

**/aʊ/ RECOGNITION: MAXIMIZING ENGLISH SOUNDS AND
SPELLING EXERCISES IN PRONUNCIATION CLASS**

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Abstract

Pronunciation is an essential part of language learning. We need to possess intelligible pronunciation to communicate effectively. The study of pronunciation sometimes becomes fatigued and challenging for teachers. They should not employ a repeat after me technique but include senses, sights, or even move to teach pronunciation. Sounds and spelling exercises could be helpful for effective pronunciation practice because they relate to phonemic awareness or sound recognition. This descriptive qualitative research used sounds and spelling exercises in pronunciation practices involving 42 students, focusing on /aʊ/ recognition at an Indonesian English Education Study Program. Students were given the exercises of sounds and spelling and then observed the progress of pronunciation ability. The results showed that this exercise could help students remedy their pronunciation, especially in /aʊ/ sounds. The significant improvement indicated the effectiveness of the practice because it is related to phonemic awareness, which allowed them to distinguish the sounds and the letters. As students knew and could predict the sounds in the written words, they precisely corrected their pronunciation, especially in words consisting of /aʊ/ sounds.

Keywords: *Maximize, Recognition, Pronunciation, Sounds and Spelling Exercise*

INTRODUCTION.

Pronunciation is an essential component in learning a language (Benitez-Correa et al., 2020). The speaker's intelligibility will increase (Ramasari, 2017) to deliver clear communication and make people understand. Intelligible pronunciation can also increase the speaker's confidence. The speaker feels more empowered in speaking, making them feel better (Maiza, 2020). Not only in speaking, but the speaker also feels better in listening to the native;

this is due to the understanding of native speaker's speech will increase by having good pronunciation.

Unfortunately, although pronunciation is essential for learning a language, especially English, teachers fail to bring a successful pronunciation class (Istiqomah et al., 2021). One of the reasons is that pronunciation is vague and much more challenging to teach. Before teachers give good pronunciation examples, they have to recognize the sounds, hear them, and apply them precisely and adequately (Gilakjani, 2016). Besides, teachers have to acknowledge students' mistakes or mispronunciations to give concise and concrete feedback (Alisia & El-Sulukiyyah, 2020). Another reason why teaching pronunciation is problematic is that teachers only know the goals of pronunciation teaching, and the learning process is good pronunciation (Yoshida, 2016). While English has many varieties of pronunciation types and it is almost impossible to reach a perfect accent. That is why teachers should set the goal of pronunciation instruction from good or ideal pronunciation to intelligible pronunciation (Kosasih, 2017).

The experts introduce some methods to teach effective pronunciation. One of the most common is the repeat after me technique (Gilakjani, 2012). Nevertheless, this technique is dramatic because it may take time and practice. Some experts suggest including more than just a repeat after me activity because it is not enough to make students recognize the sounds (Donal, 2016). Teachers can include games and phonetic exercises to teach pronunciation (Purwanto, 2019). Further, they can encourage students to have their senses, sight, hearing, or even movement to learn pronunciation (Rafael, 2019).

Sounds and spelling exercise is helpful techniques to have effective pronunciation activity. It is related to phonemic awareness (Chapman, 2003), hearing, identifying, moving, or changing sounds (Piper, 2010). Phonemic awareness focuses on individual sounds in spoken language. Students can distinguish the phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters) that represent in written language (Elliyuspita, 2021). By having phonemic

awareness, the students can pronounce the English words effectively by completing several sounds and spelling exercises.

Sounds and spelling exercise was applied to pronunciation teaching in the English Education Study Program in Universitas PGRI Wiranegara. This exercise could be one technique to increase students' phonemic awareness. The English Education Study Program students are all English foreign learners (EFL), their mother tongue is Javanese and Maduranese, the English phonemes or phonetics are different from their first language. The most common pronunciation mistake they made is pronouncing /aʊ/ sound like in the mouth, loud, down, and town (Rafael, 2019; Simarmata & Pardede, 2018; Alisia & El-Sulukiyyah, 2020)

To solve their pronunciation problem in their way of producing /aʊ/ sound and to make them aware and recognize the sound, the teacher tried to maximize the use of sounds and spelling exercise as the treatment of pronunciation rehabilitation and phonemic awareness. Demirezen (2009) had stated in his research the phonemic inventory could rehabilitate the fossilized pronunciation so did Purwanto (2019) had successfully introduced phonemic training to get correct sounds, spelling, and pronunciation. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the extent to which sounds and spelling exercises promoted students' awareness of the /aʊ/ sound and pronounce the words intelligibly.

Following research question guides the whole part of the study:

1. How did the sounds and spelling exercises improve students' awareness of the /aʊ/ sound and pronounce the words intelligibly?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is essential since the speaker wants to speak understandably and intelligibly (Visoni & Marlina, 2020). Micro skill relates to the sound system to produce certain sounds

(Gilakjani, 2016). In short, pronunciation is a segmental part of the language to communicate effectively (Elliyuspita, 2021).

In every teaching and learning activity, the teacher must have the teaching goal of teaching pronunciation. Unfortunately, the ancient thought of teachers often makes the teaching of pronunciation a challenging development part. Teachers always think that students must pronounce the words like a native; what native? (Benitez-Correa et al., 2020) It can be ambiguous.

The goal of pronunciation is to have good pronunciation or a native-like pronunciation, but the other part of pronunciation must be included (Hancock, 2005). The realistic goal is that both speaker and listener can understand each other without confusion or too much effort to understand (Ramasari, 2017).

The essential thing in the quality of learning and teaching pronunciation is the teacher itself. Has the teacher received pronunciation training? Are they interested in learning and teaching pronunciation? Do they know the current novelty in teaching pronunciation? In conclusion, before having a pronunciation class, we have to make sure that the teachers have those criteria to receive and give good feedback to students and affect students' pronunciation ability (Jacobson et al., 2003).

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the specific part of phonological awareness (Chapman, 2003). It is the ability to recognize the smallest part of the sound, which is called phonemes. It is also the ability to distinguish the differences between graphemes (letters) and phonemes (sounds) (Maiza, 2020). The key to phonemic awareness is understanding the symbolic nature of writing and its relationship in written and oral language (Hassan, 2014). It means students know the relationship of the alphabetic principle and then recognize the phonetic code and phonological awareness (Retnomurti & Octavita, 2017).

Parents have to promote phonemic awareness from an early age (Demirezen & Topal, 2015; Piper, 2010). Since English is not our mother tongue, of course, this awareness comes late to our

lives. Phonemic awareness is when someone starts learning English in school or university (Ojo & Umera-Okeke, 2008). It affects the ability to read and their pronunciation. The written English words are different in pronunciation, especially for Indonesian students whose written words are pronounced the same. It contributes to fossilized pronunciation errors when EFL students do not have phonemic awareness (Laia, 2020).

The importance of phonemic awareness allows students to distinguish the letters in the written words and the sounds they have to produce.

Sounds and Spelling Exercise

This exercise comes from the idea of phonological awareness and is in line with phonemic awareness (Istiqomah et al., 2021). Students have to spell the written words they recognize how many sounds there are, for example, on the word CAT. If they spell the letter, there will be three-letter si-ei-ti. But when they talk about sounds, they will find three sounds, they are /k-æ-t/. Does a word in three letters also have three sounds? It could be not. We go to the phrase CATCH. If we spell the letters, we will find si-ei-ti-si-eij, five letters. But how about the sounds? There are only three sounds which are /k-æ-tʃ/.

This exercise can gain students' awareness of sounds and letters. Then they will be able to remedy their pronunciation after recognizing what sounds they find in words (Elliyuspita, 2021).

Previous Studies on English Pronunciation Teaching

Some researchers had implemented strategies in pronunciation teaching. Yoshida (2018) suggested using technological tools in the teaching and learning of pronunciation due to the specific device could enrich students' interest in learning pronunciation. Kafes & Caner (2020) had proved the exploration of podcasting could give good impact for students' pronunciation ability in Turkey. The result unveiled that the students showed improvement after practicing their pronunciation through recording a podcast. It freed them to explore the pronunciation

practice better than in-class limitation. Furthermore, Osatananda & Thinchana (2021) used Praat to teach pronunciation. Praat is a freeware program used by phoneticians for pronunciation training.

However, the technology tools used to practice pronunciation were still not effectively improved the students' ability if they did not have phonological awareness (Premarathne, 2018). Teachers should facilitate students to be aware of phonological errors to gain their pronunciation ability. In line with Premarathne (2018) for the importance of phonetics awareness for pronunciation teaching, Suntornsawet (2019) found that the knowledge of sounds and letter differences in learning pronunciation could be the overall measurement of the intelligibility. In short, grapheme and phonemes exercising are among the best ways to accommodate students in practicing pronunciation. This research emphasized the sounds and spelling exercise as the helpful way to distinguish the phonemes (sounds) and the graphemes (letters) in teaching and learning pronunciation.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. Creswell (2012) defines descriptive studies as the methods for collecting information to describe the study's activities and data in detail. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. The data may be collected qualitatively in such a study, but it is often analyzed quantitatively, using frequencies, percentages, averages, or other statistical analyses to determine relationships.

This research conducts a descriptive analysis on how sounds and spelling exercises can change students' pronunciation ability and gain students' phonemic awareness of distinguishing letters and sounds.

Participants

The research participants were students in the first semester of the English Education study program in Universitas PGRI Wiranegara in Practice Pronunciation Dictation class. Forty-two students, seven male and thirty-five female were the research participants because they studied and practiced pronunciation during the semester.

Instruments

The researcher applied three instruments to gain students' pronunciation ability: test, documentation, and observation. The data were gathered through documenting the students' recording while pronouncing /aʊ/ sounds from the test given. There are two types of tests, first was the sounds and spelling exercise taken from bbclearningenglish.com, and the second test given by the researcher is sounds and spelling exercise focusing on the /aʊ/ sounds. The tests were utilized to measure students' progress after sound and spelling exercises improved their pronunciation. Students are given some words and have to analyze how many letters and sounds are in words. In meeting 3 and 4, students have to answer and practice the exercise taken from bbclearningenglish.com. The sounds and spelling exercise continued in meeting 5 and 6 by focusing on the /aʊ/sound words. Here is the example of sounds and spelling exercise taken from bbclearningenglish.com:

Figure 1. Sounds and Spelling Exercise has taken from bbclearningenglish.com

Exercise
Look at the words below and put them into the correct column based on the number of sounds.

Clue:
The number of letters and the number of sounds is always different in these words.

horse

caught

cow

carrot

heart

through

island

know

chemist

singer

judge

daughter

business

treasure

thorough

enough

knowledge

singing

thinking

door

sugar

cupboard

more

laugh

check

2 sounds	3 sounds	4 sounds	5 sounds	6 sounds

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by scoring the students' answers on the exercise given; here is the example of students' responses:

Figure 2. The Example of Students' Answer

2 sounds	3 sounds	4 sounds	5 sounds	6 sounds
cow /k au/	horse /h ɔː s/	singer /s ɪ ŋ ə/	carrot /k æ r ə t/	chemist /k ɛ m ɪ s t/
know /n əʊ/	caught /k ɔː t/	daughter /d ɔː t ə/	island /aɪ l ə n d/	business /b ɪ z n ɪ s/
door /d ɔː/	heart /h aː t/	thorough /ə ʌ r ə/	knowledge /n ɒ l ɪ dʒ/	thinking /ə ɪ ŋ k ɪ ŋ/
more /m ɔː/	through /ə r uː/	enough /ɪ n ə f/	treasure /t r ɛ ʒ ə/	
	judge /dʒ ʌ dʒ/	sugar /ʃ u g ə/	singing /s ɪ ŋ ɪ ŋ/	
	laugh /l aː f/		cupboard /k ʌ b ə d/	
	check /tʃ e k/			

The responses were quantitatively analyzed by scoring their capability to distinguish the letters and sounds stated in the exercise. The subsequent data analysis is identifying the sound, or it is called the sound-based method (Laia, 2020), then described into International Phonetic Alphabet to get the specific example of

pronouncing the /aʊ/ sounds after the error and students' progress after having sounds and spelling exercise during the class period.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There were six meetings observed and documented in this research. First of all, in meeting one, there was an introduction for the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to students. So, students knew the symbols of sounds and could differ them exactly from letters. The teacher introduced the vowel and consonant symbols to students and how they are pronounced. It was difficult for students to memorize the vowel symbols for the different kinds from their mother tongue and letters. In letters, we have five vowels; those are A-I-U-E-O, but we have twelve vowels and eight diphthongs in sounds.

In meeting two, the teacher gave pronunciation exercises to find students' most common errors in pronouncing vowels; in this case, the research focused on /aʊ/ sounds. Students pronounced some words with /aʊ/ sounds, and the teacher gave feedback on the errors students made. Here is the list of words with /aʊ/ sounds that students had to practice:

Table 1. List of Words with /aʊ/ sounds

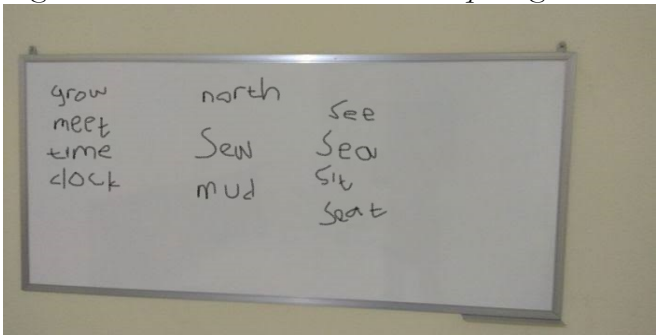
Words		
About	Bound	Sound
Around	Down	House
Found	Round	South
Ground	Cloud	Out
Shout	Mouse	Clown
Crowd	Now	How

This exercise showed that students were tricky in pronouncing the O letters. They pronounced əbot, ərond, don, now, and grond. They were not able to distinguish the O letter and how it must be pronounced. From 42 students attending and practising those

words pronunciation, only 10% could pronounce better than their friends. Most of them pronounced OU as ou and o.

The meeting continued to the third meeting, where the teacher started to give sounds and spelling exercises to make students aware of the sounds and letters. The activity began by exploring some words and spelling activities. The teacher wrote some comments on the whiteboard, and students were asked to spell and mention the sounds.

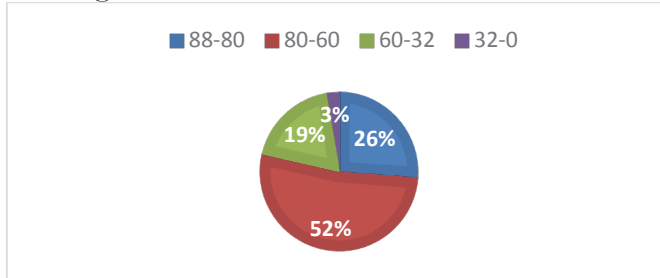
Figure 3. Some Words in Sounds and Spelling Exercise



The teacher wrote the words, and the students answered. When they spelled, the word GROW has ji-ar-ou-double yu, but in sounds, they have /g-r-əʊ/, so they found four letters in graphemes, but in phonemes, they could say there were three sounds. They spelled the word CLOCK as si-el-ou-si-key, but in sounds, they spelt/k-l-ɒ-k/ those were four sounds.

After being accustomed to the exercise, the teacher gave them sounds and spelling exercises from bbclearningenglish.com like Figure 1 presented. Before the students began to answer, the teacher tested them to pronounce the words and then gave thirty minutes to respond to how many sounds in each word, each word scored by four, so students got 100 if all their answers were correct. There were twenty-five words to be analyzed, and here was the students' score:

Figure 4. Students' Score on the First Exercise



From figure 4, we could find that 52% of students have started to recognize the sounds. 52% of students got a 60-80 score, which means they can distinguish the spelling letters and the sounds, while the other 19% or 11 students got a higher score of 80-88. 26% of students gained 32-60, and 3% or one student earned a 32-0 score.

After getting students' scores in answering the exercise, the teacher-tested students' pronunciation again to know them before and after progress. Students began to pronounce twenty-five words written in the activity. The teacher used Good, Fair, and Bad scoring criteria to measure students' pronunciation.

Figure 5. The Progress of Students' Pronunciation

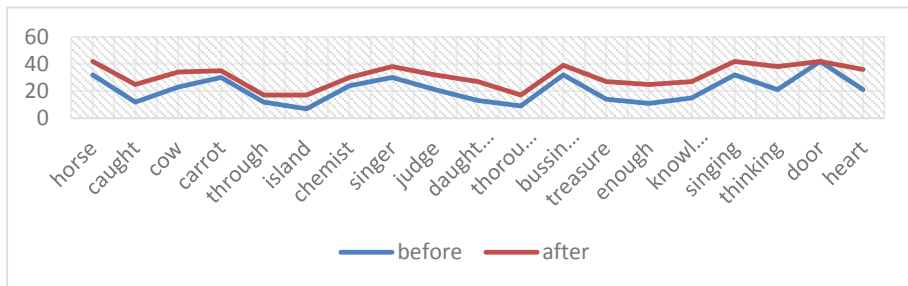


Figure 5 showed that there was progress from students' pronunciation after having sounds and spelling exercises. Students were accustomed to sounds and began to understand that letters and sounds in English words were not the same. Like in word CAUGHT, they spelt it si-ei-yu-ji-eij-ti, there were six letters, but in sounds, they were /k-ɔ:-t/ only three sounds found in that word. This way had change students' minds that English words are

difficult to pronounce. As long as they know the symbols or the sounds, the pronunciation could be directed easily.

In meeting four, the teacher gave sounds and spelling exercises focusing on /aʊ/ sounds. First of all, the teacher asked students to read the words shown in the activity; here were the words written in practice:

Figure 6. Sounds and spelling exercise on /aʊ/ sounds

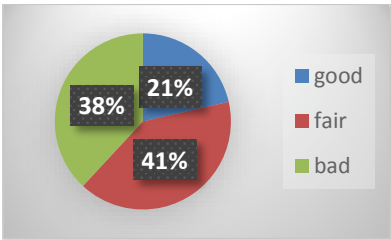
Sounds and Spelling Exercise

Look at the words below, Spell them and write the sounds you have found

WORDS	LETTERS	SOUNDS
about		
accountant		
act out		
announcer		
background		
blackout		
blousy		

There were fifty words written in the exercise. Before students answered the activity, they had to pronounce the words to know the ability to produce the /aʊ/ sounds. The teacher used Good, Fair, and Bad criteria to measure the students' pronunciation ability. There were forty-two students who had their time to read aloud the words, and here was the result:

Figure 7. Students' Pronunciation Result before having Sounds and Spelling Exercise



We knew that only a few students could pronounce the words with /aʊ/ sounds well from the chart. There were only 21% students in good criteria, 41% in fair criteria, and 38% in insufficient standards. Students might be tricky on the sound-producing, whether it is o or /aʊ/ sounds.

The exercise then continued in the fifth meeting. The teacher and students were analyzing the spelling and the sounds produced in words. Here is the example of students answer:

Table 2: Example of Exercise answer

Words	Spelling	Sounds
Announcer	ei-en-en-ou-yu-en-si-i-ar	/ənaʊnsə(r)/
Lockdown	el-ou-si-kei-di-ou-doubleyu-en	/lɒkdaʊn/
Blackout	bi-el-ei-si-kei-ou-yu-ti	/blækaʊt/
Discount	di-ai-es-si-ou-yu-en-ti	/diskaʊnt/

Table 2 shows how teachers and students analyzed the sounds and spelling of the words given. There were fifty words in the exercise, and students had to recognize both the graphemes and the phonemes.

The activity continued to the pronunciation practice. Students had to pronounce the fifty words given. The teacher observed the remedial process of students' pronunciation after having sounds and spelling exercises and recognizing the phonemes or sounds in words. Here was the students' progress:

Figure 8. Students' Pronunciation Results



From figure 8, it can be concluded that students could remedy their pronunciation by having sounds and spelling exercises. From the first pronunciation practice before students answered and did the sounds and spelling exercise, the percentage of students in Good pronunciation was 21%, or seven students. However, it increased to 12 students in the remedial process, students in Fair pronunciation were 41% or 17 students, rising to 23 students,

whereas students in Bad accent was 38% or 16 students. However, after knowing the sounds and spelling, students with bad pronunciation could remedy their pronunciation and got significant improvement from 16 students to seven students. It meant that by doing sounds and spelling exercises, students could distinguish the letters and the sounds then they successfully remedied their pronunciation.

From the findings starting from meeting one, the teacher introduced the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) to students before studying pronunciation. Teachers need to apply the use of IPA in pronunciation practice. It might be the goal for students to research pronunciation, then set the goal to pronounce the correct sounds they have seen (Gilakjani, 2016). So it would not be an accurate or ideal pronunciation goal, but intelligible and standardized pronunciation could be reached (Yoshida, 2016). In meeting two, the teacher tried to know students' common errors in pronouncing vowels, namely, the/aʊ/ sound. This sound was chosen because, based on the random observation in daily conversation, students got tricky pronunciations when producing this sound.

Knowing students' difficulties before the class begins is essential for teachers to give correct feedback and concise advice (Istiqomah et al., 2021). The third until sixth meetings showed improvements during the process of having exercise and pronunciation practices. Sounds and spelling exercises could give good progress to the practice of pronunciation. It was because students understood the difference between phonemes and graphemes (Maiza, 2020). Students could clarify the sounds they should produce in the words given (Elliyuspita, 2021). Phonemic awareness has been increased significantly. Students know the words and the sounds, so students can immediately decide how the words are pronounced (Purwanto, 2019)

Besides, it could increase students' motivation in practising pronunciation (Demirezen & Topal, 2015). It was a repeat after my technique, but students could encourage themselves to have their sights, senses, and even their movement to get the correct way to

produce the sounds. It is in line with experts suggest that to learn pronunciation, we recommended using our senses, not only imitating, pausing, imitating again, but also included in the process of knowing the sounds (Gilakjani, 2016).

If we talk about phonemic awareness, it was late for university students to recognize phonemes and graphemes because phonemic awareness should be introduced when they are young (Piper, 2010). For children raised in the English language, phonemic awareness is given when they are young, so they are ready to have good literacy, read, and speak (Yusuf, 2019). It is strengthened by Premarathne (2018) that the awareness of phonetic symbols, moreover vowels could be the dominant attributes to reduce students' fossilization. Nevertheless, this research introduces phonemic and phonological knowledge at the university level because of the Practice Pronunciation Dictation lecture. It was ok for them because nothing too late to study. Further, adult learners can absorb and understand pronunciation practice better than children (Yoshida, 2016). Any learners have their proper time to learn and study.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The practice of pronunciation could not be separated from the sound production and the goal of pronunciation learning. To reach the goal of intelligible and understandable pronunciation, teachers should apply a suitable method. Besides, teachers have to be able to give correct feedback for students' pronunciation mistakes and errors.

One of the common errors EFL learners had was how they produced the /aʊ/ sound. They often get tricky with the letter O and pronounce the word into O sound. To remedy the errors made, the teacher tried to apply the sounds and spelling exercise, which is in line with the theory of phonemic awareness.

Before learning pronunciation, students are suggested to know the difference between sounds (phonemes) and letters (graphemes) to predict and concisely realize what sounds come in

words. Using sounds and spelling exercises could give a new pronunciation practice, before a repeat after me activity to sounds and spelling activity that could motivate students to learn pronunciation.

Sounds and spelling exercises could give significant progress to the remedy of students' pronunciation practice. It was because students are aware and accustomed to the symbols of sounds, then can predict from the activity of spelling, both spelling letter and spelling sounds. In conclusion, the use of sounds and spelling exercise could remake and remedy students' pronunciation, focusing on/aʊ/ recognition.

This research focused on the /aʊ/ recognition and pronunciation remedies. Next researcher can try to maximize the use of sounds and spelling exercise in another part of pronunciation practice, which can be in consonants, voiced, voiceless, or consonant clusters. Further, it can be good to remedy other vowels recognitions.

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