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IMPROVING PRONUNCIATION ABILITY FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH HOMOPHONE GAME

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ABSTRACT
The articulation of vowels is a cornerstone of phonological and linguistic studies, playing a critical role in understanding speech patterns and language acquisition. Influenced by factors such as tongue position, lip rounding, and phonetic context, vowel variation remains underexplored in the context of second language learning. The objective of this research was to illustrate that the inclusion of homophone games 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 analysis 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*

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation stands as an 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 language components of English with the goal of improving their proficiency so they can speak clearly and accurately. In Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, teachers 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 communicate 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 them 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 words 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 gives students a fun and engaging way to study. Games are perceived as activities or contests that offer students opportunities to learn, practice, or review specific language topics, 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

Definition of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the most crucial aspect for 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.

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 aspects such as stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, and phrasing. Furthermore, it encompasses voice quality. These elements collectively shape a speaker's communication. Thus, challenges in one aspect can affect others, influencing the clarity or intricacy of an individual pronunciation.

English Vowel

Vowels are produced by voicing passing through different mouth shapes, which are influenced by the positioning of the tongue and lips. vowels can also arise from nasal coarticulation, such as in the word *bun* /b2n/, which is realized as [bʌ̃n]. Specifically, anticipatory coarticulation occurs when the velum begins to lower for a nasal consonant during the articulation of the preceding vowel, leading to the vowel becoming nasalized as well Gwizdzinski et. al, (2023). defines vowels as sounds created with an open approximation structure that serves as a syllable nucleus. According (Odijk & Gillis, 2022) Vowels are produced through the positioning of the tongue and the shape of the oral cavity. Research indicates that variations in vowel pronunciation are heavily influenced by tongue position and lip formation. For instance, the articulation of front vowels such as /i/ requires the tongue to be higher and more advanced, whereas back vowels like /u/ necessitate the tongue to be lower and retracted. These articulatory differences play a crucial

role in distinguishing vowel sounds and are essential for effective communication across various languages and dialects, therefore 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 a 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 pretest 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 games. 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 pretest 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 significance was 0.0063 because 0.063>0.05, it may be said that the data are regularly distributed. However, the control class's 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					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the differences				
				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 games is significantly 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 an advantage. 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 noting 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 impacts

students' pronunciation skill. This game approach, stemming naturally from homophone dictation, serves as a beneficial tool for students to engage in practicing and retaining homophones. 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 real evidence of the efficacy of homophone game in improving students' pronunciation skills.

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