

## *The Concept Of Vowel Sounds To Students Ability In Phonology*

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**Abstract:** *This article is motivated by the importance of vowel sounds to support the ability to read and write in English. Vowel sounds ability is an ability that is often overlooked when compared to speak and conversation comprehension, although there is a lot of literature which states that researchers and educators agree that sounds skills are important to be taught. Until now, there are still many students in general who do not understand vowel sounds . Therefore, this article discusses spelling and spelling variants. Writing this article aims: 1) to know the concept of vowel sounds 2) to find out vowel sounds 3) To find out the correct vowel sounds misconceptions. The method used is a method by searching based on existing literature and articles. The data collection technique is based on literature and articles related to vowel sounds. The result of this article is that spelling has a very big function in writing, the first impression that the reader gets is the vowel of sounds from an article before he understands the message the author wants to convey. An article with a variety of words which is much more interesting to read than an article that uses the same words over and over again. Many students feel that sounds with the correct vowel sounds is very difficult to do.*

**Key words :** *Concept, Vowel Sounds, Pronunciation*

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important parts of speaking, especially making conversation is pronunciation. Because with correct pronunciation it will be avoided from misunderstanding. To know whether the student's pronunciation is correct or not, we need error analysis. Error analysis is a method that includes data collection, identification, description, grouping, and evaluation. Learning to recognize vowel sounds in English has been explained a little about various vowel sounds/pronunciations in English. Next up is the consonants. Consonant sounds are often also called dead sounds, this is because if in a word there are only consonants, then the words have no meaning, vowels and consonants are needed. the consonant sounds unclear because, so it requires a vowel to make it clear. We ourselves call it dependent sound, which means it is very dependent on the vowel sound.

Trubetzkoy (1939) wrote "It is the task of phonology to study which differences in sound are related to differences in meaning in a given language, in which way the discriminative elements ... are related to each other, and the rules according to which they may be combined into words and sentences." Linguistic units which cannot be substituted for each other without a change in meaning can be referred to as linguistically contrastive or significant units. Such units may be phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic etc.

This research is a descriptive qualitative research. Students still need more attention, more practice of pronunciation, especially on vowels. Error pronunciation is dominated by single vowel. Mistakes that are often made by pupil is a single vowel that is in [ə], diphthong in [eə] and triphthong in [aʊə]. From this research, I hope that students in the Madrasah Aliyah environment will prioritize and learn more about English pronunciation.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This type of research is descriptive qualitative, namely research that aims to get an overview that is analyzed using the literature study method. Literature study is a research method used to obtain data sourced from books, journals, papers, and so on. Obtaining the data by reading, summarizing, and recording library data. The literature find out about approach is a series of things to do associated to techniques of amassing library data, studying and taking notes, and managing research substances (Zed, 2008:3).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Definition Of Vowel**

A vowel is a syllabic speech sound pronounced without any stricture in the vocal tract. Vowels are one of the two principal classes of speech sounds, the other being the consonant. Vowels vary in quality, in loudness and also in quantity (length). They are usually voiced and are closely involved in prosodic variation such as tone, intonation and stress. The word vowel comes from the Latin word *vocalis*, meaning "vocal" (i.e. relating to the voice). In English, the word vowel is commonly used to refer both to vowel sounds and to the written symbols that represent them (a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y).

Vowel Sounds A vowel is defined as a voiced sound in forming which the air issues in a continuous stream through the pharynx and mouth, there being no obstruction and no narrowing such as would cause audible friction ( Jones, 1975: 23 ). Vowel is a sound pronounced with vibration of vocal cords but with no closure in the vocal tract above the glottis ( Ridwan, 1995 : 14 )

The qualities of a vowels depend upon the positions of the tongue and lips. It is convenient to classify them according to the position of the main part of the tongue. The number of vowels in English is the same as in Indonesia, which is 5 a, I, u, e, o.

### **The Anatomy Of a Vowel**

In classifying vowels, we need not indicate airstream mechanism, since it will always be pulmonic egressive, and we can generally assume that vowels are all voiced and oral. To describe vowels adequately and accurately, we then need to consider three different parameters, all of which can be seen as modifications of the place or manner of articulation continua for consonants: as we shall see, these are height, frontness and rounding. Additionally, vowels may be long or short (long ones are marked with a following: below), and monophthongs or diphthongs.

#### **a. front–back dimension**

Front vowels are produced with the front of the tongue raised towards the hard palate (although not raised enough, remember, to obstruct the airflow and cause local friction; vowels are approximants). The vowels in are front. These could, in principle, equally be described as palatal, and this might be helpful in making phonological rules transparent: the rule palatalising velar /k / before front vowels in kitchen, key, give, geese looked rather perplexing as the relationship between palatal and front was not obvious. However, calling front vowels palatal would be misleading, since frontness covers a larger area than [palatal], as we shall see below; and it contrasts with completely different alternatives, namely central and back, rather than labial, alveolar, dental, velar and so on.

#### **(1) Front vowels**

|        | SSBE | GA |
|--------|------|----|
| Kit    | I    | I  |
| Dress  | ε    | ε  |
| Trap   | a    |    |
| Fleece | i:   | i: |
| Face   | eI   | eI |

Conversely, back vowels have the back of the tongue raised, towards the soft palate or velum.

(2) Back vowels

|         | SSBE | GA |
|---------|------|----|
| Lot     | ɒ    | ɑ: |
| Foot    | ʊ    | ʊ  |
| Palm    | ɑ:   | ɑ: |
| Thought | ɔ:   | ɔ: |
| Goat    | oʊ   | o: |
| Goose   | u:   | u: |

There is also a class of vowels between front and back: these are known as central vowels, and involve a raising of the body of the tongue towards the area where the hard and soft palate join.

(3) Central vowels

|       | SSBA | GA |
|-------|------|----|
| About | ə    | ə  |
| Nurse |      |    |
| Strut |      |    |

**b. The high–low dimension**

High vowels have the tongue raised most towards the roof of the mouth; if the raising was significantly greater, then friction would be produced, making a fricative consonant, not a vowel.

(1) High vowels

|        | SSBE | GA |
|--------|------|----|
| Kit    | ɪ    | ɪ  |
| Fleece | i:   | i: |
| Foot   | ʊ    | ʊ  |
| Goose  | u:   | u: |

Low vowels are those where the tongue is not raised at all, but rather lowered from its resting position: when you produce a low vowel, you will be able to feel your mouth opening and your jaw dropping, even if it is not very easy to figure out quite what your tongue is doing.

## (2) Low vowels

|      | SSBA | GA |
|------|------|----|
| Trap | a    |    |
| Lot  |      | ɑ: |
| Palm | ɑ:   | ɑ: |

These can if necessary be further subclassified as high mid (like the face and goat vowels) or low mid (like the dress, thought, strut vowels) depending on whether they are nearer the high end of the scale, or nearer the low end.

## (3) Mid vowels

|         | SSBA | GA |
|---------|------|----|
| Face    | eɪ   | eɪ |
| Goat    | oʊ   | o: |
| Dress   | ɛ    | ɛ  |
| Lot     | ɒ    |    |
| Thought | ɔ:   | ɔ: |
| About   | ə    | ə  |
| Nurse   |      |    |
| Strut   |      |    |

**c. Lip Position**

In the high back [u:] vowel of goose, there is tongue raising in the region of the soft palate; but in addition, the lips are rounded. Vowels in any of the previous categories may be either rounded, where the lips are protruded forwards, or unrounded, where the lips may be either in a neutral position, or sometimes slightly spread (as for a high front vowel, like [i:] fleece). However, it is overwhelmingly more common cross-linguistically for back vowels to be rounded than for front ones, and for high vowels to be rounded than low ones; this is borne out in English.

(1) Rounded vowels

| SSBA    | GA  |    |
|---------|-----|----|
| Lot     | ɒ   |    |
| Foot    | ʊ   | ʊ  |
| Thought | ɔ:  | ɔ: |
| Goat    | oʊ: | o: |
| Goose   | u:  | u: |

**d. Length**

Using these three dimensions of frontness, height and rounding, we can now define the vowel in fleece as high, front and unrounded; that in goose as high, back and rounded; and the unstressed vowel of about, schwa, as mid, central and unrounded. However, our elementary descriptions would class the kit vowel as high, front and unrounded, and the foot vowel as high, back and rounded; these labels make them indistinguishable from the clearly different vowels of fleece and goose respectively. SSBE and GA speakers very readily perceive the fleece and kit vowels, and the goose and foot vowels, as different; and there are plenty of minimal pairs to support a phoneme distinction, as in peat – pit, leap – lip, Luke – look, fool – full. This distinction is usually made in terms of vowel length: in SSBE and GA.

(1) Long vowels

|         | SSBA | GA |
|---------|------|----|
| Fleece  | i:   | i: |
| Goose   | u:   | u: |
| Goat    |      | o: |
| Thought | ɔ:   | ɔ: |
| Palm    | ɑ:   | ɑ: |
| Lot     |      | ɑ: |
| Nurse   |      |    |

## (2) Short vowels

|       | SSBA | GA |
|-------|------|----|
| Kit   | I    | I  |
| Dress | ε    | ε  |
| Trap  | a    |    |
| Lot   | ɒ    |    |
| Foot  | u    | u  |
| About | ə    | ə  |
| Strut |      |    |

**e. Monophthong**

Also known as pure and stable vowels because the monophthong articulated as one sound just like the original form of the letter. Below are some of the pronunciation symbols of the monophthong vowel letters and the example for each.

|      |      |
|------|------|
| Hit  | [i]  |
| Lick | [I]  |
| Beg  | [e]  |
| Fed  | [ε]  |
| Glad | [æ]S |
| Two  | [u]  |

**f. Diphthong**

Diphthong is sequence of two vocoids in a single syllable, that is, with a single center of prominence (Bloomfield and Newmark:1966). The term ‘vocoid’ here is merely the same as vowels. It is the fact that any language, there exists of a sequence of two vocoids, but possibly, it is not in one syllable. Therefore, many languages, of course, do not have what so called diphthongs.

English has eight diphthongs, they are:

- 1) /ei/ as in /teik/ take
- 2) /ai/ as in /fain/ fine
- 3) /ɔi/ as in /bɔi/ boy
- 4) /ɔu/ as in /hɔum/ home
- 5) /au/ as in /haus/ house
- 6) /iə/ as in /biə/ beer
- 7) /ɜ:ə/ as in /pɜ:ə/ pair
- 8) /uə/ as in /kjuə/ cure

The first five diphthongs are called closing diphthongs, because gliding from a more open to a closer position. While the last three diphthongs all have /ə/ for their second element; and so they are sometimes called centering diphthongs.

### **Vowel Classification**

The labels outlined in the previous section are helpful, but may leave questions unresolved when used in comparisons between different languages or different accents of the same language. Thus, French [u] in *rouge* is very close in quality to English [u] in *goose*, but not identical; the French vowel is a little more peripheral, slightly higher and more back. Similarly, [o] in *rose* for a GA speaker is slightly lower and more centralised than ‘the same’ vowel for a speaker of Scottish English. None of the descriptors introduced so far would allow us to make these distinctions clear, since in the systems of the languages or accents concerned, these pairs of vowels would quite appropriately be described as long, high, back and rounded, or long, high-mid, back and rounded respectively.

Furthermore, a classification of this sort, based essentially on articulation, is arguably less appropriate for vowels than for consonants. In uttering a vowel, the important thing is to produce a particular sort of auditory impression, so that someone listening understands which vowel in the system you are aiming at; but it does not especially matter which articulatory strategies you use to convey that auditory impression. If you were asked to produce an [u], but not allowed to round your lips, then with a certain amount of practice you could make at least something very similar; and yet it would not be a rounded vowel in the articulatory sense, although you would have modified the shape of your vocal tract to make it sound like one. This is not possible with most consonants, where the auditory impression depends on the particular articulators used, and how close they get, not just the overall shape of the vocal tract and the



effect that has on a passing airstream. It is true that the whole oral tract is a continuum, but it is easier to see the places for consonants as definite ‘stopping off places’ along that continuum, helped by the fact that most consonants are obstruents, and we can feel what articulators are involved.

One possible solution is to abandon an articulatory approach to vowel classification altogether, and turn instead to an analysis of the speech wave itself. In any case, it is true that most speakers of particular accents or even language will produce certain vowels in an articulatorily similar fashion. For comparative purposes, what we need is an approach which allow vowel qualities to be expressed as relative rather than absolute values.

## **Conclusion**

English vowel is a speech sound that is a component of a language’s sound system and serves as the building block of a syllable. It is created by a vocal tract that is relatively open and vibrates without perceptible friction. According to where the sound are produced, vowel is divided into three, front vowel, central vowel and back vowel. Front vowels are produced with the front part of the tongue. Central vowels are produced with the middle of the tongue and back vowel are produced with the part of the tongue closest to the throat. Using these three dimensions of frontness, height and rounding, we can now define the vowel in fleece as high, front and unrounded; that in goose as high, back and rounded.

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