



Using Sephonics in Teaching Speaking To The first Grade of Junior High School Students

Helfany Amsa¹, Kristian Burhan², Gusnita Efrina³

¹University of Nahdlatul Ulama West Sumatera

²University of Nahdlatul Ulama West Sumatera

³University of Nahdlatul Ulama West Sumatera

fhanyqueensha@gmail.com, misterkrist88@gmail.com, gusnitaefrina@gmail.com

Abstract

Many students think that learning English is very difficult and boring. This is because English is a foreign language and they are afraid to make mistakes. This happens due to various factors, such as lack of mastery of vocabulary and grammar, improper pronunciation and a learning atmosphere that cannot attract students. These problems can be found in all aspects of ability in English, especially in speaking. Qualitative method used in this study and content analysis will be used as data analysis. Based on the study, the writer conclude that English teachers in junior high schools, especially first graders, can also use Sephonics to improve students' English pronunciation, so that students will be more interested in learning, be active, and can also improve their language skills.

Keywords: Teaching speaking, Pronunciation, Sephonics

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1. Introduction

As human beings, people need to communicate each other to express their ideas, attitudes and feelings. Because of that, people need a tool to reach their goal, and the tool for communication is language. Based on Oxford dictionary (2000) language is a system of sounds and words that is used to express thoughts and feelings. Because human beings live apart in different parts of the world, they use different languages in their communication, and one of which is English language.

English language is spoken not only in England but also in many other countries in the world, which is, therefore, known as an international language. Besides, English

language is very crucial for developing science and technology because many sources of knowledge are written in English. Considering the importance of English, Indonesian government has taken English as one of the compulsory subject in the curriculum of junior high schools up to universities. Even some elementary schools have introduced English to their students.

Junior high school is a place where students can learn English language. In learning English language, students are expected to master four skills namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. All of the skills are integrated together to build the students' competence in using English as written in school curriculum.

According to the curriculum, the aim of learning English in Junior High schools is to develop students' communication ability in oral and written form. The curriculum also stresses that the student have to be able to develop the own competence both oral and written communication in order to reach their functional literacy.

The aim of language teaching is to help student to communicate and express feelings, attitudes, exchange facts and socialize in the language. The students can learn and practice the language well by practicing speaking. They can also easily share what they think through speaking to tell it directly to other people. Furthermore, speaking is more preferable for its effectiveness and efficiency in daily communication. This is supported by the fact that in learning process, the students are given instruction and explanation through speaking.

In order to speak English accurately and fluently, students have to master some components such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. One of the important components in speaking is pronunciation; as a result, the students have to learn how to pronounce the English words correctly. Before they are able to pronounce words correctly, they must be able to correctly pronounce each of the sounds that construct those words. In addition, in English language, the spelling of a word often gives little idea of its pronunciation, one letter is used for many sounds and one sound may be represented by several spelling. Because of that, learning pronunciation is very important for English language learners. The earlier they begin to learn pronunciation the more easily they master it.

However, most of the students are still not able to pronounce English sounds correctly, especially the sounds which are not used in Indonesian language. English has more sounds than Indonesian both in vowels and consonants. As a result, inaccurate or incorrect pronunciation gives different meanings of the word. For example, the word "three" is pronounced /θri:/, but some students still pronounce it /tri:/ which refers

to the word "tree". This happens because the sound /θ/ is not used in Indonesian language. This is only one out of other more examples of how students in junior high schools have problems in pronouncing English sounds. This fact shows that pronunciation must get serious attention from teachers in order to achieve the aims of teaching speaking as mentioned in the curriculum.

To overcome this problem, teachers have, actually, used their own technique or media. However, those technique or media do not seem to succeed to make the students able to pronounce English sounds correctly. They still depend on using the conventional technique such as drilling: asking the students to repeat the words until they can pronounce the words correctly. However, this technique may make the students bored because there is no variation in the way they learn good pronunciation. In fact, teachers can use the application of technology to teach pronunciation to the students.

Nowadays, technology has an important role in people's life. The development of technology has already influenced all aspects of human's life, not only in business, but also in education field. The improvement of technology in education field has already changed the ways of teaching-learning from conventional technique by introducing various learning media such as software program. One of great software programs of learning English sounds is "sephonics". By using sephonics software program, the students will listen to correct pronunciation of all sounds in English language. Furthermore, through this program, they can also see the spelling of each sound they pronounce.

2. Method

This research applied a qualitative approach. For qualitative research, the purpose of phenomena can be understood carefully if conducted through interaction with the subject by deep interview. Besides, it can do through observation to the location of phenomena.

2.1 Procedures

The step of this qualitative research was conducting data from observation and interview. First, the researcher observed the class that will be sample of the research. Then, the researcher focus on how the students pronounce the word and after that how the students use sephnonic in speaking topics.

The setting of the study was in MTsS PGAI. The school is located in Padang city. The participants of this study were students who had registered on 2019 academic year.

2.2 Data Analysis

The researcher used content analysis to analysing the data. Data analysis could be done after the data was collected from the observation

3. Findings And Discussion

3.1 Teaching Implementation

3.1.1. Pre teaching activities

In this stage, the teacher begins the learning process by doing classroom administration such as greeting the students, checking the students' attendance, and asking the students' readiness to study. Next, the teacher tells students that they are going to learn how to pronounce English sounds correctly by using computer software which is called "sephonics". Before introducing sephonics, The teacher gives a song to perform how English sounds are correctly pronounced. After that the students are invited to sing that song together. This song is used to attract the students' interest in the subject that is going to be learned in this meeting.

At the end of this stage, the teacher explains sephonics. This software is relatively new for the first grade students at junior high school; consequently, the teacher must give clear explanation about it. The teacher may describe sephonics by showing a figure of sephonics exercises to the students.

There are seven exercises in sephonic. Explanation about all exercises in sephonic will be showed in the figure below. This can

help the students to get the concept of sephonics.

3.1.2. Whilst teaching activities

Before the teacher explains sephonics, the students are asked to give their ideas about the figure that is shown. They are invited to participate actively in contributing their ideas to show how much they know about sephonics after seeing the figure. This activity is known as exploring activity, the sub activity in whilst teaching activity. After that the students are given explanation about sephonics and exercises that will be practiced.

The teacher can explain sephonics by saying that it is computer software to learn English pronunciation. By using this software, the students will know how to pronounce English sounds (consonants and vowels) and words correctly. Besides, they can also practice those sounds and words independently by the exercises in this software. A good pronunciation is the basic ability to learn speaking. What follow is the explanation of how the teacher explains each of the exercises in sephonics.

a. The phonetic alphabet

The teacher asks the students to open the first exercise in sephonics, that is the phonetic alphabet. This part gives the exercise to practice English phonetic alphabets. The students can hear all of English vowels and consonants by clicking the phonetic sign displayed in the monitor. For example, when the students click the sign /ae/, they will hear the sound /ae/ from the software, and they can do this activity for all of English sounds. This activity is so easy for the students on the first grade of junior high school. Besides, it is very useful for them because they can know the sound of all English vowels and consonants and they can also practice it directly while they are using the software. Finally, the teacher asks the students whether they understand about the first exercise in sephonics.

After all of the students can practice the first exercise, the teacher continues with

the second exercise. This is about English phonetic sounds and signs. The students just match the sound with the correct sign in sephonics. The name of the second exercise is “match sound and phonetic sound” that will be discussed below.

b. Match sound and phonetics sound

Now, it is the time for the teacher to model this exercise. The students will be asked to click the sign “New sound” button on the monitor to hear the sound. They will listen to the sound by choosing the correct sign in phonetic sign’s table. The teacher reminds the students whether they want to listen to the sound again. If they do, they can click the “Repeat” button. They may repeat the sound as many times as they need until they are able to pronounce each of the sounds correctly. For instance, in “New sound” a sound /g/ is shown, so the students should click /g/ in order to match them.

Then, when the students do not know which sign represents the sound, the teacher tells the students to click any three signs and the right one will start blinking to catch their attention. The teacher should tell the students that they cannot hear which sound the phonetic sign represents by using the right mouse because it is presented in the previous exercise. This exercise is helpful for the students to know about the sign and sound at the same place and same time. They will not spend their time to think about the sign. They can practice it by themselves.

c. Which spelling is correct?

The next exercise in sephonics is which spelling is correct. This is about word spelling. The teacher should explain about this exercise step by step because it is more difficult than the previous exercises. The students will see three alternative ways to write the word with ordinary letters. The students’ task in this exercise is to choose which of the alternatives is correct by clicking on it. For example, if there is a spelling /meik/, the students choose the correct word that has that spelling. The answer is /make/.

If the students get correct answer in the first time, they will see green color on the alternative box. It will be yellow for the second time. It is based on the number of times the students have tried. The teacher also explains that all of the students can click the alternative box with the right mouse to hear the pronunciation of the sign. This exercise is really helpful for the students because it shows the pronunciation of words in English and gives the students knowledge about the spelling of the words correctly.

d. Which sound can you hear?

The next exercise is about English sounds. This exercise is named “which sound can you hear” which is different from the previous three exercises. The teacher explains that in this exercise there is a word and the students are expected to guess the spelling of the word that is represented. For example, when the students hear the word /tin/ which is represented by the spelling /i/ the middle, the students have to choose it. If the students can find the correct answer in the first try, the green colour will appear on the spelling’s box. This is very useful for the students because by doing this exercise they will know word spelling, the sound of each of the alphabets, and the pronunciation of the word.

e. How is the word spelled?

The teacher tells the students that the next exercise is more difficult than the previous ones. The fifth exercise is about how the word is spelled. The students will write the word by themselves based on its spelling in the spelling box. The teacher should tell the students that when they are not sure with their own answer, they can change their first answer. If they are confused with the correct answer, they may click “show correct answer” button in order to know the correct answer.

Then the teacher should tell the students that they may choose “New word” to change the spelling. For example, they are asked to determine the spelling of the sound /swi:t/, they can write /sweet/ in the word’s box. This is an interesting way to improve the students’ ability in learning word’s spelling.

After all of the exercises have been explained, now it is the time for the students to practice those exercises by themselves. They are going to practice the exercises in sephonics from the first up to the last exercise. The teacher controls the activities by walking around the class to ensure that all of the students have already understood the process of doing all of the exercises. This activity is called confirmation. The teacher must help the students who still get difficulties in doing sephonics exercises.

3.1.3. Post teaching activities

In this activity, the teacher evaluates the students' pronunciation after using sephonics in learning process. The teacher asks the students to close the sephonics program and asks them to pronounce some of words. The teacher can use the sephonics in order to check whether the students' pronunciation has already been correct. By using sephonics, other students can also check their classmates' pronunciation. This activity finishes when all of the students have been asked to pronounce the words.

3.2 The Advantages of Using Sephonics in Teaching English Pronunciation

Using sephonics in teaching English pronunciation to junior high school students give some advantages. Here are some advantages that sephonics may offer:

- a. The students may become more motivated in learning English pronunciation because they learn it by using an advanced technology program.
- b. The students can learn a correct pronunciation from the native speakers of English. Even though they do not meet the native speakers, they can listen to their sounds through sephonics.
- c. The students can get the opportunity to check their own pronunciation whenever and wherever they are.
- d. Through sephonics, mispronunciation of English sounds that has taken place so far at schools, as have been mentioned in the background of the problem, can be solved.

Now, the students are not dependent anymore on their teacher to get the pronunciation of the English sounds and words.

4. Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that speaking is a tool to express someone's feeling and thoughts; however, it cannot run well if the speaker does not have good pronunciation. Consequently, pronunciation is an important component in speaking. Junior high school students, while speaking English, should learn how to pronounce English sounds and words correctly. The use of sephonics can help the students to be able to pronounce English sounds and words correctly. There are seven exercises in sephonics will help the students to achieve it. Each of the exercises trains the students to be able to spell the words and to pronounce the words correctly. In the teaching and learning process, sephonics is introduced in pre teaching, while in the whilst teaching, the six exercises in sephonics are explained and modeled by the teacher, and in post teaching, the teacher can use it as instrument to evaluate the students' pronunciation. Sephonics can hel the students to do independent study, that is to minimize their teacher as a source of every knowledge.

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