

THE ATTITUDE OF ENGLISH STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF PASIR PENGARAIAN IN LEARNING PRONUNCIATION

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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation is considered as an important aspect of learning English, especially speaking which is most often used in communication. The aim of this study was to know the English students' attitude in the learning pronunciation at English study program of University of Pasir Pengaraian. The research was conducted using descriptive quantitative method in which the data taken from pronunciation attitude inventory (PAI) were analysed and represented with number. The sample was 26 English students of first semester consisting of two classes (IA and IB). Based on the research finding, The students were not aware that English pronunciation was important to communicate effectively.

Keywords: Attitude, Pronunciation, English learning.

INTRODUCTION

As the international lingua franca, English is widely taught in all over the world. It is started even form early level of study to maxmize the students' English skill. The various materials, methods, and strategies are employed to get the positive impact in mastering all English aspects (speaking, listening, reading, & writing). It is all done due to the awareness of the importance of English to be used in communication among the countries.

From all English aspects above, speaking is likely to be more crucial because it becomes a common way used in communication. However, speaking English is usually considered as a difficult skill for students. Moreover, the difference between English and

Indonesian in the way of pronunciation makes it harder even those who have wide range of vocabularies do not mean their speaking is understandable if they have lack of knowledge in English pronunciation.

Having a good pronunciation definitely makes the students speaking more understandable. It does not lead to misunderstanding if they talk to others especially to native English speakers. The difference meaning concept caught by the listeners also makes ineffective conversation and takes time to know what the speaker means.

Since the role of pronunciation aspect in learning English is extremely crucial, this research was conducted to know the English students' attitude in

University of Pasir Pengaraian toward learning English pronunciation. Then, the next deeper investigation regarding

with improving the students' pronunciation can be carried out.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

English Pronunciation and the Factors Influencing Its Learning

Pronunciation is a field in second language acquisition (SLA) which is studied less than the others due to its nature that is more difficult to conduct researches and many different variables interfere with its process such as gender, motivation, field dependence/independence, etc., (Asher & Garcia, 1969). It means that the research about pronunciation field is not as much as other fields due to many factors. In University of Pasir Pengaraian, There are also researches related to this aspect. However, the deep investigation of this field never be carried out. One of the reason is that to analyse the voice produced is not easy. It needs a technology that can help the researcher analysed accurately.

According to Kelly (2000), pronunciation is when we use all the same organs of speech to produce the sounds in particular a way. It means that the students who are learning English have to pronounce the English words correctly based on the way of English not Indonesian. Unfortunately, there are some differences of pronunciation between them.

According to Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), there are some factors influencing learning English pronunciation such as *accent, stress, intonation, rhythm, motivation and exposure, attitude, age, personality, and mother tongue influence*. Those are normally factors which are closely associated to learning English pronunciation. For example, The different intonation, rythm and stress

between indonesian and English are generally catagorized as the most challenging aspects. It is normal because English is tonal language. It has different intonation in different type of sentences. There are also different stress emphasized in each word or sentence depending on the value of the word. This word stress is actually possessed by both Indonesian and English. However, Indonesian generally has word stress in the beginning of the word, but English can vary.

According to Halliday (1970), There are five types of tones : falling tone (usually used for statements), high rising tone (usually used in questions), low rising tone (usually used in polite commands or incomplete statements), falling-rising tone (usually indicated personal opinion, reservation or concessions), and rising falling tone (usually embodied surprises). The good speaker of English uses the good way intonation. Their speech can be understood easily. For instance, although he/she uses a statement pattern but the rising tone is used, it means he/she is asking a question not stating something. Meanwhile, those who are not aware of these rules, they probably use the same intonation in all types of speech and they will be even confused to differentiate the intention of the speaker.

Other factor should be paid more attention is accent. The English accent can vary depending on the regional and the social class of the speaker. The foreign language learners usually have a special accent which is different from native English speaker. It is more

noticeable if they do not learn English from early age. However, for those who desire to be more like a native, they usually want to improve their accent although it basically does not effect the communication as long as they use a good pronunciation.

Teaching and Learning English Pronunciation

Due to the weak foundation of English pronunciation in senior high school and in the previous levels. It seems to be true that some students find learning English pronunciation is really demanding even for the teachers who teach that course. The main problem is that the teachers are also non-native language speaker so that they are sometimes in doubt to pronounce English in teaching and learning process.

The teachers even pronounce a certain English word improperly. For this reason, the students do not have good exposure from the teachers how to pronounce the word well. It accordance with what has been stated by Gilakjani (2012) that adult English language learners sometimes do not effectively acquire the native-like pronunciation, such as fluency, control of idiomatic expressions and cultural pragmatics, due to “minimal exposure to the target

language and contact with the native speakers.

Pronunciation, one of essential aspects in English, has not become the priority of the teacher in elementary school until senior high school yet. The most often English materials taught in under university level tend to focus on how the students can construct the sentence using correct grammar or how they can enrich as much vocabulary as they can. As a result, the students mostly pay attention in those aspects, they know the word and the way of constructing those words into the sentences but they mostly do not know how to pronounce it correctly.

There is some factors that can be main consideration in learning pronunciation skill. One of the factors was attitude mentioned by Zhang & Yin, (2009). Attitude relates to how student perceive their learning pronunciation while motivation relates to how the students can accelerate the learners' attitude formation. They also mentioned that attitude for learning can give a good or bad results in the development of pronunciation skills. Consequently, as one of the factors that contributes to learning English pronunciation, attitude of the students should be recognized so the students that learning pronunciation can attain the excellent pronunciation skill.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research used descriptive quantitative method. According to Neuman (2007), in quantitative research, the researcher moves from abstract ideas to specific data collection techniques to precise numerical information produced by the technique. It means the data taken from distributed

questionnaire to the students were analysed and presented with number.

Participant

This research was carried out at English Study Program of University of Pasir Pengaraian. The participants were all first semester students with the total number of 35 from IA and IB. However, there were only 26 students who attended in the class when the

questionnaire were distributed. The participants are mostly between 19 to 22 years old.

Reserch Procedure

In this research, Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) was adapted and administered to 26 participants. In the quetionnaire, there were 12 statements about pronunciation. Before

choosing the scale provided in the quetionnaire sheet, the researcher informed that the result of the questionnaire would not affect the students’ score. The participants then were asked to make a circle in five-point Likert scale with 5 different ranges as can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Likert scale of PAI

Scale	Description
5	Always or almost always true of me
4	Usually true of me
3	Somewhat true of me
2	Usually not true of me
1	Never or almost never true of me

(Elliott, 1995)

After all participants submitted the questionnaire, the quantitative data were classified and analysed based on each statement. The finding was

presented by pie charts and its description. Next, it was discussed and concluded.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This finding gave information about how the students attitude in learning pronunciation based on each statement given in the questionnaire; it was presented separately and respectively and the figure could be seen in the appendix.

The desire to sound as native as possible when speaking English

The chart at figure 1 informs the student’s desire to sound as native-like speakers as possible when speaking English. Based on the presented pie chart above, all the participants did not have a great passion to sound as the native English speakers. It could be seen from 100% of the participants opted for ‘never always or almost never true’ indicating that there was unquestionably attitude toward this aspect. It was actually a bad response

having this attitude as it could make them find the harder way to achieve their goal due to the lack of motivation.

The importance of acquiring proper English pronunciation

The chart at figure 2 presents the proportion of the students attitude toward the importance of pronouncing the English word properly. It was presented clearly that 25,96 % or of the participants expected to acquire proper English pronunciation. There were only 4% or 1 participant who had lack of desire to do so. If the students did not have a willingness to have a good pronunciation. It needs much more time to make them acquire it. This happened because the participants who had no interest with gaining the proper pronunciation, they did not have any effective plan to reach the aim. They

might unconsciously improve their pronunciation, but it was not as fast as those who had an obvious objective.

The Self –confidence to speak English with a good accent

Regarding to the self-confidence of the students (see figure 3 in appendix), they mostly had high-level of confidence to gain a good accent of English. It could be seen from the chart above that shows 84% of the students believing that they were able to speak English with good accent. This means they generally realized that accent was a language aspect that could avoid them from a terrible English just due to their accent which was weird and difficult to listen. Nevertheless, for some people, accent was not too important in learning language, they were aware that reducing their accent might be needed to make their English more easily understood.

The Self –confidence to improve English pronunciation

As can be seen clearly in the pie chart at figure 4 that 73% of students had high confidence to improve their English pronunciation. It means that they had spirit to learn and desire to improve it. This mental aspect was extremely essential in learning English because generally non-native English speakers find it was very hard to do. Based on the data, there were even 27 % of students feeling pessimistic about it. It might be a reasonable response due to the fact that English pronunciation is completely different with Indonesian.

The need of emphasis in class to have proper pronunciation

The pie chart at figure 5 shows that the amount of students who think that the emphasis is not quite needed in the class to have proper pronunciation was 84%. This is quite contrast with

their spirit to get better in English pronunciation. They might think that the emphasis outside of the class is much more needed to give significant effect toward their English pronunciation. It is very possible because they have much more time to learn outside of the class. They even get a lot of resources in the outside through internet.

The personal goals to acquire proper pronunciation skills and pass as a near-native English speaker

According to the preset data at figure 6 , 81% of students did not have personal purpose to get proper pronunciation skill. It was actually very crucial to have a goal in learning English pronunciation. However, it was a fact that most of them did not have any intention to have good pronunciation skills and passed as a near-native English speaker. It seems impossible to make significant progress in learning English pronunciation if the students do not have any goal of what they are learning.

The effort to imitate English speakers as much as possible

According to the chart (see figure 7), there were a half of students who had the willingness to imitate the native English speakers when they were speaking English. It was followed by the students that sometimes they tried to be like native speakers, showing 42% and only one student that usually do so. Actually, imitation is a common way of learning English pronunciation. This is very possible action to do even there are no native English speakers to interact with. The ease of information which can be accessed simply from internet make the students get endless supply of audio or video from native english speakers. However, the lack of effort to do so makes the advance of technology

cannot be used maximally to improve the student's pronunciation skill.

Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.

The finding of the research regarding to the students' perspective about whether communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English was that they mostly thought that sounding like English native speakers was more essential. There were 77% of students who had this view followed by 23% of students who sometimes felt like that. This belief is actually contrast with their learning aim to use English as a means of communication. It is not impossible to have the ability of speaking which is very close with native English speaker. However, how much time the students will spend to achieve it. It is not a reasonable objective to be like a native English speaker but the more crucial this is ignored.

Good pronunciation skills in English are not as important as learning vocabulary and grammar

Based on the data presented at figure 8, there were various responses toward the statement about whether good pronunciation skills in English are not as important as learning vocabulary and grammar. There were 42% of students who agreed with the statement followed the students who slightly felt that it was usually not true, slightly true, and usually true with 23%, 19%, and 16% of total students respectively.

In fact, tripod of language aspects: pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are required to get better English. It is much better not to distinguish those aspects based on a nonsensical range of vision due to the importance of each aspects. For

beginners, vocabulary is extremely needed because if they do not have enough vocabulary, they are more likely to be difficult to represent what they are going to say. In addition, the ability to construct the word with a good structure of English is the vital part using English language more efficiently. Moreover, pronunciation also has a crucial role in the use of language. Mispronouncing the word can hinder the process of understanding the message in communication.

The desire to improve my accent when speaking English.

Based on the pie chart at figure 10, 92% of students did not want to improve their accent when speaking English. Based on the previous data presented, it was due to a fact that they probably had good confidence regarding to their accent. However, although they had the self confidence of their accent, the process of reducing their native accent to be more like native English speaker should be improved little by little through speaking activities.

Concerning with my progress in my pronunciation of English

The chart (see figure 11) shows that most of the students (85%) do not focus on their pronunciation progress. It seems that they do not have any target of learning because they only learn without attempting to get better. However, the fundamental thing of learning English is how they are progressing quickly. Therefore, tracing the progress in learning English is a must to know the strategies should be applied. If the students get stuck in their English, the learning process will be meaningless

Sounding like a native speaker is very important

Based on the result of the questionnaire, there were 85 of students who had belief that sounding like a native English speaker was not a vital thing. It was accordance with the response of the first statement above

that showed the low level of desire to sound as close as possible with the native English speakers. It even described that the students still did not have a good knowledge of the importance of motivation to sound like native English speakers toward their improvement in the pronunciation skill.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the finding and discussion above, the students generally have lack of motivation to improve their English pronunciation. They considered that is a skill which is not too important in communication, and they do not have any goal to be better. It is more likely due to their lack of knowlege about the

importance of it. Therefore, it is highly recomended for the teacher or lecturer to give more information and motivation to their students so that they have positive attitude in learning English pronunciation. Furthermore, teaching and learning process will give more benefits.

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