IMPROVING INTELLIGIBILITY OF VOICED AND VOICELESS "TH" CONSONANTS IN THE SPEECHES OF SOPHOMORES USING PRONUNCIATION DRILLS

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on a study conducted with the intention of treating a university sophomores' difficulties in producing intelligible /θ, ð/ sounds and enabling them to achieve faultless pronunciation of these sounds by applying pronunciation drilling technique through authentic teaching sessions.

The research design was an Action Research. The subjects were 25 sophomores (4th semester students) of English Department of State University of Malang (East Java, Indonesia). Coming from four different groups (G, GG, H, and J), they formed up a single speaking class at the department. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20. The preliminary study as well as the remedial classes were held on the University campus. The focal instrument of the study was a short text including 12 words each having "th" consonants (/ð/, /θ/ sounds) that was read aloud by the subjects in the preliminary study as well as during and after the teaching sessions. The 3 recordings were carefully analyzed and compiled on a compact disc.

The pronunciation drilling technique was implemented in one cycle comprising 4 remedial lessons.The implementation of the action was based on the lesson plans. The researcher himself was the teacher to deliver the remedial lessons through various pronunciation activities such as exercising drills, minimal pair discrimination, tongue-twisters, reading texts on the subjects.The three pronunciation activities were chosen because of the practice in hearing and saying the "th" consonants, moreover, the words containing "th" consonants are pronounced in two ways and the spelling of "th" does not overlap with pronunciation. The assessment of "th" sounds were assessed on whether the sounds were pronounced correctly or not. If one of the sounds, either the voiced "th" or the voiceless one were confusedly pronounced using a different similar or dissimilar sounds instead, such as [d], [t], [f], [s], [z], they were immediately noted down in corresponding tables. However, the correctly pronounced consonants were shown in ticks (ü). The success percentage of each 12 words included in the short text were shown in interactive graphs.

The important questions that the researcher decided to deal with were:(1) Can pronunciation drilling technique improve the sophomores' pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ consonants? (2) Can sophomores achieve intelligible pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ consonants with ease? The questions were answered with positive results. The students could achieve intelligible production of the two sounds by the end of the study. The findings of this study showed that implementing pronunciation drilling technique when teaching individual sounds, such as /θ/and /ð/ in this case, could make the students achieve rather intelligible pronunciation of English words.

Even though several linguists argue that the pronunciation drilling techniques are rather old-fashioned method of teaching pronunciation, based on the results of the present study, however, the researcher believes that this technique is at least useful in teaching individual sounds. Therefore, the speaking class teachers, especially those at secondary schools, have to apply more pronunciation drilling activities in order enable their students achieve an intelligible English pronunciation before they reach the University level. For future researchers, it is suggested to use the result of this study as a reference in conducting researches in the related areas.

The background of the study chiefly discusses the topics, such as what pronunciation is, its importance, and why pronunciation should be taught. It also deals with intelligibility of speech, factors that interfere with correct pronunciation, drilling technique and its several ways of application when teaching individual sounds. Also, it explains about potential difficult and problematic English sounds for the Indonesian speakers of English, and production of voiced and unvoiced "th"consonants.

Pronunciation Problems of Most Indonesian Speakers of English

Through the years spent as well as the personal observations obtained through teaching English pronunciation to university students and being adjudicator in several provincial English language student contests in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, the researcher was faced with unintelligible English pronunciation of some students. Although the students were undergraduates or studying their Master's Degree in the English department of some prominent Universities like Brawijaya University and State University of Malang, they were unaware of certain pronunciation mistakes in their speeches. Most of the students have substantial knowledge of English grammar and are able to make correct complex sentences in English; however, their unintelligibility in pronunciation makes their English proficiency incomplete and hard to be effortlessly perceived by another listener. For example, they happen to pronounce the words "fan"

and "van" in the same way. That is because of the L1 impact, of course because Bahasa Indonesia lacks the English "v" sound. Apart from this, other relevant instances could be the incorrect pronunciation of the words "path", "theater", "whether", etc. This problem comes either from the L1 effect or simply lack of awareness of correct English pronunciation. Those problems need to be treated.

Intelligible pronunciation is essential during a listening process, clear and correct pronunciation makes a conversation more comfortable for both the speaker and the listener and even helps to avoid misunderstanding.

David Keating (2013: 3) states that Indonesian speakers of English have problems resulting from L1 (first language) interference. In terms of pronunciation, many Indonesians have trouble pronouncing consonant clusters (3 or more consonants together in a word), as these clusters do not occur in Bahasa Indonesia.

Likewise, Indonesian speakers of English like several other non-native English speakers have significant problems concerning English consonant blends. In the current study to be conducted, the researcher takes the voiceless and voiced "th" sounds which are /θ/ as in the word thin and /ð/ as in the word mother to be one of the core issues that need to be studied and corrected through teaching and practice as they are commonly mispronounced among non-native speakers of English, such as the native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia.

In the case of sophomores at the university, a reasonable accuracy in the pronunciation of

individual sounds such as the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds as mentioned above should certainly have been achieved; earlier at school; however many students still fail to attain perfection.

Pronunciation problems may occur when non-native speakers communicate because speakers are used to sounds that exist in their mother tongue but may not exist in the target language. There are a lot of sounds that do exist or are similar in English and Indonesian; however, there are sounds that are very different or do not exist in Indonesian.

There are several factors that influence the pronunciation of Indonesian learners of English. First, Indonesian learners use sounds that are in Indonesian language but may not exist in English. For instance the clear pronunciation of the[r] sound by an Indonesian speaker of English like in the word rektor (Eng.: *rector*) definitely makes their English speech worse and somehow irritating for the listener. Second, when reading or speaking, Indonesian students apply the rule of last syllable prominence which is not presented in English. For example, in the word Canada the stress normally falls on the first syllable [C*a*nada] in the English language. However, when a typical Indonesian speaker of English pronounces the same word, he or she happens to stress either the second or the last syllable[Can*a*da]/[Canad*a*]. Lastly, Indonesian learners do not distinguish between the written and spoken form as in Indonesian the written and spoken forms resemble and this goes hand in hand with pronouncing the silent letters e.g. the word salmon is usually pronounced as /sælmən/ instead of /sæmən/ by Indonesian learners.

Potentially Problematic English Sounds for Indonesians

The most problematic vowel sounds for Indonesian learners of English are such as follows (there might be more; however, here are some instances only): /æ/ as in the word cat: since the vowel /æ/ does not exist in Indonesian, it is often pronounced as /e/ as in the word men; /ɪ/ as in the word ship: the short vowel does occur in Indonesian but it is frequently mixed with long vowel /i:/ as in the word sheep; /ɜ:/ as in the word bird: the vowel does not exist in Indonesian and it is frequently mispronounced by inexperienced Indonesian learners as / ʌ / as in the word cup or /ɑ:/ as in the word heart or vice versa; /eɪ/ as in the word tail: It is commonly pronounced as /e/ as in the word pen; or / əʊ/ as in the word phone: The common error made by Indonesian learners is that they do not distinguish between written and spoken form and therefore it is pronounced as /ɒ/ as in the word clock.

According to the researcher's intent as well as his specific area of interest a closer look will be paid to consonants; particularly the two voiced and unvoiced "th" sounds. There are consonant sounds in English that neither exist nor have equivalent form in Indonesian and therefore confusion between consonants may occur.

The most problematic consonant sounds for Indonesian learners of English could probably be the followings: /θ/ as in the word theater: there is no sound similar to this consonant in Indonesian, and therefore it is often pronounced as /t/ or /s/ because of a close place of articulation; /ð/ as in the word brother: there is no representation of the consonant in Indonesian and therefore it is pronounced as /d/ or /z/ because of a close place of articulation; /dʒ / as in the word jar or language: the common error made by Indonesian learners is that they do not distinguish between written and spoken form and therefore it is usually confused with /j/ or / tʃ/; /z/ as in the word maze: in Indonesian language a rule of assimilation of end consonants is applied, which means that a voiced consonant becomes voiceless when it occurs in a final position, therefore the voiced consonant is pronounced as voiceless /s/ if it is in a final position; /g/ as in the word frog: Indonesian learners use a rule of assimilation of final consonants; therefore the voiced consonant becomes voiceless /k/ in a final position; /b/ as in the word cab: in Indonesian language a rule of assimilation of final consonants is used therefore, the voiced

consonant is changed into voiceless /p/ in a final position; /v/ as in the word brave: in Indonesian learners apply a rule of assimilation of end consonants; therefore the voiced consonant is transformed into voiceless /f/ in a final position.

Similarly, another difficulty an Indonesian learner of the English language might face is that of minimal pairs. The term "minimal pairs" refers to two words within a language which have different meanings but vary in one sound segment only (Fromkin & Rodman,1993). Examples of this in English are the words "hit" and "heat". There are many of these in the English language. Which minimal pairs cause a student problem, depends on the phonetics of their native language and their language of study (L1 and L2). In the case of Indonesian learners, "van" and "fan", pose a problem because of the nature of the Indonesian language which lacks the sound for the English "v". For this reason the language learners have difficulty with clearly differentiating between the sounds both when they hear them and when they attempt to pronounce them. In turn, difficulties with minimal pairs may even cause language learners problems in areas like reading and spelling, as students mix up words and thus meanings.

Similar Previous Studies in the Related Fields

In his famous book, Better Pronunciation, O' Connor (1980: 25) presented 5 categories of pronunciation problems among learners from 6 Western and Oriental nationalities. One of them is sound substitution with other ones from English or from learners' L1 due to the lack of corresponding English sounds in their mother tongues. As revealed by Fraser (2001: 33), speakers of other languages usually replace English consonants that are unfamiliar with near ones available in their mother tongues(also seen in Cruttenden, 2001, Lewis & Hill, 1992, River & Temperley, 1978).

Another similar investigation was conducted by Shafiro et al (2012)on the perception of American-English (AE) vowels and consonants by young adults who were either (a) early Arabic-English bilinguals whose native

language was Arabic or (b) native speakers of the English dialects spoken in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where both groups were studying. In a closed-set format, participants were asked to identify 12 AE vowels presented in /hVd/ context and 20 AE consonants (C) in three vocalic contexts: /ɑCɑ/, /iCi/, and /uCu/. Both native Arabic and native English groups demonstrated high accuracy in identification of vowels (70 and 80% correct, respectively) and consonants (94 and 95% correct, respectively). For both groups, the least-accurately identified vowels were /ɑ/, /ɔ/, /æ/, while most consonant errors were found for /ð/, which was most frequently confused with /v/.

Dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/ are among the most difficult phonemes for speakers of other languages due to the lack of them in most languages other than English (Cruttenden, 2001). He also noticed that /t/ and /d/were used as their frequent substitutions (also seen in Chan & Li, 2000)/z/, d/ and /s/ were produced instead of /ð/ and /θ/ correspondingly. Nguyen (2007) proved that 80% of her subjects were found to mispronounce /ð/ and /θ/ sounds.

In an action research on the role of continuous feedback in students' pronunciation improvement Tran (2006) reviewed seven factors that affect the pronunciation of Vietnamese learners. Apart from well-known causes: native language, learners' ages, she emphasized the influence of the amount of exposure to English, students' own phonetic ability, their attitude to the learning of the language, motivation and teacher's role. In attempt to discuss Vietnamese learners' pronunciation of English sounds, Duong (2009) showed four main reasons that account for their failure in making the truly English consonants: (1) failure in distinguishing the difference, (2) influence of the mother tongue, (3) perception of mistakes, (4) inadequate drills and practice.

Why Teach Pronunciation?

Teaching pronunciation has undergone a long evolution. At the beginning of the 20th

century everything was subordinated to teaching grammar and lexis and pronunciation was totally overlooked. Many things have changed since that time but on the other hand there are still some teachers who do not pay enough attention to pronunciation. According to Scrivener (2005: 284) this is partly because teachers themselves may feel more uncertain about it than about grammar and lexis, worried that they don't have enough technical knowledge to help students appropriately.

It is widely recognized that acquiring good pronunciation is very important because bad pronunciation habits are not easily corrected. Kelly (2002: 11) states:

a learner who consistently mispronounces a range of phonemes can be extremely difficult for a speaker from another language community to understand. This can be very frustrating for the learner who may have a good command of grammar and lexis but have difficulty in understanding and being understood by a native speaker.

In the researcher's opinion pronunciation is still neglected at schools. When teaching pronunciation it is difficult to create a lesson that would be only focused on pronunciation practice because pronunciation is taken as an additional practice in all course books. Another problem can be caused by the fact that emphasis is frequently given on individual sounds or distinguishing sounds from each other. According to Gilbert (2008: 1) there are two main reasons why pronunciation is neglected in classes. First, teachers do not have enough time in their lessons, which would be dedicated to pronunciation, and if there is time attention is usually given to drills which lead to discouraged students and teachers who both want to avoid learning and teaching pronunciation. Second, psychological factor plays a relevant role in learning pronunciation because students are not as sure about their pronunciation as they are about their knowledge of grammar and lexis. Gilbert (2008: 1) claims that the most basic elements of speaking are deeply personal and our sense of community is bound up in the speech rhythms of our first language. These

psychological barriers are usually unconscious but they prevent speakers from improving the intelligibility. To be able to overcome the fears of speaking, teachers should set at the outset that the aim of pronunciation improvement is not to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent, but simply to get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other speakers (Ur 1984: 52).

Intelligibility

Since pronunciation is a complex and important part of learning and teaching process teachers need to set goals and aims they want to achieve with their students. According to Ur (1984: 52) perfect accents are difficult if not impossible to achieve in foreign language the goal of teachers need to be, to make their students be easily understandable when communicating with other people.

When speaking about intelligibility there is no clear definition of it, but in general we can say that intelligibility means that a hearer can understand a speaker at a set time and situation without major difficulties, in other words, the more words a listener is able to identify accurately when said by a particular speaker, the more intelligible the speaker is (Kenworthy, 1990: 13). Therefore the pronunciation of the speaker does not have to be without errors if a listener is able to understand the utterance. Dalton & Seidlhofer (1994: 11) point out that intelligibility is by no means guaranteed by linguistic similarity and phonetic accuracy, but it is often overridden by cultural and economic factors. Consequently, despite the language factors there are other points that can influence the intelligibility such as whether the topic is familiar to both a speaker and a listener or whether the utterance of a speaker is expected by a listener (Online AMEP article published by Macquarie University of Sydney).

As far as intelligibility is concerned, Kenworthy (1990: 14) also points out that other factors can affect a speaker's utterance e.g. if a learner's speech is full of self-corrections, hesitations, and grammatical restructurings,

then listeners will tend to find what he or she says difficult to follow. AMEP research center views this matter a little bit differently as they state that aspects influencing intelligibility are complex issues ranging from prosody, intonation, word stress, rhythm, syllable structure, segments, and voice quality to phrasing and sense group. The authors further outline that language teaching used to emphasize learning individual sounds rather than focusing on all aspects influencing intelligibility, and point out that recent studies claim that overall prosody, comprising stress, rhythm and intonation, may have greater prominence on intelligibility regardless a learner's mother tongue.

Factors that Interfere with Correct Pronunciation

Most researchers agree that the learner's first language influences the pronunciation of the target language and is a significant factor in accounting for foreign accents. So called interference from the first language is likely to cause errors in aspiration, stress, and intonation in the target language. Some Indonesian students tend to have difficulty with English sounds because they are deeply influenced by similar Indonesian sounds. However, they are very different from each other. A particular sound which does not exist in the native language can therefore pose a difficulty for the second language learners to produce or some times to try to substitute those sounds with similar ones in their mother tongue. These sounds include both vowels and consonants.

It is necessary to mention that there are several factors that need to be considered to be potential obstacles for a foreign language learner through acquisition of correct pronunciation. Those factors can be age factor, phonetic ability, lack of practice, motivation, personality or attitude and mother tongue. (Riswanto & Haryanto, 2012).

Underhill (1994: 15) said "sounds and words are the building blocks for connected speech, and specific and detailed work can be done at these levels without losing touch with the fluent speech from which the parts have been extracted." Actually, sounds are the building blocks for all language skills. The researcher has seen great enthusiasm from teachers for learning, but also experienced resistance to teaching sounds, but sounds of a language are like the foundations of a building, or the roots of a tree. It should not just be B.Ed or M.Ed students who are learning phonology, it is an injustice to teachers who are expected to teach language if they are not given this practical knowledge and an injustice to the children who are struggling to learn.

Similarly, Schmid and Yeni-Komshian (1999), for example, found that native speaker listeners had increased difficulty detecting mispronunciations at the phonemic level as accentedness increased, and Derwing and Rossiter (2003) found similar issues among the experienced listeners in their study. Research has indicated that many teachers lack training and confidence in their expertise in pronunciation learning and teaching (Levis, 2006; Macdonald, 2002).

What is Drilling in Language Teaching?

According to Tice (2004), drilling is a technique that has been used in foreign language classrooms for many years. It was a key feature of audio lingual approaches to language teaching which placed emphasis on repeating structural patterns through oral practice.

At its simplest, drilling means listening to a model, provided by the teacher, or a tape or another student, and repeating what is heard. This is a repetition drill, a technique that is still used by many teachers when introducing new language items to their students. The teacher says (models) the word or phrase and the students repeat it.

Other types of drill include substitution drills, or question and answer drills. Substitution drills can be used to practice different structures or vocabulary items (i.e. one or more words change during the drill).

Example:

Prompt: 'I go to work. He?

Response: 'He goes to work.'

In question and answer drills the prompt is a question and the response the answer. This is used for practicing common adjacency pairs such as 'What's the matter?', 'I've got a (headache')' or 'Can I have a (pen) please?', 'Yes here you are.' The words in brackets here can be substituted during the drill.

In all drills learners have no or very little choice over what is said so drills are a form of very controlled practice. There is one correct answer and the main focus is on 'getting it right' i.e. on accuracy. Drills are usually conducted chorally (i.e. the whole class repeats) then individually. There is also the possibility of groups or pairs of students doing language drills together.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The researcher focused his study on pronunciation teaching of the voiced and voiceless "th" consonants /ð, θ/ as several previous empirical findings show as well as the researcher himself regards them as the most problematic aspects of pronunciation for Indonesian learners of English. It is important to mention that it was really problematic issue to find relevant previous studies on the current question in terms of Indonesian learners of English. The scholastic sources are limited and therefore most of the examples are often referred to the studies conducted outside the country. Considering the above mentioned alarming matter, the main questions at issue can be concluded as follows:

(1) Can pronunciation drilling technique improve the sophomores' pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ consonants?

(2) Can sophomores achieve intelligible pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ consonants with ease?

The theoretical part concerns with crucial pronunciation issues as well as the factors that might have potential impact on teaching and learning process of pronunciation and it also provides some suggestions to elevate common pronunciation skills to real enunciation. Furthermore, it also emphasizes the issues of pronunciation in daily communication, the most problematic sounds for Indonesian learners of English as well as responding to certain questions *like why pronunciation should be taught* that may arise.

The theoretical significance can also be seen in reflecting on the teachers' and students' roles and aspects that influence a speaker's intelligibility. The researcher finds the production of voiced and voiceless consonants /ð, θ/ to be of utmost significance that needs to be studied with the sophomore undergraduate students of English department of the State University of Malang through practicing certain pronunciation drills since these two consonants are representatives of the most difficult sounds in English for Indonesian speakers.

The research gives contribution to the English enunciation where the result of this study can be reference to improve the undergraduate students' advance in pronunciation skills. For the other readers, the present research can be guidance whenever to investigate the other elements of enunciation issues with University students, especially ones who are enrolled in English departments.

The present study particularly concentrated on the controversial pronunciation issues; particularly concerning improving awareness of the correct pronunciation of certain English sounds such as [s], [z], [t], and [d] distinguishing them from "th" sounds observed in the speeches of the sophomore undergraduates of English department of the State University of Malang through using pronunciation drilling technique. Nevertheless, the research mostly dealt with the correct pronunciation of two problematic English sounds: voiced /ð/ and voiceless /θ/ that are encoded as "th" in written discourses.

METHODOLOGY

The research was an action research to improve the students' pronunciation of [th] /ð, θ/ sounds through practicing pronunciation drills. According to Bassey (as quoted by Koshy, 2005), action research (AR) is an inquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate, and then to change, in order to improve the educational practice as well as to provide teacher-researcher with a method for solving his or her everyday teaching problems.This action research was conducted in four cyclical processes: (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting (See table 2.1). The process was stopped in one cycle only as the researcher found out that the students could successfully meet the requirements stated in the success criterion.

Subjects and the Site of the Study

As the site of the study to be conducted, the researcher has selected the State University of Malang which is one of the prominent and accredited Universities in East Java, Indonesia. This University is well-known for its exceptional personnel preparation techniques along with erudite professors. Specifically, the subjects were 25 sophomores (4th semester) of English department of the University. The subjects, coming from four different groups (G, GG, H, and J), formed up a single speaking class at the department. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20. As of the students' backgrounds, it is important to mention that they came from different parts of Indonesia and learned various local languages, such as Javanese, Madurese, Lomboknese, Balinese, Sundanese, Papuanese, etc., as their first language and that would have impact on their pronunciation of English sounds.

As the researcher found out from various sources, the English department was once found to be one of the best English teacher training institutions in South-East Asia. The subjects as well as the site to conduct the present research were selected according to the researcher's personal observations, experience, and authentic empirical findings based on the current question at issue.

Research Procedure

In this study, the research procedure involved at least one cycle consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The action was stopped when the objectives of the research had been achieved according to the success criterion. The researcher initially conducted a preliminary study as the starting point to conduct this research. The research procedure can be seen in Table1 below.

Table 1: Action Research Procedure (adapted from Kemmis & Mc. Taggart, 2000, cited in Koshy, 2005).

PRELIMINARY STUDY
25 students of the combined speaking class were given a short text which included words with 12 "th"consonants i.e. /ð, θ/ sounds in their pronunciation in order to find out whether the subjects had difficulty with pronouncing them correctly. The short text were read aloud by the subjects in turns and were simultaneously recorded by the researcher for further analysis. The task remained the same with the same conditions till the end of the research.
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
Findings: Subjects' pronunciation of [th] /ð, θ/ sounds needs to be improved through remedial activities: exercising drills, minimal pair discrimination, tongue-twisters, and reading texts.The preliminary study findings are thoroughly stated in the below pages.
PLANNING
Relevant lesson plans, materials (activities, handouts, etc.) multimedia (LCD projector, laptop, speaking dictionary, active speaker), the criteria of success, and research instruments were all prepared.
IMPLEMENTING
Four authentic teaching sessions took place based on lesson plans which were aimed at improving the students' pronunciation of [th] /ð, θ/ sounds through remedial activities: exercising drills, minimal pair discrimination,

tongue-twisters, and reading texts. After each two lessons, students underwent 2 recording sessions.

REFLECTING

The collected data was analyzed, determined that the actions were successful and reported.

Problem Identification

At this very stage of the study (preliminary study) the researcher wanted to find out whether the presumed question in mind that the sophomores of the English Department, State University of Malang had problems with the pronunciation of voiced and voiceless "th" consonants as there are no same sounds in their mother tongue, was right or not. Second, the researcher wanted to ascertain if the students substitute the "th" sounds with other consonants with a near place of articulation. Lastly, the first recording functioned as an indicator of the initial conditions of the students' pronunciation of "th" consonants.

The researcher recorded all the 25 students of the speaking class. The class was first introduced to the research questions. Additionally, the entire class got to know with the terms and conditions of the study in its turn. So, there evolved a stable mutual understanding between the class and the researcher before the launch of the research.

The researcher had prepared a short text with at least 12 words containing "th" consonants. Each student was given 10 minutes for preparation so that they could get familiar with the text. After the period of 10 minutes the students were asked to come individually in front of the class where the researcher recorded their readings. The students were required to come individually because the researcher presumed that they would be fully concentrated on the text; moreover, they might be distracted by the other students as well. While the students were reading the text the researcher was carefully recording their voices for further analysis.

After the recordings underwent a careful analysis, the pre-assumed problems were detected in the subjects' pronunciations: almost all the subjects did not show any positive result. Taking this into account, the researcher began to plan the actions to take and prepared relevant lesson plans which were targeted to improve the subjects' pronunciation of the "th" sounds. The lesson plans can be found in the appendices of the paper. The preliminary study results of each student are transformed into tables and the overall findings are presented in a graph demonstrating the exact number of correct and incorrect production.
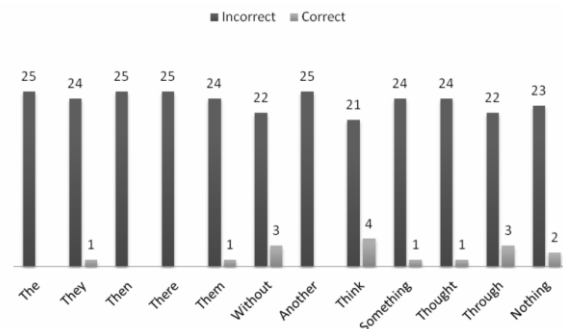

Figure 1: First recording results.

Taking the results of the first recording in the preliminary study as a whole, the researcher's initial questions were proven right. In nearly all cases students substituted "th" consonants with the consonants of a near place of articulation. To be specific, two similar sounds /t/ and /d/ superseded the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds in most cases. However, there were rare occasions where some students produced /θ/ and /ð/ sounds as /s/, /z/, /td/ /ds/, and /dz/. For example, according to the data analyzed from the preliminary study of this research, the word *without* was pronounced in various different ways. Those include the following unintelligible pronunciation samples of the word *without*:

Table 2: Unintelligible pronunciations of the word without by the students in the preliminary study.

PRONOUNCED AS:	STUDENTS
/wɪtaʊt/	student 5, 20
/wɪzaʊt/	student 1
/wɪtdaʊt/	student 10
/wɪdsaʊt/	student 9, 13, 14, 19, 21, 22
/wɪdzaʊt/	student 15, 11
/wɪdaʊt/	stdnt 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 25
/wɪ ð aʊt/	student 8, 12, 24

As it is obvious from the example above, most of the students have replaced the /ð/ sound with the /d/ sound which is encoded as *d* consonant in written discourses. It is because the consonant *d* is pronounced with a near place of articulation to the voiced *th*. However, there were at least three students who could pronounce the word *without* correctly as it is supposed to be; yet it does not make a great difference because those successful respondents have failed to pronounce other words correctly. Besides, according to the analysis results of the first recording, some students presented correct pronunciation of certain words too. Nevertheless, it had no such a big power to prevent the research from proceeding to initiate immediate possible treatment on the students' pronunciation dealing with the problem due to the huge pronunciation issue that showed up in the graph of overall results above. The graph shows that the sample words, such as *the, then, there,* and *another* were pronounced totally incorrectly by all 25 subjects. The only word that was pronounced correctly by at least four students was *think* as it is described in the chart.

In conclusion, there were all 25 subjects present during the first recording.The

outcomes seem to be clear and support the researcher's initial assumption. Students' real problems with the "th" consonants were finally discovered. Thus, following the results, remedial lessons got a start at the next meeting according to the plan. The results from the second and third recordings can be found in the 3rd chapter of the paper.

The Cycle

The cycle consisted of four consequent stages: planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, and reflecting the action. The detailed description of each stage is listed below.

Planning the Action

In this stage, the researcher prepared the procedure of using pronunciation drills to improve and correct the subjects' production of "th" sounds. He prepared the relevant lesson plans to explain how the pronunciation drills can be implemented in teaching pronunciation and achieving the students' success in producing the correct pronunciation. Furthermore, the researcher set the criterion of success as the guidance of the research's success. The research instruments were also prepared along with lesson materials (activities, handouts, etc.) and multimedia (LCD projector, laptop, speaking dictionary, active speaker).

Success Criterion

In conducting the research, the criterion of success was crucially important in order to know whether the action was successful or not. Related to the study, the criterion was utilized to see whether the implementation of drilling technique in teaching pronunciation was successful or failed. The students underwent three recordings based on a short text which included 12 words with "th" consonants:

The students *think* it is possible to pass an exam *without* getting

prepared. *They think there* is *another* way to succeed. *There* is *something* called "cheating paper" to help *them*. What if what *they thought* does not happen *through the* exam? *Then nothing* can help *them*.

The assessment of "th" sounds focused on whether the sounds were pronounced correctly and if not which consonants were used instead of them, the correctly pronounced consonants were ticked in the tables and if the consonants were pronounced incorrectly, a consonant used instead of them was noted down. The overall results are shown in graphs for each recording. In this case, the students' success was determined according to the following criterion: Each student is able to correctly pronounce at least 10 of those words in the text at the time of final recording.

Research Instruments

The focal instrument to conduct the study was the researcher himself. However, a short text including 12 words each having "th" consonants (/ð/, /θ/ sounds) was prepared by the researcher in order to find out and solve the problem, respectively. The recordings were accomplished on an "iPhone 5" device in three subsequent steps: 1st recording during the preliminary study, the 2nd during the remedial lessons, and the last 3rd recoding after the remedial lessons were over. All those three steps of recordings are compiled on a CD. Additionally, there occurred unstructured interviews between recording events. They involved the researcher wanting to know or find out more about their comprehension and producing the correct pronunciation of those sounds without there being a structure or a preconceived plan or expectation as to how they will deal with that procedure.

Implementing the Action

The implementation of the action was based on the lesson plans and it took four weeks for the remedial lessons and recordings to be accomplished. The schedule of the lessons as well as the recordings can be found in the appendices section of this paper. The researcher himself was the teacher to deliver the remedial lessons through various pronunciation activities such as exercising drills, minimal pair discrimination, tongue-twisters, reading texts on the subjects. After each two remedial lessons there were held recording events to find out whether they perceived the input provided by the teacher-practitioner. The researcher had prepared a short text having 12 words with "th" consonants to be read aloud by the students individually. Their readings were then recorder for further analysis. The short text including the conditions remained the same for further recordings also.

The three pronunciation activities were chosen because of the practice in hearing and saying the "th" consonants, moreover, the words containing "th" consonants are pronounced in two ways and the spelling of "th" does not overlap with pronunciation. During the activities the researcher tried to follow the steps, which are needed when introducing new sounds, proposed by Doff (qtd. in Dalton and Seidlhofer 1994). The necessary steps to follow when students are introduced to new sounds are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Steps taken when introducing new sounds to students according to Doff (qtd. in Dalton and Seidlhofer 1994).

1.Say the sound alone.
2. Say the sound in a word.
3. Contrast it with other sounds.
4. Write the word on a board.
5. Explain how to make the sound.
6. Get students to repeat the sound in chorus.
7. Get individual students to repeat the sound.

Kenworthy (1990) adds that when introducing new sounds students need to hear them

together with familiar sounds occurring in their mother tongue.

First, the introductory lesson was only about how to produce the sounds and what happens with our vocal tract during the production. The objectives of the lesson were to explain the basic features of pronunciation and create a friendly and supportive atmosphere in the class. *Second*, the minimal pair practice activities focused on demonstrating the contrast between the target consonants /θ/ and /ð/ and other consonants with a near place of articulation. These activities helped the students to realize how different the sounds are and therefore, comprehensible pronunciation is needed. *Third*, tongue twisters were selected because they present the difference between the /θ/ and /ð/ consonants and other sounds; and moreover, they represent activities that are funny and enjoyable for the students. *Finally*, the usage of the reading texts moved the students beyond repetition and drills as they had to think about the text properly, practice how to say each word and get encouraged to work on their intelligibility.

1. *Observing the Action*

Observing the action was intended to obtain the data as the result of the stage of implementing the actions. Observing was chiefly the process of recording and gathering data about any aspects or events which were occurring during the implementation. Generally speaking, the students' pronunciation of [th] /ð, θ/ sounds based on a short text were recorded after each two remedial lessons.

In collecting the data related to the students' attendance during the teaching and learning process the attendance record checklist was used. The checklist was later given to the home teacher who preferred to know if her students were all present through the research period. Later, the home teacher asked the researcher's opinion about her class: how active and interested the students were, what improvement they made, what shortcomings the researcher experienced during the study, and so forth. The sample

conversation in the format of Whatsapp chat can be found in the documentation section of this paper.

2. *Reflecting the Action*

In this step, all the relevant data from the implementation was analyzed and reviewed to examine if the action was successful or not by matching the observation results with the success criterion. In other words, reflection was intended to see what had been done and what had not been done within the action. In reflecting, data analysis was carried out. The data obtained from the recordings between each two remedial lessons was analyzed. Further explanations on the assessment of the recordings can be seen below.

3. *Assessing the Recordings*

Assessing the recordings was a crucial part of the thesis, but it was not an easy task to be done as Celce-Murcia et al (1996) state that in the existing literature on teaching pronunciation, little attention is paid to issues of testing and evaluation. Likewise, in this study the assessment of "th" sounds were assessed by the researcher himself on whether the sounds were pronounced correctly or not. If one of the sounds, either the voiced "th" or the voiceless one were confusedly pronounced using a different similar or dissimilar sounds instead, such as [d], [t], [f], [s], [z], they were immediately noted down in the individual tables. However, the correctly pronounced consonants were shown in ticks (ü). The success percentage of each 12 words included in the short text were shown in interactive graphs.It is important to mention that the researcher used speaking dictionaries, such as Encarta and Longman in assessing the recordings.

FINDINGS

Taking the results from the preliminary study into account, the researcher began to take actions based on the lesson plans prepared. The research was conducted during the academic year 2014 while the subjects – 25 combined speaking class attendants coming from four different classes at the English

department, G, GG, H, and J classes were in their 4th semester. The remedial lessons were delivered in four meetings for four weeks; specifically, the lessons took place on March 6, 12, 18, and 24, 2014. The recording sessions took place after each two meetings: on March 17 and March 27, 2014.

After a couple of remedial lessons (March 6 and March 12, 2014) devoted to the practice of /θ/and /ð/ consonants were delivered to the subjects, they were recorded again for the second time (March 17, 2014) to see whether the activities applied through the two previous lessons were already showing their efficiency on the subjects. The students were provided with exactly the same text which was used in the preliminary study. Similarly, the conditions also remained the same as they were during the first recording that is reading the short text aloud to get their speeches recorded.

According to the consequent steps that were supposed to be taken through the research procedure, the next action in the plan was continuing delivering the remedial lessons consisting of various pronunciation activities dealing with /θ/and /ð/ sounds practice as shown in the lesson plans. After two active and encouraging lessons (March 18 and March 24, 2014), the students underwent the last recording session on March 27, 2014. The text, conditions and the process of recording remained completely the same as they were during the previous two recordings.

The assessment of the recordings during the observation process are thoroughly described on the following section.

1. *Second Recording*

During the period between the first and second recording the students got familiar with "th" consonant production and were exposed to several activities that were devoted to pronunciation practise of "th" sounds.

First, they students were explained how "th" consonants are produced. Then they were provided with opportunities to practice their production. The aims of the activity were to raise students' awareness about the ways the consonants are produced and to focus their attention to their production.

Second, students were working with minimal pair practice activities. These activities helped them with discrimination of "th" sounds from other consonants with a near place of articulation. The objectives of these exercises were to assist students with realization of the differences in pronunciation of "th" consonants and other consonants, to raise their awareness of "th" sounds production and to provide them with opportunities to practice the sounds. Moreover, both activities demonstrated how intelligibility is important during communication process.

On March 17, 2014 the students were recorded again. At this stage the researcher wanted to find out whether they still had problems with pronunciation of "th" consonants or whether their pronunciation improved and if yes which "th" sounds were pronounced correctly, whether those that occur in the initial, middle or final position.

Like the results from the first recording, the results of the second recording of each student were also transformed into tables. The tables offer an opportunity to compare how the pronunciation of individual "th" sounds changed. Tables can be found in the appendices. The overall findings are presented in a graph demonstrating the percentage rate of correct answers.

Figure 2: Second recording results.

The graph above shows that the students showed significant results during the second recording unlike the first recording results. It means that two remedial lessons during the period between the first and second recordings were advantageous for the students. The words *think, nothing, they, something, through, without, them,* and *thought* were pronounced correctly by most of the students during the second recording. However, the words like *the, then, there,* and *another* were incorrectly pronounced by the majority of the subjects.

This means the students were still experiencing difficulty with the pronunciation of the voiced "th" because most of them did well in pronouncing the voiceless one as it is also clear from the graph above. In this part, students' pronunciation based on the comparison of the two recordings will be analyzed.

Student 1, 8, 12, 18:

These students showed better results compared with other respondents during the first recording. Like any other respondent in the second recording, most of them did well in pronouncing voiceless "th" consonant. Taking the results from the table we can say that their pronunciation was improved significantly till the time of second recording.

Student 2, 4, 21, 22, 24:

These are the students who could pronounce at least one word correctly in the first recording. Nontheless, based on the results from the table we can say that their pronunciation showed noteworthy improvement during the second recording. It can be seen on the individual tables in the appendices.

Student 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 25:

These students produced the most problematic "th" sounds pronunciation during the first recording. However, the results of the second recording show that their awareness of the sounds has significantly improved. Most of them could correctly pronounce the words with voiceless "th" consonant. Though their results are getting improved, they still need to be aware of the voiced "th" consonant pronunciation as most of them are still experiencing difficulties.

To conclude, the analysis of the first and second recording, in terms of improvement of "th" sounds pronunciation, demonstrates that pronunciation of the voiceless "th" consonant is easier for the students than pronunciation of the voiced one. The students were able to improve their pronunciation of the consonant mainly in the initial and middle positions, but on the other hand pronunciation of the word *another was* not improved at all. There was only one student, namely student 2 (AN) who pronounced the word correctly. There were some students who changed the certain sounds to other sounds pronounced with a near place of articulation during the second recording. Nevertheless, as far as the voiced "th" sounds is concerned, pronunciation was slightly improved as well, mainly in the initial position.

1. *Third recording*

The period between the second and third recording was filled up with activities aimed at further correction of "th" consonants.

The first set of activities was devoted to tongue twisters. The objectives of using the tongue twisters were to provide the students with funny and enjoyable drilling exercises in order to practice pronunciation of the target sounds.

The second set was aimed at oral reading text. During these activities the students were exposed to two reading texts containing not only "th"consonants but also consonants with a near place of articulation. The main focus was paid to sustaining correct pronunciation and to demonstrate howunintelligible pronunciation can change the meaning of the texts.

On March 27, 2014 the students underwent the last recording.The findings of the third recording are stated in tables that were created foreach student and the final finding are noted in a graph demonstrating the percentage of correct answers.

Figure 3: Third recording results.

From the graph showing the students' final results above, it can be concluded that the students were able to improve their pronunciation of both voiced and voiceless "th" consonants in no more than one cycle. The highest improvements were noted in both initial, middle positions. However, there still

were some students, such as student 3 (PAR), student 16 (SF), student 17 (BYP), student 20 (ZP), student 22 (MHRH), and 23 (MRF) who could successfully meet the success criterion set by the researcher at the beginning of the research but presented at least one or two unintelligible pronunciation of certain words. Those are noted down in the corresponding tables respectively.Except for the student 17 (BYP) who unintelligibly pronounced the word *through* in the final recording, every student pronounced the voiceless "th" consonant i.e. /θ/ properly in all positions.On the other hand, the above mentioned students who provided at least one or two mispronunciation of "th" consonants in the 3rd recording experienced complexity with the voiced "th" consonant i.e. /ð/ in all three positions. They are shown in the corresponding individual tables above. The words which were not pronounced intelligibly are the*, they, then, there, them,* and *another*. Those five students were stuck to substituting the /ð/ sound with /d/ in most cases. Nevertheless, due to the fact that they made at least one mistake and managed to successfully meet the success criterion, it was not regarded as a considerable issue to proceed to the next cycle.Generally speaking, as far as the two voiced and voiceless "th" consonants: /θ/ and /ð/ are concerned, the results show that a major progress was made during a single cycle since the students were exposed to a wide range of pronunciation drilling activities through the remedial classes. It is important to mention that the remedial classes which occurred between the recordings were conducted in rather prolonged hours because the students showed a great enthusiasm toward the pronunciation practice activities and all of them had some sort of passion to improve their pronunciation of "th" consonants which are normally regarded as the most problematic English sounds for a non-native speaker. Therefore, the researcher had to expand the pre-planned lesson plans adding more similar pronunciation drilling activities which are not necessarily mentioned in the original lesson plans in order to equip the students with more skills of the intelligible practice of the

problematic /θ/ and /ð/ sounds through using pronunciation drills, such as minimal pair discrimination, tongu-twisters, and reading texts respectively.

DISCUSSION

The discussion deals with the discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter, principally the importance of pronunciation intelligibility for the EFL learners as well as the crucial role of pronunciation drills in attaining intelligibility. The discussion covers the procedures of the remedial lessons conducted during the research as well as their effectiveness on the subjects in relation to the existing theoretical and empirical evidence.

1. *English Pronunciation and the Target of Comfortable Intelligibility*

As presented in the previous chapters, it was found out that almost all of the subjects have a problem when it comes to intelligible pronunciation of certain English sounds, particularly the two /θ/ and /ð/ sounds which majority of EFL learners consider to be one of the most problematic English sounds to produce. Hence, the researcher decided to give a treatment to the subjects' unintelligible pronunciation of "th" consonants through conducting several remedial lessons applying pronunciation drilling technique in order to support them to achieve more intelligible production of /θ/ and /ð/ sounds of English. Let's start the discussion with some theoretical support on comfortable intelligibility in pronunciation.

Morley (1991) states that the goal of pronunciation should be changed from the achievement of perfect pronunciation to the more realistic goals of developing functional intelligibility, communicability, increased self-confidence, the development of speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom. Abercrombie (1991) describes comfortable intelligibility as pronunciation which can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of listener. Morley (1991) also

states that the overall aim is for the learner to develop spoken English that is easy to understand, serves the learner's individual needs, and allows a positive image as a speaker of a foreign language. Additionally, the learner needs to develop awareness and monitoring skills that will allow learning opportunities outside the classroom environment. Obviously, creating a stronger connection between pronunciation and communication can help enhance learners' motivation by bringing pronunciation to a level of intelligibility and encouraging learners' awareness of its potential as a tool for making their language not only easier to understand but more effective (Jones, 2002).

Pronunciation is clearly a central factor in learners' success in making themselves understood (Elson, 1992). Morley(1991) also states that intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence that teachers should include in courses and expect learners to do well. The ability to employ stress, intonation, and articulation in ways that support comprehension is a skill that for learners from many language backgrounds will only come slowly. Elson (1992) urges that learners need to be encouraged to immerse themselves in the target language and to persist in spite of the difficulties that are part of the language-learning process. The experience of unintelligibility or incomprehension grows larger because of sensitivity to 'correctness' or the need to communicate successfully in the target language. The speaker's self image and sense of accomplishment is closely bound to understanding and being understood. The result can be a high degree of frustration for the speaker or listener who might see each moment of incomprehension as a personal fault and responsibility. Klyhn (1986) observes that learners should be made aware that every message they utter needs to be understood.

2. *Individual Sounds Teaching and Its Application in the First Remedial Lesson*

In terms of teaching individual sounds, most significant techniques suggested are minimal pairs, drilling, taping students' speech to compare with each other as well as with a fixed model, choral pronunciation, lip-reading, classifying words according to their consonant, varying their criterion of "good" in pronunciation teaching(Kelly, 2003; Hewings, 2004; Lewis & Hill, 1992). Similarly, in the present study, the researcher has applied almost all of the above-mentioned techniques as key strategies to collect data as well as a means of improving the subjects' pronunciation enabling them to achieve more intelligible English pronunciation.

As a compilation from materials of different sources, To et al. (2006) suggested a number of techniques of teaching sounds which are minimal pairs, and pronunciation games employing phonemic alphabet. Those ones have been suggested in view of Communicative Teaching approach. Vu (2008) proved that *(1) Eliciting and Telling, (2) Minimal pairs, (3) Phonemic chart, (4) Exposure to English language* are four really effective techniques to correct students' mispronunciation. Those techniques are time-saving, therefore, suit well with the time limitation in class when pronunciation is integrated in speaking lessons.

During the first remedial lesson, the teaching method focused the students' attention to the production of "th" consonant sounds. The main goals of the activities were to provide learners with an opportunity to practice the sounds in isolation, help them to fix the pronunciation and gain a control over the production. Moreover, students were given an opportunity to practice pronunciation of the problematic sounds. Since the activities were playful and entertaining students were actively involved from the very beginning and moreover, these activities helped them breakdown the initial fear of pronunciation. The only problem some students experienced was occasional substitution of /ð/ and /θ/ with /s/, /z/, /t/ or /d/. In this case the researcher followed the tip with the chewing gum suggested by Kenworthy (1990). The researcher told the students to position the gum on the roof of the mouth immediately behind the upper front teeth; for s/, /z/, /t/ and /d/ the tip of the tongue has to touch the

gum; for "th" they must avoid it (Kenworthy, 1990). The researcher found her idea with a chewing gum extremely helpful as it offers an aid suitable for acquiring the postures needed for pronunciation of /ð/ and /θ/. After the introductory lesson the students felt more relaxed and familiar with the form and production of the sounds. Later, the second class concentrated on minimal pair discrimination.

3. *Minimal Pair Discrimination and Its Application in the Second Lesson*

Minimal pairs have been defined in several ways.

(1) Minimal pairs are "pairs of words that differ in meaning on the basis of a change in only one sound" (Avery & Ehrlich, 1995).

(2) "A first rule of thumb to determine the phones of any language is to see whether substituting one sound for other results in a different word. If it does, the two sounds represent different phones. When two different forms are identical in every way except for one sound segment that occurs in the same place in the string, the two words are called a minimal pairs" (Fromkin & Rodman, 1993).

(3) "A minimal pair consists of two words pronounced alike except for a single phonemic difference. A phoneme is the smallest unit of significantly distinctive sound. The phonemic difference is responsible for radical changes in the meaning of the word, as in *hat-hit* or *thing-sing.* Consequently, errors in auditory discrimination and/or articulation of these sounds may result in misunderstanding and misinterpretations of the meaning of the word, phrase or sentence"(Nilsen & Nilsen, 1973).

When properly employed, minimal pairs effectively facilitate pronunciation acquisition. The good cases in point are lessons and exercises designed by Baker (2006)in the two textbooks entitled *Tree or Three* and *Sheep or Ship;*and by Baker & Goldstein (2008) in the

textbook entitled *Pronunciation Pairs*. These two authors share and illustrate the view that "language teachers can improve their students' pronunciation markedly drilling minimal pairs in order to help them improve their intelligibility" (Hansen, 1995). When learners compare and contrast discrete sounds in the environment presented in minimal pairs, the importance of these sounds in denoting word meaning is transferred to their mind naturally.Experience shows that "pronunciation classes… make students more conscious of their own pronunciation and aware of ways in which their pronunciation differs from the model offered" (Rajadurai, 2001).

The teaching sequences applied through the remedial lessons were examples of pronunciation drilling activities. Moreover, in the second lesson, they were used to raise learners' awareness of pronunciation and discrimination of /θ/ and /ð/ and the consonants with a near place of articulation. During the second stage students revised the problematic consonants /θ/ and /ð/ in order to establish accurate pronunciation and focus on them. The researcher prepared an interesting musical activity which enabled the students to practice the minimal pairs discrimination in a fun way. However, there were choir repeating and other similar tasks, additionally. The third stage served for realizing the difference between /θ/, /ð/ and consonants with a near place of articulation. The expected outcome was that the students would not have any major problems during any stage; although the last step was more complex they would not face up any difficulties and were able to distinguish the words correctly. The goals of those activities were to provide students with as much practice as possible in order to help them improve their pronunciation and show them how intelligibility is important during communication because mispronunciation of "th" sounds can lead into misunderstanding between a speaker and a listener. However, majority of the students were still having problems dealing with the pronunciation of the "th" sounds, particularly with the voiced

"th" in most cases. Hence, the remedial lessons were kept undertaken further in order to achieve the expected result.

Actually, minimal pairs are a more serious problem than simple poor pronunciation or listening skills on the part of a student. This is because mistakes with minimal pairs do not simply impair understanding; they can lead students to believe that they understand when in fact they are quite mistaken. These kinds of mistakes can hamper their conversation skills in the obvious way that they are difficult to understand, but it can also affect their confidence and thus their inclination to even try to communicate in the first place.

The problem with helping students with minimal pairs is that it is not as simple as teaching a rule and then reinforcing it with an exercise and/or homework. This simply does not provide enough practice to enable to students to learn and become competent with new phonetics. Though minimal pairs are addressed by many language learning texts, they generally do so in a brief, one time activity or some simple repetition. Though this is better than nothing, this does little to aid students in gaining any lasting improvement in either listening or pronunciation. Minimal pairs need to be seen as a problem to be dealt with over a longer period.

4. *Tongue Twisters and Texts: Their Application in the 3ʳᵈ and 4ᵗʰ Lessons*

During the third meeting on March 18, 2014 the subjects were exposed to tongue twisters practice. Tongue twisters concentrated on accurate production and helped the students to improve their pronunciation skills. This step gave the students an opportunity to hear the sentences over and over so that they could fix the correct pronunciation of "th" consonants. As far as the last step concerned, students had to focus on faultless pronunciation. Since the texts did not only contain "th" consonants but also consonants with a near place of articulation and therefore the meaning of them would be changed completely. The objective of the tongue twisters was to help

the students realize how important accurate pronunciation is through enjoyable activities. The results taken from the second recording showed that the students presented better results in contrast to the previous recording results. Nevertheless, there was one more step to go according to the lessons planned. Thus, the researcher went on conducting the remedial lessons further.

Tongue twisters are one of the few types of spoken wordplay that are fun to recite and are a great tool to aid learner's language development.Attempting to recite a tricky rhyme or tongue twister as fast as possible without tripping over one's tongue is a great challenge. For example, if one tries to recite this tongue twister "*The thirty-three thieves thought that they thrilled the throne throughout Thursday*" a sample tricky one used in the remedial lesson and he/she can't help but smile and enjoy the race to get it right. So did the subjects when they were exposed to similar activities. The tongue twisters used in the remedial lesson usually relied on alliteration – the repetition of a sound starting with a similar letter – with a phrase designed such that it is made very easy to slip (hence the fun).Tongue twisters are not only a linguistic fun and game but serve a practical purpose for language and speech development. For example, tongue twisters may be used by foreign students of English to improve their accent and speech pathologists often use them as a tool to help those with speech difficulties.

Brook suggests the following advantageous applications of tongue twisters to improve one's pronunciation proficiency:

(1) to target articulation, select tongue twisters featuring phonemes that are particularly difficult for your learners, for example if they have trouble making the hard 't' sound, practice tongue twisters that use that particular alliteration.

(2) to bolster confidence, select tongue twisters featuring phonemes your learners are particularly good at. To really make them laugh, the teacher can recite tongue twisters with phonemes they are bad at.

(3) to make a game of it, print out a bunch of tongue twisters, cut them into individual strips, put the strips in a basket, have each player draw one, and award points based on how few repetitions are needed to master it.

(4) to work on speed, add a stopwatch to the game and make the player who can recite the twister correctly in the shortest time the winner of each round.

(5) to motivate your learners, use tongue twisters as "Get Out of Time-Out Free" cards; if your learners can recite one correctly, they are sprung.

Likewise, similar techniques were actively involved in the third remedial lesson. It was obvious that the students had fun with the tongue twisters provided. The classroom was full of laughter and shouts as the students were trying to get the tongue twisters right. Finally, after individual and choir practices along with the recorded samples, they could get the tricky tongue twisters right in their pronunciations. Later, in order to make sure that the students would come up with better results, the researcher applied reading texts in the last meeting on March 24, 2014. The students were once again aware of the both voiced and voiceless "th" consonants seeing their differences with the words which are pronounced with a near articulation in oral speech. The reading text activity was rather complex and therefore the researcher decided to use it as the last activity before the final recording. The reading text gave the students the opportunity to work on their pronunciation as a whole because the texts did not only contain the target "th" sounds but also other consonants with a near place of articulation and therefore mispronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ would make them unintelligible. At this stage it was extremely important to provide the students with an appropriate and constructive feedback. Since as stated earlier, students were not able to assess their pronunciation. The inability to assess their pronunciation could lead to wrong assumptions about their pronunciation. Those wrong assumptions could make their speech unintelligible for a listener. The main aims of

the activity were to revise pronunciation of the target "th" consonants and get used to their production.

All the pronunciation drilling activities applied through the remedial lessons finally proved their efficiency in at least one cycle without the necessity for proceeding to the next cycle. In the preliminary study, the subjetcs' pronunciation of the two voiced and voiceless "th" consonants lacked intelligibility; however, after they had been exposed to interactive and interesting drilling activities, they have achieved better results and could meet the success criterion set by the researcher. The students were enthusiastic showing an exceptional interest and encouragement toward improving their pronunciation with the researcher and they did their utmost to attain intelligibility in their speeches. It is important to mention that the student 5 had the most unintelligible pronunciation of the both "th" sounds since the beginning of the study. Nevertheless, she came up with the best result by the final recording.

CONCLUSION

The final thesis has chiefly dealt with the improvement and correction of "th"consonants pronunciation that contribute to the intelligibility of non-native students of English, distinctively, the somphomores of the speaking class at the department of English, State University of Malang.

In the theoretical part, namely in the 1st chapter features of pronunciation and the potentially problematic sounds for the Indonesian learners of English were outlined in general. In this part, the researcher also inquires about the reasons for teaching pronunciation and how intelligibility of learners is important in everyday communication. Furthermore,since pronunciation teaching is still being neglected and for some reasons it is normally pushed to the margins of the language teaching, teachers' and students' rolesare also presented in the theoretical part. Moreover, the part presents factors that influence pronunciation acquisition. Lastly, attention

was paid to the intelligible production of "th" consonants and characteristic features of them were thoroughly outlined.

In the practical part, however,the researcher aimed to present the actual research on improving and correcting the sophomores' pronunciation of "th" sounds. In order to prove that the initial assumptions and the research questions were correct the researcher asked all the 25 subjects to undergo three recordings. The first recording proved the initial assumptions to be right since the students were not able to pronounce "th" consonants correctly.

On the basis of the finding from the first recording in the preliminary study, the researcher framed various pronunciation activities aimed at "th" consonants practice. During the pronunciation activities the students were introduced to the production of "th"consonants and exposed to pronunciation practice of them through the application of pronunciation drills. Then the students were recorded again to enable the researcher to compare the first and second recordings together. At this stage of the research the researcher focused on how "th"consonants were pronounced and if they were mispronounced which consonants were used instead. After the second recording, the students worked on other pronunciation practice activities and then they were recorded for the last time. Subsequently, the researcher compared all three recordings together in order to answer the research questions. On the basis of the results from the analysis of the recordings,the initial assumption was proved wrong; on the other hand, the research questions whether the sophomore undergraduates of the English department, State University of Malang were able to improve their pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/ consonants and if those sophomores of the English department, State University of Malang achieve faultless pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/consonants were in fact proved right. Since the students' pronunciation of the both /θ/ and /ð/ was successfully corrected, the researcher decided to draw a conclusion within one cycle only.

Nevertheless, the findings from the research demonstrate that factors influencing pronunciation acquisition, such as age of the students or the mother tongue do play an important role in pronunciation learning process.On the other hand, systematic and continual work on pronunciation can help learners to become more intelligible.

To conclude, assessing the students' pronunciation turned to be the most complicated and demanding part of the research since the researcher found it to be very difficult to set which sounds can still be considered as correct and which cannot. However, in this case, the researcher addressed the trusted speaking dictionaries in order to make the evaluation substantially fair.

SUGGESTIONS

Having the present opportunity, the researcher would like to address the English teachers, students, as well as the schools in Indonesia with certain suggestions which could be drawn from the current research. The preliminary study results of the present research gave the researcher less positive impressions. Although the University students majoring in English were in their 4th semester of study their pronunciation intelligibility was still under the common standards.

According to a number of scholarly sources that are mostly introduced in the theoretical part, pronunciation intelligibility of a non-native speaker of English is crucially important in making comprehensible communications. Since pronunciation is a complex and important part of learning and teaching process teachers need to set goals and aims they want to achieve with their students. As perfect accents are difficult if not impossible to achieve in foreign language(Ur, 1984) the goal of teachers should be making their students be easily understandable when communicating with other people. The speaking class teachers would better pay more attention to the practice of individual English sounds with which most of their students seem like experiencing difficulty in pronunciation. Even though several linguists

argue that the pronunciation drilling techniques are rather old-fashioned method of teaching pronunciation, based on the results of the present study, however, the researcher believes that this technique is at least useful in teaching individual sounds. Therefore, the speaking class teachers have to apply more pronunciation drilling activities in order enable their students achieve an intelligible English pronunciation. The language teachers have to improve their own pronunciations first as their students see them as models from whom they learn correct pronunciation.

Likewise, the students are also suggested to be more aware of their speech intelligibility in the English language. Once they are aware, they would be willing to exercise more and gradually improve their pronunciation through constant practicing the difficult sounds like "th" consonants which were the focal issue of the present research. Additionally, the students need to be aware of their academic and social future considering English to be an international language. Once they have rather intelligible command of English, they would stand out among their fellow workers and achieve more than anyone with unintelligible speech in the English language. In order to achieve this, they need to be exposed to regular pronunciation practice at schools.

Lastly but most importantly, the schools as well as their curricula are equally responsible factors which can greatly contribute to the spoken English language intelligibility level of their students. The Indonesian schools have to include more speaking classes in their curricula in order to enable the students to achieve more intelligible English pronunciation at an early age when they are still more motivated and encouraged to learn and discover. Additionally, more similar researches need to be undertaken on the English pronunciation and its intelligibility issues in the Indonesian context and contribute to the development of teaching and learning process of the English language in the country. The future researchers are suggested to feel free to make use of the present research findings and investigate more and deeper in the similar fields.

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