

Analyzing English Pronunciation Skills of Indonesian Bilingual School Teachers Using Phonetic Transcription

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Abstract: This paper analyzes English pronunciation skill of teachers in one of Indonesian bilingual schools which apply a combined curriculum to provide high quality of education. The teachers are demanded to have good English proficiency. Pronunciation is considered to be crucial in English speaking skill since the teachers have the responsibility to teach Cambridge International Primary Program (CIPP) subjects, such as Math, English and Science. It is to give good examples in pronouncing words and not to mislead the students during the content delivery in teaching. Fifteen homeroom teachers involved as participants in the research. It considered their having essential role in developing the students' English abilities and become a model to speak English despites their various English abilities since they graduated from non-English departments. The researchers used the recordings of the testing instrument involving 15 teachers and a questionnaire to collect data. Findings showed the words best, both, first, high, question, sure, table, television, with and wrong were frequently mispronounced by the teachers.

Keywords: *Bilingual School, Consonant Sound, Combined Curriculum, Phonetic Transcription, Pronunciation*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, bilingual schools have been an education trend in Indonesia. More parents are aware of the importance of English mastery to prepare their children to face the world's challenges. Bilingual schools are the result of market-driven education since there have been demands from the parents related to good

education paradigm. Considering to be a trend, it is believed that better learning achievements are performed by the students from bilingual schools compared to those from monolingual schools (Cummins 2000). It is a proof of the cognitive advantage increase shown in their being more divergent and creative in the way of thinking (Verhoeven 1991).

The high demands of good education through bilingual school are noticeable not only in big cities but also in small towns. This school is one of bilingual schools established in a small town in Central Java, Indonesia. It is considered as one of those bilingual schools to provide better education system emphasizing the use of English during the teaching and learning process. This school implements a combined curriculum mentioned as own curriculum, Government Curriculum, and the Cambridge International Primary Program (CIPP). Thus, the teachers are obliged to master a thorough ability to teach, learn and assess the subject materials of Math, English and Science. It is addressed for children aged five to eleven years old. In addition, based on the statement of Derwing, Munro & Lewi (Derwing and Munro 2005) that some ESL teachers, who work with adult learners, are not provided by training in teaching pronunciation. Moreover, the teachers in that school are EFL teachers. In this case, pronunciation problems exist. The purpose of the curriculum combination is to fulfill the need of a high quality education in that school. Thus, the teachers of this school ought to be excellent in their English proficiency.

As researchers, we are impressed to know the teachers' English abilities. However, the first research we conducted was related to the speaking skill mastery. Florez (1999) states that the mastery of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation is claimed to be essential to build a good speaking skill. Being more specific, we conducted a research on the teachers' pronunciation skill in this school.

More than two decades, a significant amount of inquiries has been given to the grammar learning in both observational and exploratory which has highlights of morphosyntax. It is more as of late, lexicon, in moment dialect (L2) classes. Pronunciation, in any case, is dismissed not only in the hypothetical but also the educational approaches to L2 learning (Derwing and Munro 2005;

Gilbert 2010). At slightest one typical reason for that instruction in the pronunciation, with the emphasis on individual sounds and/or prosody, has not continuously created for a comfortable fit to educators who back communicative language teaching. This causes a problem of the decrease pronunciation, both with researchers and practitioners. It is overwhelming since of the stance that an obvious pronunciation center is incapable and indeed unessential to making a difference learner accomplish the communicative competence (e.g. Krashen 1981). It is also the recognition that articulation does not performed effectively with other language skills, mention as the skills of reading or writing (MacDonald 2002).

Research has proved that having either an individual or proficient objective for learning English is able to affect the native-like pronunciation which is both required and desired for (Bernaus et al. 2004; Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid 2005; Marinova-Todd, Marshall, and Snow 2000; Masgoret and Gardner 2003). The study conducted by Marinova-Todd et al. (2000) about grown-up acquisition of English has concluded that grown-ups profoundly found themselves capable and becoming second language native-like speakers, particularly in case urged them to do so. Moyer (2007) discovered that encounter with and positive introduction to the dialect show up to be critical components in creating pronunciation like a native. In a study dealing with Spanish learners, Shively (2008) uncovered that accuracy within Spanish generation is absolutely related to the starting age to have the language introduction, the amount of formal Spanish instruction, the residence in a Spanish speaking country, the class contact with Spanish, and the center on pronunciation in class. Consequently, to focus on the pronunciation and accent in class, teachers should encourage learners to speak English not only inside but outside the classroom. They should also provide the learners

with assignments which help structure those interactions.

In addition, the fact that every learner has distinctive qualities and shortcomings when it comes to L2 learning, some components mentioned as the learning age, native language (L1) and aptitude play a bigger influence to the pronunciation compared to what other skills do (Piske, MacKay, and Flege 2001). Accordingly, language learners in classes are impossible to be at a similar level regarding their general L2 skills, but it is also possible to perform changes in their pronunciation. This changeability gives out a challenge for instructors who regularly need preparing within the pronunciation teaching (Foote, Holtby, and Derwing 2011) and who are regularly confronted with reading material which provides various pronunciation treatments ((Derwing, Diepenbroek, and Foote 2012).

Clear pronunciation presents the speakers the control to ensure whenever they communicate and demonstrate the communication with others (Zaigham 2011) although mispronunciation has a tendency to lead misperception. Consequently, pronunciation is the speakers' concern because it presents rules to articulate words precisely (Harmer 2001). The communication success relies on the speakers' familiarity in articulating the words. The speakers should not follow a few standards of pronunciation in order to be caught on by others. Considering the need of pronunciation to teachers, the researchers analyzed the teachers' ability in pronouncing the words provided.

Being a teacher in school which implements a combined curriculum demands the teachers in Lazuardi Al-Falah GIS Klaten to be able not only to speak English well but also able to deliver the content learnings using appropriate language classroom. In this case, the teachers deal with three subjects from CIPP which are in English. The goal of teaching is not to make them pronounce words like native speakers of English. There is a more modest and realistic goal. It is to

enable learners to improve their level of pronunciation, so that it does not lower their ability to communicate (Marriane, 2007).

There are some ways for teachers to increase pronunciation. They might do exercises on recognizing and creating powerless, unstressed syllables (Dalton and Seidlhofer 1994; Field 2005). They might teach word stretch during the vocabulary discussions with the learners (Field 2005). Teachers might point out to learners where the major push falls whenever unused words appear and utilize relationship exercises as well (Field 2005). Words presents similar stress patterns tend to be less demanding for learners to keep memorize (Aitchison 2003). In this case, teachers could provide learners a list of words with similar stress. Then, they inquire the learners to state the rule related to, for example, compound adverbs of area. They are inside, first floor, and outside which have the stress on the final syllable (Hancock 1998, 69). For a higher-level learning, teacher could teach learners how to break the words into syllables and find out the word stress (Field 2005).

According to Robertson (2009)(Crystal 2003), it is stated that speaking skill is one of the important mastery in learning English. Based on Brown (2007), accuracy is a spoken language which is clear in articulation; grammatically and phonologically correct (p.324). Moreover, the teachers should understand the material from the book. By using that method, the teachers must able to speak on front of the class with a good grammatical and pronunciation. Thus, the researchers specially address the following research questions: what vowels and consonants cause problems in the English pronunciation skill of teachers in that school.

METHODS

Since it is a new school established in 2013, there have not been many teachers working in Lazuardi Al Falah GIS Klaten. Thus, the researchers decided to choose only fifteen

teachers to be involved as participants in the research considering their being homeroom teachers. Becoming homeroom teachers implies that the teachers present more control to create students' capacity within the classroom, regarding CIPP subjects teaching, such as math, English and science. They should perform English well to become the model for the students. There are curiously actualities about the teachers. Most of them graduated from non-English departments and a few teachers have not been familiar in using English as a daily communication. It means that the teacher should be responsible to enhance their English acquisition in quality. Hence, this study focuses on finding vowels and consonants cause problems in the English pronunciation skill of teachers. It is crucial to have pronunciation skill mastery in order not to mislead the students related to mispronounced words.

We drew the materials for this research from the Cambridge English Pronunciation book. Overall, the pronunciation recording of fifteen homeroom teachers became our data in this research. The teachers were selected based on their need and responsibility in teaching using Cambridge curriculum.

There are twenty-five words consist of complete phonetic transcription (vowels and consonants) which are easy to pronounce (Mark, 2007). Therefore, the researchers took a total of 25 words from 40 words. The words were taken from Longman Dictionary and present the S1 and W1 labels. Those labels mean that they are most spoken and written words based on the usage. The words represent the complete phonetic transcriptions for both vowels and consonants. The 25 words consist of 19 consonants and 16 vowels were analyzed.

After making a list of the words referring to the book entitled Pronunciation in Use and consulting the Longman Dictionary, the researchers asked the teachers to pronounce each word and did the recording. In the process of

collecting the data, the researchers used a recorder to record the teachers' pronunciation. After recording, we analyzed the voice recording toward the phonetic transcription. Teacher who is able to read the word correctly will get check mark in the column of the word. To strengthen the data, we used an open-ended questionnaire consisting of five questions related to their difficulty in pronouncing the words.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The instrument of testing consisted of 25 words. There were 19 consonants and 16 vowels. Based on the analysis of the recordings, the researchers discovered some words which had the highest tendency to be mispronounced by the teachers. As seen in Figure 1, there were more than 50% of teachers who made a mistake in pronouncing the words *best*, *both*, *first*, *high*, *question*, *sure*, *table*, *television*, *with* and *wrong*. It was difficult for them to pronounce /t/ ending in *best* and *first*. They pronounced them as /bes/ and /fɜ:rs/ without the /t/ ending. It was also difficult for them to pronounce the word *with* because it has the ending of either /ð/ or /θ/. They pronounced the word *with* as /wit/ with the /t/ ending.

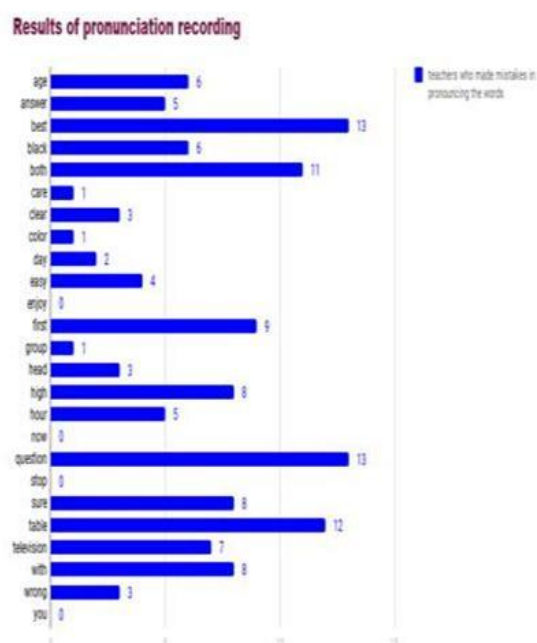


Figure 1. Results of Pronunciation Recording

Most teachers found difficulty in pronouncing the word *both*. They should have presented /əʊ/ or /oʊ/ diphthongs. However, they pronounced it in various sounds, such as /u:/, /ʊ/, /o/, /ʌ/ or /ɔ/. It was hard to pronounce the ending /θ/ in the word *both* as well, instead the teachers pronounced it as /ts/ or /t/. There are also some silent sounds, such as /g/ in the word *high* and /w/ in the word *wrong*. The teachers were unaware of those. Most teachers mispronounced the word *question* as /kwɛʃən/, omitting the /t/. It should have been pronounced as /'kwɛstʃən/. In the word *television*, most teachers paid less attention to the difference between /v/ and /f/ in. They pronounced the /v/ as /f/. Also, the teachers less noticed the /eɪ/ diphthong in the word *table* which they pronounced as /e/. The last, the word *sure* also became a common mistake to pronounce, which they pronounced /s/, instead of /ʃ/.

Based on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, the challenges which learners experience could be anticipated by contrasting the two languages features, (Crystal 2003; Fries, 1952). Based on the questionnaire, we analyzed the teachers' opinions and reflections related to the testing instrument. They mentioned the vowels and consonants they thought to be difficult. Below are the detailed lists of both difficult vowels and consonants to pronounce based on their written responses. No partial or complete closure of the air-passage is found. In the passage, it is not found a narrowing which makes audible friction or noise. Therefore, based on (Bansal and Harrison 2009, 8), vowels are voiced sounds.

Table 1. List of Difficult Consonant Sounds

| Consonant | Frequency |
|-----------|-----------|
| ə | 8 |
| d | 4 |
| s | 2 |
| tf | 5 |

| | |
|----|----|
| dz | 1 |
| ŋ | 2 |
| j | 1 |
| ð | 5 |
| ʒ | 7 |
| ɟ | 10 |
| k | 4 |
| g | 1 |
| h | 1 |
| ʃ | 2 |
| P | 4 |
| F | 1 |
| tʃ | 1 |
| r | 1 |
| w | 1 |

CONCLUSION

Based on the pronunciation analysis of teachers of Lazuardi Al Falah GIS Klaten, it can be concluded that vowels considered to be difficult are the sound /əʊ/ or /oʊ/ as in *both*, the sound /eɪ/ as in *table*, and the sound /ɜ:/ as in *first*. Whereas, the difficult consonants are /t/ in the ending of the words *best* and *first*, and the tendency to omit /t/ in question, the sound /ð/ in *with*, the sound /θ/ as in *both* and *with*, the sound /v/ as in *television*, the sound /ʃ/ as in *sure*. Some silent sounds are hardly to notice such as /g/ as in *high* and the sound /w/ as in *wrong*.

Future studies should be conducted in a longer period of time to gain more data and find further results. It is recommended that future researchers conduct class action research or practical action research into pronunciation issues.

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