

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of The Research

Pronunciation is the key aspect of spoken language and plays important role in effective communication. Pronunciation encompasses segmental and suprasegmental features. Segmental features like vowels and consonants—suprasegmental features such as intonation, rhythm, and stress, that jointly impact how natural and easy to understand<sup>1</sup>. Despite its importance, pronunciation often ignored by EFL, which causes difficulties in communication even among the learners with strong knowledge of grammar and vocabulary<sup>2</sup>. Pronunciation is one of important aspect of language learning, because the main purpose is comprehending the target language<sup>3</sup>. Accurate pronunciation improves clarity in speaking, minimize misunderstanding, and support to overall communicative competence.

Pronunciation is essential aspect of effective communication in English, because immediately influence language understanding ability and helps speakers understood. Accurate pronunciation nor only minimize pronunciation

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<sup>1</sup> Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press (2010): 2

<sup>2</sup> Tracey M Derwing and Murray J Munro, "Second Language Accent and Pronunciation Teaching: A Research-Based Approach," *TESOL Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2005): 379–97.

<sup>3</sup> Carolina Bustos Martínez and María Jesús Millar Zurita, "Improving Intelligibility and Pronunciation Through Phonics Instruction for 5th Grade EFL Learners of Chilean Public Schools," *Sino-US English Teaching* 17, no. 2 (2020): 43–57, <https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8072/2020.02.001>.

but also, can improve students' speaking confidence. Intelligibility is the main goal of pronunciation instruction enabling successful interaction regardless of accent. The clear pronunciations encourage learners to speak more confident, pronunciation can promote active participation in conversation. Therefore, pronunciation instruction plays crucial role for supporting communicative competence and overall language development<sup>4</sup>.

Pronunciation still becomes the main challenges for many Indonesian EFL learners, especially because of phonetics differences between English and Indonesia with limited classroom practice and native-like pronunciation. L1 inference often causes the learners change the sound of English that is unfamiliar with original sounds, which causes continuously mispronounce and minimize intelligibility. These difficulties are further worsened by traditional method which more focused on memorization rather than pronunciation or communicative competency, which makes it hard for students for improve their spoken ability effectively<sup>5</sup>.

To tackle those challenges among Indonesia EFL learners, recent studies have highlighted effective strategies like the use of phonetic symbols and phonics instruction. Phonics instruction has proven effective because of its

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<sup>4</sup> Derwing and Munro, "Second Language Accent and Pronunciation Teaching: A Research-Based Approach."

<sup>5</sup> A Rosyid, "Factors Affecting EFL Learners in Learning English Pronunciation," *PEDAGOGIA Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 8 (2016): 437–40.

systematics focus on the relationship between letters and sounds. Phonics instruction also helps learners to recognize unfamiliar phonemes<sup>6</sup>.

Phonics helps learners connect sounds with spelling patterns, which is very important for accurate pronunciation. In the context of EFL such as Indonesia, phonetics provides a structured solution to common difficulties with the sound system of the English language<sup>7</sup>. Phonetic-based activities improve the pronunciation of junior high school students by enhancing their awareness of sound-letter correspondence. Systematic phonics helps learners accurately distinguish and pronounce phonemes not found in their first language. Phonics-based teaching effectively helps young learners pronounce strange English sounds. Phonics instruction increases phonological awareness among elementary students, which then results in better learning of oral production.

Thus, a number of considerations relevant to the objective of estimating the effectiveness of phonics instruction in improving students' English pronunciation would lead to the choice of MTsN 2 Kota Blitar, such as this: MTsN 2 Kota Blitar has a heterogeneous student population in terms of language background, thus providing a rich context to examine how phonics instruction may operate in a heterogeneous context. Second, although a range of methods would have been applied for teaching within the school, it appears

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<sup>6</sup> Zdena Kralova and Daniela Soradova, "The Phonics Method in Teaching Efl Pronunciation To Young Learners With Dyslexia," *Proceedings of CBU in Social Sciences* 2 (2021): 211–17, <https://doi.org/10.12955/pss.v2.223>.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph K Torgesen, Richard K Wagner, and Carol A Rashotte, *Developing Phonological Awareness in Young Children* (Pearson Education, 2006).

that explicit instruction in English pronunciation is non-existent: teachers tend to have other priorities that concern completing the syllabus and doing written assignments. As a result, students are usually left unattended with pronunciation, with little corrective feedback, hence, most of them do not know that they make pronunciation errors. Thus, MTsN 2 Kota Blitar is very well equipped to judge the effectiveness of phonics instruction in improving students' English pronunciation skills.

Due to the stated condition, the researcher seeks to adopt phonics instruction as a method of teaching to overcome this gap and enhance the students' ability to pronounce the English sounds. This study is geared towards evaluating how phonics instruction will aid in improving students' English pronunciation. It is for this reason that the researcher has chosen the title “The Effectiveness of Using Phonics Instruction in Improving Students’ English Pronunciation at MTsN 2 Kota Blitar.”

### **Research Problems**

According to the operational definition, the research question of this research “How is the effectiveness of phonics instruction in improving English word pronunciation ability among seventh-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Blitar?”

## **Research Hypothesis**

### **1. Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>)**

There is no significant English word pronunciation ability score difference between students who were treated using phonics instruction method and those treated in MTsN 2 Kota Blitar.

### **2. Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>a</sub>)**

There is a significant English word pronunciation ability score difference between students who were treated using phonics instruction method and those treated in MTsN 2 Kota Blitar.

## **Objectives of The Research**

This study intends to comprehensively investigate how effective the phonics instruction method is in improving English pronunciation competence among English students of MTsN 2 Kota Blitar. Focusing on phonics instruction that emphasizes systematic correspondence between sounds and letters, the researchers try to establish whether such a method of teaching gives rise to significant improvement in the students' pronunciation accuracy. In this regard, this study is directed towards finding out phonics instruction which highlights systematic correspondence of sounds and letters-with this methodology of teaching, are there any chances of students improving their pronunciation accuracy.

## **Significance of the Research**

This thesis is expected to make contribution for students, teachers, researcher.

### **1. The Students**

Phonics instruction method enhances pronunciation quality giving students a clearer understanding of English. It will improve students' skills in pronouncing letters. There will be interest among students in pronouncing words in English because learning is fun.

### **2. The Teachers**

Phonics instruction makes for a structured and systematic method for teaching the pronunciation and reading of words; therefore, making method of instruction more efficient. Secondly, it allows for a more effective assessment of students' strengths and weaknesses, with intervention directed toward those in need of extra assistance.

### **3. The Next researchers**

The research adds to the existing scholarship as part of the source for subsequent future research on phonics instruction method. It highlights effective and novel ways to deliver language learning. It also offers insight into the cognitive and educational aspects of language acquisition, thereby widening the understanding of phonics' efficacy in diverse educational contexts.

## Scope of the Research

This research limits the scope to seventh-grade students at MTsN 2 Kota Blitar, whose stage of development in language skills is considered to be very crucial. At this level, students continue to build their understanding of English phonetics and pronunciation rules, thereby making them an appropriate group for interventions like the phonics instruction method. Thus, this study focuses on the very essence of phonics instruction and seeks to investigate its effectiveness in the field of English pronunciation, especially in terms of pronunciation accuracy and the accurate articulation of sounds in English.

## Definitions of Key Terms

To prevent misinterpretation and to provide clarity for readers of this study, the following definitions are provided for key terms frequently referenced throughout this research:

### 1. Phonics Instruction

Phonics refers to "the systematic teaching of sounds represented by letters and groups of letters, and to blend and mix them to form words that can be read or written by children."<sup>8</sup> Phonics as the relationship between patterns and systems found in spoken and written language<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> John Bald, *Sound Foundations: Learning and Teaching Phonics* (Sage Publications, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Goodman, *Phonics Phacts* (Heinemann, 1993).

Similarly, Hinson and Smith define phonics as a system where sounds or phonemes are mapped to letters or graphemes<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way in which words are spoken, including aspects such as the articulation of single sounds, stress, intonation, and rhythm. Celce-Murcia et al. consider it as the production of speech sounds in such a way that there is mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener. In other words, this means that good pronunciation encompasses all related phonological elements: segmental features (i.e., individual sounds such as consonants and/or vowels), suprasegmental features (i.e., stress, intonation, and rhythm), and the control of those characteristics in various communicative settings. In language teaching, pronunciation is often taught through a series of activities aimed at addressing specific problems such as vowel and consonant sounds, word stress, or sentence intonation<sup>11</sup>.

### The Structure of Thesis

This thesis will be structured as follows:

1. Chapter I introduces the thesis, encompassing the study's background, research question, objectives, significance, definitions

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<sup>10</sup> M Hinson and P Smith, *Phonics and Phonic Resources*, ed. M Hinson and P Smith (Staffordshire: NASEN Enterprises Limited, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Marianne Celce-Murcia, Donna M Brinton, and Janet M Goodwin, *Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

of key terms, and the thesis structure.

2. Chapter II presents a literature review, providing relevant information about recent studies and theoretical concepts to support the investigation, organized under subheadings such as the definition of pronunciation, the definition of phonics instruction and previous studies.
3. Chapter III outlines the research methodology, including study design, subjects, variables, instruments, validity and reliability testing, data collection techniques, and data analysis.
4. Chapter IV covers the data presentation and findings of the study.
5. Chapter V presents conclusion of the study, limitation of the research and offers suggestions for future researchers.