

Phonetic Symbols through Audiolingual Method to Improve the Students' Listening Skill

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Abstract

Phonetic symbols present linguistics feature to how the words are pronounced or spelled and they offer a way to easily identify and recognize the words. Phonetic symbols were applied in this research to give the students clear input and a comprehension toward English words. Moreover, these phonetic symbols were applied within audio-lingual method which provided repetitions, memorizations, and drills through audio media. This research used Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. The objective of this research was to improve the students' listening skill through phonetic symbols applied within audio-lingual method. The instruments used were observation and test. The result showed that the students were encouraged to identify spoken words based on phonetic symbols. They were able to differentiate phonetic symbols used that helped them to identify words on spoken text. Meanwhile, the result of test showed that there were 30 students of 40 students who achieved the passing grade, 75. The percentage of students' achievement test met the target of this research success that was 75% of the students got score ≥ 75 . As the target of the research was successfully done that it showed to the students' improvement, this CAR was able to improve the students listening skill.

Keywords: phonetic symbol, listening skill, audio-lingual method

A. Introduction

Listening is part of an activity of hearing or listening spoken words. During its process, both speaker and listener are engaged in the communication directly. To build such good communication, the listeners are not only listening but also intend to grab the meaning. In this case, listeners' understanding is measured based upon how well they understand what the speaker says. As it requires the listeners to actively understand every single word, listening posits active process. Indeed, it shows that there is a participation which involves the listeners to actively listen to the speaker (Rost, 1991, p. 1). The process of communication involves the speaker and listener where the speakers intend to convey what they think meanwhile the listeners are intentionally and actively listen to grab the meaning of the utterance.

Listening is one of language skill taught to the students as they are required to master the four skills. Besides, listening is a rather mechanical process in which listeners (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p. 18) construct meaning by based on individual sound, language intonation of the target language and building meaning from phonemes to words to larger units of meaning. It means that listening can be a complex skill in some ways that it is not the way to listen but it is to understand and comprehend the meaning through signals. Looking at this, some students may feel that they encounter some difficulties in listening.

One of the objectives of teaching English at junior high school is enable the students to develop their communication abilities both in oral and written form to achieve functional literacy level (Permendiknas, 2006). The communication abilities involve their English skills to be implemented which can be both oral communication and written communication. Listening can be often referred to oral communication. It is because listening invites the students to learn and develop their oral skill. However, it does not mean that oral ability is only speaking skill but it is also listening skill. In a communication, there is an active process which involves the speaker and the hearer interacts to each other. It is because both of speaker and hearer have intention to contribute the meaning of contextual discourse (Rost, 2011, p. 79).

However, some students may still feel that learning listening skill is not easy. Based on the problems faced by the seventh grade students of MTs Plus Darul Ulum Rejoso Peterongan, they also had difficulties in learning listening. It was found that some students felt difficult in understanding vocabularies that were pronounced. As a result, they did not know the word and its meaning. It happened because they could not hear the articulation of the word clearly. Their inabilities in understanding vocabularies influenced their understanding of the spoken text.

In that case, it is needed to solve the students' problem. Looking at the identified problem, the students need to have an ideal teaching aid because listening deals with the sound, audiolingual method serves the problem solving. As it is mentioned by Freeman (2000, p. 39) who states that the audiolingual method focuses in repetition some words to memorize. This method allows the students to build their oral communication. On the other hand, to be able to use language, it is required to understand the linguistics feature, one of them is pronunciation. As the language is taught systematically, it pays attention to pronunciation and by intensive oral drilling of its basic sentence pattern (Richard & Rogers, 2001, p. 53).

Some related studies show that the students' oral skill improved by using audio-lingual method (Setiawan, 2011), audio documents occasionally help students concentrate on the teaching materials (Rahmatian & Armun, 2011), and the implementation of Audio-Lingual method in teaching speaking affects the students speaking skills (Amelia, 2012).

B. Literature Review

Learning listening is essential for the students to learn before they learn to read, write and even to speak. Without the capability of listening, the students will have difficulties to speak, read, and write. In a way of listening, listener not only listen or pay attention to what speaker says but also has to remark the message by trying to gauge speaker's intentions and extracting from the message which seems relevant to the listener's goal (Field, 2008, p. 37). In this case, listening does not mean that the hearer has no intention except listening but it rather focus on finding the meaning of what is uttered by the speaker. This process determines the hearer's understanding of the context.

There are four steps in listening activity process. They are hearing, understanding, evaluating, and responding (Greene & Petty, 1971).

1. Hearing – it deals with a series of sounds that involves with the words and sentences.
2. Understanding – it means that the meaning of those words and sentences are understood.
3. Evaluating – it means that the meaning gained is evaluated the total communication is accepted or rejected.
4. Responding – a response is made to what is heard by further thought, bodily movement, facial expression or audible reaction.

From these four steps, they describe that a process of listening is through stages then it also describe the process of transmission of the actual meaning which is encoded through sounds. Each of them shows their own function. Moreover, responding stage takes main role that it measure the hearers' listening comprehension whether they comprehend what is intended by the speaker or not.

Between the speaker and hearer, the quality of their engagement in listening process and hearer's listening comprehension can be affected by some factors (Jalongo, 1992, p. 67):

a. The listeners' characteristics.

The characteristics involve the learners' motivation, experiences and the ability to use self-monitoring. The learners' motivation deals with the learners' interest to be active, to interact and to participate. The learners' experiences deal with the learners daily activities. The ability to use self-monitoring refers to the ability in associating new information with prior knowledge.

b. Situational factors

They involve the quality of the message, the amount of distraction, and the use of concrete object. It means that the message must be interesting, and well organized.

The distraction should be avoided. And the use of concrete objects such as pictures or real object as teaching media is necessary to encourage the explanation of message.

c. Speakers' characteristics

They cover the speaker's pronunciation, eye contact, nonverbal communication which is consistent with the message and the absence of distracting habits. The pronunciation of the speaker must be clear. Eye contact deals with the speaker's attention to the listener. Non verbal communication deals with mimes, gestures and body movements. The speaker's distract habits should be avoided, so that the message can be transferred well.

In audiolingual method, the students can learn listening through drilling, practices, and memorization. This will take the benefit that the students will be custom and easily recognize sounds of words that they will also come up with the understanding of the content. Mart (2013) defines audiolingual method as a language teaching method which focuses on oral skill and is used to gain the target language communicatively. Moreover, Oral instruction becomes the ideas in the implementation of audiolingual method (Richard & Rogers, 2001, p. 65). Some of the background of the activities may deal with repetition, drilling, and memorization that based upon them, the students are expected to develop their oral communication.

The principle of implementing audiolingual method is giving the students more chances on practice where they can drill what they have got can be though repetition, transforming, and also translation. As it is mentioned by Krashen (1986, p. 130) who states that this method has four basic drill, those are; simple repetition, substitution, transformation and translation. It can be inferred that the main activity of this method is drilling from the simple repetition to the translation. Besides, this method more focuses on the structure of linguistics. The students learn inductively through emphasizing on the form that it will build their fluency and they begin to avoid error. Here are the characteristics of the Audio-lingual Method in language teaching (Murcia, 1991, p. 6):

- a. Lessons begin with dialogues.
- b. Mimicry and memorization are used, based on the assumption that language is habit formation.
- c. Grammatical structures are sequenced and rules are taught inductively.
- d. Skills are sequenced: listening, speaking, reading, writing postponed.
- e. Pronunciation is stressed from the beginning.
- f. Vocabulary is severely limited in initial stages.
- g. A great effort is made to prevent learning errors.
- h. Language is often manipulated without regard to meaning or context.
- i. The teacher must be proficient only in the structures, vocabulary, etc. that she/he is teaching since learning activities and materials are carefully controlled.

The foundation of audiolingual method is ideal to language learning, especially to listening skill is that it shapes learners to be native. This method involves the students to the acquisition and learning phase of identifying structure and phonological aspects. Reinforcement, in this case, takes a control of learners' habit after they learn and are given some actions. Reinforcement is among stimulus, response, and behavior

in which it is the extrinsic approval of learners' satisfaction of the target language use (Richard & Rogers, 2001, p. 56). These are the fundamentals of behaviorism. Learners learn the target language where they focus on linguistics feature that they are guided to avoid errors. Drilling or practices is one of stimulus which will shape their behavior. Consequently, students' behavior emerges as they always respond to the language use. The following describes the central of audiolingual method (Richard & Rogers, 2001, p. 57):

1. Foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation. Positive habits are gained from giving learners correct response. Language is verbal, then addressing learners to memorizing dialogues and performing pattern drills the ability of native-like to minimize mistakes and errors.
2. Language skills are learned more effectively if the items to be learnt in the target language are presented in spoken form before they are seen in written form.
3. Analogy provides a better foundation for language learning than analysis. Analogy involves the process of generalization and discrimination. The explanation of rules is not given to the students until they have practiced a pattern in a variety of context.
4. The meaning that words of a language have for the native speaker can be learnt only in a linguistic and cultural context.

The activities for audiolingual method is distinctively various in its application. Brooks in Richard and Rogers (2001, p. 61) proposes the followings which are types of learning activities which can be applied in audiolingual method:

1. *Repetition.* The students copy the utterance and repeat it aloud as soon as he/she has heard it.
2. *Inflection.* One word in an utterance appears in another form when repeated.
3. *Replacement.* One word in an utterance is replaced by another
4. *Restatement.* The students rephrase an utterance and address it to someone else, according to instructions
5. *Completion.* The students listen to an utterance that is complete except for one word, then repeats the utterance in completed form.
6. *Transposition.* A change in word order is necessary when a word is added.
7. *Expansion.* When a word is added it takes a certain place in the sequence.
8. *Contraction.* A single word stands for a phrase or clause.
9. *Transformation.* A sentence is transformed by being made negative or interrogative or through changes in tense, mood, voice, aspect, or modality.
10. *Integration.* Two separate utterances are integrated into one
11. *Rejoinder.* The students make an appropriate rejoinder to a given utterance.
12. *Restoration.* The student is given a sequence of words that have been culled from a sentence but still bear its basic meaning. He uses these words with a minimum of changes and addition to restore the sentence to its original form.

Regarding the principles of audiolingual method, phonetic symbols will take an advantage of its application. Phonetic symbols are written characters used in phonetic transcription of speech which represent a particular sound (Meyer, 2009, p. 196). Phonetic symbols show how the word is pronounced, for example, the word flag [flæg].

The phonetic symbols show how to pronounce “flag” correctly. Additionally, to help better in pronunciation, phonetic symbols cards shows the appropriateness of word pronunciation. This is the notion of how phonetic symbols can describe the word. When learners describe or produce sounds, it is necessary to know the individual word is and how each of sound differs from all other (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011, p. 230).

The distinctions of the words may not be seen clearly when they are spoken and they somehow ambiguous. It is because the same sound words do not represent the same pattern of their sound words. The words “bake lamb” are pronounced similarly to “back lamp”. Phonetically, these words are almost the same sound patterns; however, they will look distinctly if phonetic symbols are presented:

Bake lamb	/beɪk/	/læmp/
Back lamp	/bæk/	/læmp/

The idea of the phonetic symbols used is to distinguish how words are pronounce and represented in English alphabets. Foreign language learners may encounter difficulties in sound pattern. Some of English words have different spelling and pronunciation, but some of them may have the same pronunciation. However, some of English dialects make no distinction in a case of pronunciation even some speakers distinguish the words, for example the word “cot” and “caught” (Odden, 2005, p. 21). Considerably, there are several types of sound pattern based on how the words are produced; nevertheless, this research focuses more on monophthong-vowel phonetic symbols. They include the sounds we represent as (a, i, u, e, and o) in the ordinary alphabet. For example bag [bæg], deal [di:l], fall [fɔ:l], hand [hænd], laugh [lɑ:f], etc.

C. Research Methodology

As this research was aimed to improve the students’ listening skill, it used Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. This CAR design was applied because its purpose is to address a specific, practical issue and seek to obtain solutions to a problem (Creswell, 2012, p. 577; Fauzan, 2016). This research emphasized on strengthening the students’ listening skill through phonetic symbols that it enabled them to identify and easily recognize the spoken words. By having such solution, the students were able to identify proper sound of words then they got the understanding of the spoken text.

1. Participants

The participants of the research were the seventh year students of MTs Plus Darul ‘Ulum Jombang. They were chosen purposively. Based on the pre-observation, they were chosen because of some considerations; listening practices were reluctantly done since the students could not be able to catch the words appropriately that it made them difficult to listen and comprehend the meaning, and the teacher’s report showed that they got the lowest score among the other classes.

2. Instrument

The data of this research were taken from students’ listening test and observation. The test was achievement test which measured the students’ listening

ability after the treatment using phonetic symbols through audiolingual method. Meanwhile, the observation referred to observing the students whether they enabled to identify between the words and their phonetic symbols, enable to differentiate phonetic symbols in one word to another word, and enable to identify and comprehend some words through spoken text.

3. Procedure

The research was conducted in cycle model as it was proposed by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart's design (2014, p. 19). It covered planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting for each cycle. The criteria of the research success were also set. This research was categorized successful if the result of the listening achievement test achieved 75% of the students who got score at least 75. Meanwhile, the indicators of the observation should be fulfilled positively toward the application of phonetic symbols through audiolingual method.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

As there were two types of research instruments, the data were analyzed differently. The students' scores were analyzed by using percentage formula. It was used to see how many percentage of the students who got passing grade and to fulfill the target of the research, 75% of the students who got score at least 75. Meanwhile, the observation was taken in form of observation checklist which its result was analyzed descriptively. The analysis focused on describing the students and teacher's activities during the process.

D. Findings

1. The Result of Observation

Based on the observation of the first meeting, it was found that the students were actively involved. They were able elaborate the teacher's examples showing the use of phonetic symbols. It means that through repetition as one of various types applied helped them to catch the words and symbolized the sound of words into the phonetic symbols cards given. This phase was done both individually and in group. However, when the students were presented some similar words sound, they could differentiate them appropriately. This case implied that having individual word practices was easy enough to accomplish but it was not in complex words or text. The following table showed the result of the observation.

Table 1. The Result of Observation Checklist.

No	Indicators	Meeting 1		Meeting 2	
		Fullfil	Unfullfil	Fullfil	Unfullfil
1	Listening and identifying the teacher's explanation of phonetic symbols cards and their examples.	√		√	
2	Responding the teacher's instruction appropriately.	√		√	

No	Indicators	Fullfil	Unfullfil	Fullfil	Unfullfil
3	Identifying the phonetic symbols correctly in group.	√		√	
4	Able to differentiate between one symbol and another correctly in group.		√	√	
5	Identifying some words from the text that they heard correctly in group.		√	√	
6	Accomplishing the instruction in group.	√		√	
7	Responding to the teacher's question in group.	√		√	

Based on table 1, it showed that the first meeting of the implementation of phonetic symbols through audiolingual method was not successfully done. It can be seen from the fourth and fifth indicators. Some of the students still were not able to identify and distinguish some symbols that affected them not to be able to catch and comprehend the spoken words well. The other problem they had was that they were not custom to the words and it was lack of drilling with various types of words. In the beginning of the implementation, the students were provided with single word and its phonetic symbols. They were also required to listen the words very carefully before they looked at the symbols. However, the students responded to the teacher instruction positively by learning the symbols and asked the teacher to play some more sounds.

Learning how to pronounce words and hear spoken words by the use of phonetic symbols focused on the form and its literal meaning. However, it could not be denied that the researcher guided the students to comprehend the whole spoken words. In some ways, the researcher presented spoken text and guided questions that they needed to answer the available questions.

Thus, having some revisions and improved activities enabled the teacher to strengthen the students listening ability by using phonetic symbols through audiolingual method. The second meeting proved that the effective ways of implementing phonetic symbols through audiolingual method facilitated the students to identify and comprehend the spoken words. The indicators of the observation were successfully fulfilled by the students. It means that the process of teaching and learning activities was done well.

2. The Result of Listening Achievement Test

Listening test was administered to measure or evaluate the students' achievement. It measured their progress after being taught by using phonetic symbols through audiolingual method. The form of the test was multiple choices. The students were provided some questions and they had to answer by choosing the correct answer based on the spoken text. Furthermore, based on the data analysis, the result of the test showed that the percentage of the students who got scores at least 75 was 75% or there were 30 students. The detail of the result of the test can be seen from the following table.

Table 2. The Result of Listening Achievement Test

Students' Number	Score	Students' Number	Score	Students' Number	Score	Students' Number	Score
S-1	80	S-11	90	S-21	85	S-31	50
S-2	90	S-12	60	S-22	55	S-32	90
S-3	95	S-13	85	S-23	85	S-33	85
S-4	85	S-14	90	S-24	80	S-34	45
S-5	85	S-15	50	S-25	85	S-35	80
S-6	65	S-16	85	S-26	55	S-36	80
S-7	90	S-17	45	S-27	95	S-37	80
S-8	80	S-18	80	S-28	65	S-38	95
S-9	80	S-19	75	S-29	80	S-39	90
S-10	70	S-20	75	S-30	85	S-40	95

These data were used to determine the success of the research. Based on the table 2 above, it summarizes that there were 30 students or 75% of the students achieved the passing grade and it indicates that the research was successful. The research could be categorized successful since the result of the test achieved the target of research success, that were at least 75% of the students got 75 on their achievement test.

This result of the students' test implied that the main key to the research success was in the implementation of phonetic symbols through audiolingual method. During the process of the implementation of the research, the students must follow the procedures and instructions that the use of phonetic symbol which was applied through audiolingual method had been trained them to be custom to English monophthong vowel sounds.

E. Discussion

The need of this research was the students' listening skill improved. The teaching learning process was conducted as it was already set in planning phase. The process focused on how the use of phonetic symbols could improve the students' listening skill through audiolingual method. Foremost, giving the description of phonetic symbols used to show how words were pronounced gave the students clear identification of words. The detail of the implementation of phonetic symbols was that it showed the students how words distinctly pronounced although they have similar letter, for example; *father* was pronounce as ['fɑ:ðə] and *bank* [bæŋk]. These two examples were given to the students so that they identified how words were pronounced.

Looking at the activities, the researcher took the advantages of audiolingual method that it provided the students with practices or drilling. Many activities let the students to hear and identify spoken words. The researcher not only played the sound of the words but also showed their phonetic symbols. Some texts were also used to measure how far they could identify words and comprehend the main idea of the text.

During the process of this research, an observation was conducted. The observation functioned as a control instrument to show that there were some indicators fulfilled by the students. The indicators represented their active participation and their

listening skill progress. The data from this instrument were used to identify whether the process of teaching and learning by using phonetic symbols through audiolingual method was successfully implemented or not and whether there was weakness or not. In implementing phonetic symbols through audiolingual method, the students were invited to hear the sound of words, identify them, and determine the meaning. Repetition was always used to form their target language use. In fact, during its implementation, the students could follow the teacher instructions.

In this case, audiolingual method presented the students with chances to catch and learn native language. The students were given authentic spoken language that made it as effective and sufficient input. They heard the English words correctly and appropriately. This offered the teacher to give the students real language use. Regarding to this benefits, there were some improved activities. The students were presented some various words. They began identifying and pronouncing some given words within phonetic symbols while the audio played.

In fact, the process proved that the students were able to optimize the benefits of audiolingual method to use phonetic symbols in identifying words' sounds. As a result, having been drilled through several different activities, the students were capable of comprehending the spoken words. Thus, because they had major in words sound identification and its meaning, they were able to improve their listening skill and they presented it in solving the test questions correctly. At last, the result of the observation and students' test proved that phonetic symbols which were applied within audiolingual method could improve the students' listening skill.

Teaching through audiolingual method does not only deal with listening, but it also develops speaking skill as it is mentioned by Freeman (2000, p. 39) who states that the audiolingual method focuses in repetition some words to memorize which allows the students to build their oral communication, the students' oral skill improved by using audio-lingual method (Setiawan, 2011), and the implementation of Audio-Lingual method in teaching speaking affects the students speaking skills (Amelia, 2012).

F. Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis and the discussion, it can be concluded that the use of phonetic symbols through audiolingual method can improve the seventh year students' listening skill. It was proved by the result of students' listening test that they met the standard requirement of research success. Moreover, supported by the result of observation, this research showed that the activity of giving the students treatment, the use of phonetic symbols through audiolingual method, had been successfully applied to optimize their listening skill to identify and comprehend spoken words.

As the research was successfully done, it is expected that the English teacher should use any kinds of learning model and teaching aids, especially audiolingual method and phonetic symbols to improve the students listening skill and enhance quality of teaching and learning process. As a result, phonetic symbols through audiolingual method offers the students how to learn listening effectively and it was done successfully to give the treatment to the students to improve their listening skill.

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