

# Pronunciation for Perspective

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## WORD STRESS ERRORS MADE BY ENGLISH EDUCATION MASTER'S PROGRAM STUDENTS

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### Abstract

English as Foreign Learning was learned in many aspects and levels of Indonesian learners. However, not many of them were having high mastery skills in performing English, especially in speaking ability. The main focus of this study was to investigate English Master's Program students in producing suprasegmental features, namely word stress. The focus is on analysing disyllabic noun-verb words in six video presentations and what are the factors that affect word-stress errors from 19 English master program students. The data were obtained from transcribing the videos and selecting the disyllabic noun-verb words from the transcriptions. Furthermore, a questionnaire was used to gather information about students' background knowledge in learning English, especially Linguistic field. Qualitative content analysis was employed in this study. From those videos, there were 1,089 disyllabic noun-verb words produced by the students. The stress errors made were 15 words. The stress errors mostly occurred in the first syllable and no word stress. The findings showed the factors that affected the word-stress errors were students' native language, Bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia did not have word-stress to differ a meaning, only for emphasizing. The questionnaire showed that all students' were Indonesian and only two of them used English as their native language. Although, background knowledge and gender had some effects on stress errors, but not vital. The results indicated that students needed to have a deeper understanding of word stress.

**Keywords:** disyllabic, master student, suprasegmental, word-stress

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### INTRODUCTION

When a person starts to seek knowledge and ability using any necessary strategies it can be called learning. Examples of learning strategies such as planning, practicing, monitoring, evaluating, and observing (Rodrigues et al., 2018). Implementing these strategies will help learners to learn effectively. Moreover, learning something new or strange things will need more effort to master (Baranova et al., 2019, p. 3; Hong & Ganapathy, 2017, p. 19). English as a foreign language in Indonesian people is one of the difficult things to learn. So then, they need more effort to overcome many issues in learning.

Learning English as Foreign Language (EFL) is challenging for most Indonesian people (Putri et al., 2018, p. 80). This idea was proven by the data from English First (EP) English Proficiency Index (2020) shows that Indonesia is in rank 74 from 100 non-native English

countries and number 15 in Asia. The CEFR score an average of 453 or in B1 is accommodated as low proficiency in English skills acquisition. As Mahmud (2017, p. 52) said in his study, English as a language is developing and changing. Therefore, if Indonesian people cannot master it soon, they will leave it behind. In English, basically, four main skills should be mastered to be able to perform this language well, namely speaking, writing, reading and, listening. However, based on the common known, English is one international language, yet Indonesian people still struggle to use it.

A study conducted by Patahuddin et al. (2017, p. 131), claims that Indonesian people still struggle in learning EFL, English is still called a strange language. This condition occurs because of a lack of motivation, self-efficacy, and facilities from the learners and also might happen because of the tutor (Hermagustiana et al., 2021, p. 70; Lomi & Mbato, 2020, p. 11; Ulfa & Bania, 2019, p. 169). Indonesian people tend to give up easily and cannot maintain their motivation in learning EFL. Although they start to use some strategies to keep the learning spirits, such as independent learning, action learning, and metacognitive strategies, the journey is still quite far from the finish line (Hendriwanto et al., 2021, p. 117; Laos Mbato, 2013). Another research by Leong & Ahmadi (2017) argues that from four skills in learning EFL, the most difficult one is speaking skill. Even though speaking skill is said to be an important skill to master, there are several reasons why this skill is hard to learn, i.e. structure, lack of confident, different mother-tongue, lack of ability from the teacher to deliver the skill well, and under-motivated students (2017, pp. 34–36).

One of the elements in speaking skills is pronunciation. Having good pronunciation is a must to be able to deliver the meaning in speaking. (Plansangket, 2016) explains that pronunciation takes a big role in speaking. It helps the speaker to deliver their message and the listener to understand the meaning. Mispronunciation can lead to a big disaster. Missing ability to transfer meaning effectively and efficiently make the listener hard to interpret the information given. There are two categories in speaking that mistakes mostly occur; segmental and suprasegmental. Segmental, consonant and vowels, and suprasegmental, intonation, and stress, are features in pronunciation (Abdullah & Lulita, 2018, p. 19). EFL learners must give more proportion to this part to make their pronunciation well developed.

Word stress is one of the main features in suprasegmental. Word stressed is used in many languages, including English. Chinese and Japanese have strict rules in word stress. Different stress will result not in the same meaning. English as the main language to communicate in the world also has some rules to obey in word stress. Wuli Fitriati et al. (2020) explain that in a word there is an emphasis on a specific syllable. Moreover, EFL learners tend to face a hard time in deciding the stressed and unstressed syllables in a word, especially more than one syllable. That is why examining EFL learners' word stress is significant. According to (Ghorbani, 2019) in Iranian undergraduate EFL students' word stress learning, students got difficulty in identifying the word stress because of the influence of the Persian language. Students mostly misplace the primary stress at the end of a syllable. The way to improve word stress learning is using the phonetic transcription. It helps students to understand the position of word stress and thus helps students to pronounce the word stress well, reduce the mistakes and increase pronunciation.

Another research in word stress was conducted by Saito & Saito (2017) in EFL learners in Japan. There were 10 participants and they got special treatment in suprasegmental for six weeks. The result shows that if they got exposed to suprasegmental (word stress,

intonation, and rhythm), it will improve their understanding and reduce their word-stress errors

Research on phonology especially in word-stress also conducted in the university in China with 70 participants Liu (2017). The word-stress was analysed using the reading aloud process, the data were collected and coded from recording. From this research, the researcher found that most students made mistakes on the first syllable and in two and three-syllable words. The reason was that word stress rules are not familiar in EFL students.

Research about word stress in Indonesia was conducted by several Indonesian researchers. Word stress research was conducted to understand the capability between men and women students in Indonesia (Wuli Fitriati et al., 2020). It found out that gender did not affect word stress in pronunciation. Working hard and practicing were the key to successfully and correctly pronouncing words. Another research by Widagsa et al. (2019) wanted to know the English word stress in Indonesian prosodic structures. It was conducted on 20 participants whose L1 is Indonesian. Research showed that the vacuum of prosodic structures, especially intonation, stress, and rhythm, to differ meaning, made Indonesian students difficult to produce word-stress correctly (2019, p. 83). Last, a study about word stress in Indonesia was conducted by (Abdullah & Lulita, 2018). They examined the pronunciation produced by 26 students from EFL students at Siliwangi University. The result was both suprasegmental and segmental features were still indicated as a difficult task to master by those students. Rising and falling intonation and mislaying the stress was the main errors concern. Furthermore, the researchers put into words the problems of this study as follows:

1. What word-stress errors are made by English Master's Program students?
2. What are the factors that affect English Master's Program students' word-stress errors?

## **METHOD**

In this study, the researchers employed a theory from Ladefoged & Johnson (2011, pp. 249–250) about word stress. Stress is defined as (1) the bigger sum of energy flow of speech in a certain syllable than unstressed syllable, (2) speaker uses extra muscular energy, and (3) increasing the loudness of produced sound. There are specific ways to differentiate between word stress and no stress words. The researchers used a qualitative method to discover whether or not EFL students in the English Education Master's Program (EEMP) managed to assign stress in disyllabic noun-verb words and the factors that affected the students' stress errors. Content analysis was used to determine the disyllabic noun-verb from presentation videos.

The source of the data was recorded presentation from EEMP students in Curriculum: From planning to assessment class. There were six videos from 19 students, 15 female students, and 4 male students. EEMP students were chosen because they were expected to be able to deliver English material better than undergraduate students. They were likely to pronounce all words correctly and precisely. All of the students are Indonesian students. The data were collected through a recorded presentation. After the video was recorded, the researcher transcript the video and look for disyllabic noun-verb words from the transcription. The researchers eliminated and chose suitable data. After all the disyllabic noun-verb words were found, the researcher started to examine the precise and correct

word stress that students produced. The incorrect word-stress words were inspected and categorized into different types of errors. The analysis from each video was presented in form of a table.

The questionnaire was used to collect data about students' information and background knowledge that affects their pronunciation and word-stress decision whether it was in the first syllable, second syllable, or no stress. The information gathered from the questionnaire consisted of age, native language, English exposure, personality, motivation, and phonetic ability (Antaris & Aminun Omolu, 2019; Wangi & Nudiya, 2020, p. 99; Yürük, 2020). The questionnaire was open-ended questions which consisted of seven questions. The collected data were analysed and processed to obtain the information of the factors that affected EFL master students who made an incorrect decision when producing word stress. The results were presented in form of a chart. The data were collected from six videos. From six videos, there were 19 English Education Master Program students. The data were obtained from transcribing the videos and after that, selecting the suitable words that had disyllabic noun-verb words from the video presentation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from six videos showed that 1,089 disyllabic noun-verb words had been used by the speakers. Note that all names in the data were pseudonyms. Video 1 had a duration of 27 minutes and 24 seconds. The researcher found 239 disyllabic noun-verb words from the first video. There were 98 disyllabic nouns and 141 disyllabic verbs located in the first video. In addition, this first video was delivered by four students. The first student, Anna, could correctly give stress. There was no error found in the presentation from Anna. Anna can speak 33 disyllabic words, 9 nouns, and 24 verbs. The next students produce 53 disyllabic words, consisting of 17 nouns and 36 verbs. Surprisingly, The next student, Beti, also gave correct stress in every disyllabic word she produced. However, student 3, Cita, made 2 stress errors from 102 disyllabic words, 41 nouns, and 61 verbs, she spoke. The first error was found in the word /ə'prəʊtʃ/ 'approach' as a noun. Cita wrongly pronounces the approach as /əprəʊtʃ/ which means there was no stress in this word. The correct pronunciation was /ə'prəʊtʃ/, the stress was in the first syllable. Furthermore, a second-word stress error was found in a word /prə'dju:s/ 'produce' as a verb. Cita was mistakenly pronounced as /'prɒd.ju:s/ like in the noun. The stress should be put in the second syllable, not in the first syllable. Last, Dini, the fourth student amazingly can pronounce all disyllabic noun and verb words correctly. She made 51 disyllabic nouns and verb words in her video presentation, 23 nouns, and 28 verbs. Table 1 presented the details of the first video presentation word-stress analysis.

**Table 1 Video 1 Stress Errors Analysis**

Students	Nouns	Verbs	Total	Errors		Types of errors			
				Noun	Verbs	No stress	First syllable	Second syllable	Double stresses
Anna	9	24	33	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beti	17	36	53	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cita	41	61	102	-	2	1	1	-	-
Dini	23	28	51	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Video 2 had a duration of 26 minutes and 18 seconds. There were three students presented in this video namely, Edo, Fera, and Grace. The researcher found 247 disyllabic noun-verb words produced by students in video 2. There were 90 disyllabic nouns and 157 disyllabic verbs in this video. Unpredictably, Edo made four stress errors from 69 disyllabic words he produced. From 69 words there were 29 nouns and 40 verbs. The errors found in /aɪ'diə/ 'idea', /ɪg'zɪst/ 'exist', /'mæt.ər/ 'matter', and /dɪ'mænd/ 'demand'. The word 'idea' as a noun was incorrectly stressed as /'ɪ:diə/ which meant double stress. Additionally, the second error was 'exist' as a verb that was pronounced as /əgzɪst/ meaning no stress found in the word. Next, the noun word 'matter' was by mistake said as /mæt.ər / which meant no stress. Last, the fourth error was found in the verb word 'demand'. The word was mistakenly pronounced /'dɪ'mænd/ meaning double stress. On the other hand, the other two students perfectly gave stress to all words correctly. Fera produced 95 disyllabic words consisting of 32 nouns and 63 verbs. Moreover, Grace pronounced 29 nouns and 54 verbs with a total of 83 disyllabic words that were correctly stressed. Table 2 shows the results of word-stress analysis from video 2.

**Table 2 Video 2 Stress Errors Analysis**

Students	Nouns	Verbs	Total	Errors		Types of errors			
				Noun	Verbs	No stress	First syllable	Second syllable	Double stresses
Edo	29	40	69	2	2	2	-	-	2
Fera	32	63	95	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grace	29	54	83	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

Video 3 had a duration of 17 minutes and 24 seconds. The researcher found 170 disyllabic noun-verb words from the third video. There were 71 disyllabic nouns and 99 disyllabic verbs located in the first video. In addition, this third video was delivered by three students. The first student, Harto, produced 75 disyllabic words in his presentation. There were 36 nouns and 39 verbs found in his appearance. In addition, there was one stress mistake found on his part. The disyllabic noun word 'response' /rɪ'spans/. Harto was incorrectly put the stress in the first syllable /'rɪspans/ which means first syllable error. Furthermore, student Indah also made mistake in one noun word which was 'major' that pronounce as /'meɪ.dʒər/. Indah was mistakenly put the stress in the second syllable as /meɪ'dʒər/. In all her performances, Indah produced 55 disyllabic words consisting of 18 nouns and 37 verbs. However, the last student, Juni, made no mistake. She pronounced 40 disyllabic words correctly. There were 17 nouns and 23 verbs. Table 3 showed the result of word-stress analysis from video 3.

**Table 3 Video 3 Stress Errors Analysis**

Students	Nouns	Verbs	Total	Errors		Types of errors			
				Noun	Verbs	No stress	First syllable	Second syllable	Double stresses
Harto	36	39	75	1	-	-	1	-	-
Indah	18	37	55	1	-	-	-	1	-
Juni	17	23	40	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>



Video 4 had a duration of 23 minutes and 11 seconds. There were three students presented in this video namely, Kana, Lodi, and Muri. Surprisingly, the researcher found no mistake in this video. The three presenters put all the stresses correctly. Kana, the first presenter, produced 71 disyllabic words, 20 nouns, and 51 verbs. Moreover, Lodi mentioned 62 disyllabic words that consisted of 30 nouns and 32 verbs. Last, Muri, in her part, spoke 20 nouns and 44 verbs which were a total of 64 disyllabic words. Table 4 showed the result of word-stress analysis from video 4.

**Table 4 Video 4 Stress Errors Analysis**

Students	Nouns	Verbs	Total	Errors		No stress	Types of errors		
				Noun	Verbs		First syllable	Second syllable	Double stresses
Kana	20	51	71	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lodi	30	32	62	-	-	-	-	-	-
Muri	20	44	64	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Next, video 5 was presented by Novan, Osya, and Piky. The duration of video 5 was 20 minutes and 1 second. In total, there were 175 disyllabic words found in video 5. Novan produced 46 disyllabic words containing 19 nouns and 27 verbs. There were two mistakes found in that words which were 'knowing' and 'process'. The verb word 'knowing' should have stress in the first syllable /'noʊ.ɪŋ/ and noun 'process' also had stress at the beginning of the word /'prə.ses/. Novan made mistakes by not putting stress in the word knowing that became /noʊ.ɪŋ/ and put the stress in the second syllable for word 'process' that later became /prə'ses/. However, the other two students made no mistakes in their presentation. Osya produced 75 disyllabic words and Piky mentioned 54 disyllabic words. Table 5 presented the result of word-stress analysis from video 5.

**Table 5 Video 5 Stress Errors Analysis**

Students	Nouns	Verbs	Total	Errors		No stress	Types of errors		
				Noun	Verbs		First syllable	Second syllable	Double stresses
Novan	19	27	46	1	1	1	-	1	-
Osya	34	41	75	-	-	-	-	-	-
Piky	15	29	54	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

Last, video 6 was presented by three students. There were 88 disyllabic words located in this video. The duration of the video was 11 minutes and 10 seconds. The first student who delivered her material was Qila. Qila produced 27 disyllabic words and made 1 mistake. The next student who delivered her material was Rini. Rini mentioned 23 disyllabic words and unintentionally ended with one mistake also. The last student in this video was Susi, she performed with 38 disyllabic words and unfortunately made three incorrect stresses. Qila was made mistake in the word 'confuse', whereas Rini in the word 'relate' and Susi in words 'offer', 'provide', and 'template'. Those words should be pronounce and put stress like /kən'fju:z/, /rɪ'leɪt/, /'ɒ.fər/, /prə'vaɪd/, and /'tɛm.plət/. However, the students mistakenly put stress in the first syllable for 'confuse' /'kən.fju:z/, 'relate' /'rɪ.leɪt/, and 'provide' /'prə.vaɪd/. Furthermore, the other two words had no stress on it, 'offer' /ɒ.fər/ and 'template' /tɛm.plət/. Table 6 displayed the result of word-stress analysis from video 6.

**Table 6 Video 6 Stress Errors Analysis**

Students	Nouns	Verbs	Total	Errors		No stress	Types of errors		
				Noun	Verbs		First syllable	Second syllable	Double stresses
Qila	11	16	27	-	1	-	1	-	-
Rini	8	15	23	-	1	-	1	-	-
Susi	12	16	38	1	2	2	1	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

In summary, there were 1,089 disyllabic words in six video presentations that contained 430 nouns and 639 verbs. From that result, there were 6 nouns and 9 verbs that were found incorrectly stressed in those presentations. The types of errors found on 15 errors allocated into 6 with no stress, 5 mistakes put in the first syllable, 5 errors put in the second syllable, and 2 words with double stresses. Table 7 showed the type of word-stress errors made by English education master students.

**Table 7 Word-Stress Errors of English Education Master Students**

Video	Nouns	Verbs	Total	Errors		No stress	Types of errors		
				Noun	Verbs		First syllable	Second syllable	Double stresses
1.	90	149	239	0	2	1	1	0	0
2.	90	157	247	2	2	2	0	0	2
3.	71	99	170	2	0	0	1	1	0
4.	80	90	170	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.	68	97	175	1	1	1	0	1	0
6.	31	47	88	1	4	2	3	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>1089</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

The results showed that from 1,089 disyllabic words made by English Education Master's students, there were only 15 words or 1.37% errors found in the presentation. Hence, it meant that the students were capable of putting stress on the words and had no problem with word stress. However, the students needed to improve their word stress in English.

To answer the research question of what factors affected English Master's Program students' word-stress errors, the researchers asked participants to complete questionnaires using Google forms. There were seven open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The outcomes of the questionnaire were presented in Table 8.

**Table 8 Questionnaire Summary**

Respo ndent	Age	Native language	Length of studying English?	Experience of studying or living abroad, and for how long.	Length of studying Linguistic Field?
Anna	23	Indonesian	Since I was in elementary	No I haven't studied or	4 years when I was in the university.



Respondent	Age	Native language	Length of studying English?	Experience of studying or living abroad, and for how long.	Length of studying Linguistic Field?
			school	lived abroad	
Beti	23	Indonesian language	12 years (3 <sup>th</sup> sd, 3 <sup>th</sup> smp, 4 <sup>th</sup> SI)	No	5 semesters
Cita	22	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	18 years	No	3 years
Dini	25	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	since kindergarten (basic English)	No	started to learn deeper when I was an undergraduate
Edo	37	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	16 years	Yes 2 years	never
Fera	23	Indonesian	18 years	No	6 years, since 2017
Grace	23	English	Around 17 years	No	Around 4 years
Harto	25	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	13	No	4 years
Indah	23	English	About 20 years I think	No	Five years till now
Juni	22	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	Since I was in JHS? (around 2011/2012)	No	Around 4 years
Kana	28	Indonesian	5 years	No	1 year
Lodi	22	Indonesia	since 2011	No	since 2017
Muri	26	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	Since college (2014) actually i also learned	No	since college (2014)

Respondent	Age	Native language	Length of studying English?	Experience of studying or living abroad, and for how long.	Length of studying Linguistic Field?
			from school.. but i didn't really learn/acquire the language		
Novan	29	<i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>	Since Elementary School	No	Since 6 months ago
Osy	23	Indonesia	18 years	No	4 years
Piky	24	Indonesian	More than 5 years	No	4 years (during undergraduate)
Qila	26	<i>Bahasa Jawa</i>	since Junior High School (2008, <i>kalau tidak salah</i> ) +- 14 years	No	since S1 (2014)
Rini	23	Indonesia	18 years	No	4,5 years
Susi	25	Indonesian language	Around 8 years?	No	4 years

Table 8 showed seven errors made by male students and 8 words made by female students. However, there were only 4 male students and 15 female students. It showed that there was no tendency to whether gender had a role in making more mistakes in placing word stress or not (Wuli Fitriati et al., 2020). The age of the students also had no effects in this range of age. The students were 22-37 years old, with the mean were 24.8. There were no specific factors that showed that older students tend to make more mistakes than younger students and vice versa.

As mentioned by (Foote & Trofimovich, 2018), the background knowledge of English especially suprasegmental, phonetics and phonology had a big role in identifying word stress. The two students Edo and Novan were new in the Linguistic field, Edo never had a

Linguistics subject and Novan only had it since 6 months ago. Therefore, they made some mistakes in placing the word stress in their presentation. However, mistakes were also found in the students from students who learned linguistics for years, 1 to 6 years. Overall, background knowledge had a factor in word-stress error but not in a big portion. In addition, exposure had some effects that contribute to students' pronunciation. Surprisingly, the summary above it showed that Edo, who has experience abroad for 2 years, still made some errors in placing the word-stress. Therefore, the exposure he had from abroad did not help him to place word-stress correctly in his presentation.

Those students that participated in this research were all Indonesian students. Sixteen students had *Bahasa Indonesia* as their mother tongue, two students English, and one student *Bahasa Jawa* (Javanese). Kosasih (2021) in her study mentioned that one of the factors in pronunciation was the mother tongue. Hence, in this research, the results showed slight agreement with what Kosasih mentioned earlier. Two students who have English as a mother tongue made fewer mistakes, Grace no error, Indah one error. Some mistakes were made by the students whose mother tongue was *Bahasa Indonesia*. *Bahasa Indonesia* used no stress in differentiating the meaning, and word-stress was only used as emphasizing the importance. Consequently, the no-stress errors found in the video presentations were high.

## CONCLUSION

The result showed that EFL students in English Education Master's Program <sup>6</sup> can assign stress to disyllabic noun-verb words correctly. From 1,089 disyllabic words produced by EMMP students, there were only 15 words or 1.37% mistakes found in the presentation. This conclusion meant that the students were able to place stress in the noun and verb words and had no significant problem with word stress.

Some factors that affect EFL students in the English Education Master's Program word stress errors were age, native language, English exposure, personality, motivation, and phonetic ability. In this study, age, personality, and English exposure showed no effect on students' word stress, whereas, some factors such as native language, motivation, and phonetic ability had major effects on the students' word-stress accuracy.

The gap from this study is the limit of videos analyzed and the variety of words. For future studies, it would be good if there are more videos to be analyzed and other types of words such as adverbs, adjectives, or prepositions. The variety of the participants can enrich the result if provided from different ages, backgrounds of study, and how long they learned English and Linguistic subject.

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