AN ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS' ABILITY OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY IN PRONOUNCING CENTRAL VOWEL SOUNDS

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Abstract

This research is aimed at describing the ability of the second year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing English central vowel sounds /ɑ :/, /ə /, /ɜ :/ and /ʌ /. The design of this research was descriptive. The number of population of this research was 110 students. They were divided into three classes: A, B and C. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique to choose the sample and the number of the sample was 30 students. The instrument used to collect data in this research was oral pronunciation test. Total of items specification were 80 items. The time given was 60 minutes. To find the reliability, this research used inter rater method. It means that there were two scorers and it was found that the reliability index of this test was 0,88. The result of data analysis showed that the students' ability was moderate. It was proved by the fact that 21 students (70%) had moderate ability in pronouncing /ɑ :/, 15 students (50%) had moderate ability in pronouncing /ə /, 21 students (70%) had moderate ability in pronouncing /ɜ :/ and 18 students (60%) had moderate ability in pronouncing /ʌ /.

Key words: Pronunciation, Pronunciation ability, Vowels, Central vowel sounds,

Introduction

English is known as an international language because it is the most important language spoken in countries all over the world for communication. In learning English the student should master four skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking is one of language skills becomes important because speaking is a skill that can make people easily understand to what things explained. According to Nation (2009: 7), in language focused learning involves language features such as pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse.

Pronunciation is one of language features that teacher must focus in teaching English. MacDonald (2002:3) in Yenti (2013: 1) says that pronunciation is a key element of the learning of oral skills in a second language. Therefore, by the statements above, we know that pronunciation is important to build up speaking ability.

The basic material how sounds are made is the stream of air coming from the

lungs, passing through the throat, and going out through the mouth or nose. One of the most detailed definitions of pronunciation is that pronunciation is the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is produced. (Hornby 2000: 1057).

Generally, there are two kinds of pronouncing of sound system in English: consonant and vowel (Zainuddin, 1995: 1). Consonants and vowels are produced in completely different ways. In Cambridge dictionary, the production of a consonant, the parts of mouth involved are the tongue, the lips, the teeth, the tooth ridge, the palate, the toe, the velum and the uvula. The airstream finds a radical constriction or even total blockage at some point along the central passage in the oral cavity. Meanwhile, when a vowel sound is made, no such obstacle is present. There are 12 vowels in English, they are: /i:/, /i/, /u:/, /u/, /ɑ :/, /ʌ /, /ɔ :/, /ɔ /, /e/, /ɜ :/, /æ/, and /ə/. Vowel sounds can be distinguished from each other by the place of articulation and the height of the tongue.

Based on the place of articulation, vowel is divided into: front vowels, central vowels and back vowels. Central vowel sounds are devided into two groups: stressed (longer sound) central vowel /ɜ :/, /ɑ :/ and unstressed central vowels /ʌ /, /ə /. Central vowels can be much harder for second language learners to identify

because we are essentially talking about a single sound. The difference is where that sound is located in a particular word, and whether or not it has stress.

The purposes of this research were formulated as follows:

1. To find out the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing /ɑ :/

2. To find out the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing /ə/

3. To find out the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing /ɜ :/.

4. To find out the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing /ʌ /.

This research has some significances for English teacher and students. First, for English teachers, this research will give information about students ability, With this information, they provide their students with the information about how to pronounce vowel sounds appropriately. Second, for the students, it is expected that the research gives valuable contribution for the students to know their ability. So that, they can improve and develop their

pronunciation skill, when pronouncing /ɑ :/, /ə /, /ɜ :/ and /ʌ /.

Research Method

The design of this research was descriptive in nature. Gay (1987: 189) states that descriptive research involves collecting data to test hypothesis or to answer the question concerning the current status of the subject of the study. This study was designed to describe and analyze the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing central vowel sounds /ɑ :/, /ə /, /ɜ :/ and /ʌ /. The researcher chose the second year students as population because they had studied about pronunciation course. Besides that, he belives that they are lack of practice. Number of the population of this study was 110 students that grouped into three classes; A, B, and C. The researcher chose cluster random sampling technique because the students had the same teaching materials, lesson plan and learning process, so researcher chose just one class. To choose the sample, the researcher wrote the names of the class on three pieces of paper. They were rolled and mixed up in a box. Then, the writer chose one paper from the box. The class B had been chosen and became the sample for this study. The researcher took 27% students from the population as sample. Oral pronunciation test was used as an instrument to collect the data. The students were asked to pronounce the given words in a piece of paper. The researcher gave two minutes to pronounce the given words. It means that the alocated time was 60 minutes to do the test.

The researcher used the content validity For reliability the researcher used inter rater method. It means that there were two scorers. To see the correlation between two scorers, the researcher used Pearson Product Moment formula. In gathering the data, the researcher used the following procedures. At first, The researcher administered the pronunciation test to the students. The second, the researcher recorded students' pronunciation by using hand phone and listened students' pronunciation. The third is the scorers checked the students' record. The last is the scorers gave score

In analyzing the data, the researcher used the following procedure. The first is the researcher counted the average of the students' scores from both assessor. The second the researcher calculated mean and standard deviation, the researcher used the formula by Gay. The third is the researcher classified the students' ability based on their group: high ability, moderate ability and low ability. And the last, the researcher calculated the percentage of the students who had high, moderate and low ability.

Findings and Discussions

The researcher presents the findings of the students' ability in pronouncing central vowel sounds /ɑ :/, /ə /, /ɜ :/ and /ʌ /.

1. Students' Ability in Pronouncing Central Vowel /ɑ :/.

Based on the result of data analysis it was found that the second year students' ability in pronouncing /ɑ :/ was moderate. The researcher found 5 students (16.67%) had high ability, 21 students (70%) had moderate ability and 4 students (13,33%) had low ability.

2. Students' Ability in Pronouncing Central Vowel /ə /

Based on the result of data analysis it was found that the second year students' ability in pronouncing /ə / was moderate. The researcher found that 5 students (16.67%) had high ability, 15 students (50%) had moderate ability and 10 students (33.33%) had low ability.

3. Students' Ability in Pronouncing Central Vowel /ɜ :/

Based on the result of data analysis it was found that the second year students' ability in pronouncing /ɜ :/ was moderate. The researcher found 5 students (16.67%) had high ability, 21 students (70%) had moderate ability and 4 students (13,33%) had low ability

4. Students' Ability in Pronouncing Central Vowel /ʌ /

Based on the result of data analysis it was found that the second year students' ability in pronouncing /ʌ :/ was moderate. The researcher found 4 students (13.33%) had high ability, 18 students (60%) had moderate ability and 8 students (26.67%) had low ability.

Discussions

This study found that in general the students' ability of the second year students' of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing central vowel sounds was moderate. It means that few of them can not pronounce the words correctly. The inabilities might be caused by several factors. The first is because this sound does not exist in their mother language. Actually they have /ɑ / as in *makan,* but it is quite different with /ɑ :/ as in *dark.* The second is the students are not familiar enough with the pattern of spelling that represents the sound. Generally, if a word is ended by /r/, it pronounced with /ə /. The last is the students are not familiar with the words.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the finding of this study, it can be concluded that the ability of the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in pronouncing central vowel sound was moderate. This conclusion was supported by the fact 21 students (70%) had moderate

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ability in pronouncing /ɑ :/, 15 students (50%) had moderate ability in pronouncing /ə /, 21 students (70%) had moderate ability in pronouncing /ɜ :/ and 18 students (60%) had moderate ability in pronouncing /ʌ /.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusions above, the researcher gave several suggestions as follows:

1. The lecturers should provide the students with the knowledge, teaching material and teaching method to guide the students in pronouncing these sounds in order to make the students pronounce it correctly.

2. The lecturer is expected to create sufficient drills in teaching unfamiliar English symbol, therefore the English students can learn English pronunciation easily.

3. For the students, they should do more drills seriously and care about the words to improve their pronunciation.

The next researchers are suggested to use this research finding as reference in conducting similar study.

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