

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHONICS METHOD TO ENHANCE THE YOUNG LEARNERS' ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to foster pupils' abilities in English pronunciation. Participants in this Classroom Action Research (CAR) were the students of sixth grade in MI Ma'arif NU Sunyalangu consisted of 20 students. Their English pronunciation abilities were still considered as low because the pretest average score was only 48.86. The tools used were the test questions and the observation sheet. In order to enhance their English pronunciation skills, the researchers utilized the Phonics method. This method was chosen due to its merits to teach English pronunciation. Two cycles of study were undertaken. The average score on the posttest for cycle 2 was 85.69, which was higher than the successful criteria of this study (65). In short, the phonics method could help pupils pronounce English more clearly, especially young learners.

Keywords: English Pronunciation; Young Learners; the Phonics Method

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is one of the important elements of English. Understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learners 'competence, and it is also one of the most important features of language instruction. While poor pronunciation encourages

significant challenges in language learning, good pronunciation facilitates learning (Gilakjani, 2016). According to Harmer (2001), pronunciation is the first thing that native speakers pay attention to. Grammar and vocabulary are crucial language components, and they might be rendered meaningless if speakers can't pronounce certain components or words well. If people utilize appropriate pronunciation, even grammatical mistakes can be understood by native speakers. Aniuranti & Suwartono (2020) also argue that pronunciation is completely important for English learners.

Although the importance of English pronunciation is undeniable, this component is frequently considered as difficult element. English pronunciation is one of the hardest abilities to learn, thus students should spend a lot of time working on it (Martínez-Flor et al., 2006; Gilakjani, 2016). Besides, teaching English pronunciation is commonly neglected. Pronunciation instruction is sometimes ignored in English language teaching (Gilakjani, 2016). According to Hewings (2004), pronunciation training is a really challenging task. If the activity is structured, pronunciation learning can be accelerated. Both teachers and students play a vital part in this process and are involved.

Many English learners may face difficulty in studying pronunciation. This also faced by the students in primary school. In MI Ma'arif NU Sunyalangu, students' pronunciation was still low. The average of English pronunciation test was only 48.86. In addition, most of the students were still less confident when they were appointed by the teacher to say or read aloud words in English.

Besides the students' low mark in pronunciation, teaching English pronunciation is suggested for the young learners. Zhang (2009) argues that teaching pronunciation should begin in the primary grades since children acquire the system of sounds more rapidly and effectively than adults, who struggle with the learning process due to their advanced age. After puberty, students will experience some difficulty in sound production and sound differentiation. Additionally, Coban (2010) argues that students in the 6–12 age range are significantly less self-conscious than those in the 13–18 age range since they are less able to imitate properly at this point. Therefore, this research tries to focus on maximizing the students' ability in pronunciation and overcoming the students' problems in pronunciation.

One of the methods of teaching pronunciation is the phonics method. Stahl in Neuman & Dickinson (2017) defines phonics instruction as any approach in which the teacher does/says something to help children learn how to decode words. This may involve teaching sound-symbol correspondences directly, having children manipulate sounds in written words

through spelling tasks, pointing out patterns in similarly spelled words, or anything else which helps children learn about orthographic patterns in written language.

The systematic teaching of phonics includes teaching kids how to combine and blend these letters to read or write words as well as the sound that each letter and group of letters represent. The phonics method is essential to the process because it makes the representation of word sounds clear, allowing it to be managed and purposefully used when reading and creating words (Bald, 2007). In addition, teaching phonics requires that we assess students' pronouncing skills. More than just individual sounds are involved in pronunciation. More than just individual sounds are involved in pronunciation. A word is spoken in a certain way, typically in a way that is recognized or widely understood. Additionally, using phonetic symbols, it provides a visual representation of how a word is pronounced. In this term, the researcher scores students' pronunciation based on factors such voicing, vowel length, and specific sounds. Additionally, students should be ready to apply phonics. Phonemic awareness, according to Hiskes (2011), is "the ability to discriminate sounds is a forerunner and an inevitable prerequisite for Phonics application." By using phonics, students' metacognitive skills advance from simple comprehension to extensional awareness (Brooks & Brooks, 2005).

Teaching young students phonics has various advantages. According to Kurniati (2015), the use of phonics enables students to read and pronounce words and sentences more quickly. The use of phonics enables students to recognize the letters "c-a-t" and combine them to form the word "cat" (note: students had previously been taught how to pronounce each phonics). Pancare (2018) argues that encourage young readers to mix the sound-spelling patterns to decode newly written words by having them sound them out. The phonics approach has benefits, such as boosting confidence and assisting with spelling.

There are several relevant previous studies. The first study comes from Kralova and Soradova (2021). In this study, the phonics method was employed to teach EFL pronunciation to young learners with dyslexia, and this research showed the benefits of the phonics method for all learners with significant improvement. The second study was conducted by Kurniati (2015). Her study focused on improving students' pronouncing ability using the phonics method. This study found out the significant progress in improving pronunciation. This study is different from those two previous studies. In this study, the researchers employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) which is a practical research that aims to improve learning in the classroom, and it is essential to enhance the quality of education especially in English pronunciation. Moreover, the subject is final grade students

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who will soon take higher education levels and are expected to graduate with adequate English pronunciation skill. Based on the background of the research, the researchers take the title "The Implementation of The Phonics Method to Enhance the Young Learners' English Pronunciation".

METHOD

The methodology employed in this study was classroom action research (CAR). Since the goal of this study was to improve students' pronunciation skills, this form of research was the most appropriate. Model of Kemmis and McTaggart in Sahara (2019) was used in this study. The four key phases of this model are planning, action, observation, and reflection. This study was conducted over the course of two cycles, each cycle consisting of two separate meetings. The sixth grade of MI Ma'arif NU Sunyalangu was the focus of the study. In the class, there were 20 pupils.

The test questions and observation sheets were the tools employed in this investigation. The purpose of the test was to gauge the pupils' vocabulary growth. The test is a technique to gather information about aptitude, competency, skill, and comprehension (Suwartono, 2014). Arikunto (2014) further emphasises that a test is used to assess fundamental competence or accomplishment. The assessment is based on McMurray's (2020) work.

The observation sheet served as the second tool used. This was the only auxiliary tool used to determine if the lecturer followed the lesson plans or not. Suwartono (2014) asserts that observation is a very effective tool for analysing behaviours or processes. When utilising this technique, the data is captured using the eyes and ears as windows.

Following the collection of all the data, average score, a straightforward statistical technique, was used to examine the test results. The outcomes of the observations were then only used to determine whether or not the lecturer had carried out the teaching and learning process in accordance with the plans. The observers used the findings from their observations to provide recommendations to the lecturer. The success indicator used in this study was

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

One of the researchers was the English teacher in the class, and she commented that she found many obstacles in teaching English to the sixth grade including teaching pronunciation. The pupils did not feel confident in saying English words and sentences because they feel

they could not do it well. There were also some students who had never been taught how to pronounce English words or sentences properly and correctly using certain methods. The result of the pre-test revealed that the students' ability in pronunciation was still quite low. The average score only achieved 48.86. Therefore, the teacher and the other researcher decided to do a classroom action research. After reading relevant sources, the team decided to employ the phonic method. This method was suggested to teach English pronunciation to the young learners due to several merits.

In every cycle in this study, the research team completed the cycle by doing planning, observing, acting and reflecting. Then, at the end of each cycle, the team conducted evaluation process. After implementing the phonic method for two meetings, the teaching and learning process was getting better. During the learning process in the first cycle, the material focused more on understanding the phonic method. Students are taught how to read the alphabet using the phonic method and then practice it. The result of the first posttest also showed improvement. The average score of this test was 68.39. Even though the passing grade score was reached, the researchers felt the score could still be improved. Therefore, the researcher and the observer concurred to continue the implementation of Phonics Method to cycle 2. The evaluation process of cycle 1 also showed that the team still needed to continue the cycle. There were some findings namely the teacher still gave few exercises to students so students still did not understand enough to say the words, the teacher spoke too fast so the explanations given were not captured well by the students, the teacher provided video with native-speaker pronunciation and it was still difficult for the students, and the students were confused by some new words that they rarely heard.

Based on the result of the first posttest and the evaluation, the team agreed to continue the cycle. After implementing the phonic method for two more meetings, the students were tested, and the result showed significant enhancement. In the second cycle, researchers emphasized more on practicing pronunciation and reading words in English. In this cycle, students started to feel confident in pronouncing vocabulary in English. The average score achieved 85.69. Thus, the phonics method could be used to improve students' pronunciation scores. Here is the summary of students' pronunciation development.

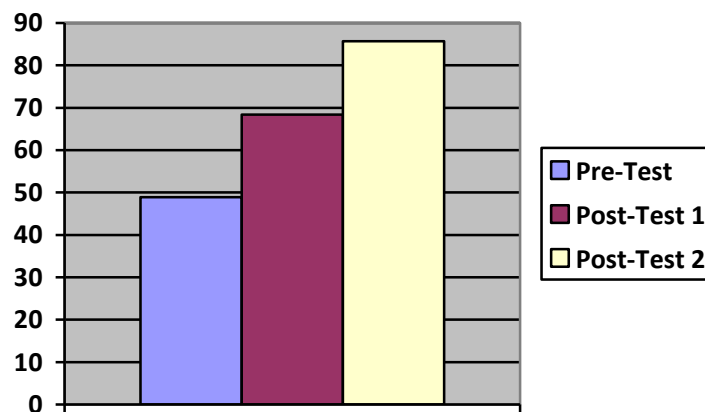


Diagram 1. Development of Students' Pronunciation Mastery

Discussion

The findings of the two-cycle study showed that the phonic approach might improve students' pronunciation. According to Kurniati (2015), phonics helps students pronounce and read words and sentences more quickly. An enormous improvement in score validated this notion. Additionally, Grant (2013) explains how the phonics approach increases students' phonemic awareness. This is the capacity to deconstruct words into their component sounds and comprehend how words are generated. This aids children in spelling and writing in addition to reading.

Besides being able to increase in students' score, the success of this study was also seen from the activeness of the students. Pancare (2018) asserts that the phonics approach can boost students' self-confidence. Children learn the sounds and shapes of the alphabet's letters during phonics education so they can recognize them when reading. Children who possess this ability can decode, or break down, new words into shorter sounds that can be combined to make words. Beginning readers gain confidence by having a tool to utilize while reading challenging or unfamiliar words thanks to the phonetic technique. Arnoldus et al., (2018) adds that students' active participation in their education is a sign of high-quality learning. The improvement in student learning outcomes demonstrates the study's success.

CONCLUSIONS

The three elements of English are pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. The first is typically seen as a crucial yet troublesome element. Young learners, particularly those at MI Ma'arif NU Sunyalangu's sixth grade, also struggled with pronunciation. The average score

only achieved 48.86 in the pronunciation pretest. The study team decided to use the phonic approach, one of the offered solutions, to solve this issue. The average student score after two separate actions in cycle 1 was 68.39, and by the end of cycle 2, the students' pronunciation had greatly improved. The final score was 85.69 on average. Thus, the phonic approach was successfully used as a means of improving pupils' pronunciation abilities.

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