THE EFFECT OF USING U-DICTIONARY APPLICATION INIMPROVING STUDENTS' PRONUNCIATION AT SUNGAI APIT STATE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (SMP N 2)

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ABSTRACT

English pronunciation is a major challenge for Indonesian students, especially after the removal of English subjects from state elementary schools. The primary factors contributing to this difficulty are the influence of the mother tongue and the lack of exposure to native pronunciation. This study aims to determine the effect of using the U-Dictionary application in improving the pronunciation skills of eighth-grade students (Class VIII-2) at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit. The research employed a quantitative method with an experimental design, involving 30 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through a pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The findings revealed that the average pre-test score was 42.1, which increased to 52.4 in the post-test. Statistical analysis showed a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is lower than 0.050, indicating that the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the use of the U-Dictionary application positively contributes to students' pronunciation improvement. Therefore, this application can serve as an alternative learning tool for English pronunciation instruction in the future.

Keywords: English pronunciation, U-Dictionary application, language learning, experiment, SMP N 2 Sungai Apit

PENGARUH PENGGUNAAN APLIKASI U-DICTIONARY DALAM MENINGKATKAN PENGUCAPAN SISWA DI SMP NEGERI 2 SUNGAI APIT

ABSTRAK

Pengucapan bahasa Inggris merupakan tantangan utama bagi siswa Indonesia, terutama setelah penghapusan mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris dari sekolah dasar negeri. Faktor utama yang menyebabkan kesulitan ini adalah pengaruh bahasa ibu serta kurangnya paparan terhadap pelafalan asli. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh penggunaan aplikasi *U-Dictionary* dalam meningkatkan keterampilan pengucapan siswa kelas VIII-2 di SMP N 2 Sungai Apit. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif dengan desain eksperimen, melibatkan 30 siswa sebagai sampel yang dipilih melalui teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes awal (*pre-test*), perlakuan (*treatment*), dan tes akhir (*post-test*). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa skor rata-rata *pre-test* adalah 42,1, meningkat menjadi 52,4 pada *post-test*. Analisis statistik menunjukkan nilai signifikansi (Sig. 2-tailed) sebesar 0,000, yang lebih kecil dari 0,050, sehingga hipotesis alternatif diterima. Dari hasil tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan aplikasi *U-Dictionary* berkontribusi positif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan pengucapan siswa. Oleh karena itu, aplikasi ini dapat dijadikan sebagai alat pembelajaran alternatif dalam pengajaran pengucapan bahasa Inggris di masa depan.

Kata Kunci: pengucapan bahasa Inggris, aplikasi U-Dictionary, pembelajaran bahasa, eksperimen, SMP N 2 Sungai Apit

INTRODUCTION

Language is essential in communication, and English as a second language plays a crucial role globally. Despite learning English for years, many Indonesian students struggle with pronunciation. The removal of English subjects from state elementary schools worsens this issue, making students less familiar with the language. A major challenge comes from the influence of their mother tongue, causing difficulty in correctly pronouncing English words. Additionally, the lack of exposure to native pronunciation, relying

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only on dictionaries, further hinders their learning. As Riadi (2013) states, incorrect pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and disrupt communication.

Pronunciation difficulties often lead students to make mistakes, yet many do not realize its importance. They may struggle to understand native speakers, making accurate pronunciation even more challenging. Teachers play a crucial role in addressing this issue by teaching correct pronunciation to prevent misunderstandings in communication.

To improve students' fluency, teachers should introduce phonological aspects such as enunciation, stress, and intonation from the early years of junior high school. However, integrating these components into daily use can be difficult for students. Therefore, consistent practice both inside and outside the classroom is essential for mastering English. While many students only engage with English in class, effective teaching techniques can inspire them to practice beyond the classroom. By using the right methods, teachers can enhance students' pronunciation skills and motivation to improve their English proficiency in various settings.

Pronunciation remains one of the biggest challenges in learning English, but with modern technology, students have more opportunities to improve their skills. One useful tool is the U-Dictionary application, which not only helps with pronunciation but also enhances vocabulary and overall language learning.

The U-Dictionary app offers several advantages for students. It is user-friendly, even for beginners, and includes multiple translation features such as magic translate, camera translator, and direct translation in various languages. Additionally, it can be used offline, though some features require payment.

One of its most beneficial features is the pronunciation test, where students can practice by selecting or typing sentences, recording their pronunciation, and receiving instant feedback. The app provides scores based on fluency, pronunciation, completion, and word stress, highlighting mispronounced words in red. Students can repeat the test until they achieve their desired score. These features make U-Dictionary an effective tool for improving English pronunciation and overall language skills. The objective of the research is to find out if there is any effect of using U-Dictionary application in improving students' pronunciation at Sungai Apit State Junior High School in grade VIII-2 (SMP N 2).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to the act or manner of articulating words, including the utterance of speech and the accepted way of speaking a word. It also involves the graphical representation of word pronunciation using phonetic symbols.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, pronunciation is "the way in which a language, a particular word, or a sound is spoken." Correct pronunciation refers to proper articulation within a specific dialect. The way a word is pronounced may vary among individuals or groups due to factors such as regional background, current residence, speech disorders, ethnicity, social class, or education level.

Fraenkel (1984) outlines two main stages in learning pronunciation:
1. Receptive/Listening Stage
   At this stage, learners develop the ability to distinguish significant sounds and patterns by actively listening to the language.
2. Productive/Speaking Stage
   In this stage, learners apply what they have absorbed, practicing and producing the correct pronunciation.

Teaching Pronunciation

Students can learn English more effectively and with greater interest when audiovisual instructional tools are used. A pronunciation instructor must serve as a good model; otherwise, students may imitate incorrect pronunciation, leading to persistent errors. To ensure proper learning, teachers should demonstrate accurate speech production, enabling students to understand correct pronunciation.

Harmer (2000) emphasizes that focusing on sounds, showing their articulation in the mouth, and making students aware of word stress provides essential knowledge about spoken English. These techniques enhance students' comprehension and intelligibility.

Teaching pronunciation involves segmental phonemes, which influence sentence meaning. Since pronunciation is a key component of speaking skills, its proper instruction is essential for effective communication.

According to Daniel Jones (1958), students face five main pronunciation challenges:

1. Recognizing speech sounds – Students must identify and remember the acoustic qualities of English phonemes.
2. Producing foreign sounds – They must learn to articulate English sounds using their speech organs.
3. Using sounds correctly in speech – Sounds must be applied appropriately in continuous speech.
4. Mastering prosodic features – Students need to understand length, stress, and pitch in pronunciation.
5. Linking sounds smoothly – They should practice connecting sounds fluently to achieve natural speech without hesitation.

Problem of Pronunciation

Many students struggle with learning English, particularly in spoken communication. According to Harmer (2007:250), there are several pronunciation challenges students face:

1. What students can hear
   Some students struggle to recognize pronunciation features that teachers expect them to reproduce. Often, speakers of different first languages have difficulties with specific English sounds.
2. What students can say
   Pronouncing certain sounds in a foreign language can be physically challenging. The unfamiliarity of using different parts of the mouth, uvula, or nasal cavity makes pronunciation difficult.
3. The intonation problem
   Many students find it hard to perceive and replicate intonation patterns, particularly the rising and falling tones in English speech.

Two main factors contribute to pronunciation difficulties. First, some teachers do not prioritize pronunciation instruction. Second, many teachers lack knowledge of pronunciation theory, making it difficult for them to teach effectively. Without proper pronunciation focus, lessons often become routine rather than addressing real classroom challenges.

To address these issues, pronunciation teachers require:

a. An adequate theoretical foundation
   Teachers must master correct pronunciation before instructing students. By modeling proper pronunciation, they help students develop accurate speech.
b. Real-world classroom proficiency
   Instructors should use effective teaching strategies to engage students, making pronunciation lessons more accessible and practical.
c. Accessibility to engaging lesson plans
   Teachers should make pronunciation practice enjoyable and interactive. This prevents students from feeling bored and increases their motivation to improve pronunciation skills.

Aspect of Pronunciation

There are 3 main aspects of pronunciation you need to focus on:

1. Phonetics: the individual sounds in a language
2. Word stress: the syllables in a word and where to place the main stress or accent
3. Sentence stress: how we pronounce words when we put them together in sentences.

RESEARCH METHOD

The Research Design

This study employs a quantitative method with an experimental design to measure the effect of treatment on the pronunciation of eighth-grade students at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit.

The Place and Time

The research was conducted at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit over six meetings from July to August 2024. The analysis and report writing took place from August to December 2024.

The Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of 56 eighth-grade students at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, with class VIII-2 chosen as the main sample because it has the highest number of students (30 students).

The Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through an experiment consisting of a pre-test, treatment, and post-test using the U-Dictionary application.

- Pre-test: Measures students' initial pronunciation skills by having them read short sentences without voice assistance from the application.
- Treatment: Conducted four times, involving pronunciation practice using U-Dictionary, including demonstrations and individual exercises in front of the class.
- Post-test: Students read short sentences to assess changes in pronunciation after the treatment.

The Instrument of the Research

The research instruments include the pre-test, treatment, and post-test. Each session used different sentences to gradually assess students' pronunciation skills.

The Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed by comparing the pre-test and post-test results to determine the improvement in students' pronunciation skills after receiving the treatment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The research aimed to determine the effect of using the U-Dictionary application on students' pronunciation improvement. Data were collected through pre-test, treatment, and post-test, where students read short sentences using the application. Pronunciation was assessed in five categories: very poor, poor, fair, good, and very good.

To ensure validity and objectivity, three raters evaluated the results. The researcher then compared students' pre-test and post-test scores using SPSS 26 to analyze the t-test results. The findings are presented below.

 A. Data Description

Table 4.1 below shows the differences in students' pronunciation ability scores from the three raters in the pre-test and post-test. The research results are displayed using Microsoft Excel 2010 as below

Table 1. The Results of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores based on Three Raters

Name	Pre-test				Post-test			
	R1	R2	R3	TS	R1	R2	R3	TS
AS	55	52	52	53	65	60	62	62
AR	45	40	43	43	55	50	51	52
AOB	55	53	55	54	67	65	65	66
ASP	44	45	45	45	52	53	55	53
ASF	51	50	55	52	65	60	62	62
AAA	61	58	60	60	75	68	72	72
DA	54	52	53	53	62	64	65	64
DN	30	30	31	30	41	39	42	41
FNP	50	48	47	48	62	60	60	61
HI	59	55	54	56	70	68	65	68
KA	45	45	45	45	57	55	53	55
LS	45	40	42	42	52	51	50	51
MR	48	46	46	47	57	55	56	56
MS	20	21	20	20	30	30	32	31
MFY	59	52	57	56	70	75	68	71

NB	30	25	25	27	35	32	33	33
NFK	35	35	36	35	42	43	45	43
NSA	43	40	43	42	52	51	50	51
NA	35	29	30	31	48	43	45	45
RA	43	41	41	42	53	50	49	51
RDP	59	46	57	54	68	60	65	64
RS	27	25	25	26	34	35	33	34
RSK	30	25	25	27	42	39	40	40
SW	55	53	50	53	65	65	62	64
SRN	43	44	45	44	50	52	55	52
SI	24	22	26	24	35	34	35	35
SDC	44	45	42	44	55	55	55	55
SF	35	37	35	36	43	45	42	43
TMR	25	23	20	23	32	30	30	31
TM	53	50	55	53	65	65	67	66
Mean				42.1				52.4
N=30								

Table 4.1 presents the differences in pre-test and post-test scores evaluated by three raters. In the pre-test, 1 student was categorized as very poor, 9 as poor, and 20 as fair, with no students in the good or very good categories. The lowest pre-test score was 20, and the highest was 60. In the post-test, 6 students were categorized as poor, 13 as fair, and 11 as good, with no students in the very poor or very good categories. The lowest post-test score was 31, and the highest was 72. The average pre-test score was 42.1, while the post-test average was 52.4. These results indicate an improvement in the pronunciation abilities of eighth-grade students at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit after using the U-Dictionary application.

B. The Result of Pre-test

This research utilized the U-Dictionary application as a medium to improve students' pronunciation skills. In the pre-test, students were asked to complete a pronunciation test without using the U-Dictionary application to assess their initial abilities. The assessment was conducted by three raters. After analyzing the pre-test data, the results are presented in four tables, covering different aspects such as categories, scores, frequencies, and percentages. The detailed analysis of the pre-test results is as follows:

Table 2. Results of the pre-test in improving students' pronunciation

No.	Category	Pre-test	
		Frequency	**Percentage**
1.	Very good (81-100)	0	0%
2.	Good (61-80)	0	0%
3.	Fair (41-60)	20	66.67%
4.	Poor (21-40)	9	30
5.	Very poor (0-20)	1	3.33%
Total		**30**	**100%**

Based on Table 4.2, the pre-test results indicate that no students (0%) achieved the very good category (81-100) or the good category (61-80). A total of 20 students (66.67%) were classified in the fair category (41-60), while 9 students (30%) fell into the poor category (21-40). Additionally, 1 student

(3.33%) was categorized as very poor (0-20). For a clearer visualization of the pre-test results in assessing students' pronunciation skills, refer to the graph below.
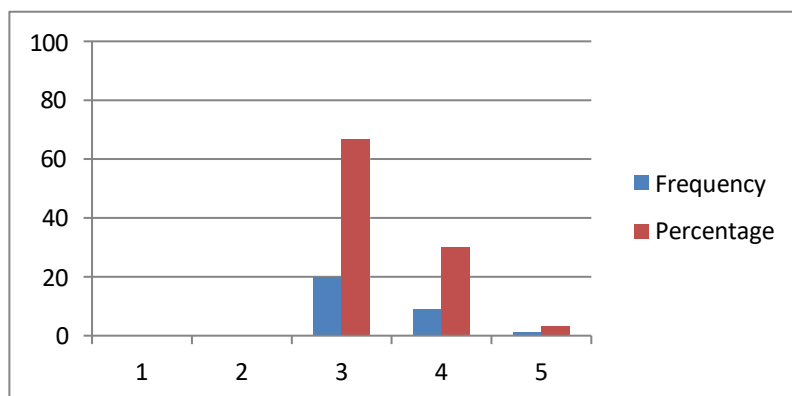

Figure 1. The results of the pre-test in improving students' pronunciation

C. The Result of Post-test

    After the researcher gave treatment to students for four meetings using the U-Dictionary application, the researcher then gave a post-test to see the results after using the U-Dictionary application. The following are the results of the pre-test analysis:

Table 3. The results of the post-test in improving students' pronunciation.

No.	Category	Post-test	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very good (81-100)	0	0%
2.	Good (61-80)	11	36.67%
3.	Fair (41-60)	13	43.33%
4.	Poor (21-40)	6	20%
5.	Very poor (0-20)	0	0%
Total		30	100%

    Based on Table 4.3, the post-test percentage shows that there were no students (0%) who got a very good category (81-100), and there were also no students (0%) who got a very poor category (0-20). There were 11 students (36.67%) who received the good category (61-80), for the fair category (41-60) there were 13 students (43.33%), and there were 6 students (20%) who received the poor category (21-40). To see more clearly the results of the post-test in improving students' pronunciation skills, you can see the graph below
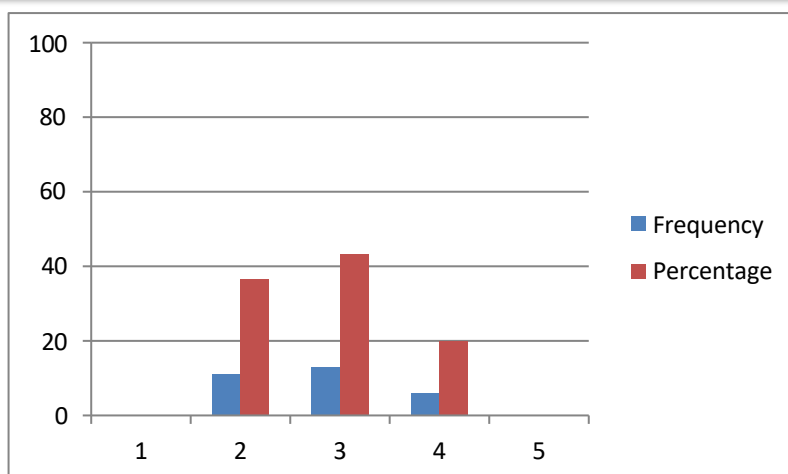
Figure 2. The results of the post-test in improving students' pronunciation

D. The difference between the Results of Pre-test and Post-test

The difference in the results of the pre-test and post-test by eighth grade students in improving pronunciation after using the U-Dictionary application can be seen from the table below:

Table 4. The differences in results from the pre-test and post-test in improving students' pronunciation

No.	Category	Frequency		Percentage	
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
1.	Very good (81-100)	0	0	0%	0%
2.	Good (61-80)	0	11	0%	36.67%
3.	Fair (41-60)	20	13	66.67%	43.33%
4.	Poor (21-40)	9	6	30%	20%
5.	Very poor (0-20)	1	0	3.33%	0%
	Total	30	30	100%	100%

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The hypothesis testing in this research is as follows:

1. Ho: Null Hypothesis
   There is no effect of using the U-Dictionary application in improving students' pronunciation at Sungai Apit State Junior High School (SMP N 2).
2. Ha: Alternative Hypothesis
   There is an effect of using the U-Dictionary application in improving students' pronunciation at Sungai Apit State Junior High School (SMP N 2).

To compare the pre-test and post-test results, the researcher conducted a t-test to determine whether the alternative hypothesis could be accepted, indicating a significant effect of using the U-Dictionary application on the pronunciation skills of eighth-grade students at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit. The t-test formula is presented in the following table.

Table 5. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	42.1000	30	11.58713	2.11551
	Post-test	52.3889	30	12.40846	2.26547

From Table 4.5, it can be observed that the mean pre-test score was 42.1, while the mean post-test score was 52.4, resulting in a mean difference of 10.29 (Table 4.6). The table also presents the standard deviation and standard error mean.

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The standard deviation is a statistical value that indicates how closely the sample data clusters around the mean, while the standard error mean measures the accuracy of the mean estimate. In the pre-test, the standard deviation was 11.58, with a standard error mean of 2.12. Meanwhile, in the post-test, the standard deviation increased to 12.41, and the standard error mean was 2.27.

Table 6. 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	-10.28889	2.00714	.36645	-11.03837	-9.53941	-28.077	29	.000

To decide whether to reject or not reject the Null Hypothesis is:
a. The probability value is accepted if the null hypothesis (sig) is > 0.050
b. The null hypothesis is not accepted if the probability value (sig) < 0.050.

DISCUSSION

This research examines the effect of using the U-Dictionary application on the pronunciation skills of eighth-grade students at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit. Based on the research results, some students still fall into the poor category. This occurs due to several factors, as each student faces different challenges. The most common difficulty is pronunciation itself, where students struggle with how to correctly pronounce sentences. Another issue is a lack of confidence when taking pronunciation tests, which stems from not receiving English lessons in elementary school. As a result, they are not familiar with English pronunciation and find it difficult even with basic words.

Through testing, the researcher identified specific pronunciation difficulties among students, particularly in words like "hearts," where many made mistakes.

After implementing the treatment using the U-Dictionary application as a pronunciation aid, improvements were observed. The application helped students by allowing them to listen to native speaker pronunciations before attempting their tests. Additionally, it increased students' enthusiasm and confidence, as the app provided immediate scores after each pronunciation attempt. Students who received poor scores were motivated to retake the test to achieve better results, with some even practicing at home.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the U-Dictionary application positively impacts students' pronunciation skills. This research aligns with the study titled "The Effectiveness of U-Dictionary Application Teaching Media Towards English Pronunciation of the Eleventh Grade Students at SMK Islam 1 Durenan" by Ninda Ulfiani (2020). She stated that the U-Dictionary application is an effective tool for teaching pronunciation to students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to determine the effect of using the U-Dictionary application on improving the pronunciation skills of eighth-grade students at SMP N 2 Sungai Apit. Based on the findings in the previous chapter, the average pre-test score was 42.1, which increased to 52.4 in the post-test. Additionally, the statistical analysis shows that the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which is smaller than 0.050, indicating that the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of the U-Dictionary application positively impacts students' pronunciation. Moreover, this research suggests that the application can serve as an alternative learning tool for pronunciation improvement in the future. Thus, the research question has been answered, confirming that the U-Dictionary application contributes to enhancing the pronunciation skills of eighth-grade students at

SMP N 2 Sungai Apit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Teachers

   English teachers are encouraged to integrate the U-Dictionary application as a learning tool, as it has been proven effective in improving students' pronunciation. Additionally, using this application can enhance students' enthusiasm for learning. The app also offers various features that can be utilized in classroom instruction.

2. Students

   Students are advised to practice their pronunciation skills regularly to become more fluent and confident. They are also encouraged to explore the U-Dictionary application further, as it can support their overall English language development.

3. Future Researchers

   Recognizing the limitations of this study, future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies to refine and expand upon this research, exploring additional aspects of the U-Dictionary application's effectiveness in language learning.

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