The Needs for Teaching Pronunciation in Indonesian Secondary Schools
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Abstract

Pronunciation is one of the most complicated but it contains the most significant features of language for secondary students. Although pronunciation is one of the most noticeable features of a person"s speech, in Indonesian secondary schools it is not explicitly taught in English classes. Almost in all English classes, teachers get the students to study grammar and vocabulary, and they make little attempt to teach pronunciation in any overt way and give attention to it. Most English teachers adopt some approaches, relying on materials that lack grounding but expect good results. Despite the known importance of pronunciation, little attention is paid to teaching pronunciation in most English language classrooms. It is suspected that the reason is because teaching pronunciation involves a variety of challenges. In this paper, some of those challenges are discussed. Early part of this paper provides an overview of the status of pronunciation teaching in secondary contexts. In middle of the paper, it is estimated the future problems that the learners will be faced by both the young and adults in learning to pronounce the English sounds: vowels, consonants, and diphthongs. In similar parts, this paper suggests some ideas and materials to handle such problems. Finally, it emphasizes the need for incorporating pronunciation into English classes because of the importance of the pronunciation as a key to effective communication.

Keywords: intelligible, materials, phonemes, pronunciation

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a Foreign Language (hereinafter termed EFL) includes learning a number of skills, they are, among other, vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics, and so on (see: Brown, 2001:173). To communicate effectively as well as intelligibly, language learners need to become proficient in using the semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological elements of the language being learnt. One of these skills, and perhaps the most important one, is pronunciation. That is because despite a learner has a good command of vocabulary and the grammar of the English as the target language, he or she will not be able to speak intelligibly if he or she does not have good pronunciation.

In Gilbert"s view (2008:30), it is really inefficient to teach individual sounds without establishing some basic understanding of the English system of rhythm and melody. For one thing, without an understanding of English prosody, students will end up practicing English sounds in their native language rhythm. This is a common problem in many ESL and EFL classrooms. The rhythmic structure of each language supplies a timing context that makes it easier to reach the target sound. So, learning about the target language rhythm will make it easier for students to pronounce that target language sounds.

Traditional pronunciation training usually focuses on minimal-pair drilling of vowel and consonant sounds, concentrating on individual sounds that are hard for students to hear or produce, in the hopes of achieving "mastery of the English sound system." Unfortunately, this kind of drilling often produces depressing results and tends to take up a great deal of available classroom time. This might be one reason why many (if not most) ESL and EFL teachers often try to avoid teaching English pronunciation particularly.

In Indonesia, many (again, if not most) learners of English as a foreign language also find that pronunciation is a very big problem even after learning English many years. To make the problem even more serious, although most (if not all) High School teachers know this importance, they do not pay particular attention on teaching pronunciation either. This reason is even found as the global problem in one and the other way. This might be the reason why, quoting Isaacs"s view, Plaza (2015:8) states that pronunciation is the Cinderella of foreign language teaching.

Despite the fact that pronunciation is one of the most noticeable features of a person"s speech, it is often not explicitly taught. In most of the weekly meetings, almost all English teachers get the students to study grammar and vocabulary, and only a few of the teachers make attempts to teach pronunciation "overtly" and give special attention to it. Most of English teachers in Indonesian High Schools do not provide specific instruction at all to teaching pronunciation. They only rely on materials that—in their views—it is based the curriculum (see: Notodipuro, 2013:64).

One very common reason is that Indonesian High School teachers provided with suitable course books and materials that help them handle with such a problem. This reason is actually not acceptable as many books are available upon engine searching. It might be that the English curriculum in High Schools only mentions the term "pengucapan yang baik" which means good pronunciation as part of the conversation, or speaking classes (see: Notodipuro, 2013:64). As a result most of Indonesian English teachers as EFL teachers do not put any priority on teaching pronunciation their classes. In facts, although pronunciation is almost never taught in High School English classes, it remains one of the most important parts of the English learning, and therefore, it is the challenge that the High School teachers must answer in any way.

In Indonesian history of English teaching, one can say that pronunciation has always been a neglected aspect. That is, pronunciation is the component of the English language which has been mostly excluded from all teaching programs, in comparison to other skills. Nonetheless, during the last one decade or so, pronunciation instruction is growing steadily. This condition might be caused by the fact that the teaching of English in High Schools—as the curriculum covers— is intended to make the students able to use English in real communication. Besides, it is especially because the most sensible, justifiable and pressing objective of pronunciation teaching is intelligibility in real communication.

Quoting Kenworthy, Plaza defines intelligibility as "being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation" (Kenworthy in Plaza, 2015:5). That is, if a listener is able to identify accurately and effortlessly words and expressions from a particular speaker and context, this person can be considered intelligible. In the case that the feature of language is not native-like, the speaker must aim for an expression that is close enough for the listener to establish a comparison and recognize the message thus, what matters is "the counts of sameness". Thus, learners need to be intelligible in order to communicate not only with English native speakers but also with non-native.

In many discussions about how native speakers of English talk to non-native speakers, it is assumed that the non-native speakers should work towards the native speakers" communicative competence. Although this statement has been questioned because the native speaker"s phonology may not be the most intelligible, it is true that the difficulty of native speakers to understand the non- native speakers is the pronunciation. Therefore, it is claimed that phonology is often subscribed to standard norms written in dictionaries which only provide an "educational codification" based on the native-like model.

Considering the description of the great importance of teaching pronunciation in High School in Indonesia above, this paper is intended to present some estimated difficulties faced by the High School students in pronouncing the English sounds, words, phrases, and sentences. Instead of providing the right models, however, this paper will present some sound contrasts between Indonesian and English, which are the causes of the difficulties. Thence, the writer will offer some samples of materials for the teacher to teach. It is expected that after the students are trained using such samples, they will eliminate some (if not most) of the difficulties found in pronouncing the English sounds, words, phrases, and sentences.

II.   THE TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

According to the Main Office of Pilinut Press, pronunciation is often the most difficult aspect of learning English as a Second Language. In most cases, the difficulty is because the native or first language does not include a similar sound (2013:1-3). Based on this view, it can be concluded that the difficulty of pronouncing English words for Indonesian students is due to the absence of the sounds in the learners" words. It may be that the student is unable to differentiate between two or three English phonemes. Instead, the student makes "sound-approximations" based on his native language.

According to this view, this is the major component of a "foreign" accent.

In Richards, et al"s definition, the pronunciation of a word is what you hear when someone says the word (1992:387). As found in any dictionary, most words have only one pronunciation. Some words, however, have two or more pronunciations (see also: Asmaradhani, 2011:7). It is very important for High School students to learn the pronunciation of all the words before they use the words in speech. The people"s pronunciation is the way they sound when they speak a language. It is said that someone"s language is good because his or her pronunciation is correct or at least close to being correct. Thus, anyone who wants to speak English well, one must work on his or her pronunciation. Unfortunately, in his view, there is no single system in pronouncing the English words. Some words have only one

pronunciation. The words like *apple, angry, pear, care, noble, people, funny, gunny, July,* and *ply* only have one pronunciation. Some words, however, have more than one pronunciation. To avoid confusion, one must use dictionary to cross-check with how to pronounce these. They are among others: g*arage, because, behind, before, have, Arkansas, was, were,* and *them* (Asmaradhani, 2011:5).

To the High School students, where English is a foreign language, some words may have strange pronunciation. If they do not know the pronunciation of those words, students usually do not use the words in speech. Instead they will choose and use the other words, and this may cause a lexical error. A dictionary, therefore, is a good guidance for students to check with the pronunciation of any word.

Some foreign students have lived in America for only two years but they have excellent pronunciation. Their grammar is not very good but their pronunciation is very good. Therefore, when speaking, it is easy to understand what they are talking about. Again this is because their pronunciation is good. Being good in pronouncing words means that the pronunciation is easy to understand by others.

People often say that the most difficult part of learning English is learning the grammar of the English. This is not always true. For many Indonesian people, the most difficult part of learning English is learning how to pronounce the English words. Some examples of the English words that are often mispronounced by many Indonesian High School students are, among others, *development, preposition, graduation, original, executive, example,* and *examination.* For the correct pronunciation of each of these words, students need to check with the standard dictionary. It is suggested that—using the standard dictionary—students try to pronounce each of the words correctly one by one and not to move to the next word until they are sure that their pronunciations are correct. The problem, however, is that many (if not most) students do not know how to read the International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) used in standard dictionary (see: Asmaradhani, 2011:5-7).

The pronunciation of American English is a little different from the pronunciation of British English. Both pronunciations, however, can be understood by either American English speakers or British English speakers. Unfortunately, most teachers usually teach only grammar and vocabulary. This is the reason why teaching pronunciation is called "The Cinderella of Language Teaching" (see: Plaza, 2015:5). In Plaza"s view, teachers do not usually teach pronunciation in particular way. As a result, the students cannot communicate intelligibly when they talk to English speakers.

The teaching itself should provide students with more exposures to input from native-like speakers (Jones, 1997:87). This will be more or less demanding the English teachers at High School to have the English pronunciation that is at least close to being native-like. Quoting Murphy"s view, Hall (1997:1-5) states that the importance of pronunciation activities is as vital as in providing the students with learning experiences to develop accurate control over the sound system within the English language.

One of the most prominent features of a language"s sound system is its collection of sounds. Linguists refer to this collection of consonants and vowels as the segmental aspect of language. When we teach sounds, we want students not only to speak correctly but also to recognize sound and spelling correspondence. We want them to be able to discriminate between similar-sounding phonemes (Harmer, 2007:89). Accordingly, it is always useful to list and define sounds, or phonemes, of the language by writing them down using phonetic representations.

Harmer (2001:54), too, advocates the using of phonemic symbols. He believes that one of the reasons for the use of phonemic symbols is that dictionaries usually give the pronunciation of their words in phonemic symbols, and if students can read these symbols they can know how the word is said even without having to hear it. Also, when both teacher and students know the symbol it is easier to explain what mistake has occurred and why it has happened (Harmer, 2001:132).

III.   WHAT TO TEACH AND HOW

3.1 The Pronunciation of Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs

Pronunciation teaching typically covers any or all of the following: consonant and vowel sounds, changes to these sounds in the stream of connected speech, word stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation (Jenkins, 2004:109-125). Besides, as Harmer (2001:89) argues, it has become customary for language teachers to consider intelligibility as the prime goal of pronunciation teaching. This implies that the

students should be able to use pronunciation which is good enough for them to be always understood. Therefore as Brown (2001:173) states our goal as teachers of English pronunciation should therefore be realistically focused on clear, comprehensible pronunciation. Furthermore, good oral production requires a combination of correct sound articulation, proper stress and pitch, and appropriate intonation. The teaching, therefore, should provide the learners with exposure to natural language that is simplified appropriately for their level. There should also be opportunities for the students to practice the language in relevant contexts, lots of repetition, and review (Bradley-Bennett, 2007:75). Students should be exposed to different voices and through different modes of delivery. Students who only hear the teacher in class may find it very difficult to discriminate sounds or get meaning when they listen to language on a cassette tape (Bradley-Bennett, 2007). Bradley-Bennett (2007:75) further argues that oral practice in the ESL/EFL classroom should provide the structure of guided practice and scaffolding, which is gradually reduced and eventually removed, challenging students to retrieve what they"ve practiced before and apply it in new situations and real-life conversations.

On the basis on the above views proposed by Bradley-Bennet (2007); Brown (2001); Harmer (2001); and Jenkins (2004), in this paper it is proposed that the discussion of the teaching covers the consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. The proposed discussion in this paper will cover some steps in teaching the three groups of phonemes. As such, materials covering the three groups of phonemes will also be proposed. In each of the groups, phonetic symbols—given in IPA—are also provided to give the students a kind of introduction to the IPA.

3.2 Pronouncing the Three Groups in Words, Phrases, and Sentences

As most English teachers know, phonetic symbols can be a very good help in learning to pronounce English words correctly. Here, it is suggested that both the teacher and the students use standard dictionary where the correct pronunciation of the English words following each of the words. Unfortunately, learning how to read the phonetic symbols is not always the easy thing to many English learners. Here are some examples of words with their pronunciation in dictionaries: about (prep.) /əbaʊt/, bat (n) /bæt/, beetle (n) /biːtl/.

In the above list of the words, it can be seen that after the word is mentioned, the category (n for noun; prep for preposition, v for verb, etc.) is given. After the word and the category of the word, the pronunciation is given right after the category. The sound symbols used in representing the pronunciation are also different. They are among others: /ɑː/, /æ/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /iː/, /tʃ/, and so on, which therefore in this paper, each of the IPA will also be used in materials for the practice here in this paper. One important thing the teacher and the students need to know the dictionary to choose. There are many dictionaries in any book store but only a few dictionaries use IPA as the symbols of English pronunciation. For that reason, Oxford Dictionary, either a pocket dictionary, an advanced-learner"s dictionary, or a desk dictionary is recommended here for discussion for the rest of this paper.

a. The English Consonants

In teaching the English consonants teacher should refer back to where the difficulties come from. In English, there are 24 (twenty four) consonants (see: Collins and Mees, 2003:39). Some of these English consonants that are absent in Bahasa Indonesia are: /ʃ/; /ʒ/; /z/; /θ/; /ð/; /f/; and /v/. This will cause difficulties in pronouncing them, especially when they are in final positions. To train the consonant sound /ʃ/, students are drilled with the words having the sound /ʃ/ in various positions. For consonant sound /ʃ/ in initial position students are drilled to pronounce the words *she, shell*, and *shirt*, and for the consonant sound /ʃ/ in medial position they are drilled to pronounce the words *ashamed, ashen*, and *ashore*. For consonant sound /ʃ/ in final position, the words for practice pronouncing are *fish, wish*, *bush* and many others.

For training the students with the other consonant sounds, teacher can just make the same design of training by replacing the consonant sound /ʃ/ with the other target English consonants. For example, the consonant sound /ʃ/ in the initial, medial and final position is replaced with /ʒ/. Thus, in each the three positions, consonant sound /ʃ/ is replaced with any of the intended consonant sounds /ʃ/; /ʒ/; /z/; /θ/; /ð/; /f/; or /v/. For further practice, teacher needs to drill the students with words containing each of the consonant sounds as suggested.

Some other English consonants are actually present in Bahasa Indonesia, however they are only in initial and or medial positions but not in final positions. This also makes it difficult for Indonesian students to pronounce. They are: /tʃ/; /dʒ/; /g/; and /d/. On the basis of the estimation, there are some words that can be used to train such particular pronunciations. To train the consonant sound /tʃ/ in final position, teachers

can use the words: beach, catch, ditch, fetch, match, teach, and many others. In training the final consonant sound /ʤ/, teachers can use: cage, hedge, George, judge, page, and many others (to get more training on this phoneme sound /ʤ/, see: Hancock, 2003:32)

To train the final position of consonant sound /g/, teachers can use the words: big, bag, dog, fog, hog, jug, pig, tag, and many others, and to train the final position of consonant sound /d/, teachers can use the words: bed, bad, Dad, fad, grade, had, jade, mad, red, and many others. For the two consonants sounds // and //, teachers can also use minimal pairs to make contrast between final consonant sounds /k/ and /g/ and between final consonant sounds /tʃ/ and /ʤ/.

As suggested by Williams, for variety in reviewing and fixing the consonant sounds, students should be given frequent dictation exercises (2006:10). This is also intended to be the assessment for the teacher to measure how far the students have come close to being correct with some certain consonant sounds being taught. For this it is a good idea to dictate some words, phrases, and sentences and have them write them in their books. To have the students write some words or phrases, it might be easy for the teacher to find references. To dictate some sentences containing words or phrases with various consonant sounds, teacher may refer to Pronunciation Practice for English Learners (Asmaradhani, 2011:79-80).

b. The English Vowels

One thing that makes some English vowels are difficult to pronounce is because those vowels do not exist in Bahasa Indonesia. In teaching these English vowels, therefore, the teacher should refer back to the where the vowels that are absent in the students‟ native language—Bahasa Indonesia. In Bahasa Indonesia there are only 8 (eight) vowels, whereas in English there 12 (twelve) vowels (see: Collins and Mees, 2003:89). Hence, 4 (four) vowels (/iː/; /ɜː/; /ʊː/; and /æ/) are absent and these are the ones that are difficult for Indonesian students to pronounce correctly. It is very necessary to explain to the students that there is a difference in meaning between short vowel /ɪ/ and long vowel
/iː/; short /ə/ and long /ɜː/; short /ʊ/ and long /ʊː/ and between short /e/ and short /æ/. Besides, there are also at least two English vowel sounds that are different from Indonesian vowel sounds in quality. They are /ʌ/ and /ɒ/ (see: Crystal, 2008:517).

The twelve English vowels are divided into long vowels and short vowels. The long English vowels are /ɑː/; /ʊː/; /ɔː/; /iː/; and /ɜː/ while the short English vowels are /ə/; /ɪ/; /ʌ/; /ɒ/;
/e/; /ʊ/; and
/æ/). On the basis of the above estimation, there are some words that can be used to train the pronunciation.

(1) To train the sound /iː/, teachers can use the words: *eat, beat, deed, feet, greet, heat, jeep, keep, peep*, and *seat*.

(2) To train the sound /ɜː/, teachers can use the words: *bird, dirt, earth, first, girl, hurt, jerk, skirt, lurk*, and *turn*.

(3) To train the sound /ʊː/, teachers can use the words: *booth, cool, fool, goose, hood, June, loose, mood*, and *root*.

(4) To train the sound /æ/, teachers can use the words: *act, apple, ban, mat, Mathew, nap, pad, rap*, and *sat*.

If necessary, these words can be put into minimal pairs like: fit-feet, about-girl, full-fool, and met- mat. By contrasting the sounds of two different vowels, it is believed that students will be able to distinguish between the two sounds which ultimately they will also be able to pronounce the two sounds (close to being) correctly.

c. The English Diphthongs

A diphthong is considered as basically a vowel sound. However since it moves and glides to another vowel sound that is at another place, it is considered as consist two different vowel sounds (see: Collins and Mees, 2003:89). A diphthong is therefore defined as a speech sound that is considered as one distinctive vowel of a particular language but it involves two vowels, with one vowel gliding to the other (see: Ball, 2008:32; Ogden, 2009:174; Smalley, 1968:176). Diphthong is also defined as "vowel segments where the tongue position moves from one point to another during a single syllable" (Ball and Rahilly, 2013:98).

For Indonesian high school students—since they are also accustomed to monophthongize the diphthongs in their native language—pronouncing the English diphthongs is often problematic. In their native Indonesian language it is fully acceptable as it is understandable. As such they should be trained pronouncing the English diphthongs intensively. Teachers should make the students practice all of the eight English diphthongs one by one in words, phrases, and even in sentences. Based on this background, some words that can be used to train the pronunciation of English diphthongs (as also suggested by Smalley, 1968:176-180) are given as below.

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(1) To train the diphthong sound /eɪ/, teachers can use the words: *may, say, same, late, rake, slake, maker, paste*, and *blame*.

(2) To train the diphthong sound /aɪ/, teachers can use the words: *I, buy, my, lied, time, fine, liner*, and *lion*.

(3) To train the diphthong sound /ɔɪ/, teachers can use the words: *boy, coil, boil, Boyd, coin, soy, foil, annoy*, and *toy*.

(4) To train the diphthong sound /ɪə/, teachers can use the words: *here, hear, beer, near, clear, fear*, and *tear* (n).

(5) To train the diphthong sound /eə/, teachers can use the words: *bear, care, fair, fare, hair, pair, pear*, and *tear* (v).

(6) To train the diphthong sound /ʊə/, teachers can use the words: *cure, doer, fuel, moor, poor, pure*, and *tour*.

(7) To train the diphthong sound /əʊ/, teachers can use the words: *cold, doe, fold, gold, hold, joke*, and *pole*.

(8) To train the diphthong sound /aʊ/, teachers can use the words: bound, count, down, found, gown, hound, and mount.

It might also be necessary that the above words are put into phrases like: down town, grey hound, underground train, and so on. Putting those words in phrases might give the students some kind of rhythmic exercise for them to enjoy, which ultimately they will also be able to pronounce each of the English diphthongs (close to being) correctly.

IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper reviews past and present perspectives on pronunciation teaching. It summarizes the background of pronunciation teaching, emphasizes the need for incorporating pronunciation into English language classes because of the importance of the pronunciation as a key to gaining full communicative competence. It also outlines some of the procedures that have been suggested for teaching pronunciation, taking into account present-day views in pronunciation pedagogy.

The paper further reviews the elements to be included in the pronunciation teaching and some of the simple steps to be taken in the teaching process. Some authors believe that one of the most important things ESL/EFL teachers need to teach in order to improve the students" pronunciation is how the articulatory organs work (see: Harmer, 2001for example). The students have to be able to feel exactly what part of the mouth is used to create each sound, especially those sounds which cause them trouble. This means teachers should not only introduce to the grammar and the vocabulary, but they should also give the students exercises and oral practice in order to become acquainted with the vocal organs to produce (close to being) correct pronunciations.

This paper has also attempted to raise the teachers" awareness of the necessity of prioritizing the English pronunciation in teaching apart from the grammar and vocabulary. The inclusion of the teaching of the English pronunciation to Indonesian learners is believed to contribute to Indonesian EFL learners in attaining the goal of satisfactory intelligibility. Ultimately, the goal of instruction can be one of the reasonable options for EFL teachers, because, despite having a good grasp of vocabulary and the grammatical rules of the English language, speakers would be unintelligible if they had poor pronunciation.

Finally, although there are challenges to teaching and learning English pronunciation, it remains a vital area to English language learners" communicative competence. The materials given in the discussion are just samples to be taught and on learners" goals and motivations for improving their pronunciation. By incorporating this current paper, implications into the teaching practice, teachers can help learners gain the skills they need for effective communication in English. It is expected that this paper provides Indonesian EFL teachers with insights and motives to integrate pronunciation teaching into their teaching sequence, and help them expand the repertoire of traditional classroom practices and, consequently, promote pronunciation instruction.

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