

# Using Drilling to Teach Pronunciation to the Seventh Graders

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**Abstract:** *The role of pronunciation is quite significant in speaking skill as a measure for language proficiency. Most teachers understand the theories of pronunciation, but in terms of teaching, they often give little material about it because of the lacks of knowledge to apply how to teach pronunciation effectively. To teach pronunciation to students, there are a lot of strategies and supports for effective pronunciation teaching. One of those techniques is Drilling. This paper describes how to teach pronunciation effectively through drilling technique and supported by some supporting strategies.*

**Keywords:** *pronunciation, seventh graders, drilling*

## Introduction

Communication is one of the most important aspects in our life. Communication is vital to the development of the whole person. It is simply the act of transferring information from one person to another. Unlike communication in the old days, people nowadays have been doing international communication along with the development of communication technology such as smart phones and social media. As social creatures, people need to communicate with each other in order to inform or deliver the message to the receiver as listeners and to get information as well.

According to Kirkpatrick (2007), all over the world, people in ever-increasing numbers are using more and more varieties of English that has now become the language of international communication. The majority of the respondents viewed English as a door to

better employment and higher social status (Zacharias, 2003). Without mastering English, Indonesian would be left behind and unable to compete. People nowadays should master English due to global competition. Therefore, English should be introduced to the young generations for a better generation. Moreover, it is a big chance to success if a foreign language is introduced to children at an early age because according to Santrock (in Gunawan, 2014) children have faster capability to learn foreign language than adults.

The Status of English in Indonesia is a foreign-language (EFL) different from other that in countries such as Singapore and Malaysia where English is as a second-language (ESL). There are hundreds of local languages in Indonesia such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and many more. Most people consider these local languages as their first language in daily communication since they were children. Besides the national language, bahasa Indonesia, is used as a formal language. Hence, the language that is used in offices and governmental matters is bahasa Indonesia. Meanwhile, English is a foreign language in Indonesia for the following reasons.

### **Historical backgrounds**

Indonesia had been occupied by the Dutch for over 350 years because the Dutch did not like to provide any education to the Indonesian people except the royal families and civil servants. Therefore, during the Dutch colonial period, the majority of Indonesians were illiterate. In 1930, only 6.4% of the population who received an education grew up knowing Dutch and perhaps English but English was never taught to be used as a medium of communication (Lauder, 2008).

The same author also cited that according to Gregory (1964), during the second war, Japanese prohibited the teaching of English. All books translated in English were burnt. Unfortunately, this decision of burning books has affected up to the present.

## **The role of English in Indonesia**

Unlike other countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, English is only taught as a subject in school to focus on 4 basic skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) and 3 language components (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) within a limitation. That is why English is considered as a Foreign Language in Indonesia. Due to the limited exposure to English in Indonesia, the students rarely hear and speak English except in the English classroom. Thus, their pronunciation is generally very much influenced by their first language, bahasa Indonesia.

## **The lack of implementation of teaching pronunciation in Indonesia**

In general, problems encountered by schools in learning language are caused by teachers who dominantly use traditional teaching methods. For example, the use of learning media is rarely used by teachers and the teachers have lack of knowledge to teach pronunciation to the students. These problems can influence the students' language improvement and creativity. For example a teacher cannot figure out the reason why students do mistake in pronouncing a word.

According to AMEP Research Centre (2002), Pronunciation refers to the way in which we make the sounds of words. It is also one of those parts of speaking skills which will be directly observed (Sholeh & Muhaji, 2015). To be able to produce sounds, we push the air from our lungs up through our throat and vocal chords, through our mouth, passing our tongue and then let it out between teeth and lips. Pronunciation is an important role in communication. To be able to communicate with other people, we have to be able to speak. Pronunciation is the basic step before we master speaking skills in learning language.

Pronunciation prioritizes the quality of sound production. It is necessary to pronounce words accurately because there are many English vocabularies that have almost similar sounds which is called as minimal pairs. According to Jones (1944) minimal pair refers to pair of words or phrases in particular language that differs in only one phoneme (a unit of sounds in a specific language). For example, peek–peak, lip–leap, tree-three, etc. Each pairs of words have one different phoneme and each of words has different meaning also. This may harden people to understand what someone is speaking if the pronunciation is not appropriate. When someone makes mistakes in pronouncing words, then it will directly be known or detected by the people who listen (Sholeh & Muhaji, 2015). Without learning pronunciation first, people may find difficulties in saying words and the listener or receiver will misunderstand the information.

Considering pronunciation is very important for EFL, English teachers have to teach their students how to pronounce English words correctly. Technically, pronunciation is the first step that the students should learn before going to the next level, speaking or having communication.

From the above explanation shows the pronunciation should be taught to young learners. However, the applications of the teaching of pronunciation are very rare. Therefore, the writer adopts one of teaching pronunciation techniques, drilling technique. The writer also focuses on seventh graders because the writer believes seventh graders are able to conceive phonetic transcription with expectation the students are able to pronounce the vocabulary which they find in dictionary. Besides, it is not suitable for the eighth or ninth graders because in these grades, the students are expected to be able to produce conversation with good pronunciation.

## **The Definition of Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is a set of habits of producing sounds to make meaning (Gilakjani, 2012). This habit is required by repeating it over and over again and by being corrected if there are any mistakes pronunciation includes attention to the particular sounds of language (segmental aspects), aspects of speech such as intonation, stress, phrasing, timing, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects), and others (gesture and expression) that are still related to the way we speak a language (Gilakjani, 2012).

When we use English for communicating with other people, we should speak properly. Learners with good pronunciation in English are more likely to be understood even if they make grammatical errors in other areas.

## **The Problems Encountered by Pronunciation Teacher**

In teaching pronunciation especially for EFL learners, some problems might often appear. As in the research of Sholeh & Muhaji (2015) some problems that appear in college level are not very much different in junior high schools. As far as the writer concerns, the problems are still related to the teaching pronunciation for foreign language. Below are the problems as stated by Sholeh & Muhaji (2015) that happen in pronunciation class.

### **a. A strong impact of mother tongue**

It is difficult for most students to avoid the impact of their mother tongue. This impact not only causes students hard to pronounce English words naturally, but also makes them speak English with their mother tongue accent. For example, they speak English but with the pronunciation and intonation of Javanese.

**b. Consonant or vocal mispronouncing**

Students often mispronounce consonants or vocals because the students are difficult to distinguish the difference between English phonetics and Indonesian phonetics. For example, the sound of ‘G’ is pronounced as /dʒ/ in English. However in Indonesia the sound of ‘G’ is pronounced as /g/. This difference often results in the students making pronunciation errors. For example, a student speaks in English but the pronunciation of the consonants and vocals uses Indonesian phonetic.

**c. Difficulty in pronouncing suffix of words ex: ‘-s’ and ‘-ed’**

Suffixes like ‘-s’ and ‘-d’ also tend to cause difficulty to students in pronouncing words. Frequently, these suffixes should get the significant sound in pronunciation. Unfortunately, these sounds are rarely heard to be pronounced when students are having conversation.

**d. Minimal pairs and Homographs**

Many study cases confirmed that minimal pairs and homographs are one of the problems that commonly appear within pronunciation class. Mispronouncing related to both minimal pairs and homographs are a serious problem in communication.

Some examples of minimal pairs: sheep-ship, eat-it, foot-food, back-bag, and many more.

For homographs, one example is word ‘read’ in these following sentences: (1) ‘I can read your writing’, and (2) ‘She picked up the letter and read it’. Both words should be pronounced in different ways even though ‘read’ has identical spelling (Sholeh & Muhaji, 2015).

**e. Organ of speech disorder**

In some particular cases, it is hard for the students to pronounce correctly because of organ of speech disorder. Pronunciation that is produced by the students who has speech disorder is hard to understand because it is not clear in particular sound(s). Sometimes, the pronunciation which is not clear can be misinterpreted by the listeners. In other words, it can create misunderstanding.

For example, when a student with speech disorder says 'run!', he/she pronounces /wʌn/ instead of /rʌn/, and the listeners hear it as 'one' not 'run'.

**Teaching Pronunciation**

According to Richard (2008. p.19), the mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners because in learning target language, many learners often evaluate their improving spoken language proficiency. Before stepping to speaking skills, teachers should pay attention to their students' pronunciation whether the pronunciation is accurate or not. If pronunciation is not taught earlier, students may find difficulties to distinguish the sound.

There are some macro skills in speaking skill which need attention: fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Sholeh & Muhaji, 2015).Pronunciation should be taught since the students start learning vocabulary in the same time. It is very important for students who learn target language especially English. However, Fraser (1999) states pronunciation is the aspect of language that receives least attention. The teacher is not sure as to how best to help learners. Besides, almost all students feel learning pronunciation as a priority and an area in which they need more guidance. Considering the target achievement in Indonesian curriculum, teachers do not have enough time to teach pronunciation or to pay attention to the students' errors.

Whenever teaching learning process is under way, many teachers often correct students' pronunciation. However, many teachers do not know what they should train in improving students' pronunciation. Thus, the writer would like to propose the main steps of teaching pronunciation as follows:

**a. Warming up and introducing the sounds of language**

There are some particular sounds that are not available in bahasa Indonesia. For example, sound /tʃ/ in 'church'. This sound is not available in bahasa Indonesia. Most local students have problem in pronouncing this sound because their mother tongue does not have these particular sounds.

Inspired by a video of Chan, M (2013) in Youtube, '*Pronunciation is a physical act: Let's do warm-up exercises!*', the teachers and students do a little warming up by moving their mouth and making funny face in order to flex the muscles of mouth in the pre-instructional activity. This is a very important activity before the teachers continue introducing some phonemes to the students because some students feel awkward to pronounce some phonemes.

Introducing phonemes with their transcription to the students may help students to distinguish each sound. Whenever the students have been familiar with phonemes of English, they easily learn the pronunciation of a word.

**b. Giving physical example**

Still related to the video, the teacher explains the sound by showing her lips and tongue position to the students. This action can be directly understood by the students because the students know how the position of their lips and tongue to

pronounce sound. What is meant by giving physical example by the author in the video includes the followings:

1. uses mirror to know the position of lips and tongue.
2. feels the vibration of vocal chords.
3. feels the puff air from mouth by using paper.

The teacher give example how to produce sound with those physical examples above and the students may also practice and experience how the sounds can be produced, how they distinguish the voiced-voiceless by feeling the vibration of their vocal chords, and the reaction of the paper when they pronounce consonants to distinguish whether the consonants are considered as weak or strong consonants.

### **The ALM (Audio-Lingual Method)**

The Audio-Lingual method was developed in the United States during World War II. It was proposed by American linguists in 1950s. As Mart (2013) states that the purpose of this method is to use the target language communicatively. According to this method, speech is given priority in foreign language teaching. Larsen-Freeman (2000) also states that students will achieve communicative competence by forming new habits. As its purpose, this method can be applied by drilling technique which gives good pronunciation to the students as habit. Hence, as Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that the more something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning.

These are five advantages of using the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), adopted from Rhalmi (2009):

1. listening and speaking skills are emphasized and rigorously developed
2. the use of visual aids has proven effective in vocabulary teaching

3. the method is just as functional and easy to execute in larger groups
4. correct pronunciation and structure is emphasized and acquired, and
5. it is grounded on a solid theory of language learning.

Larsen-Freeman (2000) also provided typical techniques closely associated with Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) that includes the followings:

1. Dialogue Memorization

Students memorize an opening dialogue using mimicry and role playing.

2. Expansion Drill

Teacher breaks a line into several parts; students repeat each part at the end of the sentence and ‘expanding’ backwards through the sentence, adding each part in sequence.

3. Repetition Drill

Students repeat teacher’s model as quickly and accurately as possible.

4. Chain Drill

Students ask and answer each other in a circular chain around the classroom.

5. Single-slot Substitution Drill

Teachers state a line from the dialogue, and then use a word or phrase as a ‘cue’.

When repeating the line, must substitute into the sentence in the correct place.

6. Multiple-slot Substitution Drill

Same as the single slot drill, except that there are multiple cues to be substituted.

7. Transformation Drill

Teacher provides a sentence that must be turned into something else, for example a question to be turned into a statement, an active sentence to be turned into negative statement, etc.

8. Question and Answer Drill

Students should answer or ask questions very quickly.

9. Use Minimal Pairs

Analysis, teacher selects a pair of words that sound identical except for a single sound that typically poses difficulty for the learners-students are to pronounce and differentiate the two words.

10. Complete the Dialogue

Selected words are erased from a line in the dialogue-students must find and insert the appropriate words.

11. Grammar Games

Various games designed to practice a grammar point in context, using lots of repetition.

### **Drilling Technique**

Drilling technique is an old technique that has been used for foreign language classroom. This technique is very suitable for foreign language especially for young learners because it emphasizes on repeating through oral practice that makes foreign language getting accustomed in teacher's control. As Senel (2006) states that this technique is very useful in teaching pronunciation because it can increase accuracy in pronunciation.

### **Supporting Media**

There are many ways of teaching that the teachers need to pay attention to improve students' pronunciation. Considering the writer focus on seventh graders, the supporting media below may help teachers to facilitate what should be taught in their ages. These

supporting media focus on pronunciation of a word or utterance, intonation, stressing, and some expression that are often used in daily life. Those are:

**a. CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning)**

Recently, computer technology, which is used in language learning, is known as CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning). In a research that has been carried out by Tsubota, Kawahara, & Dantsuji (2004) it can be concluded that the role of CALL in learning language class is significant. Although the teachers can teach pronunciation, the teachers also have problems to control the students in class—because teaching pronunciation is essentially one-on-one activity and it also can be time-consuming. It is practically impossible in large classes consisting of 40 or more students.

CALL can also help students to improve their pronunciation by a guidance of the teacher. Not only as a guide for students, but it can also detect students' error in pronouncing, provide some differences of words in one of the pronunciation component, for example minimal pairs, falling rising intonation, etc. depends on its software.

**b. Picture/Moving picture(s)**

Providing picture might be the best way to explain something. In teaching pronunciation, teachers may use picture to explain the movement of organ of speech; how the position of the tongue and lips when someone produces sound(s).

From article of Hibbing and Erickson (2003), picture may clarify students' comprehension. The article provided all comments from the students which describe picture as object in their research.

- A picture helps me by showing what's going on.
- In my textbooks when they show pictures it helps me see what they are talking about.
- If you look at a picture, it puts more ideas in your head.
- If you have a picture, it may take a thousand words to get the true meaning of the picture

These comments from the students have clarified that picture has stronger meaning rather than just description. When teachers start to explain the position of mouth cavity in order to pronounce some sounds or words, picture can also help teachers to make it clear for students' comprehension. Sometimes, people use picture if words do not work.

### **c. Recording**

As usual in pronunciation class, recording is a common tool to support teaching and learning activity. Some recordings focus on the intonation of sentence in the conversation.

### **The Model Lesson Plan of Teaching Pronunciation**

The example of lesson plan below is the implementation of the steps suggested above. To teach English for seventh graders in Indonesia, usually, the subject takes 2 x 35 minutes per meeting. Hence, this lesson plan example uses 70 minutes to teach pronunciation. The writer picks the chosen basic competence based on recent curriculum, *Kurikulum2013*.

- **Basic Competence**

4.3 *Menyusun teks lisan dan tulis untuk menyebutkan nama hari, bulan, nama waktu dalam hari, waktu dalam bentuk angka, tanggal, dan tahun, dengan unsur kebahasaan yang benar dan sesuai konteks.*

4.3 Develop oral and written text to mention the name of days, months, time in number, date and years, with true linguistic elements and appropriate contexts.

- **Achievement Indicators**

- Students are able to pronounce the names of day and month.
- Students are able to use vocabularies in particular conversation.

- **Teaching Method and Technique**

ALM (Audio-Lingual Method)

Drilling

- **Topic**

When were you born?

- **Materials**

Names of Days and Months.

- **Teaching Aids/Media**

- Computer
- LCD Screen and Projector

Teacher's Note

STAGES	TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES	TIME ALLOCATION
	TEACHER	
<b>Pre-Instructional Activities</b>	Greeting and Checking Students' presence.	5 minutes
	Teacher starts to teach students by giving triggering questions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking the students some questions that lead them to the material about date or today's topic, 'When were you born?'</li> </ul>	5 minutes
	Starting the topic of today's lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher gives the purpose of today's lesson.</li> <li>Giving material about the names of day and month.</li> <li>Teacher also gives students the target structure 'When were you born?'</li> </ul>	15 minutes
<b>Whilst Instructional Activities</b>	Drilling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher shows slide and lead students into the pronunciation.</li> <li>Teacher leads the students to do warm-up exercise before learning the target vocabulary (See on page 8 about warm-up activity)</li> <li>Teacher asks students to repeat after the teacher.</li> <li>Teacher also correct students' pronunciation if there any mistakes occurred.</li> </ul> <p>Exercise: Teacher gives students instruction to make a short dialog involving the today's material. (See the table on page 14. Concerning the pronunciation of names of day and month.)</p> <p>The exercise should consist of greetings and farewell which have been taught before. (See the syllabus of <i>Kurikulum 2013</i>.)</p>	20 minutes
<b>Post Instructional Activities</b>	Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While students work in pair, the teacher observes student's work and offers helps if any students have difficulties</li> <li>The teacher asks students to come forward to perform their works.</li> </ul>	25 minutes

The following table presents the material of days and months. Used in the lesson plan above, as a model, Teacher leads students to pronounce days and months correctly.

Table of Names of Days and Months

<b>DAYS</b>	<b>MONTHS</b>
Sunday/'sʌn.deɪ/	January/'dʒæn.jʊə.ri/
Monday/'mʌn.deɪ/	February/'feb.ru.ər.i/
Tuesday/'tju:z.deɪ/	March /mɑ:tʃ/
Wednesday/'wenz.deɪ/	April/'eɪ.prəl/
Thursday/'θɜ:z.deɪ/	May/meɪ/
Friday/'fraɪ.deɪ/	June/dʒu:n/
Saturday/'sæt.ə.deɪ/	July/dʒʊ'laɪ/
	August/'ɔ:.gəst/
	September/sep'tem.bər /
	October/ɒk'təʊ.bər /
	November/nəʊ 'vem.bər /
	December/dɪ'sem.bər /

### **Suggestion for Teachers in Teaching Pronunciation**

Some points that must be considered by pronunciation teachers to make the teaching and learning process effective:

- As a model for their students, the teachers should have good pronunciation. Otherwise they can harm their students; the students will imitate the improper pronunciation or they can misunderstand what the teachers say.
- The teachers should pay more attention to the students' pronunciation; if there are any mistakes, the teachers should give correction.
- The capability of each student is different, so the teachers should pay more attention to those who need support and guidance.
- The teachers should give instructions clearly to students to avoid them from being confused.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, the writer presents teaching pronunciation for seventh grade students. Pronunciation is the basic skill that should be mastered by learners of English. Considering the concept of Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), drilling technique is a good technique to teach pronunciation in EFL classrooms like those in Indonesia because it emphasizes on repeating through oral practice that makes foreign language students getting accustomed.

The teaching technique enriched by learning media that have been mentioned such as CALL, pictures, and recording could help more on the development of students' pronunciation. Therefore, it is advisable that teachers make use of those media maximally to improve students' pronunciation.

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