

Students' Phonological Awareness and Their Strategy in Pronouncing Words

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Abstract

The result of the study revealed that the students have difficulties in pronouncing words that were categorized into three parts, those were consonant, vowel, and diphthong. In consonant, the students made errors /p/, /b/, /dʒ/, /z/, /f/, /v/, /d/, /s/, /r/, /k/, /ʃ/, /t/, /ð/, /θ/. In vowels, the students made errors /ɔ/, /æ/, /e/, /ʊ/, /ɪ/, /ɜ/, /i:/, /ʌ/. In diphthong, the students made error /aɪ/, /ɪə/, /ɜə/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/. Furthermore, the students' strategy in their reading activity was categorized into three namely low, middle, and high categories. For low category, the strategy in reading activity was by checking the difficult word in a dictionary, asking the lecture how to pronounce the difficult word, and practicing to read the word continuously. For middle category, the strategy in reading activity was by doing repetition to every single word, listening the pronunciation of the words using u-dictionary, and always practicing to pronounce every single word. For high category, the strategy in reading activity was guessing based on their knowledge pronunciation and make a relation with the word that the same sounds.

Keywords: phonological awareness, pronouncing words

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INTRODUCTION

The nature of language as a system implies that a language is composed of two systems: a system of sounds and a system of meaning. The relationship between those two systems is very important because in human verbal communication meaning or message is conveyed or received primarily through sounds or vocal symbols. These vocal symbols are expressed in the form of words (vocabulary) and arranged in certain grammatical structures (grammar). In terms of oral language, there must be message (meaning), grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Additionally, another feature of human communication is that language is a cultural transmission. It denotes that a communication system must be discovered through communicative interaction with other users of the language. This suggests that not only features of a language can be totally acquired, but also some parts of the language should be learnt. Thus, language learning is also needed.

The consequence of both features of human language above is that in any language programs, including English language education, pronunciation as a part of system of sounds should be propositionally treated as two other dominant components of language, namely grammar and vocabulary. However, the current situation, particularly English

language in Indonesia, shows that most people who are involved directly or indirectly in English language teaching and learning programs only concentrate on their attention to the last two components. This situation actually contrasts with the nature of language itself which requires a balanced deal of language system and meaning (Tudor, 2001). We shall, therefore, include pronunciation as a part of our language teaching programs because paying no or less attention to pronunciation teaching does eventually affect students' language mastery and the process of the whole communication, particularly when Indonesian EFL learners utilize the target language in real situations later.

At the beginning level, the insufficient capability of pronunciation, of course, does not always have a significant impact on the process of communication but at higher levels of oral communication it does. The reappraisal of pronunciation teaching in EFL contexts is also in line with the globalization which increases the role and status of English. Nowadays, English really becomes a global language. English is one of the main languages for oral communication (Crystal, 1997; Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002).

According to Geudens in Fikri (2014: 10), phonological awareness defined as sensitivity to the sound structure of language. The ability is the effort to turn one's attention to sounds in spoken language while temporarily shifting away from its meaning (Yopp and Yopp, 2009). This means that phonological awareness is the ability to attend to the phonological structure of language as distinct from its meaning.

Ingram (1986: 223) stated that phonological ability improve through an increase in the ability to produce adult sounds and combine them into more complex phonological structures. Phonological are interested in the sounds patterns of particular language, and in what speakers and hearers need to know, and children need to learn, to be speaker of those language (McMahon, 2002: 13). The same things that utterances by Trehearne (2003), she stated that phonological awareness refer to "an understanding of the sound, structure of language that is, that language is made up of words, syllables, rhymes and sound (phonemes)". Those theories may indicate that phonological awareness is the deep thinking skill of language that shown from sound that utterance by the speaker and the meaning interpreting by the hearing or interlocutor in speaking process.

Phonological awareness is the awareness of basic units of sound and is measured in terms of the ability to compare and manipulate the units of speech within words and syllables (Shah, 2002). It is the ability to carry out mental operations on these units. Phonological awareness is not reading, it is not phonics, it is the awareness of words as entities separate from the meanings attached to them (Denton, Hasbrouck, Weaver, & Riccio, 2000). Different researchers argued that phonological awareness describes children's developing sensitivity to the sublexical, segmental structure of the phonological domain of language, including sensitivities to larger and smaller units (Justice, Bowles, & Skibbe, 2006). Geudens (2006) referred to "phonological awareness" in a general sense as an umbrella term and used the term "sensitivity" instead of "awareness" to refer to tasks that do not require breaking up the speech stream intentionally (implicit phonological knowledge). The term "explicit phonological awareness" was used whenever he referred to tasks that require the ability to break up the continuous speech stream and identify and isolate phonological units intentionally (explicit phonological knowledge).

Phonological awareness is critical for learning to read any alphabetic writing system. Previous studies show that poor phoneme awareness and other phonological skills is a predictor of poor reading and spelling development. Ehri et al., 2004 and Troia, 1999 asserts that phonological awareness is critical for learning to read any alphabetic writing system. Phonological awareness is even important for reading other kinds of writing systems, such as Chinese and Japanese. There are several well-established lines of argument about the importance of phonological skills to reading and spelling. English uses an alphabetic writing system in which the letters, singly and in combination, represent

single speech sounds. According to Liberman & Shankweiler, 1985 and Troia, 1999, people who can turn words to sounds and put them together have the basic skill of using the alphabetic. Without phoneme awareness, students may be mystified by the print system and how it represents the spoken word. Phoneme awareness facilitates growth in printed word recognition. Even before a student learns to read, we can predict with a high level of accuracy whether that student will be a good reader or a poor reader by the end of third grade and beyond (Good and Kaminski, 2007 and Torgesen, 2000).

METHOD

Research design refers to the schema or plan that constitutes the entire research study. In conducting this research, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research describes phenomena in the form of words. This research belongs to qualitative because Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong, 2002:3) defines that qualitative research is a research which yields the descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from observing people and behavior. This implies that in qualitative research the data and the meaning emerge organically from the research context.

Qualitative research is a research technique that is used to gain insight into the underlying issues surrounding a research problem by gathering non-statistical feedback and opinions rooted in people's feeling, attitudes, motivations, values, and perceptions often from samples also called soft data. Qualitative method yield descriptive data that are appropriate with characteristic of the qualitative research. As stated by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006: 12), descriptive method aims at documenting an event, situation, or circumstance. In line with the statement above, Moloeng (2002:6) states that one of the characteristics of qualitative study is descriptive.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this data presentation, the researcher presented the data based on the result of observation and interview. The observation and interview conducted on August 10th-25th 2020 at fifth semester of English Department at undergraduate students of Mandalika University of Mataram. The first step done by the researcher was observation in the classroom. The researcher came to the campus directly and chose the students to be respondents of the research based on the criteria that the researcher determined. The criteria to be respondents were 1) they are ready to participate in the research, 2) they are good in English especially pronunciation, and 3) they have Grade Point Average (GPA) more than 3.00.

By doing observation, the researcher found out which one is proper to be the respondents of the study. So, the researcher took six students to be the respondents of the research. Then the researcher gave the student text and they read it to record their pronunciation. After recording them, the researcher analyzed the text that has been read and made their phonetic transcription. Then, the researcher was comparing their phonetic transcription with Receive Pronunciation (RP) to find out students' phonological awareness in their reading activity.

In finding out the students' phonological awareness in their reading activity, the researcher compared students' phonetic transcriptions with Receive Pronunciation (RP). The result of students' phonetic transcriptions in reading the text can be seen below.

| ə ,sætədi ,ɑ:ftənu:n m nəʊ'vembə wəz ə'prəʊtʃɪŋ ðə 'taɪm əv 'twailaɪt | ənd ðə vɑ:st trækt
əv unenclosed waɪld nəʊn əz egdɒn hi:θ embrownd ɪt'self 'məʊmənt 'baɪ 'məʊmənt ,əʊvə'hed ðə 'həʊləʊ
streɪtʃ əv 'waɪtɪʃ 'klaʊd 'ʃʌtɪŋ aʊt ðə skaɪ wəz əz ə tent wɪtʃ həd ðə 'həʊl hi:θ fər ɪts flɔ: |

| ðə 'hevn 'bi:ɪŋ 'spred wɪð ðɪs 'pæɪlɪd skri:n ənd ði 'z:θ wɪð ðə 'dɑ:kɪst ,vedʒɪ'teɪʃn | ðeə meeting-line ət
ðə hə'raɪzn wəz 'kliəli mə:kt | m sʌtʃkən'trɑ:st ðə hi:θ wɔ: ði ə'pɪərəns əv ən ,ɪn'stɒlmənt əv naɪt wɪtʃ həd
'teɪkən 'ʌp ɪts pleɪs bɪ'fɔ:r ɪts ,æstrə'nɒmɪkl 'aʊə wəz 'kʌm | 'dɑ:knəs həd tu ə ,greɪt ɪk'stent

ə'raɪvd hereon | wail 'deɪ stəd dɪ'stɪŋkt m ðə skaɪ | | 'lʊkɪŋ 'ɒpwədʒ | ə'fɜːtʃə'kʌtə wɒd həv bi:n
m'klaɪnd tu kən'tɪnjuː 'wɜːk | 'lʊkɪŋ daʊn | 'hiː wɒd həv dɪ'saɪdɪd tu 'fɪnɪʃ ɪz 'fæɡət ənd 'gəʊ həʊm | ðə
'dɪstənt rɪmz əv ðə 'wɜːld ənd əv ðə 'fɜːməmənt sɪːmɪd tu bi ə dɪ'vɪʒn m 'taɪm 'nəʊ les ðən ə dɪ'vɪʒn m
'mætə | | ðə feɪs əv ðə hiːθ 'baɪ its mɪə kəm'plekʃn 'ædɪd hɑːf ən 'aʊə tu 'iːvɪŋ | 'ɪt kəd m laɪk 'mænə
rɪ'tuːd ðə dɔːn | 'sædn nuːn | æn'tɪsɪpət ðə 'fraʊnɪŋ əv stəːmz 'skeəsli 'dʒenərəetɪd | ənd m'tensɪfaɪ ði
əʊ'pæsɪti əv ə 'muːnləs 'mɪdnait tu ə kɔːz əv 'feɪkɪŋ dred |

| m'fækt | prɪ'saɪsli ət ðɪs træn'sɪʃnəl poɪnt əv its 'naɪtli rəʊl 'ɪntə 'daːknəs ðə 'ɡreɪt ənd pə'tɪkjələ 'ɡlɔːrɪ
əv ðə egdɒn 'weɪst bɪ'ɡæn | ənd 'nəʊbədi kəd bi 'sed tu 'ʌndə'stænd ðə hiːθ 'huː həd nɒt bi:n ðər ət sɪtʃ
ə 'taɪm | 'ɪt kəd best bi felt wen 'ɪt kəd nɒt 'klɪəli bi 'sɪn | its kəm'pliːt ɪ'fekt ənd 'eksplə'neɪʃn 'laɪnɪŋ m
ðɪs ənd ðə sək'sɪːdnɪŋ 'aʊəz bɪ'fɔː ðə nekst dɔːn | ðen | ənd 'əʊnli ðen | dɪd 'ɪt tel its truː teɪl | | ðə spɒt
wɒz | m'diːd | ə nɪə rɪ'leɪʃn əv naɪt | ənd wen naɪt fəʊd ɪt'self ən ə'pærənt 'tendənsɪ tu 'ɡrævɪteɪt tə'ɡeðə
kəd bi pə'sɪːvd m its feɪdz ənd ðə sɪn | ðə 'sɒmbə streɪtʃ əv 'raʊndz ənd 'hɒləʊz sɪːmɪd tu raɪz ənd mɪːt ði
'iːvɪŋ glɜːm m pʃəʊə 'sɪmpəθi | ðə hiːθ eks'heɪlɪŋ 'daːknəs əz 'ræpɪdli əz ðə 'hevɪz prɪ'sɪpɪteɪtɪd 'ɪt | ənd
'səʊ ði əb'skjʊərɪti m ði 'eər ənd ði əb'skjʊərɪti m ðə 'lænd kləʊzɪd tə'ɡeðər m ə blæk 'frætənəɪ'zeɪʃn
tə'wɔːdz wɪtʃ iːtʃ əd'vɑːnst hɑːf weɪ |

| ðə pleɪs bɪ'keɪm 'fʊl əv ə 'wɒtʃfəl m'tentnəs nəʊ | fə wen 'ʌðə 'θɪŋz sæŋk 'bruːdnɪŋ tu sliːp ðə hiːθ ə'prɪəd
'sləʊli tu ə'weɪk ənd 'lɪsn | 'evrɪ naɪt its taɪ'tænɪk 'fɔːm sɪːmɪd tu ə'weɪt 'sɒmθɪŋ | bət 'ɪt həd 'weɪtɪd ðəs
| ʌn'muːvd | 'dʒʊərɪŋ 'səʊ 'meni 'sentʃərɪz | θruː ðə 'kraɪsɪz əv 'səʊ 'meni 'θɪŋz | ðæt 'ɪt kəd 'əʊnli bi
ɪ'mædʒɪnd tu ə'weɪt wɒn lɑːst 'kraɪsɪs ðə 'faɪnəl 'əʊvə'θrəʊ |

Based on students' phonetic transcription, there were several pronunciation errors especially in vowel. For example, the word “was” was pronounced by using vowel [ə] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [ʌ] [wʌz]; the words “Hollow” was pronounced using vowel [ʌ], it should be pronounced [ɑ] ['haloʊ]. Furthermore, the words “Itself” was pronounced using vowel [eɪ], it should be pronounced [ɪ] [ɪt'self], the word “moment” was pronounced using vowel [ɛ], it should be pronounced [ə] [moʊmənt], the word “overhead” was pronounced using vowel [ɪ] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [ɛ] ['oʊvər'hɛd].

Furthermore, the students' pronunciation error in diphthong. For example, “Saturday” was pronounced by using vowel [ʌ] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [æ] [ə sætədi]; the word “November” was pronounced by using vowel [ɔː], the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [əʊ] [nəʊ'vembə]. Furthermore, the words “face” was pronounced using vowel [ɛ], it should be pronounced [eɪ] [feɪs], the word “Approaching” was pronounced using vowel [ɔː], it should be pronounced [əʊ] [ə'prəʊtʃɪŋ], the word “vast” was pronounced using vowel [ɛ] whereas the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [æ] [væst]. the words “Itself” was pronounced using vowel [eɪ], it should be pronounced [ɪ] [ɪt'self], the word “as” was pronounced by using vowel [ɛ], the true pronunciation should be pronounced by using vowel [æ] [æz]. Furthermore, the words “Itself” was pronounced using vowel [eɪ], it should be pronounced [ɪ] [ɪt'self].

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of data analysis in chapter iv, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the students have difficulties in pronouncing words was categorized into three parts, those were consonant, vowel, and diphthong. In consonant, the students made errors /p/, /b/, /dʒ/, /z/, /f/, /v/, /d/, /s/, /r/, /k/, /ʃ/, /t/, /ð/, /θ/. In vowels, the students made errors /ɔ/, /æ/, /e/, /ʊ/, /ɪ/, /ɜ/, /i:/, /ʌ/. In diphthong, the students made error /aɪ/, /ɪə/, /ɜə/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/.

Furthermore, the students' strategy in their reading activity was categorized into three namely low, middle, and high categories. For low category, the strategy in reading activity was by checking the difficult word in a dictionary, asking the lecture how to pronoun the difficult word, and practicing to read the word continuously. For middle category, the strategy in reading activity was by doing repetition to every single word, listening the pronunciation of the words using u-dictionary, and always practicing to

pronounce every single word. For high category, the strategy in reading activity was guessing based on their knowledge pronunciation and make a relation with the word that the same sounds.

RECOMMENDATION

Some suggestions and recommendation which might be useful for students, lectures, and further researcher who are interested in the same study especially in finding out students' phonological awareness in their reading activity. The researcher suggests to lecturers to improve students' phonological awareness by using interested method and good media. Students are expected wisely to practice more to improve their phonological awareness in their reading activity. For the further researcher who wants to investigate the same topic, it is very important to undertake the research by focusing on students' pronunciation difficulties.

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