

A STUDY ON STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH WORDS IN ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF UNIVERSITY OF HKBP NOMMENSEN PEMATANGSIANTAR

Novra Melisa P. Hutabarat¹⁾

English Department, University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar

ABSTRACT

This study deals with the difficulties in pronouncing English words of the first semester students in English Study Program of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. Pronunciation means the way how we say a word or a sentence to express our idea or feeling. Difficulty of the students is the matter or problem in learning especially in pronouncing vowels sound and consonants sound. The objective of this study is to find out the difficulties of the student's in pronouncing English words. In this research, the relevant theories such as: Brown (2000), Harmer (2000), Jones (1972), Nunan (2003), and Syafei (1988). The limitation of this study is on the students' difficulties in pronouncing English especially on first semester students, group A in English vowels and consonants of the simple words. From the data analysis the writer found the finding of the research were: the students of the first semester in English Study Program of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar were not able to pronounce English words. The students have difficulties in pronouncing English vowels and consonants. There was some mispronounced that the students do when pronouncing some words. The students have difficulties in vowels, like; æ - e, ɪ - e, ə - ʌ, θ - t, ʌ - ɔ, ð - t, ə - ɔ, ə - p, e - ɪ, θ - tʃ, θ - d, ʒ: - ʌ, and i: - e. The students have difficulties in consonants, like; v - f, z - s, dʒ - e, t - ð, dʒ - g, dʒ - tʃ, g - dʒ, and dʒ - z. The students have difficulties in pronunciation when read the words.

Keywords: *Difficulties in Pronunciation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is one of important thing in our life. As the human, people cannot form and maintain communication with other without using language. People at least use one language to expresses their ideas, desires, feelings through communication process with each other and it is used as a tool of communication among the nation in all over the world. As the human, we cannot form and maintain communication with others without using language. Robins (cited in Umami 2007: 1) states that "language is a unitary activity; people speak and write; and understand what is spoken and written in their own language, without necessarily being aware of such things as grammar and pronunciation."

In English, there are four skills that should be mastered, they are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Every student must master all of the skills. The students need to be exercised and trained in order to have a good reading skill. Although it is focused on the four skills, pronunciation cannot be separated from the four skills. Pronunciation is not only conducted in speaking but also in reading.

The obvious aspect of language is pronunciation. Pronunciation is the universal material of human language, and the conditions of speaking and hearing have, determined its developmet. Pronunciation is very important because it is the first thing people notice when one speaks English. Pronunciation as the production of

significant sound in two senses (Dalton, 1998: 3). First, sound is significant because it is used as a part of a code of a particular language. Second, sound is significant because it is used to achieve meaning in contexts of use. From the definitions, it can be concluded that pronunciation is the way to sound languages so that meaningful.

This study significanced for English learners because it discovers the problematic areas of pronunciation and identifies the exact of sounds. In order to learn or to study language learners must be aware to pronunciation skills. Among other skills which is great of importance for studying English language. Good pronunciation comes from a lot of technical knowledge on the part of the teacher about placement of the mouth, etc. Language learning needs a lot of practice and both mechanical and meaningful practice lead to improved pronunciation. A word can be spoken in different ways by various individuals or groups, depending on many factors, such as: the area in which they grew up, the area in which they now live, their [ethnic group](#), their [social class](#), or their [education](#).

Event though Indonesia students have been learning English for six until twelve years or more, they still could not express their thought in English correctly because there must be some reasons which bring failure of them in mastering English, especially in pronounce English words. The failure originated from difficulties in learning foreign language is caused of the differences between the

students' mother tongue and English as target language. The differences above make the students produce so many errors in pronouncing English words. But they do not care about it. And sometimes they do not know what the native speaker said. So the students get difficulties in pronouncing word correctly.

In fact the learners may face some difficulties in the pronunciation when they find new sounds in the target language. A lot of errors made by the students especially to produce English words based on English vowel and English consonant, in initial and middle position. And the problem made by the students need to solve. As Ramely (1996:25) who has conducted a research on pronunciation find that, the student errors in pronouncing English words caused from their mother language.

From the arguments above, the researcher concludes that the difficulties in pronouncing the English words are the students rarely to hear and pronounce the sound.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Pronunciation

According to Brown (2005) as cited in Lantaigne (2006:3), the goal of the language learners is to make sure that they can communicate what they have in mind effectively; they have to be understood when they are uttering the words. Knowing that precision in pronouncing words is especially essential, language learners should pay more attention on the way they articulate the foreign words and, most importantly, master pronunciation of a language they are learning.

Pronunciation is part of speech which includes word, intonation, and the sounds of language. According to Harmer (2000:26), Pronunciation is the knowledge of how to say a word – that is how to pronounce it. There are as many different kinds of English as there are speakers of it; no two people speak exactly alike, we can always hear differences between them and the pronunciation of English varies of great deal in different geographical areas. In the other hand, Kelly (2000: 9) explains that the study of pronunciation consists of two fields, namely phonetics and phonology. Phonetics refers to the study of speech sounds. A phonetician usually works in one or more of the following areas :

1. The anatomical, neurological, and psychological bases of speech (collectively known as psychological phonetics).
2. The actions and movements of the speech organs in producing sounds (articulatory phonetics).

3. The nature and acoustics of the sound waves which transmit speech (acoustic phonetic).
4. How speech is received by the ears (auditory phonetics).
5. How speech is perceived by the brain (perceptual phonetics).

Furthermore, Odden (2006:2) relates pronunciation to the foundation areas of linguistics that deal with scientific study of the language structure, that is, phonology. He mentions that different from other linguistics fields, language structure discussed in phonology is closely related to the study of sound structure in a language. Subsequently, in essence, phonology deals with two main things, phonemics, that is, the study of the distinctive sound units, and phonetics that mainly deals with speech sounds (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1992:215). It should be noticed that to the same extent as phonology, pronunciation, basically, also deals with sounds. The difference is that pronunciation does not concern with the phonemics, but it focuses mainly on phonetics as Brown (1992) explains that what learners must understand about pronunciation is that essentially 'any attention to pronunciation is phonetics' (as cited in Bowman, 2002:1).

2.2 Teaching Pronunciation

Harmer (2000:183) states that teaching pronunciation not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features, but can also improve their speaking immeasurably.

Concentrating on sounds, showing where they are made in the mouth, making the students aware of where words should be stressed – all these things give them extra information about spoken English and help them. When it comes to a language teaching, it is important to note that there is a difference between what is effective as appoint of reference or set of bearings for learning and what is presented as an attainable behavioral target. The task of pronunciation teaching, as in the teaching of any other aspect of language, is to establish models for guidance, not norms for imitation.

2.3. Elements of Pronunciation

When learning English we will find two kinds of speech features (Syafei, 1988: 11) :

1. Segmental features, which refer to sound units, arranged in a sequential order; or it is about consonant and vowel.
2. Suprasegmental features refer to stress, pitch, length, intonation and other features that always accompany the production of segmental.

2.4 Students' Problems in Pronouncing English

Our mother tongue has some differences with English in pronunciation. In our language, there is no difference between its writing and its sound. But we find it different in English. Sometimes we sound differently from the writing. For example, the word *here* is pronounced / hi:ð /; however, in Indonesian we pronounce / here /. It is not denied that students often make mistakes in learning foreign language; however, doing such mistake is a part of learning the language itself.

According to Harmer (2000: 99) that mistakes can be divided into three broad categories: "slips", "errors" (mistakes which they cannot correct themselves – and which therefore need explanation), and "attempts" (that is when a student tries to say something but not yet know the correct way of saying it). From the three categories, it can be said that error is the most important thing for the teacher to be concerned because the students cannot correct themselves instead of the teacher's help.

There are some reasons about why students make mistake in their pronunciation are because they face such problems as follows: The existence of a given sound in the latter, which is not found in the former. Sounds have the same phonetic features in both languages but differ in their distribution. Similar sounds in two languages which differ only slightly in their phonetic features. And sounds that have the same qualities in both languages may constitute some learning problem if they occur in a cluster or sequence of sounds.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research was conducted by using the qualitative approach in which the source of data was from the phonetic transcription of the

students' pronunciation with the identification of the sound errors by comparing each student's actual pronunciation with the standard phonetic transcription. The subject of the study were the students of the first semester in English Study Program of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, while the object is to pronounce English words by the group A of first semester in English Study Program. The researcher did the research in class participant in which the researcher focus on twenty (20) students.

3.2 Research Instrument

The data of the research was collected from the result of record that given by the writer to the subject of research. The writer was going to give text and asked the students to read the text clearly one by one. After collecting the data, then the data were arranged. The writer listened to the recording of the text that the students read. While listened the recording the writer transcribed the record into a written language. After that, the research chooses the appropriate data from the transcription and the writer analyzed it word by word to know the students' pronunciation; it was right pronounced or mispronounced.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed based on The Student's Difficulties in Pronouncing English words that the writer collected in English Study Program of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. The writer analysed the students pronouncing English words in vowels and consonants. The standard pronunciation used in this study was standard pronunciation on Oxford Learner's Dictionary.

4.2 Research Finding

Research finding is the conclusion of the research result by data shown. After making research, the writer found some difficulties of the students and there is some mispronounced in vowel sounds and consonants sounds.

4.2.1 Mispronounced in Vowel Sounds

Vowel	Mispronounced in Vowel Sound
æ	e
ɪ	e
ə	ʌ
θ	t
ʌ	ɔ
ð	t
ə	ɔ
ə	v
e	ɪ
θ	tʃ
θ	d
ɜ:	ʌ
i:	e

4.2.2 Mispronounced in Consonant Sounds

Consonant	Mispronounced in Consonant Sound
v	f
z	s
dʒ	e
t	ð
dʒ	g
g	dʒ
dʒ	tʃ
dʒ	z

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of data, the writer concluded that the students have difficulties in pronunciation based on vowel sound and consonants sound. There is some mispronounced that the students do when pronouncing some words. The students have difficulties in vowels, like; æ - e, ɪ - e, ə - ʌ, θ - t, ʌ - ɔ, ð - t, ə - ɔ, ə - v, e - ɪ, θ - tʃ, θ - d, ɜ: - ʌ, and i: - e. The students have difficulties in consonants, like; v - f, z - s, dʒ - e, t - ð, dʒ - g, dʒ - tʃ, g - dʒ, and dʒ - z.. They cannot pronounce the words with the correct way based on the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) also. The students read the words based on what they see. Although they do not understand, they do not want asking for help.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on discussion in Chapter IV, the writer in this part tries to state some suggestions as follows:

1. To the teacher should help the students to give more knowledge to pronounced the words or sentences in a right way and teach pronunciation by repetition. The teacher should repeat the words or sentence several times until the students understand, so the students would be familiar speak and to listen English.
2. To the students have to study hard and always pay attention to English pronunciation.
3. To the other researchers who are interested for further study related to this research, it is better to make a comparison when conducting a research with other subject or the specific skill of English. It aims to have a better result and progress English skill.
4. To the reader, may this research bring the readers to know more about pronunciation.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. Douglas. 2000. *Teaching by Principles*. San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc
- Dalton, E. 1998. *Teaching Pronunciation*. London: Longman Group Ltd
- Davies, I.K. 1981. *Instructional Technique*. New York: Mc Graw Hill
- Gimson, A.C. 1960 *An introduction to the Pronunciation on English Third Edition*. The English Language Book Society and Edward Arnold LTD
- Harmer, J. 2000. *The Practice of English language Teaching*. London: Longman Group Ltd

- Jones, Daniel. 1972. *The Pronunciation of English*. London: Cambridge University Press
- Sahulata, Daniel. 1988. *An Introduction To Sounds and Sounds Systems of English*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan PPLPTK.
- Sapir, Edward. 1994. *Language An Introduction to the study of Speech*. London: Harcourt, Brace & World, INC
- Sugiono. 2009. *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan*. Bandung: Alfabeta
- Syafei, A.1988. *English Pronunciation: Theory and Practice*. Jakarta: Depdikbud, Dirjen Dikti