Teaching English Pronunciation in Between Color and Vowel

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Abstrak: Pengucapan yang tepat sangat penting untuk komunikasi yang sukses dalam bahasa apa pun, terutama dalam bahasa Inggris yang menghadirkan berbagai tantangan fonetik bagi pembelajar. Penguasaan pengucapan tidak hanya meningkatkan pemahaman tetapi juga membangun kepercayaan diri pembelajar saat berinteraksi dengan penutur asli. Seiring berkembangnya metodologi pendidikan, pendekatan inovatif dalam pengajaran pengucapan pun bermunculan, salah satunya adalah *Color Vowel Approach*. Penelitian ini mengkaji efektivitas metode ini dalam meningkatkan keterampilan pengucapan vokal bahasa Inggris di kalangan mahasiswa semester pertama Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu. Dengan melibatkan 40 peserta, penelitian kuasi-eksperimental ini mengungkap peningkatan yang signifikan setelah penerapan *Color Vowel Approach*, yang didukung oleh temuan statistik (p<0.05). Meskipun *Color Vowel Approach* menghadirkan suasana belajar yang menarik, penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk memahami efektivitas jangka panjangnya dibandingkan dengan metode tradisional dalam pengajaran pengucapan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada wacana pendekatan pengajaran inovatif, serta menawarkan rekomendasi praktis untuk meningkatkan keterampilan pengucapan di pendidikan tinggi.

Kata kunci: Pendekatan Vokal Warna, Bahasa Inggris, Pengucapan

Abstract: *Potent pronunciation is crucial for successful communication in any language, particularly in English, which presents numerous phonetic challenges for learners. Mastery of pronunciation not only enhances intelligibility but also fosters confidence among learners when engaging with native speakers. As educational methodologies evolve, innovative approaches to teaching pronunciation have emerged, one of which is the Color Vowel Approach. This research investigates the effectiveness of this method in enhancing English vowels pronunciation skills among first semester students of English Tadris study program in State Islamic University Datokarama Palu. With participants amounted to 40 students, this quasi- experimental research unveiled notable enhancement following the employment of Color Vowel Approach, backed by statistical findings (p<0.05). While the Color Vowel Approach provides thrilling learning atmosphere, more research is needed to fully understand its long-term effectiveness compared to other traditional method of teaching pronunciation. This research supplies to the discourse on the innovative teaching approach, offering practical recommendation in enhancing pronunciation skills in higher education.*

Keywords: *Color Vowel Approach, English, Pronunciation*

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is more than just a matter of producing sounds; it encompasses aspects such as intonation, stress, and rhythm, all of which contribute to the overall comprehensibility of speech (Chan, 2018). Research indicates that learners with poor pronunciation may face difficulties in both understanding spoken language and being understood, leading to frustration and a lack of confidence in their communication abilities (Derwing & Munro, 2005). This underscores the necessity of effective

pronunciation instruction in language education, especially in a global context where English serves as a lingua franca.

Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect of language learning that significantly influences communication effectiveness (Low, 2015). In the context of English language acquisition, mastering pronunciation is essential for learners to convey their messages clearly and to be understood by native speakers (Nagle et. al., 2019). However, many learners struggle with the intricacies of English phonetics, particularly with vowel sounds, which can vary widely in pronunciation and meaning. Traditional pronunciation instruction often focuses on rote memorization of sounds and repetition, which may not effectively address the nuanced nature of pronunciation. Many students benefit from more interactive, engaging methods that incorporate visual aids and contextual practice (Pennington, 2011). However, not all educational environments provide the necessary resources or training for teachers to implement these innovative approaches. As a result, students may receive inadequate support in developing their pronunciation skills. As a response to these challenges, innovative teaching methods have emerged, one of the most notable being the *Color Vowel Approach*.

The *Color Vowel Approach*, developed by Karen Taylor and Tim T. B. M., is an innovative pedagogical method that integrates visual aids with auditory learning to facilitate the teaching of vowel sounds. This approach assigns specific colors to different vowel sounds, creating a visual framework that helps learners associate sounds with specific words and pronunciations. By using color as a mnemonic device, the method aims to simplify the learning process, making it more engaging and accessible for students who may struggle with traditional phonetic instruction. Initial studies indicate that this approach can significantly improve learners' ability to recognize and produce English vowel sounds accurately.

Figure 1. Color Vowel Chart

As language education continues to evolve, it is crucial to assess the efficacy of contemporary teaching methods in achieving desired learning outcomes. The *Color Vowel Approach* represents a shift towards more interactive and visually oriented teaching strategies. This study seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the *Color Vowel Approach* in

pronunciation instruction. By comparing the pronunciation skills of students taught using this method with those taught through conventional approaches, the research aims to provide insights into the practical applications of this innovative technique.

A couple of relevant studies have explored the *Color Vowel Approach* and its effectiveness in teaching pronunciation. First, Saito and Wu (2019) in their research entitled *Effects of Visual Cues on L2 Pronunciation: The Color Vowel Approach in Action* examine how visual cues, such as those used in the *Color Vowel Approach*, impact the pronunciation skills of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Saito and Wu's research highlights the effectiveness of visual cues in enhancing L2 pronunciation, demonstrating that the *Color Vowel Approach* significantly improves learners' pronunciation accuracy and engagement. Second, Putri and Adawiyah (2024) in their research entitled *Color Vowel Approach: Coping with Students' Learning Styles in Teaching Pronunciation* discover *Color Vowel Approach* thrived to cope with students' learning style in Pronunciation Practice course. It helped the students to easily comprehend material being taught as well as yielded a relaxed learning environment where students could learn best.

This research comes as an advancement of the researcher's previous study to probe further into the effectiveness of Color Vowel Approach in teaching pronunciation in State Islamic University Datokarama Palu. Hence, The aim of this research is to examine the effectiveness of the Color Vowel Approach in teaching English pronunciation at State Islamic University Datokarama Palu.

METHOD

This study utilized a quasi-experimental research design with 57 population of second semester students of English Tadris Study Program in Islamic State University Datokarama Palu academic year 2021/2022. The population were from 3 classes; TBI1 and TBI2 with 20 students each, and TBI3 with 17 students. TBI3 was excluded from the research due to uneven number of students in comparison to the other two classes that might become confounding variable. TBI1 where selected as control class while TBI2 as experimental one after gaining the pre-test result where the mean score of TBI2 was lower than TBI1.

During the research time frame, 8 meetings took place. Pre-test was conducted on the first meeting and lasted for 200 minutes while post-test was conducted on the eighth meeting and lasted for the same amount of time as in pre- test. Pre-test and post-test instruments containing 20 multiple choices questions for each test were employed to collect data. In the tests, each student was given maximum of 10 minutes to showcase the pronunciation skill one by one separately. The pronunciation skill of students was assessed by three other English lecturers in State Islamic University Datokarama Palu who contributed as the assessors for this research.

In this study, each teaching session was designed to last for 100 minutes, providing ample time for both instructional and interactive learning activities. The researcher employed the Color Vowel Approach as the primary method for teaching English vowel sounds in the experimental class, emphasizing a unique and engaging strategy to help students grasp the nuances of vowel pronunciation. This approach involved associating

vowel sounds with specific colors and key words, aiming to enhance students' auditory discrimination and pronunciation skills in a more interactive and memorable way. In contrast, the control class was taught English vowel sounds using traditional methods, without incorporating the Color Vowel Approach. This distinction allowed the researcher to observe and compare the outcomes of both teaching methods, highlighting the potential effectiveness of the Color Vowel Approach in improving students' mastery of English pronunciation.

Data analysis was carried out through several steps. They were (1) content validity test to gain data about the appropriate test content that suit the expected graduate learning outcomes and course learning outcomes stated in the semester learning plan of Pronunciation Practice course compiled by the senior lecturer at research location; the same lecturer who share her expert judgment to guarantee the instruments validity; (2) descriptive analysis to gather data distribution and pattern (mean and deviation standard); (3) inferential analysis to test whether the null hypothesis was accepted or not based on the t-test result and ANOVA to gain p-value. The result of reliability coefficient of the pre-test was 0.96 and the post- test was 0.93 meanwhile the reliability coefficient is at least 0.7. Therefore, the pre- test and post- test were reliable as the research instrument.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As stated in the introduction session, the objective of this research was to answer research question about the effectiveness of *Color Vowel Approach* in teaching pronunciation. Several data were found to showcase the result and were presented as follows:

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test result

Group	Pre-test mean	Post-test mean	Difference	p-
Experimental	65.4	85.7	+20.3	0.002
Control	67.1	75.5	+8.4	0.089

The experimental group showed a substantial improvement in pronunciation skills, with the mean post-test score increasing by 20.3 points from the pre-test. This difference was statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.002, which is well below the threshold of 0.05. This suggests that the treatment had a strong positive effect on the participants' pronunciation skills. The small p-value indicates that the likelihood of the observed improvement occurring by chance is very low, further supporting the effectiveness of the treatment.

In contrast, the control group showed a much smaller improvement in pronunciation skills, with a mean post-test score increase of only 8.4 points. However, this difference was not statistically significant, as the p-value of 0.089 is greater than 0.05. This suggests that the improvement in the control group was likely due to factors unrelated to the intervention, such as natural improvement over time or other external factors.

The significant improvement observed in the experimental group (20.3 points) strongly suggests that the *Color Vowel Approach* used in this research was effective in enhancing pronunciation skills. The p-value of 0.002 indicates that the results are not due to random chance and points to the effectiveness of the teaching method.

It is worth noting that the improvement in the experimental group was substantial, and the mean score increase was well above what was observed in the control group. This provides evidence that the intervention played a key role in improving participants' pronunciation abilities. These findings are consistent with research that suggests that structured, systematic approaches to teaching pronunciation (such as the Color Vowel Approach) can lead to significant improvements in learners' spoken language skills, particularly when the approach targets specific aspects of pronunciation in a visual and auditory manner.

The control group experienced a smaller improvement (8.4 points), and the result was not statistically significant. The p-value of 0.089 indicates that any observed changes in pronunciation could have been due to unrelated factors, such as practice effects or the mere passage of time, rather than any specific intervention. While a modest improvement was noted, it was insufficient to conclude that the control group benefited significantly from the research conditions.

This finding is important because it highlights the need for targeted interventions (in this case *Color Vowel Approach*) to achieve meaningful improvements in language skills. The lack of statistical significance in the control group underscores the idea that, in the absence of a structured teaching method, learners are less likely to show significant gains in pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

The research on the effectiveness of the *Color Vowel Approach* in teaching pronunciation underscores its significant impact on enhancing learners' phonetic skills and overall language proficiency. This innovative method, which utilizes color- coding to represent vowel sounds, not only aids in sound recognition and production but also fosters greater engagement and motivation among students. Key findings reveal that the *Color Vowel Approach* leads to improved pronunciation accuracy, enabling learners to articulate English sounds more clearly and confidently. The visual cues provided by this method facilitate self-correction and active participation, empowering students to take charge of their pronunciation practice. In conclusion, the *Color Vowel Approach* represents a promising strategy for pronunciation teaching in ESL contexts. Its ability to improve pronunciation outcomes while fostering learner engagement positions it as an essential tool for educators seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their language instruction. Future research should continue to explore its applications and long-term effectiveness across different contexts and learner populations to further validate and refine this innovative approach.

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