FACTORS AFFECTING PRONUNCIATION DIFFICULTIES OF 8th GRADE STUDENTS OF MTSN PALU BARAT

Ian Antaris, Fikriani Aminun Omolu
fikasunset@gmail.com

English Education Study Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu

Abstract

The objective of this research was to find out the factors affecting the pronunciation difficulty of 8th grade students MTs.N Palu Barat. This is a descriptive research. The respondents of this research consist of 38 students. The instruments of the research were non-test consisting of interview, tape recorder, and questionnaire. The data were collected by interviewing English teacher, recording students, and distributing the questionnaire. The result of this research shows some finding. Firstly, the result of interview indicates the factors affecting the pronunciation difficulties of students were low motivation, lack of confidence, insupporting environment, do not use English as their primary language, have no enough ability in pronunciation, less attention, influenced by their accent and the orientation of the scool generally. Secondly, the result of recording shows that the students did mistakes in pronouncing the words in English.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Difficulty, and Vowel.

BACKGROUND

English becomes the most essential language in the world. Almost all of the people from many different countries around the world use it to communicate. It makes English important to learn for its use as an international language. One of the important aspects in learning English is pronunciation. If a speaker does not pronounce a word correctly, it can be very difficult to understand him/her speaks and a speaker who constantly mispronounces will extremely difficult for a listener to understand it. The better a speaker pronounce words, the better s(he) can explain what s(he) means to the listener. On the other hand, it will be hard for listener to understand the speakers if their pronunciation is not clear.

The pronunciation considered important for Indonesian learners since there are differences in English vocabulary between the symbol and its sounds.

According to Pollard (2008:65), "Pronunciation is an essential aspect of learning to speak a foreign language." When someone communicates with other people, he/ she should not only have many vocabularies but also have a good pronunciation. Therefore, it is necessary to master pronunciation.

Based on the curriculum (KTSP 2006), the scope of teaching English of Junior High Schools includes four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Although pronunciation is covered in speaking skills, but there is no explanation in standard of English competence for junior high school students about it. Because of that reason some of English teachers do not give much attention on pronunciation when they teach English. Kenworthy (1988: 1) points out, "Learners will have a strong tendency to hear the sounds of English in terms of the sounds of

their native language." Realizing the importance of pronunciation, teachers should be able to convince students so that they have willingness to improve their English pronunciation.

On the preliminary observation, the researchers found that the grade 8th students of MTs.N Palu Barat got difficulties in pronouncing English words. At the time, the researchers had some conversations with them that the researchers realized that the students have problems in pronunciation. For example: the students prunced the word *People* as *Papel*, instead of "*Pi:pl*", and *enough* is pronounced *enough*, instead of $ɪˈnʌf$. From short conversation with the students, this mispronunciation was caused by psychological factor and socio-cultural factor. In psychological factor, most of the students had low motivation in learning English. In fact, motivation is one of important matter in learning. Omolu (2017) states that Starting from a good motivation, students will dotask, learning activity, and things related to their study better than those who do not have good motivation. The students stated that it was caused by the lack of confidence about their competence in English. While in socio-cultural factor, it was caused by insupporting environment or students' social background for having proper pronunciation. Therefore, they did not use English as their primary language and it made them hard to pronounce the word or the letter in English.

There were more factors causing students facing difficulties in English especially pronunciation, therefore the researchers were interested to do this research to find out the factors effecting pronunciation difficulties of 8th Grade students of MTs.N Palu Barat.

The Nature of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect that is important in part of learning English.

Because of this aspect is important, it has to be mastered by the beginner of English learners so they will be familiar to pronounce words, phrases and sentences. Furthermore, pronunciation is the manner to pronounce words in a language system and it refers to the ability to use stress and intonation correctly so the listener can understand the content. Celce-Murcia (2006) states that pronunciation is the language feature that most readily identifies speakers as non-native. Since it can identify us as non-native, we do not need to pronounce like the way native speakers do. However, we need to be minimally intelligible while speaking.

Pronunciation has two main features namely phonemes and suprasegmental features. Phoneme is the different sounds within language vowels. While suprasegmental is features of speech which generally apply to groups of segments or phonemes stress. Thus, ppronunciation or phonology is a part of grammatical competence.

Concepts of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is one aspect that is important not only in speaking but almost in all aspect of English learning. There are two concepts of pronunciation:

The first concept, pronunciation is the manner how to pronouncing the sound correctly. In Oxford dictionary (2008:352) defines that pronunciation is way in which a language or particular word or sound is spoken. Besides that, pronunciation refers to the production of sounds that we use to make meaning. There are three levels of English pronunciation:

1) People often do not understand what you want to say. You use the wrong sounds in English words.
2) People can understand what you want to say, but they have to concentrate to understand you.
3) People can understand you easily. Your pronunciation is clear and pleasant.

The second concept, in pronunciation we have to paying attention to the indicators of pronunciation. According to Djiwandono (2008:124-125), there are four indicators of pronunciation, they are; intelligibility, fluency, accuracy and native-like.

- Intelligibility is pronounced of the whole text and its parts are heard clearly or not causing misunderstanding.
- Fluency is as a whole of text can be pronounced well.
- Accuracy is words and parts of text are pronounced precise.
- Native-like is pronounced of the whole text and its parts are pronounced like native speaker.

Based on the statements above, it can be stated that pronunciation is a particular component in learning English and have to give extra ability to be able to master it. Therefore, pronunciation cannot be underestimated in learning English.

The Factors Affecting Pronunciation Difficulties

There are some factors that may happen in a process of learning pronunciation. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994:125) point out that first, students usually pronounce a sound which is new and unfamiliar with the close sounds they have already known; second, Indonesian students used to pronounce word in the way it is written; third problem is that students rarely check the correct pronunciation in their dictionary. These errors cannot be separated from the language students accustomed to. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994:125) explain that, "the capacity of the ordinary person to perceive auditory phenomena of the language to be learnt is widely, but quite wrongly, taken granted." The problems of students actually are started when they try to speak as natural as native speakers do because they do not know exactly how to pronounce a particular word accurately.

For someone who wants to learn a foreign language; s(he) will obviously meet all kinds of learning problems. According to Ramelan (2003: 6), there are some problems for pronunciation:

- The existence of a given sound in the latter, which is not found in the former and the foreign sound is thus completely new to students; for instance, [tʃ] in "cheap", [dʒ] in "jewellery", [ð] in "feather", [ʒ] in "measure", and [ʃ] as in "she".
- Sounds having the same phonetic features in both languages but differ in distributions. In English those stops occurs in utterances initial, medial, and final position. The words final position *b*, *d*, and *g* in Indonesian such as in *sebab*, *abad*, *grobag*, but they are pronounced as „voiceless stops" that is [p], [t], and [k] respectively. Therefore, Indonesian learners usually do not make any distinction between *bed* and *bet*, *pig* and *pick*, *cab* and *cap*.
- Similar sounds in the two languages which is differ only slightly in their phonetic features; such as in *t*ea, *s*he and *ch*ain.
- Sounds that have the same qualities in both languages may constitute some learning problems if they occur in a cluster or sequence of sounds; for example, twe*lfth* [twelfθ], wo*rld* [wə:rld], and stre*ngth* [streŋθ].

In order to solve the problem in learning pronunciation, students must learn and practice regularly in a certain period of time because mastery of English, including pronunciation is a matter of habit. It means that if they do not use it frequently, they will not have a good pronunciation. If the students master English pronunciation well, they can speak English correctly and fluently.

The way we speak in a different language is affected by our mother tongue. There are several factors that can affect pronunciation. As stated by Brown

2001:284-285), there are six factors affecting pronunciation:

1. **Native language**. This factor will influence the students if they learn new language. Some languages that become the native language of students do not have certain phoneme like what English has, this gives students problem to pronounce some words.

2. **Age**. Principally, the beginners will speak and sound like a native speaker when they learn the languages. While for people who already learnt it, they will just focus on maintain a "foreign accent".

3. **Exposure**. Someone who takes much time in foreign country does not mean she/he can speak well. To get more exposure depend on how long the time she/he takes, pronunciation improvement must be come first in order students will have good pronunciation.

4. **Innate phonetic ability.** It is known as having an "ear". People can find themselves easily learning a language because they used to hear the language when they were child. Some people may know a phonetic coding that others do not.

5. **Identity and language ego**. Attitude turns out to be an influence of speaker in target language and understanding the language ego to recognize the speaker.

6. **Motivation and concern for good pronunciation**. Some learners think that pronunciation is not important, but others do. Motivation will support them to have good pronunciation.

These six factors probably the most influence of pronunciation for the learners. Those factors can open the teacher mind of understanding a learner's willing to improve their pronunciation because the teachers can assist learners toward these factors.

In learning any foreign language, a learner will certainly meet with any kinds of learning problems since there are always similarities and differences between the target language and source language. There are many differences between Indonesian and English, so the learners have to make much effort to overcome the problems they meet. The differences between Indonesian and English sound systems are found in both segmental and suprasegmental features. In the classification of the Indonesian sound system, there are 6 pure vowels (a, i, u, e, o, ɔ), 23 consonants (b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z. ng, and ny), and 3 diphthongs (ai, au, andoi). Kenworthy (1988:9), English has 11 pure vowels (e, ə, ɔ:, ɑ:, ɒ, ɜ:, i:, ʊ, u:, ʌ, I), 24 consonants (p, b, t, d, k, g, tʃ, dʒ, f, v, θ, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h, l, r, m, n, ŋ, j, w), and 5 diptongs (ei, ai, ɔi, ou, and au). Having these deffences, Ramelan (2003) argues, "English causes problems for Indonesian learners since there are sounds in English that do not exist in their native language. For examples, when they want to pronounce English words like "she" [ʃI] and "thin' [θIn], they tend to say [si:] and [tin]". It is clear that pronunciation problems influencing by foreign language learners are caused by differences found between the learners' language and the target language.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The researchers applied descriptive method. It analyzes and describes the factors affecting pronunciation difficulties of 8th grade students of MTs.N Palu Barat. In collecting the data, the researchers used non test instruments which consisted of questionnaire and interview.

The researchers used questionnaire to find out some information from the students about English learning generally and words pronunciation. Then he asked the students to put checklist (√) as a response on scale of ranking (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree). The questionnaire consisted of 10 items.

In interviewing teacher, the researchers recorded the teacher's answer by using cellular-phone. This aimed at getting some information about the students in learning English. The researchers asked some questions related to students ability and inability in pronouncing English words.

In collecting the data, the researchers used oral assessment as a technique. Its purposed is to know students' pronunciation, in this case the researchers used cellular-phone as a tool to record how the students speak or pronounce English words and paid attention to their pronunciation about English vowels. The researchers asked them to read 10 words that refer to English vowel. The purpose of this activity was to get the data accurately and to conform all of required information and the fact in the class.

The researchers used descriptive analysis in analyzing the data of English teacher and he transcribed the result of the questionnaire by calculating the percentage of each item. To get the percentage of the questionnaire, the researchers used a formula as proposed by Sudjiono (2008: 43):

$$P = \frac{f}{N} X\ 100$$

Where:

- P : *Percentage*
- f : *Frequency*
- N : *Number of Respondent*
- 100 : *Constant Number*

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Result of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to the 8th grade students of MTs.N Palu Barat. There were 38 students filling the questionnaire. It was given in order to get the accurate data of the factors affecting student's pronunciation difficulty. To identify the factors affecting the 8th grade students of MTs.N Palu Barat in pronunciation, the researchers asked them

to put their answer on scale of frequencies (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree). The questionnaire consisted of eight items. The result is presented in number and percentage which is calculated using the following formula.

$$P = \frac{f}{N} X\ 100$$

The data obtained from the questionnaire were tabulated and are described in this sub chapter.

Table 1. Students' native language influences students' learning of new language

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
1	My native language influences when I learn English	Strongly agree	29	76%
		Agree	5	13%
		Strongly disagree	1	3%
		Disagree	3	8%
Total			**38**	**100%**

The table shows that there are twenty nine students (76%) who are strongly agree that native language influences when they learn new language, five students (13%) are agree, one student (3%) is strongly disagree and three students (8%) are disagree. It intends that native language is somehow affecting students' pronunciation in English.

Table 2. Students' find difficulties to pronounce words like native speaker

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
2	I find difficulty to pronounce the word like a native	Strongly agree	33	87%
		Agree	2	5%
		Strongly disagree	2	5%
		Disagree	1	3%
Total			**38**	**100%**

Table 2 indicates the result of questionnaire item no.2. It shows that there are thirty three students (87%) who strongly agree that they find difficulty to pronounce the

words like a native speaker, two students (5%) who agree, two students (5%) who strongly disagree and one student (5%) who disagrees. The researchers found that 87% (strongly agree) is the highest percentage. It intends that pronunciation is somehow difficult for students; therefore they cannot speak like a native speaker.

Table 3. Unimportance of pronunciation for students to improve

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
3	It is not important for me to improve my pronunciation	Strongly agree	3	8%
		Agree	2	5%
		Strongly disagree	2	5%
		Disagree	31	82%
Total			**38**	**100%**

The data shown is the result of questionnaire item no.3. It shows that there are three students (8%) who strongly agree that it is not important for the students to improve their pronunciation, two students (5%) agree, two students (5%) strongly disagree and there were thirty one students (82%) disagree. The researchers found that 82% (strongly agree) is the higher percentage. It intends that pronunciation is somehow important to improve.

Table 4. Students' motivation to have good pronunciation

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
4	I have no motivation to have good pronunciation	Strongly agree	26	68%
		Agree	5	13%
		Strongly disagree	3	8%
		Disagree	4	11%
Total			**38**	**100%**

The result shown in table 4 is from questionnaire item no.4. It shows that there are four students (68%) who strongly agree that they have no motivation to have good pronunciation, five students (13%) who agree, three students (8%) who strongly disagree, and four students (11%) who disagree. The researchers found that 68%

(strongly agree) is the highest percentage. It intends that motivation is somehow affecting student's pronunciation in English.

Table 5. Student's training and practice of pronunciation

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
5	I seldom or practice of pronunciation	Strongly agree	28	74%
		Agree	5	13%
		Strongly disagree	2	5%
		Disagree	3	8%
Total			**38**	**100%**

The table shows the questionnaire item no.5. It shows that there are twenty eight students (74%) who strongly agree that they seldom train and practice of pronunciation, five students (13%) who agree, two students (5%) who strongly disagree and three students (8%) who disagree. The number 28% (strongly agree) is the highest percentage among all. It intends that having not enough time to practice is somehow affecting students' pronunciation in English.

Table 6. Student's concern in pronunciation

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
6	I do not care about my pronunciation when I speak	Strongly agree	2	5%
		Agree	3	8%
		Strongly disagree	4	8%
		Disagree	30	79%
Total			**38**	**100%**

The table provides result of the questionnaire item no.6. There are two students (5%) who strongly agree that they do not care about their pronunciation when speak, three students (8%) who agree, three students (8%) who strongly disagree and thirty students (79%) who disagree. The researchers found that 79% (disagree) is the highest percentage. It intends that careless of pronunciation is somehow important in English.

Table 7. Students pronounce words as it is written

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
7	I always pronounce word in the way it's written	Strongly agree	29	76%
		Agree	5	13%
		Strongly disagree	1	3%
		Disagree	3	8%
	Total		**38**	**100%**

The table provides data from the questionnaire item no.7. It shows that there are twenty nine students (76%) who strongly agree that they have not had enough training or practice in pronunciation, five students (13%) who agree one student (3%) who strongly disagrees and three students (8%) who disagree. The researchers state that 76% (strongly agree) is the highest percentage. It intends that pronounce the word as its written is somehow affecting students pronunciation in English.

Table 8. Students' correction of their pronunciation through dictionary

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
8	I rarely check the correct pronunciation in dictionary	Strongly agree	29	76%
		Agree	5	13%
		Strongly disagree	4	11%
		Disagree	0	0%
	Total		**38**	**100%**

The result shown in table 8 is taken from questionnaire item no.8. It shows that there are twenty nine students (76%) who strongly agree that they rarely check the correct pronunciation in dictionary, five students (13%) who agree four students (11%) who strongly disagree and there was no student (0%) who disagrees if "I rarely check the correct pronunciation in dictionary". The 76% (strongly agree) is the highest percentage. It intends that rarely check correct pronunciation in dictionary is somehow affecting students' pronunciation in English

Table 9. Students' living environment makes them hard to pronounce like a foreigner

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
9	I have never stayed in a foreign country, therefore I cannot pronounce the words like foreigner	Strongly agree	30	79%
		Agree	4	11%
		Strongly disagree	2	5%
		Disagree	2	5%
	Total		**38**	**100%**

The data shown is from the questionnaire item no.9. It shows that there are twenty nine students (79%) who strongly agree that they have never stayed in foreign country; therefore I cannot pronounce words like foreigner, four students (11%) who agree, two students (5%) who strongly disagree and two students (5%) who disagree. The 79% (strongly agree) is the highest percentage. It shows that stay in foreign country is somehow affecting students' pronunciation in English

Table 10. Student's difficulties of English phonetic symbol

Item	Statement	Options	Freq.	%
10	The phonetic symbol of pronunciation are difficult therefore I do not understand how to pronounce the words	Strongly agree	30	79%
		Agree	5	13 %
		Strongly disagree	2	5%
		Disagree	1	3%
	Total		**38**	**100%**

Table 10 indicates the result of questionnaire item no.10. It shows that there are twenty nine students (79%) who strongly agree that the phonetic symbols of pronunciation are difficult, therefore they do not understand how to pronounce the word. Five students (13%) agree, two students (3%) strongly disagree and there was one student (3%) who disagrees. The Strongly Agrees percentage is the highest, 79%. It intends that phonetic symbol of

pronunciation is somehow affecting students' pronunciation in English.

Result of Interview

It is explained before that Interview lists eight questions and it spent 10 - 15 minutes duration. The interview then was recorded by using cellular-phone. It is conducted to gain information from the teacher of English in MTsN Palu Barat to support the questionnaire result.

The interview shows that there were some factors affecting student's pronunciation. The teacher stated that students have enough ability in pronunciation. When they were in seventh grades, the teacher taught them to pronounce the words but a few of them still found difficulties especially when read a long sentence. It is caused by having no attention in teaching process. Their difficulties also influenced by their accent. It happens to the students because majority of students' background are Bugisiss and Kailiness. Another information found from the teaches is that the students who were able to pronounce word correctly were taking English course while those who were not having English course, they got difficulties to pronounce the words.

As a teacher, he absolutely corrects student's pronunciation. He gets his students to read the sentence first then he corrects if they pronounce it wrong. After teaching the students, the teacher always ask the students to re-pronounce the words that have been taught. Before starting the lesson the teacher always has the students to re-pronounce the words that have been given at the previous meeting. The teacher tries many ways to increase students' ability in pronunciation. However, they still find difficulties in pronouncing the words. The students commit mistake in pronunciation is caused by their ignorance, lack of reading, and the orientation of school does not focus at English lesson.

Referring to explanation above, it can be stated that the factors affecting students'

difficulties in pronunciation come from the students themselves, such as less attention and the influence of mother tongue. Teacher already taught students to increase their ability but they still get difficulties in pronunciation.

Result of Oral Asessment

The researchers recorded the 8th grade students of MTs.N Palu Barat by using cellular-phone. The students pronounced 10 words and it spent less than 1 minute.

The result of recording shows that there were some mistakes that students did in pronouncing words.

- The word *eat* and *it* were pronounced *it* instead of *it* and *i:t*.
- The words *sea* and *she* were pronounced *si* instead of *si:* and *ʃi:*.
- The words *leave* and *live* were pronounced *lif* and instead of li:v and liv.
- The word *son* and *soon* were pronounced *son* instead of *sʌn* and *su:n*.
- The words *feel* and *fill were* pronounced *fail* and *fil* instead of fi:l and *fil*.
- The words *still* and *steal were* pronounced *stail* and *stil* instead of *stil* and *sti:l*.
- The words *bag* and *beg* were pronounced *beg* and *bʌg* instead of *beg* and *bæg*.
- The words *bat* and *but* were pronounced *bat* and *but* instead of *bæt* and bʌt;
- The words *heart* and *hurt* were pronounced *hart* and *hurt* instead of *ha:rt* and *hɜ:t*
- The words *god* and *good* were pronounced *gud god* instead of *gɒd* and *gʊd*.

From these facts above, the researchers find out that the 8th grade students of MTs.N Palu Barat get difficulties to pronounce English vowels, especially to differentiate the sound of Indonesian vowels and English vowels.

Discussion

Students of grade 8th of M TS.N Palu Barat get difficulties in pronouncing English word properly and correctly. Their respond in questionnaire item no 2 is 87% of the students or 33 students' response that they found difficulties to pronounce English words like a native speaker. This is also supported by the result of documentation that the researchers got.

From the investigation, the researchers found that there are five factors affecting student's difficulties. The factors are the influences of native language, lack of motivation, lack of practice, the influence of students' environment, and lack of self confidence.

The first factor affecting students' pronunciation, **the influences of native language**, is proven by the answers of the students in questionnaire item no. 1, 7, and 10. Questionnaire item no.1 shows that there are twenty nine students (76%) of responds or equal 29 students that their native language affects if they study another language. It is caused by having no capability and their accent to produce the words in English. Therefore most of them pronounce the words in wrong way. For example: *sea* and *she* was pronounced *si* instead of *si:* and *ʃi:*. Question item no. 7 shows that there are twenty nine students 76% or equal 29 students strongly agree if they produce English word as its written. It is proved by the result of documentation that words *bat* and *but* were pronounced *bat* and *but* instead of *bæt* and *bʌt*. While question item no. 10 shows that 79% of response or equal 30 students strongly agree if they do not know to produce English words especially vowel because the phonetic symbols of English is very hard, they assume that the way of English written is similar with its utterance like what they have in Indonesia language as their native language as well as in traditional language. Therefore they pronounced word *son* and

soon with the same pronunciation *son* instead of *sʌn* and *su:n.*

The second factor affecting students' pronunciation is **lack of motivation**. It is proven by the answers of the students in questionnaire item no. 4 and 8. Questionnaire item no. 3 shows that 68% of response or equal 26 students strongly agree that they do not have enough motivation to make their pronunciation better. It is caused by having low attention in learning English and it is very difficult for them to learn it and questionnaire item no. 6 shows that 76% or equal 29 students strongly agree that they seldom to open dictionary to correct their pronunciation. It is shown from the result of documentation that words *bag* and *beg* were pronounced *beg* and *bʌg* instead of *beg* and *bæg.*

The third factor affecting students' pronunciation is **lack of practice**. It can be seen from the result of questionnaire item no. 5. This questionnaire item shows 74% or equal 28 students strongly agree that they almost never practice their pronunciation. It supported by the result of documentation that words *eat* and *it* were pronounced *it* instead of *it* and *i:t.* .

The fourth factor affecting students' pronunciation is **the influences of students' environment**, is proven by the answers of the students in questionnaire item no. 9. In this questionnaire item, 79% of response or equal 30 students strongly agree that they never go to western for staying and studying. It is happening to the students because there is no mostly thing around them to support in improving their pronunciation whether in the class or out the class. For example: they just use Indonesian language when they speak to each other.

The fifth factor affecting students' pronunciation is **the low of self confidence**. This is indicated by the way of the students pronounce the English words when the researchers documenting their pronunciation by giving ten words as a test

and caused by insufficient of ability to produce words when having conversation in English then students' social background influencing their accent to speak like a native speaker.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the data gathered from questionnaire, interview, and oral assessment, the researchers draw conclusion. There are five factors affecting students' pronunciation. The factors are; the influence of native language, lack of motivation, lack of practice, the influence of students' environment, and low self confidence.

Suggestion

Suggestions raise as the research ends. Firstly, there is no other way than practising to make oneselves master pronunciation. By doing this, born as not a native speaker and unfavorable environment would not become crucial problems anymore because it gets reduced by practising. Secondly, teachers should become a good problem solver, a good example and a good motivator for students. Learning language means immitating the native speaker, therefore, students will immitate one who teaches them. Teachers should never give up in motivating their students over and over again.

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