

The Problem of Syllabification in Consonant Cluster for English Department Students

Rahmah Widya Sari^{1*}

¹ English Department of Tarbiyah Faculty IAIN Langsa, Indonesia

Abstract

The focus of this study is an attempt to identify the students of English department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster. Syllable is the smallest unit beyond single consonants and vowels. Syllabification refers to the division of a word into syllables. Meanwhile, consonant clusters are the combinations of consonant found at the beginning or end of words and syllables. In this research, the researcher used quantitative approach which the design is the descriptive design. The process of collecting data was done by applying the essay test. The test was conducted to 11 respondents from the English department students of IAIN Langsa. According to the result of the essay test, the researcher found that there were three aspects of the students of English department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster, these were syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components. There were 45,45 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification and syllable components and 54,55 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components. According to the result of the research, the researcher suggested to the English department students of IAIN langsa have to improve their learning strategy in order to help them in comprehending the syllabification and the syllable structure. In addition, the English department students should enrich their comprehension about syllabification, consonant cluster, syllable components and recognize each of them in the word.

Keywords: *Syllable, Syllabification and Consonant Cluster*

1. INTRODUCTION

In English Department, phonology is one of the subjects in the fifth semester at English Department. Indeed, in phonology class, syllable is one of materials that the English Department Students need to learn. A syllable is a single unit of speech. In the other words, syllable is a unit of

^{1*}Corresponding author: rahmahwidyasari@gmail.com
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pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or a part of a word.²

A syllable has two main components: the *Onset* (O) and *Rhyme* (R). *Onset* contains any consonants that precede the *nuclear* (the vowel), and the *Rhyme* contains the *nuclear* (the vowel) as well as any marginal elements (consonants) that might follow it. The *Rhyme*, therefore, is classified into *Nucleus* (N), and *Coda* (Co). The *Nucleus* represents the *nuclear* or most sonorous element in a syllable. The *Coda* includes all consonants that follow the *nucleus* in a syllable.³

In English Department, Syllable is one of required materials. In this case, the learners must learn how to describe the syllable as directed. They need to comprehend more about how to describe the syllable from the word with detail. Furthermore, the learners are required to segment the words into its syllables. Hence, that is the reason why the syllable is the required matery for the learners.

As a material in the phonology course at the English Department in IAIN, the researcher assumed that students taking Phonology courses had difficulty describing the syllables in every word they uttered. Moreover, in certain words that have a consonant cluster. Furthermore, some students still do not really understand how to describe the syllable properly and correctly. Therefore, the researcher is interested to analyze and find out The Students of English Department Problem in Syllabifying English Consonant Cluster.

² Hasa, *The Difference Between Morpheme and Syllable*, accessed on 10 November 2019 from <https://pediaa.com/difference-between-morpheme-and-syllable/>

³ San Duanmu, et al., *Stress and Syllable Structure in English: Approaches to Phonological Variations* (Taiwan: University of Michigan, 2005), 22.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Definition of Phonology

Phonology is the systematic study of the sounds used in language, their internal structure, and their composition into syllables, words and phrases.⁴ Phonology is the branch of linguistics which investigates the ways in which sounds are used systematically in different languages to form words and utterances.⁵ According to Mike Davenport and S. J. Hannahs, Phonology deals with how these speech sounds are organised into systems for each individual language; for example: how the sounds can be combined, the relations between them and how they affect each other.⁶

Phonology is the study of the patterns of sounds in a language and across languages. Put more formally, phonology is the study of the categorical organisation of speech sounds in languages; how speech sounds are organised in the mind and used to convey meaning.⁷ In addition, phonology is often said to be concerned with the organization of speech within specific languages, or with the systems and patterns of sounds that occur in particular languages.⁸

2.2. Hesitation Phenomena Syllables

Syllable is the smallest unit beyond single consonants and vowels. Cruttenden illustrates that the syllable refers to the concept of a unit at a

⁴ Steven Bird, *Phonology* (University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 1.

⁵ Francis Katamba, *An Introduction to Phonology* (London: Lingman Group UK, 1996), 60.

⁶ Mike Davenport and S. J. Hannahs, *Introducing Phonetics and Phonology* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2-3.

⁷ School of English, *Phonology*, accessed on 24 October 2019 from <https://all-about-linguistics.group.shef.ac.uk/branches-of-linguistics/phonology/>

⁸ John Clark and Colin Yallop, *An Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology* (USA: Cambridge University, 1994), 2.

higher level than that of a phoneme or sound segment.⁹ Consonants and vowels are phonemes that constitute the basic speech unit. So, when these phonemes are combined together, they form syllables.¹⁰ Ladefoged defined syllables as the smallest possible unit of speech.¹¹ According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, syllable is a unit of pronunciation consisting of a vowel alone or of a vowel with one or more consonants.¹²

A syllable is a unit of pronunciation larger than a single sound and smaller than a word typically.¹³ Syllables differ in intensity (or loudness), in pitch (or tone), and in duration. They can be either strong or weak depending on many factors: stress, elision, and intonation. Syllables are often considered the phonological building blocks of words. It can influence the rhythm of a language, its prosody, its poetic metre and its stress patterns.¹⁴

Syllable consists of three components: a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning is usually called onset, the middle is called nucleus and the end is called "coda". In other words, the onset is the initial consonant or consonant cluster of the syllable. The rime of syllable is the vowel and any consonants that come after it.¹⁵

⁹ Alan Cruttenden, *Phonetic and Prosodic Aspects of Baby Talk*, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48.

¹⁰ Hadeel Mohammad Ashour, *Difficulties Facing English Department Juniors at IUG in Learning Stress: Reasons and Strategies* (The Islamic University of Gaza: Thesis, 2010), 20.

¹¹ Ladefoged, *A Course in Phonetics* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), 248.

¹² Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, *Syllable*, accessed on 24 October 2019 from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/syllable>

¹³ David Crystal, *Texting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 467.

¹⁴ Wikipedia, *Syllable*, accessed on 24 October 2019 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syllable>

¹⁵ Rebecca Treiman, *The Internal Structure of The Syllable* (USA: Washington University, 1989), 27.

2.2.1. Syllabification

The syllabication of the word is a natural process which is carried out by the native speaker of a particular language.¹⁶ Syllabification refers to the division of a word into syllables.¹⁷ Most of the speakers agree on the syllabification of a word in their language. Crystal defined syllabification as a term used to refer to the division of a word into syllables.¹⁸ The agreement of the syllables in a word mostly is triggered by the intuition of the native speakers, which guides them to syllabify the words in a natural way of speech. Gouskova, described there are few English words, that may have variable pronunciation. For example, including (i) *Bottling*, can be pronounced with two or three syllables, (ii) *Realistic* with three or four etc.¹⁹

2.3. Consonant Cluster

A consonant cluster is defined as a group or sequence of consonants that appear together in a syllable without a vowel between them (intrasyllabic).²⁰ J. C. Catford defined consonant clusters as those sequences of consonant that occur initially or finally in syllables.²¹ A consonant cluster in a word is a group of consonants with no vowels between them.²² While David Crystal mentioned that consonant clusters

¹⁶ Hameedullah Khan, *Understanding of Syllabification of Pakistani Intermediate English Language Learners*, (Islamabad: Allama Iqbal Open University, 2017), 9.

¹⁷ Mohammad Aslam & A. A. Kak, *English Phonetics...* 63.

¹⁸ David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics: 5th Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 447.

¹⁹ M. Gouskova, "Falling Sonority Onsets, Loanwords and Syllable Contact", CLS 37: The Main Session, The Chicago Linguistic Society, (1), 26.

²⁰ Ch. Jones, "Some Constraints on Medial Consonant Clusters", JSTOR, Vol. 52, No. 1, 121-130.

²¹ J. C. Catford, *Phonetics* (New York: O.U.P, 1988), 116.

²² British Council, *Consonant Cluster*, accessed on 19 November 2019 from <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/consonant-cluster>

as those sequences of adjacent sounds, occurring in restricted pattern at the beginning or end of syllables.²³

3. METHODS

In conducting this research, the researcher uses quantitative approach. Quantitative approach is an approach in research where the data which is produced is in form numeral and the analysis use statistic.²⁴ The design of this research is descriptive design where we are purposed to give indications, facts, or events systematically and accurately about certain population as stated by Sugiyono.

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4. RESULT

Here is the histogram of the test results of students' test.

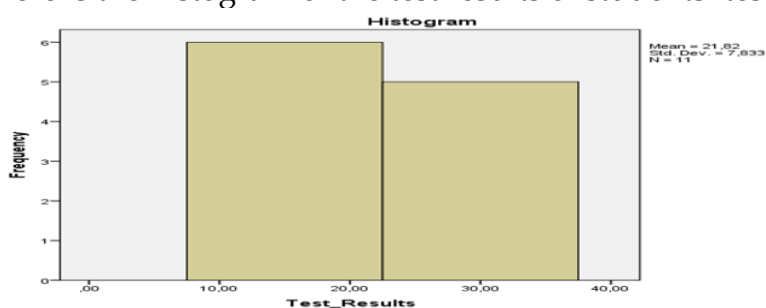


Chart 1. The Histogram of Students' Test

²³ David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics: Third Edition* (Basil Blackwell, 1991), 24.

²⁴ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*, (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2010), p.13.

²⁵ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*, (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2010), p.13.

In addition, the researcher also used IBM SPSS 21.0 version program for Windows to figure out the frequencies of the test results. The raw score can be seen in Appendix. Here is the percentage of the test results of students' test.

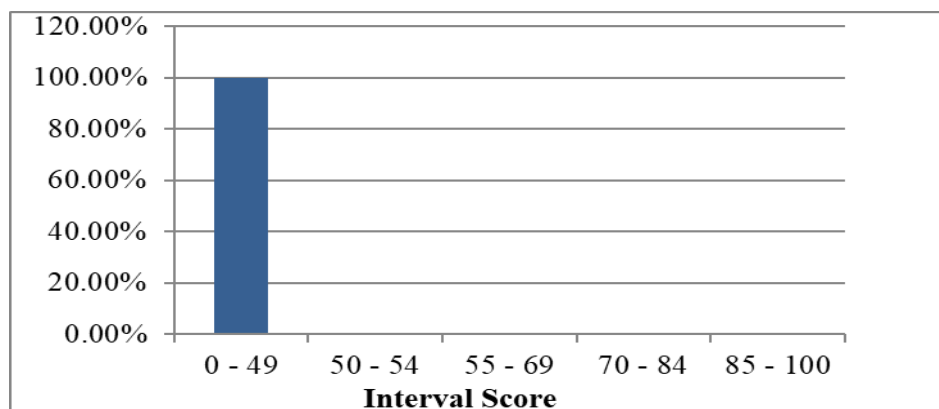


Chart 2. The Percentage Scores of Learner's Essay Test

Based on the data descriptive above, the result of essay test' score was into only one category. There were 15 students or 100% (the interval score 0-49) who got very poor scores. Meanwhile, there were no students or 0% who got poor score, adequate score, good score, and excellent score. Hence, it can be concluded that the average level of the fifth semester students in syllabifying English consonant cluster were very poor. After analyzing and scoring the data, the researcher made a description and interpretation of each aspect. Thus, the data of the students' essay test based on each aspects can be seen in the following table:

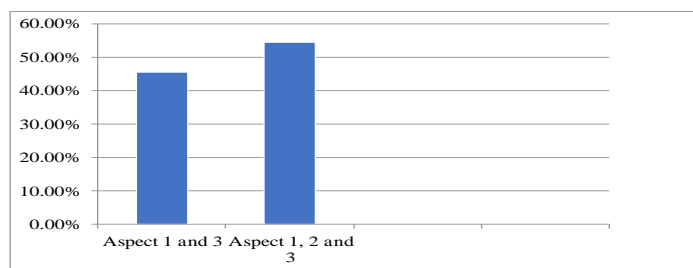


Chart 3. The Scoring Aspects Percentage of Learner's Essay Test

Based on the data descriptive above, there were three aspects of the students' of English department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster, these were syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components. There were 45,45 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification and syllable components and 54,55 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components. Thus, it can be concluded that students' of English department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster were lacks of comprehension in syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components.

5. DISCUSSION

The finding then can be categorized into two points: 1) description of the students' ability in syllabifying English consonant cluster; and 2) description of the students of English Department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster.

Description of the students' ability in syllabifying English consonant cluster.

The result of this study indicated that the students' ability in syllabifying English consonant cluster is very low. Most of students have no variation in scores, most of them got very poor scores. It showed that most of students tended not to have interests and comprehension toward syllabifying English consonant cluster. They did not know how this theory was working on. In addition, they also tend to accomplish the task without realizing the rules of the theory first. Hence, it caused the students' ability in syllabifying English consonant cluster is very low.

The finding revealed that the test' score was into only one category. There were 11 students or 100% (the interval score 0-49) who got very poor scores nscores. Meanwhile, there were no students or 0% who got

poor score, adequate score, good score, and excellent score. Based on the result, the level of the students' ability in syllabifying English consonant cluster were very poor.

Description of the students of English Department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster.

In this case, the research indicated that there were three aspects of students of English department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster, these are syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components. These aspects were very crucial when the students need to syllabify the word and analyze the syllable structure. Besides, these three aspects affected the student's ability in syllabifying English consonant cluster correctly.

The finding revealed that There were 45,45 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification and syllable components and 54,55 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components. Thus, it can be concluded that the students of English Department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster were lacks of comprehension in syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on finding and discussing in the previous chapter, it revealed that there were 45,45 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification and syllable components and 54,55 % of students who got mistakes in aspect syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components. Hence, the conclusion was taken in this research was the students of English Department problem in syllabifying English consonant cluster were lacks of comprehension in syllabification, consonant cluster and syllable components.

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