

The Verbo-Tonal Method (VTM) of Phonetic Correction in Learning French Pronunciation

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses one method of phonetic correction for pronunciation learning improvement called Verbo-tonal method. Nowadays, this method of phonetic correction is the most widespread method. However, this method is not quite popular in Indonesia. The main objective of this study is to analyze fundamental problems that occur in the learning process and capture the causes of the problems. The study is conducted by descriptive literature review method. Therefore, this study aims to collect as much information as possible on the Verbo-tonal method. The findings show that the Verbo-tonal method has a good impact on pronunciation learning. Furthermore, this study is expected to provide insights for researchers, practitioners, and future researchers to strengthen knowledge in the field.

Keywords: *French as a foreign language, phonetic correction, pronunciation learning, verbo tonal method*

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, foreign languages are fundamental to learn to support communication with foreign interlocutors. English is no longer the only foreign language that should be mastered and studied because other foreign languages have fewer speakers than English, for example, French. According to Jean (2019), with 300 million speakers, French is the fifth most widely spoken language after Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic. In learning foreign language, pronunciation is one competence that seems difficult to acquire (Gilakjani et al., 2011). As we know, every language has its characteristics. So, the pronunciation of a foreign language is considered precisely difficult because each language has different phonemes (Mutiarsih et al., 2009; Baskoro, 2003). For example, there is phoneme [y] in French, but there is not in Indonesian. So, it is not surprising that French learners have difficulty pronouncing these sounds.

To overcome this pronunciation problem, there are several strategies. One of them is by phonetic correction. This phonetic correction is a field done quite a lot by many teachers in Europe, especially France. Even this topic has its class in universities. The phonetic correction method is divided into two, namely, the articulatory method and the verbo-tonal method. So far, the articulatory method is prevalent. The verbo-tonal method is one of the methods of phonetic correction instead of the articulatory method that existed before the verbo-

tonal method, but it remains the most widespread method (Alazard, 2012).

The phonetic correction itself is an activity that corrects sound errors produced by the learner. According to Landercy and Renard (1977), the objective of corrective phonetics is to study the processes or means of correcting pronunciation. The verbo-tonal method is based on the main principle of prioritizing perception first, then production, so learners are expected to have good perception and produce better production. The idea is to discover a learner's pronunciation errors and correct them by applying different techniques be more efficient.

Based on the fact that French pronunciation is one of the problems that learners often encounter, the researchers are interested in discussing solutions that can overcome this problem. The verbo-tonal method is considered as one of the solutions due to its effectiveness (see Alazard, 2013). However, there is still a lack of study of this method implementation in French as foreign language learning in Indonesia. Therefore, the study about this method in Indonesia is interesting to be conducted.

The researcher aims to explore some research questions as follows: How does the verbo-tonal method support the field of French pronunciation learning? Furthermore, what problems were found related to learning French pronunciation?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

French pronunciation is considered difficult by non-French-speaking students. Several previous studies on this matter have proven it (e.g., Deswarte et al., 2020; Purinthrapibal, 2016; Junkai et al., 2018; Mulama, 2016; Mutiarsih et al., 2009; Rabadi & Odeh, 2010).

This study focuses on discussing one method of phonetic correction that can help students solve French pronunciation difficulties. Based on the results of several studies, we found that the verbo-tonal method has proven effective in improving students' pronunciation (Alazard, 2013; Hu & Uno, 2005). Also, the verbo-tonal method can be used with any language, learning, and learner (Rançon, 2018; Ludovic, 2010).

The phonetic correction itself is a practice and, as such, it asks the teacher to show empathy and objectivity to certain perceptions in order to understand which errors should be corrected, how and under what circumstances to correct them, and when it is better to do nothing (Boureux, 2017). According to Landercy and Renard (1977), the purpose of corrective phonetics is to learn the process or how to correct pronunciation. In comparison, Billières (2002) defines it as understanding the sounds of the target language as best as possible and reproducing them with maximum authenticity. In other words, phonetic correction is a corrective practice that helps the learner improve his pronunciation in a foreign language. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that phonetic correction is an activity carried out by teachers to correct students' pronunciation. In addition, the teacher must have the ability to correct the pronunciation of learning spontaneously.

There are two different phonetic correction methods, namely the articulatory method and the verbo-tonal method. The articulatory method focuses on only articulatory movements, such as speech apparatus. In contrast, the verbo-tonal method focuses on prosodic gestures such as body and hand movements or even facial expressions. The verbo-tonal method was invented by the famous linguist Petar Guberina at the University of Zagreb in 1954. At that time, this method was used as a phonetic correction tool for deaf children. This method is based on the main principle of prioritizing perception first, then production, so that students are expected to have a good perception and produce better production.

The verbo-tonal method has several basic principles. Ludovic (2010) mentions the following basic principles.

1. Integration of phonetic correction in teaching
2. The importance of body and affection
3. Importance is given to intonation and rhythm
4. Intuition: no direct analysis of pronunciation, no use of learner analytic awareness

5. Prioritizing oral overwriting

The starting point of this method is student error. No direct analysis can be known if it is not based on student errors. Therefore, teacher intuition is needed. Since the teacher must be able to analyze and correct students' mistakes directly, body movements are considered essential to help show intonation or rhythm in sentences.

3. METHOD

The research method used in this study is qualitative. Moleong (2015) also states that qualitative research aims to understand a phenomenon that has been experienced by way of description through words and language by utilizing various scientific methods. The method used is a descriptive analysis that aims to describe the facts and the relationship between phenomena in the research object. In this case, the descriptive analysis approach is used to analyze the verbo-tonal method in learning pronunciation.

The research design used is a literature study. To obtain research data, researchers refer to books, journals, articles, and previous studies that are relevant to this research. This study examines journals related to the verbo-tonal method and pronunciation learning in the last ten years. Data was collected by browsing electronic journals and articles through online sites. After collecting the data, we analyze the data and make conclusions so that others can easily understand it.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the findings, someone who cannot pronounce something well does not mean so, but he misunderstood what he heard. Thus, the resulting sound is also wrong. This is supported by the opinion of Billières (1991, p. 5) who says, "According to the verbo-tonal method of phonetic correction, the pupil has difficulty reproducing the sounds of a foreign language because he initially perceived them badly. It is, therefore, necessary to (re) educate your ear". Therefore, a foreign language learner's pronunciation ability can be improved to resemble a native speaker.

There are several factors causing pronunciation errors that students often make. One of them is the influence of the mother tongue and other foreign languages being studied. This is in line with the results of several studies, which show that most of the pronunciation problems issues in French are mother tongue and first foreign language interference (Mutiarsih, 2012; Deswarte et al., 2020; Kim & Song, 2012; Purinthrapibal, 2016; Rakhmat et al., 2015). In addition, the learner's carelessness in learning a new language is also understandable. Therefore, the mistakes made by the learner in pronouncing a foreign language are very natural.

Regarding pronunciation, the learner is advised to pronounce words well or to speak as natively as possible to understand what he is saying. Unfortunately, pronunciation teaching has often been neglected in foreign language acquisition (Billières, 2016; Derwing & Munro in Martin, 2020; Lah, 2017). In addition, learning about prosody has not been explicitly taught. The causes are a lack of human resources or experts in the field. Because as we know, studying a foreign language in the country directly will get much knowledge that we may not get compared to learning French in Indonesia.

On the other hand, Spalacci (2014, p. 176) affirms that "Unfortunately, pronunciation teaching is generally viewed as a separate and 'unloved' subject, tedious for students and laborious for teachers.". This is because, in the pronunciation class, both students and teachers are required to be active. According to Herry-Bénil and Pillot-Loiseau (2010), we found that pronunciation is generally little taught in language classes, compared to other disciplines concerning a foreign language, probably due to a lack of confidence or a lack of interest in the discipline (Lauret, 2007). Because as we know, in the pronunciation class teachers must demonstrate the proper pronunciation.

Learning pronunciation involves several types of intelligence: intra-personal, linguistic, musical and bodily. This could explain the reluctance of some teachers to teach or practice pronunciation in foreign language class, which requires mastery of articulatory and combinatorial knowledge and know-how, but also rhythmic, bodily and emotional (Briet, 2014). So, based on the above explanation, it is no surprise that teachers rarely want to teach pronunciation very deeply in the classroom.

Another study from Alazard (2013) has compared the impact of the two methods. The data were collected through a longitudinal study pilot for three weeks. The class consists of 8 participants in the beginner level, which is divided into two groups. Each group received two sessions of phonetic correction per week – lasting 90 minutes each. The same teacher taught both methods. The learners had been tested in an oral reading task before the training and after three weeks of training. The texts consist of short stories adapted to the level of the learners. According to the results, the verbo-tonal method improves the prosodic components than at the segmental level. This makes a lot of sense, considering that the articulatory method only focuses on an articulatory description of the movements of the different articulators, while on the verbo-tonal method not only focuses on the segmental level, but also the suprasegmental level (rhythm and intonation which are prosody).

Hu and Uno (2005) have done a study related to using the verbo-tonal method in distinguishing tones in Chinese. This study found problems with teaching methods in learning tone in Mandarin, because Mandarin

is a language that has a tone. If the syllables are the same, but the pitch is different, the meaning differs depending on the pitch. Therefore, to get the tone right, the effectiveness of this verbo-tonal method was tested, considering that this method uses body movements. The class consist of 35 participants in the basic Chinese class. The group received two sessions per week using the verbo-tonal method – lasting 90 minutes. After 7 weeks, the students were tested with dictating and pronouncing tasks and a survey questionnaire. The results revealed that they obtained high scores on almost all tasks. Also, based on the questionnaire results, we can conclude that the body movements are useful for distinguishing and learning to pronounce some different kinds of voice tones. So, based on this method, the beginning learners can do voice-tone learning more effectively and appropriately in a shorter time.

The previous research above found that the verbo-tonal method has a good impact in learning foreign language, especially in pronunciation learning. For foreign language learners, learning a new language is difficult. especially if in the new language several sounds are different from the mother tongue. However, it does not mean that the learner cannot pronounce it well because of the lack of good perception. This is supported by opinion from Renard (1971, p. 24) (one of the pioneers of the verbo-tonal method) said: "The fact is that we are mistakenly pronouncing a sentence in a foreign language because we perceive it mistakenly: this wrong perception is the result of the selection habits of the mother language".

Even pronunciation teaching is essential, and the teachers still have a lack of initiative. Also, the effectiveness of verbo tonal method can be seen. However, teachers must have a sign of solid courage in learning pronunciation because four different bits of intelligence must be involved. This method might be successful in Europe, but considering the culture of Indonesian who is sometimes shy, the results might be different. Therefore, the researchers hope that later there will be someone who experiments on this issue.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results, we can conclude that pronunciation learning is essential, but there is still a lack of interest in this discipline. This is because, in the pronunciation class, we should involve four different bits of intelligence. So, it means that teachers should have a high initiative to use the verbo tonal method in the class. Also, even the verbo tonal method is widespread, but there is still no phonetic correction class in Indonesia. So, we hope that this method will soon spread in Indonesia. After seeing the success of this method in Europe, this method is worth trying here.

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