

AN ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN PRONUNCIATION

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Abstract

This research aims to determine teachers' perception on students' difficulties in pronunciation. The researcher used a qualitative approach and conducted with a semi-structure interview for this research. The data resource in this research was an English teacher that teach grade 7,8, and 9 SMP Sanur Makassar. It was obtained from interview with 9 questions and the English teacher as the respondent. The result of the research concluded that: teachers perceive that on average students have low pronunciation skills, this is influenced by the fact that English is a different language from students' everyday language, students' lack of self-confidence, and students believe that English is the most difficult language. With this challenge, teachers overcome it by giving students motivation, giving students pronunciation practice with friends or groups so that students can be directly involved in activities to improve pronunciation skills. In addition, teachers provide media such as videos and songs in English, so that students can imitate the correct pronunciation of native speakers. The media used by the teacher have a positive impact on the students' pronunciation. difficulties in pronunciation of English can be caused by interference from the student's first language. In addition, in the context of English learning, teachers who understand students' difficulties in understanding and pronouncing sounds can influence the teaching methods they apply. This shows that teachers' perceptions of students' pronunciation abilities can influence the learning approaches they use. Assessing students' pronunciation skills is an important aspect of language education. Furthermore, research has shown that teachers' observations and interactions with students on a daily basis can provide reliable information about students' pronunciation abilities and students demonstrated varying levels of improvement in their pronunciation when speaking English. In conclusion, the data collected by the researcher and the findings are influence of teachers' perceptions on their learning approaches and emphasize the importance of understanding students' pronunciation abilities. This highlights the need for effective pronunciation instruction and assessment methods in language education.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception, Pronunciation.

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is essential in communicating something in English. This affects an information or idea that the speaker is trying to convey to the other person. Mispronouncing a letter can change the meaning of a word and make it difficult for listeners to understand it. The difficult aspect of speaking is pronunciation. It is involved with phonology, the study of the structure and function of sounds in a language (Hardianti et al., 2023).

The teacher's role is very important to be the main example in front of students related to pronunciation practices. Teachers are one of the human elements of education and teachers are people who play an important role in education and withstand a position (Fahranah et al., 2023). Students learn by imitating the teacher who teaches them and need to get used to pronouncing words correctly.

From the observations of the researcher, students can imitate the teacher in pronouncing words correctly by training students seriously. Students can't understand others or say what they want to say if they don't know enough words (Azizah et al., 2023). When students mispronounce a word, the teacher corrects it by giving an example then students follow and this is done repeatedly until students can pronounce the word correctly. During the assignment of Kampus Merdeka 4 while carrying out a team work program, namely 'English Class' in grade 7 SMP Sanur Makassar on September 5, 2022, the team gave 5 vocabulary words to students by writing them on the blackboard then chanting and asking students to repeat it several times and found student Q mispronounce several words then the team guides them until student Q can pronounce it correctly.

There are several studies and findings that discuss about pronunciation. The first one is the study entitled Difficulties Faced by Middle School Students in English Pronunciation by Praistiana and Budiharto (Praistiana & Budiharto, 2020). Based on the data, the researchers found that there are two ways for teacher to overcome students' difficulties in English pronunciation, namely teacher must be patient with students and teachers can use methods or strategies that are suitable for students. Furthermore, the difference with the research conducted by researchers is that this research focuses on what students face in English pronunciation. The second one is the study entitled an Analysis of Students' Pronunciation Errors by Maiza (Maiza, 2020). Based on the data, the researcher found that there are some suggestions for students, namely students must aware that studying English pronunciation is different with Bahasa Indonesia and students must ask the lecturer if they do not understand the material. Furthermore, this study conducted in university while this research was carried out at SMP level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception

Definitions of Perception

Perception is the psychological process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory information to make it meaningful. It involves the recognition and response to sensory stimuli, and can be influenced by individual experiences and cognitive processes. Perception is not always an accurate reflection of reality and can be subjective. It plays a significant role in how individuals communicate and interact with the world around them. According to Erin and Maharani (2018), perception is the process of giving meaning to stimuli obtained through the five senses. It varies due to differences in experiences, beliefs, and motivation. The perception process has three stages: selection, organization, and interpretation. The first stage is stimulation, which involves sensing stimuli. The second stage is organization, where information about the stimuli is communicated to the brain. The third stage is interpretation, where the brain assigns meaning to the stimuli.

Factors of Perception

Miftah Thoha (2010), identified several factors that influence perception, including internal and external factors. Internal factors such as emotions, attitudes, personality, prejudices, desires, learning processes, physical and mental health, needs, values, interests, and motives can affect perception. External factors encompass family background, acquired information, surrounding

knowledge, intensity, size, opposition, and the presence of unfamiliar and new items. Toha emphasizes the significance of these factors in shaping an individual's perception of the world around them. The recognition of these influences can be valuable in various fields, including education, psychology, and communication.

Indicators of Perception

The indicators of perception according to Walgito (2010), include the following: 1) Absorption: This refers to the process of accepting or absorbing stimuli or objects from outside the individual through the sensory organs. 2) Understanding: It involves the classification and organization of the absorbed stimuli, leading to the formation of different perceptions in each individual. 3) Assessment/Evaluation: After forming an understanding, there is an assessment or evaluation of the perception, where individuals compare their understanding with their own criteria or norms. These indicators provide a framework for understanding how individuals perceive and interpret the world around them.

Pronunciation

Definition of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the production of meaningful sounds in which the speaker can produce a sound that is acceptable and understandable to the listener. Proper pronunciation is important to be able to produce sounds, words, and sentences that are clear and easily understood and interpreted by others. According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), pronunciation is a crucial aspect of language, as it affects the understanding and communication of meaning. Pronunciation is an important aspect of language learning, as it can affect how well one is understood by others.

Aspects of Pronunciation

Sound, stress, and intonation are important aspects of pronunciation. Sound refers to the way words are pronounced, while stress involves emphasizing certain syllables or words to convey meaning. Intonation refers to the pitch and tone changes used in speech to convey meaning and emotions. Intonation can be rising or falling, and it is particularly important in conveying emotions and attitudes in speech. Using appropriate intonation patterns and stressing important words can help ensure that a message is received and understood as intended. According to Nurullayevna (2020), stress is used by speakers to highlight important information that is emphasized and is useful in communicating meaning. Stress is one of the consequential elements of the English sound system. It plays an important role in clearness and comprehensibility. The aspects of pronunciation are important in communication because they affect meaning so that listeners get appropriate information and do not misunderstand.

Functions of Pronunciation

According to Gilakjani (2016), with acceptable pronunciation, a speaker's speech can be understandable despite having other mistakes; with bad pronunciation, the speech would be very difficult to understand, despite being accurate in other areas. Proper pronunciation serves several functions, including eliminating listener confusion, enhancing comprehension, and preventing misunderstandings. Accurate pronunciation ensures that the intended message is understood without confusion, allowing for seamless comprehension and lowering the chances of misunderstandings.

Factors Affecting the Learning of Pronunciation

Factors affecting the learning of pronunciation include characteristics of speakers, attitudes in acquiring native pronunciation in the target language, teacher's instructions in prohibiting pronunciation, motivation, personality in practicing pronunciation, time management and repetition, the influence of the mother tongue that tends to arise, and learning media that support the teaching and learning process. Other factors include natural ability, types of learners and goals, first language interference, types of teachers and teaching methodologies, and classroom environment.

METHOD

Research Design

Descriptive qualitative research is a flexible and exploratory approach that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. This approach involves collecting data in the form of words, pictures, or other non-numeric forms. The method can be conducted using relatively few and easily obtained resources, such as research participants, data collection tools, and recording equipment. As for the purpose of the researcher to consider this design is because the researcher wants to get factual and accurate information directly on the research object to know how the teacher perceives on student's difficulties in pronunciation.

Data Resource

The data resource is English teacher who teaches English subjects in grades 7, 8, and 9 at SMP Sanur Makassar.

Research Variable

This research focuses on pronunciation as a variable and keyword. English pronunciation rules are a set of guidelines that help speakers produce sounds in words that can be understood by others and follow the rules of the language.

Instrument of the Research

The instrument used in this research is semi-structure interview. The goal of this type of interview is to explore issues more openly, asking for opinions and ideas. During the interview, researchers listen carefully and take notes on what the informant conveys to the researcher (Sugiyono, 2011). In terms of collecting this data, the research object was asked directly by the researcher to obtain valid data. The instrument was used to get data on the English teacher's perception of students' difficulties in pronunciation. The interview was given with several questions about difficulties experienced by students in pronunciation and how the teacher can deal with the problem in the classroom.

Procedure of Collecting Data

The data used in this research is taken from an English teacher who teaches English subject in grades 7, 8, and 9 at SMP Sanur Makassar. An interview is a qualitative research method that relies on asking questions in order to collect data. To collect the data from the data sources, the researcher conducted an interview steps.

Technique of the Data Analysis

The technique used in the research is the Miles and Huberman Model technique (Miles et al., 2014). After collecting the data, all the collected data was examined by the researcher. It

consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data in the research are data from interviews regarding English teachers' perceptions on students' pronunciation difficulties, obtained by giving questions to teachers who teach English in grade 7,8 and 9 SMP Sanur Makassar as a form of data retrieval and direct documentation and then the researcher analysis. The perception indicators include four components that are, 1) absorption of stimuli or object includes responses and impressions, 2) definition or understanding of object so the result of absorption could be organized, classified, compared, and interpreted, 3) individual assessment or evaluation of objects, 4) perception based on the stage of learning implementation namely, the instructional stage using learning media and managing the class.

The following are the interview results, further explanation, and the interpretations obtained from the English teacher's explanation regarding perceptions on students' difficulties in pronunciation at SMP Sanur Makassar, as follows:

The teacher's general impression of students' pronunciation abilities.

The first data shows the teacher's general impression of students' pronunciation abilities are low, as the teacher said "*Karena rata-rata siswa mempunyai tingkat pengucapan yang rendah.*". The teacher perceives that students have difficulty in pronunciation due to the fact that English is not the students' first language. According to the teacher, this is because the students' native language affects their pronunciation of English words. English pronunciation varies from region to region, and some English words are harder to pronounce for some native speakers but not for others.

Challenges the teacher faces when teaching pronunciation and how the teacher overcomes the challenges.

The second and the third data shows the challenges the teacher faces when teaching pronunciation and how the teacher overcomes the challenges. The challenges are students' embarrassment, students' ignorance in pronunciation and according to students' impressions, English learners commonly struggle pronunciation. As the teacher said "*Yang pertama, siswa tersebut malu, kemudian yang kedua siswa tidak tahu cara membacanya, kemudian mereka menganggap bahasa Inggris itu bahasa yang paling sulit.*". Furthermore, the teacher overcomes this challenge by providing motivation to students that English is not a difficult language. As the teacher said "*Memberikan motivasi bahwa bahasa Inggris itu sebenarnya bukan bahasa yang sulit.*".

In addition, the teacher gives lessons to the student word by word gradually and introducing students to discuss with their friends. As the teacher said "*Bisa untuk kita pelajari, pelan-pelan setiap hari belajar kata demi kata. Misalnya pake kata 'speak' bagaimana cara pengucapannya. Diucapkan kemudian bagaimana caranya sampaikan kepada teman-temannya.*". In line with that the data is in accordance with Curtain and Dahlberg (2010) theory which explains several effective ways to teach foreign languages to students, namely the teacher must pronounce it slowly, use clear pronunciation or pronunciation, use short sentences that are not too complex, do lots of repetition, often check students' understanding of what the teacher says, use body gestures and visual reinforcement, using lots of concrete media, and involving students in conversation.

The teacher overcomes pronunciation problems in the classroom.

The forth data shows how the teacher overcomes pronunciation problems in the classroom. The teacher helps students overcome pronunciation problems by providing practices such as dialog and memorizing a small amount of vocabulary. As the teacher said “*Saya biasanya memberikan sedikit latihan-latihan. Setiap siswa diberikan tugas untuk membaca dialog dengan pasangannya dan menghafal vocabulary yang tidak terlalu banyak.*”. One effective method is to have students read dialogues with their partners and memorize a small amount of vocabulary. Memorization can also be an effective tool for learning new vocabulary and dialogues, but it should be done in a methodologically appropriate way. Finally, teachers should assess their students' motivations, struggles, and study techniques to provide personalized support and targeted adjustments can be made to help bring about changes in teachers' practices.

Students' pronunciation affects English language proficiency.

The fifth data shows students' pronunciation affects English language proficiency. Level of willingness can indeed affect students' English proficiency in pronunciation. As the teacher said “*Bagaimana pronunciation mempengaruhi kemahiran Bahasa Inggris siswa adalah keinginan siswa untuk belajar bahasa Inggris. Karena jika tingkat kemauan tinggi otomatis siswa akan berusaha untuk mempelajari bahasa Inggris.*”. In line with that the data is in accordance with Utami and Rismadewi (2022) theory which shows that the willingness to communicate in English classes is crucial for student engagement and learning. Teachers are required to encourage students' willingness to communicate using English. Therefore, a student's willingness to communicate and practice pronunciation can significantly influence their overall English proficiency.

The teacher involves students in the process of overcoming pronunciation difficulties.

The sixth data shows the teacher involves students in the process of overcoming pronunciation difficulties. As the teacher said “*Melibatkan siswa dalam proses mengatasi kesulitan pronunciation dengan memberikan latihan dengan teman di kelas bikin kelompok. Kita bahas misalnya 5 vocabulary, jadi kalau sudah ada 5 vocabulary kita suruh mempraktekkannya satu-satu. Kita kan melatih pronunciation mereka kemudian suruh teman-temannya memperhatikan apakah pronunciationnya sesuai dengan yang dibaca dengan yang didengarnya apakah sesuai dengan kata-katanya.*”. The teacher conducted the strategy of involving students in the process of overcoming pronunciation difficulties by practicing with classmates in groups can be effective, such as, the teacher asks the students to discuss five vocabulary words and have each student take turns pronouncing them while their classmates listen and provide feedback on whether the pronunciation is correct. The strategy can help students build confidence and improve their ability to pronounce English words correctly.

The teacher involves students in the process of improving pronunciation skills.

The seventh data shows the teacher involves students in the process of improving pronunciation skills. The teacher involves students in improving their pronunciation skills by encouraging them to practice speaking English with friends or interlocutors. As the teacher said “*Melibatkan siswa untuk meningkatkan keterampilan pronunciation dengan meminta siswa untuk mencari teman atau lawan bicara.*”. In line with that the data is in accordance with Curtain & Dahlberg (2010) theory which explains several effective ways to teach foreign languages to students, namely one of which is the teacher involving students in conversation.

The teacher assesses students' pronunciation abilities

The eighth data shows the teacher assessment of students' pronunciation abilities are low and students need more practice. As the teacher said “*Kemampuan pronunciation siswa masih rendah dan masih perlu dilatih.*”. It is common for language learners to struggle with pronunciation, and it is important to practice regularly to improve. In line with that the data is in accordance with Setyowati et al., (2017) which shows the importance of pronunciation in English is because mispronunciation of words in English can have fatal consequences. Mispronouncing one consonant or vowel letter in a word can create a meaning error. In addition, mispronunciation in English can lead to misunderstandings, confusion, and ineffective communication. The teacher's concern is valid, and additional practice can be helpful. There are many resources available for pronunciation practice, including online tools, language exchange programs, and pronunciation-focused classes.

Resources that the teacher use to support the teaching and learning of pronunciation in the classroom

The ninth data shows resources that the teacher use to support the teaching and learning of pronunciation in the classroom. Lack of resources in school impact on the teacher being limited in providing material with more up-to-date media. However, this can be overcome with media that is more affordable in its availability such as video. As the teacher said “*Kalau sumber daya di sekolah bisa dibidang hampir tidak memadai. Jadi kita hanya menggunakan media-media yang kita punya seperti video.*”. The use of videos in learning English can be an effective strategy in reducing students' pronunciation errors and helping them in learning pronunciation more effectively. In line with that the data is in accordance with Sari's theory (2016) which shows that videos are suitable for practicing pronunciation because apart from showing recordings or moving images, they also provide sound. The combination of sound and images will attract student's attention. The videos used in learning English are videos that display interesting images accompanied by writing and pronunciation examples.

The media that teachers use in teaching in class helps improve student pronunciation.

The tenth data shows the media that teachers use in teaching in class helps improve student pronunciation. Apart from the media utilized by the teacher, the teacher found that students delighted English songs and this helped students with pronunciation. English songs can help improve student pronunciation, as students can practice directly what they hear through the media. As the teacher said “*Media-media yang digunakan lumayan membantu. Karena siswa rata-rata suka lagu-lagu barat (lagu berbahasa inggris). Siswa lancar menyanyikan lagu-lagu barat Jadi harus ada praktek langsung daripada dikasih teori.*”. In line with that the data is in accordance with Eryon et al., (2023) theory which shows that using songs, especially in pronunciation, can help students improve their pronunciation skills. Songs can help learners improve their pronunciation by exposing them to natural articulation, stress, and intonation, and by providing an opportunity to practice a wide variety of sounds.

CONCLUSIONS

The teacher perceives that on average students have low pronunciation skills, this is influenced by the fact that English is a different language from students' everyday language, students' lack of self-confidence, and students believe that English is a difficult language. With this challenge, the teacher overcomes it by giving students motivation, giving students pronunciation practice with friends or groups so that students can be directly involved in activities to improve pronunciation skills. In addition, teachers provide media such as videos and songs in

English, so that students can imitate the correct pronunciation of native speakers. The media used by the teacher have a positive impact on the students' pronunciation.

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