POLYTECHNIC LEARNERS' PERCEPTION ON PRONUNCIATION ACQUISITION VIA QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION TODAY

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Abstract

This study examines perceptions of learners on pronunciation acquisition, learning phonetic transcriptions and their sounds associations amongst Polytechnic Kuala Terengganu Learners. This study was carried-out amongst semester one diploma of Electronics and Electrical Engineering learners in Kuala Terengganu Polytechnic, Terengganu, Malaysia. This study also hopes to show that by learning to recognise and read phonetic symbols learners will be able to overcome any pronunciation disability using the dictionary. This research follows the quasi- experimental design of a control-group A and treatment group B selected randomly doing a pre-test and post-test. The treatment of explicit instruction of phonetic transcriptions for 45 hours was given only to the experimental group. This study focuses on the analysis of oral test answers by learners. Some of the challenges identified in the acquisition of pronunciation are mother tongue interference, mispronunciation because

spelling does not reflect pronunciation, unintelligibility and miscommunication and the lack of confidence to speak the English Language. Whilst factors that affect pronunciation acquisition are mother tongue, exposure, motivation, students' perception, ways of learning, which English to speak and others. However, it was discovered that phonetic instruction of transcriptions and their sounds' association improves pronunciation competence. Some of the implications of this study are aimed at ELT academicians and practitioners to apply the method used in this study to up-grade the standard of pronunciation proficiency and a suggestion that the learning of pronunciation using phonetic symbols should be taught earlier in their education.

1. Introduction

This study examines the learning of pronunciation by investigating the questionnaire of the open-ended section responses by learners. This study also investigates the challenges faced and some of the factors affecting pronunciation such as mother tongue, attitude, aptitude, motivation via the learners' perceptions. The lack of English language pronunciation proficiency if unchecked will cause misunderstandings, miscommunications or events of breakdowns in communications. The aim is to help them to overcome the struggles and challenges to improve their pronunciation competency. Subsequently, this study also reviews the other researches related to pronunciation instruction and pronunciation competence. This study examines some of the problems they faced and to suggest explicit phonetic transcription instruction as a possible solution to overcome the challenges found. This study advocates the teaching of Received Pronunciation, (RP) but will accept an approximate pronunciation of English, a level of intelligibility that is understandable, and focusing on communication of meaning.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Background of Study

This study is carried-out amongst polytechnic learners studying Diploma in Electronics and Electrical Engineering in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. The purpose of this study is to gain insights and understanding into the learners' pronunciation acquisition and to

assist them on how to improve their pronunciation towards communication competency. This study also seeks to understand some of the problems they faced and to suggest explicit phonetic transcription instruction as a possible solution to overcome the challenges that will be mentioned. Anyway as claimed by Fraser (2000:7), she claimed that being able to speak English includes a number of sub-skills, but pronunciation is the most important. She argues that "with good pronunciation, a speaker is intelligible despite other errors; with poor pronunciation, a speaker can be very difficult to understand, despite of accuracy in other areas".

It is pertinent to understand some of the factors that affect learners' pronunciation acquisition. Subsequently, this will reveal further interesting insights into the learners' perceptions in their pronunciation acquisition experiences. Perceptions gained will let us understand underlying struggles and challenges encountered by learners. The purpose is to help them to overcome the struggles and challenges to improve their pronunciation competency. By investigating the level and trend of learners' perception on learning pronunciation and identifying some of their problems and the factors affecting the students' pronunciation this will help us to gain insights into how to help them to increase their pronunciation competency. Next, some of the factors that affect and influence the learners' pronunciation learning will be examined.

2.2 First Language Interference

First language or mother tongue interference is the problem identified amongst polytechnic learners who struggle to acquire the new language but the existing language for example their first language may interfere in the acquisition process. This situation is also known as the interlanguage phenomenon. As supported by Selinker (1972) who coined the term interlanguage, interlanguage scholars seek to understand 'learner language' on its own terms, as a natural language with its own systematic rules. Thus, undeniably, there is always the phenomenon known as 'mother tongue interference' when these students learn to pronounce English Language words. For example, they will pronounce words like 'bat' /bæt/ as /bɑːt/ and 'air' /eə(r) / as /aɪyɪr/.This is because in the Malay Language the vowel 'a' is always pronounced as /ɑː/ whereas 'air' mean 'water' is pronounced as / aɪyɪr /. Therefore, these examples indicate that, misunderstanding of the true meaning intended can occur through mispronunciation of words.

2.3 Mispronunciation because spelling does not reflect pronunciation

According to Crystal (2005), English spelling has never been a good guide to pronunciation for years. He says that most listeners give just one reason for their complaint: a letter is there in the spelling, and so it should be pronounced. The reason for such irregularity of English orthography is due to the historical development of the English language. Thus, in English, many spelling of words does not reflect their pronunciation. It is not possible to predict with certainty the sound of a written English word from its spelling or the spelling of a spoken English word from its sound. Many words may start with the same letter but pronounced differently in different words. For example, words that begin with the letter 'c' but possess various differing pronunciations. A student may mispronounce words as in the following; case /keɪs /', 'chase/tʃeɪs /', 'chi /kaɪ / 'and 'cease/siːs /'. Those mentioned words starts with the letter 'c', but their pronunciation differs individually from the sound /k/, /tʃ/ to /s/. This is because in the English Language, the spelling of the words often does not reflect their pronunciation. In these instances, the pronunciation of the letter 'c' does not reflect its pronunciation. In addition to that, there exists no consistency in having only one pronunciation for words that start with the letter 'c'.

2.4 Unintelligibility and Miscommunication

Polytechnic learners struggle with unintelligibility and thus produce instances of miscommunications. For example, their inability to pronounce the /Ɵ/ sound, in the word 'thin' instead they will say /t/ as in /tɪn/ and not /θɪn/. So the miscommunication that may occur would be whether they are trying to say the word' thin' or 'tin' or 'thing' as /tin/. For instance in the sentence "Please carry the 'thing' here but pronounced as / tɪn/ so the confusion here is that whether the speaker is referring to the noun 'thing' or 'tin'. This may produce a possibility of a misunderstood meaning. However, in the above mentioned situation it is usually aided by context. By providing a context of those words, usually communication is understood by the recipient.

2.5 Lack of confidence to speak the English Language

Learners is said to perceive pronunciation learning as a high priority even more than teachers, this is because in spoken interaction, pronunciation is often the first hurdle to intelligibility, and uncertainty about pronunciation is often a major reason for learners' lack of confidence in speaking. (Varasarin, 2007) When learners are not confident of how a word is pronounced, they may make a mistake in pronunciation and is at risk of being the butt of joke, thus they will rather not speak.

Polytechnic students are not able to pronounce English language words correctly, thus resulting in them not having the confidence to speak in English. Events of miscommunication and the inability to communicate successfully further hamper their progress in learning the language. The students mainly come from a homogenous group of the national language, Bahasa Malaysia being their first language. Sometimes, students just refuse to speak the language due to their lack of confidence and not wanting to be mocked by their peers. When they do not speak, they will not improve. So, they always revert to speaking their first language, Bahasa Malaysia even during English language lessons, even if the lecturer addressed them in English they will reply in Bahasa Malaysia. However, on the other extreme, if the lecturer does not allow them to speak their first language they may just end-up keeping silent and passive in class.

2.6 Priority to other skills

Lecturers do not place high importance on pronunciation teaching but rather other skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Pronunciation skills are often being given less importance compared to the other skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the teaching of the English language. (Greenwood, 2002) In the polytechnic system, pronunciation learning only makes-up about 10% of the total learning syllabus, thus explains the obvious neglect or lack of emphasis. Studies in pronunciation instruction has been increasing in second language acquisition (SLA) (Deng, Holtby, Howden-Weaver, Nessim, Nicholas, Nickle, Pannekoek, Stephan and Sun (2009), several studies have been published since Breitkreutz et al.'s research that have furthered our understanding such as of adult second-language (L2) learners' pronunciation issues (Couper, 2003, 2006; Field, 2003; Munro & Derwing, 2006; Zielinski, 2006; Sardegna, 2011; Gordon et al. 2013; Saito, 2013; Derwing, & Munro, 2015). Despite of studies by researchers such as Suter (1976) who reported an insignificant relationship between formal instruction of pronunciation and students' pronunciation of English as a Second Language, many other researchers such as Elliot (1995), Pardo (2004), Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (2010), and Saito (2013), who had found that phonetic instruction improved pronunciation competence

2.7 Lecturers lack the expertise to teach phonetic instruction

Many lecturers feel they lack the knowledge and expertise needed to teach pronunciation or that their own pronunciation is not up to par. In other words, pronunciation is an area where teachers as well as learners often suffer from a lack of confidence. (Ramesh,

Rajasegaran and Geraldine, 2006) Most lecturers also feel inadequate to teach pronunciation because some were never train to do so, whilst others just lack the confidence because of the perception of the 'requirement' of having the standard of speaking the English language like a native speaker. Some of the lecturers themselves tend to use Bahasa Malaysia while interacting with the students and there are some who do not speak fluent English themselves what more speak like a native speaker. There are also those who do not major in English but are from other subjects discipline but end-up having to teach English. This is true even in the higher institutions such as the polytechnics.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Sample and Instruments

The study followed quantitative methods strategy (Creswell, 2013) with the questionnaire administration. The questionnaire will tap into the perspectives of the students to gain insights on their attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, actions, lifestyles, habits, personal history and others towards the learning of pronunciation. This study data aims to provide beneficial practical results based upon the questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were used to provide a general view of the respondents' profile such as the independent variables of the students' level and their motivation. It focuses on data collection, summary and the characteristics of set data.

Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were sought and analysed from the collected questionnaires. Percentages were also used when describing various issues broached by the questionnaires. The research outcome is based on the statistical data of the questionnaire. The quantitative questionnaire employs objective closed-ended questions and some limited open-ended questions with numeric data. The questionnaire results reveal insights into the learning of pronunciation by the learners. But, this study only focuses on the findings of the open-ended responses of the students of the questionnaire as in Appendix 1.

The sample of study comprised of two classes of first semester one Information Technology Diploma and Electrical and Electronics Engineering learners enrolled at Polytechnic Kuala Terengganu for the December 2012/2013 intake. These learners have undergone primary and secondary education of the English language for 11 years prior to coming to the polytechnic. Most of them are Malays, thus Bahasa Malaysia is their first language, so the English language is the second or foreign language to them. Most of them not only speak Bahasa Malaysia, but they speak it with an accent originating from where they

come from. Most of them come from Terengganu, thus they speak Bahasa Malaysia with a Terengganu accent. They also hardly have the opportunity to speak English except in English language classes.

3.2 Research Instrument: Questionnaire

The questionnaire in this study was to gain more understanding on the learning of pronunciation and specifically the learning of pronunciation. The learners' personal details and background were also queried, including items are such as their gender, the language they speak at home, their PMR, SPM and the MUET English results. The language the learners speak at home is highly important towards understanding the role played by their first language towards the acquisition of pronunciation competence. If any of the learners speak English at home, this will definitely contribute to their higher level of pronunciation competence, thus high scores in the test which may not necessarily be due to the learning of phonetics using the dictionary. The learners' examination results spanning from PMR, SPM till MUET provided the information of their level of pronunciation competence before the experiment.

The information on the learners' background was important to investigate and to understand the learners' pronunciation acquisition process. Insights gain may assist in future learning strategies to be implemented for effective learning of pronunciation towards pronunciation competence. The questionnaire for this study contained a list of questions pertaining to the learners' perceptions in learning pronunciation. The open-ended questionnaire was a part of the whole study that consists of a quantitative methodology of test: paired sample t-tests and questionnaire: closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to identify the ways students learnt pronunciation, how they would have liked to learn pronunciation, why they thought learning pronunciation via phonetics was important, the reasons for their weak pronunciation and before this program of learning pronunciation using the dictionary whether they were able to understand phonetics symbols and their associated sounds. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher. The students were given approximately 30 minutes to an hour to answer all the questions. The researcher went around the classroom, assisting students who had problems in answering the questions in the questionnaire.

The objective of this method of study was to find an understanding from the learners' perspectives for the purpose of the betterment of pronunciation and thus speaking skills in general to enhance English language proficiency. The questionnaire explored the learners'

knowledge, experience and thoughts on teaching phonetics in pronunciation teaching and learning towards the improvement of pronunciation competence in English.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Findings and Implications

These are some of the findings and implications from them. It covers findings from the open-ended questions. After analysing the findings, these are some of the implications to be drawn and steps to be taken to improve the learners' pronunciation competency.

4.2 Open-ended Questions

These responses are authentic excerpts of the students' responses, with their usage of Bahasa Malaysia, wrong spelling and grammar. For the first question, the students were asked about the different ways their teacher teaches pronunciation their responses were many and varied such as repetition. Repetition was mentioned by students (4): 'repeation'and (5): 'repeatition'. It means that the teacher says out loud and the students repeat after the teacher. It is like 'drilling'. Next, student (10) claimed 'reading'. Whereas, student (1): 'translating', and student (21): 'Use translate to BM', this referred to translation: this means that the use of Bahasa Malaysia to aid in understanding, when the students understand the words this will assist them to remember them.

Using compact discs, student (18) 'cd', television, student (20) 'tv', listening to music and songs: Student (2), 'listening from the song', these are enjoyable ways to learn and refine their pronunciation skills. This is via listening means from the input, they understand it, and later the students will produce the words from their memory. Subsequently, student (11) commented on 'using dictionary and phonetic transcriptions' as one of the ways of learning pronunciation. Using phonetic transcription means the students are being taught the phonetic symbols and their sound associations. Some claimed that they were hardly taught pronunciation as was claimed by student (6) and (7): "We hardly learn pronunciation." meaning the teachers either skimmed or skipped pronunciation lessons. This could be because they place importance to other skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking.

For the second question, when they were investigated on the ways in which they would like to learn pronunciation, their responses were phonetics, for example student (3): 'phoenetic', student (21): 'use phonetics transcription': student (28): 'phoenetic', referring to recognising the symbols of phonetics and their sounds association to be able to pronounce correctly. Student (15) 'orang dari luar Negara datang ajar': thus, they also desired to be taught by native speakers meaning the British, Americans whose native language is English.

The use of translation means the use of mother tongue in assisting them in learning. Student (1) commented on 'cd, tv, watch a movie, online dictionary'. This shows that the use of online dictionary, compact discs, television, movies, exciting videos and singing. This meant they desire for a variety and creative ways of learning. Student (19) mentioned 'listening, singing and repeating'. This could be via listening, repeating and following the teacher, hereby the teacher will be the role model for the students to emulate and imitate in their learning.

For the third question, when they were examined on the reasons why they think learning pronunciation via phonetic transcriptions is important, their responses were varied. The students claimed to seek respect from others: student (1) 'people will respect me and I can refer to dictionary anytime it is not difficult'. They also want to have self-confidence: student (3) 'I want to work with multinational company', student (7) 'I'm confident in speaking', student (9): 'I will confident to speak': student (9) 'to have the confidence to speak' (mendapat keyakinan untuk bercakap)'. Having the ability to speak fluently, will grant them good impression and thus, self-confidence when communicating and interacting with others.

Next, student (19) 'to get a better job, good for my future and my friend will respect me', student (23) 'is for communication and tourism'. They will be able to communicate well too when their pronunciation ability to improve. They claimed that others will be proud of them and they themselves can take pride of their pronunciation competency. Good pronunciation skills will enable them to get a better job for a better future ahead. That will also allow them to travel and tour more conveniently by having the ability to communicate with others in English which is an international lingua franca. Having good pronunciation skills will ensure communication effectiveness and thus avoid events of communication breakdowns from occurring. When pronunciation is improved, communication is also improved including body language skills. This means that body language skills also will exude confidence and high self- esteem propelling the person forward in a positive manner in social situations.

In question 4, they were enquired the reasons for their weak pronunciation, the reasons provided were many. Student (1): 'I do not speak English with my friend, lecture. My lecture had speak in English.' Student (2) 'My lecturer don't speak in English'. Student (7) 'I don't have opportunity to speak'. Student 8: 'I do not know phonetics. Student (16) 'I speak Malay at home.' Student (10): 'I don't speak English with my friends and my teacher mix

English and BM. Student (19) 'I don't like English, lazy to study pronunciation and phonetics. Sometimes, phonetics it's hard to understand.

The students claimed that they do not speak English with friends and lecturers or seldom speak in English with friends or lecturers. They also claimed that they have no opportunities to speak English. They claim that they do not know phonetics, thus are not able to refer to the dictionary to check up on words pronunciation. They claimed that it is difficult to understand phonetics when they eventually have phonetics lessons. They claimed that lecturers do not speak in English, thus they do not have role models to follow after. They claimed that they do not like English, they lack of practice and that they are plain lazy lacking the motivation to improve their pronunciation ability and skills. They said that they use Bahasa Malaysia and speak Bahasa Malaysia at home, thus they lack the opportunity to use English and can survive without bettering their pronunciation ability.

For question 5, when asked whether before this program of learning pronunciation using the dictionary under the program, can they understand phonetic symbols and their associated sounds, student (1) 'No, I have to learn more', student (3) 'No because I never learned before this', student (12) 'Before this, I don't know how to use phonetics in dictionary', student (16) 'This is first time I learn about this', student (17) ' Before this I really not know how to use phonetics symbol in dictionary, student (20) 'No because this program make my English improve', student (22) 'Others teacher on my secondary and primary school not teach us', thus, they commented that they didn't learn it before this, not in their primary and secondary schools. Thus, they want to learn more. They claimed their pronunciation has improved, after being able to associate the phonetics and sound in English and pronounce them correctly by referring to the dictionary.

4.3 Implications

The students were asked what are the different ways their teacher teaches pronunciation, their responses are many and varied such as repetition, reading, writing, translation, listening, listen and repeat, imitation, using compact discs, watching the television, listening to music and songs and via phonetics. Some claimed that they were hardly taught pronunciation. Thus, all these opinions reinforce that pronunciation teaching should be varied so as to captivate students' interest. These finding also further reinforces Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) claim that effective communication involving any skill or combinations of skills area (listening, speaking, reading and writing) depends on the speaker's ability to integrate knowledge of the sound system, grammar and lexicon. Thus, there is a need for an integration of the four main skills with the phonology and phonetics,

morphology and syntax, and power of vocabulary of the English language in order to be proficient. Szyska (2015) claims that each learner may have their preferred learning strategies in learning pronunciation to be a better speaker of English, this is for the purpose of communication success and to prevent miscommunications and breakdowns of communication.

The claim that they were hardly taught pronunciation triangulates with the earlier finding when they were examined on whether they understand their lecturers' pronunciation lessons in their English Language class. It was found that they mainly disagreed. This can be the teachers' inability or lack of know how to teach pronunciation, the rampant use of Bahasa Malaysia in the language classroom, the side lining of pronunciation skills favouring the other language skills instead of listening, speaking, reading and writing. (Kelly, 2008) As empahsised by Yeou (2010), study of pronunciation instruction in Moroccan higher education, he said that there is a need for teacher training, whereby teachers need to be equipped to teach pronunciation, must have knowledge of articulatory phonetics, knowledge of theories of second language phonological acquisition and an up-to-date ability and techniques to apply in teaching. He also claimed that there is a paradox between the learners' attitude in learning pronunciation in comparison to the teachers', it was discovered that the students were enthusiastic to learn but not the teachers are the opposite in teaching.

They were investigated on the ways in which they would like to learn pronunciation, their responses were via phonetics, taught by native speaker, use dictionary, translation, use online dictionary, compact discs, television, movies, exciting videos, singing, listen and repeat and follow the teacher. When compared to the responses in Q1 on ways they were taught, here the addition would be they claimed that they would actually like native speakers to teach them, to have access to online dictionary and to have exciting videos.

As for native speakers teaching them in polytechnic, so far there is none compared to the school system where there exist this scheme of native speakers coming to teach as English Teaching Assistants in the state of Terengganu. Under this project Seventeen Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETA) will be placed in premier and elite schools in Terengganu to help raise proficiency in the language. This is a networking program created to promote educational exchange between Malaysia and the United States, conducted since 2006. (NST: 25 January 2012) So, the polytechnic can emulate what is being done in schools and bring in the native speakers to teach English specifically pronunciation skills.

On online dictionaries, there is a need for a multimedia laboratory, which does exist in polytechnic but owned and used by other subjects. This could then be suggested that the language laboratory to be up-graded to a multimedia laboratory or arrangement be made that the students can assess the other multimedia laboratory in their respective core department, as English is only a supplementary subject and the English Language department comes under the General Studies department that acts as a supporting department to the main department of Information Technology department and Electrical and Electronics department. Exciting videos is an interesting entry, this shows that students need to be excited and to enjoy their pronunciation lessons, bringing about the challenge for the lecturers to produce interesting and creative lessons that can cater to this need.

They were examined on the reasons why they think pronunciation is important and why they want to improve their pronunciation their responses were pertaining to affective factors such as to gain respect of others, to have self-confidence, to speak fluently, to improve pronunciation, to make others proud, to take pride for communicating well and socio-economic as well for example, to get a better job, for travelling and touring, to avoid communication breakdown , for a better future, to speak clearly, to speak to loved ones, work in a multinational company or overseas, to study overseas, to speak well with other English speakers, to get a better job, work and self- development, want to visit Europe, gain respect, good in studies, speak better than before, speak English with teachers, talk to foreigners, talk to other nationalities and just simply to be more fluent. These agree with the findings of Bartolata (2015) who claimed that the one of the skills most applicable to job performance is interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills entails being able to speak clearly and intelligibly to others. Furthermore, (Mbuh, 2015) claimed that one of the reasons why ASEAN students must improve their English Language is for the purpose of getting a better job.

Guiora (1972) mentioned that personality or language ego as he puts it is at the heart of attaining pronunciation skills. He said that speaking a foreign language requires the acquisition of a new grammar, syntax, vocabulary and adapting one's identity in the way we sound. Schumann (1975) supports Guiora that ego permeability which means how the ego can be flexible and adaptable will ensure successful second language acquisition. Instrumental motivation is when a learner learns a language for a reason for example to get a job. Contrarily, Lukmani (1972) claimed that the intensity of motivation is as important as the type of motivation. He reiterated that someone who has a very high instrumental motivation, for example, someone who wants to sound native like because of his acting job may well end-up producing a better pronunciation than someone with integrative motivation that is

very positive but less intense. Likewise, Kızıltepe (2000) found that the most important reason for learning English are for instrumental purposes such as finding work and using the internet. These purposes will motivate and spur them in their pursuit to better their pronunciation ability.

Sparks and Ganschow (1991) on personality found similar results. They state that students with motivation to learn with positive attitudes towards the target language and its speakers were more successful than those who aren't. They refer to Gardner and Lambert's research on motivation wherein two types of motivation are highlighted. The first type of motivation is instrumental, which is motivation to learn the L2 for the value of linguistic achievement. Second is integrative motivation, which describes the desire to continue learning about the second language culture.

Thus all of them Guiora (1972), Schumann (1975), Lukmani (1972), Sparks and Ganschow (1991) agreed that motivation is highly important in pronunciation learning. Thus, the multi-varied of reasons the students think pronunciation is important and thus the urgent need for improvement will determine the degree of success of their quest in the learning of English pronunciation. The students were enquired the reasons for their weak pronunciation, the reasons provided were they do not speak English with friends and lecturers, seldom speak in English with friends or lecturers, do not know phonetics, lost focus in class, lecturers do not speak in English, thought that pronunciation is not important, no interest in English, no chance to speak, do not like English, lack of practice, just plain lazy, difficult to understand phonetics, no role model to follow, lecturers do not speak English, do not learn phonetics, use Bahasa Malaysia and speak Bahasa Malaysia at home. This means that an environment that foster and promotes English usage is highly necessary for the purpose of producing successful and competent learners of English. Thus, these are the reasons discovered for their weak grasp of English pronunciation, that can be summed- up as factors like exposure, mother tongue, syllabus, learners' and teachers' characteristics. (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010) Despite of all these factors, this research will suggest that by learning phonetics, the students shall be able to improve their pronunciation competence.

They were asked why they like to learn phonetics to improve their pronunciation, their reasons are it is so funny, it is fun, they can refer to the dictionary any time, it is not difficult, they can pronounce and speak correctly, get good marks in practical training, to improve self-confidence, able to refer to phonetics and pronounce correctly, speak like a British, to get dictionary skills, to excel in their studies, to know how to say and pronounce words, they like it, it's a new skill and to be good in English.

From these findings it is highly encouraged that the students have a positive attitude towards phonetics and pronunciation acquisition, all these are towards the success of their learning, so that at the end they will be intelligible, clear and understandable even though they need not necessarily speak like a native speaker. In addition, they responded that pronunciation learning is fun and enjoyable. This is highly necessary for optimum learning as advocated by Brown. (2007) They were examined whether prior to this program of learning pronunciation using the dictionary under this program, can they understand phonetic symbols and their associated sounds, they commented that they didn't learn it before this, they want to learn more, their primary and secondary teachers didn't teach them, this program makes their pronunciation improve, for first time they are able to associate the phonetics and sound in English and pronounce them correctly by referring to the dictionary.

These findings seem to confirm that they were not taught phonetics before this, be it in kindergarten, primary or secondary school. According to cognitive science, the idea of the adult brain *"atrophying"* or become incapable of producing new sounds is inaccurate since the brain maintains a measure of flexibility throughout its life (Diamond, 1988). On the other hand, Scott (1989) demonstrates that auditory perception diminishes with age, specifically for those over 60 years, hindering their attempts to achieve target like pronunciation in second language acquisition. Thus, when phonetics was taught in this program, picking-up as a part of their semester one syllabus, they find it beneficial in improving their pronunciation via referring to the dictionary at anytime and anywhere. Therefore this study agrees that explicit phonetic instruction does improve pronunciation, despite the age of the learners. However, the end aim is comfortable intelligibility and not native speaker language. This is further supported by the results obtained from the t-test, echoed by Yeow (2010) whose learners strongly agree/agree that learning IPA segmental is very helpful with the amount of 87% compared to the strongly disagree/disagree with the rating of a mere 4%.

5. Conclusion

Having gained insights into the learners' learning pronunciation challenges and the underlying reasons for them, the suggestion is that to teach the learners phonetic transcription ability. By having the ability to associate the sounds of the language to the transcriptions they represent, this will greatly help them to improve their pronunciation ability. It could also be any other possible ways for example, of using an integration of multimedia and technology in education, specifically pronunciation competence, parallel with today's current world of advanced Information Technology (Por, Zarina, Shuki, Phoon and Fong, 2012). Thus, it is

hoped that there will be less events of communication breakdowns and misunderstandings. However, there should be intelligibility of spoken English towards effective communication amongst Malaysians English speakers with speakers of English from all over the world.

It was discovered also that learners should take pride to speak in standard Malaysian English and not native speaker English. Next, speaking a standard Malaysian English should not be presumed as a social stigma (Moyer, 2015). Parlindungan and Friska (2015) claimed that sometimes a child is shy and reluctant to speak up because it is a challenging task to speak correctly like the teacher from Britain who speaks in a British style of pronunciation. Therefore, the aim here is not to speak like a native but an approximation of native is fine as long as it is understandable and intelligible.

Speaking English as an international language means the English is understood by everyone. (Abdullah and Abant, 2011) This view is also echoed by Jenkins (2000) who claimed that if everybody else understand what is being uttered even though it is not RP, there is no reason to continue to say that it is wrong. Further reiterated by Jones (1922) who said that "people can speak English as they like" as long as they are intelligible to other people, echoed by King (1949) "correctness is of less important compared to fluency in speech" who commented well ahead of his time and very aptly too.

First language interferes and affects second language acquisition. Due to mother tongue interference some sounds cannot be produced accurately in English thus the necessity to accept an approximation of native and not native. For example, on a study by Scovel (1969) quoted in Celce-Murcia et al (2010), he posits that educators should favour grammar and vocabulary rather than pronunciation because its advocates claim that native like pronunciation was an unrealistic objective and could not be achieved. Other factors affecting pronunciation are learners' attitude, aptitude and motivation. Whilst, some of the challenges are such as first language interference, mispronunciation because spelling does not reflect pronunciation, unintelligibility and miscommunication, lack of confidence to speak the English Language, priority to other skills, lecturers lack of expertise, learners' perceptions in the aspects of attitude, aptitude, motivation and how they learn or want to learn pronunciation. So, the findings in this study gave us insights into the learners' factors and challenges affecting their pronunciation learning.

This study is limited to Polytechnic Kota Kuala Terengganu students who are mainly learning to be able to be proficient in the English Language. The English language subject is only a complementary subject not a core subject. So, the learners are English for Specific Purposes and not English Language students. Future research can focus on investigating the

teaching of phonetic transcriptions using English Language students as sample. They can also complement the study with a qualitative method such as interviewing the teachers to gain insights of their perceptions on pronunciation teaching. Other than that, anyone can also conduct a study on suprasegmental features such as rhythm (stress and pausing) intonation (prosody), voice quality (voice setting features), body language in oral communication (non-verbal) and not just segmental as carried-out in this study (Dabic , 2013).

All these efforts and initiatives are towards increased pronunciation competency to be understandable and intelligible for the purpose of successful communication with others. This skill of recognising phonetic symbols and their sounds associations will help them to be independent to find solutions to their language problems. Dictionaries are undeniably amongst the most readily available and cheapest learning tool for students (Wright, 2001).

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