is inadequate, we may have difficulties in being comprehended, regardless of the accuracy of our grammar and vocabulary. The objective of this research is to identify errors in the production of Velar consonants by second-semester students enrolled in the English education study program at Muhammadiyah University Purworejo during the academic year 2023/2024. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research methodology. The research focused on second semester students studying English language education. The researcher selected a sample of 20 students for the investigation. The researchers used a pronunciation test as the device to get the data. The investigation revealed a significant occurrence of mispronunciations in the final position of the /g/ sound. Students often exhibited a proclivity to replace the /k/ sound with the /g/ pronunciation, as exemplified in terms like "big" and "beg." The consonant /g/ in the last position is unquestionably a strange consonant for Indonesian students. As a result, they often replaced that sound with the /k/ sound. Furthermore, students faced difficulties in determining the sound of vowels or consonants that come after encountering the consonant /ŋ/. For example, the phonetic representation of /'fɪŋgər/ changes to /'fɪŋdʒər/, while the phonetic representation of /'sɪŋər/ turns into /sɪŋgər.

Keywords: consonant, mispronunciation, velar

1. Introduction

English is a compulsory subject that students have to learn from high school to university level. English is regarded as a foreign language in Indonesia (Maiza, 2020). Students who learn English are taught basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking is considered a productive skills and cannot be isolated from listening skills. When people communicate, they make utterances that should be meaningful. Speaking is an activity where people can communicate with each other. At least two people are involved in this activity, as a speaker and a listener. In terms of speaking, there are some micro skills. The students should master all components of

speaking skill, namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency and comprehension (Siregar, 2017). One of the most important is pronunciation. English pronunciation is one of the most important sub-skill in speaking skill (Rafael, 2019), which needs to be learned by students because it is related to spoken communication (Grandyna, 2018). A correct and suitable pronunciation is required to communicate effectively since it influences understanding of the meaning.

Pronunciation is the way we make sounds of the language how and where we place the stress, and how we use pitch and intonation to show how we are feeling and what we mean. English pronunciation is one of the basic skill and plays an important role in learning English (Mukmin, 2020). In pronunciation, there are so many aspects or elements to be known. In supra-segmental aspects, there are stress, intonation, and pitch. In segmental aspects consist of vowels, diphthongs, trip thongs, and consonants. Both segmental and supra segmental sounds of English are important because they differentiate the meaning of the English words

The sounds of the English language can be categorized as vowels and consonants. Speech sounds of a language are classified into vowels (pure vowels and diphthongs) and consonants (Rustipa, 2009). There are numerous ways to pronounce English consonants, which can be categorized into three groups. They are as follows: a) determined by the location of optimum obstruction, including bilabial, labio-dental, dental, alveolar, palatal, velar, and glottal consonants; b) determined by the manner in which the articulators obstruct the air; affricative, fricative, and nasal consonants; and c) determined by the activity of the vocal cords, including voiced and voiceless consonants. Concerned with the initial category of English consonant sounds, the researcher is most interested in velar consonants. Velar is a class of sounds produced by raising the back of the tongue toward the soft palate or velum. The sound of velar or the start and end sounds such as kick /kɪk/ and gig /gɪg/ and the final sound of /bæk/ and bag /bæg/ (Senowarsito & Ardini, 2016)

Unfortunately, learning can be difficult since the phonetic elements of the English and Indonesian languages are clearly distinct. It is in line with Srakaew's opinion (2021). He says that pronunciation is one of the problems in the field of English language teaching as the second or foreign language. The English pronunciation is hard and perplexing since the vowel and consonant system has many different sounds. It explains why non-native speakers struggle with English pronunciation. Zhang & Yin, (2009) stated that a particular sound which does not exist in the native language can therefore pose a difficulty for the second language learners to produce or some times to try to substitute those sounds with similar ones in their mother tongue. While it happened to the second language learners, it is obvious that the foreign language learners would get more difficulties. It is stated that students who learn pronunciation called good pronunciation of English, while students who have difficulty pronouncing are called pronunciation of poor (Gilakjani, 2016).

Furthermore, a significant number of individuals who are acquiring and utilizing the English language frequently neglect to give any consideration to their pronunciation.

Some individuals underestimate and disregard it. They believe that pronunciation is of lesser importance compared to speaking, and that pronunciation is less significant than grammar and vocabulary. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that pronunciation holds significant importance. Pronunciation is often neglected in many English language instruction sessions. Pronunciation is a crucial feature of language, particularly in speaking. However, many teachers of foreign languages lack awareness of this fact. Misunderstandings in communication sometimes arise from mispronunciation of words or poor intonation. For instance, if an individual articulates the terms fog and fox, see and she, unwell and six with minimal distinctions, it can potentially result in a misinterpretation. Furthermore, proficient pronunciation might provide an added advantage to those who have mastered it. People are astonished by your English language proficiency and pronunciation skills when they hear you talk in English. The determining factor is the proficiency of the enunciation. Proficiency in pronunciation can enhance your self-assurance when delivering speeches or presentations to large audiences. It is increasingly evident that pronunciation should not be ignored. It is imperative to make learning English a top priority. It is essential for English learners to allocate a same amount of time and focus to pronunciation as they do to grammar and vocabulary. According to Cakir & Baytar (2014), pronunciation impacts the attitude held by language learners, and also, accurate pronunciation of English words helps in overcoming anxiety in the communication process. Similarly Yusriati & Hasibuan (2019) state that pronunciation plays an important role in communication because pronunciation errors can affect the clarity of a person's delivery

This research aims to investigate the errors in the pronunciation of Velar consonants made by university students, based on the aforementioned information. Following the disclosure of the research findings, it is imperative for teachers to adopt innovative methods in teaching pronunciation. One innovation involves the utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for teaching pronunciation to students. (ICT) can enhance and streamline the process of learning and teaching for students. ICT can serve as a supportive system in education to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process.

2. Method

The research included in descriptive qualitative method because the collected data was in the form of utterances which contained pronunciation errors spoken by the second semester students of English Education Department Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo in academic year 2022/2023. This research focused on 20 (twenty) students to find out error in pronouncing velar sounds. The instrument of collecting the data that was used by the researchers is pronunciation test. The data used in this research is tongue position in producing velar consonants as follows: /k/, /g/, and /ŋ/. The researchers used the recording when the second semester students pronouncing the given list. First, the researchers tried to get the recording while the students pronounce the sentences. Then,

the researchers reviewed and listened the record in order to observe the students when presenting the given list contained velar sounds. Finally, the researchers started to transcribe the utterance which contained some pronunciation errors made by the students in order to make it easy in analyzing them.

3. Findings and Discussion

After collecting and analyzing the data, it was discovered that some students made error while producing Velar consonants. The data distribution can be seen in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3.

Table 1. Student Percentage on Pronouncing Velar Consonant /k/

Velar Consonant	Consonant Position	List of Words	Correct		Incorrect		
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
/k/	Initial	<i>Cap</i>	14	70%	6	30%	
		<i>Course</i>	17	85%	3	15%	
		<i>Come</i>	17	85%	3	15%	
	Medial	<i>School</i>	20	100%	0	0%	
		<i>Locker</i>	20	100%	0	0%	
		<i>Soccer</i>	20	100%	0	0%	
		<i>Think</i>	20	100%	0	0%	
		Final	<i>Clock</i>	20	100%	0	0%
			<i>Comic</i>	20	100%	0	0%

By analyzing the data distribution, it is evident that there is a certain number of errors made by students when pronouncing the velar consonant /k/ in three different word positions. In initial position, there were 19 students (95%) who answered correctly, and 1 student (5%) who answered incorrectly. Out of the 19 students, 95% answered correctly on the word "course", whereas 1 student, representing 5%, answered incorrectly. Out of the 20 students 19 (95%) pronounced the word "come" correctly, while 1 (5%) mispronounced it.

Switching to the medial position, all 20 students correctly said the phrases "school," "locker," and "soccer." Finally, all 20 students were able to correctly pronounce the terms "think," "clock," and "comic." When comparing the three consonant positions in producing velar consonant (/k/), it is discovered that the dominating student error is producing (/k/) in the initial position.

Table 2 Student Percentage on Pronouncing Velar Consonant /g/

Velar Consonant	Consonant Position	List of Words	Correct		Incorrect	
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
/g/	Initial	<i>Group</i>	19	95%	1	5%
		<i>Get</i>	20	100%	0	0%
		<i>Give</i>	19	95%	1	5%
	Medial	<i>Trigger</i>	18	90%	2	10%
		<i>Eagle</i>	19	95%	1	5%
		<i>Ago</i>	18	90%	2	10%
	Final	<i>Flag</i>	19	95%	1	5%
		<i>Beg</i>	20	100%	0	0%
		<i>Big</i>	19	95%	0	5%

The percentage of errors made by students when pronouncing the velar consonant /g/ in three different consonant positions is presented in Table 2. To begin with, one student (5%) erroneously pronouncing the word "group" in the Initial position, while 19 students (95%) did so accurately. The word "get" was pronounced correctly by all twenty students. Of the total number of students, 19 (or 95%) were able to spell "give" accurately, while 1 student (5%) made an error in its pronunciation.

With regard to the medial position, the following percentages of students were able to correctly pronounce the following words: 18 (90%) were able to pronounce "trigger" correctly, while 2 (10%) were incorrect; 19 (95%) could pronounce "eagle" correctly, while 1 (5%) did so incorrectly; 18 (90%) were able to pronounce "ago" correctly, while 2 (10%) were not yet able to do so. Following that, one student (five percent) erroneously articulating the word "flag" while 19 students (95 percent) were in the final position. Furthermore, fourteen students (70%) correctly articulated the word "beg.", while 6 students (30%) did so incorrectly. Eight student (40%) pronounced the word "big" inaccurately, while the remaining 12 students (95%) pronounced it correctly. When comparing the three consonant positions involved in producing the velar consonant (/g/), it is determined that the final position (/g/) is where students make the most frequent error.

Table 3 Student Percentage on Pronouncing Velar Consonant /ŋ/

Velar Consonant	Consonant Position	List of Words	Correct		Incorrect	
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
/ŋ/	Medial	<i>Finger</i>	11	55%	9	45%
		<i>Singer</i>	14	70%	6	30%
		<i>Thinker</i>	19	95%	1	5%
	Final	<i>Sing</i>	19	95%	1	5%
		<i>Thing</i>	19	95%	1	5%
		<i>Wing</i>	18	90%	2	10%

The velar consonant /ŋ/ is limited to two locations, specifically medial and final. In the middle position, 11 students (55%) pronounced the word "finger" correctly, whereas 9 students (45%) pronounced it incorrectly. Out of the total of 20 students, 14 students (70%) pronounced the word "singer" correctly, whereas 6 students (30%) said it incorrectly. In addition, out of the 20 students, 19 (95%) pronounced the term "mango" correctly, while 1 student (5%) said it incorrectly.

In the final position, the word "sing" was correctly pronounced by 19 students (95%), while 1 student (5%) pronounced it incorrectly. Out of the total of 19 students, 95% pronounced the word "thing" properly, while 5% pronounced it inaccurately. Regarding the word "wing," 18 students (90%) pronounced it accurately, while 2 students (10%) pronounced it incorrectly. When comparing the two positions of consonants in making the velar consonant /ŋ/, it has been shown that the most common error made by students is in producing /ŋ/ in the middle position.

Upon performing computations and conducting analysis on the data shown in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3, it becomes evident that a significant percentage of students possess the ability to articulate words involving dental consonants. Based on the statistics in Table 1, the occurrence of mispronunciation in words containing the letter /k/ is extremely uncommon. This consonant is known to students because its tongue position in pronunciation is the same as the consonant k (/k/), which is used in their mother tongue, notably Javanese and Indonesian.

However, according to Table 2, numerous mispronunciations occur in the final position of the /g/ sound. Students have a tendency to substitute the /g/ pronunciation for the /k/ sound, as in the words "big" and "beg." The consonant /g/ in the final position is undoubtedly an unfamiliar consonant for Indonesian students. Consequently, they frequently substitute that sound with the /k/ sound.

Students encounter challenges when attempting to determine the pronunciation of vowels or consonants following the encounter with the consonant /ŋ/, as illustrated in Table 3. For instance, the pronunciation of /'fɪŋgər/ becomes /'fɪŋdʒər/, and the pronunciation of /'sɪŋər/ transforms into /sɪŋgər/. This occurs because students continue to have limited knowledge and comprehension of English phonetic pronunciation rules, particularly the mid-word consonant /ŋ/. When pronouncing the consonant ŋ/ in the second syllable, the student should maintain the following tongue position: gently press the base of the tongue against the velum while air exits through the nose to produce the sound ŋ/. This action induces a buzzing sensation in the head. Subsequently, the student should perform a pop-back motion on the base of the tongue, where the glottis retracts and the lungs exert pressure against the airflow in order to produce the consonant j/. However, certain pupils pronounce it without performing a back-pop; rather, they make contact with the base of the lower teeth and the midsection of the tongue using the roof of the mouth. Subsequently, an exhalation of air occurs via the aperture situated between the tongue and the roof of the mouth, coinciding with the tongue retracting. The phoneme is modified to a consonant /dʒ/. The intended pronunciation of /'fɪŋgər/ is therefore altered to /'fɪŋdʒər/.

4. Conclusion

In this research, the researcher analyzed the students' problem in pronouncing Velar consonants (/k/, /g/, /ŋ/). In this study, twenty participants were actively engaged, contributing to the data through recordings. The researcher counted the percentage of errors in pronouncing Velar consonants sound. It is found dominant error /g/ sound in final position

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