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Arfyan Ridwan, M.Pd.
NIDN 0723078802

An Investigation of Students' Pronunciation: A Case Study at An Namirah Senior High School

by Chairuddin Chairuddin

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An Investigation of Students' Pronunciation: A Case Study at An Namirah Senior
High School

Chairuddin

STKIP PGRI Bangkalan, Bangkalan
chairuddin@stkipgri-bkl.ac.id

Abstract

The research tried to investigate the students' pronunciation in An Namirah Senior High School through phonemic chart media. The findings reported that most of students got problem or difficulties in pronouncing the correct of sound symbol, intonation, stress, and rhythm. Furthermore, the results figured that the problems influenced by many factors such as lack of reading dictionary, practicing, listening, imitating, and the process of teaching learning the teacher caused the students felt bored because the teaching learning process seemed to be monotonous. These findings recommended that phonemic chart is a solution to solve the students' pronunciation problems. The researcher strongly agreed that the applying this chart became a good media for students in accommodating their pronunciation ability and also to make the situation in teaching learning process more enjoyable and fun.

Keywords: pronunciation, phonemic chart, teaching learning process.

Introduction

In linguistics, there are two sub disciplines deal with sound, namely phonetics and phonology. Phonetics consists of the objective ways in explaining and analyzing the sounds range of humans use in their languages. Moreover, speech organs and muscles are involved in producing the different sounds of the world's languages known as articulatory phonetics. Those sounds are then directly transmitted from the speaker to the hearer, and acoustic and auditory phonetics will focus on the physics of speech as it travels through the air in the form of sound waves, and the effect those waves have on a hearer's ears and brain. It follows that phonetics has strong associations with anatomy, physiology, physics and neurology (McMahon, 2002: 01).

Kelly (2000: 09) had same idea about pronunciation; he cited that the study of pronunciation consists of two fields, namely phonetics and phonology. Phonetics deal with speech sounds. A phonetician usually focused in one or more of the following areas: physiological, articulatory, acoustic, auditory, and perceptual phonetics. Then, phonology is primarily concerned with how the sounds interpreted and systematized by the speaker. Phonology covers the system and the pattern which exist in the particular languages. He also stated that the study of phonology of English investigated the area of the vowels, consonants,

and suprasegmental features of language. Pronunciation analyze to the ability to use the intonation, correct stress, and rhythm of a word in a oral language. While Harmer cites that in the pronunciation of English, there are three areas we need to know – apart from speed and volume – which are intimately connected with meaning. Those are sound, stress, pitch and intonation (1998: 50). A word can be spoken in different styles by various persons or groups, depending on many things, such as: the area in which they grew up, the area in which they now live, if they have a speech or voice disorder, their ethnic group, their social class, or their education. Brown claims that the goal of English pronunciation teacher should therefore be more realistically focused on clear, comprehensible pronunciation (2007: 284). ⁹ The students must be able to use the correct sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation in teaching learning process. But the reality in the school, the students' mastery in pronunciation is still in low level. It was seen from the way they speak English in the class and they did not use the correct sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation. From the recently research showed that the difficulty above may be influenced by many things such as lack of practicing, listening, imitating, and teaching learning process by the teacher caused the students felt bored because the teaching learning process seems to be monotonous. Related the problems above, this article tried to investigate the problem had been arisen from the students' proficiency in pronunciation. The researcher wanted to make a different media in teaching pronunciation by using phonemic chart. It was listened to ⁵ the sounds of English by clicking on the symbols and clicking on the top right hand corner of each symbol to hear sample words including the sounds. After that the sounds of phonemic chart were repeated by the students and the teacher would try to fix the incorrect pronunciation produced by the students. The researcher strongly agreed that this chart were able an alternative media for students to their pronunciation ability and also to make the situation of teaching learning process more enjoyable.

Method

Descriptive qualitative was used in this research method. In this regard, there are three steps taken in conducting the research, namely data collection, data analysis, and presentation of analysis results (Arikunto, 1993: 310). Data was carried out on the An Namirah Senior High School. Data was from the students' speaking in pronunciation in interacting with the other students or in practicing the Language. The data was taken by observing the class then interviewing the students.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that the use of phonemic chart media could make different atmosphere of English class and the students' pronunciation skill. The students' pronunciation skill improvement was from some aspects. The first is to make sure that the students recognized in their own vocal tract the difference between these (consonants, monophthongs and diphthongs) criteria. It was taken from distinguishing consonants from vowels and two kinds of vowels. It was supported by Howlader (2011), he utters that the second language learners or foreign language in acquiring pronunciation was concerned by imitation, discrimination of sounds, using phonetic transcript and communication.

Here the researcher made a first exploration of how and where the sounds are produced, and at the same time distinguish vowels from consonants. As we can see, the phonemic chart has three main sections. 6 The vowels are shown in the upper half, monophthongs on the left, and diphthongs on the right. The consonants are shown in the lower half. The colon by five of the vowel symbols indicates length. The box in the top right-hand corner contains stress and intonation symbols. So, in this step the students knew about the pronunciation symbol or produced specific sounds.

In general, the aim of activity is to experience the auditory, visual and physical aspects of sounds. To make this experience more vivid, there are three kinds of feedback which the writer can give in the activity. Those are (1) kinesthetic feedback: the internal physical sensation of touch and of muscle movement in our throat, mouth, tongue and lips, etc; (2) auditory feedback: what we hear, externally through the air, and internally through our head (we can enhance the latter by blocking our ears with our fingers when we speak); and (3) visual feedback: any physical movement connected with the production of the sound that we can see in our self. In line with Marianne, Donna and Janet (2000) proposed that in developing approaches of pronunciation in a second language context will be effective by using techniques like visual and auditory reinforcement, tactile reinforcement, kinesthetic enforcement, use of authentic materials (e.g. jokes, advertising copy, comic strips, passages from literature). They also suggest using techniques from psychology, theatre arts and other disciplines. Their proposals and suggestions are certainly effective and worth following (see Howlader, 2011).

The second aspect of students' improvement was the word in isolation in which the students put the phonemes together into sequences to form syllables and words. In this aspect, pronunciation focuses on words spoken carefully in isolation. This kind of pronunciation is recognized by native speakers of English as a slow, clear and deliberate pronunciation of words, and it corresponds to the pronunciation given for individual words in a learners'

dictionary. It is sometimes also called the *citation form* of a word. During this stage, the students studied how the phonemes begin to flow, or melt, into one another, affecting and changing each other, and forming a seamless flow. They also noticed how the phonemes overlap, so that the second phoneme is forming before the first has finished.

Another thing in the second aspect is that the students explored about word stress. ⁴ Word stress is the term used to describe the accent or emphasis given to a particular syllable of a word, and it is a more or less invariable attribute of that word ⁴ when spoken in isolation. Words of more than one syllable contain both stressed and unstressed syllables. Learners' dictionaries indicate the stressed syllable (s) for every multi-syllable word as if it were being spoken in isolation. The stress symbol used by most dictionaries is // just before the affected syllable. The location of this stress is as much a part of the pronunciation of a word as are the phonemes themselves. Sounds and stress both contribute to the acoustic identity of a word, so both of them need to be studied at the same time.

Both the sequence of sounds and the stress pattern are essential parts of the identity of a word spoken in isolation, and both affect the way a word will behave in the stream of speech. Stress only exists relative to unstressed, and so learning to unstressed is as important as learning to stress. Vowel reduction is an important ingredient of unstressed and it contributes to the aural recognition of words. Pitch movement is an ingredient of primary stress. Sounds and stress ³ should always be learned together as two inseparable parts of any one, whole pronunciation. ³ It may be that a word spoken with not-quite-right sounds, but with correct stress pattern, is more easily understood than one with more or less correct sounds but incorrect stress pattern.

The next aspect deals with connected speech, just as at the second aspect we found that a word is not just the sum of its individual sounds, so at the third aspect we find that connected speech is not just the sum of its individual words. Continuous connected speech ¹ consists of a flow of sounds which are modified by a system of simplifications through which phonemes are connected, grouped and modified. Stream of speech pronunciation brings together the three branches of practical phonology: sounds, stress and intonation. After the following overview, these three areas are examined to the degree of detail that the writer had found its benefit to practical classroom work.

Conclusion

Pronunciation is a prior thing in speaking skill. One will use convey a real meaning by using a correct pronunciation of the words. They will mislead the meaning they utter if the

use the wrong pronunciation of English. The implementation of phonemic chart media was able to make the different occasion of the students' pronunciation skill. The procedures of conducting the research to the students' pronunciation were generally divided into some tasks. Firstly, the students discuss about sounds in isolation in which they talked about the correct sound symbol, the way and the place its. Secondly, the students discussed about words in isolation in which the students put the phonemes together into sequences to form syllables and words. The last, the students conducted about connected speech which consisted of a flow of sounds which are modified by a system of simplifications through which phonemes are connected, grouped and modified. The result of the use of phonemic chart media showed that students' pronunciation were different.

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