# IMPROVING THE PRONUNCIATION ABILITY OF THE SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SIDENRENG RAPPANG THROUGH PHONETIC SYMBOLS

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#### ABSTRACT

The objective of the research was to find out : (1) whether or not phonetic symbols influence pronunciation ability of the second-semester students of Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang and (2) whether or not the students interested in the use of phonetic symbols in teaching and learning pronunciation of the second-semester students of Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang. This research applied a Pre-experimental method that applied one group pre-test and post-test. The subject of the research was the second-semester students of Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang in the academic year 2018/2019. The total population was 30 students that gather in one class and the population was taken as samples by the total sampling technique. The data of the research were collected by using two kinds of instruments, namely pronunciation test, and questionnaire. The pronunciation test was used to know the students' interest in teaching and learning pronunciation through phonetic symbols.

## Keyword: Pronunciation, Phonetic, Symbols

#### Introduction

Pronunciation is the main feature of speaking skill which is the oral mean of communication and the first language skill to be developed, pronunciation has great influence in making speaking comprehensible and acceptable. On the other hand, mispronunciation errors may lead to significant misunderstandings. Harmer (2004) stated that the main point of pronunciation besides sounds and some features is to improve their speaking. In teaching, pronunciation teachers must more focus on because it distorts the meaning and can lead to misunderstanding.

Anna Baker and Sharon Goldstein (1990) stated that the main focus of language is to understand and to be understood. So, pronunciation according to them is the knowledge of knowing the production of sounds which is vital in speaking when the speakers pronounce the words wrong, it can lead the misunderstanding. On that problem accuracy and fluency is important in expressing himself in communication.

According to Lado (1972) states that oral skill is an ability that used in fundamentally normal communication in stress, intonation, grammatical structure and foreign language vocabulary at normal rate delivery for native language speaker." According to his statement, language learner needs to be a better pronouncer in speaking, that is the reason in teaching pronunciation English learners must more sensitive in facing problems above.

Realizing this problem, English learners have to pay attention to one of the speaking features. In this case, pronunciation is a phenomenon in all languages, especially in English. It refers to the how-to particular words are sounded or spoken. (Oxford Dictionary, 2008) Pronunciation is certainly the greatest thing that people notice when they are speaking. Harmer (2001) stated native speakers notice the people's pronunciation first. To get involved in communication, we can choose a simple word to describe our intention, we do not have to use the difficult word to describe our words.

To find what students' problem is, the researcher conducts a pre-research at the Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang. the researcher has conducted the previous-research that consist of asking the lecturers, doing pronunciation test and observing in teaching-learning process in the classroom. Ilham

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Based on the lecturers' interviews the students' motivation is still low. This condition makes the students hard to focus on the lesson being taught. The lecturers' informs that the most difficult skill in English faced by the students is speaking and listening. Based on the result of the students' interview, most of the students said that they have a problem with speaking skills. The problem they have such as not having enough confidence to speak, afraid to speak not grammatically, and speak with wrong pronunciation. The researcher found that many students still face a problem in pronunciation.

Moreover, based on the result of pre-research by using pronunciation test, the researchers found that from 30 respondents of students, 22 (73.33%) of students was categorized poor level and 8 (26,67%) of students was categorized in fairly good level. The researcher has done a diagnostic test to the students to find student's prior ability in pronouncing English words, in classifying students score in pronunciation; the researcher used Depdiknas (2012) score classification.

From the data above, the researcher found that most of the students were at a poor level, which proves that students' pronunciation ability of the secondsemester students of the Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang is still insufficient. The students have some problems pronouncing English words. For example, some of the students pronounce archive /'a:.karv/ as //'a:.srf/, think / $\theta$ rgk/ as /trgk/, high /har/ as /hark/, enough /r'nAf/ as /r'npg / et cetera. The researcher concludes that students' pronunciation needs more attention.

Improving pronunciation is very important to master speaking. In doing this, they will need one strategy that can apply in English teaching. The teaching of pronunciation is related to two knowledge that is recognition and fluency in speaking. These skills rely very little on the intellectual master of any production rules. Ultimately, it is only practiced in listening and speaking which guides the learner in the skill he requires. There are many methods or techniques we can use to improve or increasing ability in pronunciation, one of them is through phonetic symbols. Phonetic symbols have a basic rule: provide students with opportunities for practicing features of pronunciation. The purpose of this method is to provide consistent means of representing speech sounds that occur practically in all languages. The phonetic symbol is standard English pronunciation, and it would help and support the students to learn pronunciation independently.

Moreover, Brazil (1987) states that mastery phonetic symbols can provide confidence to pronounce independently as exemplified phonetic keyword dictionary provides. These advantages above conform to (Mompean 2005) stated that the results of phonetic symbols in English are known and that the foreign language students can create and discriminate the sounds symbols stand for. Therefore, teaching Pronunciation through phonetic symbols is one of the interesting techniques to increase students' pronunciation.

Based on the statements, to resolve the problem that the second-semester students facing, the researcher intends to propose a research proposal under the title: "Improving the Pronunciation Ability of the Second Semester Students of the Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang Through Phonetic Symbols.

The importance of pronunciation has made many language teachers and research explorer and expose language teaching and learning process by implementing various techniques. Several studies as previous findings are listed as follows:

Mompean (2015), states that students must focus on courses that support phonetics and pronunciation as the main subject. Those aspects are considered as the main aspect for the language learner. Nyyssonen (2017) found that many university students consider phonetics is very useful in teaching. According to them, the learners considered that phonetic notation supports them to have good pronunciation and support them in their future teaching career. Lintunen (2013) in his research to see the attitude of Finnish university students found that phonetic learners agreed with the statement that phonetics has raised their attention to the English sound system. It comes after comparing the result of before and after a course English phonetic.

Maskara (2013) found that India has many Various Indian English dialects and it caused a problem on Indian students' pronunciation. She assumed that phonetics teaching/phonetic training is needed in an Indian school. Moreover, the IPA phonetic symbols will be recommended as a part of Indian education.

Hallaq (2015) researched to find the effectiveness of using phonetics based on the interaction program has a positive effect and mutual concern and care among English Learners in Gaza. It makes the EFL learners can improve their speaking and listening skills more effective than using the ordinary teaching method.

Khayati (2015) research using phonetic symbols as a medium to improve students' pronunciation. She found that phonetic symbols can increase students' pronunciation ability. Therefore, he suggests to the teacher to use the phonetic symbol in teaching pronunciation. Phonetic Symbols would help the students learn pronunciation without guidance from the teacher. The phonetic symbol for teaching pronunciation is positive and it would be an alternative strategy to improve students' pronunciation.

The important feature of English is pronunciation, especially in speaking. Every sound, stress pattern, and intonation can be interpreted as meaning. Kelly (2000) states that inaccurate phoneme production can cause misunderstandings. So, non-English speakers who speak English must be very careful in speaking a few words, or he may create a misunderstanding. In line with Lado (1964) elaborated that pronunciation is the use of the sound system in listening and conversation. Here, pronunciation is the most important role as an action that occurs in speaking and listening.

Pronunciation is the way to pronounce and express sounds (Yuliana, 2004). In other words, it can be said that pronunciation is the way to create sounds to be understood. In the senses, pronunciation according to Gilakjani (2016) is the way to pronounce the words so they will give a clear meaning. This defines a clear definition of pronunciation which contains important keys in pronunciation so the words that have been pronounced can be understandable.

Harmer (1991) defined that sound, stress, and intonation is am as an aspect of how to say the word. Sound deals only with sound and can be meaningless, but if we put some sound together in a certain order that will be bear a meaning about something. Stress emphasis of the words when they are pronouncing and indicated in writing. Probably the simplest to do is which carries a central stressed syllable. Some words are stressed in the initial syllable and some others at the end. The grammatical function of nouns and verbs can change the grammatical function. It means that many words will change because of grammatical function. Intonation and stress are related.

Teaching pronunciation is not the main focus of many English teachers. The teacher is often unwilling to use phonetic Symbols because of their lack of knowledge of the phonetic transcription. On the other hand, using phonetic symbols in teaching pronunciation is supported and recommended.

Nowadays there are many possibilities to reach real spoken English. Especially on the internet. It means that there are endless opportunities to hear English pronunciation but still does not guarantee that learners will acquire good pronunciation. Well (1996) claims that teaching phonetic symbols will bring explicit benefit because the phonetic symbol has an important role.

Some phoneticians stated that phonetic symbols have some advantages, phonetician such as Mompean (2005), increasing student's awareness of SEL feature "visualization" and learners autonomy, etc. Help the learners learn the language that has an inconsistent spelling system (Rogerson-Revel (2011, James (1986) can help students to find the correct pronunciation from dictionaries and books. The phonetic symbols were created to make the transcription of spoken language systematic and understandable for everybody interested in this topic.

Phonetic symbols are put into a chart and it is undoubtedly well organized. It was also very useful for realizing some features that would be unnoticed by the learners, knowledge of phonetic symbols raises awareness. Some learners might struggle when learning pronunciation just by hearing English. It can make a big difference for them when they can have visual support what they hear, it can be provided phonetic symbol/notation again. The knowledge of phonetic symbols and the ability to use them give learners great freedom. The learners can improve their pronunciation ability outside of the classroom and check their pronunciation by looking up dictionaries.

### Method

The researcher applied the pre-experimental method involved one group pretest and post-test design. The researcher used one class to whom the treatment was applied. The instrument of the research was a pronunciation test. It aimed to find out the students' ability to pronounce English words. The test consists of pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was intended to see the students' ability in learning pronunciation material before the treatment and the post-test was intended to see the result of the treatment on students' pronunciation. After giving the post-test the researcher distributed a questionnaire to measure students' interest following the technique. The procedure of collecting data chronologically performed as follows: Pre-test., Treatment, Post-test, Questionnaire

#### Discussion

1. Students' pronunciation ability

The data were collected by administrating the test. The test was done twice namely the pre-test that was given before the treatment and the post-test that was given after treatment.

a. The result of the pre-test

Table .1. The result of the pre-test

No.	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	Excellent	≥9.50	0	%
2	Very good	8.00 - 9.49	0	0%
3	Good	6.50 - 7.99	0	0%
4	Fairly good	5.00 - 6.49	12	40%
5	Poor	3.50 - 4.99	15	50%
6	Fairly poor	3.50	3	10%
	Total		30	100%

Table .1 shows that before doing the treatment, the students had the poor ability. It was proved when the researcher has done a pre-test, there were 15 out of 30 students (50%) students classified as poor classification. The result of the post-test

Table .2. The result of the post- test

No.	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	Excellent	$\geq 9.50$	5	16,66 %
2	Very good	8.00 - 9.49	22	73,33%
3	Good	6.50 – 7.99	3	10%
4	Fairly good	5.00 - 6.49	0	0%
5	Poor	3.50 - 4.99	0	0%
6	Fairly poor	3.50	0	0%
Total			30	99,99%

Table .2 shows that after the doing treatment or post-test, the students' ability improved if we compare with the result of the pre-test. There were 5 out of 30 students (16.66%) who were excellent classification, there were 22 students (73,33%) who were very good

classification. There were 3 students (10%) who were good classification. It means that the pronunciation ability of the second-semester students of the Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang in learning pronunciation through phonetic symbols is satisfactory.

#### b. The mean score and standard deviation of the students' test result

The finding through the mean score of a result of pre-test and post-test of the students on the reading test were tabulated as follow. Table .3. The mean score and standard deviation of the students' test

Type of Test	Mean Score	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Pre-test	4.64	0.66
Post-test	8.99	0.48

Table 3 shows that the mean score of pre-test was classified as poor classification and the mean score of post-test was classified as a good category. It means that the result of the post-test was greater than the result of a pre-test. And the standard deviation of the pre-test was higher than the standard deviation of the post-test.

c. Hypothesis testing

In testing the hypothesis, the researcher applied an independent test at the level of significance alpha ( $\alpha$ ) (0.05). The result of the calculation was shown as follow :

Table 4. The t-test of the students' ability

Variable	t-test value	А	
Pronunciation test	0.000	0.05	

Table 4 shows the probability value (0.000) was lower than the significance value (0.05). The analysis proved that the alternative hypothesis  $(h_1)$  was accepted. It means that phonetic symbols can influence the students' pronunciation ability. The pronunciation ability of

the second semester-students of the Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang improving.

- 2. Students' Interest
  - a. Scoring students' Interest

These results of the students' interest score were tabulated as follows.

Category	Range	Frequency	%
Strongly Interested	85-100	19	63.33%
Interested	69-84	11	36.66%
Moderate	52-68	0	0%
Uninterested	36-51	0	0%
Strongly Uninterested	20-35	0	0%
Total		30	99.99%

Table 5 The Percentage of Students' Interest

Table 5 indicates that the students were strongly interested to improve their pronunciation ability through phonetic symbols. There were 19 out of 30 students (63.33%) strongly interested, 11 (36.66%) students were interested.

b. The Mean Score of Students' Interest

Table 6 The Mean Score of Students' Interest

Total respondent	Total score	Mean
30	2589	86.30

Table 6 shows that the mean score of students' interest was 86.30, it was interpreted into the score as strongly interested criteria. It means that the students were strongly interested in teaching and learning English pronunciation through phonetic symbols.

# c. The mean score of each item of students' interest

No		/lean	%	Category
1	Saya menikmati belajar Pronunciation dengan 4 phonetic symbols.	.60	92.00	Agree
2	Saya memiliki merasa antusias saat diminta untuk hadir dalam pembelajaran pronunciation4 menggunakan phonetic symbols.	.16	83.33	Agree
3	Phonetic symbols penting dipelajari bagi saya sebagai mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris.	.43	88.66	Agree
4	Phonetic Symbol meningkatkan pronunciation saya. 4	.00	80.00	Agree
5	<i>Phonetic symbols menantang untuk dipelajari.</i> 4	.13	82.66	Agree
6	Phonetic symbols meningkatkan kesadaran dan visualisasi saya mengenai Pronunciation bahasa4 Inggris.	.60	92.00	Agree
7	Belajar phonetic symbols membuat saya lebih <sub>4</sub> percaya diri mengenai pronunciation saya.	.53	90.66	Agree
8	Dengan belajar _Phonetic symbols bisa membuat saya belajar dengan mandiri untuk meningkatkan4 pronunciation saya.	.23	84.66	Agree
9	Phonetic Symbols membantu meningkatkan kemampuan berinteraksi dan dan kemampuan4 komunikasi saya	.30	86.00	Agree
10	Belajar pronounciation dengan phonetic symbols <sub>4</sub> sesuai dengan harapan saya.	.03	80.66	Agree
Mear	a Score 4	.30	-	Agree

Table 7. The mean score of positive statement

Table 7 shows the results:

1. The mean of item #1 "Saya menikmati belajar Pronunciation dengan phonetic symbols" equals 4.60 (92%). it indicates that students agreed

to this item. So, the researcher concludes that students enjoyed learning pronunciation through phonetic symbols.

- The mean of item #6 "Phonetic Symbols meningkatkan kesadaran dan visualisasi saya mengenai Pronunciation bahasa Inggris" equals 4.60 (92%). It indicates that students agreed to this item. So, the researcher concludes that phonetic symbols can improve students' awareness and visualization of English pronunciation.
- 3. The mean of item #7 "Belajar phonetic symbols membuat saya lebih percaya diri mengenai pronunciation saya" equals 4.53 (90.66%). it indicates that students agreed to this item. So, the researcher concludes that phonetic symbols can improve the students' selfconfidence about their pronunciation.
- 4. The mean score of all items in positive statement equal 4.30, it indicates that student had positive response toward the use of phonetic symbols in teaching pronunciation.

Table. 8. The mean score of the negative statement

No	Pernyataan Negatif Mean	%	Category
11	Penggunaan phonetic symbol dalam 4.40 pengajaran pronunciation kurang	88.00	Disagree
12	Saya tidak memiliki memiliki rasa antusias saat diminta untuk hadir dalam <sup>4.30</sup>	86.00	Disagree
13	pembelajaran pronunciation Phonetic symbols tidak penting 3.83 dipelajari bagi saya sebagai mahasiswa	76.66	Undecided
14	Phonetic Symbol tidak meningkatkan <sub>4.13</sub>	82.00	Disagree
15	Phonetic symbols tidak menantang untuk <sub>4.46</sub>	89.33	Disagree
16	dipelajari Phonetic Symbols tidak meningkatkan 4.50 kesadaran dan visualisasi saya	90.00	Disagree

17	Belajar phonetic symbols tidak membuat 4.60 saya lebih percaya diri mengenai	92.00	Disagree
18	Belajar _Phonetic symbols tidak bisa 4.70 membuat saya belajar dengan mandiri	94.00	Disagree
19	Phonetic Symbols tidak membantu 4.30 meningkatkan kemampuan berinteraksi	86.00	Disagree
20	Belajar pronounciation melalui dengan 4.03 phonetic symbols tidak sesuai dengan	80.66	Disagree
Mean	Score 4.42	-	Disagree

Table 8 result shows :

- The mean of item #18 "Belajar phonetic symbols tidak bisa membuat saya belajar dengan mandiri untuk meningkatkan pronunciation saya" equals 4.70 (94.00%). It indicates that students disagreed with this item. So, the researcher concludes that the students can improve their pronunciation independently after learning phonetic symbols. It is the opposite of the item offered.
- 2. The mean of item #12 "Saya tidak memiliki memiliki rasa antusias saat diminta untuk hadir dalam pembelajaran pronunciation dengan menggunakan phonetic symbols" equals 4.30 (86.00%). It indicates that students disagreed with this item. So, the researcher concludes that the student students having enthusiasm attending the class that taught by using phonetic symbols. It is the opposite of the item offered.
- The mean of item #15 "Phonetic symbols tidak menantang untuk dipelajari" equals 4.46 (89.33%). It indicates that students disagreed with this item. So, the researcher concludes that the students consider

that phonetic symbols are challenging to learn. It was the opposite of the item offered.

5. The mean score of all items in the negative statement equals 4.42, which indicates that the student tends to disagree with the items offered. So, the researcher concludes that the students had positive responses toward the use of phonetic symbols in teaching pronunciation.

## Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that :

- Through phonetic symbols is helpful to improve students' pronunciation ability. The students' pronunciation ability improve after having treatment through phonetic symbols. The result was proved by the students' test. Students who were not able to pronounce certain words in the pre-test, after having the treatment students' were able to pronounce the words correctly.
- 2. Students were interested in the application of phonetic symbols in teaching pronunciation. It was proved by students' participation and perception when the researcher applied the technique. The student seemed enthusiastic in the learning process and students' more aware of their English pronunciation.

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