THE USE OF JAVANESE-ENGLISH SIMILAR SOUNDS TO TEACH PRONUNCIATION

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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation is one of indicators that make up speaking skill. Without intelligible pronunciation, communication can be hindered. Javanese students, for instance, find it difficult to pronounce most of English words because they tend to pronounce them the way they are written. As a result, their pronounciation sounds weird and it is quite likely that misunderstanding occurs between speaker and listener. Therefore, it is crucial to teach good pronunciation to students, particularly to those would-be teachers. One of the media to use is similar sounds existing in Javanese and English. The similarity of sounds between these two languages is expected to minimize pronunciation errors among Javanese students.

Keywords: teaching media, pronunciation, similar sounds

1. Introduction

Speaking fluently and accurately is one of the skills that English language learners want to achieve. To do so, they have to master some indicators of speaking skill namely vocabulary, grammar as well as pronunciation. The latest indicator seems to get the least attention from many learners. They still find it difficult to master even after learning English language for years. This phenomenon also happens to Javanese students who learn English language. They struggle to have intelligible English pronunciation. They think that learning to pronounce well is a laborius matter.

Hinofotis & Baily (1980) point out that it is not vocabulary or grammar that most severely hinders communication process for English language learners. Instead, it is pronunciation. Fraser (2000a) states that with good pronunciation, someone is understood despite other errors in speaking sub-skills. On the contrary, with poor pronunciation one is hardly understood despite accuracy in other speaking sub-skills. Unfortunately, teachers pay little attention to teach pronunciation. Fraser (2000a) argues that English teachers find it difficult to teach pronunciation since they are not well-informed about sufficient basis to work from.

Numerous studies have shown that pronunciation errors made by English language learners is systematic, not simply random. O'Connor (2003) notes that errors of pronunciation are mainly because the substitutions of sounds that do not exist in the learners' mother tongue. They will use other sounds which are close to the right sounds. For instance, Javanese students use /t/ rather than /θ/ in the word 'thin'.

2. Factors Influencing Students' Pronunciation

2.1. Mother Tongue Interference

Some reseachers have found that mother tongue hugely influences when students learn English language. The sound /p/ and /b/ are two different sounds and each of them is easily identified by native speakers. Javanese students usually confuse between /p/ and /b/ e.g. words like ('pill', 'bill'), ('pee', 'bee'), and ('pull', 'bull'). The sound /p/ is voiceless bilabial

stop and the sound /b/ is voiced bilabial stop. Unfortunately, the way Javanese students pronounce these two sounds the same because Javanese language does not differentiate them. Avery & Ehrlic (1992, cited in Thanasoulas, 2003) point out that the sound pattern of learner's mother tongue is transfered into the target language and commonly causes foreign accent. The sound system of mother tongue influences the target language in three aspects. First, if a sound in the target language does not exist in the mother tongue, or vice versa, learners will find it difficult to produce it. Second, combining sounds into words likely cause difficulties because it is different from one language to another. Third, learners likely transfer the rhythm and melody of their own mother tongue to the target language.

Brown (2000) shows that English language learners find difficulties to master the language because of their mother tongue interference especially if they learn English in adulthood. In turn, the interference causes errors in pronunciation. Carter & Nunan (2001) state that mother tongue significantly affects L2 pronunciation. If L1 and L2 rules are different, errors come out as a result. The errors of pronunciation that students make are caused by the over practice of the mother tongue. The pronunciation of mother tongue has fossilized. Meanwhile, students need to build a new set of sounds corresponding to the sounds of English aand change the arrangement of sounds in L1 that has already built up. Changing the habit they have set for a long time is by no means easy. Regular practice is needed to form the new system of sound.

2.2. Different Sound System in L1 and L2

Large number of studies have proven that there is a conflict in sound system between L1 and L2. Javanese students get used to use phonological features of Javanese language. This causes difficulties in differentiating sound system between Javanese language and English language. Learners with different sound system will encounter difficulties to produce English sounds because their mother tongue and English language are different. The differences are viewed as obstacles to gain good English pronunciation. Learners are not accustomed to use new sounds which feel strange for their organs of speech. This happens especially if learners start to learn English language when they are already adult.

Javanese vowel system is simple and learners can pronounce Javanese words easily without difficulties. In contrast, a single vowel in English is pronounce differently. In English, /r/ is clearly pronounced if it is before a vowel, but if it is after a vowel, it is not pronounced. Meanwhile, in Javanese /r/ is pronounced in all positions both before and after a vowel. Javanese students pronounce /r/ in any position such as in words like summer, rain, and teacher. In Javanese one letter represents one sound. Thus, it is very easy to read. No sound in Javanese language is silent. On the contrary, some English sounds are silent e.g. /b/ is silent in 'climb' and /t/ in 'listen'. Sounds like/θ/ and /ð/ do not exist in Javanese language. Javanese students tend to use /t/ for /θ/ and/d/ for /ð/. If they find the word 'thick' they will read it /tik/ instead of/θik/. Also, they will read 'father' as /fʌdər/rather than /fʌðər/. The number of consonants and vowels in Javanese and English is far different. English language has 24 consonants and 20 vowels. It means that there are 44 phonemes of English language that learners have to master. Javanese language has 23 phonemes in total. There are 23 letters. Each of them represents one sound. A sound is pronounced by definite movement of the organs of speech. If the number of sounds in learner's mother tongue is less than 44, they will definitely find difficulties to produce the missing sounds. Javanese students encounter confusion to produce sounds like /iː/, /ɔː/, /uː/, /θ/, as well as /ð/ because they do not exist in Javanese language.

2.3. English Vowels Inconsistency

Hassan (2014) argues that one of challenges in teaching English pronunciation is that a vowel sound in Englsih has more than one pronunciation. This problem triggers many difficulties and causes mispronunciation. Because Javanese language has less complex vowel system, Javanese students will change the quality and quantity of the sound. Words like monkey /mʌŋki/, come /kʌm/, son /sʌn/, blood /blʌd/ use the same sound /ʌ/. Unfortunately, most of English learners might pronounce them using /ɔ/ or /u:/. This is because in their mother tongue each letter represents one sound. As a result, they assume that the vowels used in each of those words is different. O'Connor (2003) states that it is not easy to determine the correct sounds like letters stand for or represent in certain words e.g. pretty /priti/, busy /bizi/, village /vilidʒ/, city /siti/, women /wimin/. All those letters y, a, u, e, o represent one single sound /i/. On the contrary, in words like facebook /feisbuk/, banana /bəna:nə/, man /mæn/, many /meni/, the letter 'a' represents four different sounds. The learners who do not know the knowledge of different pronunciation of all those vowels find difficulties because they make use of different variants in pronouncing the words.

Researchers and linguists relate this problem with the complex vowel sound system in English and the inconsistency of its pronunciation.

The inconsistency creates difficulties for English language learners. The letter 'o' in the words home, move, women, some has different pronunciation /əu/, /u:/, /i/, and /ʌ/. English language learners who are ignorant of how to pronounce correctly of such words will encounter difficulties. Words such as butcher, book, could, and wolf consecutively use u, oo, ou, o. In fact, all of them are pronounced the same /u:/. Earlier example shows that the same letter is pronounced differently. Meanwhile, latter example proves that different letters are pronounced the same.

2.4. Influence of Spelling on Pronunciation

English language learners also find difficulties to pronounce some words from a written text. This is because of spelling system in English language. In Javanese language students can easily pronounce a word from a written text simply by looking at it. Each letter represents one sound. Thus, the relationship between the orthography and the phonology can be easily distinguished. In addition, there is no silent letter in Javanese language unlike English language. English has several letters which are not pronounced. Yule (2001) shows that the sounds of spoken English do not match up with letters of written English. If English learners cannot use the letters in a consistent way to represent the sounds we make, it is difficult to describe the sounds of a language.

Some words which have the same letters are pronounced differently. For example, the word 'lead' can be pronounced /li:d/ as well as /led/ depending on the context. Meanwhile, some other words have different spelling but actually have the same pronunciation. For example, the words reign, rain, and rein are pronounced /rein/. O'Connor (2003) adds that if the learners do not master the pronunciation of those words, they will pronounce each of them by looking at its spelling and finally they are expected to mispronounce them.

Teachers should pay attention to the explanatory potential of the sound-spelling relationship (Carter& Nunan, 2001). The ability to combine orthograhy and phonology allows students to predict the pronunciation of words from their spelling. If learners do not know the correspondence between sound and spelling, they will mispronounce words by simply looking at their spelling. For example, in the words knee, know, knot, knight the letter /k/ is silent. If they do not master this knowledge, the letter /k/ is pronounced. In contrast, in words like signal, resignation, and signature the /g/ is pronounced. Learners who are ignorant might get confused to pronounce them. The other examples are the silent /gh/ in light, night, weight,

and knight will confuse those learners who do not know to pronounce them. To conclude, students need to consult dictionary frequently to make sure that their pronunciation is correct.

3. Why is it important to teach pronunciation?

Poor pronunciation causes misunderstanding. This will make English language learners feel ashamed. Many Javanese students mistake foot for food. Because the final consonant is not clearly pronounced, a native speaker gets confused to answer. For example, a student asks, " What do you think about Indonesian foot?". The native speaker answers, "I have no idea.". This problem will not occur if the student clearly pronounce final consonant /d/ instead of /t/. Students need to be reminded that having good pronunciation significantly help them to master listening, spelling, reading, and grammar (Wong, 1993).

Having intelligible pronunciation encourages students' confidence will make it easier for them to understand what lecturers are saying, what TV/radio presenters are conveying, etc. Native speakers of E nglish (British, American, Australian, etc.) will be delighted if English learners can produce sound and group of words in a sentence that meet one of the standard variety of English.

4. How to improve students' pronunciation?

Fraser (2000b) points out that in teaching English pronunciation there is lack of reliable research-based information about what is effective to teach pronunciation. It is important for teachers to contribute essential information to linguistics. Teachers are struggling to experiment various teaching method to improve the previous techniques. Tested methods need to be shared so that other teachers can benefit the advantage.

Bray (1995), for example, uses limerick to teach suprasegmental features like stressed, unstressed, and stress-timed rhythm. Chen et al., provide some teaching techniques and tools to teach word rhythm. They include visual effects to teach word stress, auditory techniques in the form of clapping to distinguish stressed and unstressed syllables, rubber bands to determine length variation in syllables and stress matching games. Makarova (1996) employs phoneme cards, pronunciation-based quiz games, 'sign language', tongue twisters and limericks.

Gilakjani (2011) proposes that teachers should allocate 5-10 minutes of pronunciation practice at the end of the class or in the middle of the class if a problem arises. This can be planned or spontaneous and be integrated into grammar, reading, speaking or any other class as needed. Most of students believe that the most helpful aspects of pronunciation is segmental aspects rather than suprasegmental since segmental aspects help them improve their pronunciation patterns, confidence to use English and the most important thing is segemental aspects can be modified easily rather than suprasegmental aspects.

Dealing with segmental aspects which focus on sounds, this paper offers an alternative way to improve students' pronunciation, especially for Javanese students. By providing similar sounds that exist in Javanese language and English language, students can utilize it as a guide to check their pronunciation. The sounds between Javanese and English presented here are not exactly the same because some sounds in English do not exist in Javanese.

a. Words with 'au'

English	Javanese
auction /ɔ:kʃn/	**ok**ol
audience /ɔ:djəns/	**od**ol

Austria /ɔ:stria/	**os**eng
Paul /**pɔ:l**/	**pol**

b. Words with 'aught'

English	Javanese
caught /**kɔ:t**/	co**kot**
taught /**tɔ:t**/	o**tot**

c. Wordswith 'aw'

English	Javanese
jaw /**dʒɔ:**/	be**jo**
law /**lɔ:**/	u**lo**
lawn /**lɔ:n**/	ku**lon**
paw /**pɔ:**/	u**po**
saw /**sɔ:**/	nde**so**
straw /**strɔ:**/	sa**stro**
yawn /**yɔ:n**/	gu**yon**

d. Words with 'ew'

English	Javanese
blew /**blu:**/	**blu**thuk
brew /**bru:**/	**bru**tu
crew /**kru:**/	**kru**puk
grew /**gru:**/	**gru**duk
knew /**nu:**/	pa**nu**
screw /**skru:**/	**sekru**p

e. Words with 'ey'

English	Javanese
jersey /dʒərz**i**/	we**si**
kidney /kid**ni**/	ge**ni**
Sydney /sid**ni**/	wa**ni**

f. Words with 'ought'

English	Javanese
bought /**bɔ:t**/	a**bot**
brought /**brɔ:t**/	gem**brot**
sought /**sɔ:t**/	nge**sot**
thought /**tɔ:t**/	o**tot**

g. Words with 'us'

English	Javanese
anus /ei**nəs**/	nge**nes**

fetus /fi:**t**əs/	pan**tes**
focus /fəu**k**əs/	**kes**el
lotus /ləu**t**əs/	pan**tes**
minus /mai**n**əs/	nge**nes**

5. Conclusion

Pronunciation is not simply correct production of individual sounds or isolated words. It is important to see pronunciation as a crucial and integral part of communication that should be integrated with other skills of English. Teachers are supposed to identify the students' need and level of ability to detect the problems that they encounter in mastering both segmental and suprasegmental aspects in English. By doing so, teachers can provide appropriate teaching methods or media that help students to minimize errors in pronunciation. Encouraging students to always look up words from dictionary is helpful to keep students' pronunciation on the track. When students have a mastery of pronunciation, achieving other English skills will be easier.

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