



## **Tongue Twister as a Technique to Help Students Solve Their Difficulties in Pronouncing /s/, /ʃ/ at Junior High School**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is aimed at describing the use of ‘Tongue Twister’ to improve students’ pronunciation of /s/ and /ʃ/ consonants at junior high school students. This technique is applied to help junior high school to pronounce words that have similar sounds. This technique enables students to solve the problem by using tongue twister sentence given to them. ‘Tongue Twister’ allows students to practice the sentence repeatedly and to determine the appropriate sounds to each word.

**Key words:** *Pronunciation, Pronouncing /s/ and /ʃ/, Tongue Twister, Junior High School*

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

As it is known, English is an international language. Beside English is known as international language, it is also the most widely language that are used by people in the world. They also use English in their daily life, for example in school, business, in market, etc. However, it does not happen for most Indonesian students. As what the writer found in a school when the writer did practical teaching, beside the students do not learn English properly, most of them think that English is not really important as long as they still live in Indonesia, as a result they do not have motivation to learn this language and finally they get into boredom phase.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language. Thus, students will master English if they learn English itself seriously. Nowadays, Indonesian government decides that English has become one of the subjects that must be taught at school. However, Indonesian government has decided in the 2013 curriculum that English is no longer mandatory for elementary school. Therefore, English is as a compulsory subject at junior and senior high school level. At the elementary level, English is included in local content category. It

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means that it is okay if the school decides to include English into the list of subjects or not.

As a global language, English becomes important for individual to be able to speak in English. Being able to speak in English, it is going to be easier for people to communicate with others from different countries. When people are good in using English, they will be better in exchanging the information one with another. Besides speaking it is used to communicate, it is also can be used by people to solve problems and also to build social relationship. Explanations above can show several reasons why people should master English, especially for students.

While learning English focuses on speaking, teachers should also pay attention to one of the micro skills in speaking, which is pronunciation. When someone has already well and can speak fluently by using English, but poor in pronouncing the word, it will be hard for the interlocutors to catch what the speaker is talking about. As stated in Syafei (1988:1),

“With regard to its pronunciation, the English language is quiet difficult for Indonesian learners. In some cases the difficulties due to the fact that the irregular spelling of the language offers poor guidance to its pronunciation.”

It is not being secret anymore that pronouncing English word is appropriately difficult. As García (2007), Flor et al. (2006), and Gilakjani (2016) in Gilakjani (2016) said that among skills in English, pronunciation is the most difficult one to be mastered. To improve pronunciation skill, learners should spend lots of time on it. It means that in learning how to pronounce, learners need lots of time to focus on pronouncing the word, especially on the word they are struggling with.

However, even pronunciation is important, but not all teachers really care about it. As Harmer (2001) said that a lot of teachers do not really pay attention on students' ability in pronouncing the word. It was also felt by the writer when the writer did practice teaching. English teacher sometimes just ignore even though students wrong in pronouncing certain words. Teacher does not give much time to enhance students' pronunciation.

To enhance students' pronunciation, the teacher has to drill several words chorally to students. However, there are many students who cannot pronounce certain words properly even though they have a text to read in their hands. For example, when the teacher asked several students to read a paragraph of a text, they all almost have the same struggle to pronounce a word that they do not familiar with, such as 'temple', when they should have read it /temple/, but they have done with straight /temple/. Another example, when they confused to pronounce /drank/ and /drunk/, they still did straight pronounce and said /drang/ and /drung/. Moreover, the teacher seemed also does not give correct example to the students on how to pronounce the word.

Therefore, it is important for teacher to enhance the students' ability in pronunciation. The teacher can improve learners' pronunciation through several

practices that we already familiar with, such as pattern drill, conversation drill, and so on. In addition, teacher can use a technique namely 'tongue twister'. As Sitoresmi (2016: 590) states, "considering such condition, tongue twisters were chosen to improve their (learners) motivation, pronunciation and self-confidence." Teacher can use tongue twister to enhance learners' pronunciation because by using this technique, learners will be asked to focus on several words that they are struggling with.

Tongue twister is, "word or phrase that is difficult to say," (Oxford: 2008). Even though tongue twister is difficult to say, it will be fun to use tongue twister as a technique to improve pronunciation and make the tongue becomes stronger. This technique will make learners' enjoy their process of producing words. As Sitoresmi (2016) said that, beside tongue twister can be used to improve students' motivation and class condition, tongue twister is also can be used to improve students' ability in pronunciation.

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This part describes the literature review of the study. It is an evaluatif report of information found in the literature related to the selected area of the study. It consists of pronunciation, consonants of /s/ and /ʃ/, and tongue twister technique.

### **1. Pronunciation**

Burns and Claire (2003: 5) defined that "pronunciation refers to the phonology of the language -- or the meaningful perception and production of the sounds of that language and how they impact on the listener". In addition, as stated in Oxford Dictionary, pronunciation is a way how to produce a sound of languages or words. According to Yate (2002, as cited in Purhousein Gilakjani, 2016: 2), "pronunciation is the production of sounds that are used for making meaning".

Based on several definition from the experts above, the writer conclude that pronunciation is the production of sounds of language. The speaker should pronounce the words clearly to make the listener able to catch the meaning and understand what the speaker said.

### **2. Consonants of /s/ and /ʃ/**

In learning English language, especially pronunciation, both teacher and student will find what it is known as consonant. Consonants are, as the writer already cited before based on Syafei (1988) opinion, how the speech sound made up by two ways, closure in the mouth and the restricting of the air.

Dardjowidjojo and Jaya (2009: 78-79) states, "the sound /s/ is very common and found in many languages. It is produced by having the blade of the tongue touch the alveolar ridge. The nasal passage is closed. The airstream is impeded and then released through the two sides of the tongue as long as the breath permits. It is constinuant sound. The vocal folds do not vibrate, thus giving name voiceless alveolar fricative." For example in words; see, stuck, fast, nurse, etc.

Dardjowidjojo and Jaya (2009:81) discuss that, “...produced by putting the front part of the tongue on the alveopalatal area. The front part of the tongue is just behind the blade; the alveopalatal area is the area on the hard palate just behind the alveolar ridge. As the name indicates, it is an area where the alveolar and hard palate meet. The nasal passage is closed. The airstream is released through the sides of the tongue, causing a friction; the lips are somewhat protruded. The vocal folds do not vibrate. The sound is, therefore, called a voiceless alveopalatal fricative.” For example, the sounds of /ʃ/ can be found in words; shall, wish, shoot, shame, etc.

3. Tongue twister technique

There are many definitions of tongue twister. As stated in Oxford (2008) Tongue twister is word or phrase that is difficult to say. According to Carmen (2009: 114), “a tongue twister is a sequence of words that is difficult to pronounce quickly and correctly.” In line with Machackova (2012), tongue twisters are phrases or sentences which are difficult to pronounce because similar sounds occur but students still can enjoy the activities in pronunciation activities.

According to Cambridge Advance Learners Dictionary (1995), tongue twister is “a sentence or phrase that is intended to be difficult to say, especially when repeated quickly and often. It usually consists of words that have close sounds. The words are listed altogether in a sentence and pronounced continuously”.

## C. DISCUSSION

This part describes how tongue twister technique should be conducted in order to improve students' pronunciation. It consists of what teacher should do before entering the class and how to implement tongue twister technique to help students in pronouncing the consonants of /s/ and /ʃ/.

1. The preparation

In a learning process, before starting to teach, the teacher should have the preparation in order to make teaching-learning process run well. As already known, in teaching, it is really important to teacher to prepare what will be needed in the process of teaching-learning before the teacher enters to the classroom. If the teacher did not prepare everything needed, the class may not run well.

The preparations can be a lesson plan and materials. The teacher should prepare the lesson plan about pronunciation. The lesson plan will help teacher to take what steps that teacher should do in the classroom and help the teacher to achieve the aim of learning process. The teacher also has to prepare the materials that are going to be used in teaching because materials are crucial things and really important to be well prepared. Good materials preparation will help teacher in teaching so much.

2. Teaching pronunciation by using tongue twister

As commonly suggested by the 2013 Curriculum, there are three stages in teaching:

a. Pre-teaching activities

In pre-teaching activities, there are several things that should teacher and students do. First, teacher should greet students in English in order to make students become familiar with English greeting. After that, the teacher asks a student to lead a prayer. The teacher and students pray together. Then, the teacher checks students' attendance. The teacher and students review the previous topic of the lesson. The teacher states that they will come to the new topic as well as informing the students about the goal of the lesson in order to motivate the students.

b. Whilst-teaching activities

Whilst-Teaching activities are the main part of the teaching activity. Whilst-teaching is the activity which teacher begins to introduce the lesson, and then deliver it to the students and practice it during the class. In this activity, the teacher expects to achieve the goal and objective of teaching. There are five stages in whilst-teaching. They are observing, questioning, exploring, associating and communicating.

In observing stage, the students are asked to watch the video about how to pronounce consonants of /s/ and /ʃ/, after that teacher also shows the students the video of tongue twister of consonants of /s/ and /ʃ/. The students are asked to pay attention to the videos, because the next activities will be connected to the videos.

In questioning stage, after students watched the videos, the teacher gives students time to analyze the video they just watched and the teacher should stimulate students curiosity by asking several questions.

In exploring stage, students can explore other sources about pronunciation and tongue twister, such as textbook, internet, or even from the material given from the teacher. By exploring more about the material of the lesson, it will help students to get more knowledge about the lesson they learn.

In associating stage, the pronunciation lesson will be conducted. The first of all, the lesson is started by practicing to pronounce /s/ and /ʃ/ by the teacher showing minimal pairs of /s/ and /ʃ/ consonant. Students are asked to repeat the sound of consonants after the teacher. Then, teacher can continue the lesson with individual practice. The teacher may give every student work sheets on which there are ten words with consonants /s/ and /ʃ/. The students are asked to determine the words based on the consonant in each word. After giving students' practice, the teacher may divide the class into five

groups. After the students sit in their groups, the teacher shows the tongue twister sentences in front of the class by using laptop and projector. There are five sentences, so the teacher gives a sentence for each group. Here, every group has their own sentence. After each group gets a sentence, they have to analyze the sentence. They should analyze the sentence based on their knowledge and according to the video they already watched before. From the sentence given to each group, they will be asked to find out which word with consonant /s/ and which word with consonant /ʃ/.

Communicating is the last stage in whilst-teaching. Here, each group will be asked to present their result of their group discussion in front of the class and also present their tongue twister sentence. Each group chooses one representative member to stand in front of the class to present their sentence and their discussion result. They should share their information which words are with /s/ and /ʃ/ consonants and students should read tongue twister sentence correctly.

c. Post-teaching activities

Post-teaching activity is the last activity in a lesson. In this section students and teacher conclude the learning material. The teacher evaluates students understanding of pronouncing consonant of /s/ and /ʃ/. Then the students answer the teacher directly. After conclude the lesson, the teacher gives the students personal homework. If the teacher's explanation is clear, the teacher close the lesson by asking a student lead a prayer.

## D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the previous discussion, tongue twister can be used in teaching students junior high school to enhance their pronunciation. In general, tongue twister is a word or phrase that difficult to say. The learners enjoy the lesson if the teacher use this fun technique because the students will be challenged to repeat the difficult words until they can pronounce it correctly.

Tongue twister is conducted by dividing students into five or more groups. Before dividing students into group, the teacher shows the video related to tongue twister. If the video have already watched by students, then the teacher divides students into groups. The teacher gives each group a tongue twister sentence and the teacher asks the students to discuss the sentence. After that, the students pronounce tongue twister in group continually until their tongue familiar with the word, and at the end they will present their tongue twister in front of the class.

It is suggested for teachers to consider in choosing the tongue twister for junior high school students, which is it should start from the easy one. Reward should be provided for students with the highest score in order to stimulate students' willingness in doing tongue twister. Teacher also may give students the chance to create their own version of tongue twister.

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