

***The Role of Students' Perception and Information Technology in
Improving The Production of (θ) and (ð) by 1st Semester
Students of STIKOM Tunas Bangsa Pematangsiantar***

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Abstract

The productions of the English consonants (θ) and (ð) are constant difficulties faced by English learners whose mother tongue is not English. The failure in perfect productions of these consonants very often goes on to the time when the students' speech sound plays a key part in their career. With the role of students' perception of correct positions of the articulators against the required points of articulation in producing the dental fricative consonant sounds (θ) and (ð) and information technology, the students can improve the quality of the productions even to perfect state.

Keywords: *role, students perception, information technology, consonants ð and θ*

1. Introduction

As a nation, Indonesia lives in cooperation with many other nations in the world. Being together, these nations must inevitably communicate with one another. When talking about communication, like an individual human being, a nation must have a means that will allow it to talk or to discuss with another. And the most practical and the most popular means of communication is a language. England, having controlled one third of the world, makes the language spoken worldwide (The United States and Britain in Prophecy, 1980). Due to the fact, The Department of Education and Teaching of the Republic of Indonesia has **decided that the English Language is taught in schools.**

The teaching of English in Indonesia's schools has begun in Elementary schools. Through this early years of English learning by the students, it is expected that the learners, when they are already admitted at tertiary schools, they will be sufficiently skilled at speaking or reading the language with perfect pronunciation. But after so many years of being in school, the achievement, especially in the production of English sounds, is far distance away from the objective determined by the state.

The same low quality of sound production is also conducted by the semester-two students of STIKOM Tunas Bangsa. And the worst is the productions of the English consonants (θ) and (ð), in which the writer focuses this research. The sound of (θ) in "think" is pronounced the same as (t) in "ting", and the sound of (th) in "this" is pronounced the same as (d) in "duck". Of the 17 students the writer observed, not even one could produce the sound of the English consonants (θ) and (ð) correctly. They did not place the articulators at their correct positions, that (θ) and (ð) are dental and fricative; (θ) is voiceless and (ð) is voiced.

The STIKOM students, after undergoing eight semesters, will graduate with a degree, and they deserve to be called professionals. When, later, they go into a work-field, they are worthy of holding an important position. In other words, they are also called important workers. Being important, they will be well-paid and must have good command of English

because the quality of the language represents the financial position of the company (Business English Training, Manchester, 1982). They are, therefore, should be trained to produce the best possible English sounds. In learning a new language, the chief problem is not at first that of language vocabulary items, but the mastery of the sound-system to understand the stream of speech, to hear the distinctive sound features and to approximate their production (Charles C. Fries, 1970). Due to their weakness in the production of (θ) and (ð), the writer, in his research, conducted the **role** of the students' perception and information technology to improve the students quality in correctly pronouncing the two consonants.

Role

In a stage play or a movie, the word role means a part that an actor takes. As a performer in a play or a film, a player may take the role of a policeman or a pan-handler. But in this scientific work, the word role means the function that a person or a thing typically has or is expected to have (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, A.S Horby). In this case, the writer uses the role students' perception and Computer Technology to reach his teaching objective.. A stage or a film can never go alive without the role of the actors. The actors make the story in the stage-play or film available, without whom, nothing will come up for the viewers to see. But the role of the students' perception and Computer Technology in improving the students' quality in the productions of (θ) and (ð) is a choice as a strategy to help the students produce as perfect as possible sounds of (θ) and (ð). With the service of both, the students are expected to correctly pronounce the consonants

English Consonant

Consonants are sounds in the production of which there is an obstruction of the air passage. This production is caused sometimes by one and sometimes by either of the speech organs, and it amounts sometimes to complete closure and at other times only to a partial one. Due to the different ways of production, various consonants are identified (Paul Christophersen, 1981). The following are the groups of the consonant sounds of English according to the manner of articulation **Stops** (p, b, t, d, k, g) are produced by stopping the passage of the breath stream, with a built-up pressure behind the closure and then releasing the breath.

Fricatives which are ten in number (f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, r, h) are produced when the air stream is not completely stopped but passes through with friction or a hissing sound.

Affricatives are produced when a stop combines with a fricative.. There are only two affricatives: (tʃ, ʒ).

Nasals (m, n, ŋ) are produced with the air stream passing through the nose rather than the mouth.

Lateral (l) is produced when the air stream is stopped in the centre by the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge.

Semi vowels. There are only two semi vowels in English: the bilabial (w) and palatal (j). They are called semi vowels because in their production, there is lack of friction and the sounds are vowel-like in their voicing but they function as consonants (Lim Kiat Boey, 1980).

Consonant (θ) and (ð)

Consonant (θ) and (ð) are fricative, dental, voiceless sounds which are produced when the air stream is not completely stopped but passes through with friction or a hissing sound. In

the production of the two sounds, the tip of the tongue shapes an opening with the upper teeth (as the point of articulation), then the dental fricatives are produced, voiceless (θ) as in the beginning of “thin” and “through” and voiced (δ) as in the beginning of “the” and “then” (Lim Kiat Boey, 1980). The other fricative sounds of the kind are (f, v, s, z, \int , ʒ , r, h). But not like these eight consonant sounds, (θ) and (δ) are the most difficult to produce by the Semester two students of STIKOM Tunas Bangsa, who are 100% Bahasa Indonesia-speaking learners, Indonesian natives, especially that the two fricative consonant sounds are not available in Bahasa Indonesia consonant sounds.

Students' perception

The base morpheme of perception is perceive which means interpret or understand something in a certain way, and the word perception is a noun which means the ability to understand something (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, AS Hornby). Whether or not students will be successful in learning a foreign language depends on their perception on how much they perceive the new language. In learning a new language, the chief problem is not at first that of learning vocabulary items. It is, first, the mastery of the sound system-- to understand the stress of speech, to hear the distinctive sound features and to approximate their production (Charles C. Fries, 1970). To make sure that the students have as perfect as possible perception, the role of the teacher, in this case is the writer, is very much required. The writer has to be able to make his students perceive what he explains. Due to the fact, the writer uses Bahasa Indonesia in his explanation. Because, in the oral approach, the explanation, although the language of the students have to be avoided as far as possible, but in order to make sure that the explanation is thoroughly understood, the students' language, Bahasa Indonesia is used (Charles C. Fries, 1970).

Technology

Technology is the application of scientific study and applied sciences* to practical tasks that are concerned with reality and action rather than theory and ideas (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, AS Hornby) As network computing and tools for learning, teaching and administration gain more power and accessibility, integrating technology into educational process is becoming a major thrust for more colleges and universities (Mc Keachie, 2006: 229). The increasing number of the world population cannot be blocked and in the rhythm of this fact, people are facing more complicated problems from one day to another. The more situation the people face, the more things the people have to do in order to search for a solution to the problem, and these have led to the people's conducting a lot of researches for the way out. Finally, as seen today, a lot of breakthroughs in the form of technology inventions serving as instrument that facilitate people doing things have come to effect. With the presence of technology, people save a lot of time and do more work, not only in offices, companies and factories around the world but also in schools. The schools without making use of the service of technology will never meet with the requirement of achieving their teaching objectives.

Students' Perception and Information Technology.

In his effort to reach the objective—to improve the production of (θ) and (δ) by the students, the writer functions the collaboration of the students perception in the correct production of (θ) and (δ) and information technology. The following are the steps taken by the writer in his class-room research.

Step one: An explanation of the correct production of (θ) and (ð) is given. It is clearly explained that the consonant (θ) and (ð) are fricative, dental, voiceless sounds which are produced when the air stream is not completely stopped but passes through with friction or a hissing sound. In the production of the two sounds, the tip of the tongue shapes an opening with the upper teeth (as the point of articulation), then the dental fricatives are produced, voiceless (θ) as in the beginning of “thin” and “through” and voiced (ð) as in the beginning of “the” and “then”. In this case, the writer uses his own articulator, showing the students that the tip of the tongue has to be placed against the upper teeth as the point of the articulator. To support this explanation which is mostly in Bahasa Indonesia, English consonant chart, as shown in the following figure, is exhibited.

		Bilabial	Labio dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post Alveolar	Palato Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
						lar	lar			
STOP	VI vd	P b			t, d				k, g	
AFFRICATIVE	VI Vd						tʃ, dʒ			
NASAL		m			n				ŋ	
LATERAL					l					
FRICATIVE	VI vd		F, v	θ, ð	s, z	r	ʃ, ʒ			h
SEMI VOWEL		w						j		

Figure 1: English Consonant Chart (Bloner, 2015)

The consonant chart serves as a great assistance to the students as they can see at a glance that (θ) is dental, fricative and voiceless and (ð) is dental, fricative and voiced. In this way, they can clearly remember the nature of the production of both the sounds. Step two: To support the explanation using the consonant chart, a computer, with a previously prepared wall-screen and an in-focus are used. In the computer, a Cambridge Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary must have been previously installed. By using this technology, the students can listen to the voice of the native speakers’ producing (θ) and (ð). The students can clearly distinguish that the fricative, dental, voiceless sound of (θ) in

thin, thank, through, thief, thesis ” is quite different from (t) in **tin, top, tip, tick, tap**” and the fricative, dental, voiced sound (ð) in **then, though, that, father, clothing**, is different from (d) in **den, dream, dead, doubt, dog**” . Then, the students’ tongues are constantly trained by asking them to repeat the sounds they hear from the recorded voice of native speakers by imitating the way how the sounds are produced

Finding

Number of students* correctly produce (θ) and (ð) after having applied the role of students’ perception of the consonant chart and a dictionary-installed computer equipped with in-focus and wall-screen is as shown by the following figure.

	kind of sound	Students’ improvement		
		Before training	After using perception in chart	Using perception and technology
	(θ)	0%	52,9%	82,3%
	(ð)	0%	47%	76%

Figure 2 : Percentage of students’ improvement in the production of (θ) and (ð) after having applied the role of students’ perception and technology.

* The number of students involved is 17, out of whom, nobody correctly pronounced (θ) and (ð) before the research.

Conclusion

After having used the role of students’ perception and dictionary-installed computers equipped with in-focus and wall-screen, the students could improve the production of fricative, dental, voiceless (θ) and the fricative, dental, voiced (ð). But, there must be constant training of this activity for the students to achieve the objective.

Suggestion

To make sure that the sound system teaching objective is achieved, the writer suggests the following:

1. For students in order not to depend on the presence of the teachers, they are advised to have their own computers installed with one or more English Pronouncing Dictionaries, like Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. In this way, they can learn the sounds wherever and whenever they need them.

2. Teachers have to realize that they can not stand away from making maximum use of technology in teaching, for studies show that use of technology saves a lot of time and leads to accurateness..

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