



## The Analysis of Difficulties in Pronouncing English Vowels (Monophthongs) in Singing English Song

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**Abstract:** The aims of this study are to find out the English Vowel (Monophthongs) in Singing English Song which are difficult to pronounce, and to find out the problem that causes the difficulties faced by the students of UKM Surya Sagitta Choir Purworejo Muhammadiyah University. This research is descriptive qualitative research. Then, the researchers take 15 students as a sample of this research, they used pronunciation tests and questionnaires to collect the data. The students' pronunciations are recorded then analyzed by transcribing the students' pronunciation into phonetic transcription. Based on the finding and data analysis the researchers find 401 mispronounced English vowels, including 279 mispronounced of English short vowel monophthongs [ɪ], [ɛ], [æ], [ɒ], [ʌ], [ʊ], [ə], and 122 English long vowel monophthongs [i:], [ɑ:], [u:], [ɔ:], [ɜ:]. The most vowels that are difficult to pronounce by students are (1) Short vowels [ɪ] which are 143 times (79,4 %) of 12 words analyzed. (2) long vowel [ɜ:] 19 times (63%) of 2 words analyzed. (3) long vowel [ɔ:] 33 times (55%) of 4 words analyzes. Therefore, students have difficulty pronouncing English vowels [ɪ], [ɜ:] and [ɔ:]. The factors that cause students' difficulties in pronouncing English vowels in singing English songs are they rarely listen to English songs, confuse to pronounces, and do not understand the meaning and lyrics of the song.

**Keywords:** English vowels monophthongs, Pronunciation, Students' difficulties

### 1. Introduction

Language has an important role in communication in our daily lives. People need to communicate with each other by using language that the world has established as an international language. Therefore, it requires English as a way of communication with native speakers

English is used almost as a second language around the world, it is also the international language and the most commonly used form of communication. It is also the main language of international air traffic control and world media, science, and technology. English is a language that can be used almost all over the world, therefore every school in Indonesia is required to have English subjects because it is very useful when we are abroad and communicate with people around the world.

Songs are a very good "tool" to help students' learning process of English, more specifically songs are believed to be able to motivate students during learning English. This is the most effective way to improve English language skills, one of which is in terms of pronunciation. By getting used to singing English songs, the better our English skills. The song is a linguistic resource. In this case, the song becomes a medium for introducing new languages, as well as a medium for strengthening grammar and vocabulary.

Pronunciation is an important element and component in the English language. Because learners need clear pronunciation in communication to create conversations correctly and clearly. Pronunciation is the key to communicating in the communicative purpose of English. Even though the pronunciation is an element in English, pronunciation is closely related to the four skills in English (listening, speaking, and reading). To make correct pronunciation, the students need a habit to practice speaking English. They can also improve their pronunciation by habit to listening, singing, or

imitating native speakers from tape, television, and other electronic media. Gradually, their pronunciation will be better through practice as frequently as possible.

However, there are still many students who have difficulty singing songs in English, they are constrained by the pronunciation of song lyrics that are difficult to pronounce, for example, Muhammadiyah University students who take part in the extracurricular chorus of students, many of them has difficulty singing and pronouncing the song lyrics in the English language.

For 3 years, the researchers followed the extracurricular. A lot of curiosity arises about the difficulties of students participating in these extracurricular. Based on the researcher's experience, the students often tell the researchers about their difficulties in singing English song lyrics, for example in the pronunciation of the word "Heal" / hi:l / they pronounce it into / he:l / pronounce "Make" / meik / be / mek / and there are many more mistakes as well as their difficulties in singing songs in English.

There are several problems in this research. First, The Students are less interested in English songs. Second, some students are not from the English education study program, and the third, Lack of listening to English songs. This study aims to know about the English Vowel (Monophthongs) in Singing English Song which are difficult and to find out the problem causes difficulties in pronouncing English Vowel (Monophthongs) in Singing English Song by the students of UKM Surya Sagitta Choir.

Based on the reason above, the researchers are interested in conducting research about pronunciation (especially Monophthongs) entitled: *"The Analysis of Students Difficulties in Pronouncing English Vowels (Monophthongs) In Singing English Song At The Students Of UKM Surya Sagitta Choir Purworejo Muhammadiyah University"*

## 2. Literature Review

### Pronunciation

The act or manner of pronouncing words; utterance of speech; a form of speaking a word, especially one that is recognized or widely understood; and a visual depiction of the way a word speaks, employing phonetic symbols.

Pronunciation is an important component in English. [1], [2], [3] "Excellent grammar can be completely masked by poor pronunciation". So it can conclude that good pronunciation is better than mastery grammar well when speaking English. [1] That pronunciation is an essential ingredient of oral communication, which also includes grammar, vocabulary choice, cultural considerations, and so on [4].

Pronunciation is how a particular person pronounces the words of a language. It means that pronunciation refers to the way a word or a language is spoken or how someone utters a word[5].

Pronunciation is how Language or a particular word is pronounced. It means that the basic of pronunciation is not only the consonants and vowels, but also accent, inflection, and intonation[6].

### English Vowels (*Monophthongs*)

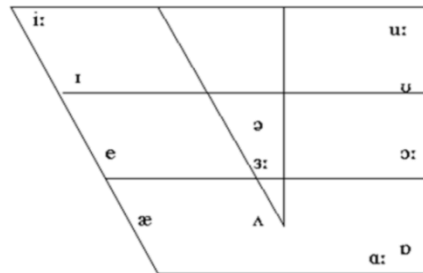
In this world, among countries use different languages. Therefore, each pronunciation may have a different vowel sound. We must understand very well the vowels that speakers say when speaking because vowels are very important to pronounce words well so that they can convey the message can be well received by the listener.

[5] Vowels are spoken sounds that are produced with little or no restriction of the airflow via the mouth. When the airflow is sounded through the vibrations of the vocal cords in the larynx, vowels are formed by changing the shape of the mouth with the tongue and lips as a whole, all vowels are produced by vibrating the vocal cords.

[7] As a function, vowel sounds are identified and describes by using following variables:

- 1) Raise which part of a tongue:
- 2) The space between both the tongue and the roof of the mouth (the degree of the raising the tongue)
- 3) The shape of the two lips, specifically, whether they are rounds or not.

A vowel diagram and a description of each English vowel are shown below.



**Picture 2.** The diagram of the types of vowel: long and short vowels

The diagram is a representation of the “vowel space” in the Centre of the mouth where vowel sounds are articulated.

- 1) ‘Close’, ‘Mid’, and ‘Open’ refer to the distance between the tongue and the roof of the mouth.
- 2) ‘Front’, ‘Centre’ and ‘Back’ and their corresponding ‘vertical’ lines refer to the part of the tongue.
- 3) The position of each Phoneme represents the height of the tongue, and also the part of the tongue which is (however relatively) raised.

To get English pronunciation, we must be able to memorize and understand the vowel sound. And the vowel sound itself is divided into 2, namely *Monophthong Sounds* and *Diphthong Sounds*. [5] Monophthongs are vowels in which there is no appreciable change in quality during a syllable. It is the vowel that is standing alone, the opposite of diphthongs that are consisted of two vowels. [8] The monophthongs are classified as tense and lax vowels. When compared to tense noises, lax sounds are produced with less muscular effort and movement and are generally brief and unclear.

- (1). Short Vowel Monophthongs: [ɪ], [e], [æ], [ɒ], [ʌ], [ʊ], [ə]

In English, most monophthongs are referred to as "short vowels," which are formed when a vowel is followed by one or more consonants in a syllable. [9] A short vowel is a basic vocalic segment that occurs within a syllable's nucleus. When there is only one vowel sound in a word, this sound is produced. The pronunciation is shorter than the long vowel sound. Such as in the words; ‘mat’ /mæt/, ‘pet’ /pet/, /‘twin’ /twin/, ‘not’ /nɒt/ ‘cub’ /kʌb/.

- (2). Long Vowel Monophthongs: [i:], [ɑ:], [u:], [ɔ:], [ɜ:].

[9] Long vowels are vowels associated with two X-slots within the syllabic nucleus. Examples include /i:/ (/hi:d/, heed) and /ɔ:/ (/hɔ:l/, hall) . Examples include /i:/ (/hi:d/, heed) and /ɔ:/ (/hɔ:l/, hall).

### Concept of Songs

A song is a melodic accompaniment that can be sung by humans with words or lyrics, usually, the song is accompanied by musical accompaniment. [10] that songs express feelings or reflect the songwriter's experience through the use of words and rhythm. Songs can also help in the teaching of pronunciation to students. In general, songs can be divided into several types: art songs, folk songs, and popular songs.

### Singing English Songs

Singing is a unique way of communicating. As a result, singing is used as a method in this study to improve speaking skills. [11] There are several activities that are commonly carried out in music education for students, one of which is singing, singing can help children's development in the articulation of language skills, rhythm, and breathing control.

According to [12] there are several benefits for students from singing activities, namely:

- 1) Gives somatic calm

- 2) Foster a sense of humor
- 3) Stimulating the ability to think
- 4) Develop a sense of self-worth
- 5) Support other lessons
- 6) Overcoming certain difficulties that students work on

The habit of singing English songs is the practice on a regular basis. So that students can practice singing every day, whenever and wherever they want. It makes them fun and enjoys while practicing singing, besides that when students sing English songs, they practice their pronunciation to make it even better.

[13] "Singing can add to vocabulary because at the time of singing students can hear and memorize vocabulary so that students are stimulated to express and express it ". [14] There are three indicators of the habit listening and singing English songs:

- 1) Action repeated
- 2) Attention
- 3) Understand what it means

Therefore, it can conclude that the habit of singing English songs can improve the skills of vocabulary, reading, and pronunciation in English, in every song lyric, or verse that is sing.

### **Related Research**

The researchers use three studies from previous researcher. First previous study is conducted by [15] The Problem of this study are what kinds of difficulties the students make in pronouncing English vowels in reading narrative text and why these difficulties happen/occur. The result of this research is English pure vowel [ə] is the most difficult to pronounce by students, which is 57 times (17,5%). Then the second is pure vowel [ɪ] with 48 times (14,8%). The third is pure vowel [e] with 42 times (12,9%). Therefore, the students are difficult in pronouncing English vowel [ə], [ɪ], and [e]. The difference between the first previous study is uses an English song, while the previous study uses narrative text. The similarities of this research focus on analyzing student difficulties in pronouncing English vowel, and using descriptive qualitative research.

The second previous study was conducted by [16] This research aim to find out there was a correlation between students' pronunciation ability and the habit of singing English songs in the second semester of eighth grade at MTs Al-Ishlah South Lampung in the academic year 2017/2018. It used a descriptive method that included two types of instruments. There are given questionnaires and conducting pronunciation test. The coefficient correlation between the two variables was  $0,386 > 0.325$  or  $2.440 > 2.030$ , according to the data analysis. As a result, it can be stated that there was a correlation between students' pronunciation ability and the habit in singing English songs. The Similarities between the second previous study with this research is both of this research using Singing English song as the source of data. While the differences is using descriptive qualitative design, while the previous study is using quantitative method designed, and this research focuses on generally pronunciation.

The third previous was conducted by [17] The aim of this researcher is to find out How do students of SMKN 7 Yogyakarta's English debating club pronounce English monophthong vowels in their speech, and what factors impact their pronunciation. This study finds (1) Some monophthong vowels of some words are spoken correctly in their English debating speeches, while some are pronounced incorrectly. The result of this research is the monophthongs which are usually pronounced correctly are /e/; /ʌ/; /ʊ/; /ɔ:/; /i/; /i:/ and /ə/ where as those usually pronounced incorrectly are /i:/; /æ/; /ɜ:/; /u:/; /ɔ:/. (2) different factors influence their correct and incorrect pronunciations of English monophthong vowels. (3) In the pronunciation of English monophthong vowels, there are five sound modifications. The similarities from the third previous study to this research is focuses on Pronunciation of English Monophthongs, and using descriptive qualitative research, and the difference is the previous study takes the data from students of English Debating Club, meanwhile this research is from student's choir song.

### 3. Research Methods

#### Type of The Research

According to [18] stated that qualitative research is descriptive, in a natural setting, and concern in the process. Based on the statement, this study belongs to descriptive qualitative research. The researchers would like to identify and describe the analysis of student difficulties in pronouncing English vowels (monophthongs) in singing English songs. Researchers analyzed the results of student pronunciation that occur based on short vowel monophthongs and long vowel monophthongs.

#### Subject of The Research

The subjects of this study are the extracurricular choir students of Surya Sagitta Muhammadiyah University Purworejo. The researchers chose to take the 2019 batch to collect data.

#### Instrument of The Research

The research instrument has an important role to obtain the result of the research. It is a set of methods that are used to collect the data. [18] states that the researchers are the primary tool for assessing the data in this study. According to this statement, the key instrument in qualitative research is the researchers. The researchers used some supporting instruments to support in conducting the research. Some supporting instruments are the questionnaire and the pronunciation test.

#### Technique of Collecting Data

The researchers use observation technique in collecting the data [18] In Collecting the data, the researcher does some steps, the steps explain details as follows :

1. Researchers prepare the instruments to test students' pronunciation. Researchers used the song "See You Again by Charlie Puth" and "Flashlight by Jessie J" as a pronunciation test.
2. The researchers collect the choir students in the WhatsApp group,
3. Researchers distribute questionnaires with Google form
4. The researcher sends samples of English songs to the WhatsApp group as an instrument.

#### Technique of Analyzing Data.

[19] States analyzing qualitative data requires understanding how to make sense of text and images so that the researcher can form answer to the researcher's research questions

The researcher takes procedures of data analysis. The steps of data analysis are described as follows:

1. Firstly, the researcher identifies the pronunciation by hearing the record.
2. Then the researcher analyzes, the appropriateness of the English vowels (Monophthongs) based on Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary and Electronic Dictionary of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary.
3. The researchers describe and explain which monophthongs, are most difficult to pronounce. The researchers use certain criteria [20] to know how well the students pronounce the English vowel. The criteria are as follows:

Table 1. Rating Scale

Categories	Number of Mistake in percentage
Excellent	0 – 25%
Good	26 – 50%
Fair	51 – 75%
Poor	76 – 100%

4. The researchers analyse the answer to the questionnaire to find the difficulties in pronouncing English vowels.
5. The researchers make a summary from the students answer on the questionnaire
6. The last step, the researcher draws a conclusion.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The oral test is designed to identify difficult-to-pronounce vowel sounds, and the questionnaire is used to identify the causes that made it difficult for students to pronounce English vowels.

### Findings

The researchers present the results of the analysis of students in pronouncing English vowels and the factors that make it the students difficult to pronounce English vowels. The researcher takes the data from 15 students and uses the formula because the number of words for each vowel is different.

$$\frac{\Sigma \text{IP}}{15 \times \Sigma \text{WA}} \times 100\%$$

$\Sigma \text{IP}$

$\Sigma \text{IP}$  : The number of incorrect pronunciation  
 15 : Total of students  
 $\Sigma \text{WA}$  : Number of words analyzed  
 % : Percentage

Here is the table that show the students' difficulties in pronouncing English vowels:

**Table 2.** Incorrect Pronunciation of English Vowels (Monophthongs)

Short Vowels	$\Sigma \text{IP}$	$\Sigma \text{WA}$	%	Long Vowels	$\Sigma \text{IP}$	$\Sigma \text{WA}$	%
[ɪ]	143	12	79,4%	[i:]	36	9	26,6%
[ɛ]	25	7	23,8%	[ɑ:]	22	4	36,6%
[æ]	36	7	34,2%	[u:]	12	5	16%
[ɒ]	27	7	25,7%	[ɔ:]	33	4	55%
[ʌ]	22	6	24,4%	[ɜ:]	19	2	63%
[ʊ]	4	1	26,6%	<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>-</b>
[ə]	22	4	36,6%				
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>-</b>				

From the table above, it can see that the number of difficulties in pronouncing words found in short vowels [ɪ] is the highest percentage (79,4%) which is 143 times mispronouncing of 12 words. Then the second order is the difficulty of pronouncing long vowels [ɜ:] the percentage is (63%) which is 19 times the mispronouncing of 2 words. The third order is the difficulty of pronouncing long vowels [ɔ:] with 33 times mispronouncing of 4 words, the percentage is (55%).

### The Result of Data Analysis by Oral Test

#### a. Short vowel monophthongs

**Table 3.** Pronunciation of /I/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
1	Its	/its/	5	33%	10	67%	Fair
2	Give	/giv/	2	13%	13	87%	Poor
3	Til	/tɪl/	2	13%	13	87%	Poor
4	Will	/wɪl/	1	7%	14	93%	Poor
5	Is	/ɪz/	3	20%	12	80%	Poor
6	Things	/θɪŋz/	2	13%	13	87%	Poor
7	In	/ɪn/	3	20%	12	80%	Poor

8	Sing	/sɪŋ/	-	-	15	100%	Poor
9	Beneath	/bɪ'ni:θ/	4	27%	11	73%	Fair
10	Mountain	/maʊntɪn/	7	47%	8	53%	Fair
11	Needed	/ni:ɪd/	6	40%	9	60%	Fair
12	Kick	/kɪk/	2	13%	13	87%	Poor

**Table 4.** Pronunciation of /ɛ/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
13	Strength	/strɛŋθ/	11	73%	4	27%	Good
14	Let	/let/	11	73%	4	27%	Good
15	Again	/ə'geɪn/	3	20%	12	80%	Poor
16	Getting	/gɛtɪŋ/	10	67%	5	33%	Good

**Table 5.** Pronunciation of /æ/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
17	And	/ænd/	10	67%	5	33%	Good
18	Began	/bɪ'gæɪn/	5	33%	10	67%	Fair
19	Carry	/kæri/	7	47%	8	53%	Fair
20	Shadows	/ʃædəʊz/	2	13%	13	87%	Poor

**Table 6.** Pronunciation of /ɒ/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
21	Got	/gɒt/	7	47%	8	53%	Fair
22	Top	/tɒp/	13	87%	2	13%	Excellent
23	Stop	/stɒp/	12	80%	3	20%	Excellent
24	On	/ɒn/	13	87%	2	13%	Excellent
25	Long	/lɒŋ/	12	80%	3	20%	Excellent
26	Tomorrow	/tə'mɑ:rəʊ/	6	40%	9	60%	Fair

**Table 7.** Pronunciation of /ʌ/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
27	Come	/kʌm/	6	40%	9	60%	Fair
28	But	/bʌt/	12	80%	3	20%	Excellent
29	Comes	/kʌmz/	9	60%	6	40%	Good
30	Stuck	/stʌk/	11	73%	4	27%	Good

**Table 8.** Pronunciation of /ʊ/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
29	Look	/lʊk/	11	73%	4	27%	Good

**Table 9.** Pronunciation of /ə/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
30	Memory	/meməri/	2	13%	13	87%	Poor
31	Afraid	/ə'freɪd/	6	40%	9	60%	Fair

**b. Long vowel monophthongs**

**Table 10.** Pronunciation of /i:/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
1	Been	/bi:n/	9	60%	6	40%	Good
2	We've	/wi:v/	9	60%	6	40%	Good
3	Leave	/li:v/	12	80%	3	20%	Excellent
4	Feeling	/fi:lɪŋ/	7	47%	8	53%	Fair
5	Breathe	/bri:ð/	6	40%	9	60%	Fair
6	Lead	/li:d/	11	73%	4	27%	Good

**Table 11.** Pronunciation of /ɑ:/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
7	Can't	/kɑ:nt/	1	7%	14	93%	Poor
8	Heart	/hɑ:t/	7	47%	8	53%	Fair

**Table 12.** Pronunciation of /u:/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
9	Soon	/su:n/	11	73%	4	27%	Good
10	Through	/θru:/	7	47%	8	53%	Fair

**Table 13.** Pronunciation of /ɔ:/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
11	All	/ɔ:l/	10	67%	5	33%	Good
12	Cause	/kɔ:z/	2	13%	13	87%	Poor
13	Always	/ɔ:lweɪz/	5	33%	10	67%	Fair
14	Your	/jɔ:/	10	67%	5	33%	Good

**Table 14.** Pronunciation of /ɜ:/

No	Words	PT	T	%	F	%	Remark
15	Worse	/wɜ:s/	6	40%	9	60%	Fair
16	Hurt	/hɜ:t/	5	33%	10	67%	Fair

From the tables of result data analysis by oral test above it can infer that it is most difficult for pronouncing some word that category (Poor), there are word *Sing*, *Will*, *Til*, *Give*, *Is*, *Things*, *In*, *Kick* in short vowel [ɪ] then word *Again* in short vowel [ɛ], then word *Shadows* in short vowel [æ] then word *Memory* in short vowel [ə] then word *can't* in long vowel [ɑ:], the last is word *Cause* in long vowel [ɔ:] but the biggest percentage of difficulty in pronouncing English vowel monophthongs, is Short vowel [ɪ] with 143 times (74,9%).

### Discussion

From the research findings above, the researchers then analyze the data from the tests that have been done to find out what English vowels are difficult to pronounce by students and the factors that make it difficult for them to pronounce English vowels.

### The students' difficulties in pronouncing English vowels

From the results of the research above, a total of 401 words are mispronounced. Consists of 279 short vowel monophthongs and 122 long vowel monophthongs, for short vowel monophthongs, consists of 143 (79,4%) mispronunciation of vowels [ɪ] of 12 words, 25 (23,8%) mispronunciation of vowels [ɛ] of 7 words, 36 (34,2%) mispronunciation of vowels [æ] of 7 words, 27 (25,7%) mispronunciation of vowels [ʊ] of 7 words, 22 (24,4%) mispronunciation of vowels [ʌ] of 6 words, 4 (26,6%) mispronunciation of vowels [ʊ] of 1 word, and 22 (36,6%) mispronunciation of vowels [ə] of 4 words. Then for long vowel monophthongs, there are 36 (26,6%) mispronunciation of vowels [i:] of 9 words, 22 (36,6%) mispronunciation of vowels [ɑ:] of 4 words, 12 (16%) mispronunciation of vowels [u:] of 5 words, 33 (55%) mispronunciation of vowels [ɔ:] of 55 words, and 19 (63%) mispronunciation of vowels [ɜ:] of 2 words..

### The causes of students' difficulties in pronouncing English vowels

Based on the discussion of data analysis and questionnaires above, the researcher concludes that several factors make it difficult for students to sing English songs. These factors are students rarely listen to songs with English lyrics so that they have difficulty pronouncing them, students are also confused about how to pronounce English song lyrics, and they don't understand the meaning and lyrics of the song, so students find it difficult to sing an English song, so students find it difficult to sing an English song.



## 5. Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is, there are 401 mispronunciations of English vowels, including 279 mispronunciations of short vowel monophthongs, [ɪ], [ɛ], [æ], [ɒ], [ʌ], [ʊ], [ə] and 122 mispronunciations of long vowel monophthongs. [i:], [ɑ:], [u:], [ɔ:], [ɜ:]. Short vowel monophthongs [ɪ] is the most difficult to pronounce by students, which is 143 times (79,4 %) of 12 words analyzed. Then the second place is the difficulties in pronouncing long vowels [ɜ:] 19 times (63%) of 2 words analyzed. The third place is students' difficulties in pronouncing long vowels [ɔ:] 33 times (55%) of 4 words analyzed. Therefore, students have difficulty pronouncing English vowels [ɪ], [ɜ:] and [ɔ:].

From the questionnaire had been done by students, the researcher concludes that several factors make it difficult for students to singing English songs. These factors are students rarely listen to songs with English lyrics so the students have difficulty pronouncing them, the students are also confused about how to pronounce English song lyrics, and the students don't understand the meaning and lyrics of the song, so students find it difficult to sing English song.

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