



IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' MASTERY IN PRONOUNCING CONSONANTS /f/ AND /v/

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Abstract

This final project is concerned with the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary toward the students' pronunciation of consonants [f] and [v]. The objective of this study is to improve the students' pronunciation by using Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. This study used action research design. There were two cycles of action in this study. This research started with an initial pre-test and ended with a final post-test. In each cycle there were pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The tests were used to collect the quantitative data. Meanwhile, observation checklist and questionnaire were used to gather the qualitative data. Thirty one students of class VIII H of SMP N 22 Semarang were chosen as the subjects of this study. Based on the data analyses, there was a significant improvement of the students' achievement after the implementation of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary was given. This improvement was proved by the comparison between the result of Initial Pre-test and Final Post-test. This improvement was also supported by the results of observation checklists and questionnaire. Based on the observation checklists, the students' attendance and engagement in Cycle 2 was better than their attendance and engagement in Cycle 1. Moreover, the result of questionnaire showed that the students gave positive perception towards the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. With regard to the above results, it can be concluded that the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary successfully improves the students' pronunciation of consonants [f] and [v]. Therefore, the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary in the teaching pronunciation, especially pronunciation of English words containing consonants [f] and [v] is recommended.

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INTRODUCTION

During my observation on the teaching process in SMP N 22 Semarang three months ago, I found that the teacher gave less pronunciation practice to the students. During eighty minutes of teaching and learning process, the teacher only gave pronunciation practice for five to ten minutes. The rest of the time was spent on reading and writing practice, and also doing some tasks.

In the beginning, the teacher pronounced a list of vocabulary and then she asked the students to pronounce those words. Then, she randomly asked the students to pronounce those words. Pronunciation error correction would come up when any of the students mispronounced any of those words. However, in daily interaction with the teacher during the teaching and learning process, the students often mispronounced other English words but the mispronunciation was not corrected. It seemed that the teacher gave less attention to the students' pronunciation.

The most interesting pronunciation problem I found during my observation was the failure of the students in pronouncing the words containing the sounds /f/ and /v/. They always pronounced the sound /v/ with /f/ but the teacher did not correct such a mistake. For example, the students pronounced the word *love* as [lɑ:f]. The students' failure in pronouncing the words containing sounds /v/ might be caused by some possibilities. Firstly, the teacher did not teach how to pronounce that sound explicitly. Secondly, the teacher pronounced that sound correctly but the students failed to copy it correctly.

Based on my observation on the teaching process, the teacher still used conventional method in teaching pronunciation. Her pronunciation became the sole model of pronunciation that should be followed by the students because there is no pronunciation model from media. Therefore, the students was not interested in the learning process. As a matter of fact, there are many media that can be used in teaching pronunciation. They do not only make the pronunciation teaching and learning more interesting, but also become a good model of

pronunciation. Those teaching media are video, internet, flashcard, and dictionary. Any of those media can be applied in SMP N 22 Semarang because the facilities in that school enable the teacher to use media in teaching pronunciation.

The fact that the use of media in teaching pronunciation is still ignored may occur in the other classes of SMP N 22 Semarang. Therefore, there is also a possibility that the students in those classes of that school mispronounce English sounds, especially the sound /v/ because they do not get a good model of pronunciation.

In an effort to answer the problem above, I decided to conduct a research in that school. I decided to use Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary in my teaching to prove whether or not it successfully improves the students' pronunciation of English consonants [f] and [v]. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary was chosen since it was practical and gave the audio form of pronunciation of English words. Hopefully, with this research, the students will be more interested in learning pronunciation and they will have a good model of pronunciation of English words.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Pronunciation

Dalton and Seidholfer (1994:3) write their idea about pronunciation in general terms, as follows:

Pronunciation is the production of significant sounds in two senses. First, sound is significant because it is used as part of a code of a particular language. Therefore, we can talk about the distinctive sounds of English, French, Thai, and other languages. In this sense, we can talk about pronunciation as the production and reception of sounds of speech. Second, sound is significant because it is used to achieve meaning in context of use. Here the code combines with other factors to make communication possible. In this sense, we can talk about pronunciation with reference to acts of speaking.

According to Ramelan (2003: 22), there are two features that can be distinguished when a speaker produces an utterance. They are as follows.

1. Segmental features, or just segmental which refer to sound unit arranged in a segmental order; and
2. Suprasegmental features, or just suprasegmental which refer to such features as stress, pitch, length, intonation, and other features that always accompany that production of segmental.
5. similar sounds in two languages which differ only slightly in their phonetic features.

Then, according to Dalton (1997: 1), the main problem in learning a foreign language is learner's reception. He states that 'If the "English" sound is not clearly received, the brain of the learner converts it into the closest sound in their own language.'

From the statements above, it can be concluded that there are many reasons that cause the students' failure in producing proper pronunciation of certain sounds. Therefore, the teacher should include pronunciation in her teaching material in order to help the student able to pronounce the English sounds correctly. The next sub-section will explain further about teaching pronunciation.

In this study, the main feature of pronunciation which will be focused is the segmental one. The segmental features are vowels, diphthongs, and consonants. According to Ramelan (2003: 99-108), there are twenty five kinds of consonants; they are [p], [t], [k], [ʔ], [b], [d], [g], [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ], [r], [h], [tʃ], [dʒ], [m], [n], [ŋ], [l], [w], and [y]. Among those consonants, there are only two that will be discussed. They are consonants [f] and [v]. Therefore, the next sub-chapter will review pronunciation of English consonants [f] and [v].

Teaching Pronunciation

In mastering English as a foreign language, the students should learn English both in written form and oral form. In the spoken form, pronunciation is important because having bad pronunciation may lead to misunderstanding in communication although a speaker has a good command of grammar. Therefore, teaching pronunciation to the students is considered important. The idea is in line with Kelly (2000: 11) who states that it is important to include pronunciation teaching in the classroom because learners' errors can cause misunderstanding and inhibit successful communication.

Pronunciation of English Consonants [f] and [v]

In producing [f], Kelly (2000: 50) says, 'The lower lip makes light contact with the upper teeth. The soft palate is raised. /f/ is unvoiced and fortis.' Meanwhile, in producing [v], Kelly (2000: 50) states that 'The lower lip makes light contact with the upper teeth. The soft palate is raised. /v/ is voiced and lenis. /v/ is devoiced at the end of a word.'

From the statements above, it is obvious that the teacher should teach pronunciation to the students. However, non-native teacher may feel that his/her pronunciation will not meet the standard of the native English speaker, so he/she does not feel confident to teach pronunciation. In this case, teaching pronunciation by using media could be the solution to this problem. The medium which was used in this study was Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. It will be discussed in the subchapter below.

Reasons for Pronunciation Problems

Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, there will be some pronunciation problems faced by Indonesian students when they learn English. According to Ramelan (2003: 5-7), pronunciation problems are caused by some reasons. They are:

1. transfer of linguistic habit;
2. different elements between native language and the target language;
3. the same phonetic feature in both language but differ in their distributions;
4. similar sounds in the two languages, which have different variants or allophones; and,

Electronic Dictionary

In this modern era, teachers can use many technologies as tools in teaching English to achieve effectiveness in the class. One of the

media that can be used by means of technology in class is an electronic dictionary.

There are several definitions of electronic dictionary. Webster Online Dictionary (<http://websteronlinedictionary.org/definitions/Electronic%20Dictionary>) defines electronic dictionary as follows:

An electronic dictionary is either a small handheld computer with integrated reference materials, or a PDA or a smartphone with a dictionary program. Electronic dictionaries are also programs that can be downloaded from the Internet or purchased on a CD-ROM or DVD and installed on a desktop computer or on a laptop. Other electronic dictionaries can be searched and consulted online on the Internet. The computer-installed dictionaries can often be consulted directly from within any application that uses editable text. The term may be used in a broader sense to refer to the features of a machine-readable dictionary or spell checker.

Based on the Webster Online Dictionary's definition above, there are several kinds of electronic dictionaries. They are:

1. a small handheld computer with integrated reference materials;
2. a smartphone with a dictionary program;
3. a program that can be downloaded from the internet or purchased on a CD-ROM and should be installed on a computer;
4. online dictionaries; and,
5. spelling checker.

In this study, I used Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary as a medium in teaching pronunciation. It belongs to the kind of electronic dictionaries in the third form. It provides meanings, phonetic transcriptions, and the audio of English word pronunciation. It can be easily downloaded from the internet and installed in a laptop/computer.

Action Research

Since the research design that I used in this study was an action research, this sub-chapter would discuss action research according to some experts. There are several definitions of action research. Harmer (2001: 344-345) states that 'Action research is the name given to a series of

procedures teachers can engage in, either because they wish to improve aspects of their teaching, or because they wish to evaluate the success and/appropriacy of certain activities and procedures'.

According to Coats (2005:4) action research can be described as 'Any research into practice undertaken by those involved in that practice, with an aim to change and improve it. It is therefore, a process of enquiry by you as a practitioner into the effectiveness of your own teaching and your students' learning.'

Steps in Action Research

Burns (2010:8) states that there are four steps in action research. Those steps are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. They would be explained below.

1. Planning

In this step, a problem is identified and a plan of action is developed in order to bring improvements in the research.

2. Action

It is a step where the plan which has been arranged is put into action in a period of time.

3. Observation

In the observing step, the data are collected and the effects of the action are observed.

4. Reflection

It is a step of evaluating and describing the effects of the action in order to make sense of what has happened and to understand the issue which have been explored.

METHOD

This study was an action research with the students of VIII H of SMP N 22 Semarang in the academic year of 2015/2016 as the subjects. This action research consisted of two cycles of four steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The object of the study was the students' improvement of the students' pronunciation of English words containing consonants [f] and [v]. Therefore, the material of this study was the English words containing consonants [f] and [v] that were available in the students' handout.

To collect those data, three instruments were used. The first was tests; they were used to record the students' pronunciation. The second was questionnaires; they were used to record the students' impression to the use of Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary. The last was observation checklists; they were used to record the students' attendance and engagement during the treatments.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION OF FINDINGS

Result of the Students' Pronunciation Test

Scores	Initial Pre-test	Cycle 1		Cycle 2		Final Post-test
		C1 Pre-test	C1 Post-test	C2 Pre-test	C2 Post-test	
	42.39	70.05	85.64	14.24	48.70	

The Result of Cycle 1 Observation Checklist

Indicators	Total Point	Mean Point	Criteria
Attendance	95	3.06	Good
Engagement	88.25	2.84	Engaged

The Result of Cycle 2 Observation Checklist

Indicators	Total Point	Mean Point	Criteria
Attendance	118	3.80	Very Good
Engagement	101.5	3.27	Very Engaged

The Result of Questionnaire

No.	Question Number	Yes		No	
		Σ	P	Σ	P
1.	1	31	100%	-	-
2.	2	29	93.54%	2	6.46%
3.	3	-	-	31	100%
4.	4	31	100%	-	-
5.	5	31	100%	-	-

REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Initial Pre-test

The classical mean score of the Initial Pre-test (42.39) indicated that the students' pronunciation was below the standard of mastery of learning score (75) set up by the school. In addition, individually, none of the students got score above the mastery of learning. Therefore, I decided to give some treatments to the students in order to improve their pronunciation score.

Cycle 1 Pre-test

The result of Cycle 1 Pre-test showed that the students did not have difficulty in pronouncing the sound /f/. They were able to pronounce the sound /f/ correctly because this sound also existed in their mother tongue. However, both classical and individual mean score were still below the mastery of learning (75). In addition, the students had poor performance in pronouncing the other English sounds. This problem needed to be investigated by other researchers in order to know the cause of it because Cycle 1 Pre-test only focused on the students' pronunciation of the sound /f/. Since the classical and the individual mean score were still below the mastery of learning, the students needed to get a treatment in order to make their pronunciation reach the mastery of learning score.

Cycle 1 Post-test

The mean score of Cycle 1 Post-test (85.64) was higher than the mean score of Cycle 1 Pre-test (70.05). According to the criteria of success that had been explained in Chapter 3 (see page 32), this mean score fulfilled the first criteria. Both classical and individual mean score reached the mastery of learning score. However, if we referred to the second criteria, the classical mean score did not fulfill it. The improvement of classical mean score did not reach 20 points. Meanwhile, individually, there were only some students that made significant improvement. Since both classical and individual mean score fulfilled the first criteria, Cycle 2 could be conducted.

Cycle 2 Pre-test

By looking at the mean score of Cycle 2 Pre-test (14.24), both classical and individual mean score was below the mastery of learning score (75). I conclude that the students had difficulty in pronouncing the sound /v/ in the context of English words. They always pronounced the sound /v/ with /f/, for example the word *leave* was pronounced as [li:f]. Therefore, the students needed to get a treatment in order to make their performance in

pronouncing the sound /v/ in the context of English words better.

Cycle 2 Post-test

By looking at the first criteria of success, the classical mean of Cycle 2 Pos-test (48.70) did not fulfill the criteria. It was still below the mastery of learning score. Meanwhile, individually, there were only some students whose the individual mean score fulfilled the first criteria. However, if we referred to the second criteria, both classical and individual mean score fulfilled the criteria. The improvement of classical mean score and individual mean score reached 20 points. Since the objective of the second treatment had been reached, I decided to give the students Final Post-test.

Final Post-test

By looking at the first criteria of success, both classical and individual mean score did not fulfill the criteria. The classical and individual mean score were still below the mastery of learning score (75). However, by looking at the second criteria, the improvement of classical mean reached 24.06 point. Meanwhile, the improvement of individual mean score reached about 24.05 points. It meant that the second criteria had been fulfilled.

Cycle 1 Observation Checklist

The students' attendance mean score (3.06) was classified as good. Meanwhile, the students' engagement mean score (2.84) was classified as being engaged. It indicated that they were interested to have a new way in learning pronunciation, so that they gave full attention to the teacher's explanation, immediately responded to the teacher's instruction, and actively asked and discussed the medium and the teaching material. Those positive reactions might be caused by the fact that they had never been taught a pronunciation practice by using a medium.

Cycle 2 Observation Checklist

In Cycle 2 Observation Checklist, the students' attendance mean score increased from

3.06 in the first treatment to 3.80 in the second treatment. Meanwhile, the students' engagement mean score increased from 2.84 to 3.27. By looking at the criterion of observation checklist assessment, the students' attendance mean score was classified as very good. Meanwhile, the students' engagement mean score was classified as being very engaged.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to the students in order to find out the students' interest in the use of media in pronunciation teaching, the relevancy of the materials to the curriculum, the level of the materials difficulty, the advantage of the use of media, and the sustainability of the use of media in pronunciation teaching. The result of this questionnaire showed that all of the students liked the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary in pronunciation learning. They also agreed that the use of medium helped them pronounce the English words containing the sound /f/ and /v/. None of them had difficulty in pronouncing the English words containing the sound /f/ and /v/. They also said that the medium was very much needed to be employed in the pronunciation teaching and learning. There were only 2 students who said that the materials in this research were not appropriate with the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

First, this study showed that the subjects of the study had problems in pronouncing the sound /v/ in the context of English words. It was proved by their poor mean score in the Pre-test.

Second, the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary in pronunciation teaching was able to improve the students' performance in pronouncing the sound /v/ in the context of English words. It was proved by the significant improvement of both classical and individual mean score.

Third, the students showed positive reactions towards the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary in pronunciation teaching. It was proved by the improvement of students' attendance and engagement. Moreover,

based on the result of the questionnaire, the use of Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary in pronunciation teaching and learning was necessary.

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