A. Teaching Pronunciation

1. The Definition of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way a certain second sound or sounds are produced. Unlike articulation, which refers to actual production of speech sound in the mouth, pronunciation stresses more the way sounds are perceived by the hearer.¹ Pronunciation is one of the sub-skills of speaking skill; it is one of the most important sub-skills to make sure that the person speaks all the words clearly. Moreover, people can also have the conclusion what they have understood about the meaning of pronunciation. Nevertheless, pronunciation can be defined as the way in which a language or a particular word is pronounced.

Besides, another definition of pronunciation according to Penny Ur is to say:

the sounds right, to use the words to express the appropriate meanings, or construct their sentences in a way that sounds acceptable.² It means that pronunciation is used to make the words that are said sounds right and the meaning of the

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words can be delivered and sound and sound acceptable to the listener.

2. Features of Pronunciation

Pronunciation has some features that can avoid the misunderstanding and misheard in learning pronunciation. There are two features: phonemes and suprasegmental features. Phonemes are divided into two parts, consonants with voiced and unvoiced as the contents and vowels with single vowels (consist short and long single vowels) and diphthongs as the contents. Meanwhile, suprasegmental features are also divided into two parts, intonation and stress that consists word stress and sentence stress.

a. Phonemes

Phonemes are the different sound within a language. Even though some people articulate sounds differently, yet those can still be described how accurately the sounds are produced.\(^3\) Then phonemes categorized into two parts, consonants and vowels.

a) Consonants

A consonant is the phonemes which are not vocal, in other words, the sound is produced by obstructing the flow of the airstream in the mouth.

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b) **Vowels**

Vowels are articulated as a tongue and lips are shaping the voiced airstream so that the overall shape of the mouth can be modified.

3. **Suprasegmental Features**

Suprasegmental is the features of pronunciation that are invisible. The features can be hardly recognized if the speaker cannot distinguish where to place it. Ladefoged and Johnson stated that the features are the variation of stress, pitch, and length that can affect single segments as same as whole syllables.⁴

These features contain two important part that can affect to a clear pronunciation, the first stress and the second is intonation.

a. **Stress**

This part of pronunciation takes an important role in the clarity of speaking. If a person says event a word, but the stress in incorrect. That word can have a different meaning to another person who listens to him. Harmer stated, “stress is the term that we use the describe the point in the word or phrase where pith changes the vowels lengthen and volume increase”.⁵ It means that the use of stress in pronunciation is

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really meant to be said. That word or phrase will be increase whether the volume, pitch or length to make sure the listener understand and pay any attention to the stressed word or phrase.

b. Intonation

As well as stress, intonation also affect the way a person says a word. In saying a word, the person has the know where the voice should be raised or be lowered. To be clear, Ladefoged and Jhonson illustrated “In English, it is event possible to change the meaning of sentence such as that’s a cat from statement to a question without altering the order of the words. If you subtitle a mainly rising intonation to a mainly falling intonation, you will produce a question spoken with an air of astonishment : that’s a cat ?”\(^6\) it can be stated that the intonation can change the phrases that are said. A question is usually ended with the falling intonation. If the intonation can changed into rising, the question will be considered as a statement not a question anymore.

B. Virtual Assistant Application

1. The Definition of Virtual Assistant Application

A virtual assistant application is an Automatic Speech Recognition which is able to recognize the speech and voice of a human. According to Joseph keshet and Sanny Bengio, the goal of automatic speech recognition is “to transcribe recorded

\(^6\) Ladefoged, Jhonson, loc.cit, p.24.
A virtual assistant application is automatically installed in a mobile device to help the user in using media or other applications in the smartphone.

2. The Most Used Virtual Assistants

Some kinds of virtual assistants had been developed by some of the developers; the purpose of developing this application is to make the use of the smartphone effective. However not all of those virtual assistants have a good capability and applicable, some of those may still need some developments. Henning stated that Google Now, Microsoft’s Cortana and Apple’s Siri are the leading smart virtual assistants. It means that the leading virtual assistant is Google Now, Microsoft’s Cortana, and Apple’s Siri that is popularly used by today's people.

a. Apple’s Siri

Siri is a virtual assistant with a voice-controlled natural language interface that uses sequential and contextual awareness to help perform personal tasks for iOS users. And, like most of the other key technological features in Apple’s

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iOS product, SIRI is an artificial intelligence program consisting of machine learning.\(^8\)

**b. Google now**

Google now is an intelligent personal assistant made by Google. It was first included in Android 4.1 which launched on July 9, 2012, and was first supported on the Google Nexus smartphone. Found within the Google search option, Google Now can be used in numerous ways that are helpful, Google Now also displays different sections called now card that pulls information from your Gmail account and throws it on the screen.\(^9\)

**c. Microsoft’s Cortana**

Cortana is the name of the interactive personal assistant built into Windows 10. You can give her instructions and talk with her by using your voice or by typing. Cortana, name after her fictional counterpart in the video game series Halo, take notes, dictates messages, and offers up calendar alerts and remainders.\(^10\)

There are no differences in function among Cortana, Siri and Google Now. The Cortana function is the same like Siri and Google Now, the assistant virtual is the developer by

\(^8\) Reehal Sheetal, “Siri, Intelligent Journal Of Advanced Research In Computer Engineering & Technology (IJARCET). Vol.5 no.6 (June, 2016), p.2021


Microsoft and it is intended to be applied in Microsoft’s device.

The applications are often used by the student who want to pronounce the words correctly. Therefore, the use of these applications can be helpful for the students that have the problems in pronunciation, because the student can practice the pronunciation through the application anywhere as long as they bring their smartphones.

C. The Advantages of Virtual Assistant Application in Teaching Pronunciation

The use of the virtual assistant application in teaching pronunciation gives some advantages to the teacher. Adapted from Elimat and Seileek, the advantages of the virtual assistant application in teaching pronunciation are:

1. Providing interactive speech-based games and role-play with the computer. Such activities make learning pronunciation a more realistic, rewarding, and fun experience.
2. The programs can reduce foreign language classroom anxiety.
3. Students can also study and improve pronunciation independently.

Using virtual assistant in teaching pronunciation can give the students a change to do a self-assessment because they learn pronunciation independently then they will know what their weaknesses and stranger are.

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D. Teaching Pronunciation Through Virtual Assistant Application

The virtual assistant application is getting more popular to be used as a medium of teaching English, especially pronunciation. The capability of the application to deliver of students’ pronunciation problems make it easier for the teacher to access and improve students’ pronunciation skill. Ambara Neri, Catia Cucchiarini, and Halmer Strik stated: “The reason for this popularity lie in the opportunities this technology offers for practicing oral skills and addressing pronunciation problems, two areas that are hard to improve within traditional call-based settings”\footnote{Ambara Nawi, Catia Cucchiarini, and Halmer Strik, Effective feedback on L2 pronunciation in ASR- based CALL, proceedings of the workshop on computer assisted language learning, 2001, p.40.} from the statement, it proves that virtual assistant application, consonants, vowel, intonation, and stress are the main focuses of this application.

The virtual assistant application focuses on the segmental features of pronunciation. Consonan, vowel, intonation, and stress are the main focuses of this application. A student who say a word or a sentence without the correct consonant or vowel sounds even the improper intonation and stress will know their mistakes. This application will detect the words and transcribe the words on the phone screen, the application then will respond by showing what the student has said according to its analysis, Ambra Neri, Catia Cucchiarini, and Helmer Strik stated that the system can provide an interaction, making it possible to detect individual errors and
provide immediate feedback\textsuperscript{13} so if the student means to pronounce ‘snake’ but the student pronounce it incorrectly, the virtual assistant application then will respond and give a feedback by showing ‘knight’ instead of ‘night’.

\textsuperscript{13} Nawi, Cucchiarini, and Strik, Effective feedback on L2 pronunciation in ASR, p.44.