

USING PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH VOWELS AT SMA NEGERI 6 JENEPONTO

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received: February 15, 2025 Revised: February 25, 2025 Accepted: April 05, 2025 Published: June 30, 2025</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Phonetic Transcription Pronunciation Vowel Sounds Pre-Experimental Research</p>	<p>This study aimed to improve students' pronunciation skills, specifically vowel sounds, through the use of phonetic transcription. A pre-experimental method was implemented, involving 25 eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 6 Jeneponto. The treatment consisted of structured pronunciation lessons using phonetic transcription as the primary instructional tool. The pre-test and post-test assessments included 20 vowel sounds to evaluate students' progress. The results demonstrated a significant improvement, with mean scores increasing from 46.32 in the pre-test to 77.16 in the post-test. The paired samples t-test yielded a significance value of 0.000, confirming the effectiveness of phonetic transcription in enhancing pronunciation accuracy. These findings indicate that phonetic transcription plays a crucial role in improving vowel pronunciation, as it provides a systematic approach to understanding and producing vowel sounds. By familiarizing students with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), this method bridges the gap between written and spoken English, helping students recognize correct pronunciation and reducing errors influenced by their native language. Furthermore, explicit pronunciation instruction fosters greater awareness of phonetic cues, encouraging better pronunciation habits that lead to improved fluency and confidence in spoken English. Based on these findings, the alternative hypothesis (H₁) was accepted, confirming that phonetic transcription significantly contributes to enhancing vowel pronunciation. This research concludes that phonetic transcription is a valuable and effective approach for addressing pronunciation difficulties in English language learning. Therefore, it is recommended that educators integrate phonetic transcription into their teaching strategies to enhance students' pronunciation skills and overall communication abilities.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.</i></p> <div style="text-align: right;"></div>

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INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential language in various fields, including education, business, and professional careers. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is widely used in both digital and physical learning platforms. Mastering English is considered an important asset, as it provides individuals with better career opportunities and higher salaries (Rini, 2014). Many universities in Indonesia have established English study programs to equip students with strong language skills. However, despite years of learning, many students still struggle with one of the fundamental aspects of English: pronunciation.

Pronunciation is a crucial component of language learning that influences all four English skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Good pronunciation helps students communicate effectively and improves their comprehension of spoken English. Kenworthy (2005) highlighted that pronunciation should be integrated into the teaching process; however, it is often neglected in the classroom. Many teachers focus on grammar and vocabulary while overlooking pronunciation instruction, leading to persistent mispronunciations among students. One of the most challenging aspects of pronunciation for English learners, particularly Indonesian students, is mastering vowel sounds.

Vowel sounds in English are complex and differ significantly from those in the Indonesian language. Many students struggle to differentiate between similar vowel sounds, such as /I/ and /i:/ or /ʌ/ and /ɑ:/. Mispronouncing vowel sounds can lead to misunderstandings in communication, as slight changes in vowel pronunciation can alter word meanings entirely. According to Fraser (2000), pronunciation difficulties are common among learners of English as a foreign language, and incorrect vowel production is one of the most frequent issues. To address this problem, effective teaching methods are required to help students recognize and produce vowel sounds accurately.

One of the alternative methods to improve vowel pronunciation is the use of phonetic transcription. Unlike traditional drilling methods, which rely heavily on repetition and imitation, phonetic transcription provides students with a visual representation of sounds using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). This system allows learners to see the exact pronunciation of words, making it easier to understand and produce vowel sounds correctly (Pelttari, 2015). By using phonetic transcription, students can compare their pronunciation

standard phonetic representations and identify their mistakes, leading to better pronunciation accuracy.

This research focused on the use of phonetic transcription to improve students' pronunciation of vowel sounds. The study was conducted with eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 6 Jeneponto, as they were at an appropriate stage of language development and preparing for their final exams. The researcher aimed to analyze how phonetic transcription could help students enhance their vowel pronunciation skills and address their difficulties in distinguishing vowel sounds. Therefore, this study was titled "Using Phonetic Transcription to Improve Students' Pronunciation of English Vowel Sounds."

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied a quantitative method with a pre-experimental design. In this design, only one group was involved, which underwent a pre-test, received treatment, and then took a post-test to measure any changes in their pronunciation skills. The independent variable in this study was phonetic transcription, which served as a tool to enhance students' pronunciation skills by providing a standardized representation of speech sounds. Meanwhile, the dependent variable was students' pronunciation skills, specifically their pronunciation of vowel sounds, which were assessed before and after the treatment to determine the effectiveness of phonetic transcription.

The population of this research consisted of all grade XI FMIPA students at SMAN 6 Jeneponto. Due to time and accessibility constraints, the researcher selected a single class as the sample, comprising 25 students. To collect data, this study used pre-tests and post-tests as research instruments. The tests consisted of 20 vowel-related words, with phonetic transcription provided beneath each word. The pre-test was conducted at the beginning to assess students' initial pronunciation skills, while the post-test was administered after the treatment to evaluate any improvements.

The data collection procedure was carried out in four meetings. In the first meeting, the researcher observed the classroom environment and conducted the pre-test by asking students to read aloud while their pronunciation was recorded. The second meeting introduced phonetic transcription focusing on vowel sounds, their characteristics, and their corresponding IPA symbols. Students were guided to understand how vowel sounds are produced and represented phonetically. In the third meeting, students practiced pronouncing vowel sounds accurately using phonetic transcription. Finally, in the last meeting, students took the post-test, where they were asked to read a set of vowel-related words aloud, with the words randomized to ensure the same level of difficulty as the pre-test.

The data were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS 25. Each student's test scores were calculated, and the percentage of improvement was determined using the formula:

$$\text{Student's Score} = \frac{\text{The Number of Students' Correct Answer}}{\text{The Number of Tests}} \times 100$$

Agung (2022)

Where X1 represents the total pre-test score and X2 represents the total post-test score. The classification of scores followed a predefined scale ranging from "Excellent" to "Very Poor." Hypothesis testing was conducted based on the p-value, where if the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that phonetic transcription had a significant effect on students' vowel pronunciation skills.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the research, specifically analyzing the impact of phonetic transcription on students' pronunciation proficiency, focusing solely on vowel sounds. The data comparison between pre-test and post-test results highlights significant improvements in students' pronunciation accuracy after the intervention.

Students' Pronunciation Performance in Pre-Test

The pre-test results indicate that students initially struggled with vowel sounds, as reflected in their scores. Table 4.1 shows that the mean score in the pre-test was 46.32, with 48% of students classified as "Very Poor" and 36% as "Poor." The low scores suggest that students had difficulty distinguishing and articulating vowel sounds correctly. This aligns with previous research indicating that Indonesian EFL learners commonly struggle with English vowel pronunciation due to phonemic differences between English and their native language.

Table 1. Students' Pre-Test Scores and Classification

No.	Classification	Score	Pre-Test	
			F	P
1.	Excellent	96-100	0	0%
2.	Very Good	86-95	0	0%
3.	Good	76-85	0	0%
4.	Fairly Good	66-75	0	0%
5.	Fair	56-65	4	16%
6.	Poor	46-55	9	36%
7.	Very Poor	0-45	12	48%
Total			25	100%

Table 1 further categorizes the students' pronunciation proficiency, revealing that none of the students achieved classifications of "Good," "Very Good," or "Excellent." This underscores the necessity of intervention strategies to improve vowel pronunciation.

Students' Pronunciation Performance in Post-Test

Following the implementation of phonetic transcription techniques, the post-test results demonstrate a significant improvement in students' pronunciation of vowel sounds. As seen in Table 2, 48% of students achieved a "Fairly Good" classification, while 28%

reached "Very Good," and 24% attained "Good." Notably, no students remained in the "Poor" or "Very Poor" categories, indicating a clear enhancement in their vowel pronunciation skills.

Table 2. Students' Post-Test Scores and Classification

No.	Classification	Score	Post-Test	
			F	P
1.	Excellent	96-100	0	0%
2.	Very Good	86-95	7	28%
3.	Good	76-85	6	24%
4.	Fairly Good	66-75	12	48%
5.	Fair	56-65	0	0%
6.	Poor	46-55	0	0%
7.	Very Poor	0-45	0	0%
Total			25	100%

After analyzing the pre-test and post-test results, the table below presents the mean score and standard deviation.

Table 3. The mean score and standard deviation of students' pre-test and post-test

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	25	30	34	64	46.32	8.184
Posttest	25	29	66	95	77.16	9.651
Valid N (listwise)	25					

Table 3 further supports these findings, illustrating the statistical significance of the improvement. The minimum and maximum scores in the post-test (66–95) were considerably higher than those in the pre-test (34–64), reinforcing the conclusion that phonetic transcription played a crucial role in enhancing pronunciation skills.

Statistical Significance of Improvement

A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant. Table 4 presents the t-test results, showing a mean difference of -30.840, a t-value of -38.186, and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0), which suggests no significant difference between pre-test

and post-test scores, is rejected. This confirms that phonetic transcription had a significant positive impact on students' pronunciation accuracy, particularly in vowel sounds.

Table 4. The result t-test paired samples test

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	30.840	4.380	.808	-.32.507	-.29.173	-.38.186	24	.000

Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research emphasizing the effectiveness of phonetic transcription in improving pronunciation skills. Irawan & Tampubolon (2020) and Chootharat & Veerachaisantikul (2017) also found that phonetic transcription enhances the accuracy of vowel pronunciation by providing a visual representation of sound patterns. The intervention in this study allowed students to better understand vowel articulation, leading to more precise pronunciation.

One key observation is that Indonesian students often struggle with vowel distinctions that do not exist in their native language. Phonetic transcription bridges this gap by offering a structured approach to vowel pronunciation. The significant improvement in students' post-test scores highlights the method's role in addressing these challenges.

Moreover, the absence of students in the "Poor" and "Very Poor" categories in the post-test suggests that phonetic transcription not only helped students improve but also contributed to greater confidence in pronunciation. Active engagement with phonetic transcription exercises likely reinforced their understanding of vowel articulation, consistent with findings from prior studies.

However, some variability in post-test scores indicates that individual learning progress may differ. Future research could explore additional reinforcement strategies, such as extended practice sessions and integration of technology-based phonetic training, to ensure more uniform improvements.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that phonetic transcription significantly aids students in recognizing and accurately pronouncing vowel sounds in English. By understanding phonetic symbols, students were able to reduce common errors in vowel pronunciation and improve their clarity in speech. The gradual introduction of phonetic transcription, combined with consistent practice, proved effective in building students' confidence in pronouncing vowel sounds that were previously difficult to distinguish. The findings confirm that phonetic

transcription is a reliable method for enhancing vowel pronunciation and should be integrated into English language learning.

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