

Utilizing the Phonetic Transcription of IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) to Avoid EFL Students Miss-Pronunciation

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to know how phonetics transcriptions based on IPA (*International Phonetic Alphabet*) avoid EFL students from any mispronunciation, so that their pronunciation performance is being improved. The researcher gives students drilling practices using an Oxford pocket dictionary as a tool to transcribe it. The subject of this research is 30 students in eleventh grade at MA 1 Pesantren Annuqayah Putri. As the short observation, the class still applies the traditional method 'repeat after me' in teaching and learning pronunciation. Mixed method design is applied to collect the data by giving students pre-test and post-test, interviews, and recording which were constructed in the form of field-notes.

Keywords: *Phonetic Transcription, Mispronunciation, EFL students, IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet)*

1. BACKGROUND

English stands with four skills, they are speaking and writing as the productive skills and listening and reading as the receptive skill. Those skills are important to be mastered in learning English language, and pronunciation has a big role with those four skills. As the proof, students can listen to the native speakers and understand the message conveyed because of pronunciation, and they also will have lack of error in writing and reading when they know the pronunciation of each word, phrase or even sentence. Even, students will speak well in their communication because they produce understandable pronunciation from what they say. This consideration is in line with what Kenworthy [1] said that pronunciation is integrated with all of four English skills. However, it is often neglected and reluctant to be drill, particularly in the context of education.

Many teachers ignore the remedy of pronunciation and still got fossilized with some wrong sound of words. In previous years and until today, they usually apply drilling 'repeat after me' method to teach pronunciation. They read aloud the materials and followed by students after. Sometimes, they instruct students to pronounce the

word one by one in which it consumes so much times of learning [2],[3]. This method does not provide strong evidence to what the teacher pronounce is right, unless it is supported by the use of audio or video related to the right pronunciation. Consequently, the chance for mispronunciation can still occur among EFL students. Other factor usually affect students' pronunciation is elaborated by Yoshida [4], they are intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors are the age of students, motivation, personality and aptitude, while the extrinsic factor includes the method and quality of teaching, the exposure of target language, and the influence of the students' language. These factors can cause mispronunciation which leads to miscommunication among speakers. When students have mispronunciation, their speech will no longer be comprehensible for the listeners [5]. Reputedly, the fault that most affect students' communication manner in EFL or ESL rookies is a pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar neither [6]. The fact shows how important to have correct pronunciation is, despite the reality says it is needed to study harder in obtaining good pronunciation.

Having good pronunciation does not mean students have to speak like a native, at least the students achieve the minimum requirement of good pronunciation. So, it

is important to know that pronunciation includes supra – segmental feature, they are sound, stress, rhythm and intonation. Every language has their own great number of sounds. For instance, English has 44 (forty-four) language sounds and only have 26 (twenty-six) alphabets. Thus, alphabets sometimes cannot represent the different sound within English language, such as the alphabet ‘u’ in the word ‘buy’ and ‘u’ in the word ‘cute’. The vowel ‘u’ has different pronunciation in both two words and causes distinct sounds. To avoid such difficulties of pronunciation which lead to mispronunciation, IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) is introduced to remove the difficulties [7]. Phonetic transcription nowadays becomes a good way to remedy and improve students’ pronunciation. It is the written record of sound of spoken language. Meanwhile, It also appropriate to be used as teaching method for replacing the old method ‘repeat after me’ to help teacher knows how to pronounce some kinds of words. Because Phonetic transcription based on IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) precisely show how the word should be produced and pronounced in the right pronunciation.

Some previous studies have been found in talking about the phonetic transcription. [8] Putri said in her research specially focus to discuss EFL students’ perception toward IPA symbols. The research finding shows there was a positive perspective in using IPA symbols as pronunciation system. In line with it, [9] Yusuf. also did the research which applied the application called ‘Tophonetics’ to know how it affects toward students’ pronunciation. In the finding, he found students are encouraged and motivated to study pronunciation. On the current research also did by Ana Ahsana,[10] she emphasizes on how the phonetic transcription is used to improve students’ pronunciation ability by using a vocabulary. Finally, she found that phonetic transcription could improve students’ pronunciation ability because it could show the precise visual written record of the sound itself.

Based on the previous studies briefly mentioned above, phonetic transcription can improve students’ pronunciation and help them motivate to learn it. However, those researchers only focus to use short vocabulary as their material to be transcribed and less of care toward students’ mispronunciations to be repaired. Therefore, to put the recent study into the context, the focus of this study is to utilize a narrow phonetic transcription based on IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) in the form of sentence by using Mini Oxford dictionary as a tool to transcribe it. It aims to avoid any mispronunciation of EFL students, particularly for grade Eleventh of MA 1 Annuqayah Putri. Based on the short observation, the class still use the traditional drilling ‘repeat after me’ as the method to teach pronunciation. So in this research, the researcher will also give drilling practices that can result in better transcription skills in students learning phonetic transcription.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on these previous study mentioned above and to fill the gap of them, the researcher formulated the research question as below:

- a) How does the phonetic transcription based on IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) avoid EFL students from mispronunciation?
- b) What EFL students’ perspective toward phonetic transcription drill teaching practice by using Oxford dictionary to improve their pronunciation performance?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants and Setting

This research aims to avoid EFL students from mispronunciation by utilizing phonetic transcription based on IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) in the form of sentence. The mini Oxford dictionary will be used as a tool to transcribe it in order to produce the same pronunciation styles. The participants of this research is 30 students of eleventh grade at MA 1 Annuqayah Putri Sumenep-Madura, particularly in language department.

3.2. Instruments

In mixed method design, the researcher uses interview, experimental research design by giving pre-test and post-test to obtain data either from teacher or EFL students. The interview is needed to answer the second RQ. While to answer the first RQ, the researcher will give EFL students pre-test and post-test dealing with the use of phonetic transcription to avoid them from mispronunciation.

3.3. Procedure

In doing the research, the researcher needs five meetings to gain the data. In first meeting, the researcher will observe the class condition prior giving student pre-test. While in the second meeting, the researcher gives pre-test in the form of reading a short text loudly. The third and fourth meetings are the chance for researcher to do drill teaching practice on phonetic transcription by using mini Oxford dictionary. While, in the fifth meeting students will be give post-test to read short text of English.

3.4. Data Analyses

Mix method is used in data analyzes. The quantitative method will analyze the result of the experimentation. While, the result of the interview will be analyzed qualitatively which include transcription, coding, interpretation and triangulation.

4. KEY TERMS

4.1. *EFL Students*

EFL students are students who learn English as their foreign language in a non-English country. For example, Indonesia students learn English in their own country.

4.2. *Pronunciation*

Pronunciation refers to the process of producing a meaningful speech sound that is articulated through the controlled friction of airstream of humans' speech organs [11]. It also attention to the particular sound of language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sounds, such as intonation, phrasing, timing, stress, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects), how the voice is projected (voice quality) and attention to gesture and expressions that are closely related to the way people speak a language [12]. Other current opinion [13] stated that pronunciation is someone's ability to use the correct stress, rhythm, and intonation of a word in a spoken language. It includes a supra-segmental feature, they are sounds of the language, stress and intonation [7].

4.3. *Mispronunciation*

Mispronunciation is defined as the act or habit of pronouncing a word in a way that is considered as nonstandard, unconventional, or faulty [14]. In addition, Lems, Miller and Soro [15] explained that students may mispronounce the words because there are some sounds that do not really exist in the students' first language or it can be caused by the letters they are trying to pronounce have different sounds in their foreign language, which is English.

4.4. *Phonetic Transcription*

Phonetic transcription is a combination of the word phonetic and transcription. Phonetic is concerned with how sounds of human are produced, transmitted and even perceived [16]. It is related to the sound of the language. While transcription is the written symbol of the sound students heard or listened from normal English orthography [17].

Weels defined the phonetic transcription is as the use of phonetic symbol to represent the speech sounds [17]. It shows how the words should be pronounced (from normal English orthography), besides it is a tool to analyze the pronunciation clearly [17]. Atkielski [18] also defined phonetic transcription is as a written edition of sounds which has the connection to pronunciation similar with the song and rhythm. Rachel [13] added that phonetic transcription is sound-based or alphabetic writing systems as the tool to represent the pronunciation of each word.

4.5. *IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet)*

IPA is the abbreviation of 'International Phonetic Alphabet'. IPA is a standard phonetic symbol for every alphabet in English language. It is usually written using

Latin language. The IPA is defined as the standard sound representation for oral language [19]. The first idea of making this IPA was first suggested by Otto Jespersen in a letter to Paul Passy and was developed by Alexander John Ellis, Henry Sweet, Daniel Jones, and Passy (IPA in the Encyclopedia Britannica).

5. PREVIOUS STUDY

Some studies regarding to phonetic transcription in learning pronunciation have been conducted. The researcher has taken some previous studies as the comparison and guidance of this research.

A research conducted by Sulukiyyah & Mardiningsih (2018) aimed to improve students' pronunciation ability. This is the classroom action research where the researchers give students' phonetic exercise within two cycles. Students are given two kinds of test which are reading aloud and phonetic transcription exercises. But, the test material or transcribed-words are in the forms of some of vocabulary. Questionnaires were also given to the students to know their response about phonetic transcription exercises. The result of the research showed that in the first cycle, students still have some pronunciation errors. While in the second cycles, their pronunciation have a significant improvement which was cause they have been accustomed toward the phonetic symbols. As the conclusion, phonetic exercise improve students' pronunciation ability. Based on the previous study, the current researcher tries to make a novelty to be discussed further.

The researcher will be more concern to utilize a narrow phonetic transcription based on IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) in the form of sentence by using Mini Oxford dictionary as a tool to transcribe it. The mini oxford dictionary helps to assure the consistence pronunciation that will be pronounced by students of eleventh grade at MA 1 Annuqayah Putri. When it is compared by the previous research, they do not give a detail drilling on how to pronounce the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) and accustom to it. Moreover, the previous researcher only focused on some International Phonetic Alphabet to be taught. So, the current researcher will give students detail drilling practices that can result in better transcription skills in students learning phonetic transcription. It aims to make students free from any mispronunciations during speaking.

Other related previous studies on the phonetic transcription can improve students' pronunciation are also explained below;

Yusuf [9] did the research regard to the English pronunciation based on the Phonetic transcription application. This research aimed to facilitate students' English pronunciation learning become easier by using 'top phonetics' application. The researcher used a descriptive qualitative method with ten students as the samples. To obtain the data, the researcher used the

interview as an instrument in this research was to collect the data. The finding of the research is the students looked for the phonetics transcription by using this 'top phonetics' application. The result of this study showed that top phonetic application can make students easier to use the app in which it could improve students' pronunciation better.

Najmuddin [20] did the research about teaching English pronunciation through International Phonetic Alphabet symbol at Man-1 Murung Raya. He aimed to help teachers during the learning of pronunciation and explains why English pronunciation is very difficult to be learned especially for Indonesian students and how the English sounds are produced. He found that students who have been recognize the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols know more on how to pronounce any words in pronunciation styles, either British or American pronunciation.

Other the same research is also conducted by Putri [8] to know students' perception in using phonetic symbol in teach pronunciation. This paper focus to observe how the college students understand the usage of phonetic symbols to educate pronunciation. The research found that using the phonetic symbols can give a burden because of the newest exposure to the students who have not got the symbols on their previous level of study. In line with the above research, the same researcher also did the same research, however with different subject of the research. The subject were sophomore of the academic year 2015 English Education Department, State Islamic University Jakarta. The finding of the research is the same as the latest research in year 2016 that students get difficulties toward phonetic symbols.

Lintunen [2] investigated the effect of phonetic awareness on evaluating pronunciation problems by Szpyra-Kozłowska's findings. This research focuses on the improvement of pronunciation awareness and how it is affected by phonetics teaching. It aimed to compare students 'pronunciation with their subjective evaluation of their pronunciation problem. Finally, the research found that the subjective evaluations were partly affected by awareness-raising.

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

During the research, the researcher firstly found the students were still given the traditional method 'repeat after me'. In implementing this method, students did not get any chances to have more practices and even correct other students' mispronunciations because the instructor or the teacher only repeated each vocabulary twice to three. However, through pre and post-test of using phonetic transcription given by the researcher, the students have more chances to improve their pronunciations.

The researcher firstly gave the drill teaching practice of phonetic transcription based on IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) which are thought in detail by using

the Oxford pocket dictionary as a tool to transcribe each pronunciation of the word. Furthermore, to treat students' further pronunciation, the given drill exercise was in the form of the sentence, it also to accustom students to not only capable in reading a word, but also in a form of sentence. After doing the narrow phonetic transcription, the researcher found there was the positive improvement regarding toward students' motivation to learn pronunciation, particularly when the phonetic transcription avoids them from any mispronunciation.

7. CONCLUSION

Pronunciation is one of fundamental skill that deals with one's oral ability in English. Having correct pronunciation is necessary for all people, particularly for EFL learners. Because correct pronunciation indicates good understanding and right perception among speakers and listeners. However, EFL learners often have pronunciation errors while they are communication. This problem is caused by several factors, such as EFL learners cannot acquire all English phonemes, EFL learners' mother tongue exerts their production in English language, and EFL learners' mother tongue has diffident structure in term of pronunciation systems. Moreover, when students are found have negative attitude toward their pronunciation where it is usually caused the teacher's method used during their pronunciation learning.

Realizing these problems undergone by students, the researcher then provides effective technique to solve the problem. The researcher uses phonetics transcriptions based on IPA as writing systems to imitate English speech sound. Phonetic is studies of language signs that distinguishes one word from another in a particular language. The system will be transcribed using IPA as basic tool to know each English sound. Furthermore, as the finding of this research, the phonetic transcription enabled students pronounce English words correctly and reduce their miss-pronunciation through the pre-test and post-test given to them.

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