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THE PERCEPTION ACCURACY OF ENGLISH MONOPHTHONG BY MALAY YOUNG LEARNERS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Intelligibility is the ability to differentiate speech sounds and this ability is important in communication. Being intelligible is vital as perception accuracy is related to utterance understanding. Communicating in one's own native language may not be a problem, but the issue arises when one has to communicate in other languages, for example, English. The task to listen and at the same time, perceiving the correct message may be challenging. This present study investigates Malay young learners in Malaysia on their ability, in terms of accuracy, to differentiate three English monophthong pairs. Each monophthong pairs consist of one short and long vowel, which are / / - /i:/, / / - / :/ and / / - /u:/. Ten 11-year-old students who studied in a semi-urban primary school in Kuala Lumpur have participated in this study. The participants were selected carefully using a Language Profile Test, loosely based on Birdsong et al. (2012). They took parts in the two-alternative force-choice (2AFC) test, presented using PsychoPy software. The stimuli are presented in blocks and according to vowel pair, each targeted vowel was repeated three times. The findings reveal that the participants were able to distinguish the short and long vowels with 73.9% accuracy. Further analysis shows that the participants perceived / / - /u:/ better (98.3%) compared to / / - /i:/ (53.3%) and / / - / :/ (70%). The participants performed better in distinguishing short vowels (75.6% accuracy) compared to long vowels (72.7% accuracy) and no significant difference was found ($t(89) = -.555$, $p = .580$). Overall, the participants were able to perceive and differentiate the targeted English monophthongs, which indicates that they have a high intelligibility score.

Keywords: English in Malaysia, Malay young learners, Perception, English monophthongs, Accuracy