Comparing The Clear Pronunciation: Which Accents Teacher Should Teach More?

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Abstract. Pronunciation is a part of speaking skills which can be directly and clearly observed and known. When someone speaks in English, the person who's listening will immediately identify the pronunciation of that person as well as the mistakes they made. The main problem is understanding the pronunciation of different accents because students don't fully understand accents and pronunciations from different regions. The aims of this study are: to identify the abilities of English Education students at the State Islamic University of Sumatra Utata in terms of pronunciation from different regions and to identify the difficulties faced by English Education students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in learning pronunciation. The research data used descriptive qualitative data. The instruments are notes and a device such as a handphone for the audio. The subject is English Education Study Program students at the Faculty of Teaching and Education, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. While the implementation time is April 21-27 2023. The result is the American accent has the clearest pronunciation with the main reason being taught more since elementary school than the British English accent which is rarely even never taught by the teachers. Teachers should teach the British English accent more due to a lot of students don't understand the British accent pronunciation to decrease students' difficulties when they face listening tests with a British English accent.

Keywords: Pronunciation, accents, difficulty, teaching

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is a part of speaking skills which can be directly and clearly observed and known. When someone speaks in English, the person who's listening will immediately identify the pronunciation of that person. When someone makes a mistake in their English pronunciation, it will be immediately known or detected by those who are listening. It then covers phonology in an outline of how people with different regions have different pronunciations so it becomes a challenge for listeners to understand this but because of the many differences in accents in pronunciation make language a unique thing to learn.

But the problem in the field is learning phonology, especially in understanding the pronunciation of different accents is difficult for students to implement, this is because students do not fully understand accents and pronunciations from different regions. In addition, the lack of interest and ability of these students are inseparable from the selection of strategies and media that are suitable and easy for students to imitate. Although in learning pronunciation students have learned how to pronounce a word correctly.

Meanwhile, to optimize attention to student pronunciation, teachers must have sufficient information and data regarding the difficulties faced by students. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study to find, identify and test matters related to students' difficulties in pronunciation. Specifically, the objectives and the aims of this study are: 1) to identify the abilities of English Education students at the State Islamic University of Sumatra Utata in terms of pronunciation from different regions, and 2) to identify the difficulties faced by English Education students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in learning pronunciation.

To improve the quality of pronunciation we can see the fact that English students can use many ways or techniques freely. Furthermore, as students from formal institutions, students can access any source and can adopt many methods that are considered applicable in a successful learning process both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, they can pay attention, observe, and explore how to pronounce properly and correctly. In addition, English lecturers in speaking practice must provide examples of the pronunciation of sounds in English according to pronunciation standards so that students can directly imitate and imitate standard sounds in English. Furthermore, students are expected to be able to maximize the pronunciation of these English words by accessing other sources that include standard English pronunciation, for example, audio-visual sources, films, YouTube, native speakers, and other social media.

RESEARCH METHODS

This section contains the research design including research design, research population/sample, data collection techniques and instruments, data analysis tools, and the research model used. Common methods do not need to be written down in detail, but simply refer to references (for example: F-test formulas, t-tests, etc.). Testing the validity and reliability of research instruments does not need to be written down in detail, but it is sufficient to disclose the test results and their interpretation. The symbol description on the model is written in sentences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pronunciation is a proper method to say a word (Otlowski, 1998). In addition, Pronunciation is defined as the creation of a sound system that doesn't associate with communication from the speakers' or the listeners' perspectives (Paulston & Burder, 1976). It "remained at the early stages of language teaching methodology as a principled, theoretically-founded discipline, originating with the late-nineteenth-century Reform Movement," stated Seidlhofer (2001:56). An accent, according to Collins and Mees (2013), is a phonetic variation that is characteristic of a group of people's speech. Intelligibility is defined by Munro and Derwing (1995) and Yazan (2015) as the extent to which listeners understand the speakers' intended utterance; comprehensibility is interpreted by listeners' comprehension of the level of difficulty encountered while attempting to comprehend an utterance, and accentedness is defined as listeners' recognition of how distinct a second language (L2) accent resembles the variety of English spoken in society.

Jenkins (2000) discovered that pronunciation was the most important factor for intelligibility in international contexts. She took a closer look and found crucial areas that needed to be addressed if the information was to be transferred effectively. According to Yates and Zielinski (2009), the focus on English pronunciation suggests that pronunciation is important in learning English. Fraser (1999) states that pronunciation is a very important part of teaching English. However, Fraser further stated that even so, this aspect of teaching pronunciation still receives little attention from teachers. According to Fraser (2000), teachers should be offered courses and tools to help them improve their pronunciation teaching. She went on to add that instead of emphasising the importance of English pronunciation instruction, second language education studies should focus on the methods of instruction in pronunciation.

The main reason is the uncertainty of how best to teach pronunciation and also because usually do not have enough time to pay attention to it and it is difficult to detect what difficulties students actually face (Gilbert, 2008, pg.1) Therefore, English teachers must know how to teach pronunciation and besides that, they must also know what are the difficulties or weaknesses of their students in terms of pronunciation. As an English teacher, teaching pronunciation involves numerous challenges.

Morley (1991) underlined the importance of developing functional intelligibility, functional communicability, greater self-confidence, speech monitoring abilities, and speech modification methods in students. The dilemma is not whether or not to teach pronunciation, but rather what should be taught in a pronunciation class and how it should be taught (Morley, 1991). In addition, she insisted on the importance of teaching English pronunciation in the ESL or EFL classroom; nonetheless, this essential topic is still overlooked or ignored in many universities and colleges around the world. To minimise student pronunciation challenges, teachers should provide relevant materials based on their needs (Shahzada, 2012). According to Kenworthy (1987), there are several criteria for some learners to learn appropriate pronunciation without relying on their teachers. They are phonetic abilities, integrative motivation, and achievement motivation in learners. Only a few students understand the importance of proper pronunciation. Teachers must urge their students to study pronunciation thoroughly and assist them in learning how to utter English sounds correctly. Learners should recognise that understandability comes before the speed of communication (Rasekhi Kolokdaragh, 2010).

According to Harmer (2001), the main reasons for teachers not paying enough attention to English pronunciation consist of a lack of high-quality, appropriate teaching and learning materials, as well as a lack of time to practise pronunciation. Teachers believe that they have too many responsibilities and that pronunciation education is a waste of their time. Some teachers feel that their children may learn proper pronunciation without any special instruction. Even some teachers do not pay full attention to pronunciation, They argue that pronunciation teaching is ineffective since it is merely a motor skill (Brown, 1987) and its practice is unrelated to communicative ability (Morley, 1991). According to Anderson-Hsieh et al. (1992), the prosodic variables of stress, rhythm, intonation, and pausing have the greatest influence on native speakers' assessments of non-native speakers' pronunciation.

Acceptable pronunciation, according to James (2010), can be understood at the following fundamental levels. People are unable to understand what the speaker is saying at level 1. The speaker produces incorrect sounds or prosodic qualities when forming English words or sentences. People can understand what the speaker is saying at level 2, but the speaker's pronunciation is difficult to listen to since he or she has a peculiar and thick accent. People understand the speaker at level 3, and the speaker's English is appropriate to listen to.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a case study with a descriptive qualitative method. The data in this study were obtained through the interview method containing kinds of questions related to the audio we gave.

Participants

The subjects of this study were students taking the English Education Study Program course at the Faculty of Teaching and Education, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. While the implementation time is April 21-27 2023.

Instrument

The research data is in the form of descriptive qualitative data. We used a note to write down our participants' answers through interviewing them and also a device such as a handphone for the audio.

Data Collection

This information is collected with the aim that researchers can test and understand what difficulties students face and how these difficulties can later be overcome by lecturers and students. Data in the form of students' knowledge and achievement in English pronunciation or pronunciation were collected by answering interview questions.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, next the researcher gave the participant two audio with different accents; British English and American accents without telling them which one is the accent. Then, the researcher asked them which audios have a clear pronunciation and lastly interviewed them about why they chose that audio. As a result of that, the researcher will have the research question and make a discussion through this research paper. The last step taken was to conclude the difficulties faced by students and what things the should be teacher concerned is to help students deal with these difficulties and the accent that lecturers must apply in learning English.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are presented in descriptive and gotten from the interview method. The researchers used two audios with different accents without telling them the name of the accents; American and British English accents. On the other hand, without labelling the name of the accents from the audio, interviewers already knew the name of the accent as a result that our interviewers don't lack the kind of common accent in English. The interviewees have difficulty when hearing the British accent audio as is clearly stated in the following excerpts:

P1: "American accent has clearer pronunciation and people from our country will understand that accent easily, on the other hand, the British English accent is the higher level of accent in addition a lot of Americans don't understand the British accent, not a secret why we as a beginner or non-English native speaker don't understand that higher level of English accent. Moreover, British pronunciation is hard due to they pronounce some words unclearly and speak fastly"

P2: "According to me, I consumed the American accent more than the British English accent since I was in senior high school to present plus the American accent is more universal and the word classification is easy, more simple due to the intonation and the stress when we pronounced not as hard as British

P3: "Obviously American, it's easy to be listened to and understand. The pronunciation is easier moreover people are used to speaking English with the American accent"

P4: "American accent, the speaker speaks slowly and more comfortably to hear than in a British accent"

P5: "American, due to I'm not familiar with the British accent yet"

P6: "American accent, the case is we used to hear American accent since then even when American speak fastly we still understand them meanwhile in British accent audio there are lot of linking as a result if we heard it in first we will be puzzled"

P7: "American because still don't use to the British accent"

The result is the majority of the interviewees answer American accent has a clearer pronunciation than the British English accent. A similar answer is that the American accent is

an accent that we as Indonesian, the teacher taught us with an American accent in elementary school and used to it as a result, it's hard to understand the British English accent properly. In addition, the interviewer said the British English people talked unclearly and fastly in the audio. Moreover, the American accent consumed more than British Accent and is more universal as well as the word classification is not that hard and more simple from intonation and stress. As we've already mentioned, the British audio spoke faster than the American accent audio so we asked them once more time if the speaker in British accent speak slowly would they understand his pronunciation and the answer is still no.

The result is the American accent has the clearest pronunciation with the main reason being taught more since elementary school than the British English accent which is rarely even never taught by the teacher. teachers should teach the British accent more due to a lot of students don't understand the British accent pronunciation. If this still happens, the students will have a big difficulty when they face listening tests with a British accent and keep avoiding it without ever learning about the accent since they never touched the British accent from their teachers. In listening, English speakers like to use linking words. They will learn how to link words on their own in an accent training programme. Your brain will be able to recognise the same sounds as you listen as you learn to talk. Other than that, the advantages of learning another accent that the students don't understand, they will improve their listening abilities, grow a stronger voice, spell English better, and gain a surprising amount of confidence as a result of accent training. The most surprising additional advantage is an improvement in confidence. This, I believe, is due to the fact that they already now understand what they are doing and how to modify it. In addition, they receive honest criticism of their speeches on a regular basis from a coach, and they have someone to help them through difficult situations.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper is to find the difficulty of students understanding accents and suggest to the teachers which accents should teach more. When the students face a listening test using a British English accent it'll be a nightmare for them due to they never taught about that accent properly. Still, some students learn this accent on their own, but we still need a teacher figure to teach this unclear pronunciation. To understand others and communicate effectively, language learners must be exposed to different accents and become sensitive to variances in pronunciation so that they can deal in the real world, where they will be continually exposed to varied accents. Pronunciation should always be an important part of the teacher's attention when learning English. This becomes even more important considering that students of English education courses will later become English teachers who will become role models for their students in the future. In this context, the researchers advised English study program teachers to pay attention to their students' pronunciation skills and help them overcome the difficulties they face and always provide input and feedback on students' pronunciation to help them develop their skills, especially pronunciation.

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