Overcoming Students' English Pronunciation in Remote Area, Indonesia

By Ujang Suparman

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Overcoming Students' English Pronunciation in Remote Area, Indonesia

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Abstract

The teaching of pronunciation often lags behind the four main language skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Pronunciation is very fundamental in meeting communicative communication criteria. This study aims to instill English pronunciation as acceptable as possible so that students have the confidence to start communicating, especially orally. The authors raise the following research questions 1) what difficulties do students face with regard to pronunciation? 2) Can the learning process with multilevel teaching techniques improve the pronunciation of the students? This study used classroom action research through an action cycle consisting of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013). The participants are students of class VII.B SMP Negeri 3 Waypengubuan Lampung Indonesia, consisting of

31 students (17 famales and 14 males). The conclusions are that students really have difficulties in pronouncing English words as follows: the letter combination /ea/ is pronounced [i]. and /ea/ is pronounced [ǽ]; the letters /u/ still pronounced [u], /u/ pronounced as [a], and 'u' is not pronounced and also silent word a. 2) Applying multi-level teaching can improve students' pronunciation skills up to 95.62% of acceptable pronunciation.

Introduction

English language is a compulsory subject to teach in Indonesia starting from junior high. Indonesian people regard it is a very important language as it is admitted as one of international languages. Therefore, it is languages that Indonesian schooling introduces it even from the kindergarten level.

The end of learning language is that students are able to communicate both orally and written. For junior high school level, students are insised to master English at least up to fuctional, which means that they are able to communicate both orally and written to survie for the daily needs.

To communicate orally students are required to be able to pronounce the English words acceptably. It was found that after learning English for one semester, students' pronunciations were hard to undertand. For example, *books* is pronounced as *boks*. In short, the students pronounced it as it happened in the Indonesian language reading system.

Such a condition drove the authors to administer the pronunciation tests through reading descriptive text intensively. From the test, it was known that students can pronounce the English words acceptably only 72.3%. The cause of the problems was (1) most of the students did not have a person to guide, (2) if the students stated that they had a person to guide with low competency to be a guide, and (3) most students experienced pronunciation problems.

EFL classes mostly reject pronunciation (Robertson, 2020). Most language teachers are better at English grammar than pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin,

2010). Teachers must transfer only what they know to their students; therefore it is not surprising to see the fact that students are also more competent in grammar and lexis than pronunciation as well. The behavior of Indonesian teachers, in general, is that they tend to be reluctant to teach pronunciation. Although pronunciation plays an important role because it does not become the subject of demands in examinations, teachers are lazy to teach it. The authors try to break it up to practice pronunciation. Over the years, the presence of communicative language teaching or communicative approaches in language teaching brought new enthusiasm for teaching pronunciation. The communicative approach emphasizes that language is learned to communicate. In oral communication, the teachers cannot deny the important role of pronunciation (Aziez & Aziez, 2018).

The teacher must find a solution to the problem above so that students' interest in learning well enough is not damaged because of their frustration and the teacher must also encourage the students who are less interested in learning to be more interested in learning. To overcome this problem, the authors use multi-level teaching.

Pronunciation learning is integrated into speaking and reading, especially reading aloud. But in reality, that's not enough. In addition, teachers have very limited time allocation if they have to deal with each student. Special treatment only for the pronunciation aspect will be very time consuming. In order not to take too much time, the author uses multi-level teaching. This is because in multi-level teaching there are aspects of utilizing social relations that are mutually beneficial, such as peer tutors. Multi-level teaching - as in multi-level marketing - can stimulate learning, because the up line will get additional scores from their training efforts (Tudge & Rogoff, 1999).

Literature Review

Pronunciation matter

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (Standop, 1990) states that pronunciation is the way in which a word is pronounced. The Indonesian point of view that the writing and reading system of English from that of Indonesian for example, Indonesians tend to pronounce the word *turist* as it is spelt, but English people do not do like that English has its own transcript system. Such differences make Indonesian people perceive that reading and writing in English are different. It is difficult for nonnative

speakers to pronounce words as native speakers do. Therefore, the pronunciation referred to, in this research here, is an acceptable pronunciation. Acceptable pronunciation is the pronunciation that is generally understood by English users in general. For example, the words *girl* according to the phonetic symbols will be symbolized as /gɜ:l/. But by certain tribes in Indonesia, the word girl will be pronounced /gǽl/. Things that are caused by such factors are certainly tolerated. What cannot be tolerated is that if the word *made* is pronounced as the Balinese name /Made/ which is not pronounced /meɪd/. Also, English pronunciation has silent letters. They are [k], [p], [w], [l], [s], [b], and [t]. [K] is silent for *know, knee, knife,* and so on. [P] is silent for pscyhology, psychologist, and pneumonia. [W] is silent for *wrap, wrapt, wrist, write,* and *wrinkle.* [L] is silent for *should, would, could.* [S] is silent for *isle, aisle,* and *island.* [B] is silent for *debt* and *doubt.* [T] is silent for *listen, often, castle,* and *soften.*

Indonesia also has many local languages. Each language has a unique pronunciation accent. For example, Batak and Mandarin people tend to pronounce /e/ instead of /ə/ such as the word *among* /əˈmʌŋ/, Bugis tend to add sound /g/ closing words that end with /n/. For Indonesian, their mother tongue is mostly the local language. Their second language is the national language, Indonesian. Then, they learn several foreign languages at school, such as English. The students' difficulty in pronouncing English words is inseparable from the influence of mother tongue (Alhaisoni, Al-Zuoud, & Gaudel, 2015).

At the college level, pronunciation is a separate subject study. However, Gimson (Cruttenden, 2014). *"Clearly a foreign learner who requires an adequate performance in the language for the practical purposes of everyday communication will not need to master all the variants described. Nevertheless, any teacher or learner must consider how much of time given to the acquisition of another language should be devoted to pronunciation and what level of performance is necessary for efficient communication* (Gimson & Ramsaran, 1970; Hornby & Cowie, 1974; Hornby, Cowie, Gimson, & Hornby, 1974).

Pronunciation Practice

The exercise can be used in various ways as a mode of endeavor in itself as well as in imitative and unprepared practice steps. The aim of this exercise is to stabilize the

pronunciation patterns. Practices can include oral reading scripts of various kinds, whether chosen by the teacher or chosen by the students themselves or compiled by the teacher and/or students (for example, radio broadcast scripts or TV broadcast scripts of all types; quotes from famous speeches, plays, narrative poems, novels, plays and role-plays, etc. planned (relatively short) oral presentations of various topics, with chosen topics,); dress rehearsal and final appearance in class with audio and/or video recording (and feedback criticism sessions either immediately or later); independent learning exercises outside the classroom or learning sessions in pairs/small groups with audio and/or video recording; one-on-one speech training session with the speaking teacher (e.g., speech coach) (Aziez & Aziez, 2018).

Vocabulary Concept

We cannot say anything if we do not have a vocabulary. As a result, we cannot communicate with each other. According Hornby and Zhang (1984) vocabulary is the total number of words which, with rules for combining them, make up a language".

Because of this, it can be said that vocabulary is the basic material forming language and has a very important role. In line with (Hornby & Zhang, 1984). It would be impossible to learn language without vocabulary (Rivers, 2018).

It is evident that vocabulary is very important to learn not only to know its meaning but also its pronunciation. The vocabulary intended in this study is all the words needed in the descriptive text given to students. For example, the word *he,* if there are five words in the text, the authors count five vocabulary words. This is because student inconsistencies are very high. *He* can be read correctly in a sentence, but not in other sentences.

Even though research on vocabulary indicates that vocabulary is fundamental in language instruction, vocabulary activities appear only in reading section, in which it is given in one of the nine activities in the chapter. No vocabulary learning strategies are present and no recycling is found. This lack of attention to the vocabulary component is truly happens in Indonesia (Aziez & Aziez, 2018). It gets worse in the pronunciation.

Descriptive Text

In the Indonesian curriculum of Junior High School (JHS), it is said that the descriptive text has general characteristics namely a) communicative objectives, b) the structure of the text, and c) the characteristics of language. The communicative purpose of the descriptive text is to describe a particular person, object, or place. The structure of the descriptiv text consists of an introduction to the object or identification to be described and a description (Pendidikan, 2006). The description can be a color, a measure of origin that only gives information about a particular object, place or person. Whereas linguistic characteristics use: certain objects, simple present tense, relating verb, action verb, adjective, adverb, and figurative language (Permendikbud, 2016). The foregoing needs to be explained with the aim that this research is clearly framed focused and becomes the reason for the title selection. Everything will be different if the type of text is not focused. For example, descriptive and narrative texts are taught so that different spellings will occur. The verb *go,* in the descriptiv text will change to "went" in another text. One of the solutions to overcome this problem is the use of muti-level teaching as elaborated in the following section.

Multi Level Teaching

Motivation is important in all learning. This is clearly a success factor in pronunciation. However, motivating students to develop their pronunciation is not easy. Concern for pronunciation is the need for students to convey ideas, and pronunciation instructions that revolve around the microscopic features of language have been at odds with this goal. The emphasis on the exact meaning of individual voices has also met with resistance from students for various reasons. For example, some feel that if they produce this strange sound correctly, they will lose their own identity. Pronunciation learning also places students in a great risk position: They risk making mistakes, feeling embarrassed, failing, and losing self-esteem (Beebe, 1983). Given what students face, it is not surprising that pronunciation does not have a high priority for many students.

The teacher must facilitate the form of teaching not only to meet the language learner's goals but also to create a positive experience. Pronunciation has a relationship with communication. For communication purposes, a connection is required. For this

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reason, students need to know exactly what connections are, how well they make connections, and what they need to do to improve connections. For example, before emphasizing the specification of pronunciation, the students must first experience using language as a means for communicative purposes that are truly objectives. For this purpose, the teacher exercises it which is embedded in the method. Whereas the techniques for training teachers can provide settings and stimuli for this communication experience, and help them analyze moments of communication breakdown, some of which can be traced to speech difficulties. After the students recognize the role of pronunciation in the communication process, they are then ready for focusing on the pronunciation work. For this reason, teachers use multi-level teaching.

Adding income is the goal of Multilevel marketing (MLM). MLM provides opportunities with minimum costs and time flexibility to achieve financial independence if the individual manages to secure a loyal sales base. MLM is a genre of personal sales where products or services are distributed by agents to customers through personal contacts (Ambarini, 2011; Hikmawati, 2013; Nga & Mun, 2011).

Up line is a student who has been declared graduated in mastering the pronunciation of a text that is taught or the best among students and is given the authority to provide guidance to his friends who have not mastered the text taught in learning activities at the time. How to determine the up line? The teacher offers fairly to all students to be tested. Next, take notes that state that they are ready to be tested up-line and openly test before other students. The number of up lines is adjusted by the number of students and the time allocation available, so as to achieve a reasonable comparison; not too much and not too little. In carrying out their duties, the up line is given a sheet containing a chart to be filled up by the up line which includes the up line itself, the down line and the value.

The down line is students who are learning classically by the teacher who has not yet mastered the pronunciation of the text that is the target of learning or worse the pronunciation than of the up line.

A reward is giving additional value to a predetermined passing grade value for each up line who successfully guides and tests friends so that they graduate. For example, the passing grade is 6 (six) and from each student who is guided to pass is 0.1, and the up line can graduate 3, then the up line gets an accumulated grade of 6.3.

Method

The aim of the study

The ability to say is directly proportional to the ability to accept and understand the words of others. Therefore, this study aims to inform researchers and explain how the dynamics and challenges of giving English pronunciation to students from remote areas and from low-income families, as much as possible so that students have the confidence to start communicating especially orally. The authors propose the following research questions:

1. What difficulties do students face with regard to pronunciation?
2. Can the learning process with multilevel teaching techniques improve the pronunciation of students' description texts?

Participants and the context

This study used classroom action research through an action cycle consisting of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2013). The population which is the subject of research was students of class VII.B SMP Negeri 3 Waypengubuan Lampung Indonesia, consisting of 31 students (17 famales and 14 males). The authors, in conducting this research, did loose collaboration, namely collaboration between students and teachers (Arikunto & Suhardjono, 2006; Setiadi, 2006).

Procedure

Efforts to overcome problems of pronunciation faced by students as stated in the background can be done by students to pronounce with the following basic learning steps as shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Learning implementation procedures

No	Time	Activity	eacher's activities	Student activities
1.	5 minutes	Opening	Conveying anything that will be done.	Ask things that aren't clear yet.
2.	15 minutes	Modeling	Teach students how to say the words in the text.	Students imitate.

3.	15 minutes	Search up lines	Offer students to be tested to be upline. Looking for the best of everything.	Register to be tested.
4.	5 minutes	Grouping	Divide down line to up lines to form study groups.	Form a study group.
5.	20 minutes	Peer tutorial	As a director, supervisor, model, trainer, a guide for the whole group and students. Noting things that need to be recorded in the class observation note sheets.	Up line teaches down line.
6.	15 minutes	Down lines test	Distribute sheet charts up and down line relationships.	Up lines test the down line.
7.	5 minutes	Closing Reporting	Delivering notes that need to be delivered to students about things that are good to be maintained and things that are not good to be fixed.	Listening and running input from the teacher.

Result and Discussion

Cycle I

Cycle 1 lasts for three meetings. The authors offer openly that anyone could be an upline and the authors openly test it. Five students who had best pronunciation were being an up-line. The principle applied was not to find the pronunciation which was acceptable to all, but the most widely accepted pronunciation among students.

After teaching, the authors conducted a test to determine the development of students' pronunciation. From the test data, it was known that the pronunciation of students grew to the good development. However, the results had not reached what the authors wanted. Therefore, the authors proceeded to Cycle 2. The test results in Cycle 1the authors present in the table as follows.

Table. 2. The Pronunciation Development of students in Cycle 1

No	Measurement	Average incorrect percentage	Average correct percentage
1	Before	27.3	72.3
2	I	9.68	90.32

Source: Classroom Action Research Data

Developing pronunciation in a foreign language is a complicated process. Pronunciation, as one aspect of language, is a form of behavior, but more than that, it expresses one's feelings. What's more, for change to occur, students must first recognize it and make changes. However, to change, once obtained, can be easily marked because the process is canceled too quickly for students who are impatient. Thus, steps to maintain motivation must be built into the learning experience. These learning considerations are as important as insights into the language itself (Wong, 1987).

Cycle 2

After the third meeting in Cycle 2, the authors did the test to find out the level of development of students' pronunciation. The test results turned out to show a better direction, but the results had not reached the desired target. Thus the author proceeded to the Cycle 3. The data of Cycle 2 is presented by the authors as follows.

Table 3. Development of the pronunciation of students Cycle 2

No	Measurement	Average Incorrect percentage	Average percentage correct
1	II	6.99	93.01

Source: Classroom Action Research Data

Productive pronunciation depends on identifying relevant goals and can be achieved by the students to change their pronunciation and teach them how to speak more clearly and effectively. Dramatic changes in the near future are rare, but changes in their perceptions of the phenomena of pronunciation in their own language and in that of native speaker can be significant. This is because pronunciation learning can show students the main components of spoken English systems; show how these components contribute to the expression of meaning and communication in general; teach students how to understand features in natural speech; teach them how to understand these features in their own speech; and provide tools for them to develop their own pronunciation. By giving them specimens to be developed independently, the responsibility falls to those who have the actual power to make the necessary changes (Wong, 1987).

Cycle 3

After the third teaching was accomplished, the authors conducted the test to find out the development of students' pronunciation. It turned out from the test hat the development of their pronunciation had exceeded the desired target. The target that the authors wanted was 95% acceptable or only 5% the level of the unacceptability of students 'pronunciation, while the achievement of their pronunciation had reached 4.4%. The result of the third test is presented as follows.

Table 4. Development of students' pronunciation in Cycle 3

No	Measurement	Incorrect percentage average	Correct percentage Average
1	III	4.4	95.62

Source: Classroom Action Research Data

By looking at Table 4 above, the authors had reached the target set. Thus the authors can end the action.

The authors present the overall development of the students' pronunciation from each cycleas follows.

Table 5. Development of students' pronunciation of each cycle

No	Measurement	Average percentage correct
1	Before treatment	72.3
2	I	90.32
3	II	93.01
4	III	95.62

Source: Classroom Action Research Data

Good pronunciation skills are the basis for reading and speaking skills. The development of students' pronunciation skills, as in table 5 is in line with studies that reveal the relationship between reading and speaking. The use of reading tests as a diagnosis has been the basis of criticism that spontaneous reading and speaking are different processes and those students who can read parts well can speak poorly - or vice versa. Advantages of using many readings, including the following: (a) a uniform

database for each student & easing the evaluation task for teachers (b) having standard texts eliminates the need to copy samples of student speeches, which will be required for interviews, picture descriptions, and task-based activities; (c) the text can be controlled for the length and degree of difficulty, which students cannot avoid; and (d) reading can be made more like a conversation by choosing dialogue as text. The teacher can take one part and another student, and then they can exchange parts. Teacher participation makes it more fun for students and gives them samples of native speaker speeches that they can review as often as possible (Wong, 1987).

Pronunciation is the most important verbal communication skill and it is important in the evaluation of the speaker by the listener. This is the language skill that is the most difficult to learn and difficult to measure (Fraser, 2000; Naji, Subramaniam, & White, 2019). According to Morley (1998) pronunciation is what creates the impression of speakers of knowledge about language. The mastery of pronunciation is necessary for skills which, in turn, make students pragmatically competent in any social context (Alrefaee & Al-Ghamdi, 2019). On the other hand, bad pronunciation can cause misunderstanding between speaker and listener. In addition, a student with a bad pronunciation accent can lose confidence and that may have an overall negative impact on the student's personality. Therefore it is important to understand that we can use simple words or grammatical structures in our communication, but we cannot use simple pronunciation (Lund, 2003). Pronunciation is very important in our social l lives as in determining our prestige, social position, and even our professional competence (Al-Ahdal, 2020; Gelvanovsky, 2002).

Also, the good results are in the line with that usually, children are well trained to do tutoring at the end of the first session, but with first and second-grade students it may be necessary to train them for several sessions and days (Carta, Dinwiddie, Kohler, Delquadri, & Greenwood, 1984).

Conclusions

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that 1) students really have difficulties in pronouncing English words as follows: the letter combination /ea/ which should be pronounced /i:/ e.g. leak [li:k] and /ea/ which should

be pronounced [æ] e.g. the letters /u/ which should be pronounced [ʊ], e.g. put [pʊt] u/ which should be pronounced [ʌ] e.g. but [bʌt], and /u/ which is not pronounced (muted u), e.g. *enough* [ɪˈnʌf], and also silent word a. 2) Applying multi-level teaching has enables students' pronunciation skills to improve up to 95.62% of acceptable pronunciation. This article has presented problems and how to solve them related to pronunciation in the Indonesian context. As it is known, Indonesia has a variety of tribes, customs, cultures, and languages and they live together in a melting pot. To test and deepen and reproduce more comprehensive learning practices, other researchers need to conduct further studies with a different language and cultural settings and contexts.

Pedagogical Implications

The fact that even the urban students who study pronunciation remaine lack accepted English pronunciation. This might be jue to lack of exposer to received English pronunciation. This study which was carried out in a remote area where the facilities and invoreonment to some extences are differents from those in urbun area, the problem of teaching received English pronunciation is more complicated. Therefore, it is assumed that English language teachers in remote area should pay more attention to the implementation of exposer. The following are some implications.

Firstly, in order to help the students acquire received English pronunciation; it is inevitable for the students to have a lot of exposure to pronunciation, they can make use of films, videos, songs most frequently by native speakers.

Additionally, the differences in pronouncing words in English and Indonesia are very great due to the wide differences socio-cultural knowledge of the students. Therefore, socio-cultural information pertaining to the differences in pronunciation between English and Indonesia should be incorporated into English curriculum.

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