

Exploring Students' Understanding on English Syllables at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong

Putri Yasmin¹, Kris Uluelang², Heriyanti Tahang³, Retny⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong, Indonesia

putriyasmin0706@gmail.com, krisuluelang.ums@gmail.com, heriyantitahang@um-sorong.ac.id,
retny@gmail.com

*putriyasmin0706@gmail.com

Abstract

This article aims to explore students' understanding on English syllables. There were two purposes of this research: i) the most frequently English errors of English syllable made by students, and ii) the most frequently understanding on analyzing English syllables made by students. There were 17 students of English Department participated in this research. This research used qualitative method and applied descriptive qualitative as the design. This research used a test. The test was vocabulary list and the students were asked to divide the syllable by using symbol (-). Those words were ranging from one syllable to seven syllables. The results were the total of 35 questions that given to the students, there was 425 frequency or 71,42 percent of students' error on dividing syllables. There was 170 frequency or 28,57 percent of students' understanding on dividing English syllables. It can be concluded that students' understanding on dividing English syllables were less. Based on Ridwan (2010), on the classification of students' understanding level.

Keywords: English Phonology, English Syllables

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is the study of language. Studying language helps us understand the structure of language, how language is used, variations in language and the influence of language on the way people think. In reaching good communication, students should be able to carry out and dig their deep understanding about how they can use English orally as well as they can (Wael, Asnur & Ibrahim, 2018). Linguistics helps us understand that languages around the world have commonalities in structure, use, acquisition by children and adults, and how they change over time. Language learners have their own way to learn a language (Wael et al. 2023). Linguistics research allows us to understand commonalities and where they originated, as well as determine structural differences and their limits. According to Fromkin, Victoria & Robert (2007), linguistics is very broad, with many different fields. There are various branches of linguistics which are given their own name, that are Phonetics and Phonology (sounds), Morphology (words), Syntax (sentences structure), and Semantics (meaning).

In addition, phonology is the study of linguistics systems, specifically the way in which sound represents differences of meaning in a language. For the time, segmental view of the situation whereby each word is made up of three segments. In forms of phonological theory it is assumed that each language or language variety has a single system of contracts which may vary slightly depending on position in the syllable, for example the beginning (onset) or the end (coda). So each language has a system of consonants and vowel to distinguish each of its lexical items from each other. (McMahanon :2002). Phonology and phonetic subject have

been given in even semester. Those second semester and fourth semester. Phonology was the study of word prosodic systems representation for word stress and lexical tone. The syllable made up of words, words made up of letters. Hence, the students should learn about syllables. Moreover, while teaching and learning phonology and phonetic, the lecturer taught the students about syllable. The lecturer asked students to divide a syllable. Some of students did not understand how to divide a syllable.

Phonology is the study of the way native speaker organize and store the knowledge of the sounds of their own language that enables them to use it appropriately on all occasions (Lodge, 2009). In other words, Phonology was the study of sound that enables to use while speak to convey feelings by focus on the intonation. In addition, Phonology is the branch of linguistics which studies the sound system of languages. The sound system involves the actual pronunciation of words, which can be broken up into the smallest units of pronunciation, known as a segment or a phoneme. (Jailings : 2004). In other hand, phonology always talked about sound system how we produced the word. According to Murashkina (2014), “a syllable is a combination of segmental and supra segmental units that create the smallest structure and is in action during speech act, it has certain objective characteristics and is divided in perception of speech act. While one of the objectives of the syllable was it being the realization position of the stress, it’s another, and not less important objective is to act as elementary distribution models of phonemes in speech act (in syntagmatics)”.

However, according to Shevchenko (2011), “syllable, as a phonological unit, is a minimal group in a which a vowel and consonant join allowed by a language structure”. “A syllable is the sound of vowel that is created while pronouncing the letters A, I, U, E, O and the their combination. The number of times that hear the sound of a vowel is the number of syllable in a word”. In other words, a syllable can be divided by knowing how many vowel and their combination in a word. Roach (1998), states that the syllable is a very important unit in both Phonetics and Phonology. Skandera and Burleigh (2005), sustain that syllable can be probably defined as the smallest rhythmic unit of spoken language, for example, or a unit that is typically larger than a single sound smaller than a word. So, they believe that the syllable can be defined in different ways.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This research was conducted from October to November 2023. This research took place at English Department in Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong. The participants of this research was seven semester. This research applied Qualitative approach to obtain the comprehensive data on English syllables. According to Crowl (1996), “Qualitative research method are used to examine questions that can be best answered by verbally describing how participants in a study perceive and interpret various aspects of their environment.” In addition, Frankel and Wallen (1993), reveal that “Qualitative methods used descriptions and categories (words), for example, open-ended interviews, naturalistic observation, and document analysis. In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative as the research design. To collect the data, the researcher used an objective test (vocabulary list). The vocabulary test which consists of three until seven syllable words. The test consists of 35 items, which 7 items consist of three syllables, 7 items about four syllables, 7 items about five syllables, 7 items about six syllables, and 7 items about seven syllables. It aimed to find out the concept of students’ understanding on dividing English syllable. In order to provide the comprehensive data of students’ understanding on the syllable, the researcher used classification as scores:

Table 1.
Classification of student’s understanding level

Scores	Classification
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81%-100%	Excellent
61%-80%	Good
41%-60%	Enough
21%-40%	Less
0%-20%	Poor

Ridwan, (2010)

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

After obtaining the data, the researcher presented the result of this research on the frequency of the students' errors on dividing English syllables of 3 syllables:

Table. 2

The Frequency and Percentage of Students' Errors on Dividing 3 Syllables

3 Syllables	Frequency	Percentage
Cummerbund	1	5,88%
Determine	4	23,52%
Entertain	4	23,52%
Resurrect	4	23,52%
Commander	16	94,11%
Spaghetti	9	52,94%
Encounter	17	100%

From the table above, the totals of seven questions of 3 syllables were given to 17 participants, the highest frequency and percentage was "encounter". The word "encounter" was 17 or 100% percent. Second position was the word "commander" was 16 or 94,11 percent. Third position was word "spaghetti" was 9 or 52,94 percent. Fourth position were "determine" "entertain" and "resurrect" with 4 or 23,52 percent of each word. The last position was "cummerbund" with 1 or 5,88 percent. *First*, all of the participants divided word "encounter" based on the vowel, such as "*en-coun-ter*". The root word of "encounter" was "count" "en" as prefix and "er" as suffix. Therefore, to divide word "encounter" was "*en-count-er*". *Second*, most participants divided word "Commander" based on the vowel, for example students' errors to divide English syllable on the word: "com-man-der". Though, to divide word "commander" was "com-mand-er". The stem word of commander was "command", "er" as the suffix. *Third*, the word "spaghetti", most of students divided the word such as "spa-ghetti". The word "spaghetti" there were two consonants "tt". Therefore, to divide word "spaghetti" was "spa-ghet-ti".

Fourth, the word "determine" "entertain" and "resurrect". The word "determine" was divided by participants such as "deter-mine", so to divide the word "determine" was "de-ter-mine". The word "entertain" was divided by the participants such as "enter-tain", so to divided the word "entertain" was "en-ter-tain". Furthermore, the word "resurrect". Two of participants divide the word "resurrect" such as "resur-rect". The word "resurrect" there were two consonant "rr", so to divided word "resurrect" was "re-sur-rect". *The last* was "cummerbund", one participant divided the word such as "cummer-bund", the word "cummerbund" there were two consonants "mm", to divide the word "cummerbund" was "cum-mer-bund".

The researcher presented the result of this research on the frequency of the students' errors on dividing English syllables of 4 syllables:

Table. 3
The Frequency and Percentage of Students' Errors on Dividing 4 syllables

4 Syllables	Frequency	Percentage
Comfortable	17	100%
Accuracy	11	64,70%
Purposeful	17	100%
Prestigious	11	64,70%
Politeness	14	82,35%
Photography	17	100%
Universal	13	76,47%

From the table above, the total of seven questions of 4 syllables were given to 17 participants, there were three words placed the highest frequency and percentage. Those words were “comfortable”, “purposeful” and “photography” with 17 or 100 percent of each word. The second position was “politeness” 14 or 82,35 percent. Third position was “universal” 13 or 76,47 percent. Fourth position was “accuracy” and “prestigious” with 11 or 64,70 percent of each word.

First, the word “comfortable”, some participants divided word “comfortable” such as “com-for-*ta-ble*” and “com-for-*table*”. Moreover, to divide word “comfortable” was “com-fort-*a-ble*”. Moreover, the word “purposeful” had a suffix “ful”. The word “purposeful”, was divided by participants as “pur-*pose-ful*”, to divide the word “purposeful” was “pur-po-*se-ful*”. Furthermore, the word “photography” was divided by the participants as “pho-to-*gra-phy*” and “photo-*graphy*”. According to Maledo (2011), divide the word between two middle consonant, example “pho-tog-*raph-y*” and divide off any suffix “pho-tog-*raph-y*”. **Second position** “politeness”, most of participants divided the word “politeness” such as “po-lite-*ness*” and “poli-te-*ness*”. The word “politeness” had a suffix that was “ness”, it can be divided “po-li-te-*ness*”.

The third position was “universal”. Most of participants divided the word “universal” such as “uni-*ver-sal*” and “uni-*versal*”, so, the word “universal” can be divided “u-ni-*ver-sal*”. The last position were “accuracy” and “prestigious”. The word “accuracy” was divided by some participants as “ac-cu-*racy*” and “accu-*racy*”. Therefore, to divided the word “accuracy” was “ac-cu-*ra-cy*”. The word “prestigious” was divided by most participants as “pres-ti-*gi-ous*”, so to divided the word “prestigious” was “pres-ti-*gi-ous*”.The researcher presented the result of this research on the frequency of the students' errors on dividing English syllables of 5 syllables:

Table. 4
The Frequency and Percentage of Students' Errors on Dividing 5 Syllables

5 Syllables	Frequency	Percentage
Interpretable	16	94,11%
Advertisement	15	88,23%
Contradictory	17	100%
Advantageous	14	82,35%
Productivity	8	47,05%
Uncomfortable	16	94,11%

Practicality	9	52,94%
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From the table above, the total of seven questions of 5 syllables that had given to 17 participants, there was one word placed the highest frequency and percentage. Those words were “contradictory” with 17 or 100 percent. The second were “interpretable” and “uncomfortable” with 16 or 94,11 percent, and the third position was “advertisement” 15 or 88,23 percent. Fourth was “advantageous” with 14 or 82,35 percent. Fifth position was “practicality” with 9 or 52,94 percent. The last position was “productivity” with 8 or 47,05 percent. The researcher provided the data analysis and the explanation of its start from the highest position till lowest position as follows:

First, most of students divided the word “contradictory” such as “con-tra-dic-to-ry” and “con-tra-dic-tory”. The word “contradictory” had a suffix “y”. Moreover, from these theories, the word “contradictory” can be divided as “con-tra-dic-tor-y”. **Second**, the word “uncomfortable” had a prefix “un” and suffix “able”. Most participants divided the word “un-com-for-ta-ble”. Moreover, the word “uncomfortable” can be divided such as “un-com-fort-a-ble”. Furthermore, the word “interpretable” also had a suffix “able”, most of participants divided “in-ter-pre-ta-ble” and “in-ter-pret-able”. It can be divided such as “in-ter-pret-a-ble”.

Third position was the word “advertisement”, the word “advertisement” had a suffix “ment”, most participants divided “ad-ver-tise-ment” and “ad-ver-tise-ment”. It should be divided “ad-ver-ti-se-ment”. **Fourth**, the word “advantageous” was divided by the participants such as “advan-tage-ous”, so to divide the word “advantageous” was “ad-van-ta-ge-ous”. **Fifth**, the word “practicality” was divided of some participants such as “prac-tica-lity” and “prac-ticality”, however, to divide the word “practicality” was “prac-ti-ca-li-ty”. **The last position** was “productivity”. Some of participants divided the word “productivity” such as “pro-ducti-vity”, so it can be divided such as “pro-duc-ti-vi-ty”.

The researcher presented the result of this research on the frequency of the students’ errors on dividing English syllables of 5 syllables:

Table. 5
The Frequency and Percentage of Students’ Errors on Dividing 6 Syllables

6 Syllables	Frequency	Percentage
Capitalization	9	52,94%
Trichomoniasis	15	88,23%
Responsibility	9	52,94%
Personification	9	52,94%
Prestidigitation	9	52,94%
Voluminosity	13	76,47%
Desertification	8	47,05%

From the table above, total of seven questions of 6 syllables that had given to 17 participants, there was one word place the highest frequency and percentage. There was “trichomoniasis” with 15 or 88,23 percent. The second was “voluminosity” with 13 or 76,47 percent. The third position was four words, those words were “capitalization”, “responsibility”, “personification” and “prestidigitation” with 9 or 52,94 percent of each word.

The last position was “desertification” with 8 or 47,05 percent. The researcher provided the data analysis and the explanation that begin the highest position until lowest position as follows:

First, the word “trichomoniasis” some participants divided “tri-cho-mo-nia-sis”. The word “trichomoniasis” had a vowel sound that “ia”, it can be divided as “tri-cho-mo-ni-a-sis”. **Second**, the word “voluminosity”, some participants divided “volu-mino-sity” and “vo-lum-in-os-ity”. The word “voluminosity”, can be divided as “vo-lu-mi-no-si-ty”. **Third**, the word “capitalization” had a suffix “tion”. Most of participants divided the word such as “capa-tali-zation”. Moreover, to divide the word “capitalization” was “capa-tali-zation”. **The last position** was “desertification” had a suffix “tion”. Some participants divided the word such as “de-ser-ti-fi-cation”. Moreover, to divide the word “desertification” was “de-ser-ti-fi-ca-tion”.

The researcher presented the result of this research on the frequency of the students’ errors on dividing English syllables of 5 syllables:

Table. 6
The Frequency and Percentage of Students’ Errors on Dividing 7 Syllables

7 Syllables	Frequency	Percentage
Intercolonization	10	58,82%
Conceptualization	14	82,35%
Denominationally	15	88,23%
Infinitesimally	14	82,35%
Disproportionality	17	100%
Photoactivatable	16	94,11%
Metalinguistically	17	100%

From the table above, the total of seven questions of 7 syllables that had given to 17 participants, there were two words place the highest frequency and percentage. Those words were “disproportionality”, and “metalinguistically” with 17 or 100 percent. The second was “photoactivatable” with 16 or 94,11 percent. The third was “denominationally” with 15 or 88,23 percent. The fourth were “conceptualization” and “infinitesimally” with 14 or 82,35 percent. The fifth was “intercolonization” with 10 or 58,82 percent. The researcher provided the data analysis and the explanation which begin from the highest position until lowest position as follows:

First, the word “metalinguistically” had suffix “al”, “ly” and the root word “linguistic”. Most participants divided the word such as “me-ta-li-ngu-is-ti-cal-ly” and “me-ta-li-ngu-is-tic-ally”, so, to divide the word “metalinguistically” was “me-ta-lin-guis-tic-al-ly”. **Second**, the word “photoactivatable” had a suffix “able”, most of participants divided the word such as “pho-to-ac-ti-va-tab-le”, According Maledo’ theory, it can be divided such as “a-ble”. Moreover, to divide the word “photoactivatable” was “pho-to-ac-ti-vat-a-ble”. **Third**, the word “denominationally” had a suffix “ly”, some participants divide “de-no-mi-na-tion-ally”. Moreover, the word “denominationally” can be divided such as “de-no-mi-na-tion-al-ly”.

Fourth, the word “conceptualization” had a suffix “tion”, some of participants divide “con-cep-tu-ali-za-tion” and “concept-tual-iza-tion”. Based on the theory of Roach and Maledo, it can be divided “con-cep-tual-iza-tion”. Moreover, the word “infinitesimally”. The word “infinitesimally” had a suffix “ly”. Some of participants divide the word such as “in-fi-ni-tes-im-al-ly” and “in-fi-nite-si-mal-ly”, so, to divided the word “infinitesimally” was “in-fi-ni-te-si-mal-ly”. **The last**, was the word “intercolonization”, the word

“intercolonization” had a suffix “tion”. Most of participants divided the word such as “in-ter-co-lo-ni-zation”. Moreover, to divide the word “intercolonization” was “in-ter-co-lo-ni-za-tion”.

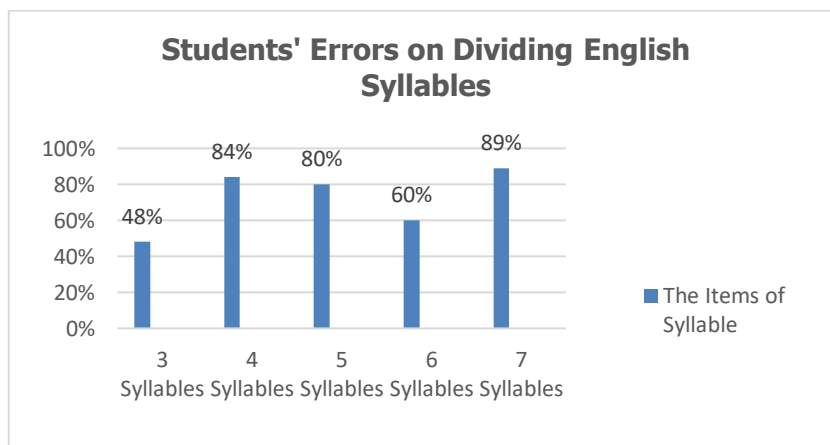
The table 4.6 below showed the total of students’ errors on divide English syllable and its explanation. The table as follows:

Table. 7
Classification of Students’ Errors on Dividing English Syllable

Items	Frequency	Percentage
3 Syllables	55	46,21%
4 syllable	100	84,03%
5 syllable	95	79,83%
6 syllable	72	60,50%
7 syllable	103	86,55%
Total	425	71,42%

Based on table above, the highest position of students’ errors on dividing English syllable was 7 syllables with 103 frequency of syllable shift or 86,55 percent. The second position was 4 syllables with 100 frequency or 84,03 percent. The third position was 5 syllables with 95 frequency or 79,83 percent. The fourth position was 6 syllables with 72 frequency or 60,50 percent. And the last position was 3 syllables with 55 frequency or 46,21 percent. Moreover, the total of 5 items of syllable that had given for 17 participants, the total percent of students’ English syllable shift was 430 or 72,26 percent. Furthermore, the researcher provided the chart of students’ errors on dividing English syllable on which the highest and the lowest position of students’ errors on dividing English syllables made by students. The chart as follows:

Figure. 1
Chart of Students’ Errors on Dividing English Syllables



Moreover, the researcher provided the classification of students’ understanding on English syllable and its explanation. The table as follows:

Table. 8

Classification of Students' Understanding on English Syllable

Items	Frequency	Percentage
3 Syllables	64	53,78%
4 syllable	19	15,96%
5 syllable	24	20,16%
6 syllable	47	39,49%
7 syllable	16	13,44%
Total	170	28,57%

From the table above, the total of 5 items of syllable that had given to 17 participants in English Department. The highest position of students' understanding on syllable was 3 syllables with 64 frequency or 53,78 percent. The second position was 6 syllables with 47 frequency or 39,49 percent. The third position was 5 syllables with 24 frequency or 20,16 percent. The fourth position was 4 syllables with 19 frequency or 15,96 percent. The last position was 7 syllables with 16 frequency or 13,44 percent. Furthermore, it can be seen that the total of 5 items of syllables that had given or 7 question for each syllables, the frequency and percentage of students' understanding was 170 or 28,57 percent. According to Ridwan, (2010) classification of students' understanding level, it can be concluded that students' understanding level was less or 21-40%.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the data analysis as mentioned before, it can be concluded that the highest frequency and percentage of students' errors on dividing English syllables made by students was the word with suffix. The participants got the difficult when divided the word with suffix "able", "ly", "y", "ment", "er". Moreover, the participants tend to find difficult to divide "the term of English" such as "Metalinguistically", "Voluminosity", and "Trichomoniasis". While, the researcher found the most frequently errors on dividing English syllables made by students were 7 syllables with 103 or 86,55 percent, followed by 4 syllables with 100 or 84,03 percent. The third positions was 5 syllables with 95 or 79,83 percent. The fourth position was 6 syllables with 72 or 60,50 percent. The last position was 3 syllables with 55 or 46,21 percent. Moreover, there were two unique of this finding. There were first, the participants were easy to divide the word with prefix and suffix "ion" it proved with the students' frequency or percentage on 50 percent. Second, for the word on 3 syllables "cumberbund", the total of 17 participants just one participant made error on dividing the word, almost participants understanding on dividing this word. It can be seen by the frequency and percentage. The frequency was 1 or 5,88 percent. Furthermore, to answer the research questions "what is students' most frequently errors on divide English syllables at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong" was 425 frequency or 71,42 percent, and "what is students' most frequently understanding on dividing English syllable at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong" was 170 frequency or 28,57 percent.

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