

Enhancing Pronunciation Skills through Phonetic Method

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at stressing current issue on how to enhance pronunciation skills through the phonetic method. The design applied action research in a classroom where there are two cycles conducted after primarily doing pre-cycle. The techniques to collect the data were an oral test, interviews with students and teacher, and field notes. The findings showed that the first cycle did not significantly enhance students' skills in pronunciation because, among 24 students, 16 students passed the test with the category of a good score and sufficient. Some students were still confused with the pronunciation instruction and failed to test underscore 60. Thus, It needs the second cycle to reach the goal of the research. The second cycle pointed out that 19 students enhanced their pronunciation skills. This research furthermore gives some contribution. First, the students will have the confidence to use English without any affection to be awkward, nervous through having an interaction with each other and make them able to communicate well. Then, in language learning, it provides both practical and theoretical teaching ideas to the prospective teachers to help and to assess their students for enhancing accurate pronunciation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Paying attention to pronunciation in communication is crucial in language learning. The study of pronunciation seems easy to be taught by repeating the word sounds. However, some students still ignore the function because actually, the repeat of sounds needs correction (Lepore, 2014). Besides, the purpose of pronunciation class is not concerned to make the students should be like native speakers of English but it is associated with good communication (Ferdianto, 2019).

Pronunciation is also termed as the method of producing certain sounds within a language. In the instructional process of English, pronunciation is the key which is taught for language components such as new sounds, words, phrases, and sentences (Yates & Zielinski, 2009). Thus, pronunciation is an essential part of learning a language for students because it makes the communication goes well.

Related to improving pronunciation skills, some questions were raised by students in the English class. First, it is inconvenient to understand what an English native speaker says because there is a language variety of English so that the students get stressed, frustrated, hesitated, and failed to communicate at last. Fewer students can pronounce correct pronunciation because they do not consistently hear English in their daily communication. They have worked hard because it is not an easy goal. Moreover, there are only a few students consider the meaning of good pronunciation which makes the teachers take responsibility to assist them in learning pronunciation. It is important to conceive the importance of studying pronunciation for the students as a priority as a foreign or second language beyond the case of having exercises or practices. If the students do not figure out this suggestion, it will influence their success in learning any language (Hişmanoğlu, 2012).

It is necessary to conduct a research on improving students' pronunciation skills by using some particular strategies because pronunciation is the basic skill to strengthen and to motivate students in speaking class. One of those is phonetics which is closely related to pronunciation and has a concern with the sound articulation, the system of human language system regarding the place to put the sounds and manner, to take the positions of sounds (Ebrahimi, 2010). Commonly, the study of phonetics is learned by students at the university level because it is explicitly found in the senior high school curriculum but it can be provided for the students at school especially in the EFL class (Lintunen & Mäkilähde, 2015). Articulatory phonetics, acoustic phonetics and auditory phonetics are the classification of phonetics. Articulatory phonetics describes the organs that are used to deliver human sounds while the acoustic investigates the duration, quality, intensity, and frequency of sounds. Then the auditory explains how humans perceive their speech sound (Mcmahon, 2002).

Systematically, the articulation of sounds in a language is associated with phonetics. English in this case, phonetics can be a method to avoid and to solve pronunciation errors of sounds through the speech organs, manner, place, and also the transcription which is familiar to say as IPA (International Phonetic Alphabets). Although IPA may have its term in alphabets, it does not discuss 26 alphabets that English has in the system of writing but in the system of pronunciation, there are 44 speech sounds considered to learn in phonetics. According to (Lintunen, 2015), phonetic transcription is a convenient and useful device that is used to describe speech. It takes notice of vowels and consonants as the phonemes. That is why phonetics is a useful method to work on a spoken dialogue system including pronunciation (Lison, 2012).

There are some reasons for conducting this research to EFL students at schools or universities that have been ignored by teachers in many countries, especially in Indonesia which are related to previous relevant research about teaching pronunciation with some strategies or approaches. First, pronunciation can be taught by explicit teaching approach where (Pardede, 2018) found that EFL learners at a university may enhance their pronunciation integrated with the four language skills. Second, the same strategy by using video at a university was done to enhance the quality of sound pattern that the key factors were influenced by familiar words, students' basic needs and level (Hasanah et al., 2020). Third, the use of phonetic method in teaching English which where phonetic instruction can be done from the primary to advance level at schools. One of the school level is vocational school, (Suhardi, 2018) suggests that phonetic method can be applied in teaching English through three aspects of speaking ability, namely pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. It can be applied in teaching vocabulary which has some steps but mainly in reading aloud, imitating the teachers, practicing orally in pairs, individually, or even in groups (Amirul Mukminin et al., 2020). Besides, children at schools may use phonetics through reading ability especially for kindergarten level. The children might name some characters in the reading passage and mention the letters thus the social interaction exists, the students got excited to learn by expressing some opinions during the activity (W.W & Suparno, 2019).

Also, there are some studies that had been conducted to analyse the use of phonetic transcriptions in teaching English. (Sahara, 2019) in her thesis entitled improving students' pronunciation by applying a phonics method in the classroom at the eighth grade students found that

the students got better score after having the treatment by using Phonetic Method. Another study was conducted by, (Bambang and Ahsan, 2020) entitled: using phonetic transcription to improve students' pronunciation skills. They conducted the research by using action research to see how phonetic transcription can improve English pronunciation of the fourth semester students of English Literature Department of Pamulang University in Academic year of 2019/2020. In the finding, they found that Phonetic transcription was able to improve students' pronunciation by improving segmental features of pronunciation and helping the students to learn suprasegmental features of pronunciation such as word stress and sentences stress.

Based on the previous studies, this research is also expected to explore another strategy in a pedagogic discipline especially to enhance one of the crucial language skills for EFL or ESL learners at any levels. Explicitly, the reason is to put phonetics as a method in teaching and learning pronunciation because phonetics is associated with it. Furthermore, this study has two reasons, first is to investigate the students' pronunciation skills through the phonetic method and then it is to find out the students' responses of how to enhance their pronunciation skills through the phonetic method.

2. METHODS

Classroom Action Research (CAR) was applied to this research. Based on (Kemmis, 2006), it has a phase terminology namely cycle that consists of planning, action, observe, and reflection (PAOR). Two cycles, in this case, were done to investigate the enhancement of pronunciation skill by the phonetic method. In the first cycle, the pronunciation skills of the students was not significantly increased although the phonetics method was applied. Some of the students did not have good scores to put themselves passed the test given by the teacher. Then, the second cycle was done to show the increasing scores as the re-evaluation which all of the students passed the test and their pronunciation skills were better than earlier.

The research was done at SMA Harapan III Deli Serdang, Jl. Karya Wisata Ujung Medan Johor, North Sumatera where the students came from the Grade XI in socio-science class. It took only one class and 24 students were the subjects of getting the data. The data were the scores of their pronunciation skills right before the treatment of using the phonetic method and also right after using it. The researchers put themselves as observers. The observation was used to see the scores and the attitudes of the students in studying pronunciation through the phonetic method which was taught by their English teacher. It means that the teacher was also observed to support the data.

To analyze the data, there were some instruments used they are observation sheets, interviews, documentation, and field notes. The observation sheets were used to see the attitudes of students toward studying pronunciation by the phonetic method. In the interview session, the students gave their testimonials after learning phonetic to enhance their skills in pronunciation, furthermore, the teacher was also interviewed to elaborate the situation happened to the students during English class with and without using the phonetic method. To prove, documentations and field notes were also done to analyze the data.

As previously stated, Classroom Action Research has at least two stages which consist of planning, observe, action, and reflection stages (PAOR). Those were the procedures during the research conducted. In the first step that is planning, the researchers prepared all things before conducting the research. Visiting the school, asking for permission to do the research, and observing the subjects of the data were the things that the researcher did. Researchers took some preliminary data about the pronunciation skills of the students and teaching strategies used during the English class. That preliminary data was drawn as one of the reasons why this research should be done. While setting the research schedules, the pronunciation tests were also prepared that contained the phonetic method. The phonetic method was about how students learned the transcription of the sounds, which is International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA). The materials were suitably provided within the

curriculum at school. Researchers also introduced and described the procedures in pronunciation class to the teacher. This means, researchers and teachers worked together and play their roles.

By the time of the schedules, the researchers had done the action step which came to school and conducted the research. The teacher taught the students about how they should learn and work hard for their pronunciation. In the first cycle, the teacher did not use phonetic instruction. Researchers asked the teacher to use a conventional method that is practicing to articulate the words or in a full sentence without paying attention to the transcription of sounds in English. The students only imitate the teacher to do the same when reading a text as the material.

There was no special knowledge of phonetic instruction found by the students themselves. It was acquired naturally. In this session, because there was no approach to introducing the phonetic method, some of the students had a variety of scores. Dominantly, they got a low score to pass the test in the first cycle. To pass the test, at least they should have 70. Here, there should be the second cycle anyway to ensure that the students could pass the test. The second cycle finally is done and shown that the score they got increased rather than earlier. It was because when doing cycle two, the teacher had introduced them on how to enhance pronunciation skills through phonetic instruction. The teacher explained the sounds of English and introduced the speech organs to make them interested.

In observation step, while the teacher and students had their interaction in the class to work hard for pronunciation subject, researchers observed the situation happened among those participants. The intention was put on the students' attitudes towards the materials besides the teacher ensured the students to follow the instruction on each cycle done. Furthermore, documentation and field notes were done to capture and to describe the interaction. As a matter of fact, in the last session after finishing the lessons, researchers went to interview the students one by one to draw the attitudes of studying phonetics to make their pronunciation better. Between the first and the second cycle, there was a significant comparison whether it is about the scores or enthusiasm of students in English class.

Before the lessons finished, the last procedure done was the reflection that the teacher discussed the progress of pronunciation skills with the students. Students were allowed to do some practices in front of the class having a presentation in reading the same text given in both cycles. It means to see the difference between the result of the test in the first and the second cycle. This context was done to reflect them to be confident to study English and not hesitate in speaking or afraid of having errors in their communication. Moreover, the summary of sounds in English and the brief explanation of organs of speech were reviewed. Students were suggested to consult with the dictionary or to use any technology tools in phonetics.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As previously stated that there were two cycles done in the research, it means that different results between them were also shown. Each of the cycles had the percentages of students' scores and completed by the discussion. Their pronunciation skills were obtained from the scores evaluated through the test of phonetic instructions taught and given by the teacher. Here the activities are done in every cycle.

Pre-Cycle Activity

In the pre-cycle activity, the students were not introduced by the phonetic method or any instructional strategy at all. The researchers asked the teacher to directly test the students' pronunciation skills. The test was about a procedure text as well as planned by the researchers. The text was very simple and the content was on the tutorial of making a favorite food, some fried rice. Based on the curriculum and also in their English textbook, one by one the students were instructed to read the text. This activity was purposed to see the pre-scores of pronunciation skills that was not treated by the phonetic method.

Table 1. Pre-Activity Scores Analysis

Categories	Score Range	Frequency	Percentages
Very Good	85 - 100	0	0%
Good	75 - 84	5	20,8%
Sufficient	60 - 74	3	12,5%
Poor	50 - 59	10	41,7%
Very Poor	0 - 49	6	25%
Total		24	100%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that among 24 students, five students had good scores with 20, 8%. Three students were sufficient with 12,5% but 41,7% were poor because ten students got scores under 60 and at last six students with 25% were sadly very poor. This activity was done just to see the progress before and after using the phonetic method. Students' pronunciation skills in this activity were too stiff. Most of them remained to be passive or silent.

In this case, the students got their own scores by reading activity without any strategy or before applying the phonetic method. As (W.W & Suparno, 2019) stated that through reading can be improved through phonetic method because of paying attention to phonemic awareness such as alertness and sound manipulation in words spoken are enhanced when the students learn to associate letters with their voices.

They looked like nervous to pronounce or mention letters, sometimes, when they were confused and shy because they were hesitated to speak or afraid of making errors. They felt difficult to pronounce because their speech organs unconsciously misplaced the speech sounds. As summarized, because of there were no students who got a very good score, it verified that the students have less enthusiasm, they did not focus on when the activities done, had no idea to do, expressed their opinions, and interacted with classmates. These are also said to have a weak pronunciation skills and trapped to keep focusing on grammar.

Activity in Cycle I

In this cycle, the phonetic method was applied by using the teacher as the role model. The teacher used the procedure text given to read the whole text slowly and tried to articulate in a better way. In this phase, the teacher introduced a brief course of phonetics. The lessons started from describing the speech organs and the sounds in English that it was different with 26 alphabets commonly used. Students focused on how the teacher pronounced every word in the text. However, they did not think that using phonetic instruction may give them a horizon to speak better; they thought that all they need was just listening to what the teacher said and imitated as well as pronounced. This idea brought them into mistaken that their pronunciation would be good if they did as native speakers sound like. The scores were classified as follows.

Table 2. Scores Analysis in Cycle I

Categories	Score Range	Frequency	Percentages
Very Good	85 - 100	0	0 %
Good	75 - 84	11	45,8%
Sufficient	60 - 74	5	20,8%
Poor	50 - 59	1	29,1 %
Very Poor	0 - 49	6	25 %
Total		24	100%

By showing the table, still, it can be seen that there were no students who reached a very good score. This case happened as just the same as the pre-cycle activity. But, there was a bit progress of enhancement from the pre-cycle to cycle I which there were 11 students (45,8%) got good scores, 5 sufficient students (20,8%), poor scores decreased into 1 students (29,1%) and 6 students (25%) who were said to be very poor. It means the percentages of the frequency were just previously stated were at least changed. Nevertheless, it cannot be stated that this cycle was exactly succeeded because the requirement should be fulfilled by the students that they had to pass the standard minimum criteria based on the school curriculum, not fewer than 70. Meanwhile, some students still had poor and very poor in their pronunciation skills. It requires up to 70 for the student to pass.

Based on the activity in the first cycle, the teacher straightly introduced the phonetic symbols to the students through reading the texts. The students only listened to the teacher's pronunciation when each word described in the texts while consulted with the symbols. Also, they caught the sounds while learning the symbols and tried to memorize them. However, when the students were presented some similar words sound, they could differentiate them appropriately. This case implied that having individual word practices was easy enough to accomplish but it was not in complex words or text ((Samawiyah & Saifuddin, 2016). The observation found that the phonetic method was not completely done. Some of the students still were not able to identify and differentiate some symbols that affected them not to be able to catch and comprehend the spoken words well. The other problem they had was that they were not custom to the words and it was lack of drilling with various types of words. In the beginning of the implementation, the students were provided with single word and its phonetic symbols. They were also required to listen the words very carefully before they looked at the symbols. However, the students responded to the teacher instruction positively by learning the symbols and asked the teacher to play some more sounds.

Learning how to pronounce words and hear spoken words by the use of phonetic symbols focused on the form and its literal meaning. However, it could not be denied that the researcher guided the students to comprehend the whole spoken words. In some ways, the researcher presented spoken text and guided questions that they needed to answer the available questions. Thus, having some revisions and improved activities were suggested in the second cycle because there were some obstacles faced by the teacher in applying this method, such as inadequate time for English lessons, and the target of material achievement determined by the curriculum and syllabus makes the teacher less flexible in applying this method. Therefore, the addition of lessons, improving facilities or teaching media, and active participation of students are expected to maximize the application of the phonetic method.

Cycle II Activity

Because the first cycle did not successfully enhance students' skills in pronunciation, the second cycle must be carried out after its reflection. The reflection was about to evaluate the obstacles and to observe each situation. Same with the first cycle, this activity was done in two meetings within 90 minutes at each meeting held. This cycle was purposed to complete all the activities of the phonetic method. Again, the students were given the same test, the procedure text but in this case, the teacher reviewed all the lessons about the speech sounds and organs. At this time, the teacher asked the students to use a dictionary by looking at the transcription of sounds that were previously learned. Then, the students were given an exercise to transcribe the procedure text which contains all the sounds in words and sentences. This strategy used to make the students easily know how to pronounce after a long time enough discussing the speech sounds. Right after the IPA of speech sounds in the text had been transcribed, the teacher asked them to check on their assignments. They could underline the transcription of each word found in the text.

Moreover, the students were invited to read the text together. Also, the teacher repeated once while the students carefully listened. Last, the final test was given to them. The students should come forward in class one by one without seeing the transcriptions that they had just done. Before they performed, they should memorize all the sounds transcribed. The assignments were submitted and

collected by the teacher so that they had no handouts. When they took their turns, they focused on the slide show of the procedure text, and then everybody should read and pronounce the words by paying attention to the sounds. Their pronunciation skill was observed and checked. Here are the scores classified into the following table.

Table 3. Scores Analysis in Cycle II

Categories	Score Range	Frequency	Percentages
Very Good	85 - 100	3	12,5%
Good	75 - 84	16	66,7%
Sufficient	60 - 74	5	20,8%
Poor	50 - 59	0	0 %
Very Poor	0 - 49	0	0 %
Total		24	100%

The second cycle was done after seeing the result in the first cycle. As stated previously, the first cycle did not fulfill the goal that the students could enhance their pronunciation skills. So, the second cycle needs to be done. The results showed that among 24 students, there were three students enhanced their skills in pronunciation through phonetic method because their scores were between 85 up to 100. It means, there was a significant result than the first cycle. 16 students got 75 up to 84 and there were no students who were categorized in poor and very poor. At least, they got sufficient scores within 74. It indicates that all of the students enhanced their pronunciation skills and passed the standard minimum criteria based on the latest curriculum at school. Some important things were obtained by interviewing the students and teacher.

The pronunciation skills was enhanced and all of the students passed the standard minimum because the teacher used a slightly different strategy by reading the texts while the students listened and paid attention carefully through the style, stress, and intonation as well as the movements of a particular form of the expression which the series in the reading should be structured as to be the perfect reading material and sustainable (Amirul Mukminin et al., 2020). After reading the lesson was completed, and then the conversation exercises had been also done. Once it leads to complex conversations as it was recommended to use props or teaching media such as native speakers recordings or movies, the main target was about to make the speech and the conversation clear. At the end of each lessons, the teacher provided practical exercises in reading and conversation to each of the students through individually, in pairs, or groups depending on the texts. Also, the teacher gave various records conclusions and advices in the form of encouragement (giving motivation for the students) in order to study hard, and regularly as daily exercises.

Thus, it was found that students' attitudes and pronunciation skills had been progressed. They had tried to show their courage to speak through pronunciation. The research found that some students were still nervous and hesitated to come forward in the class. Through phonetic instructions and lessons, they widely opened their minds that it turns out there is a solution to overcome their problems in English, especially in terms of their poor pronunciation. So far, they only relied on grammar and too tired of studying the structure and busy with correcting the grammar while their pronunciation screwed up. Besides, through the phonetic method, they thought a good pronunciation can be done if just listening carefully then imitating and repeating the same articulations with the teacher as if it were a native speaker. But apparently, getting acquainted with the variety of English sounds and speech organs is very crucial and this still requires sufficient time and the deepest understanding of phonetic symbols.

As mentioned above, the implementation of this phonetic method can enhance student learning outcomes in pronunciation. Moreover, some learning outcomes can be obtained in the ability of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, which included of teaching purpose. Almost all the students

were enthusiastic and stimulated in learning pronunciation because they could practice better and controlled by the teacher. Their problems in pronunciation especially in speaking were solved. They could keep away from nerves and hesitation. Finally, the students got some tips to enhance pronunciation through the phonetic method. They felt better and motivated in studying English rather than just focusing on grammar. Besides, the teacher was also confident to recharge himself. It is important to consider a phonetic method as the stimulus for the students in pronunciation. Besides, the teacher should pay attention to what students need rather than what the teacher wants and make the situation more attractive.

The comparison of students' pronunciation skills in pre-Cycle, Cycle-I, and Cycle -II can be seen in the following graphic.

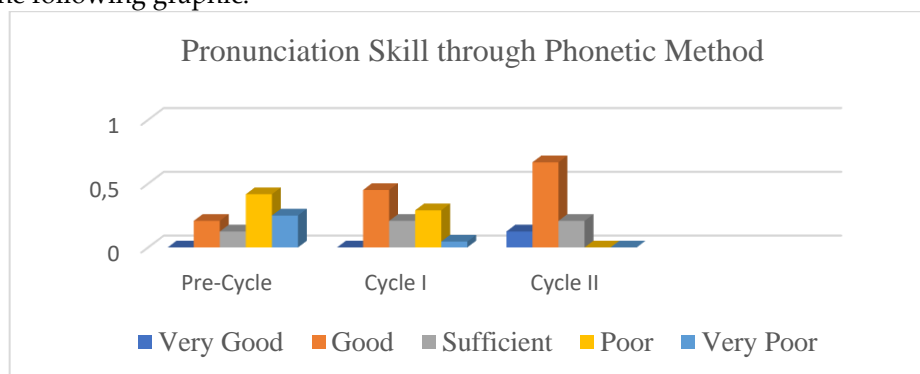


Fig. 1. Flowchart of Pronunciation Skills through Phonetic Method

Based on the chart, the percentages of students' pronunciation skills through the phonetic method were progressively increased. It can be seen in the graphic shown and there were three phases done. First, in the pre-cycle, the students' skills in pronunciation was incompletely enhanced because the phonetic method had been not applied yet. The percentages of the poor and the very poor category were high. Then, in the first cycle, the phonetic method was introduced and slowly enhanced their pronunciation skills where some of them could increase their scores in the good category. But, it cannot be satisfyingly stated that in the first cycle, there was no one student could enhance their pronunciation in a very good score because there was nothing media to support the phonetic method implemented. It means that the teacher relied on reading and phonetic symbols from his skills in pronouncing every single word in the texts (Samawiyah & Saifuddin, 2016).

To make the score level up through the same phonetic method applied, the second cycle was done with some teaching media and had a significant result (Mukminin, et al., 2020). The use of recordings and videos as the teaching media make the phonetic method offered many opportunities for students to practice pronunciation. Over 50% of the students got good scores and 12,5% were very good even though the rest were 20,3% insufficient. At least, all of them completed the skills.

Finally, pronunciation can be seen as more than correcting the production speech sounds made by someone. Also, it can be as an important part of communication that is associated with classroom activities. Teachers may investigate and observe their learners to monitor and to evaluate their pronunciation by giving some practices or exercises their speaking skills as much as possible both in and outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers could set the goals that are appropriate with the communication needs of learners. Pronunciation skills are aimed at intelligible pronunciation and teachers can productively motivate their students' skill in pronunciation. It is important because it plays someone's understanding. If students cannot correct their speech, definitely they could not communicate effectively.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the finding, it can be concluded that the phonetic method enhanced students' skills in pronunciation. There was an improvement of the students' scores from cycle I to cycle II. It proven

that Phonetic Method gave any benefit in teaching pronunciation since the Phonetic Method involves the relationship between sounds and their spelling. So, this method focuses on the pronunciation improvement. The students feel amazed and enthusiastic when their pronunciation was trained with a new strategy by introducing a variety of sounds in English because they have been taught without any specific guidance on how they should pronounce the words that they use. This response can be concluded from the results of interviews with several students. Some arguments found that their boredom of grammar which has only been the main focus of a foreign language has never been completed even though the mastery of their pronunciation has been more helpful because previously they only listened to music, use pronunciation aids from the internet. Whereas to face the native speakers directly, students are still awkward and afraid to interact because of worrying about that their poor pronunciation while they have only been busy paying attention to the grammar. Therefore, there need to be additional lessons that can be assisted by their subject teacher who motivates them to be active in communicating and mastering foreign languages such as English. In this case, the teacher is the basic guide from which students will be able to deal with other people or even English speakers. Other students assume that they have a new understanding of pronunciation to wisely use a dictionary as a traditional language tool because it contains a variety of sounds that are important to be recognized in practicing pronunciation. Also, the teacher has a satisfaction because it turns out to focus on students' needs in English classes not only depend on the textbooks, syllabus, and curriculum that have been planned for each meeting. What a teacher needs to do is an innovation to add some lessons outside the contexts.

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