



An Analysis of Silent Letter Mispronunciation Made by Students 7th Grade

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Abstract. This research aims to examine the mispronunciation of silent letters produced by Indonesian junior high school students when learning English. Mispronunciation refers to the incorrect pronunciation of words, which often occurs because English contains phonological features that are not found in the Indonesian language. Many pronunciation errors are caused by silent letters such as gh and h, which are frequently articulated by students despite being silent in standard English pronunciation. This research was conducted with eighteen seventh-grade students at a junior high school. A qualitative research method was employed, in which data were collected through audio recordings of the students' pronunciation and subsequently described and analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques. The findings reveal that most participants incorrectly pronounced words containing silent letters, indicating that silent-letter pronunciation remains a major challenge for beginner English learners. These errors were influenced by first-language interference, limited pronunciation practice, and insufficient exposure to authentic English speech. The study concludes that English teachers should provide more intensive pronunciation instruction, incorporate phonetic awareness activities, and utilize audio-based learning materials to improve students' pronunciation accuracy and communicative competence in learning English.

Keywords: English Language Learning; Junior High School Students; Mispronunciation; Phonology; Silent Letter Pronunciation.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the international languages. It has become a universal language that is widely used as the main language in many developed countries around the world. Many countries also use English as the official language in international meetings (Antika & Afriyanti, 2021). However, because English is a foreign language, Indonesian learners often find out difficult to speak and pronounce English words correctly. Sometimes, the written form of the word differs from its spoken form. This has become a major problem for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Learning English pronunciation is particularly challenging because English words differ significantly from Indonesian words. In Indonesian, words are generally pronounced as they are spelled, whereas English uses a phonetic system in which pronunciation may differ from spelling. Therefore, understanding correct pronunciation is crucial.

Effective communication in English requires accurate pronunciation. Pronunciation plays a key role in communication in order to avoid mispronunciation and misunderstanding. This is in line with Altair and Suwartono (2020), who state that good pronunciation in English can minimize miscommunication and make it easier to convey and receive information. Thus, pronunciation is not only a difficult aspect of learning English but also an important one. Nevertheless, many learners still make mistakes when pronouncing English words. Mispronunciation is one of the main problems faced by English learners. Many students

continue to experience pronunciation difficulties due to several factors, such as limited exposure to correct pronunciation and a lack of attention to pronunciation practice. Some learners tend to guess the pronunciation of words without consulting a dictionary (Wangi & Aprilliyanti, 2019), which may lead to misunderstanding.

Mispronunciation is defined as the act of pronouncing a word or sound incorrectly. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, mispronunciation can be a serious obstacle for foreign language learners in making themselves understood. Most mispronunciations occur when students pronounce letters that do not exist in Indonesian or when they are unfamiliar with native speaker pronunciation. Additionally, many students rarely consult dictionaries to check correct pronunciation.

Some letters that do not exist in Indonesian appear in English but are not pronounced, there are *gh* and *h* in certain words. Carney (1994) defines silent letters as letters that are expected to be pronounced but remain silent, making pronunciation difficult for both native and non-native speakers. Silent letters do not correspond to any audible sound but are included in the written form of words, creating differences between spelling and pronunciation. For example, the letter *h* is silent in the word *ghost* but pronounced in *horse*. These silent letters often make the student confused and make pronunciation challenging. Therefore, students should consult dictionaries to learn correct pronunciation, and teachers should play a crucial role in guiding students to pronounce words with silent letters accurately.

Based on the arguments above, the researcher concludes that many students mispronounce English words because they rarely study, hear, and practice English sounds. Understanding the types and positions of silent letters can help learners improve their English pronunciation.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore students' mispronunciation of silent letters. Data were collected through observation and interviews. The researcher recorded the students' pronunciation during interviews, and the data were analyzed qualitatively.

The data collection procedures included several steps. First, the researcher identified mispronunciations produced by students. Second, the students' pronunciation was recorded during interviews. Third, the recordings were carefully listened to. Finally, the data were transcribed into tables for analysis.

In analyzing the data, the researcher categorized students' pronunciations into correct and incorrect forms. The data were presented in tables to determine the frequency and percentage of students' pronunciation accuracy. The dominant types of mispronunciation were identified, and conclusions were drawn based on the analysis.

The following formula is used to create the percentage:

$$\text{percentage: } \frac{\text{level value}}{\text{total value}} \times 100 \quad (\text{i})$$

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the collected and analyzed data, the researcher obtained the following results. The research was conducted at a junior high school to identify students' pronunciation of words containing silent letters.

Table 1. Students' Pronunciation.

Silent Letter	Words	Phonetic	Result		Mispronunciation
			Correct	Incorrect	
"GH"	Bought	/ba:t/	4 (22,2%)	14 (77,7%)	/bough/
	Brought	/bra:t/	4 (22,2%)	14 (77,7%)	/broug/

The result shows that the participants had particular difficulty in pronouncing the words that contain silent letters "gh". Those words have same meaning and the pronunciation sounds looks like. Overall the students' do mispronunciation more than a half when pronounced that words. The word /bought/ should be pronounced as /ba:t/ and the word /brought/ should be pronounce as /bra:t/ , but overall students pronounced that words incorrectly. For example, in word /bought/ at least from 18 students', only 4 (22,2%) students' who pronounc correctly. From the word /brought/ only 4 (22,2%) students' pronounced correctly from 18 participannts. On the other hand, a lot of students pronounced the letters "gh" clearly.

Table 2. Students' Pronunciation.

Silent Letter	Word	Phonetic Transcription	Correct Pronunciation	Incorrect Pronunciation	Common Mispronunciation
gh	Caught	/kɔ:t/	6 (33.3%)	12 (66.7%)	/caughf/

The result show that a lot of students pronounced the word incorrectly. Based on the table above, from 18 students', only 6 (33,3%) students' prounced correctly, 12 students did mispronouncing the words. The word /caught/ should be pronounced as /ka:t/, but mostly students pronounced the word as /caughf/.

Table 3. Students' Pronunciation.

Silent Letter	Word	Phonetic Transcription	Correct Pronunciation	Incorrect Pronunciation	Common Mispronunciation
h, gh	<i>Taught</i>	/tɔ:t/	5 (27.8%)	13 (72.2%)	/taught/
h, gh	<i>Thought</i>	/θɔ:t/	0 (0.0%)	18 (100.0%)	/tought/

The result show those words are hard to be spelled and pronounced. Those words contain sillent letters 'h' and 'gh'. From word /taught/ the students pronounced correctly only 5 (27,7%) from 18. Many student pronounce the word /taught/ when it should be pronounced as /ta:t/, mostly students' pronounce as /taught/ as the word has been written.

The word /thought/, there no one students pronounced the word correctly. All the students had mispronunciation that word. The word /thought/ contain silent letters "h" and "gh", students hardly to pronounce correctly.

Discussion

This research aimed to find the mispronunciation of silent letters. The discussion is constructed according to the data analyze in the result. This research examined the mispronunciation of the silent words "h" and "gh" in junior high school students. The words list containing silent letters was given to the participant, those are /bought/, /brought/, /caught/, /taught/, and /thought/.

The data show that the pronunciation of the wors containing silent letters "h" and "gh" in English are challenging for students. Those words were difficult to be pronounced because those silent letter were not exist in Indonesian words. The students' rarely heard, listened those words, or looked at dictionary. Students faced the diffilculties in pronouncing those words correctly.

Most students pronounced those words as how the words has been written, they clearly pronounced /bought/ sound like /bought or boughf/, /brought/ sound like /brought/. Those are not differences between the words written and pronounced, it might that words containing silent letters "gh" and "h" were hard to be spelled. Mispronunciation might gain misunderstanding. It has been challenging to teacher and students.

This research find out were those word pronounced incorrectly, participants' were given those words by text. First, the researcher interviewed the students' and took a data by recording the students' pronunciations. Second, analyzed the data.

The Mispronunciation of Silent Letters “gh”

In this research, there were many mispronunciation produced by students in pronouncing the English silent letters. As presented in table 1,2, and 3 in the result section the students mispronounced the silent letter “gh”. Those words contain the silent letters “gh”, the data showed most of students incorrectly pronounced those words. The mispronunciation happened in all focus words /bought/, /brought/, / caught/, /taught/, /thought/.

The data showed more than a half of participants’ can not pronounce those words in correct. The result of this research are consistent with Arvian Ersan (2021) mention in other hand students’ made mistakes in pronouncing silent letters because they already knew the correct rules, however, they could not apply it consistently.

Many students made errors and can not explain the correct rule of silent letters (Pusfarani et al., 2021). Furthermore, students’ pronounced those words as what they words has been written. It showed that the English silent letters does not exist in the students’. It can be seen the student which correctly pronounced this words, might to that the students’ lack of practice in learning English words. Mostly students’ which incorrectly pronounced those words, might ti that the students’ has difficulty to learn English and the students’ did not practiced. It can be concluded the dtudents’ caryying the standard pronouncing English word as same as they are pronounced in Indonesian letters sound that they have no silent letters.

The Mispronunciation of Silent Letter “h” and “gh”

In this study, the data in tabel 3 show that there is word contain silent letter “h” and “gh” in word /thought/. Tel silent letter “h” in the second consonant should not to pronounced, as same as the silent letter “gh”. The participants’ overall incorrectly while pronouncing this word. This word should pronounced /θa:t/, there no one students’ pronounced correctly. Mostly students’ pronounced this word clearly as same as the word has been written. All the students facing difficulties when pronouncing the silent letters. In the other hand, if there contain more than one silent letter. Mostly students’ cannot pronouncing correctly because the students’ preceive that word is a new thing from them to pronounce. Based of Kuspiyah, H. R., Zulaikah, Z., & Setiadi, A. (2021) has similarity, that research showed many participat incorrectly to pronounce the silent letter ‘h’. The silent letter ‘h’ has high difficulties to pronounce. It happens when students know the correct way to say a word, but do not always use it. Sometimes, they stop and try to correct themselves. (Isma & Yusuf, 2025).

From the explanation above, it can be showed that most of students’ mispronounced the silent letters, it happened because those word does not exist in Indonesian letters. Those letter does not used to speak in daily.

4. CONCLUSION

Related to discussion, mostly students' incorrectly to pronounce those words that contain silent letters "gh" and "h". They pronouncing those words as same as the words has been written. The mispronounced can be caused by the silent letters did not exist in Indonesian letter.

Because English is still a "foreign language" to Indonesian students mind, many students have not been encouraged yet to improve their English language skills especially in speaking. In addition, their most important obstacle is because some of their English teachers and lecturers did not actively communicate using English when they were studying English in the classroom. They are more often taught in one-way-learning method. They were usually only asked and forced to memorize vocabularies and then have them to write some sentences or stories in English.

For the English teacher, they should more pay attetion to their students' pronunciation about silent letters. Also they should find a suitable methods for teaching the English pronunciation to students'. Give more practices and drills to the students. The students suggest should more pay attetion to the teacher when they teach. The student should practice a lot in pronunciation in order to improve their communication skill. The students' should realize that their pronunciation are important and must learn more extra. Their pronunciation will influence the English skill in the future. For futher reseacher They could focus when deal with silent letters reseacrh. They could use this research for their reference to conduct futher research to overcome the mispronunciation.

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