Perception and Practice: Investigating English Pronunciation Mastery Among Postgraduate Students

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Abstract- Particularly for postgraduate students who specialize in English education, the acquisition of different and accurate pronunciation is an essential component of language proficiency, as it has a substantial influence on their academic achievement and future professional pursuits. Despite its significance, the mastery of pronunciation remains a difficult task because of the interplay of numerous factors and particular features of each student. This study investigates a comprehensive investigation regarding on postgraduate students' perception in mastering English pronunciation. This study also aims to discover students' practice in mastering English pronunciation. This study employs a descriptive-qualitative design. To collect the data, the instruments used observation, and a semi-structured interview. The participants in this study were six postgraduate students enrolled in an English education major at one of the universities in Malang. This study used convenience sampling to elicit the participants. The findings reveals that all postgraduate students face some factors that influences their English pronunciation. There are age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, attitude, and motivation. Each of these elements significantly influences the students' pronunciation abilities. Postgraduate students also employ various practices for mastering English pronunciation, including auditory perception, recollections, summary, and note-taking. Postgraduates use those practices to master English pronunciation.

Keywords: Factors Influencing Pronunciation, Perception, Postgraduate Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Mastery of English pronunciation is essential for postgraduate students since it influences their capacity to participate with self-assurance in professional exchanges, for instance, presentations, discussions, and other professional interactions. According to Derwing and Munro (2015), pronunciation significantly impacts intelligibility and comprehensibility, which are essential for effective communication. They also define that clear pronunciation is essential for effective communication, especially in academic and professional settings.

Puspandari and Basthomi (2022) defines that accurate pronunciation is essential for effective communication. It assists students in resolving significant issues related to intelligibility particularly for postgraduate students who specialize in English education, the acquisition of different and accurate pronunciation.

Suzukida (2021) conducted a study which revealed that postgraduate students frequently experience self-consciousness regarding their accents and pronunciation. They expressed a strong desire for accent reduction and clear speech to enhance their academic and social

interactions. These findings highlighted the importance of addressing pronunciation concerns in language instruction and support services for postgraduate students.

Several studies have highlighted the influence of native language interference on English pronunciation. A study conducted by Zhang and Yin (2009) focused on Chinese postgraduate students, found that variations in the vowel systems associated with Mandarin and English frequently cause difficulties with the pronunciation of English vowels. Moreover, Komariah (2019) believed that pronunciation difficulties for English attributed to the lack of certain sounds in their native language. Despite the significant impact of the native language on English pronunciation, various methods and processes can be employed to reduce difficulties in pronouncing English words (Octaviani et al., 2024).

There are other factors that influence the difficulties faced by postgraduate students in learning pronunciation. Lasabuda (2017) reveals that students frequently struggle to distinguish words with nearly identical pronunciations, due to a lack of English practice, a limited vocabulary, a strong local accent, embarrassment, difficulty pronouncing difficult-to-find sentences, nervousness, and a limited understanding of the intended. Kazuya et al. (2018) conducted a study that revealed international postgraduate students frequently experience self-consciousness regarding their accents and pronunciation. They expressed a strong desire for accent reduction and clear speech to enhance their academic and social interactions. These findings highlighted the importance of addressing pronunciation concerns in language instruction and support services for postgraduate students.

By understanding their perceptions, educators can develop more effective pronunciation training programs that fulfil to the specific needs of postgraduate students. Moreover, several factors influence the wide variation in postgraduate students' perceptions of their English pronunciation skills. Several students, especially who are from non-English-speaking backgrounds, feel anxious about their pronunciation. This anxiety often occurs from a fear of negative judgement and the potential for miscommunication. As a result, students unaware to engage in conversations and academic discussions, which could influence their language. They typically consist of postgraduate students who are still face the difficulty in pronunciation with more complex features of pronunciation, for instance, the intonation or related speech phenomena which it is less frequently covered in normal language classes.

There is a practice to mastery English pronunciation. Derwing and Munro (2015) classifies the practices into two main categories: formal and informal practices. Formal practices typically include structured language classes, pronunciation workshops, and the use of technology-assisted resources such as language learning applications and software (Derwing et al., 1995). Those practices offer precise feedback and enable students to concentrate on phonetic components, including intonation, stress patterns, and articulation. Conversely, informal practices are usually self-guided and involve activities such as consuming English media (such as podcasts and movies), engaging with native speakers, and self-assessment through recording to track improvement.

While previous studies have explored pronunciation challenges, the influence of native, and overlook the unique challenges. There is a lack of targeted investigation into the specific factors influencing postgraduate students' perceptions of their English pronunciation skills. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive investigation into postgraduate students' perceptions of their pronunciation skills and the specific practices in mastering English pronunciation especially postgraduate students majoring English education. They participated in professional and academic environments where precise and intelligible pronunciation is not just an issue of clarity, but also an indication of competence and professionalism.

II. METHODS

This study employed qualitative approach. Qualitative approach enabled the development of comprehensive, narrative descriptions that accurately represented the complex nature of human behavior and cognitive processes (Creswell, 2015). It appropriate for this study since It aimed to provide a comprehensive and deep understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives

The participant of this study were six postgraduate students form English education in one of universities in Malang. All participants studied English as an undergraduate major. This study employed a convenience sampling technique to elicit the participants. To reduce the

potential limitations of convenience sampling in this study, it was crucial to assess the representativeness of the sample. It was important to have a sample that appropriately represents the variety of backgrounds of postgraduate students in an English teaching program to ensure the validity and generalizability of the findings. To protect the participants' names and personal information, tightly anonymity and confidentiality norms were followed throughout the investigation process. These participants had the same background in majoring English education when they undergraduate students. These participants were appropriated for this study since postgraduate students generally had a high level of English proficiency and take an active role in academic activities. Consequently, they acted as perfect participants for exploring specific aspects of pronunciation (Nunan, 2010). Their experiences, along with their practices, might provide useful perspectives on the difficulties and practices involved in obtaining mastery of English pronunciation at an advanced level. In addition, by concentrating on a small homogenous group, it became possible to conduct a thorough examination of each participant's perspective and behavior, which was consistent with the objectives of qualitative research (Sharan, 2009). In this study, observation and semi-structured interview were the instrument to collect the data.

Observation could provide insights into the patterns and variations of pronunciation practice, which could enhance our understanding of the students' learning processes (Spradley, 1980). Observation was enabled to gain a more comprehensive understanding of participants' practice routines. A systematic approach will be implemented by the researcher to observe the pronunciation practices of postgraduate students. It started with the development of an observation guide that explores the primary behaviours and practices that related to the acquisition of English pronunciation proficiency. The observations will take place in natural settings when postgraduate students engage in pronunciation performs during presentations in the classroom. The researcher will carefully keep observations, specifically examining the postgraduate students' pronunciation by focussing in their fluency. It also focused on non-verbal indicators that can reflect students' levels of confidence or difficulty with pronunciation. Then, the researcher pointed out any common trends or noteworthy actions. The observations will be combined with interview data to offer a thorough examination of the students' pronunciation approaching.

The semi-structured interview conducted by employing several open-ended questions to participants related to postgraduate students' perception and practice in pronunciation. Since the responses of the participant followed up with the following question, this was beneficial when examined perceptions since it allowed the researcher to explore individual experiences in greater depth and comprehend the subtleties of each participant's perspective (Patton, 2015). The interview was conducted in a natural setting, which provided approximately fifteen minutes for each participant.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The finding of this study divided into three sub-sections. They were factors influencing pronunciations, perceptions of pronunciation fluency, and practices for improving pronunciation.

Factor Influencing Pronunciation

The mother tongue was a primary factor influencing their confidence when communicating in English. Age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, attitude, and motivation were other factors influencing their pronunciation. All postgraduate students believed that their English pronunciation was fluent. They faced the anxiety when communicated with native speaker since they could not pronounce unfamiliar words in different phonetic. In the other hand, two out of six participants believed that their English pronunciation not fluent. They believed that they could not pronounced particular words correctly. The factors were similar with other students that phonetic ability and unfamiliar words were difficult.

For postgraduate students, motivation and exposure were crucial factors that significantly impact English pronunciation. The connection was based on both psychological and environmental factors that together improve linguistic proficiency. Firstly, motivation functions as a fundamental psychological aspect. The internal motivation encouraged students to dedicate time and effort for mastering English pronunciation. Two students believed that their high level of motivation would increase the probability of participating in activities which focused for enhancing their pronunciation skills, for instance, actively listening to native speakers, engaging in phonetic exercises, and receiving feedback from fluent speakers. Motivation raised

from a variety of sources, for instance, academic objectives, professional obligations, or personal objectives. For instance, a postgraduate student who intended to obtain a job in an international organization might be strongly motivated to develop a nearly native accent to attempt and to enhance their chances of being recruited. In the other hand, exposure was an environmental factor that it had a big effect on speech. Postgraduate students who faced English in a variety of settings, were more likely to learn the language's sounds such as rhythms, and intonations. Exposure occurred in many ways, including classes, social interactions and being in English-speaking settings all the time. Most postgraduate students believed that interaction in the classroom had the most impact. Engaging in English seminars, presentations, and conversations offered the chance to improve and enhance their pronunciation skills. Moreover, they believed that interacting with native speakers would make learning easier since they could apply the right pronunciation patterns. Engaging in media consumption activities such as watching English movies, listening to podcasts, and reading aloud could improve exposure.

Postgraduate Students' Perception in Pronunciation Fluency

The postgraduate students in this study have a generally positive perception of their English pronunciation fluency. Four out of five participants believed that they had excellent pronunciation skills, which they attributed to their background as postgraduate students majoring in English education. This academic context created an expectation for them to master pronunciation, not only for their academic context but also for their future professional endeavours. The students acknowledge that, as future educators or professionals in English education fields that require excellent English proficiency, they must be able to pronounce words clearly and accurately. However, despite their confidence, these postgraduate students also recognized the difficulties in achieving perfect pronunciation. They were aware of the difficulties that came with mastering several English sounds, particularly when dealing with unfamiliar words or complex phonetic patterns. To address these difficulties, the postgraduate students engaged in various practices designed to improve their pronunciation. These practices include actively listening to native speakers, participating in phonetic exercises, and seeking

feedback from more fluent speakers. The students understand that continuous practice and exposure are key to refining their pronunciation skills.

Postgraduate students' Practice for Mastering Pronunciation

The data analysis uncovered unique practices that employed by postgraduate students to improve their English speech. The results suggested that postgraduate students employed various practices for mastering their English pronunciation, including as auditory perception, recollections, summary, and taking notes. These practices incorporated a combination of auditory and visual learning approaches, with each way contributed to distinct aspects of learning.

- **Auditory Perception**

The act of listening to music had become a prevalent habit among postgraduate students. These practices utilized the inherent cadence and musicality of songs to aid in the practice of pronunciation. Regarding to students' perspective, engaging in singing along with English songs proved beneficial in enhancing their pronunciation skills by imitating the auditory stimuli. Through the process of comparing the lyrics with their own pronunciation, students could recognize any inconsistencies and strive to rectify them. This practice was justified by the notion that music might augment language acquisition by offering frequent exposure to the sounds of the target language in an enjoyable setting. Songs repeated and rhythmic elements assisted listeners internalize proper pronunciation patterns. Students had the opportunity to continually listen and to practice with the same music, which enhanced the accurate pronunciation of words and phrases. In addition, songs frequently used formal language and contractions which that provided students' exposure to the practical elements of spoken English that may not be encountered in formal academic settings.

- **Recollections**

Another important habit that was identified by the process of committing words to memory. Postgraduate students typically concentrated on perfecting their pronunciation by compiling lists of unfamiliar or difficult terms. This approach comprised multiple stages: recognized challenging terminology, documented, and iteratively involved their enunciation. Students sometimes utilized online resources like Google Translate to verify the accurate pronunciation of words. By utilizing tools that offer native speaker

models, individuals could analyze and modified their own speech patterns. Memorizing vocabulary provided more than one repetition; it needed comprehending the phonetic composition of words and repeatedly rehearsing them until they were ingrained. This approach was essential for postgraduate students, as they frequently needed to face a considerable level of expertise and fluency in academic and professional environments. Proficiency in vocabulary and accurate pronunciation could greatly influence one's capacity to communicate with effectiveness.

- **Summary**

Postgraduate students frequently engaged in the practice of describing visuals. This task involved analyzing a picture and provided a verbal description of it in the English language. It operated as a pragmatic activity that integrated the utilization of vocabulary with the practice of pronunciation. Students feel obliged by describing images. This approach also promoted students' utilization of an extensive range of vocabulary and facilitated their practices of word pronunciation within a contextual framework. Providing the descriptions of photographs could be especially beneficial for postgraduate students since it replicated real-world settings in which they might be required to elucidate concepts or illustrate situations in their academic or professional environment.

- **Taking Notes**

Most postgraduate students also indicated that they wrote notes as a component of their pronunciation practice. This approach involved writing down unfamiliar vocabulary or challenging words and subsequently cross-referencing with their accurate pronunciation which it used tools such as Google Translate or native speakers' podcast. Writing notes could enhance the learning process by involving many senses: visual (reading the notes), auditory (listening to the pronunciation), and kinesthetic (writing the notes).

All postgraduate student maintained the belief that engaged in the activity of singing English songs and analyzed the lyrics in relation to their own pronunciation yielded significant advantages. The practiced involved an actively which engaged in listening to the accurate pronunciation of words in the lyrics and to reproduce the same sounds. Through this approach, students could identify the phonetic elements. By comparing lyrics with sound, someone can receive instant feedback. It could be

immediately determined whether their pronunciation aligned with the song and made necessary modifications accordingly. The prompt feedback loop was crucial for efficient pronunciation training, as it enables students to promptly fix mistakes and improve their skills.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicated that postgraduate students faced several factors influencing their pronunciation. They were age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, attitude, and motivation. The finding of this study supported with a previous study conducted by Jahara and Abdelrady (2021) revealed that the impact of natural phonetic aptitude and exposure on postgraduate students emphasizes the significance of individual differences in pronunciation acquisition. They revealed that phonetic and exposure were the key factors. The consistency between these findings underscored the importance of recognizing and addressed these individual differences when developing strategies for pronunciation improvement in postgraduate students. The findings of this study also aligned with the previous study conducted by Suzukida (2021) showed that motivation plays a significant role in English pronunciation. Specific factors, including exposure and motivation, were essential for improving pronunciation since they had a direct impact on postgraduate students' levels of engagement and practice opportunities, according to the findings of this study. Postgraduate students used motivation as an incentive to focus their efforts on improving their pronunciation. The participants' efforts to improve their pronunciation to demonstrate their status as English language learners are consistent with the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in pronunciation performance (Shehzad et al., 2022). Postgraduate students also employed several practices in mastering English pronunciation. The finding revealed that they practiced with their ways such as: auditory perception, recollections, summary, and taking notes. It aligned with the result of study conducted by Nguyen et al (2021) showed that the diverse approaches of participants to pronunciation practice, including listening to music, memorizing vocabulary, and using technology like Google Translate, demonstrate their proactive efforts to enhance their pronunciation skills Engaging in methods such as singing English songs and watching movies to

improve pronunciation. It also aligned with the notion that social factors can positively influence pronunciation enhancement (Almusharraf, 2021). The belief among students in the effectiveness of their pronunciation practices underscores the significance of self-perception and motivation in language learning (Alsaqqaf et al., 2023).

Most postgraduate students preferred to use several tools such as Google translate and online translator during practicing their English pronunciation. It aligned with study conducted by Islami et al (2021) showed that the utilization of tools like Google Translate for verification indicates a willingness to seek external feedback to improve pronunciation accuracy. Participants' involvement in pronunciation practice through techniques like tongue twisters and vocabulary memorization showcases their dedication to enhance their pronunciation skills (Yürük, 2020). The finding aligned with this currents study which was one post graduate students believed that they tended to practice their tongue twister since they faced difficulty during pronouncing several words. Shehzad et al (2022) also reveal that on self-directed practices, such as analyzing song lyrics for pronunciation, emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation in pronunciation improvement.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research regarding the form and cultural meaning of the names of hamlets in Sembalun District. The findings produced in this research are divided into three parts, namely the form of toponym variants, the word formation process, and the meaning of hope. The form of naming a hamlet refers to the topographic conditions of the area. Topography can be interpreted as an aspect that includes the manifestation of nature, the environment and the conditions of the location of the hamlet. *First,* Toponymic variants are classified into embodiment aspects, social aspects, and cultural aspects. Aspects of embodiment are found more at the level of the form of water, nature, and conditions of place (topography). *Second*, the word formation processsby classifying the process of forming noun compositions with nouns, metaphorical noun compositions, noun compositions with adverbs, and noun compositions with adjectives. Meanwhile, the composition of nouns with adverbs is the most dominant word composition unit found in the names of hamlets in Sembalun district. *Third*, the

meaning of naming hamlets in Sembalun District is classified based on the meaning of hope and the meaning of memory. The naming of hamlets in Sembalun District is more directed towards the hope that its people will have guidance in life, and be able to always surrender to their creator. Therefore, all the hamlet names given by the Sembalun people on average refer more to the meaning of surrendering to God.

It is hoped that further research can dig deeper into the linguistic aspects of the Sasak language and traditions which are related to surrendering oneself to Allah SWT, especially those in the Sembalun area so that they can complement this research. Therefore, this research hopes that further research will be able to explore the other side of the naming of hamlets in Sembalun District because in this research it focuses more on aspects of the form and meaning of hamlet names so that a deeper search is needed into the historical realm of the formation of hamlet names in Sembalun District.

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