

Strategies in Solving the Problems in Teaching Pronunciation: A Case Study of University English Teachers

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Abstract—this study aimed to deal with teachers experience in teaching pronunciation, particularly on the problems faced by teachers and the strategies used in solving the problems in teaching pronunciation. To achieve the objectives, interview was done to two English teachers who had been given responsibility to teach pronunciation in a private university of Yogyakarta. The collected data was obtained from descriptive case study design in qualitative method. The findings of the study discovered that personal issues, familiarize the different sounds, lack of time and problems from students' side were all the problems faced by the participants. Moreover, increasing teaching quality, introducing pronunciation rules, and using various teaching techniques and classroom activities became the strategies to solve teaching pronunciation problems.

Keywords—pronunciation; teaching pronunciation problems; strategies in solving teaching pronunciation problems; descriptive case study.

Introduction

The English language is known as popular language. “English as a global lingua franca is increasingly important or even compulsory to learn in all nations through the world” (Panggabean, 2015, p. 35). English is very common learned and taught by people around the world in order for them to be able to communicate effectively with each other. Panggabean (2015, p. 35) added that “In Indonesia, learning and teaching English is conducted extensively in formal schools beginning from early education to university levels”. Even though the students learn the English language, they do not normally use English even after completing the learning (Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011).

Pronunciation teaching is in form of presentation of new words, sentence patterns, and several practice activities (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2004). The teacher needs to consider carefully the fact that pronunciation is not just about an individual's sound which is only one aspect (Brewster et al., 2004). Tenant (2007) wrote in his article, there are only a few teachers who try and do some pronunciations, but the majority does very little or none at all. He added that the reasons to avoid teaching pronunciation are divided into many aspects of pronunciation such as difficult to teach, and pronunciation can be quite difficult to create a lesson around pronunciation point. Teachers sometimes feel underprepared to teach pronunciation, and many of them struggle to learn the phonetic alphabet. The quality of teaching that students' receive usually affects the quality of their learning. Many course books or journals provide plenty of activities and ways to teach pronunciation. One of the Indonesian teachers in Moedjito's study (2016) said that she was very unwilling to teach pronunciation because she really did not know how and what to teach because pronunciation did not include a mandatory in curriculum guideline currently.

Pronunciation ability is an important skill which needs to be learned by students because it is related to spoken communication. Actually, teachers need to assist the students in learning how to pronounce language because it can give a positive impact on students' pronunciation ability. The researcher aims to investigate the teachers' problems in teaching pronunciation. There are many problems appear because of the different nature of sounds and patterns in English. Besides, the researcher wants to know the teachers' problem in teaching pronunciation. Additionally, the teachers should use effective strategies in order to solve the problems faced in teaching pronunciation. Moreover, interesting strategies for teaching pronunciation is needed to make the students pleasant and delight in learning pronunciation.

This study aimed to deal with teachers experience in teaching pronunciation, particularly on the problems faced by teachers and the strategies used in solving the problems in teaching pronunciation. To meet the goals of this study, two research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the problems faced by the teachers in teaching pronunciation at ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta?
2. What are the teachers' strategies in solving the problems of teaching pronunciation at ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta?

Method

The researcher employed a case study as the research design in order to give a clear explanation, description, and understanding of phenomenon appearing in the case of teachers' experiences. The researcher selected the case based on teachers' experiences through teaching pronunciation including teaching problems and strategies to overcome the problems in teaching pronunciation. The case was about the live experience of two university English teachers during their teaching experience from their first year of teaching pronunciation until the year 2018 in ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta.

The research was conducted at ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta. English Language Education Department established in 2010 and A accredited in 2016. This Department aims to participate in improving quality, supporting facilities, providing teaching staff in Indonesia including English language teacher who can apply their theoretical knowledge in good teaching. Supported by 18 teachers holding doctoral and master degrees from local and abroad universities who teach compulsory courses and elective courses with higher education curriculum, this department provides more than 40 courses students can take and pronunciation was covered in course called *Capita Selecta on Linguistics*.

The researcher expected three participants that were convenience to be the participants in this study based on the mentioned characteristics. However, after several appointments and agreements process, only two teachers were available to be the participants. The first participant is a female teacher called Rose who joined the ELED since 2016 and had been taught pronunciation for one semester. The second participant called Lily who joined ELED since 2010 and had been taught pronunciation for four semesters.

This study used interview as the instrument for data collection. The interview was used to explore more detailed and specific information on problems and strategies in teaching pronunciation. Cohen et al. (2011) declared that interviews are the instruments used for data collection. They also stated that interview is used to gather information on the research objectives. The research objectives in this study were about the problems' faced and strategies in solving the problems used by the teachers in teaching pronunciation.

The language used in the interview was English for the second interview session, and the participants unconsciously used Code-switching between English and Indonesian

language. English was used in the interview because the researcher herself believed she could do conversation in English because her participants were all English teachers. For the first interview session, the time allocation of interview took 16 minutes for Rose and 35 minutes for Lily. For the second interview session, the time allocation was 12 minutes for Rose and 43 minutes for Lily.

The data were obtained from two session interview to each participant. The first was the purely open-ended interview. The data were analyzed using three types of coding. The second was interview serving clarification and additional data and qualitatively analyzed using coding. The data were the source for the conclusion of the study.

Findings

There were two main topics reported in this chapter. The topics were gathered and analyzed from the interview results and arranged from the research questions.

“Always trying to stick on [to] the Dictionary”: Rose’s Strategy in Solving Teaching Pronunciation Problem

Graduated as Ph.D. in Education Department from one of the leading universities in Australia, Rose certainly had a myriad of knowledge about education and course in teaching. She started teaching at ELED in 2016 and vacuumed because she was in Australia to finish her study. She came back to Indonesia in 2017 and taught *Language and Education Research, Principle of Teaching and Learning, Capita Selecta on Grammar 1, Issues on Language Teaching and learning, and Capita Selecta on Linguistics*. Rose started teaching from the year 2000 at Language Training Centre of a private university in Yogyakarta and also at one private health science academy in Yogyakarta. Rose completed her master degree in Linguistics Department from one public university in Yogyakarta. She took her bachelor degree from study in the Education Department in one public university in Yogyakarta.

Teaching pronunciation in just one semester, Rose problems in teaching pronunciation came from various aspects. The problems came from her personal issue to deliver the subject in front of the students, feel afraid of her students will be bored and problems came from students’ side which is the students’ capability to pronounce the words and shy students. The strategies she used are preparing the teaching by upgrading her knowledge about pronunciation, using games and storytelling. To solve the students’ side

problems, the strategies she used are suggesting the students to learn from internet and dictionary, asking the students to practice, Rose was also giving models and samples, and asking the students personally to engage in learning. Lastly, if the students confused about the words, she was usually explaining the correct pronunciation and the irregularities in English to the students.

“Lack of Time to Revise the Students One by One, and It is Time-consuming”: Lily’s Teaching Pronunciation Problem

Lily had been working as a teacher of English for more than 20 years. She taught English in middle school, high school, and in university levels. Having a long teaching journey provided for sure very useful reflection to improve her teaching quality. Graduated from English Literature Department from one of the leading universities in Indonesia made her have the literary skills. She joined ELED in 2010 and she taught *Capita Selecta on Grammar 1*, *Capita Selecta on Grammar 4*, *Capita Selecta on Linguistics and Literary Appreciation*. In 2005, Lily graduated from Education Department for her master degree from one Islamic university in Malaysia. She graduated from teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

Lily has been teaching pronunciation for four semesters. Pronunciation problems faced by Lily are difficult to familiarize the different sounds because of the different language system, lack of time to revise and need time to prepare the teaching, and problems came from the students’ side which were the students’ mispronunciation, students’ behavior including lazy to practice, motivation, underestimate the practice and the different levels of the students. Therefore, there are various strategies used to solve the problems in teaching pronunciation. She was implementing tongue twister, read aloud, read dictionary, using song, gave feedback, and gave visual reinforcement. Other strategies used are finding effective material, doing reflection, applying group reading activity, asking the students to practice, giving assignments and assessments. She was also becoming strict and showing anger face expression, and doing individual session.

Discussion

This part discussed the teachers' strategies in solving the problems in teaching pronunciation related to the theory. There are two main topics presented below.

Problems of teaching pronunciation

There were different and similar problems showed by both Rose and Lily. The problems in teaching pronunciation came from variant aspects.

Personal issues: feeling new again, how she will deliver the subject, afraid the students to feel bored. This problem was in line with Yoshida (2016) who stated that the teachers need to know much knowledge about pronunciation and also the teaching principle if the teachers want to teach pronunciation effectively. Because it is related to the quality of teaching and this affects the quality of learning (Yoshida, 2016). If the teachers do not have many different ways of teaching, the students are not able to use their senses through sound, movement, and sign for which is more effective to help understand better (Yoshida, 2016).

Familiarizing the different sounds. The researcher found an explanation from (Yoshida, 2016) who explained that problem is called *substitution* where "our brains and ears can't tell the difference between two similar sounds, we tend to pronounce both of them in the same way" (p. 5). In this case, the example is where Indonesian language does not have /ʃ/ *sh* sound (Lily, 2018) so that *she* sounds like *see*.

Timing: lack of time to revise, needing time to prepare in teaching. Yoshida (2016) explained that learning pronunciation takes time because when learning new pronunciation the muscle of mouth moves in new ways and it takes a long time to get used to it. When the time is limited and many students make mistake, it's time-consuming to correct all the mistakes. Because teaching pronunciation need time and it cannot be done in just once and expect the students master it right away (Yoshida, 2016).

Students' side: mispronounce word, lack of motivation, lazy to practice, underestimate the practice, different levels of students and shy. The things from the students' side can also make the teaching done smoothly or even obstructively. The problem from students' mispronounce word is explained by Yoshida (2016) statement that learning pronunciation takes time because it needs practices. This activity may become the problem because doing activity like practice continuously takes time and tiring. Tahereen (2015) said, "Learner's awareness is very important in developing good pronunciation" (p. 13). It became

a problem to teacher because teacher has to deliver all the knowledge of pronunciation to the students where they have no awareness in learning those. When the students are lack of motivation, the students do not have the desire to learn and lead to stagnant pronunciation ability. Yoshida (2016) said that teacher don't have the ability to change students' pronunciation. Teachers themselves play important role in showing the knowledge but if the teachers do not show the necessary guide toward pronunciation, nobody will do it (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Strategies in solving the teaching pronunciation problem

Based on the teaching pronunciation problems obtained from the interview, there were also various strategies found to solve the problems.

Increasing teaching quality. The quality of the teacher is really required to make the students achieve the lesson. The problems came from the readiness and limited time in teaching this strategy could help the teacher to prepare effective teaching. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) also said that teachers should know the difference between the target language and mother tongue sounds because when the teachers know the differences and similarities, they can understand the difficult sound their students may encounter. Teacher can do self-reflection from their past teaching to analyze and evaluate their teaching. Teacher can evaluate their teaching to make an improvement to be better and effective. Reflect the activities and the ways in teaching to shed and to select the effective one. Preparing the effective ways and material can reduce time-consuming problem because we can prepare ways and material in a shorter time.

Introducing students to pronunciation rules. Introducing students about pronunciation rules in this finding means that the two teachers believe that teaching the English pronunciation rules is important because students need to know that English and Indonesian language have different language system. This is in line with Tahereen (2015) who said that pronunciation needs to be integrated with tasks, stress patterns of words, syllable patterns and phonetic rules. According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), there are three features teachers need to know namely segmental features about the sound determined in phonetic, voice-setting features about general articulatory speech, and prosodic features about stress and intonation.

Using various teaching techniques and classrooms activities. There are plenty of activities conducted by the participant to solve their problem in teaching pronunciation. Based on the exploration and analysis of the interview conducted by the researcher, there were techniques and classroom which can be useful to solve teaching pronunciation problems. The techniques and activities are *teaching phonetic transcription, using dictionaries, reading aloud, using games and tongue twisters, giving feedback, individual session and become strict.*

Conclusion

Having competency to teach pronunciation well can be a key to educate learners and add language skills to be used because pronunciation is the compulsory part of speaking (Boyer, 2002). However, to teach well, teachers need to know how to do it. Even though teachers know, they still either feel conscious or not in facing teaching problems. This study was conducted to identify teachers' problem in teaching pronunciation and to investigate teachers' strategies in solving the problems. The data were obtained by interviewing two teachers given responsibility to teach pronunciation.

In conclusion, in teaching pronunciation, the teacher should have readiness and myriad of knowledge. Because as a teacher who teaches students in the country where English is not their second language with different background, the teacher must know how to teach pronunciation and make the students understand English pronunciation. Besides, teachers' knowledge is the key to the successful pronunciation teaching in order to reduce the chance of a problem arising.

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