FROM NOVICE TO NATIVE-LIKE: HOW DIPHTHONGS ARE PRONOUNCED?

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ABSTRACT

English pronunciation is seen to be one of the most crucial aspects in the English language setting because proper and correct pronunciation creates effective and efficient means of communication. This community empowerment was implemented to investigate the effect of English phonetics transcription instruction, particularly on diphthongs, to boost EFL learners' English pronunciation. Thirteen participants, of which teemed by female, were taken in such a convenient way. One of orphanages in South Sumatera, Palembang was chosen to be empowered in this activity. To check EFL learners' English pronunciation achievement, an English pronunciation test was provided as a pre-test and a post-test. The results revealed that English phonetics transcription instruction impacted EFL learners' English pronunciation attainment, particularly diphthongs. This could be viewed from t obtained value which was much higher than the t table (2.497 > 2.179) and the p value gained was much lower than .05 (.02 < .05). In addition, other instructors, agents of change, future facilitators, and participants were imparted with fruitful implications due to the implementation of English pronunciation instruction to have a native-like communication to some extent.

Keywords: Diphthongs; English Pronunciation; Novice; Native-like.

ABSTRACT

*Pengucapan bahasa Inggris dianggap sebagai salah satu aspek paling krusial dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris karena pengucapan yang tepat dan benar menciptakan komunikasi yang efektif dan efisien. Kegiatan pemberdayaan masyarakat ini dilaksanakan untuk mengkaji pengaruh pembelajaran transkripsi fonetik bahasa Inggris, khususnya pada diftong, dalam meningkatkan pengucapan bahasa Inggris pembelajar EFL. Sebanyak tiga belas partisipan, yang didominasi oleh perempuan, dipilih melalui teknik yang bersifat praktis (*convenience sampling*). Salah satu panti asuhan di Palembang, Sumatera Selatan, dipilih sebagai lokasi pelaksanaan kegiatan ini. Untuk mengukur pencapaian pengucapan bahasa Inggris pembelajar EFL, diberikan tes pengucapan bahasa Inggris berupa* pre-test *dan* post-test. *Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran transkripsi fonetik bahasa Inggris memberikan pengaruh terhadap peningkatan penguasaan pengucapan bahasa Inggris pembelajar EFL, khususnya pada diftong. Hal ini dapat dilihat dari nilai t hitung yang jauh lebih tinggi dibandingkan dengan t tabel (2,497 > 2,179) serta*

nilai p yang jauh lebih rendah dari 0,05 (0,02 < 0,05). Selain itu, para pengajar, agen perubahan, fasilitator masa depan, dan partisipan juga memperoleh implikasi yang bermanfaat dari pelaksanaan pembelajaran pengucapan bahasa Inggris, sehingga dapat mencapai komunikasi yang mendekati penutur asli hingga batas tertentu.

Kata kunci: *Diftong; Kemahiran Seperti Penutur Asli; Pemula; Pengucapan Bahasa Inggris.*

INTRODUCTION
1. Overview of the Present Situation

Taking for granted in integrating pronunciation practice in English language instruction is something that EFL teachers or instructors needs to be ditched out as this hampers the EFL learners to improve their memory retention and articulatory system in producing words speech. This pronunciation instruction should be well-incorporated in EFL classroom in a playful manner. Pronunciation is defined as one of the most important aspects of oral communication since accurate and unambiguous word pronunciation results in a variety of speech units (Berry, 2021). Furthermore, becoming proficient in the English language requires learning pronunciation (Khodjayeva, 2020). In order to pronounce words, phrases, and sentences correctly while paying attention to spelling, stress, and intonation, one must produce each sound. In addition, a technique known as "phonetic transcription" is employed to precisely depict word pronunciation. According to (Mäkinen, 2021), phonetic transcription is a type of written representation where each letter represents a distinct sound. Having the same thought, pronunciation is today understood to be the precise production of speech sounds, including the right accents, syllable structure, and letter sounds in words (Zuliyan, 2024).

Therefore, it is a crucial part of successful communication in EFL learning and the physical creation of speech sounds (Yusuf, 2019). Pronouncing words correctly makes it easier for EFL students to understand and be understood by native speakers. Pronunciation is crucial to EFL learning for several reasons. First of all, it enables EFL students to interact with native speakers in an efficient manner. Good pronunciation increases the likelihood that native speakers will comprehend what EFL learners say, resulting in more fruitful and pleasurable communication interactions (Kapranov, 2019). Therefore, verbal communication might be severely hampered and performed inadequately without proper pronunciation. For EFL learners to develop their language skills, they must be exposed to pronunciation (Abker, 2020).

However, ironically some problems owned by EFL instructors and learners became a barrier in applying pronunciation practice, such as neglecting pronunciation instruction somewhere when having integrated English language skills. Numerous relevant studies have demonstrated that one of the issues associated with the lack of interest in pronunciation development is that non-native EFL teachers frequently have very low phonetic competence,

which causes them to neglect both pronunciation instruction in general and the correction of their students' errors in this area, with clear consequences for the learners' own pronunciation skill development (Petsy, 2022). In addition, Abdulwahid (2023) emphasizes the difficulties instructors face while instructing students in pronunciation, especially when it comes to communicating certain sounds. One cannot communicate without pronouncing the language, according to Al-Yaqoobi et al. (2016). However, students believe that their communication issues are primarily caused by their pronunciation (Ababneh, 2018). Meanwhile, according to Fadly (2022) and Maharani et al. (2021), learners often make phonological or pronunciation errors because of the phonological variances between their mother tongue and the target language. Hence, it could vividly be said that EFL learners still possess several problems pertaining to English vocabulary mastery which these could potentially slow up their successful English learning particularly on gaining new English words.

In association with the problems hampered the English vocabulary learning faced by the English language learners, the EFL instructors are needed to provide contextual and interactive media of instruction and communicative technique of instruction to have them more engaged and motivated during English vocabulary acquisition. In line with that, it is crucial that English language instructors focus on the process of teaching pronunciation. When teaching English, the instructor should focus on employing a strategy, technique, or approach, but they should also consider the resources (Maria et al., 2019). Various educational learning approaches have been administered to instruct young EFL learners with pronunciation practice. Research has examined the efficacy of phonological awareness exercises, interactive language games, teacher modeling, pronunciation drills, explicit phonetic training, and incorporating pronunciation into everyday language classes (Djigunović & Krajnović, 2015). In addition, employing effective and engaging English teaching strategies would greatly increase students' motivation and enthusiasm for English learning (Chen & Hsu, 2020).

Phonetics is categorized as a linguistics branch on the study of language sounds, including how they are created and perceived. It looks at these sounds regardless of whether or not they have distinct meanings (Reetz & Jongman, 2020). The descriptive basis for researching a language's phonology is phonetics. Studying phonetics and phonology is beneficial for a number of reasons. In the first place, it advances our knowledge of the human mind. Furthermore, mastering the phonetics of another language increases our ability to recognize and fix pronunciation mistakes in that language and to instruct others on how to pronounce it (Yusuf, 2019).

Among all language skills, pronunciation is one of the most important since it facilitates effective communication, which raises the level of language proficiency (Ambalegin, 2021). Pronunciation is also very important when communicating. It aids pupils in resolving significant intelligibility issues. If we speak words correctly, people can understand what we're saying. The three elements of pronunciation are intonation, articulation, and stress. The syllables are emphasized with stress. The movement of the tongue, lips, and teeth to alter the sound produced is referred to as articulation (Wang, 2020). Moreover, the ability or method used to pronounce English words in a way that is similar to that of a native speaker is sometimes referred to as English pronunciation. Gaining competency in the English language requires mastering pronunciation (Khodjayeva, 2020). In order to pronounce words, phrases, and sentences correctly while paying attention to spelling, stress, and intonation, one must produce each sound. Furthermore, a technique known as "phonetic transcription" is employed to precisely depict word pronunciation. According to Mäkinen (2021), phonetic transcription is a type of written representation where

each letter represents a distinct sound. In fact, there are three main components to teaching English pronunciation: intonation, rhythm and emphasis, and sounds. Therefore, the teaching of the English pronunciation particularly on the Internation Phonetics Alphabet (IPA) transcription were needed to help the EFL learners pronounce the English words phonologically correct English and to avoid misunderstanding in English communicative settings.

Additionally, numerous related studies were formerly employed concerning in the integration phonetics transcription instruction to young learners' English pronunciation. According to a study by Al-Rubaat & Alshammari (2020), Saudi EFL students have similar challenges when it comes to improving their speaking and pronunciation abilities. Raising students' understanding of the value of pronunciation training is the goal of the EFL curriculum, which was introduced at the undergraduate level with particular emphasis on teaching speaking and listening instruction. In order to improve English pronunciation and communication skills, listening to sound systems was emphasized. Elumalai et al. (2021), who confirmed that English language pronunciation a sub-skill of speaking modules during a second language acquisition process, also highlights this problem. Exposure to pronunciation is essential for improving EFL learners' language skills because it will enable them to differentiate between good and poor English (Abker, 2020).

Moreover, Chan (2018) emphasizes the importance of phonetics instruction in helping students master pronunciation by emphasizing the need for consistent, methodical repetition. The significance of understanding the English pronunciation system, including vowels, consonants, and diphthongs, all of which are frequently challenging for EFL learners, is covered by Sundari (2018) and (Mulya & Mujiyanto (2018) . In order to properly teach pronunciation, Cabrera & Gervain (2020) emphasize the scientific foundation of phonetics in the analysis of speech sounds. Through training that results in notable increases in learners' pronunciation accuracy, (Isaacson et al. (2020) illustrate the useful advantages of phonetics instruction. However, English pronunciation owned by Indonesian English learners was unsatisfactory because they had trouble learning the language, and because English pronunciation instruction was not prioritized in Indonesian English courses (Abrar et al., 2018). Additionally, they further asserted that the significance of teaching and acquiring English pronunciation in Indonesian English classrooms has been reevaluated. Hence, it could then be said that the instruction of English phonology and phonetics is very necessary in raising the EFL learners' language skills, especially in English pronunciation in EFL classrooms.

2. Identified Problems and Proposed Solution

Based on the evaluation of the present situation above, the problems faced by the partner, 'Aisyiyah Humairah Orphanage, could be further formulated that the participants still had of pronouncing certain sounds, having no confidence in learning phonetic symbols, having interest lack in pronunciation development, neglecting of learning English sounds independently, having confusion of English sounds as target language with mother tongue, and having no clue where to start to learning English phonetic transcription. These problems would block their way of learning integrated English language skills. For those vivid descriptions, faced English pronunciation problems, and the formerly relevant investigation above, the researcher was highly interested to address the problems and gap by facilitating the community service as the solution offered by administering English phonology and phonetics instruction to raise EFL participants' English

pronunciation accuracy so they would have a near native pronunciation. This community empowerment aimed to check whether English phonology and phonetics instruction were statistically significant and impactful on the EFL learners' English pronunciation. This would also be very advantageous for EFL learner to have self-study and self-practice to impart the English sounds through imitation and repetition to make them stay in their memory retention.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION METHODS
1. Location, Time, and Participants

The conduct of community service was about to provide English language learners with English phonetics transcription instruction, particularly on diphthongs, to enhance their English pronunciation. One group sample was taken conveniently, which consisted of thirteen participants. This was employed in 'Aisyiyah Humairah Orphanage located in South Sumatera Island, Palembang city on 02 November 2025. The pronunciation instruction was given after pre-tests and before post-test administration. This was done with pronunciation drills, both individual and choral repetition of certain English words exposed.
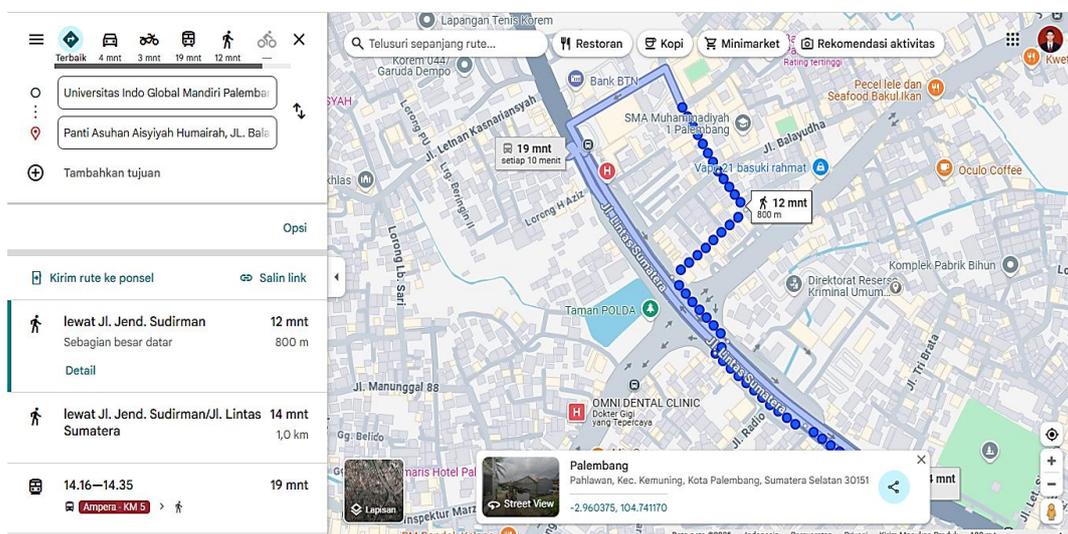

Figure 1. Google Maps of 'Aisyiyah Humairah Orphanage.

To give further and specific information concerning the partner's location, the distance from Indo Global Mandiri University to 'Aisyiyah Humairah Orphanage was 800 M. To reach this location, it takes 3 minutes by motorcycle, 4 minutes by car, and 19 minutes by public transportation.

2. Program Evaluation Instruments

The administration of pre-test and post-test were marked appropriately when the participants' score attainment was determined. Additionally, the SPSS application was used to perform a descriptive statistical calculation of their English pronunciation. This was done in order to determine the pre-test and post-test scores prior to obtaining the appropriate intervention. Descriptive statistics and the paired samples test were appropriately employed in the SPSS program to calculate statistical analysis components particularly on reckoning from the lowest and highest scores, mean scores, modes, medians, standard deviations, t-obtained values, degree of freedom, and p values, several pertinent descriptive analyses were taken into account. After having all statistical computation, a comprehensive and well-organized discussion was produced in a thorough and careful manner to be offered to other concerned parties.

192 | **Darma Diksani:** Jurnal Pengabdian Ilmu Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Humaniora
Vol. 6, No. 1, Maret 2026, Hal. 187-196.

3. Program Implementation Stages

Apart from that, well-organized stages of applying the phonetics transcription in English pronunciation instruction were performed as follows: 1) The team of community service from the faculty of teacher training and education did a focused group discussion to decide where to have a community service facilitation and to find what problems and its solution, 2) then the team divide the task with different facilitation to be intervened, 3) the instructor prepared the learning material, strategy, and test beforehand, 4) on the facilitation day, the facilitator gave pre-test to know the participants' English pronunciation achievement before intervention, 5) participants were asked about their problems of English learning individually, 6) then they were listed on and discussed especially on English pronunciation problems, 7) participants were explained about phonology and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription, 8) then during the explanation, they were given several English words to pronounce chorally, 9) to make sure whether they have correct pronunciation, individual repetition was afterwards done on some particular English words, 10) then mini English pronunciation practice was administered to the EFL participant to have an end check, 11) after the English pronunciation intervention was conducted in a well-done manner, the administration of post-test was given to the EFL participants to obtain their English pronunciation attainment.

PROGRAM RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having finished collecting and analyzing the participants' score data accordingly from the community service, it was gained that the attained lowest score attained in the pre-test was 4 and the attained highest score was 8. Furthermore, the mean score gained was 5.85, the median score gained was 6, the gained mode score was 4, and the obtained standard deviation was 1.405. On the other side, it was also revealed that the lowest score generated was 5 and the generated highest score was 10. Furthermore, the mean score generated was 7.15, the median scored generated was 7, the mode score generated was 7, and the generated standard deviation was 1.625.

Figure 2. The Presenter Explains about the Phonetics Transcription and English Pronunciation Practice.

Additionally, after having computed the participants' data with descriptive statistics analysis, a progressive analysis with paired samples t-test was done in order to find out the participants' progress after having intervened with word game. The findings revealed that the gained mean score was 1.308, the obtained standard deviation was 1.888, the t obtained was 2.497, the degree of freedom earned was 12, and the p value (2-tailed) was .02. As the t obtained

value was much higher than the t table (2.497 > 2.179) and the p value gained was much lower than .05 (.02 < .05), therefore it could be further asserted that there was a significant improvement on EFL learners' pronunciation particularly on diphthongs made by the EFL participants after getting intervened with English pronunciation instruction.

Getting finished computing the descriptive analyses and progressive analyses, it could be then said that there was a significant attainment owned by EFL participants in pronunciation especially on diphthongs after having intervened with English pronunciation instruction as this could be seen from the minimum score and maximum score gained and also mean score obtained before and after the intervention given. Afterwards, there was a better result on the EFL participants particularly on English diphthongs as it could be further seen from the results of statistical calculation such as mean gained, t obtained, and p value computed. For those attained results, it could be vividly concluded that there were significant improvements on the EFL participants' English pronunciation after being integrated with English pronunciation instruction.

These proper and better improvements made EFL learners after being well-treated with English pronunciation instruction were caused by frequent pronunciation practices on certain diphthongs which allow the learners to have correct pronunciation. Additionally, reinforcement through pronunciation drills drive them to get more engaged and motivated to learn English sounds. Apart from that, phonetic symbols recognition practice during exposure were provided intentionally which this makes them get used to having confident in pronouncing English words taught. Furthermore, the EFL participants were given intelligible and structured English pronunciation instruction and guided practice simultaneously.

The present research findings were in association with several researchers like Chan (2018) who emphasized the importance of phonetics training in accomplishing this goal by highlighting the need for consistent and methodical practice in mastering pronunciation. In addition, it has been demonstrated that explicit pronunciation teaching significantly improves learners' pronunciation abilities (Martin, 2020). Additionally, because it will help EFL learners distinguish between good and poor English, exposure to pronunciation is crucial for enhancing their language proficiency (Abker, 2020). Additionally, using engaging and successful English teaching techniques would significantly boost students' motivation and excitement for learning the language (Chen & Hsu, 2020). In line with that many previous assertions regarding the effects of pronunciation training are moderated by the thorough analyses of Saito & Plonsky (2019) meta-analytical study, which aids in identifying the impacts and efficacy of a sizable collection of studies conducted over a 25-year period.

Additionally, the drilling method helps learners develop regular, disciplined study habits that might accelerate their progress. This approach necessitates that students go over the content they have acquired several times, including vocabulary, sentence structures, and other linguistic patterns (Heryani et al., 2024). Additionally, drilling can increase students' vocabulary which depicts how well the drilling method works for learning English (Rofi'ah & Huda, 2020), improve speaking abilities (Johar & Yunus, 2021), and improve pronunciation (Maro, 2018).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After conducting the statistical calculation and writing relevant description to it, hence it could be stated that a better improvement on English pronunciation mastery was made by EFL learners, it could be further seen from the computation results of the score gained in the pre-test and post-test and

the mean score for each test administration, respectively. Another finding is that a significant improvement was made by EFL learners on their English vocabulary attainment, it could be viewed that the statistical result of the pre-test and post-test using paired sample t test which specifically on the t obtained and p value where t obtained was much bigger than t table (2.497 > 2.179) and p value was much smaller than .05 (.02 < .05). Therefore, it could be concluded that there was a better impact on the EFL learners' English pronunciation attainment particularly on the English diphthongs by using English pronunciation instruction.

In relation to the research results and description, several suggestions were headed to English participants and other future researchers regarding the implementation of English pronunciation instruction to enhance EFL learners' English pronunciation attainment. For English participants, it was highly expected that they would have regular self-practice whenever they acquire new English words. Furthermore, it was strongly demanded that other researchers implement this technique, combined with other English instructional materials, whenever teaching English pronunciation to be administered to other participants in different English language settings. Moreover, the more regular and structured English pronunciation practice made by the English participants during the English pronunciation learning, the longer the English words fossilize in their memory retention.

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