

The Production of word stress patterns in English noun to verb conversion words by adult EFL learners in Indonesia: A Phonological Study

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Abstract—Word stress errors produced by EFL learners is such a common issue in phonological study. Many research regarding the issue have been conducted. Most of research concerned about the analysis of word stress errors itself. This urges the researcher to conduct a study on the production of word stress patterns in noun to verb conversion words. This topic is somehow rarely found in the area of research since the researcher use conversion words as an instrument. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the production of word stress patterns in English noun to verb conversion words by adult EFL learners in Indonesia. The researcher gathers the data by recording the production of 10 English noun to verb conversion words in the form of sentences given to 10 English Linguistics postgraduate students as participants of the study. The researcher classifies the data into correct word stress and error word stress. The error word stress are also classified into types of error word stress. The results showed that most of the students already have phonological competence, particularly in word stress patterns production in noun to verb conversion words. Apart from the success of word stress placement. It is also found that there are several types of error placement produced by adult EFL learners comprising verb stress placement in noun, noun stress placement in verb, unstressed words, and double-stressed words. In addition, this research have made contributions to the area of phonological study especially word stress and its implementation according to specific language learners.

Keywords—word stress patterns, English noun to verb conversion words, adult EFL learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

In phonological study, word stress errors produced by EFL learners is such a common issue that gains much attention by many researchers. Some are concerned about the production of word stress errors itself, some are concerned about the factors causes the word stress errors, some are concerned about methods or strategy in teaching word stress. Those issues are studied due to the importance of word stress in the intelligibility and comprehensibility which are undermined specifically by faulty word stress (Field 2005). Moreover, misunderstanding of word stress can have significant impact beyond the language lab or classroom. For example, it has been found that word stress mispronunciation contributes to misunderstandings between GPs and their patients in multicultural medical clinics (Roberts, Moss, Wass, Sarangi & Jones, 2005).

In this area of knowledge, Checklin (2012) provides some word stress rules that must be beneficial to understand more about word stress. The first of the three

is phonological similarity. This is when students use known stress patterns from other similar words and transfer them to new words. For example, a student may know the word stress pattern of ‘humanity’ and apply its word stress structure to a new vocabulary item such as ‘absurdity’. It is particularly of note that late learners of English rely most on the stress patterns of phonologically-similar known words (Guion, 2006). The second rule relates to word class. Just over 80% of two syllable nouns and adjectives place stress on the first syllable, e.g., ‘kitchen’ /ˈkɪtʃ.ən/ and ‘extra’ /ˈek.strə/ (Hammond, 1999). However, verb stress works in the opposite manner (consider ‘achieve’ /əˈtʃi:v/ and ‘agree’ /əˈɡri:/.). An important third rule concerns the syllabic structure of words (Guion, 2006). English stress tends to fall on syllables with longer vowels or when the word ends in two or more consonants (Chomsky & Halle, 1968). However, it may be that consonant clusters are less important than vowel length and there are many exceptions to this rule (Guion, 2006). Early bilinguals can

pick up more complex pattern learning such as syllabic structure rules but still show some slight deficits in this area (Guion, 2004).

Based on the previous studies, it urges the researcher to conduct a study on word stress patterns suggested by Checklin (2012) focusing on the second rule which relates to word classes that the researcher believes it will be best implemented in English noun to verb conversion words. Conversion is also called zero derivation that can be subsumed under derivation. Derivation is not only used in a category-changing fashion, but also to create other semantic subcategories of the same lexical category, named conversion (Booij, 2005). The noun to verb conversion words are employed in this study since they have the exact word stress patterns. For example, the word conflict /'kɒn.flɪkt/ as noun, the stress is in the first syllable, and conflict /kən'flɪkt/ as verb places stress in the second syllable. However, Booij (2005) argues that there is no phonological change involved in conversion. This statement is quite arguable in contrary to what Checklin (2012) affirms that just over 80% of two syllable nouns place stress on the first syllable, e.g., 'kitchen'/'kɪtʃ.ən/ and verb stress works in the opposite manner, e.g., 'achieve' /ə'tʃi:v/. The fact is that 80% is a significant number. According to both statements, it can be inferred that the word stress patterns are not applicable to all noun to verb conversion words but there is a great possibility of the same word stress patterns to occur in noun to verb conversion words such as in disyllabic words such as 'conflict', 'increase', 'convert', etc.

Thus, this study aims to study the production of word stress patterns in English noun to verb conversion words by adult EFL learners in Indonesia. Additionally, this research has made contributions to the area of phonological study especially word stress and its production of noun to verb conversion according to specific language learners. This provides new insights since conversion which is actually one of important elements in morphology is taking part.

II. METHODS

The researcher employs phonological approach to support the study. Phonology is the description of the systems and patterns of sounds that occur in a language. Forel (2005) defines that "phonological study is concerned with how sound function in relation to each other in language, it is about sound system in language". This means that phonological study is concerned with the organization within specific languages, or the system and patterns of sounds that occur in particular languages which provides

objective ways of describing and analyzing the range of sounds humans use in their language. One of its important elements in supra-segmental units is regarding the stress which is the reason that this approach is used i.e. in order to help investigate the word stress pattern occurs in noun to verb conversion words.

In collecting the data, the researcher chooses 10 postgraduate students majoring in English Linguistics. They are selected because they have taken phonology and morphology courses and due to the needs of participants who are knowledgeable in the area of linguistics study because such study conducted by the researcher is targeted to adult EFL learners who are considered have the ability to recognize the morphological interference towards the word stress patterns.

Then, the researcher recorded 10 word list containing noun to verb conversion words produced by the students. The researcher then classifies the data into correct word stress and error word stress. Apart from that, the error word stress will also be classified into several types of error. As instrument of the research. The following are the word list of noun to verb conversion words including its transcript based on dictionary. While the sentences containing noun to verb conversion words will be available in appendix.

Table 1: Noun to Verb Conversion Word List

No.	Word List	
	Noun	Verb
1.	Addict /'æd.ɪkt/	Addicted /ə'dɪk.tɪd/
2.	Conflict /'kɒn.flɪkt/	Conflict /kən'flɪkt/
3.	Contest /'kɒn.test/	Contest /kən'test/
4.	Contrast /'kɒn.trɑ:st/	Contrast /kən'trɑ:st/
5.	Convert /'kɔ:n.vɜ:t/	Convert /kən'vɜ:t/
6.	Decrease /'di:kri:s/	Decrease /dɪ'kri:s/
7.	Import /'ɪm.pɔ:t/	Import /ɪm'pɔ:t/
8.	Increase /'ɪn.kri:s/	Increase /ɪn'kri:s/
9.	Insult /'ɪn.sʌlt/	Insult /ɪn'sʌlt/
10.	Permit /'pɜ:.mɪt/	Permit /pə'mɪt/

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on this research, most of the students already have phonological competence in stress placement of noun to verb conversion words. The results show that most of the stress are placed correctly with the total number of 321 correct stress and only 79 error stress from the total number of 400 noun to verb conversion words produced by adult EFL learners. The results also reveal that most of the students have more knowledge on how to stress verb instead of noun, they sometimes apply way of stressing the verb into noun. This can be seen from 321 correct stress words that consist of 167 verb and 154 noun. The

number of correct stress verb is higher than noun. This is in parallel with the total number of 79 error stress words that consist of 33 verb and 46. The number of error stress is dominated by noun. The overall production of word stress patterns in noun to verb conversion words by adult EFL learners are available in appendix.

Apart from the success of word stress placement. It is also found that there are several types of error placement produced by adult EFL learners. The researcher classifies the types of error placement into four categories including verb stress placement in noun, noun stress placement in verb, no-stress placement, and double stress placement. The overall types of error is available in appendix. The following are the description of each types of error:

1.1 Verb Stress Placement in Noun

What is meant by verb stress placement in noun is that when the students place the stress in noun the way the verb is stressed. The total error of this case is 34 which is the highest occurrence comparing to other types of error. This shows that most of the students know more about how to stress a verb instead of noun. This resulted in stressing the noun the way they stress the verb. In other words, they generalize the way of stressing both verb and noun conversion words according to the way of stressing verb as their reference. For instance, it happens in the noun 'contest' /'kɒn.test/, the stress is in the first syllable, but they place the stress in the second syllable /kɒn'test/ which is the correct stress of verb, not noun.

1.2 Noun Stress Placement in Verb

The second type of error is noun stress placement in verb which is the opposite of the first type of error. This happens when the students place the stress in verb the way the noun is stressed. The total number of this type of error is only 11 occurrence which is much lower comparing to the verb stress placement in noun. In this regard, the students generalize the way of stressing both verb and noun conversion words according to the way of stressing noun as their reference, but the generalization is not as much as the previous one. The example for this type of error occurs in the verb 'decrease' /dɪ'kri:s/, the stress is in the second syllable, but they place the stress in the first syllable /di:kri:s/ which is the correct stress of noun.

1.3 No-stress Placement

The third type of error is sort of common error produced by adult EFL learners in Indonesia since Indonesian language is a syllable-timed language where each syllable takes roughly the same amount of time comparing to English which is a stress-timed language where the stressed syllables are said at approximately

regular intervals, and unstressed syllables shorten to fit this rhythm. The total number of this type of error is 21 occurrence which is higher comparing to noun stress placement in verb and double stress placement. One of the examples occurs in the word 'permit' /'pɜ:.mɪt/ as noun and /pə'mɪt/ as verb. This word appear to be the most frequent unstressed one which occur 8 times. The students sound it in a flat tone /pərmɪt/.

1.4 Double-stressed Placement

The last type of error is double stress placement which only occurs three times. This unnecessary stress is the least to produce due to their good comprehension of phonology, particularly word stress. This happens in the verb 'increase', they sounded it /'m'kri:s/. They place the stress both in the first and the second syllable. The second is in the verb 'convert', they sounded it /'kɑ:n'vɜ:t/ which happens twice. They also place the stress both in the first and the second syllable.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the study shows that the adult EFL learners already have phonological competence, particularly in the production of word stress pattern in noun to verb conversion. The correct stress word is dominated by verb stress placement instead of noun stress placement. It implies that they seem to generalize the way of stressing both verb and noun conversion words based on the correct stress of verb. It also shows that they have more knowledge on how to place stress on verb. Apart from that, it is also found that there are types of errors produced by adult EFL learners comprising verb stress placement in noun, noun stress placement in verb, unstressed words, and double-stressed words.

Moreover, the results have made contribution to the area of phonological study, particularly the realization of word stress to specific language learners. It also gives more insights to this area of knowledge that noun to verb conversion words have different word stress placement. Although it cannot be generalized to all noun to verb conversion words, but many research claimed that over 80% of two syllable nouns place stress on the first syllable, and verb stress works in the opposite manner. This knowledge can also be implemented in teaching word stress.

Additionally, in relation to the issue of error word stress produced by adult EFL learners, the results of this study is quite surprising that most of the students place the stress correctly. Hence, the researcher believes that further studies under the same issue are required to broaden this area of knowledge. Such studies should pay more attention about how adult EFL learners learn word

stress and the possible success factors certain learners may have. Another recommendation is that there should be more participants or another specific language learners. The addition of noun to verb conversion word list are also recommended.

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APPENDIX

Table 2: Sentences Containing Noun to Verb Conversion Words

No.	Word List	Sentences
1.	Addict	a. Rob is a crack cocaine <u>addict</u> . b. If you keep playing that game, you will get <u>addicted</u> to it!
2.	Conflict	a. The two friends were in <u>conflict</u> . b. Your two accounts of what happened <u>conflict</u> .
3.	Contest	a. He is taking part in a boxing <u>contest</u> . b. I'm sorry, I have to <u>contest</u> your figures
4.	Contrast	a. There's quite a <u>contrast</u> between their political views. b. I will compare and <u>contrast</u> these two poems
5.	Convert	a. He is a <u>convert</u> to Buddhism. b. I'm sorry, you will never <u>convert</u> me.
6.	Decrease	a. There has been a <u>decrease</u> in sales recently. b. We need to <u>decrease</u> the number of children in the class to make it more effective.
7.	Import	a. Coffee is an <u>import</u> from Brazil. b. We would like to <u>import</u> more coffee over the next few years.
8.	Increase	a. There has been an <u>increase</u> in accidents recently. b. We need to <u>increase</u> our sales figures.
9.	Insult	a. What she said felt like an <u>insult</u> . b. Please don't <u>insult</u> me.
10.	Permit	a. Do you have a <u>permit</u> to drive this lorry? b. Do you <u>permit</u> me to park my car in front of your house?

Table 3: Word Stress Patterns in Noun to Verb Conversion

No.	Word list and correct stress based on dictionary		Total of the correct word stress		Total of the error word stress		
	Noun	Verb	Noun	Verb	Respondent	Transcript	
						Noun	Verb
1.	Addict /'æd.ɪkt/	Addicted /ə'dɪk.tɪd/	16	15	R1		/ədɪktɪd/
					R4	/'æd.ɪt/	/æ'detɪt/
					R5	/æ'dɪ:k/	
					R6	/ə'dɪk/	/ədɪk'tɪd/
					R8	/ædɪk/	/ædɪktɪd/
					R10		/ədɪk'tɪd/
2.	Conflict /'kɒn.flɪkt/	Conflict /kən'flɪkt/	18	16	R4		/'kɒn.flɪkt/
					R5		/'kɒn.flɪk/
					R6		/'kɒn.flɪk/
					R8	/kən'flɪk/	
					R9	/kɒnflɪkt/	/'kɒn.flɪkt/
3.	Contest /'kɒn.test/	Contest /kən'test/	16	18	R1	/kən'test/	
					R2	/kən'test/	
					R4		/'kɒn.test/
					R6		/'kɒn.test/
					R8	/kən'tes/	
					R9	/kɒn'test/	
4.	Contrast /'kɒn.trɑːst/	Contrast/kən'trɑːs t/	15	18	R1	/kən'trɑːst/	
					R2	/kən'trɑːst/	
					R4		/kɒntrɑst/
					R6	/kɒntrɑːst/	
					R8	/kɒn'trɑːst/	
					R9	/kɒn'trɑːst/	
					R10		/'kɒn.trɑst/
5.	Convert /'kɑːn.vɜːt/	Convert /kən'vɜːt/	18	15	R1		/'kɑːn.vɜːt/
					R2		/'kɑːn.vɜːrt/
					R5	/kɑnɜːrt/	/kɑnɜːrt/
					R6		/'kɑːn.vɜːr/
					R8		/kɑnɜːrt/
					R9	/kən'vɜːt/	
6.	Decrease /'diː.kriːs/	Decrease /dɪ'kriːs/	13	19	R1	/dɪ'kriːs/	
					R2	/dɪ'kriːs/	
					R4	/dɪ'kriːs/	
					R5	/dɪ'kriːs/	
					R6		/'diː.kriːs/
					R8	/dɪ'kriːs/	
					R9	/dɪ'kriːs/	
					R10	/dɪ'kriːs/	
7.	Import /'ɪm.pɔːt/	Import /ɪm'pɔːt/	13	17	R1	/ɪm'pɔːt/	
					R2	/ɪm'pɔːt/	
					R4	/æmpɔrt/	/æmpɔrt/

					R5	/ɪmpɔ:t/	/ɪmpɔ:t/
					R6	/ɪmpɔ:rt/	
					R8	/ɪmpɔ:t/	/ɪmpɔ:t/
					R9	/ɪm'pɔ:rt/	
8.	Increase /ɪm.kri:s/	Increase /ɪm'kri:s/	13	18	R1	/ɪn'kri:s/	
					R2	/ɪn'kri:s/	
					R4	/ɪn'kri:s/	
					R5	/ɪn'kri:s/	
					R6	/ɪnkri:s/	/ɪ'm'kri:s/
					R8	/ɪn'kri:s/	
					R9	/ɪn'kri:s/	
					R10		/ɪ'm.kri:s/
9.	Insult/ɪn.sʌlt/	Insult /ɪn'sʌlt/	15	18	R1	/ɪn'sʌlt/	
					R2	/ɪn'sʌlt/	
					R4	/ɪn'su:lt/	/ɪn'su:lt/
					R5		/ɪnsʌlt/
					R6	/ɪn'sʌlt/	
					R8	/ɪn'sʌlt/	
10.	Permit /pɜ:.mɪt/	Permit /pə'mɪt/	17	13	R1	/pə'mɪt/	/pərmɪt/
					R2		/pɜ:.mɪt/
					R5		/pərmɪt/
					R4	/pərmɪt/	/pərmɪt/
					R8	/pərmɪt/	/pərmɪt/
					R9		/pərmɪt/
					R10		/pərmɪt/
Total			154	167		46	33
			321			79	

Table 4: Types of Error Word Stress

No.	Word list	Types of error				Total occurrence of error
		Verb stress placement in Noun	Noun stress placement in Verb	No-stress placement	Double-stress placement	
1.	Addict	2	-	3	-	5
2.	Conflict	1	4	1	-	6
3.	Contest	4	2	-	-	6
4.	Contrast	4	1	2	-	7
5.	Convert	1	1	3	2	7
6.	Decrease	7	1	-	-	8
7.	Import	3	-	7	-	10
8.	Increase	6	1	1	1	8
9.	Insult	5	-	1	-	6
10.	Permit	1	1	8	-	10
Total		34	11	21	3	79