

## Blended Learning Model (BLM) in English Pronunciation Class: Lesson from Indonesia

Yuliyanto Sabat<sup>1</sup>, Suwarsih Madya<sup>2</sup>, Basikin<sup>3</sup>, Abd. Syakur<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>English Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

sabatkeren@gmail.com, suwarsihmadya@uny.ac.id, basikin@uny.ac.id, syakurabdmpd@gmail.com

### Abstract

*Blended Learning Model (BLM) has frequently been viewed as one of the most effective models in teaching. Many studies have been conducted to reveal the effectiveness of BLM to teach various subjects, yet very few previous studies touched the use of BLM to teach English pronunciation. This research aimed at filling the gap describing how English pronunciation teacher put into practice the BLM in pronunciation instruction and what the students' responses toward this model. This research used qualitative research method and employed field notes observation, a set of questionnaires, and semi-structured interview as the instruments. The research participants were 29 students from English education study program at teacher training institute at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo, East java, Indonesia. The result showed that BLM was employed through three related stages in pronunciation class; online materials, the online tutor, and the face-to-face teacher. Additionally, BLM increased students' interests and motivation to learn pronunciation. These results can be viewed as a source of perspective points while teaching pronunciation skill in EFL setting.*

### Keywords

blended learning model; english pronunciation; adult learners



## I. Introduction

Pronunciation is a very crucial language component in effective oral communication. Conceptually, it is a part of linguistic competence helping EFL students achieves speech intelligibility for successful communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Burns, 2003). This intelligibility could be achieved if the students could accurately produce the English sounds. Interestingly, one English sound could be represented by many symbols and one symbol could be represented by many English sounds (Madya, 2017). Thus, they need to memorize the rules of English sound productions and their exceptions. This is worsened by the fact that not all English words have the same stress and the quality of sounds in unstressed words. Additionally, the existence of rhythm and intonation also become their challenges in learning English pronunciation. Therefore, many EFL learners find it difficult to learn English pronunciation (Haghighi and Rahimy 2017; Gilakjani 2016; Sadeghi and Mashhadi Heidar 2016).

Contextually, Indonesian EFL students learn English pronunciation as the most challenging subject due to some reasons. First, Indonesian is a phonetic language where there is almost perfect correspondence between letters and sounds while English has very little correspondence between the letters and sounds (Madya, 2017:172). In the process of pronunciation learning, they pronounce every letter written in English words as it is in Indonesian. Second, some of the English sounds do not exist in Indonesian. Darjowidjojo (1998) state that English sounds such as [v], [θ], [ð], [ʒ], [dʒ], [tʃ] cannot be found in Indonesian. Consequently, they substitute the absent English sounds with the similar ones

existing in Indonesian, yet it leads to different meaning of words (Richards, 2015). Therefore, it is important to provide students with such an appropriate instructional model.

The ideal learning model for Indonesian EFL learners is a model which could incrementally support their pronunciation enhancement. This is because of the differences between the sound system of Indonesian and that of English (Madya, 2017; Moedjito, 2008). These differences require learners to make persistent and continuous efforts to reach the level of intelligibility. However, the facts show that many teachers face some obstacles in teaching pronunciation. First, teachers teach such a big class size. The condition of overcrowded classes does not permit them to teach pronunciation effectively (Hayati 2010; Kanwal & Khurshid, 2012). Second, pronunciation is taught within a very limited time (Tulung, 2008). Third, teacher lacks of time (Hammer, 2001). Therefore, teachers should solve these problems by involving innovations in pronunciation instruction.

Blended Learning Model (BLM), the incorporation between the conventional and technological teaching models (Akbarov et al., 2018; Clark and Mayer, 2003), can be considered as a solution for some reasons. First, BLM helps students to be more active, motivated, and autonomous (Nguyen, 2014). To this point, teacher might lead students to access the internet and find the best models of pronunciation to be downloaded, imitated, and uploaded their learning products to be seen and commented by others. Second, students who are learning pronunciation will not deal with such burdening assignments which are sometimes very frustrating and confusing for them (Goodwin & Miller, 2013:78). The third reason is that BLM benefits teachers in term of giving learner autonomy, repetitive practice, immediate and detailed feedback and flexible learning (Kilickaya, 2007). Lastly, BLM helps teachers minimize pronunciation error in giving model. Teacher can ask their students to use technology to check and compare their sound to that of a native speaker (Neri, Cucchiarini, & Strik, 2002).

Based on the aforementioned reasons, this research aimed at describing the steps taken by pronunciation lecturer using BLM and the students' response toward the implementation of BLM.

## **II. Review of Literature**

English pronunciation teaching in Indonesia, Blended Learning Model (BLM), and Cognitive Phonological theory were applied as theoretical frameworks.

### **2.1 English Pronunciation Teaching in Indonesia**

In Indonesia where English is taught as foreign language, many students find it difficult to learn pronunciation including EFL student teachers in university. One of the main obstacles is due to the influence of their mother tongues and Indonesian when learning English pronunciation. They are accustomed to pronouncing every letter in Indonesian words since Indonesian is phonetic language in which there is almost perfect correspondence between letters and sounds while English has very little correspondence between the letters and sounds (Madya, 2017:172). It will be ideal to compare the sound system of English and those of their mother tongues and Indonesian to find out if differences and similarities exist. For the practical reasons, the researcher will compare between English and Indonesian inasmuch as all students in Indonesia speak Indonesian as the National language or lingua franca.

Generally, comparison between English and Indonesian shows that some English sounds are indeed similar to Indonesian, some others have the same manners of articulation, and even some of English sounds are absent. Lantaigne (2006:1) also states

that difficulties in learning English occur due to the fact that some of the English sounds do not exist in the mother tongue of learners. Darjowidjojo (1998) affirm the previous researchers have found by stating that English sounds such as [v], [θ], [ð], [ʒ], [dʒ], [tʃ] cannot be found in Indonesian. Therefore, the nature of the similarity relationship between the first and the second languages will determine the rate of learning (Steinberg, 233).

Regarding the uniqueness of Indonesian compared to English, Indonesian EFL student teachers who are supposed to be the future English teachers need to have a good pronunciation skill. Helping them possess such a good pronunciation skill, Madya (2017: xii) proposes two kinds of approaches. The first, sound-symbol approach emphasizes on students' phonological awareness in which Indonesian and English sound systems are much different. Indonesian students must be aware that one English sound can be represented by more than one letters or symbols. This is different from Indonesian sound system in which there is almost perfect correspondence between sounds and letters. Meanwhile, the second approach is called as symbol-sound approach. This second approach raises students' awareness that one English letter can be represented by more than one sounds. Therefore, Indonesian EFL student teachers must be aware of such crucial difference in order to have a good pronunciation skill when teaching English in the classroom after completing the education from college. Education is one of the efforts to improve the ability of human intelligence, thus he is able to improve the quality of his life (Saleh and Mujahiddin, 2020).

## 2.2 Blended Learning Model (BLM)

Various definitions have been proposed by many experts across the world regarding BLM, yet they refer to the same ideas that integrate between conventional and technological learning models (Guangying, 2014; Holmes & Gardner, 2006; Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007; Masson & Rennie, 2006; Williams, 2002; Kang and Seomun, 2018). The emphasis of this model is on students' autonomous learning. Nguyen (2014) states that BLM helps students to be more active, motivated, and autonomous. In this case, students can learn pronunciation by accessing the internet to find the best models of pronunciation to be downloaded, imitated, and uploaded their learning products to be seen and commented by others. The concept of BLM can be simply designed as the following combination (Najeh Rajeh Alsalhi, Mohd. Elmagzoub Eltahir, Sami Sulieman Al-Qatawneh, 2019).



*Figure 1. The concepts of BLM (Alsahi, Eltahir, A-Qatawneh, 2019)*

The previous experts such as Driscoll (2002); Graham (2006); Whitelock and Jelfs (2003) mention the benefits of BLM. It aims at achieving the learning goals through to the use of various types of technology facilities in IoT era. It blends a thoughtful conventional meeting with online procedures (Klimova & Poulova, 2014 as cited by Kosar, 2016). In addition, it incorporates various teaching methods underpinned by learning theories such as constructivism and behaviorism. Students who are learning pronunciation will not deal with such burdening assignments which are sometimes very frustrating and confusing for them (Goodwin & Miller, 2013:78).

Apart from the aforementioned benefits of BLM, it also gives negative impacts to students in learning process. They can hardly accomplish the completion of the assignments as the follow-up learning activities because of preparing the upcoming meeting. BLM sometimes makes the students feel uncomfortable in learning process as they cannot engage with the in-class materials and use the available time for activities. From teachers' perspectives, they cannot give timely feedback on students' performance compared with the conventional method.

Regardless its strengths and weaknesses in classroom practice, the use of BLM in English pronunciation class is very rare (Carlos Orúsa, María José Barlésb, Daniel Belanchec, Luis Casalód, Elena Fraje, Raquel Gurreaf: 2016 in Backla 2018). Therefore, this research will describe the steps on the implementation of BLM in pronunciation class and students' responses toward BLM in learning pronunciation.

### **2.3 Cognitive Phonological Theory**

Having acquired an L1 phonological system since childhood, children will gain an automated structure from such phonological concepts (Fraser, 2006). These concepts are produced unconsciously and showing one's individual identities. SLA theory states that these language concepts will be developed since childhood and used to learn L2 (Culture, 1984). The cognitive theory considers that it is more difficult to learn the concepts of pronunciation features in adulthood due to the fact that changing the present and internalized concepts is harder than forming the new ones. The same point of views is conveyed by Morley (1996) that L1 speech pattern will likely hinder L2 speech pattern modification and it will influence one's speech intelligibility in L2 sound productions.

## **III. Research Method**

This research employed case study to describe the steps taken by pronunciation lecturer using BLM and the students' response toward the implementation of BLM. It described the uniqueness of the existing phenomena using multiple sources of information (Merriam, 2002). The research participants were the first semester students taking pronunciation course from English education study program at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia. To collect the data, the researcher used three main instruments namely field note observation, questionnaire, and interview.

## **IV. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Results**

#### **a. The Implementation of BLM in a Pronunciation Class**

The first statement of the problem aimed to describe the stages or steps on the implementation BLM to teach English pronunciation. The result of data analysis showed that the pronunciation lecturer had conducted three related steps in teaching pronunciation namely opening, whilst, and closing activities. There are several activities conducted in opening session such as leading to prayer, calling the roll, and brainstorming while in whilst session, the lecturer taught the main topics as stated in the lesson plan and finally close the session by giving summary of the lesson and giving the instructions for the next meeting. Before ending the session, the lecturer explained the students about submitting the assignment via Edmodo and some other instructions dealing with pronunciation. To this end, the lecturer makes use of technology in teaching pronunciation and the results of students' assignments were discussed in the face-to-face meeting.

### b. Online Learning

Based on in-classroom observation, it was found out that when explaining the design of pronunciation learning, the lecturer asked the students to open their mobile phone and connect it to the internet. He instructed the students to access one of technological platform in the internet which is called as edmodo. It is a learning platform which enables educators across the school subjects particularly pronunciation lecturer and the learners to connect one another outside of the classroom. He stated that he would send and share the learning contents and many other tasks through this platform. Due to its roles in education, edmodo became more popular to help educators send assignment, save, and administrate the class more easily (Zakime, 2018).

### c. The Online Tutor

The next step was online tutor. The lecturer also explained the materials through online and instructed his students to access any related materials there. Utilizing this platform, the lecturer was obviously helped to provide learning support to his students. Meanwhile, the students not only download the pronunciation video or other materials but also upload the products of their practice to the lecturer via internet (Brunelli, 2019). In this area, the lecturer gave written feedback such as a motivating feedback (eg., good, well-done, excellent) through the platform. He did not make a web-based video conferencing system due to the poor connection of the internet in his institution. In addition, he also noted some points or words which were commonly mispronounced by the students. He later discussed such mispronounced words in the face-to-face meeting.

### d. Face-to-face Teacher

In this phase, the lecturer asked the students to practice their pronunciation once more in front of the lecturer. He then discussed the most common errors which students make in pronouncing some English words. He also used some pronunciation equipment such as software of Pronunciation Power and Cambridge university dictionary completed with audio and phonetics form so that the students will be able to check their pronunciation with native speakers' pronunciation.

### e. Students' Responses toward BLM

The second statement of the problem aimed at describing the students' responses toward the implementation of BLM in learning pronunciation. The questionnaire consisted of 14 items and categorized into three main areas; students' interest to learn pronunciation; students' opinion about BLM, and the internet access of each student.

### f. Students' Interest to Learn Pronunciation

The item of students' interest to learn pronunciation consisted of 5 items. The research participants were instructed to code 5 items from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD) (corresponding to 1 to 5 respectively). Table 1 showed the percentage for each item.

**Table 1.** Students' interests to learn pronunciation

NO	STATEMENT	DEGREE OF AGREEMENT					Σ%
		SA	A	H	DA	SD	
1	Pronunciation is an interesting and challenging lesson.	55.17% (16)	37.93% (11)	3.45% (1)	0.00% (0)	3.45% (1)	100%



2	Learning pronunciation is fun.	51.72% (15)	34.48% (10)	10.34% (3)	3.45% (1)	0.00% (0)	100%
3	Pronunciation is an important part of language learning.	44.83% (13)	37.93% (11)	6.90% (2)	0.00% (0)	10.34% (3)	100%
4	It is necessary to have good pronunciation.	51.72% (15)	34.48% (10)	6.90% (2)	0.00% (0)	6.90% (2)	100%
5	It is important for English teachers to have good pronunciation	51.72% (15)	37.93% (11)	3.45% (1)	6.90% (2)	0.00% (0)	100%

SA: Strongly Agree A: Agree H: Hesitated DA: Disagree SD: Strongly Disagree

### g. Students' Opinion about BLM

The item of students' opinion towards BLM consisted of 6 items. The research participants were instructed to code 5 items from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD) (corresponding to 1 to 5 respectively). Table 2 showed the percentage for each item.

**Table 2.** Students' opinion about BLM

NO	STATEMENT	DEGREE OF AGREEMENT					%
		SA	A	H	DA	SD	
6	Learning pronunciation by using blended learning strategy is very interesting.	24,14% (7)	48,28% (14)	27,59% (8)	0,00% (0)	0,00% (0)	100,00%
7	Learning pronunciation by using blended learning strategy can make learning process become challenging	24,14% (7)	44,83% (13)	24,14% (7)	6,90% (2)	0,00% (0)	100,00%
8	The material given by the teacher using blended learning strategy is easy to understand	17,24% (5)	41,38% (12)	41,38% (12)	0,00% (0)	0,00% (0)	100,00%
9	Blended learning strategy is suitable strategy use for learning pronunciation	10,34% (3)	44,83% (13)	41,38% (12)	3,45% (1)	0,00% (0)	100,00%
10	The assignment given by using blended learning strategy influences me to master pronunciation.	13,79% (4)	41,38% (12)	37,93% (11)	6,90% (2)	0,00% (0)	100,00%
11	The combination of online and face-to-face learning methods would facilitate meaningful and authentic learning	27,59% (8)	48,28% (14)	13,79% (4)	10,34% (3)	0,00% (0)	100,00%

### h. Students' Internet Access

The item of students' internet access consisted of 3 items. The research participants were instructed to code 5 items from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD) (corresponding to 1 to 5 respectively). Table 3 showed the percentage for each item.

**Table 3.** Students' internet access

NO	STATEMENT	DEGREE OF AGREEMENT					%
		SA	A	H	DA	SD	
12	I have access to the Internet in my house/dorm/flat.	20,69% (6)	41,38% (12)	24,14% (7)	6,90% (2)	6,90% (2)	100%
13	I have a good skill in terms of computer skills.	17,24% (5)	37,93% (11)	44,83% (13)	0,00% (0)	0,00% (0)	100%
14	I have a good skill in terms of internet skills.	20,69% (6)	48,28% (14)	31,03% (9)	0,00% (0)	0,00% (0)	100%

### 4.2 Discussion

The first research question was formulated in order to describe the BLM stages implemented to teach pronunciation skill. The result of this research revealed that BLM was implemented through three related steps in pronunciation class. They were online materials, the online tutor, and the face-to-face teacher. In other words, the lecturer of pronunciation course followed the teaching stages offered by Neumeier (2005: 172). He utilized an educational platform called edmodo. He shared the materials and instructed the students to send their work via edmodo. The students' assignments were made in a form of video based on the topics in the syllabus. In addition, he asked every student to show the result of their rehearsal in front of him in the conventional meeting.

These findings justified the previous concepts of BLM conveyed by the previous researchers in which it is such a learning circle showing the combination between the use of internet access and conventional activities (Khamis, 2003; Kavitha and Jaisingh, 2018; Singh, 2003). The in-class observation also noted that the implementation of BLM was beneficial for both lecturer and students due to the fact that lecturer could manage the time allotment effectively and efficiently. The role of lecturer was as a facilitator as students possessed internet access to gain wider sources of information regarding pronunciation skill and no dominance of lecturer in the class as it occurred in traditional one (McLean, 2012). The data analyzed from in-class observation also revealed that the students practice the English pronunciation actively and enthusiastically. After a brief enrichment from the lecturer, they operate their gadgets and smartphones to find out the best model of native speakers' pronunciation and opened up their dictionary in their smartphones.

The second research question aimed to describe the students' responses toward the implementation of BLM in pronunciation class. Regarding the students interest to learn pronunciation, the data showed that students who were learning pronunciation had such a good interest and motivation to learn such a course. Most students conveyed that pronunciation is such an interesting, challenging, and fun course to learn. Besides, good awareness was shown by the students to learn pronunciation as it is an important part of language learning. This thing raised students' motivation to keep on learning pronunciation.

The result of this research also strengthened the previous research findings which stated that the most obvious reason why to learn EFL pronunciation is on the intelligibility within the global context (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2007; Fraser, 2006; Jenkins, 2000). It was also found out that they found it difficult to produce certain English

sounds which did not exist in their mother tongue. Based on SLA theory, the L1 language concepts will be developed since childhood and used to learn L2 (Culture, 1984). However, it is harder to change adult EFL learners' sound feature concepts due to the impacts of the existing feature concepts. They must train their speech organs in new ways to pronounce learned sounds in English (Kelly, 2000:4). Thus, they need to let the L1 sound concepts drive their new language concepts to cater the EFL pronunciation demands.

The second item which was intended to investigate was students' responses toward BLM. The research participants conveyed that BLM was beneficial for students to learn pronunciation. Most participants stated they did not feel that they were learning EFL subjects as they could sing an English song, acted as if they had been an English news anchor, and conduct their learning assignment anywhere at any time without being limited anything in term of time and place. These findings confirmed the previous research that revealed the positive impacts of BLM in EFL learners' pronunciation skills (Flipped Learning Network, 2014; Flynn, 2015; Halili, Abdul Razak, & Zainuddin, 2015). Besides, BLM enables learners to enjoy learning process through technological tools (Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, & Arfstrom, 2013: 4).

The research participants also stated that they felt convenient during the learning process as feeling free to do any activities regarding the completion of pronunciation assignments. In other words, BLM was considered as a teaching model which was able to increase students' satisfaction in learning process (Adams and Timmins, 2006; Ireland et al., 2009; So, 2009). It is also in line with other previous researchers stating the positive influence of BLM. For instance, a research conducted by Engin (2014), the findings showed that BLM gave students more opportunities to be more independent, skillful at problem-solving, and resourceful. Another research was voicing the same findings. BLM enabled students to develop their ability in a peer learning (Danker, 2015; Moraros, Islam, Yu, Banow, & Schindelka, 2015).

The other information gained from data analysis was that the participants did not feel anxious in learning pronunciation. It confirmed the previous findings described by Chen Hsieh et al. (2017). They found out that BLM could reduce the students' anxiety and increase students' motivation to be more active in the class. Underpinning this finding, reports from some researchers revealed the great positive response toward BLM (Bell, 2015; Butt, 2014; Flynn, 2015; Helgevold & Moen, 2015; Hung, 2015; Mok, 2014). In short, these findings showed the students' satisfaction toward BLM implementation.

Despite the positive impacts toward the BLM implementation, there were some obstacles encountered by the participants. Based on the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, it could be seen that 62, 07% respondents did not have any access to the internet in their house. It is stated in point 12 that 20, 69% agreed on it. 24, 14% hesitated and the rests disagreed on this statement. Hence, it is known that only 13, 8% respondents have an internet access in their house. Another crucial aspect in blended learning is computer skill. Therefore, it is important to find out the respondents' skill in operating the computer. Based on the result of the questionnaire number 13, it is known that 57, 17% respondents have good skills in operating computer. 44, 83% respondents hesitated to state that they have good skills while none disagreed on this statement. It means that more than 57% respondents have been technological literate. Regarding the internet skills, 68, 97% respondents have a good internet skill and 31, 03% respondents hesitated whether or not possess a good internet skill. This result could be seen in statement number 14.



## V. Conclusion

This current research aimed at describing the implementation of BLM in teaching pronunciation and the students' responses toward BLM. The result of the research showed that there were three related steps employed by the lecturer to teach pronunciation. They were the stages or steps online materials, the online tutor, and the face-to-face teacher. Most participants had such good awareness in learning pronunciation and positive attitudes toward BLM. Despite the positive attitudes toward BLM and good awareness on pronunciation skill, the participants encountered some problem regarding with computer skills and internet access.

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