Common Pronunciation Mistakes in Non-native Speakers: A Review

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Abstract

Pronunciation is one of language micro-skill that should be mastered in order to create a clear and effective communication. This article aims to provide a brief review of some common mistakes in pronunciation at various L2 speakers by focusing into researches on related topic. By noticing the problem that occurred, English teachers may develop a better plan for future to avoid the same mistakes. The similarity between non-native learners, such as Chinese, Indonesian, Palestinian, Turkish and Vietnamese, is they tend to make mistakes in sound that do not exist in their first language

Keywords: *common mistake; non-native learners; pronunciation*

INTRODUCTION

While it seems simple and can be drilled through repetition used in daily communication, pronunciation belongs as one of the most difficult parts for a language learner to master and one of the least favourite topics for teachers to address in the classroom. As a sub skill of speaking, if teacher want to change the way a learner pronounces words, they should change the way to think about the component sounds of those words (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

One source of optimism in nowadays pronunciation as well as other branches of knowledge is wide variety of learning media (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015). Artificial Intellegence in Google Assistant and handheld application such as Babbel and Duolingo might provide useful example of how specific word voiced over. It means appropriate learning material have never been as accessible as today. Nevertheless, the paradigm of native alike pronunciation have been less and less essential in communicative - comprehension era.

However, it is still necessary for teachers to usher their awareness into the brink of diverse English sound structures to reach intelligibility point in a conversation. Thus, further gaining insights into pronunciation variations that English as Second Language (ESL) students are facing now (Lin, 2014). Certainly, it is not an easy task, especially in country that has an extreme distinct phonology in their first language, such as Chinese and Arabic, to English. From Dhillon (2016), the interference of mother tongue also takes major role when student attempt to speak naturally in English (slower pace, unsure and odd tone). At the beginning, young students might learn with copy and remember precisely how their teacher performs certain utterance.

This article was compiled with the objective to provide a brief review of some common mistakes happen in pronunciation, which possibly happened due to several different factors such as age, confidence level, attitude, and more, at various countries by focusing into

researches with relevant topic. By noticing the problem that occurred in pronunciation class, English student and teachers may develop a better plan for future to avoid the same mistakes.

Researchers and linguists have pointed some linguistic factors such as the differences of the sound system between first language and the second language, the inconsistency of some sounds in English language, the mother tongue interference and the influence of spelling on pronunciation (Hassan, 2014).

While, Gilakjani (2012) pointed out four factors that affect pronunciation learning: (1) Attitude, (2) motivation and exposure, (3) instruction and (4) exposure to target language. Two former factors mainly related with someone"s internal, two latter factors can be designed and supported by teacher, learning institution and, the best way, surrounding environment in daily life, which might offer random material to digest. The opposite of natural environment is "linguistic ghettos" where little meaningful exposure existed and reduce acquisition chances.

Brown (2000) found that a second language learner meets some difficulties, because his LI affects his L2 especially in adulthood, and this effect is a result of LI transfer. So, it is a significant source of making errors for second language student.

The primary issue that second language student has with pronunciation is their need to change a conceptual pattern of sound from their first language that they have internalized in childhood. It is not the case that student are best helped if they are able to „see" speech, whether in articulate or acoustic form. Students need help in categorizing or conceptualizing sounds in a way appropriate to English. Simply seeing a speech-wave or a diagram of the articulation of a sound, however „animated" and however accurate, will not help student unless they are also helped to understand what features of the sound are significant and given appropriate ways of thinking about the sound so that they can reproduce it (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

To improve student's pronunciation, teachers must set view into their pronunciation difficulties, which will provide teachers with ideas of designing differentiated teaching strategies for dealing with those students" problems in learning English pronunciation. In fact, teachers are able to help all students learn standardized English without diminishing their linguistic backgrounds through knowing their language variations (Charity & Mallinson, 2011).

METHOD

This paper uses qualitative method to gather data through study of previous researches or literature that investigated about pronunciation mistakes in English for foreign learner context as the sources. A review is a surveys scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works (Ramdhani et al., 2014). The focus of a literature review is to summarize as well as synthesize others" works in related topic without adding new arguments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In China, the problem varied from the first language interference in learning English pronunciation, student" age, attitude, psychological factor and prior pronunciation instruction and the student" insufficient knowledge of phonology and phonetics to a large extent affecting the acquisition of the English pronunciation (Zhang & Yin, 2009). Especially in first language interference, some Chinese students tend to have difficulty with English sounds because they are deeply influenced by similar Chinese sounds. For example in English /r/ and /ɑ/ are very different from the Chinese /sh/ and /r/. So, it is not surprising when the words „English",

„pronunciation", „rose" and „rise" are uncomfortably heard when they are produced by ESL student.

English student who have Arab as their first language also find similar difficulties in pronunciation. Take Palestinian (Jabali & Abuzaid, 2017) as example. The first sound which causes mispronunciation is the sound /p/. The findings show that 25% of the students are able to pronounce the sound /p/ correctly in word different positions. Students mispronounce the sound /p/ as [b] as it is noticed in the recordings. The reason why students pronounce the sound [b] in most of the cases is that it exists in the Arabic phonological system while /p/ does not.

Another sound is the post-alveolar affricate sound /tʃ/. Students are asked to pronounce the words "champion, launching, church". The results show that 56.66% of the respondents do not pronounce the sound /tʃ/ correctly. Instead, they use the fricative counterpart [ʃ]. The reason why /tʃ/ is problematic is that it does not exist in the Arabic phonological system as an independent phoneme, but it does exist as an allophone of other phonemes, /k/ and /q/, in some dialects in a way that does not affect Arabs' English pronunciation.

In Turkish" pre-service teachers (Bardakçi, 2015), the common mistake pattern took place in schwa part, as in ancient (/eɪnʃənt/), appreciation (/əpriːʃieɪʃən/), and career (/kərɪər/). The researcher assumed that there was difference in the phonetic and phonemic dynamic in first language and English. Turkish might not find any difficulties in produce /ə/ at the final of word. However, when at the initial of word, they are unable to pronounce it. In addition, it appears that there is no word with schwa part at Turkish native language.

Focused on how Vietnamese" adult learners pronounce /ð/ and /θ/, Bui (2016) observed respondents tend to change /θ/ sound into /t"/ either conscious, shown with attempt to contemplate how to voice it, or unconscious. In words three, teeth and bath, some respondents performed inconsistent mistakes due to difference placement of sound, which occurred at the beginning in the former and at the end for the rest. As for /ð/, the researcher found it frequently sounded as /z/ and in some sample became /dʒ/, /d/, /t„/. and /θ/. The respondents wondered whether there was an impact from their first language to this phenomenon. While they believed that rarity in practice and native input exposure played major part on pronunciation development.

From Indonesian, this problem was studied by Silalahi (2016) through "Pronunciation Problems of Indonesian EFL Student: An Error Analysis". In the research, 30 student respondents from English Language and Culture - Universitas Bunda Mulia was observe when pronounced the lists of similarly-spelled word (Lite, Liter, Pear, Pearl Spear) that recorded by using PRAAT 6.0.06. The result showed that from 600 words tested, there are 176 mispronunciations produced by the students. According to the students, their mispronunciations are generally caused by several reasons: (a) The students follow the pronunciation of basic words, (b) it sound correct and appropriate, (c) the words are rarely or even never used before, (d) they imitate the wrong pronunciation from his/her teacher.

On the other study in Indonesia context, Donal (2016) investigated about diphthongs pronunciation in thirty five students, who possessed different mother languages (Malay, Bataknese, Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangnese), of English Study Program, University of Pasir Pengaraian. Among eight English diphthongs, Indonesian students tend to have difficulties in pronouncing diphthongs [aʊ] and rather easier in pronouncing diphthong [ɔɪ]. Some factors that influencing students are the influence of students" mother language, the lack

of knowledge in English sound system and the unsuccessful efforts in using borrowed English words. It was illustrated in word "horizon" [hə:raizn]. In Indonesia, the word horizon is also used and modified as horison; Indonesian students often pronounced it based on Indonesian language version.

While Adila & Refnaldi (2019) found that alveolar error - /t/, /d /, /n/, /s/, /z/, /l/, and /r/ - is the category that most mispronounced by students, followed by interdental, alveo-palatal, and labiodental. The researchers also believed mother tongue interference held significant effect to pronunciation error, together with lack of communicative use, unchallenging course, passiveness and shyness of student.

There is misperception among foreign student English phonology and it affected in wrong pronunciation that can be distractions in communication process. Gleason (2012) found several conclusions about the most pressing phonetic problems of Spanish speaker of English. First, the / / æ versus /ow/ and /p/ versus /b/ distinctions appeared to be the least problematic for participants, although this still may be a critical issue in student with a lower proficiency than those exhibited here. Second, the /iy/ versus / / and final-position /d/ versus /t/ distinctions seemed to be the most common at higher levels of spoken proficiency. One phenomenon that relates to the latter distinction is the tendency to eliminate final consonant clusters and sounds.

Avery and Ehrlich (1992) further note that since the failure to add consonant clusters often interferes with the interpretation of grammatical tense, the inability to produce such clusters in often misinterpreted as a grammatical problem. This type of error, among the high-proficiency speakers examined here, is argued to be of the highest priority for pronunciation teaching, as it seemed to be the factor that most influenced their intelligibility and comprehensibility. Finally, both speakers also tended to supplement [d] for [ð] in words such as the and then, an error that may not be critical for understanding but that may make a listener have to work harder to comprehend. If these mistakes go unnoticed by teacher, students may think that nothing is wrong with their pronunciation and build wrong habits in their pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

The common mistakes in pronunciation that happened in non-native countries, such as China, Indonesia, Palestina, Turkey, and Vietnam, is the sound that do not exist in their first language. Due to this reason, teacher should recognize student pronunciation cautiously and make a proper, correct pronunciation in front of the class. Also, teacher should motivate student to put more attention to pronunciation by pointing how important they pronounce English because it may affect the whole communication process and message delivery.

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