

The Use of A Read Along Application to Improve Students' Pronunciation

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Abstract: This study aims to enhance students' English pronunciation skills through the use of the Read Along application. The research focused on seventh-grade students at SMPN 2 Cilegon during the 2023/2024 academic year. The participants were 34 students from class VII B. The methodology employed was Classroom Action Research (CAR) as developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, conducted in two cycles each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data collection involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data was gathered using observation sheets, while quantitative data was obtained through tests. The application usefulness was hampered in cycle I initial test by problems like slow internet connectivity and low student participation. The first was for the students to open the application, which they did without any problems. However, only about 20% of students were able to grasp the second level's features. This was due to the students' inexperience with the technology of the application, which made it take longer for them to get used to. With an average score of 62.41, only 6 students (17.65%) passed the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM). After resolving these issues, demonstrated significant improvements in the second test of cycle II, there was significant improvement, with 29 students (85.30%) meeting the Mastery Minimum Criteria (KKM) and an average score of 82.05. The study concludes that the Read Along application is effective in improving the English pronunciation of seventh-grade students at SMPN 2 Cilegon.



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INTRODUCTION

The use of language is essential for daily communication and is particularly crucial for those wishing to acquire a foreign language, like English. Most people believe that speaking a foreign language is a prerequisite for learning a language, and that conversational fluency is the primary measure of successful language learning. Put another way, since fluency is the foundation of efficient communication, mastering a language is the most difficult part of learning and teaching foreign languages. There are also specific pronunciations that one must become proficient in when speaking. Speaking also has been including as one of the important subjects in English language mastery. Speaking in English language mastery is not just communicating but also building English language components such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. By mastering that skill, students can communicate directly to others easily, especially with a native speaker. That is why speaking is important and needed to be mastered.

Before teaching speaking, teachers must teach pronunciation (Varasarin, 2007). Because pronunciation is the first step in speaking, it is therefore the foundation of learning to speak (the process of learning how to form English sounds). Mispronunciation during communication causes misconceptions and keeps people from accomplishing their speaking goals. It's common knowledge that there are a number of fundamental word pairings in the English language with essentially identical pronunciations.

Teaching pronunciation to students' from the earliest age feasible aims to enhance their capacity for verbal communication while demonstrating the attributes of accurate and clear pronunciation. The aforementioned occurrence, which demonstrates that certain students have difficulty pronouncing English terminology, lends support to this aims to enhance students' oral communication skills, particularly in terms of their ability to pronounce words clearly and intelligibly.

Many language learners find it difficult to pronounce words correctly in the target language, even though clear pronunciation is essential for efficient communication. This can lead to misunderstandings, learner frustration, and difficulty being understood by native speakers.

The life of the Alpha generation uses gadgets every time from waking up to sleeping again they use Gadgets. Therefore, researchers in this study used an application that is easily accessible and can be downloaded on Google Playstore, namely the Read Along application, this application can be used in the classroom to improve pronunciation by letting students read text while listening to examples of proper pronunciation of words. The researcher intends to provide an application called Read Along that will help teachers teach speaking abilities, including pronunciation, in order to address this problem and improve instruction in the classroom.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Pronunciation is among the most crucial aspects of learning a language, particularly while speaking. The process of producing sounds during speech in order to transmit meaning is known as pronunciation. Thus, we need to be able to pronounce words correctly in order to facilitate discourse. For this reason, many language learners think that speaking clearly signifies that they are communicating effectively. Speaking is an extremely useful ability that makes social interaction easier, thus everyone should be able to do it. For learners to be able to communicate in English, they must be adept in its construction. Understanding the exact phrases and meanings used by the language learners would be beneficial for the audience.

The two main elements of pronunciation are phonemes and suprasegmental traits. A phoneme is a unit of sound in a language that aids in word separation. The two parts of a phoneme are vowels and consonants. Suprasegmental features, also known as prosodic features in phonetics, are speech elements that are comparable to stress and intonation (Kelly, 2001, p.1). The voiced and unvoiced phonemes of consonants are the subject of the researcher's investigation in this study. Sounds, especially dental fricative sounds [θ] Alveoli contain the plosives [t], [d], and [ð].

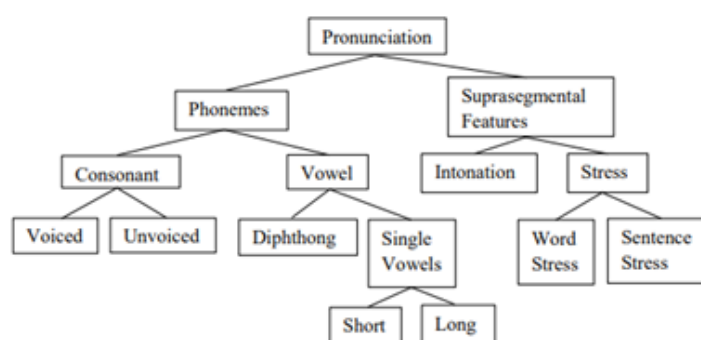


Figure 1, Figure Pronunciation Features

According Giegerich (2009) mentioned the three variants of Standard English. Scottish Standard English Vowel Phonemes, Southern British Standard Vowel Phonemes, and General American Vowel Phonemes (RP: Received Pronunciation) are the three variants. Still, we instruct the kids utilizing the English Classical System, which consists of twenty phonemes for vowels and twenty for consonants. There are 12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs among the 20 vowel phonemes.

According to Zemková (2018), suprasegmental traits distinguish artificial speech produced by machines from human speech. In both English and Indonesian, intonation and stress are two suprasegmental features. Suprasegmental characteristics come in two varieties. Stress comes first, followed by intonation.

According to Harmer (2001), many teachers do not provide their pupils with enough attention. The following are some justifications for this omission. Secondly, when learning English, many pupils do not pay much attention to pronunciation. The primary reasons why students have trouble pronouncing words correctly in English are teachers' preference for speaking skills over pronunciation. And argues that the main reasons why English pronunciation is neglected are a lack of high-quality resources, a scarcity of pertinent teaching and learning tools, and a lack of time for pronunciation practice. Now is the moment to practice your pronunciation. Furthermore, he claims that throughout a conversation, native speakers pick up on pronunciation first. Students improve their speaking skills in addition to learning new sounds and voice traits through pronunciation training.

The media is one of the communication mediums that has united people worldwide. The Latin word medium, which meaning in the center, is where the word media originates. The term "media" encompasses not only traditional mass communication networks and content producers, but also a number of technologies for mediated human speech. This would include movies, video games, recorded music, newspapers, periodicals, books, and Internet versions of any of these media, as well as traditional electronic media (broadcasting, broadband, cable, or satellite). The media is one of the communication mediums that has united people worldwide.

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The Read Along application makes it easier for student's to learn to read and speak because it is so user-friendly and helpful for modern learning. One method that helps students' learn languages is to Read Along. With the help of engaging stories from around the globe-some of which even feature mini games-this Read Along application facilitates learning. Students' receive stars and badges as they advance through the learning process, which encourages them to keep studying and having fun. The text that researchers read from online sources is represented by the character Diya in this Read Along application.

METHOD

According to Kemmis and Taggart (1988), the first step in conducting research is planning an action. After then, the activity is observed as the plan is implemented in the classroom. Examining the data acquired from the action is the aim of the reflection. Although the process of participatory action research is only partially explained in terms of a mechanical sequence of phases, it is commonly assumed to involve a spiral of self-reflective cycles of the following.

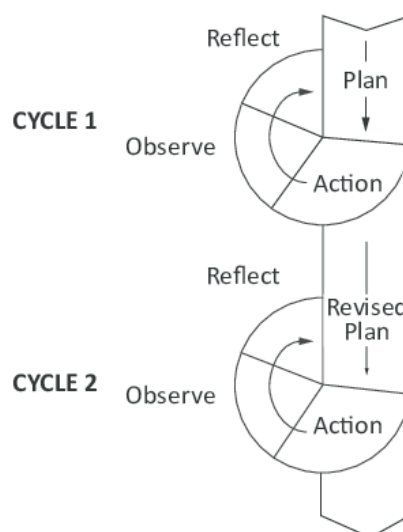


Figure 2, Figure Cyclical AR model based on Kemmis and McTaggart

This research will be conducted seventh grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Cilegon in the 2023-2024 school year. The whole population is classified as seventh grade there are about 34 students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher collected and analyzed data from the students' first tests as well as observations of teaching and learning activities in the classroom to determine the challenges and issues students were having with learning English pronunciation. The researcher used the Read Along application to aid pupils pronounce words more appropriately. The researcher carried out an action study in the classroom for tests 1 and 2. The action research was conducted in two cycles of two sessions each. Two rounds were conducted in 2024: the first took place from May 30 to May 31 and the second from June 6 to June 7. The research sample comprised of thirty four VII B students in total.

Following the completion of the class action research, data was gathered via testing and observation. Here's the explanation:

The teacher noted on the observation sheet that while the students' enthusiasm for studying pronunciation was lower in cycle I, it increased as the class moved into its second, third, and fourth meetings (see the attachment). The instructor reported that the students' curiosity about the distinctions between each word and how to pronounce it motivated them greatly. Additionally, the instructor mentioned that the reason these included problems opening the application due to a bad internet connection, technological difficulties that occurred in the classroom, and some students not having cellphones. The application effectiveness could not be adequately assessed in the first cycle due to the low degree of interaction. They were also lacking in every way. The reason the students didn't meet the requirements for completeness was that the typical student in the class couldn't pronounce the exam fluently. And for the barrier was only their embarrassment since they were not accustomed to pronouncing things in English at the start of the class learning session. As a way to help students practice pronouncing words in English, which is their mother tongue in this case Sundanese and Indonesian, the instructor observed that utilizing the Read Along application is particularly effective.

Students are still unsure about how to create examples of the issue using cycle I proper language. Many experienced not only fear but also embarrassment for their errors. The Cycle I implementation revealed that while students were able to access the application, their proficiency with its features was limited to 20%, and they encountered difficulties in locating articles. A more methodical approach was required for the second cycle. In order for students to feel more familiar and at ease with the Read Along application, comprehensive training sessions must first be held to introduce its key functions. Live demonstrations and repeated practical exercises may be part of this training. Secondly, the introduction and instruction on narrative discovery need to be more targeted, maybe by offering a more approachable list of suggested stories to start. Additionally, you can assist students in overcoming navigation barriers by providing them with resources like worksheets or films that serve as usage instructions. It is anticipated that with this method, students will be more proficient and self-assured when utilizing the program in the second cycle.

And in this cycle II there are some developments, following several instances and an explanation, students appeared to have a greater understanding of the grammatical norm. Students got even more engrossing and exciting when the teacher stated that they would open their phones and read the story on the Read Along application which was only used during the test. Less students' were crammed together, but some of them still followed the teacher's directions even though they didn't seem to be enjoying this cycle. Still, most students' seemed more comfortable and bold enough to speak in English. The Cycle II of the Read Along application adoption showed a discernible improvement, with 80% of students having mastered its features. Students' were made more comfortable and confident with the software by engaging in extended training sessions that included live demos and multiple hands on activities. Additionally, the introduction of a more structured approach to story exploration and the provision of additional materials such as worksheets and video lessons helped students overcome the difficulties they had navigating during the first cycle. As a result, users may easily use the application and utilize all of its features to improve their learning opportunities.

Based on cycle I results, the researcher discovered that 6 out of 34 students' who received a score surpassed KKM (a minimum of 75). Based on these findings, the researcher chooses to proceed with cycle II.

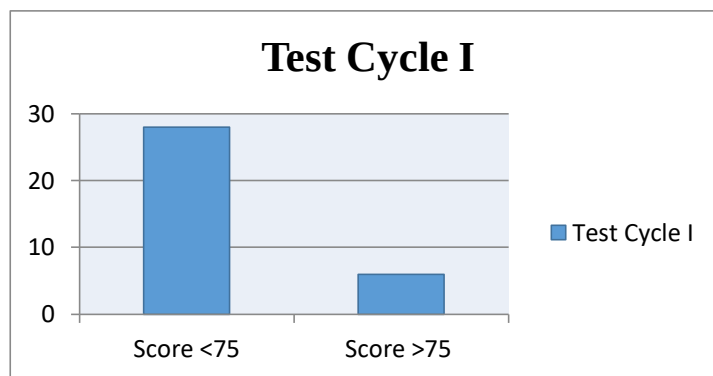


Figure 3, Figure The Result Test 1 Cycle I

Based on cycle II data, researchers found that students' pronunciation skills had improved. Five students continue to perform below the KKM level, whereas 29 students (85, 30%) receive a KKM score of >75. In light of these results, the researcher decided to conclude the inquiry because the test result satisfied the study's achievement conditions.

The explanation of the first cycle II above leads one to the conclusion that there has been an improvement in the pronunciation skill test results for students, with scores ranging from 17,65% in cycle I to 85,30% in cycle II. Based on these results, it can be said that cycle II was successful because over 80% of the students received a KKM score of at least 75.

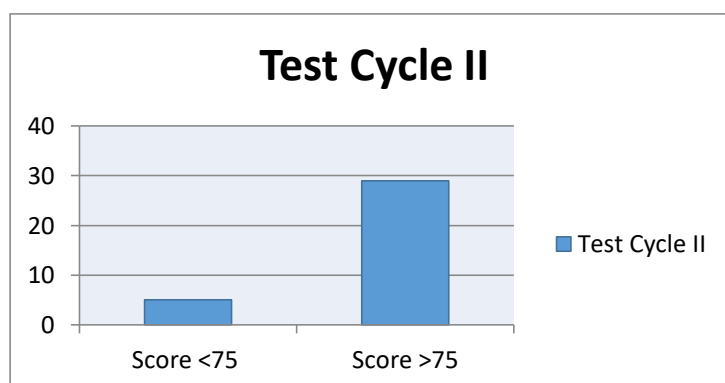


Figure 4, Figure The Result Test 2 Cycle II

The comparison of students who got score >75 can be seen in the following table.

Table 1, Table Number of Students Who Got Score >75

Meetings		Students who got Score >75
Cycle I	II	6 Students
Cycle II	IV	29 Students

The research found that the students' pronunciation skills improved when they used the Read Along program. The average cycle II result was 82,05, and 85,30% of students received a score higher than 75. Cycle II mean and score were found to be higher than Cycle I. Students' with scores above 75 also increased in number. 6 students' (17,65%) with a mean score of 62,41 obtained scores higher than 75 in the first cycle.

During cycle II, a total of 29 students' (85,30%) achieved a score exceeding 75. In other words, from the first meeting to the next, the students' proficiency in accurately pronouncing words improved.

All of these statistics show that students contribute their attitudes and responses throughout the teaching and learning process. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data results, it can be concluded that the Read Along application can assist students' in pronouncing words more accurately, especially in class VII at SMPN 2 Cilegon.

CONCLUSION

After students' could use the Read Along application easily, it was discovered that only around 20% of students had mastered its functions when it was first incorporated in the cycle. This was primarily due to their lack of experience with the application technology and user interface, which made it difficult for them to navigate and utilize the features effectively. These problems made it clear that students' needed to be taught how to use the application more responsibly. Students gained more knowledge and experience with the Read Along application in cycle II, when they also gained a grasp of how to use it. Consequently, 80% of the students successfully learned how to use the application capabilities and applied it in accordance with the correct procedure.

The researcher compiles the results of the first and second tests. The first cycle test results showed that the students' performance did not meet the Mastery Minimum Criteria, or KKM. To achieve the criteria, 75% of students must pass the Mastery Minimum Criteria (KKM). 6 (17.65%) out of the total number of students received a score greater than the Mastery Minimum Criteria (KKM). In order to improve the students' pronunciation, the researcher conducted extra research in Cycle II after six students' in Cycle I test 1 were able to achieve the average Mastery Minimum Criteria (KKM). As a result, 80% of students in Cycle II, or 29 out of 34 students in Class VII, satisfied the Mastery Minimum Criteria (KKM).

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