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Junior High School Students' Ability of Chinese Initial and Finals Pronounciation in Speaking

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Abstract

Based on preliminary observations at Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School, pronunciation in Mandarin is quite difficult because pronunciation in Mandarin is different from Indonesian. In this regard, the purpose of this research is to determine the ability to pronounce *shēngmǔ* and *yùnmǔ* in Mandarin. This research is quantitative descriptive. The research subjects were students of class VII Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School with a total of 9 students. The techniques used to collect research data are observation techniques and test techniques. The test instrument was used to determine the ability to pronounce *shēngmǔ* and *yùnmǔ* in Mandarin for class VII students of Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School. The results showed that the students' average pronunciation ability was 44 with a standard deviation of 10.25 and was at intervals of 46-55. Thus it can be concluded that the level of ability to pronounce *shēngmǔ* and *yùnmǔ* in Mandarin for class VII students of Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School is at moderate criteria.

Keywords

ability; pronunciation; mandarin; consonants; vowels.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of *society* 5.0, the ability to speak foreign languages is a very important added value, because through mastering a foreign language people can interact with each other. In learning a foreign language, students are required to be skilled at listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among the four skills, speaking skills have a very important social role in human life, because according to Tarigan (2015) a person's career success is also determined by his ability to speak.

The skill of speaking a foreign language, especially Mandarin is one of the language skills that is relatively difficult to learn because the process

of speaking requires it The three basic components are pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence patterns. These three components are interrelated and support the process of oral communication.

Some of the results of previous research that support this research include research on student errors in pronouncing the phonemes */z/*, */c/*, */s/*, */zh/*, */ch/*, */sh/*, and */r/* in Chinese vocabulary. by Mardiana (2008), based on the results of this study it was concluded that the high number of students made pronunciation mistakes and had not mastered the pronunciation of Chinese phonemes, especially the pronunciation of phonemes */z/*, */c/*, */s/*, */zh/*, */ch/*, */ sh/* and */r/* and students' ability in pronouncing the phoneme */zh/* is very poor.

Next, research by Uliyanti (2016) stated that all students were able to pronounce the sound *shēngmǔ /b/, /p/, /m/, /f/, /d/, /t/, /n/, /l/, / g/, /k/* and some students are still unable to pronounce *shēngmǔ /j/, /q/, /x/, /z/, /c/, /s/, /zh/, /ch/, / sh/, /r/* . Then students are able to correctly pronounce *yùnmǔ /e/, /i/, /ü/, /ie/, /ua/, /üe/, /an/, /en/, /ang/, /eng/, /ian /, /iang/, /ing/, /uan/, /uen/, /uang/, /ueng/, /ong/, /üan/, /ün/, /iong/* . The results of the study also showed that all students were able to pronounce *shēngdiào* (tone) correctly in the word *"bō – bó – bǒ– bò"* and some students had not been able to correctly pronounce words that had three *shēngdiào* met three *shēngdiào* (tone).

Furthermore, research by Afrina (2020) stated that most students made mistakes in consonant sounds *(z), (c), (zh),* and *(ch)* . Errors in this sound, apart from being caused by interference factors, differences in the shape of graphemes/writing also cause errors in pronunciation and include intralingual errors. The biggest form of error is also the influence of the mother tongue accent which makes students pronounce the consonant as if there is an emphasis on the end of the consonant.

Pronunciation is the basis for someone to be able to speak properly and correctly. Sometimes the pronunciation of phonemes in Mandarin is also very difficult to pronounce, because Indonesian does not have these phonemes. Phonemes have no meaning, but their role in language is very important because phonemes can distinguish the meaning of each word.

According to Chaplin (1997) *ability* (ability, skill, dexterity, talent, ability) is energy (strength) to perform an action. Meanwhile, according to Robbins (2000) ability can be an innate skill from birth, or is the result of training. Everyone has different abilities to perform an action. This ability affects the potential that exists within an individual. The learning process requires students to hone all their abilities.

Furthermore, according to Mulgrave (via Tarigan 2008), speaking is a tool for communicating ideas that are arranged and developed according to the needs of listeners. Speaking skills in Mandarin have unique characteristics. Wang (in Abidin 2016) states that the basic or smallest part of speaking in Mandarin is 声母 (shēngmǔ) or consonants, 韵母 (yùnmǔ) or vowels and 声调(shēngdiào) or tones. In Mandarin pronunciation, if there is a mispronunciation in these three aspects, the meaning conveyed is also different.

Mandarin is one of the most spoken languages in the world. In Huang Borong's "Modern Chinese": Mandarin is the language of the Han nationality, the common language of the Chinese family and community groups, and is also the common language used by the Chinese community in the world. In addition, Mandarin is one of the most popular languages in Indonesia, and has developed very fast in Indonesia. Therefore, the role of language as a communication tool will continue to grow. In the language learning process, learning the similarities and differences between languages is very important for language learning. By comparing the two languages, the process of learning a second language has also been simplified to a certain extent. (Junaeny, 2020).

The pronunciation of Mandarin is different from the pronunciation of other languages. Characteristics of Mandarin pronunciation include: (1) Mandarin pronunciation must pay attention to the tone because the tone affects the meaning, (2) Some consonants are pronounced with aspiration or blowing air, (3) Some consonants are pronounced with the tongue bent upwards, touching the roof of the mouth.

The pronunciation of consonants in Mandarin is different from Indonesian. The pronunciation of Chinese consonants is greatly influenced by the placement of the tongue, lips and teeth and how they are pronounced. If there is an error in the pronunciation position or pronunciation method, the resulting pronunciation will be inaccurate and have a different meaning. Mandarin has 21 consonants or initials *(shēngmǔ)* in Mandarin. The following is a classification of consonants based on their articulation.

a. Bilabial consonants : b, p, m
b. Labiodental consonants : f
c. Apicoalveolar consonants : d, t, n, l
d. Dorsovensal consonants : g, k, h
e. Palatal afrocade consonants : j, q, x
f. Alveolar affricate consonants : z, c, s
g. Apikopalatal africate consonants : zh, ch, sh, r

Mandarin vowel phonemes are also called suffix elements or 韵母*(yùnmǔ),* generally occupying the final position. Vowels in Mandarin are divided into single vowels, double vowels, triple vowels, and mixed consonant vowels.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted in the odd semester of the 2022/2023 school year in learning Mandarin which was carried out at Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School located on Jl. New Monginsidi No. 11, Maricaya Baru, Kec. Makassar, Makassar City, South Sulawesi Province.

The partisipants in this study were 9 students of class VII Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School, using a *total sampling technique*.

This research is a research using quantitative descriptive research methods. The data collected in this study can be analyzed using statistical analysis.

As for what was explained by Zuhairi.

Quantitative research is research that requires a lot of numbers, starting from data collection, interpretation of the data, and the appearance of the results. Likewise, at the research conclusion stage it would be better if it was accompanied by pictures, tables, graphs or other views. (Zuhairi, 2016, p. 24).

According to Sugiyono (2015) descriptive research is a research method that seeks to describe and interpret objects as they are without intending to make general conclusions. Based on the above understanding, it can be concluded that the research to be conducted by researchers aims to analyze and describe existing phenomena using numbers.

Based on the above research methods, this study used a quantitative method to describe students' ability to pronounce consonants and vowels in Mandarin based on each variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Assessment of the Ability *to Pronounce Shēngmǔ* and *Yùnmǔ* in Mandarin Speaking Skills

Data on the test results for the ability to pronounce *shēngmǔ* and *yùnmǔ* in Chinese for class VII students at Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School are as follows.

Table 1. Raw Score Data from the results of the Ability *to Pronounce Shēngmǔ* and *Yùnmǔ*

No	Score	Frequency (f)	*Fx*	fx^2
1	45	1	45	2025
2	28	1	28	784
3	55	1	55	3025
4	43	1	43	1849

5	39	1	39	1521
6	29	1	29	841
7	58	1	58	3364
8	48	1	48	2304
9	51	1	51	2601
		N = 9	**∑fx = 396**	**∑ fx^2 = 18311**

Note:
x : student scores
f : frequency
∑ *fx* : score multiplied by frequency
∑ fx^2 : score squared

Table 1 shows ∑ *fx* = 396 and N = 9. Then the mean value *can* be known:

$$X = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$
$$= \frac{396}{9}$$
$$= 44$$

So, the average students' ability to pronounce *shēngmǔ* and *yùnmǔ* in Mandarin is 44. Calculations to find the conversion of students' scores need to know the standard deviation with the following calculations.

$$S = \frac{\sqrt{(N\sum fx^2) - (\sum fx)^2}}{n\,(n-1)}$$
$$= \frac{\sqrt{9 \times 18311 - (396)^2}}{9 \times 8}$$
$$= \frac{\sqrt{164.799 - 156816}}{72}$$
$$= \frac{\sqrt{7.983}}{72}$$
$$= 10{,}52$$

Furthermore, to find the conversion value of the ability to pronounce shengmu and yunmu, it can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2. Converting Students' *Shēngmǔ* and *Yùnmǔ Pronouncing Ability Scores* in Chinese

Number Scale	Hundred Scale	Note
44 + 2.25 (10.25) = 67.67	100	Perfect
44 + 1.75 (10.25) = 62.41	90	Very good
44 + 1.25 (10.25) = 57.15	80	Good
44 + 0.75 (10.25) = 51.89	70	Enough
44 + 0.25 (10.25) = 46.63	60	Currently
44 – 0.25 (10.25) = 41.37	50	Moderate enough
44 – 0.75 (10.25) = 36.11	40	Not enough
44 – 1.25 (10.25) = 30.85	30	Very less
44 – 1.75 (10.25) = 25.59	20	Bad
44 – 2.25 (10.25) = 20.33	10	Very bad

Following are the results of the assessment of each student's consonant and vowel pronunciation abilities as described below.

Table 3. Results of the *Shēngmǔ* and *Yùnmǔ Pronunciation Ability Test for* each Student

No	Student	Pronounciation	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehen-sion	Total Value
1	Student 1	9	13	8	15	45
2	Student 2	6	10	5	7	28
3	Student 3	12	20	9	14	55
4	Student 4	9	20	6	8	43
5	Student 5	6	19	6	8	39
6	Student 6	6	15	5	3	29
7	Student 7	12	19	8	19	58
8	Student 8	5	28	5	10	48
9	Student 9	6	22	4	19	51
Total		**71**	**166**	**56**	**103**	**396**

Furthermore, the criteria for obtaining a score for the mastery level of each student's speaking ability are described in the following table.

Table 4. Criteria for the Level of Mastery of Speaking Ability

No	Student	Total Value	Criteria
1	Student 1	45	Not enough
2	Student 2	28	Less once
3	Student 3	55	Moderate enough
4	Student 4	43	Not enough
5	Student 5	39	Not enough
6	Student 6	29	Less once
7	Student 7	58	Currently
8	Student 8	48	Moderate enough
9	Student 9	51	Moderate enough

The overall results of the students' Mandarin speaking skills test are described in the following table.

Table 5. Results of the Mandarin Speaking Ability Test

No	Ability	Total Value	Average	Conversion Results	Criteria
1	Pronunciation	71	17.75	47.33%	Currently
2	Vocabulary	166	41.5	47.42%	Currently
3	Fluency	56	14	46.66%	Currently
4	Comprehen-sion	103	25.75	29.42%	Bad

Descriptive Assessment of the Ability *to Pronounce Shēngmǔ* and *Yùnmǔ* Grade VII Students of Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School

a. *Student 1*

In the sentence *" měi tiān wǒ dū zài wán yóuxì bìng chángshì jiǎnshǎo tā , wǒ nǔ lì xuéxí"* , students pronounce the word *tiān* and *tā* with a sound */t/* which is not aspirated. The word *chángshì should be* pronounced *changsyeh [tʂ‘* aŋ *ɡ ʂ[]* and the word *jiǎnshǎo should* be pronounced *jienshaou [tɕiɛnʂau]* , but students pronounce the word *chángshì jiǎnshǎo* with the sound of *jiansao*

gongsi . Students pronounce the word *nu* with the vowel *u* into the vowel sound *ü* .

b. *Student 2*

In the sentence *" fàng xué hòu, wǒ lìjí huà le yī zuò fáng zi bìng gěi tā shàng shǎi . Wǒ jīng cháng dǎkāi Resso yìngyòng chéngxù, tīng tīng hǎo tīng de gēqǔ" ,* students pronounce the word *gei* with a consonant sound */g/* which does not change to sound [k]. The word *xue should be* pronounced *shiue [ɕyɛ],* the word *hua should* be pronounced *hua [xuA] ,* the word *zuo should* be pronounced *tzuo [tsuo] ,* the word *zi* is pronounced *tze' [ts ɻ],* the word *ta* is pronounced tha *[t'A] ,* the word *shai* is pronounced *shaiy [ʂai] ,* the word *chang* is pronounced *chaang [tʂ'aŋ],* the word *yingyong* is pronounced y *ingyoung [y iŋyuŋ],* the word *tingting* thingthing *[t'iŋ t'iŋ] ,* and the word *gequ* is pronounced *kecheu [k ɣtɛ'u],* but students pronounce *xue hua zuo zi gei ta shai chang yingyong tingting gequ* with the sound *sie hu ze ci gei ta sai cang wingwong tingting gekyu.*

c. *Student 3*

In the sentence *" shì zhǎo gǔndòng zuì róng",* students pronounce the word *shi* with the sound *se* , the word *zhao* is pronounced *zao* , the word *gundong* is pronounced *khunthong* with the consonant sounds */g/* and */d/* aspirated, the word *zui* is pronounced *zui* and the word *rong* is pronounced *rrong* with the consonant */r/* sound makes the vocal cords vibrate distinctly.

The results of the validation by *native speakers* found pronunciation errors in the consonant sounds */sh/*, */q/,* and vowel */ei/* . Comparison of ratings by researchers and *native speakers* gets different ratings, so the valid results used are ratings by *native speakers* .

d. *Student 4*

In the sentence *" wǒ xǐhuān wán yóu xì , yīnwèi tā ràng wǒ kuài lè bìng jiǎn qīng yālì"* students pronounce the word *xi* with the sound *se* , the words *ta* and *kuai* are pronounced with the consonant sounds */t/* and */k/* are not aspirated, and the word *qing* pronounced with a *cing sound* .

e. *Student 5*

In the sentence *大家好 dà jiā hǎo* , students pronounce *家 jiā* using the vowel *io* because they are influenced by the word after it, namely *好 hǎo* . Another example is in the sentence *wǔ rén zhī zúqiú xùnliàn zhīdào ,* students pronounce the sentence *zhī zúqiú xùnliàn zhīdào* with the sound *ce cujiu sunlian cetao* . The sentence should be pronounced with the sound tse tsujiou syunlien tzetaou *[tʂi tsutɕ'iu ɕyn liɛn tʂitau]*.

f. *Student 6*

In the sentence 小学朋友 *xiǎo xué péngyo u* , in the word 朋 *péng* the students pronounce the consonant sound *p* without aspiration, as well as in the word 天 *tiān* the pronunciation of the consonant *t* is not pronounced aspirationally. Another example is in the sentence *"tiān dǎ yóuxì bù zuòzuo"* , students pronounce the word *tian da* with the consonant sound */t/* not being aspirated and the consonant sound */d/* not being changed to sound *[t]* . In the word *youxi* , students pronounce it with the sound *youse* . In the word *bu* , the consonant sound */b/* is not changed to the sound *[p]* and in the word *zuozuo it* is pronounced *chuchu* .

The results of the validation by *a native speaker* found a pronunciation error in the sound */you/* which the researcher considered to be the correct pronunciation. However, after getting a comparison of the ratings from the supervisor and *the native speaker* , the error is valid and the pronunciation is not justified.

g. Student 7

For example, in the word 绘 *hui* , the vowel *ui* is pronounced with the sound *ui* which should be pronounced *hwei* . Another mispronunciation of the words *qi* and *zi* , students pronounce the word *qi* with the sound *ce* and the word *zi* with the sound *tse* .

h. Student 8

For example in the word *qī* , the consonant *q* is not pronounced with aspiration with the sound *ki* . Another example of the word *shi* , students pronounce it with the sound si.

i. Student 9

For example, in the word 常 *cháng , the pronunciation of the ch* consonant is not pronounced stronger and aspirated, so it sounds like the original *c sound* . Another example is the word 了 *le* , because there is influence from B2 students, the sound 了 *lee [li:] is* pronounced like the sound *lii* in English.

The results of the analysis are based on the criteria for assessing the ability *to pronounce Chinese students'* Shēngmǔ and *Yùnmǔ*

a. Pronunciation

There are two students who have high scores in the 10-12 range, while the lowest scores are 4-6 with one student, so the percentages are presented as follows.

$$\frac{2}{9} \times 100\% = 22{,}22\%$$

The percentage of 22.22% is in very bad criteria . There are seven students who have scores in the range of 4-9, so the percentages are as follows.

$$\frac{7}{9} \times 100\% = 77{,}77\&$$

The percentage of 77.77% is in the perfect criteria, meaning that the number of students who have scores in the 10-12 score range is lower than students who are in the 4-9 score range.

b. Vocabulary

Students who have the highest score in the value range 19-28 are six people. The lowest score is at 10 with one person, so the percentage is presented as follows.

$$\frac{6}{9} \times 100 = 66{,}67\%$$

The percentage of 66.67% is in very good criteria. There are three students who have scores in the range of 10-15, so the percentages are as follows.

$$\frac{3}{9} \times 100\% = 33{,}33\%$$

The percentage of 33.33% is in the very low criterion, meaning that the number of students who have scores in the 19-28 score range is higher than students who are in the 10-15 score range.

c. Fluency

There are three students who have high scores in the 7-9 range. So the percentage is presented as follows.

$$\frac{3}{9} \times 100\% = 33{,}33\%$$

The percentage of 33.33% is in the very low criteria. There are six students who have scores in the range of 4-6, so the percentages are as follows.

$$\frac{6}{9} \times 100\% = 66{,}67\%$$

The percentage of 66.67% is in very good criteria, meaning that the number of students who have scores in the 4-6 range is higher than students who are in the 7-9 range.

d. Comprehension

There are two students who have high scores in the 19-24 range, so the percentages are presented as follows.

$$\frac{2}{9} \times 100\% = 22{,}22\%$$

The percentage of 22.22% is in very bad criteria. There are seven students who have scores in the range of 3-15, so the percentages are as follows.

$$\frac{7}{9} \times 100\% = 77{,}77\%$$

The percentage of 77.77% is in the perfect criteria, meaning that the number of students who have scores in the 19-24 value range is less than students who are in the 3-15 value range.

CONCLUSION

Assessment of speaking skills includes aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Based on these results, it can be seen that the ability test to pronounce *shēngmǔ* and *yùnmǔ* in Mandarin for class VII students of Tunas Bangsa Makassar Junior High School is located at a mastery level of 44-55% with a *fairly moderate category*.

The problem that is often faced by students in the pronunciation aspect is that they are not able to articulate the sound of letters correctly because of the lack of practice in speaking Mandarin by students. Vocabulary mistakes that are often made by students are using vocabulary that is limited to basic things. Errors in the aspect of fluency made by students are sometimes missing words, so that sentences are floating or not completed and difficulty pronouncing all groups of consonant and vowel sounds easily and quickly. The problem that is often experienced by students in the aspect of understanding is that students do not understand the meaning of the sentences spoken, confusion of understanding of the position and role in a sentence.

Teachers should apply a variety of learning techniques such as repeating techniques, looking at words, creating story pictures, *flashcards* , and memory games. Teachers can also provide reinforcement for students which aims to increase student attention, stimulate and increase learning motivation, foster productive student behavior, and foster self-confidence. Forms of reinforcement in the form of verbal reinforcement through praise.

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