TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN SPEAKING USING PROSODY PYRAMID

A RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate whether Prosody Pyramid is effective to teach pronunciation in speaking and how effective is the use of Prosody Pyramid to teach pronunciation in speaking to the seventh grade students of SMPN 1 Sungai Pinyuh in academic year 2016/2017. The research method used is pre-experimental and the design used is one group pre-test post-test design. The sample consists of 31 students who were chosen by using single cluster sampling technique. The data had been collected by using measurement technique. The tool of data collection was oral test in which the students had to pronounce a text containing sounds of /f/ and /v/. The results of data analysis showed that the mean score of the students' pre-test is 64.77 and the mean score of the students' post-test is 93.93. The interval score of the students' pre-test and post-test is 29.16. The t-ratio is 13.88. The t-critical is 2.042 with the df=30 and α=0.05. The effect size is 2.48. Hence, the effectiveness of teaching pronunciation in speaking using Prosody Pyramid to the seventh grade students of SMPN 1 Sungai Pinyuh in academic year 2016/2017 is very high.

Keywords: Teaching Pronunciation, Speaking, Prosody Pyramid

Speaking is very important in this global era. The language learners must be able to speak to communicate their ideas and thought. The students of junior high school level are expected to master the ability to do public speaking, based on the curriculum 2013 in Indonesia. There are some parts in speaking that should be taught to the students so they could have good speaking skill. One of the most important parts in speaking is pronunciation.

Pronunciation is a part of speaking skill which is truly important to make the communication runs well. Teaching pronunciation should be in line with speaking as Broughton (2003) states that pronunciation teaching should always be set in a context of genuine language use in order to become proficient in understanding and speaking. Therefore, it is crucial to teach pronunciation to the students. According to Kelly (2001), the inaccurate production of a phoneme can lead to misunderstanding even if the students may have good grammar and vocabularies. The students' good pronunciation would lead to good speaking as well.

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Unfortunately, in reality, there are still a lot of high school students who are not able to pronounce English words well. Those students are not aware that sometimes words do not sound alike despite their similar spellings, (Gebhardt, 2011). The problem in pronunciation may be different from one student to the other, but generally all students

should know that it is essential that learners attend to both those aspects of pronunciation which relate to larger units of speech such as stress, rhythm, intonation and voice quality which Yates (2009) describes as suprasegmental aspects and to how the various sounds of English are pronounced which are also known as segmental aspects. The students may also make some errors in their pronunciation when they speak. In line with this, Ur (2009, p. 58) argues that "the errors which are more important to correct are those which may easily lead to lack of comprehension, or which make the speech 'uncomfortable' to listen to".

Many strategies can be applied to overcome the problems, one of them is by using prosody pyramid. Gilbert (2008) explains that prosody pyramid illustrates the English prosodic system visually with a pyramid shape. Broughton (2003, p. 49) claims that "in order to hear the new language accurately enough to imitate it, the foreign learner must respond to a whole new sound system". By using prosody pyramid, pronunciation is explained step by step. Since the various levels of pronunciation are interdependent, it is easier to be understood if they are separated and presented one step at a times described by Gilbert (2008). That makes prosody pyramid a good technique in teaching pronunciation and that is why the researcher wants to implement this technique.

Pronunciation is a prominent factor in language learning. There are 26 letters and 44 sounds (Konar, 2011, p. 43). So, there is a difference between the way a word is spelt and the pronounciation. Hismanoglu (2006) argues that language teachers must show the proper importance of teaching pronunciation since sounds play an important role in communication. Ur (2009) states that the concept of pronunciation includes the sounds of the language or phonology, stress, and rhythm which is "intimately connected with meaning" (Harmer, 2001, p. 50). Smaller parts in pronunciation are connected. /v/ is one of the voiced consonants.

English consonants that represent voiced consonants are /b/, /v/, /d/, /z/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /l/, /w/, and /y/. O'Connor (1980) states that when the weak consonant /v/ occurs at the end of words, after a vowel, it makes the vowel longer. /f/ is one of the voiceless consonants. English consonants that represent voiceless consonants are /p/, /f/, /s/, /ch/, /k/, and /sh/. O'Connor (1980) states that when the strong consonant /f/ occurs at the end of words, after a vowel, it makes the vowel shorter. Voiced consonants are produced with a narrowed glottis (Devanport & Hannahs, 2010). Vibration is produced from pronouncing voiced consonants (Yates, 2009). While voiceless consonants are produced with an open glottis (Devanport & Hannahs, 2010). "Voiceless consonants sound as if you are whispering when you say them" (Yates, 2009, p. 42). Minimal pairs can show the difference between the sounds of /f/ and /v/. The sounds of /f/ and /v/ can constitute a minimal pair in English.

Minimal pair is a pair of words that differ only in one segment (Devanport & Hannahs, 2010). The sounds of /f/ and /v/ are different in the voicing term. Also, /f/ is a strong consonant while /v/ is a weak one (O'Connor, 1980). /f/ is an unvoiced consonant while /v/ is voiced. There are some characteristics to differentiate /f/ from /v/. According to Baker and Goldstein (2001), /f/ can be differentiated from /v/ by emphasizing the use of voice in /v/ but not /f/ (for example /f/ as in *fan*, and /v/ as in *van*). According to Hancock (2003), the vowel is shorter before /f/ than /v/ for example in leaf and leave. Baker (2006) explains that "to make the target sound /f /, touch your top teeth with the bottom lip, blow out air between your lip and teeth. Don't use your voice" (p. 131). While making the target sound /v/, there is the use of voice (Baker, 2006).

Assimilations and elisions are phonological processes that occur in English speech. According to Devanport and Hannahs

(2010), /f/ and /v/ do not show a great deal of assimilation, though /v/ may often become voiceless word-finally preceding a voiceless obstruent, as in 'ha/f/ to' ('have to'), 'mo/f/e slowly' ('move slowly'), 'o/f/ course'. Elision occurs commonly in casual conversation. According to Devanport and Hannahs (2010), elision is loss of a segment. Elisions of sound can be seen clearly in contracted forms like *isn't* (is not), *I'll* (I shall/will), *who's* (who is/has), *they'd* (they had, they should, or they would), *haven't* (have not) and so on.

The teaching of pronunciation cannot be separated from speaking. Pronunciation skill in junior high school curriculum, Curriculum 2013, is taught integratedly with speaking. Kelly (2001) claims that "such reactive teaching is, of course, absolutely necessary, and will always be so" (p. 13). So, the teachers not only correct the students' wrong pronunciation, but actually active teaching of pronunciation is also needed. According to Harmer (2001), teaching pronunciation is not only to make students aware of different sounds and sound features (and what these mean), but also to increase their speaking immeasurably. By teaching pronunciation, the researcher hopes that it can increase the students' speaking skill, not in a way that the students should have perfect accent but simply to help them to pronounce the words accurately in order to be easily and comfortably comprehensible (Ur, 2009). So, the aim is listener-friendly speech.

There are many ways to teach pronunciation. According to Celce-Murcia (1996), there are three ways to teach pronunciation as parts of communicative approach: listen and imitate, phonetic training, and minimal pair drills. Gilbert (2008) argues that "it is so central to communication, in fact, that time spent helping students concentrate on the major rhythmic and melodic signals of English is more important than any other efforts to improve their pronunciation" (p. 2). According to Broughton (2003), pronunciation teaching deals with two interrelated skills—recognition or understanding the flow of speech, and production or fluency in the spoken language. Morley (1992) explains that pronunciation has traditionally been taught with a goal of speaking like a native speaker, but this is not practical. In fact, it is a recipe for discouragement both for teachers and for students. According to Kjellin (1998), a more practical approach is to aim for listener-friendly pronunciation. Goodwin (2001) states that "teaching consonants, we first need to decide whether the phonetic symbols are necessary" (p. 122).

The material that was used to teach the students was descriptive text. Descriptive text is a text which says what a person, a place or a thing is like (Stanley, 1988). Its purpose is to describe and reveal a particular person, place or thing as mentioned by Johnston and Morrow (1981).

Communication does not stand alone. Gilbert (2008) states that "communication in spoken English is organized by 'musical signals'. There are two aspects of these signals – rhythm and melody and the combination of these two aspects may be called prosody" (p. 2). A thought group is a group of approximately two to five words that form a unit of meaning. According to Baker and Goldstein (2001), thought group is sometimes called phrase group or intonation group. Chafe (1970); Bolinger (1989); Brown (1990); Cauldwell (1992) as cited in Gilbert (2008) state that "this is a group of words that may be a short sentence, a clause, or a phrase within a longer sentence" (p. 10). Baker and Goldstein (2001) also explain that there is a focus word which is the most important word in each thought group.

Every English thought group has a focus word. This is the most important word in the group (Baker and Goldstein, 2001). It is the word that the speaker wants the listener to notice most, and it is therefore emphasized. Gilbert (2008) states that to achieve the necessary emphasis on the focus word, English makes particular use of intonation.

Every English multi-syllabic word has a syllable that receives the main stress. According to Gilbert (2008), in the focus word, this stressed syllable gets special attention because it represents the peak of information in the thought group. It is the most important syllable within the most important word, and therefore, the sounds in the peak syllable must be heard clearly. Baker and Goldstein (2001), explains that "the stressed syllable in a word is longer, sounds louder, and is often said in a higher pitch than unstressed syllable" (p. 2).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the research method used is pre-experimental and the design used is one group pre-test post-test design. The population of this research was the seventh grade students of SMPN 1 Sungai Pinyuh in academic year 2016/2017. The sample consists of 31 students who were chosen by using single cluster sampling technique. The data had been collected by using measurement technique. The tool of data collection was oral tests (pre-test and post-test) in which the students had to pronounce a text containing sounds of /f/ and /v/. In this research, the researcher gave the pre-test to the sample before the treatment was given. Then the treatment was given. In this research, the treatment was teaching pronunciation of the sounds /f/ and /v/ by using prosody pyramid. The researcher gave pre-test in the form of pronunciation practice where the students had to pronounce a short text that the researcher had prepared before the teacher taught pronunciation by using prosody pyramid. Finally, the researcher gave the post-test, also in form of pronunciation practice to see the students' achievement in pronouncing the words with the /f/ and /v/ sounds. The researcher compared the mean score of pre-test and post-test. Then did a t-test to obtain the t-value. Then the researcher found the effect size. According to Cohen (2007), an effect size could lie between 0 to 1 with the degree :

Table 1. Effect Size

Effect size	Qualification
0 – 0.20	Weak effect
0.21 – 0.05	Modest effect
0.51 – 1.00	Moderate effect
>1.00	Strong effect

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

The researcher got the data for this research after conducting the research using prosody pyramid to teach pronunciation in speaking to the seventh grade students of SMPN 1 Sungai Pinyuh in academic year 2016/2017. The results of data analysis showed that the mean score of the students' pre-test is 64.77 and the mean score of the students' post-test is 93.93. The interval score of the students' pre-test and post-test is 29.16. The t-ratio is 13.88. The t-critical is 2.042 with the df=30 and α=0.05. The effect size is 2.48. From the data analysis. The researcher found that the mean score for the pre-test was 64.77. Then the researcher gave the treatment. The treatment was given twice, first with the focus on the /f/ sound and second with the focus on the /v/ sound. After that, the post-test was given. After that, the researcher compared the mean score of the pre-test and post-test.

Table 2. Result of Pre-test and Post-test

Score	Average
Pre-test	64.77
Post-test	93.93
Difference	29.16

Table 2 shows that the mean score of the pre-test was 64.77 and the mean score of the post-test was 93.93. The difference was 29.16. The comparison showed that the mean score of the post-test was higher than the mean score of the pre-test. From the result of the calculation above, the calculation of the t-test is 13.88. So, the t-ratio is 13.88. The degree of freedom (df) is 30 which is counted with the formula: df = N-

1= 31-1= 30. The t-critical with the significant (α) at 0.05 level and df 30 is 2.042. It means t-ratio is higher than t-critical (13.88>2.042). It shows that the students' pronunciation significantly improved from pre-test to post-test.

Discussion

The researcher found some problems during the research in the learning process. The problems were the difficulties in handling and managing the students in the classroom and the passive students. The students also did not speak in English and some of them could barely understand English. The researcher had to translate everything into Indonesian for all of the students to understand well. First, the teacher told the students not to worry about the long sentences and showed them how to take one sentence and broke it down into phrases. Second, the teacher took one of the phrases that contained words with /f/ or /v/ sound and chose one word with /f/ or /v/ sound of that phrase. Then the teacher pointed out the syllable with /f/ or /v/ sound of that word.

After that, the students started to break down the long sentences by themselves. The findings are in line with the research findings from Gilbert (2008). She emphasized on helping the students to produce more intelligible and listener-friendly speech by breaking down the teaching rhythm and intonation into a focused prosody pyramid.

The researcher also found that at first, the students mispronounced some words like photograph and favorite. This is in line with the theory from Gebhardt (2011) which says that sometimes the students are not aware that some words do not sound alike with their spellings. To solve those mispronouncing problems, the researcher used prosody pyramid. At the end of the lesson, the students found out the single sounds of those words.

The students found that there is /f/ sound in photograph, not /p/ and /h/ sounds. This findings are in line with the findings from Bin-Hady (2016) which suggest that Prosody Pyramid could help the students to overcome the mispronunciation of some consonant English phonemes.

During the teaching learning process by using prosody pyramid, the researcher found some weaknesses of prosody pyramid. First, since the focus was only on the sounds of /f/ and /v/, there were many words abandoned by the students. The teacher reminded the students not to skip the phrases or words parts so they also learnt the sentences as sentences not only word by word.

Second, mostly focusing on the smallest part, the students tended to forget about the meaning of the sentences. They only focused on pronouncing those words without actually knowing the meaning. So, the teacher also discussed the meanings to the students.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The researcher concludes that first, teaching pronunciation in speaking by using prosody pyramid to the seventh grade students of SMPN 1 Sungai Pinyuh in academic year 2016/2017 is effective. It is proved by the increasing of the students' pronunciation scores. The mean score of the pre-test is 64.77 while the mean score of the post-test is 93.93. Second, the effectiveness of teaching pronunciation in speaking by using prosody pyramid to the seventh grade students of SMPN 1 Sungai Pinyuh in academic year 2016/2017 is strong. It is showed by the effect size score which was 2.48. Third, the null hypothesis of this research that there was no significant improvement between the students' pronunciation in speaking before and after the implementation of the prosody pyramid was rejected.

Suggestion

After analyzing the research findings of this research, the researcher suggests that: First, the teacher should remind the students not to skip the phrases or words parts so they also learn the sentences as sentences not only word

by word. Second, since some of students may be really new to English, it is better for the teacher to speak slowly or even translate for the students to understand well. Third, the teacher should discuss about the meaning of the words so the students are not clueless about the words they are pronouncing. Lastly, the researcher suggests other researchers to investigate the effectiveness prosody pyramid in the classroom, not only to teach pronunciation in speaking about /f/ and /v/ sound, but also other sounds and other skills.

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