THE USE OF NATURAL READER SOFTWARE IN TEACHING
PRONUNCIATION AND SPEAKING PERFORMANCES

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ABSTRAK


Kata Kunci : Natural Reader, Pelafalan dan Kemampuan Berbicara

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Problem

Speaking is one of important skills in the process of learning language. The learners cannot be good speakers if they do not master it. However, teaching speaking is not easy skill since it needs the enthusiastic of the students to produce and speak English. Hence, the teachers need to encourage students to be confidence and willing to practice.

Before the teachers teach speaking, they have to teach pronunciation (Varasarin, 2007). It means that pronunciation is the foundation in learning speaking because it is the first element of speaking (the study how to produce English sound). Mispronunciation will make misunderstanding between speaker and hearer when they have communication and it will not reach the goal in speaking. As we know that, English has some minimal pairs of the words that the pronunciation is almost the same. For example the words “Bag” and “Back”. When the students pronounce these words in wrong way and do not know the context of speaking, it will make the hearer feels hard to understand what is the speaker’s mean. In addition, sometimes people think that someone who has poor pronunciation, he is uneducated and incompetent (AMEP Research Centre, 2002).

Based on the pre observation, the researcher found that most of the students at SMP Islam Terpadu Dhua’afa Merangin were not confidence when the teachers asked them to speak in English. This situation mostly occurs because they had difficulties in pronouncing the English word correctly. Although, the teacher provides some vocabularies which are related to the topic of speaking. Because of this problem, the students were still reluctant to speak, tend to be passive, difficult to enhance their speaking
performances and could not reach the school standard competencies.

Based on the curriculum, the standard competencies of speaking at SMP Islam Terpadu Dhu’afa Merangin stated that students are able to express the meaning in short conversations/dialogues in formal and informal situation to communicate with others. However, the students still have difficulties in reaching it.

When the researcher did the observation and interview with the English teacher on December 7th 2014, she said that it was hard to teach speaking performances because of some factors. They are: First, as non-native learners, the students were not familiar with English since it had not given in Elementary school. Second, they thought that English is difficult because the spelling of the word is different with pronouncing. Third, they were afraid in making mistake because of the local accent. If they made mistake in pronouncing the word their friend laughed at them.

The last, the teacher is hard to look for the appropriate teaching aid which can help students to improve speaking performances. Due to these situations, the process of teaching and learning in speaking performances was passive and almost 80% of the students could not speak in English and could not reach the target score of KKM was 75.

Based on the problems above, the teacher needs to look for the appropriate teaching aid in order to solve those problems. Diyyab (2013) states in his research that looking for teaching aid in teaching language is very crucial because it will affect the result of learning. Then, Derewinka in Tomlinson (2007) and Madhuri (2013) point out that software is an effective teaching aid that can be used by teachers in teaching language. It can make the students interested in all details and help them to understand the materials easily.

Related to the opinions above, the researcher assumed that Natural Reader software is an appropriate teaching aid since it is attractive, provides natives sound and free for download. The students can practice easily and imitate the sound from the software.

Based on the reasons above, the researcher interested in conducting a research about the benefit of Natural Reader software in enhancing students’ pronunciation and speaking performances at SMP Islam Terpadu Dhu’afa Merangin. She believed that it can help the students in improving their pronunciation and speaking performances because this media provides the pronunciation of the words. If the students know how to pronounce the word, they will be confidence to perform in speaking class and the class will be active.

2. Theoretical framework

a. The Concept of Speaking

Speaking is one of important skills that have to be mastered in learning language because it is the process of expressing ideas of the speaker to the listener. Tarigan in Kusmaryati (2008) and Nazara (2011) define that speaking is the process of constructing and sharing the meaning of words through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety context. By speaking, the learners can express their ideas, deliver the message and make a good interaction. Regarding to this statement, Egan (1999) points out that speaking is the heart of language. It means that language learners are nothing if they are not fluent in speaking. Therefore, it is important for them to master in it in order to be good speakers in a language.

Brown (2004) says that there are five basic types of speaking, they are: A) Imitative is the ability to imitate a word or phrase or possibly a sentence. B) Intensive is the ability of people to use grammatical, phrasal, phonological, lexical in communication. C) Responsive is types of speaking about how to interact with others in very limited level. For example, how to express their opinions of something, making short conversation, small talk, request, comments and etc. D) Interactive is the ability of people to make interaction with others in specifically. E)
b. Aspects of Speaking Skills

Aspects of speaking should be considered by the learners, because it influences the result of learning speaking. According to Harmer (1991) there are some aspects of speaking that must be learnt by students in learning speaking as follow: a) Pronunciation; how to read the word. b) Grammar; the rules in making sentences. c) Fluency; the way of learner speaks well. d) Vocabulary; lists of words that they use in speaking performances.

In this research, the researcher analyzed all aspects of speaking skill. However, she more paid attention to pronunciation element, because she saw that all the students made mispronunciation to English words when they spoke in front of class.

c. The Functions of Speaking

The functions of speaking must be known by speakers when they made a communication. Brown and Yule in Richards (2008) explain that there are functions of speaking. First, Talk as interaction; when they met other people, they used greeting to great other, exchanged the experience, engaged in small talk and etc. Second, Talk as transaction; when speakers talked, they knew the situation and the message understood by the listener. Third, Talk as performance; people speak for public. For instance, they make a presentation or give speech to others.

d. Principles in Teaching Speaking

Speaking have to be taught by the teacher, because it is one of skills which can help students to communicate and interact in the class. In teaching speaking, the teachers do not only teach the material, but they also create the principles of it in order to make the students successful in learning.

According to Nunan (2003) in teaching speaking, the teachers have to proposes at least five principles, such as be aware of the differences between second language and foreign language learning contexts, give the students practice with both fluency and accuracy, the teacher gives a chance for students to practice with group or pairs in order to limit teacher talks, prepares exercises for students which make students communicate with others and the language used by the students is understood by others, designs classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking.

e. The concept of Pronunciation

As the components of speaking skill, pronunciation is the most important components must be have by students who want to master in speaking skill. Lynch and Anderson (2012) define that every person begins studying a foreign language with learning pronunciation, which are important to pronounce the word correctly. Related to this opinion, Varasarain (2007) says that good pronunciation may make good communication, more relax and more useful. It means that learning speaking cannot be separated with learning pronunciation. Clear pronunciation can make good communication between speaker and listener.

Learning pronunciation is not easy way because the students have to know the sound of language in order to reach the goal of learning, that is to make sounds similar with the natives. Beside that, the learners have to realize that they cannot be natives because of the local accent and it is not their mother tongue.

Then, Harmer in law (2009) argues that good pronunciation is the goal of language learner but to be a perfect dialect is not. It could not get by the learners who learn the language, because it is foreign language to them. They only know about how to pronounce
the word well but they could not be likes the natives of the language.

After that, Omasz (2011) emphasizes that English pronunciation in unpredictable. It means that the spelling is different from how to pronounce the word. It can be seen from the word “but”, the pronunciation is /bʌt/. Kriedler in Varasararin(2007) also points out that good pronunciation takes times to build up, it means that the learners have to overlook the process of learning.

In learning pronunciation, both teachers and students have to work together and know their roles each others in order to reach the goal of learning language (Kenworthy,1988 & Fraser ,2006). In addition, Low (2009) points out there are some factors affecting in learning pronunciation, such as accent is the way when the students pronounce the word, Motivation and exposure refers to the desire of the students when they are learning the language, Intelligibility and varieties of English is the variation of English in order knowing the alphabets of English. After that, Kenworthy (1988) classifies some factors affecting in learning, for instance the language native (Accent), Age, Amount of exposure, phonetic Ability, Attitude, identity and motivation.

After students understood the elements and factors affecting in learning pronunciation, the teacher has to create the strategy in teaching. Low (2009) point out there are instructional strategies that can be used by the teacher in teaching pronunciation. They are : a) Cultivate positive attitudes toward accurancy; The teacher has to create good atmosphere in the classroom. in order to make the students could practice in pronunciation. b) Identify specific pronunciation features that pose problems for learners ;The teachers make some checklist word that students often make a mistake in pronouncing the word. c) Make learners aware of the prosodic features of language ; The teacher can ask students to hear good streses and intonation when the native speaks. d) Focus on developing learner’s communicative competence ;The teacher should make the focus features in pronunciation (consonants, diphtongs, vowels, stress and intonation).

f. Media for Teaching Speaking Performances

Teaching speaking is not easy. Sometimes, the teachers found some problems in teaching. For instance, students are less motivation, spirit, and enthusiastic to understand the lesson. Nazara (2011) points out that when teachers teach language to the students, they should know the elements of teaching language, as follow : teacher uses correct method, interesting activities, and proper equipments. In teaching process, the teachers not only teach about the meaning of the words but they have to make students are confidence to produce and speak with others at the sametime. Then, they also have to make the students are able to transfer the information in good pronunciation and clearly. Because of that, teachers have to look for the appropriate teaching aid in order to make students interested in learning language.

Multimedia is an effective media that can be used by teachers in teaching language. According to Lee in Lai (2000) states that there are some reasons why multimedia can be used in teaching language. First, prove practices for students through the experiential learning. Second, offer students more the learning motivation. Third, enhance student achievement. Fourth, increase authentic materials for study. Fifth, encourage greater interaction between teachers and students, students and peers. Sixth, emphasis the individual needs. Seventh, regard independence from a single source of information. Eighth, enlarge global understanding.

Related to this ideas, Coolins, Hammond, and Wellington (1997) also explain that multimedia can be motivating, engaging, and helping the learners in understanding the material. In addition, Collins, Hammond, and Wellington (1997), Derewianka in Tomlinson (2007), Nazara (2011), Madhuri (2013) point out that multimedia that can be used in teaching
language, such as animated text, static text, sound, voice graphics, software and video. It can be concluded that, software is one of teaching aid that could help the teachers to teach the students because it provides some features to help students in understanding the material.

g. Natural Reader Software

According to Flood (2007) Natural Reader (http://www.naturalreaders.com/) is the application converts the text into spoken words. It can also convert any written text into audio file such as MP3 or WAV for CD player or ipad. It has many other functions, such as audio editor.

Natural reader software is one of media that can help the users to enhance their writing and second language learning. The software will read the text and the user could listen the text from the software to any text at any speed. Flood (2007) tells that there are some interesting features of Natural Reader software. Such as:

a) High quality, human sounding voices; the users are able to download or choose the sounds of speakers which they like.

b) It is easy to use; the users can use it by themselves. There are some steps in operating the software:

- First, click the icon Natural Reader software
- Second, type the word or sentence that want to hear the pronunciation from the software
- Then, click the icon play
- Finally, the software will read/ pronounce the words or sentences.

c) The use of Natural Reader is intuitive; it means that if the users do not know how to pronounce the sentences, they can convert the sentences from microsoft word into the Natural Reader and it will read the text. So, they listen the pronunciation from the natives.

d) Powerful Audio Output; it means that it can export audio output as MP3, WAV, or OCG audio file; The users can create electronic copies from MP3 and hear the sound easily.

Based on the explanations above, it can be said that Natural Reader software could help the students in learning pronunciation in order to be confidence in speaking performances because it provides some features to help students in knowing the English sounds.

B. METHODOLOGY

The research took place at SMP Islam Terpadu Dhu’afa Merangin and the participants were students at the eight grade especially class B, academic year 2015-2016. The students were 14 females and they were between 13 – 14 years old. This study was classroom action research. It was conducted in three cycles. Each cycle consisted of three meetings. Two meetings focused on giving treatment to the students and one meeting focus on giving the task in order to know the ability of the students. In collecting the data, the researcher used observation, field note, students’ note, recording and task.

In analysing the data, the researcher used two methods, they were quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data were the scores of speaking performances task and pronunciation task from the researcher and the collaborator. She used rubric scoring from Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan as a guidance in making a point students speaking performances task.

Table 1: Scoring Rubric for Speaking Performances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The pronunciation is clear and based on English standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The pronunciation is almost correct, 2 or 3 words still mispronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Many mistakes in pronouncing the words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fluently without obstacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fluently but still have obstacle/ feel doubt to speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unfluently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary | 3 | Using appropriate words
---|---|---
| 2 | Using appropriate words with 2 or 3 words unappropriate
| 1 | Unappropriate words
Grammar | 3 | Right English Structure
---|---|---
| 2 | Almost right English Structure with some mistakes
| 1 | False Structure

Source: Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (2007:15)

For the Pronunciation task, the researcher used the rubric scoring from www.campus.com, the scoring rubric can be described as follows:

Table 4: The rubric scoring for Pronunciation task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student has errors in pronunciation some effort in articulation in the target language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student make minor or no errors in pronunciation, great articulation in target language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Pronunciation task, the researcher used the rubric scoring from www.campus.com, the scoring rubric can be described as follows:

\[
P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%
\]

In which:
- \( P \) = Percentage
- \( F \) = Frequency
- \( N \) = Total Numbers of students

After that, she continued to analyze the percentage of students in order to know the percentage of total students that could reach the target score KKM, the pattern as follow:

\[
P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%
\]

Source: www.campus.com

After that, she continued to analyze the average score for students’ achievement. It is for measuring how good the improvement of average students’ task score in learning speaking performances and pronunciation by using Natural Reader Software in every cycles. Here, the researcher used statistics pattern based Brown (1996) as follow:

\[
M = \frac{\sum FX}{N} \times 100
\]

In Which:
- \( M \) = Mean
- \( N \) = Total of students
- \( \sum fx \) = Total of score

After the researcher analyzed the data by quantitative method, she continued to analyze data by using qualitative. In qualitative data, the researcher used the theory from Gay (2000). He said that there some steps in analysing the qualitative data, they are:

1. Data Managing: The researcher checked the observation sheet, field note, students’ note, task result from the collaborator and researcher, and recording
2. Reading: In this phase, the researcher read and analyzed the observation sheet, field note, students’ note and watched the recording in order to know the situation in the classroom during teaching and learning process.
3. Description: She described all data and informations about the research when the researcher collected the data. Such as: setting, the participants, the activities and situation in the teaching and learning process.
4. Classifying: She categorized into smaller unit based on the data from observation sheet, field note, students’ note, task result and recording during the research activities.
5. Interpreting: After classified the data, she drew the conclusion about data which are found in the field.

Finally, by analyzing the observation sheet, note, students’ note, task result, and recording, the researcher made the conclusion wheter Natural Reader software can improve students’ pronunciation and speaking performances or not at SMP Islam Terpadu Dhu’afa Merangin especially class VIII B.
3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Finding

a. The improvement of students’ speaking performances

The findings of the research showed that Natural Reader software could improve students’ speaking performances. The improvement of students’ speaking performances could be recognized from the improvement of the students’ speaking achievement, the ability of students to give response when the teacher invited to speak, the ability to pronounce the word correctly, the ability to express their ideas with appropriate vocabularies, correct grammatical form and they spoke fluently.

Before conducting the research, the researcher found that the students had low speaking achievement, they could not answer teacher’s question, they could not pronounce the word correctly, and they could not use appropriate vocabulary in their speaking. They did not want to speak up, because they felt afraid in making a mistake in pronunciation and they did not know the vocabulary in English. In fact, they could not reach the KKM.

However, after the teacher taught the students by using Natural reader software to enhance their speaking performances. The students could speak with good pronunciation, appropriate vocabulary, correct grammar and spoke fluently. The improvement of speaking performances could be seen from the average score of students’ achievement and the total number of students that could reach the target of KKM cycle to cycle. It was described as follows:

Graph 4.1 The average Score of students’ speaking performances Test from the teacher and collaborator in every cycles

From the graphs of the average score above, it could be seen that the improvement of the students in their speaking performances from the first cycle until the third cycle has improved. In the first and second cycle, the improvement of the students was not significant, because the researcher changed the type of task. At that time, the students tried to adjust themselves to this situation, they tried to give a response to the teacher with their ability.

In the first cycle, the researcher asked the students had a conversation with their peer, they made the conversation by themselves and they could memorize the conversation before they performed in front of the class. However, in the second and third cycle, the researcher asked the students to have conversation with the teacher in naturally. They had to answer teacher’s question without memorized the conversation before and they did not know the topic.

The reasons why the researcher changed the type of the task because she wanted to know the improvement of students more detail and clearly. When the students had conversation with their peer, they could memorize the dialogue and their friend will help them if they had difficulties in pronouncing the word and memorized the conversation. If the students had the conversation with the teacher, they had to think more about how to give a respond to the teacher’s question with good pronunciation, appropriate vocabulary, correct grammar and speak fluently. In addition, they had to engage in the conversation.

Although, the researcher changed the type of task, the students still could do the task well, they could answer teacher’s question, and the total number of students that could reach the KKM also has improved. It could be seen from the percentage students that could reach the target score of KKM.

1.2 The Percentage of Total Students that could reach the target score of KKM
From the graphs above, it could be seen that in the first cycle only 7 or 50% of students could reach the target score of KKM. In the second cycle, 9 or 64.28% of students and in the third cycle 14 or 100% of students could reach the target score of KKM. From the explanations above, it could be concluded that the improvement of the students from the first cycle until the third cycle was significant.

b. The Improvement of students’ pronunciation

The improvement of students’ pronunciation could be seen from the task result of pronunciation. The researcher did pronunciation task in the second cycle because in the first cycle the researcher found that the students could not pronounce the word correctly if the words were not in their dialogue or conversation. When the teacher asked them to pronounce the words, they made a mistake. They only could pronounce the words that have in their conversation. Because of this situation, the researcher gave pronunciation task after the students had conversation with the teacher. It was used to know the ability of students in pronouncing the word. The improvement of students’ pronunciation could be seen from the graphs below:

Graph 4.3 The Average Score of students’ pronunciation Task from the teacher and collaborator in the second and third cycle

From the graphs above, it could be seen that the improvement of students’ pronunciation in the second and third cycle were significant. From the teacher’s score, the average scores of students’ pronunciation in the second cycle was 91.38 and 97.85 in the third cycle. The average scores from the collaborator were 93.28 in the second cycle and 98.57 in the third cycle. The improvement of students achievement could be seen from the ability of students to pronounce the words that provided by the teacher. They could pronounce the words correctly without felt doubtful and afraid in making mistake, they could left their mother tongue and they could pronounce the words that there was not in their dialogue before.

c. Improvement of Classroom Atmosphere

During the research, the researcher asked the collaborator to fill the observation sheet, to take a note, and asked someone to record all the activities in the classroom. Then, she also asked the students to write a note about their feeling after they used Natural Reader software as a media to in teaching pronunciation and speaking performances.

Based on the result of observation, field note, students’ note and recording, the researcher found that Natural reader software could change the atmosphere in the classroom. Before conducted the research, the atmosphere in the classroom was monotonous, the students did not want to speak in front of the class, some students felt sleepy and talking to their friend during teaching and learning process. After, the researcher conducted the research and used Natural reader software as a media in teaching and learning process, the atmosphere in the classroom was more alive. It could be seen from the enthusiast of the students to attend in the classroom, they never came late, they never left the class during teaching and learning process, and they wanted to practice their pronunciation by using the software before they performed in their speaking performances.

The participation of the students also has improved from the first meeting until the
ninth meeting. The students were more active, they wanted to answer teacher’s question and gave a good response when the teacher reviewed the material. In addition, they wanted to raise their hand when the teacher invited them to perform in front the class. They spoke confidently without felt afraid in making mistake in their performances.

In the end of every cycles, the researcher also asked the students to write a note about their feeling after they used Natural Reader software as a media to improve their speaking performances and pronunciation. The result of students’ note showed that Natural reader software helped the students to improve their pronunciation and speaking performances. It helped the students to know the pronunciation of the words, it made them felt more confidence to perform in front of class and they could speak fluently.

So, It can be concluded that Natural Reader gave good impact to the students especially VIIB at SMP Islam Terpadu Dhuafa in enhancing their pronunciation.

B. Discussion

Based on the finding of the teaching and learning process, the researcher could be concluded some findings, they were:

a. Natural Reader software could improve students’ pronunciation and speaking performances.

In this research, the researcher found that the improvement of students’ pronunciation and speaking performances. Before the researcher did the research, the English teacher said that almost all students at SMP Islam Terpadu Dhuafa especially VIIB could not speak English well and reach the KKM was 75. Because of that, the researcher did the research with the aimed to improve their pronunciation and speaking performances.

After the researcher did the research in three cycles, the researcher could solve students’ problem. She helped the students to reach the KKM, all the students (14 Students) could reach the KKM with the average score was 94. 9 students got the excellent score 100, 2 students got 86.6 and 78.2, 1 student got 91.6. The improvement of the students could be proved by Flood’ statements (2007). He said that Natural reader will improve users’ writing and second language learning. Based on the Flood’s statement, it can inferred that the software can assist students to enhance their second language learning, not only for writing skill but also for pronunciation and speaking performances. The software helps the students to know the pronunciation of English words. After they know the pronunciation of English words, they felt confidence to speak in front of the class.

Related to this statement, Yousefzadeh (2013) said in her research that Natural Reader software could improve Oral Reading Fluency for Disabled students. So, from the explanation above, it can be seen that Natural Reader software could improve students second language learning, not only for normal students but also for disabled students to improve their second language learning.

In summary, Natural Reader software helped the students in learning language and it gave more contributions to the students who learn a language. In addition, it help the students to understand the language.

b. Natural Reader could change the classroom atmosphere

Diyyab (2013) states in his research that looking for teaching aid in teaching language is very crucial because it will affect the result of learning. The researcher agreed with Diyyab’s statement, she found that the atmosphere of the classroom has changed because of the appropriate teaching aid that used by teacher in her teaching.

Before the students used Natural Reader in their speaking class, they were more be passive and they were reluctant to perform when the teacher invited them to speak up. These situations happened because they did not know the pronunciation of English word.
After the students used Natural reader as a media in learning speaking, the atmosphere in the classroom has changed, the students were more active, had a spirit and confidence to speak in front of the class because they knew the pronunciation of the words and they used their gesture in their performances. As stated by Shyamlee (2012) said that the use of technology can assist students to be confidence and felt enjoy in their practice. Then, Collins, Hammood and Wellington (2007) “ Multimedia can be motivating, engaging, and helping the learners in understanding the material”. From the statements above, it can be concluded that Natural Reader could change the atmosphere in the classroom, because it helps the students to understand how to pronounce the English words well, increased the spirit of students and make them more confidence when they speak up in front of the class.

Related to the statements above, Lee and Lai (2000) said that beside Multimedia can enhance students ‘motivation and achievement, it could enlarge global understanding. Learning by using Natural Reader Software not only could improve students’ pronunciation and speaking performance, but also could add students’ knowledge about computer. Before the researcher did the research, the students never studied by using media, they only used the book from the teacher. After she did the research, the students knew how to operate the laptop or notebook, and they know how to type.

From the explanations above, it could be concluded that the using Natural Reader software in teaching pronunciation and speaking performances could change the atmosphere in the classroom, it could be seen from the attitude of the students during the research such as:

a. Active : The students asked the teacher when they found the difficulties in their learning, they wanted to give a respond when the teacher gave them a question and raised their hand when the teacher invited them to speak in front of the class.

b. Confidence : The students have high confidence when they performed in the speaking performances and they were able to use their gesture when they spoke in front of the class. In addition, they were not afraid in making a mistake when the teachers asked them to pronounce the English words.

c. Practice : The students are able to speak fluently when they are practicing in front of class. Then, they tried to practice by themselves before performed in front of the class in order to show their ability. In addition, they turned on the software when they did not know the pronunciation of the words.

d. Spirit : The students have high spirit to perform when the teacher invites them to speak. They never rejected the invitation from the teacher, when the teacher asked them to speak, to pronounce the word. In addition, when the teacher reviewed the material, they tried to give a good response to the teacher.

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