**IMPROVING PRONUNCIATION ABILTY FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH HOMOPHONE GAME**

***MENINGKATAN KEMAMPUAN PELAFALAN SISWA MENENGAH PERTAMA MELALUI PERMAINAN HOMOPHONE***

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this research was to illustrate that the inclusion of homophone game could improve the pronunciation skills of seventh grade students at SMPN 16 PALU. the researcher employed a quasi-experimental approach, assigning 31 students to the experimental group and 34 students to the control group. The sample was selected by using cluster random sampling technique. Data collection involved pre-test and post-test, an analyzed was conducted using paired sample t-tests with the assistance of SPSS version 27 windows. The findings indicate that employing the homophone game strategy effectively improved the pronunciation ability of the seventh-grade students at SMPN 16 PALU. this was evidenced by the paired sample t-test analysis, revealing a significance level (2-tailed) of 0.001 < 0.05, indicating a significant difference in students’ learning outcomes between the pretest and posttest phases. This discovery suggests that to improve pronunciation instruction, educators should integrate homophone games into their teaching approaches. **Keywords:** Improve, Pronunciation, Homophone Game

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk membuktikan bahwa integrasi permainan homofon dapat meningkatkan keterampilan pelafalan siswa kelas tujuh di SMPN 16 PALU. Peneliti menggunakan desain kuasi-experimental, dengan 31 siswa dalam kelompok eksperimen dan 34 siswa dalam kelompok control. Sampel dipilih dengan menggunakan Teknik cluster random sampling. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan pre-test dan post-test, analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan paired sample t-test dengan bantuan SPSS versi 27 windows. Temuan penelitian menunjukan bahwa penggunaan strategi permainan homophone secara efektif meningkatkan kemampuan pengucapan siswa kelas tujuh di SMPN 16 PALU. hal ini dibuktikan dengan analisis uji t-sample berpasangan yang menunjukan Tingkat signifikan pada hasil belajar siswa antara fase pre-test dan post-test. Temuan ini menyiratkan bahwa untuk meningkatkan pengajaran pelafalan, guru harus memasukkan homophone game ke dalam strategi instruksional mereka.

**Kata Kunci:** Meningkatkan, Pelafalan, Permainan Homofon

**INTRODUCTION**

Pronunciation stands as essential component of the English language, serving as a cornerstone for powerful verbal exchange. Mastering pronunciation is essential for students mastering English, because it ensures a strong foundation for spoken language. It is far universally recognized that pronunciation performs a crucial position for all individuals in conveying their mind efficiently. The best suggest of articulating speech sounds for conversation is through correct pronunciation, which includes shaping sounds created by using airflow passing through the organs of speech. According to Agustiana et al. (2021) A comprehensive understanding of English pronunciation is imperative for those acquiring it as a second language. Any discrepancies between symbols and actual sounds may lead to misinterpretation due to poor pronunciation.

Pronunciation is taught to students as one of the of the language components of English with the goal of improving their proficiency so they can speak clearly and accurately. In Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, teacher teach accurate pronunciation because incorrect pronunciation can cause misunderstanding in communication speech, stress, and intonation. phonological aspect of pronunciation that English teachers are recommended to teach from year one to year three at the junior high school level to help students communication in English accurately and fluently.

According to the observation made at SMPN 16 Palu, seventh-grade students encounter challenges in pronunciation, frequently mispronouncing words and demonstrating a lack of understanding of correct pronunciation. There are several factors that affect students’ pronunciation problems such as concept understanding, the students may be able to understand basic concepts in pronunciation but struggle to apply the appropriately when speaking. This problem could be due to lack of practice or inadequate understanding of how sound is produced. Another problem is limited learning resources, not all learning resources provide effective approaches or adequate materials to improve pronunciation. lack of access to quality resources can also be a barrier. At other times, students may struggle to articulate wors accurately.

To address these spatial issues, teachers can employ games, which serves to simplify the lesson and inspire students to engage in learning and comprehension. Various factors can enhance students’ capabilities and facilitate learning. A game can reduce the possibility of student boredom (Syamsia & Salamat, 2019). These activities provide a meaningful context for language usage, serving as a valuable motivator for deliberate language use. Numerous creative approaches can be utilized to enhance elocution in the classroom environment. (Pratiwi, 2019). With a defense that game give students a fun and engaging way to study. Games are perceived as activities or contest that offer students opportunities to learn, practice, or review specific language topic, aiding in the retention of information (Minh and Giang, 2022). These are just some of the skills that students learn in class, in addition to pronunciation, new vocabulary, exchange of knowledge, and experience.

**MATERIALS**

1. **Definition of Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the most crucial aspect or learning English. Because it is essential for communicating in English and allows others to understand us. When speaking, stress and intonation can convey meaning. According to Morley (1998) suggests that when individuals engage in conversation, their pronunciation is often the initial factor that determines the perceived quality of their language proficiency. Poor or unclear pronunciation can lead to misunderstanding for both speakers and listeners. We must be very careful while pronouncing words when speaking in English because if we make a mistake, the listener might not comprehend what we are saying. According to the American English dictionary, pronunciation is the skill of correctly articulating and spelling English words. Mastering this can be challenging due to the varied spellings found in different languages. According to Maulana et al., (2021) Pronunciation refers to the manner in which language is spoken, encompassing the articulation of words and the way individuals vocalize language sounds.

1. **Part of Pronunciation**

Pronunciation entails the precise formation of sound crucial for conveying meaning in speech (Purhosein, Yates & Zielinski, 2019). It encompasses consonants and vowels, known as segments, along with supra-segmental aspect such as stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, and phrasing. Furthermore, it encompasses voice quality. These elements collectively shape a speaker communication. Thus, challenges in one aspect can affect others, influencing the clarity or intricacy of an individual pronunciation.

1. **English Vowel**

Vowels are produced by voicing passing through different mouth shapes, which are influenced by the positioning of the tongue and lips. Collins (1972) defines vowels as sounds created with an open approximation structure that serves as a syllable nucleus, whereas Hornby (2005) describes vowels as speech sounds produced with an open mouth and the tongue not touching the roof of the mouth and teeth. Vowels encompass various types, including short and long vowels.

**METHOD**

This research employed a quasi-experimental research design, comprising pre-test, treatment implementation, and post-test. It applied the two groups which are the experimental class and the control class. By comparing the pre-test and post-test results, the effectiveness of the treatment is assessed. This research examined the effect of participating in homophone game on students’ accuracy in pronunciation. The research design followed the framework proposed by Cresswell (2021), which is outlined as follows:

O1 X O2

O3 X O4

The researcher conducted a pre-test before the intervention to assess the students’ pronunciation skills initially. After the pre-test, the treatment was administered exclusively to the experimental group. Following the treatment, a post-test was conducted to assess the impact of using homophone game. The research population consisted of seventh-grade students from SMPN 16 Palu. Employing the research design, the researcher selected a sample using cluster random sampling, resulting in 31 students for the experimental group and 34 students for the control group. The researcher administered two tests to the students: the first serving as a pre-test before treatment, and the second as a post-test after treatment. In both assessments, the students were asked to pronounce twenty homophone words.

**Table 1. Test Type and Scoring**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Kind of test** | **Item** | **Score of each correct answer** | **Maximum score** |
| 1. | Pronouncing short and long vowels | 20 | 1 | 20 |

**RESULTS**

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistic**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| Pre-test experimental | 31 | 35 | 60 | 47.74 | 6.812 |
| Post-test experimental | 31 | 65 | 90 | 76.77 | 6.776 |
| Pre-test control | 34 | 40 | 70 | 55.29 | 7.276 |
| Post-test control | 34 | 55 | 85 | 67.94 | 6.976 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 31 |  |  |  |  |

The table provides a comprehensive overview of the data gathered from both the experimental and control classes. In the experimental class, comprising 31students, the range of scores varied from a minimum of 35 on the pre-test to a maximum of 65 on the post-test. Conversely, the control class, with 34 students, displayed a range from 40 to 70 on the pre-test and from 55 to 85 on the post-test. The mean scores reveal that the experimental class started with a pre-test average of 47.74 and significantly improved to 76.77 on the post-test, indicating substantial progress. In contrast, the control class began with a slightly higher pre-test mean of 55.29 but only reached a post-test mean of 67.94. The standard deviations reflect the spread of scores within each group, with the experimental class showing slightly less variability both before and after the intervention compared to the control class. These findings underscore the effectiveness of the experimental approach in enhancing students’ performance.

**Table 3. Test of Normality**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Kelas | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
| Statistic | df | Sig. |
| Pre-test experimental (Homophone) | .901 | 31 | .008 |
| Post-test experimental (Homophone) | .936 | 31 | .063 |
| Pre-test control | .952 | 34 | .140 |
| Post-test control | .950 | 34 | .125 |
| a. Lilliefors Significance Correction | | | |

The purpose of the normality test is to ascertain whether the collected data follows a normal distribution. In this, the researcher opted for the Saphiro-Wilk method within the SPSS v.27 software for windows, selected due to the research sample size being 65 (<100). In the Saphiro-Wilk test, if the significance value is >0.05 it indicates that the data is normally distributed and if the significance value is <0.05 suggests non-normal distribution.

The researcher only considers the post-test score in light of the output shown above. In the post-test, it is evident that the experimental class is significance was 0.0063 because 0.063>0.05, it may be said that the data are regularly distributed. However, the control class is post-test significance was 0.125 because 0.125>0.05, it indicates that the data was regularly distributed. Stated differently, the distribution of the experimental and control classes is normally distributed.

**Table 4. Paired Sample Test**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Paired differences | | | | |
| Mean | Std. deviation | Std. error mean | 95% confidence interval of the differences | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| lower | upper |
| Pre-test and post-test experimental | 60.758 | 15.655 | 1.988 | 56.782 | 64.743 | 30.560 | 61 | <.001 |

According to Santoso (2014), the paired sample t-test decision criteria are as follows, if the significance value (sig.) is below 0.05 (two-tailed), the hypothesis is affirmed. Conversely, if the significance value (two-sided) exceeds 0.05, the hypothesis is refuted. Following this criterion, it can confidently be deduced that the research hypothesis stands affirmed, as the two tailed significance value of 0.001 is lower than 0.05. Consequently, these findings suggest that the application of the homophone game technique positively influences the pronunciation improvement of seventh grade students at SMPN 16 Palu.

**DISCUSSION**

The hypothesis of this research sought to show that integrating homophone games could enhance the pronunciation skills of seventh-grade students at SMPN 16 Palu. Kiswindari (2018) stated the effectiveness of the learning process, suggesting that the outcomes of this study align with prior research. According to Pratiwi (2019), the majority of students found the use of homophone games enjoyable and beneficial for their learning process, particularly in enhancing pronunciation. The integration of homophone games had a positive influence on improving students' pronunciation skills indeed, the majority of students exhibited notable enhancements in their pronunciation abilities in the post-test. These findings indicate the success of the intervention in enhancing students' pronunciation proficiency. Based on testing hypothesis, to find out which hypothesis is received between null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis. The result showed that the 2-tailed 0.001 less than 0.05 for the level significance. It can be concluded that the students’ pronunciation through homophone game is significant better after giving the treatment. Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (Hi) is accepted.

Homophone games apparently have multiple benefits for students during the research process in class. The first is being able to increase understanding of vocabulary that has the same pronunciation but different meanings. That is supported by Kenworthy (1987) It was mentioned that several factors impact the process of acquiring pronunciation skills, such as one's native language, attitude towards learning, identity, age, and motivation. It is generally believed that starting to learn pronunciation from childhood or during the early years of education is advantages. During this stage, children and young learners possess strong memorization skills and can imitate sounds easily, making it less challenging for them to acquire proper pronunciation. however, some students have expressed difficulties in learning English during their elementary school years. It is worth nothing that there is a correlation between age and pronunciation ability. Additionally, students require motivation from their parents or teachers to effectively improve their pronunciation skills.

While conducting research on administering treatment through gaming, it is imperative for the researcher to establish an enjoyable and supportive learning environment. The result of this research on post-test scores in these studies exhibited a significant improvement compared to pre-test scores, indicating that incorporating homophone game in educational activities positively impact students’ pronunciation skill. This game approach, stemming naturally from homophone dictation, serves as a beneficial tool for students to engage in practicing and retaining homophone. Moreover, the game aids in emphasizing sounds that students may find challenging to discern and transcribe.

Syamsia and Salamat (2019) stated that it was observed that the incorporation of homophone games led to notable improvements in student pronunciation skills during the learning process. Consequently, the researcher deduces that the utilization of homophone games proved to be more effective and efficient in enhancing the pronunciation abilities of seventh grade students at SMPN 16 Palu.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the examined data and the discussions provided in earlier sections, the researcher affirms that the utilization of homophone games substantially improves the pronunciation skills of seventh-grade students at SMPN 16 PALU. This claim is corroborated by the results obtained from both pre-test and post-test analyses, where the significance value is 0.001 < 0.05. this provides the real evidence of the efficacy of homophone game in improving students’ pronunciation skills.

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