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STUDENT'S VOICES IN REFLECTIVE SUPRASEGMENTAL FEATURES PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

ABSTRACT: *Most of the literature on pronunciation discusses what and how to teach. The learner, that is actually the center of the teaching and learning process, remains little known or untouched. Meanwhile, suprasegmentals are of paramount importance in spoken English. The presence of suprasegmental features in speech contributes heavily to intelligibility. Suprasegmental features cover mainly stress, length, tone, and intonation. These features are essentially the same as prosodic elements of language. Perhaps, to most EFL (English as Foreign Language) learners in Indonesia, these features are complicated to master. Some teachers of English even did not seem to show interest in introducing the features to students. This article highlights the reflective process within the students learning the English pronunciation. The data were collected through diaries. The students were provided with small notebooks to write entries of reaction, perception, and learning experience when they were being taught English suprasegmental features using reflective method. Video was utilized to facilitate student engaging in reflective process through main teaching and learning activities of listening to target model, rehearsing monologue or dialogue, video-recording, and playing video clip. Overall, the majority of reflections revealed that the adoption of video as a reflective tool integrated into communicative language activities has helped the students evaluate and self-monitor their own speech performance in learning the English suprasegmental features pronunciation, which is commonly considered complicated.*

KEY WORDS: *Students' voices, reflective, suprasegmental, pronunciation, evaluate, self-monitor, teaching and learning process, diary, and class-room action research.*

INTRODUCTION

Suprasegmentals are of paramount importance in spoken English. The presence of suprasegmental features in speech contributes heavily to intelligibility. In addition, these features convey better impression of the speaker (O'Neal, 2010:65-87). It means improving the pronunciation of English suprasegmentals can facilitate communication, boost self-esteem, and possibly lead to a better future. Therefore, within the context of spoken English communication, suprasegmental features should be given priority or, at least, equality.

Suprasegmental features cover mainly stress, length, tone, and intonation (Ladefoged, 1975:217). These features are essentially the same as prosodic elements of language (Trask, 1996:343). Perhaps, to most EFL (English

as Foreign Language) learners in Indonesia, these features are complicated to master. Some teachers of English even did not seem to show interest in introducing the features to students.

Moedjito (2008:129-142) reported that EFL teachers in Indonesia valued segmental features more than suprasegmental ones. This might be due to a feeling of doubt as to how to teach the suprasegmental features. In the literature on EFL, suprasegmental features teaching methodology is still little known. In the current study, a reflective learning method was adopted to help students learn the English suprasegmental phonemes.

An expert in reflective learning and practice, Jennifer Moon (2003), argues that reflection deals with deep learning. In deep learning, the intention is the learner to develop a personal understanding of the

material and to relate it to what is already known. While Kolb, in the theory experiential learning, explains that the learner's immediate experience is taken as the focus of learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts; and at the same time, providing a concrete reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process (cited in Benson, 2001:38). In experiential learning, he adds, learning is seen as a cyclical process that integrates immediate experience, reflection, abstract conceptualisation, and action. Within the cyclical process, reflection serves as the bridge between experience and theoretical conceptualisation (Benson, 2001).

Concerning English suprasegmental phonemes learning, the relevance of reflection to experiential learning is that learners take the benefit of experience they already have for testing ideas and assumptions exploratively related with English suprasegmental features that are considered difficult to master. Learners, though feeling in doubt, knowing a little or nothing about English suprasegmental features as experience, have readiness to survive under difficult time. Reflective learners may survive searching for patterns in English suprasegmental phonemes by learning from experience they have when working with grammar or learning segmental phonemes, for instance. In other words, reflective learners are motivated to find more alternatives to approach English suprasegmental learning challenges.

From an experiential point of view, the concept of reflection is inseparable from the characteristics of adult learning. Based on age (18 years old or above), the present research participants fall into adult category and, therefore, quite relevant to be discussed in more specific context, i.e. adult education.

Adult learning cannot be regarded as similar to child learning. Brundage and Macheracher mention some characteristics of adult learning, one of which is so closely connected to the concept of reflection: adults see their own experience as learning source. Thus, experience is central in reflective process. It is the focus in adult learning process (cited in Mayuni, 2007). In a narrower context,

in the area of language teaching, it is stated that adults have rich life experience, that can be made use for learning. This means any learning which gives emphasis upon reflective process is suitable for adult language learning.

The concept of reflective or deep learning can also be viewed from a theory which belongs to constructivist theories, namely personal construct theory. Kelly mentions that personal construct theory views human thought as a process of hypothesis testing and theory building involving the continual development and revision of constructs or meaning attached to objects or events in the light of new experience (cited in Benson, 2001). Personal constructs are derived from shared assumptions and values, but systems of constructs are unique to the individual since they are shaped through personal attempts to make sense of experiences that are uniquely one's own. In regard to English suprasegmental phonemes, learning that is considered complicated and construct system that learners have, it is expected that the adoption of reflective learning will raise self-awareness of construct systems available in individual learners.

K. Cercone (2008), in discussing about adult learner characteristics, points out that adult learners need to self-reflect on the learning process and be provided ways to engage in metacognitive reflection by using think logs, reflective journals, and group discussions. This implies that although in adults reflective process already develops, there is no guarantee the process is optimum. Dealing with the current research participants, since they are at their beginning of adulthood, it is likely that reflective process is rarely identified. It is for this reason, teachers are supposed to play a role and give control so that students' reflective process becomes optimum.

In line with what discussed above, Joan Morley (1991) states that pronunciation/ speech study is most profitable when students are actively involved in their own learning, not passively detached repeaters of drills. However, learner self-involvement cannot be left to chance; it must be actively shaped, early and continually, throughout ESL (English as Second Language) course work. Teachers and

materials can help students become involved in say, for instance, the development of self-monitoring skills. Self-monitoring can begin as gentle consciousness-raising with the goal of helping students develop speech awareness, self-observation skills, and a positive attitude toward them by helping them develop a simple self-rehearsal technique—talking to yourself and listening to yourself—as the way to self-monitor.

In the present study, video as reflective tool was adopted to give this kind of impact. Video used in the video clip making makes it possible for students listen and repeat after the model while listening to/watching native speakers. While being replayed, video enables students to make the strategies of active listening and mirroring (Vitanova & Miller, 2002).

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The current study was carried out in the context of an action-research study. An action-research study was chosen to learn and improve classroom practitioner's own teaching activities. The Kemmis and Taggart's model of action research was adopted (cited in Gay & Airasian, 2000:593). The study involved twenty-four second semester students of Class C-2 at the Department of English Language Teaching of UMP (Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto) in Central Java, Indonesia, attending Pronunciation course in the 2011/2012 academic year.

The collaborative study contained two cycles, each of which comprised three pronunciation sessions. Main learning activities in each session covered listening to target model, rehearsing monologue or dialogue, video-recording, and playing video clip. Scripts were provided to help the students memorise what to say. Videos available on the campus language labs' computers were made use to facilitate reflection process in the part of students.

Two types of data were gathered: data on teaching and learning process and data on learning outcome. The research qualitative data included teaching and learning activities, teacher's behavior, students' behavior and reaction/response; while the quantitative data dealt with the test result. Qualitative data

were elicited through observation, diary, and interview; while the quantitative data were collected through recorded conversation task and test.

Qualitative data were analysed via analytic induction methods to identify common themes and to extract narratives of experience. Quantitative data were analysed to calculate statistical frequencies, percentages, and means. Triangulation – more than one methods of investigation – was employed to establish validity of the research (Bryman, 1988:131-134), namely: investigator triangulation and method triangulation.

This article is meant to share the main findings revealed in the research diaries. It is especially interesting because the sense “reflective” is twofold in the study: *firstly*, the adoption of video for encouraging students to engage in reflective process; and *secondly*, the use of diary, which is by nature reflective, for collecting the research data. According to David Nunan (1992:118-120), diary is one of important introspective tools in language research. He asserts that diaries enable students to articulate problems they are having with course content and, therefore, get help and promote autonomous learning, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning (Nunan, 1992:120).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The adoption of reflective learning method in the current study was a successful attempt to improve the teaching and learning process. In the pre-intervention period, involvement was a concern. Reflective learning method using video incorporated to communicative, meaningful language activities has encouraged student involvement in the teaching and learning process of the commonly-considered complicated suprasegmental features pronunciation.

Based on the diaries, the students involvement in the teaching and learning process can be explained as follows. Their responses varied, that fell into five to six categories: (1) *positive responses* which comprised the instruction was interesting/exciting, the instruction provided new knowledge, and the instruction was

meaningful; (2) *not wholly positive responses*; (3) *negative responses*; and (4) *others*. “Not wholly positive” constituted responses that contained partly negative responses. “Others” were responses that seemed irrelevant or did not fall into any category already mentioned, for example notes on stress patterns, or personal health.

Below is a figure that displays the students' responses to the instruction at the beginning (first cycle, first session) of the intervention period. The figure 1 shows that positive responses make up around 50 percent of the whole responses.

In the following part, relevant and useful information from the diaries is discussed under those categories mentioned above. It is necessary to note that some responses seemed to overlap quite a lot. Consequently, it is not easy to split up the diary entries into clear-cut categories.

On the Interesting Lessons. The learning activities that tended to be interesting was made possible by the inclusion of exciting learning “menu” in which students were provided with opportunity to directly practice communication in English in meaningful activity, i.e. a challenge to speak in the way the models on the recording do. With facial expressions that could be seen either *on-line* (during production) or *off-line* (after production) on the computer screen, the students became more confident in acting and expressing like in front of mirror and as if nobody had seen them. A student commented: “*I think it's very interesting [...]. Quite exciting like learning drama with expressions when speaking*” (diary of student A, 2/3/2012).

What was written by a female student below could be right. The learning activity created in the instruction was believed to benefit her because, beside exciting – that might lead to a sub-conscious learning – so that learning became more automatic, it enabled her to self-assess her own performance:

The method applied is more varied, and so the atmosphere created is exciting. Therefore,

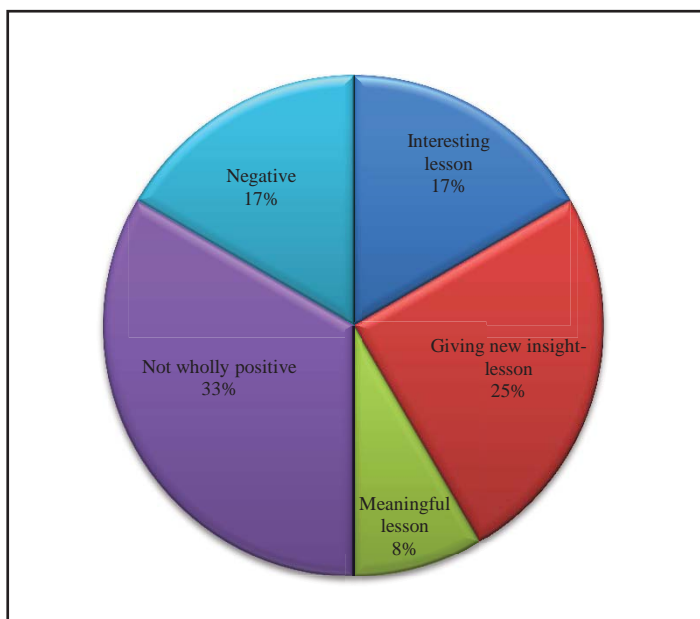


Figure 1:
Students' Responses to the Instruction

the material can be mastered more easily. By practising directly, I can recognise my mistakes and correct them directly (diary of student B, 9/3/2012).

Most students shared positive impressions dealing with the teaching and learning process, primarily the core-activity of video clip making. A student noted about desire to learn and practise as follows:

At the beginning, I felt sleepy as the course is scheduled to start at noon, but now it becomes more interesting. Then, I am making a video clip again and comparing a friend's video clip with mine and delivering comments on flaws or mistakes to correct (diary of student C, 16/3/2012).

This shows an advantage of the intervention adopted, which was not only interesting to the students, but also helped them monitor and modify their own performance, including their speech. The students found the learning activity so exciting that they never wanted to miss any single lesson, as implied in the following diary of a student.

Today I went out for refreshing mind with some mates. I feel a relief, *ehm* [...] but do not have lunch yet, as I was hurried to attend the pronunciation class. This lesson is really

interesting for me. It is always exciting to listen to own voice again, see expressions (diary of student D, 23/3/2012).

On the Meaningful Lesson.

The lessons gave considerable opportunity for the students to use the material being taught. They found the lessons like the real thing. A student, for example, wrote as follows:

I enjoy learning this way, because I can directly practise what is taught by Mr. Ton. I can directly justify when I am right and when I am wrong with the material I learn (diary of student E, 7/4/2012).

The meaningful lesson seemed to have motivated the learners to learn. It is a challenge for teachers of pronunciation in general and suprasegmental features in specific to create an environment that most possibly supports learning.

On the New Insights/Knowledge.

In relation with the intervention adopted, positive responses to the teaching and learning activity carried out can also be traced from other entries written by some participants, as quoted below:

[...] my video is bad. The one deleted was better instead. It's because I'm nervous, time is limited [...], I'm hurried [...]. However, I enjoy learning this way, so that I can show my own ability. Working in groups is not maximum, I have to share and *am* dependent upon others (diary of student F, 14/4/2012).

This example expresses the student valued individual work that was assigned at that moment. While not every learner may have been in favour of the individual activity, it was chosen for a genuine reason. The materials being taught was the stress patterns. The students were expected to make monologue video clips. In addition, this, unintentionally, could serve as a variety and accommodate different needs of learner.

The students seemed actively involved in the classroom activity. They were evaluating, self-



Figure 2:
A Reflective Suprasegmental Features Pronunciation Class

monitoring, and self-correcting their own performance (both speech and visual cues) upon completion of a monologue video clip making. The use of video as reflective tool integrated into communicative language activities has enabled them to engage in reflective process when learning the commonly-considered complicated English suprasegmental features pronunciation.

Similarly, another student wrote: "*Fairly easy, but I have to be careful [...]. A bit difficult to make it, because once is not enough, I have to make and remake a video clip*" (diary of student G, 21/4/2012). Another student commented: "*I am happy, because I can listen to videos from the computer on my desk, so that I can hear more clearly how stress is produced by speakers in the videos*" (diary of student H, 28/4/2012). From the note, it is obvious that a revised plan by sharing video files to all computers in the network was considered beneficial to the student.

Seriousness, involvement, self-monitoring, and evaluation was reflected in most of the expressions produced by the students. The learning that was considered helpful has encouraged them to learn and practice more enthusiastically: "*Thanks God, today I get new knowledge. I have to study harder in order to achieve better*" (diary of student I, 5/5/2012).

The following expression suggests that reflective process has already developed stronger in the student: "*I thinks it is more complicated. I have to find out the verbs first [...]. However, my pronunciation is better, no more dominated by the local accent*" (diary of student J, 12/5/2012). The development of self-monitoring in the parts of students is thought to be associated with the learning process or the teaching and learning activity adopted in the current research study.

A number of students reflected the development of reflective process, including self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-correction. A participant, for example, wrote: "*I understand better now, but unfortunately I can't give the right comments*" (diary of student K, 19/5/2012). Similarly, another learner mentioned: "*I am happy, because my speech voice is getting better*" (diary of student L, 26/5/2012).

On the Not Wholly Positive Responses. Some students noted different expressions reflecting responses that are not wholly positive, such as feeling of interest and fun in joining the lessons with no clear reason and sign of being able to monitor and evaluate performance by themselves. A participant commented:

Very, very interesting, although there is a little technical problem the learning activity continues well. With a method that adopts video, I can instantly recognise mistakes in my pronunciation and repeat them better (diary of student F, 14/4/2012).

This shows an advantage of using the intervention adopted, that was not only interesting for the students but also helped them evaluate and correct their own pronunciation. The exciting learning enabled the students to handle learning obstacles they met as implicitly conveyed in the following diary entry of a student.

Again, [...] new sort of intonation material, I am so happy to learn it. It's so interesting. There are errors today, especially in our media, but I think we have good results as we hope. Hopefully, there'll be another exciting lesson next time (diary of student H, 28/4/2012).

A not wholly positive response that reflects developing capacity for monitoring and evaluation in student's own learning is best exemplified in the following note of a low achiever: "*I am still learning intonation. I gradually understand better. However, when practising, I still have difficulty and often make mistakes*" (diary of student C, 16/3/2012). Another note written by another weak yet diligent student contains similar message:

Making a video clip is very interesting. I can act and it's a freedom of performance. However, it seems that I am still having problems with several things in pronouncing words, unable to distinguish when to go up and when to go down (diary of student J, 12/5/2012).

It implies in the note that the writer has been able to self-evaluate learning material mastery. Thus, information of mental process could be found either in positive or negative responses. Such a thing becomes necessary as most of the literature on pronunciation deals with what and how to teach, while the learner remains an abstract, silent body in the classroom. That is why, it is important for pronunciation teachers to listen to students' voices related with their beliefs and thoughts about their pronunciation learning/teaching.

When the teachers listen to the students' voices, they give an opportunity for the development of their self-awareness, involvement, and responsibility in the process of learning suprasegmental phonemes. When the teachers listen to the students' voices, they could determine strategies and pronunciation teaching components the students find most valuable. In the case of English suprasegmental features, this enables the teachers to monitor the students' learning advancement.

CONCLUSION

Diary is valuable to be utilized for "hearing" student voice. It has a high revealing power dealing student reaction, feeling,

perception, and learning experience. In the context of the current research, in which reflective English suprasegmental features pronunciation learning method is adopted, one dominant sort of information from the diary entries is that capacity for self-monitoring, evaluation, and self-correction develops in the students' learning.

This finding is of great value, considering that so far in pronunciation teaching (mostly segmental features), learners have not been taken into account properly. Either teacher or students, with this information, can do the best in the teaching and learning activity. The teacher can immediately give necessary assistance to the students who have learning problems, improve the weak points of teaching and learning process they conducted, and find advancement in the teaching of the commonly-considered complicated suprasegmental features pronunciation materials.

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