



Improving Students' Pronunciation Through Rap Song In Advanced Class At Smaru Gondanglegi

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ABSTRACT

Mastering English pronunciation remains one of the greatest challenges for EFL learners, particularly in mastering stress, rhythm, and intonation. Traditional drilling methods often feel monotonous and ineffective, leading to disengagement and slow progress. This study explores rap music as a transformative tool that blends rhythm, repetition, and phonetics to enhance pronunciation learning. Implementing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, the study involved 15 advanced students at SMA Raudlatul Ulum Gondanglegi. The intervention combined rap music with phonetic symbols, providing a structured yet dynamic approach to pronunciation practice. Data were gathered through pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and student feedback surveys. Results showed a remarkable improvement, with an average increase of 18% in post-test pronunciation scores. Moreover, students exhibited heightened confidence, engagement, and enthusiasm in speaking activities. These findings highlight rap music as a powerful and innovative alternative to traditional pronunciation instruction, offering a more immersive and motivating learning experience. Future research should examine its long-term effects and potential integration into broader language learning curricula.

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INTRODUCTION

English is widely regarded as the global language of communication, particularly in academic settings, where proficiency can significantly influence students' academic performance and future opportunities (García-Sánchez, 2020). However, mastering English pronunciation remains one of the most challenging aspects for many learners, often leading to misunderstandings and difficulties in effective communication (Derwing & Munro, 2017). The challenge lies in the significant differences between English pronunciation and that of many other languages, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Such difficulties affect their participation in classroom activities, as well as their overall learning progress (Saito, 2019). Studies have shown that pronunciation issues are often one of the main factors contributing to the struggles EFL learners face in their speaking skills, particularly in terms of clarity and the ability to convey their message effectively in real-life situations (Saito & Lyster, 2020). The focus of these studies has been on how pronunciation challenges impede the development of students' speaking abilities, including their fluency and comprehensibility, not merely their confidence in speaking

At SMA Raudlatul Ulum Gondanglegi, students struggle with English pronunciation, especially with unfamiliar sounds, such as vowel sounds and word stress, which do not exist in their native language. These difficulties have been identified through a series of informal tests, such as pronunciation drills and reading aloud exercises, as well as classroom observations conducted in the last academic year. The tests involved students attempting to pronounce commonly mispronounced English words, followed by feedback and corrections. Despite their efforts, many students still struggle to pronounce certain words clearly and accurately, often misplacing stress or mispronouncing individual sounds. These ongoing challenges suggest that the traditional pronunciation teaching methods currently used may not be sufficient to address the students' difficulties. It is plausible to assume that the lack of engagement and interaction in conventional methods, such as repetitive drills, may be contributing to the limited progress in pronunciation accuracy. As such, alternative methods, such as the integration of rap songs, may offer a more engaging and effective solution (Saito, 2019). Traditional pronunciation practices, which primarily focus on rote repetition and minimal student interaction, may not fully address the need for more dynamic and contextually engaging language practice. At SMA Raudlatul Ulum Gondanglegi, the existing methods seem to lack the rhythm and stress practice that could make the pronunciation lessons more effective in helping students overcome their specific pronunciation issues.

In response to these challenges, one of the alternative methods I propose is the use of rap music as a tool for pronunciation practice. Rap, with its rhythmic and repetitive nature, offers a highly effective approach for teaching pronunciation, particularly for challenging sounds and word stress. The rhythm and repetition in rap music make it easier for students to internalize the correct pronunciation of words. This repetitive nature helps students practice difficult sounds and word stress patterns in an engaging and memorable way (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2020). Rap music, due to its distinct rhythm, also aids in improving students' intonation and fluency by promoting a natural flow of speech (Derwing & Munro, 2017). In this context, rap lyrics can be tailored to focus on specific pronunciation challenges faced by students, enabling them to practice pronunciation in an interactive and enjoyable way. Moreover, the use of rap in the classroom not only helps with pronunciation but also boosts students' confidence in speaking English. By incorporating a fun and interactive element into the learning process, students are more motivated to engage with pronunciation tasks. This approach allows students to feel more at ease while practicing English, as the informal and dynamic nature of rap fosters a relaxed learning environment (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2020). Additionally, using rap can encourage greater participation, as students often feel more comfortable practicing in groups or performing rap lyrics together. The incorporation of rhythm and melody further facilitates the retention of pronunciation patterns, which can lead to more accurate and fluent speech production.

This issue of pronunciation difficulties has been consistently observed in previous studies, particularly among non-native English learners. Traditional methods, such as drilling and repetition, have been predominantly used to teach English pronunciation. However, these methods have not explored the integration of alternative approaches, such as the use of rap music or phonetic symbols, in the learning process. Previous studies have typically focused on three main areas: the research objective, research method, and the findings. In terms of the research objective, many studies aim to investigate how specific methods, including traditional ones, influence pronunciation accuracy. In terms of the research method, most studies rely on drilling

techniques and repetition to address pronunciation challenges, but they have not incorporated more dynamic methods like rap or visual aids such as phonetic symbols. The findings of these studies often highlight the limitations of conventional methods and the need for more engaging, context-based solutions. In line with this, recent research has suggested that rap can improve rhythm, intonation, and clarity in pronunciation, particularly for students who struggle with stress and intonation patterns (Derwing & Munro, 2017; Saito & Lyster, 2020). Given the challenges observed in this study, rap offers a potential solution to these pronunciation issues, particularly in helping students achieve more accurate pronunciation. This research aims to address this gap by investigating the impact of integrating rap with phonetic symbols on improving students' pronunciation accuracy (Wang & Munro, 2020).

The use of rap music in language learning has been acknowledged for its potential to engage students in a fun and motivating way. However, despite the benefits of using rap for improving pronunciation, there remains a gap in research regarding its integration with phonetic symbols and its impact on EFL learners, particularly in the context of high school classrooms. While prior studies have explored the use of rap to enhance rhythm, articulation, and fluency (Adams, 2018; Ziegler & Haan, 2017), few have investigated how rap can be combined with phonetic symbols to improve the accuracy of pronunciation in a structured learning environment. This gap is significant because it limits the understanding of how combining auditory and visual elements can enhance students' pronunciation skills in an integrated and interactive way.

This research aims to address this gap by examining the impact of integrating rap music with phonetic symbols on improving pronunciation accuracy among high school students at SMA Raudlatul Ulum Gondanglegi. The choice of SMA Raudlatul Ulum Gondanglegi as the research site is based on the consistent challenges observed in the students' pronunciation skills, which reflect broader issues faced by many EFL learners in high school settings. Recent studies have shown that students in such settings often struggle with the articulation of difficult sounds, intonation, and word stress (Adams, 2018; Ziegler & Haan, 2017), which is also evident at SMA Raudlatul Ulum Gondanglegi through informal observations and tests. Furthermore, the findings of this research have the potential to offer valuable insights into effective pronunciation teaching methods, providing practical recommendations for integrating rap and phonetic symbols into language curricula. By exploring this combination, the study aims to contribute to the development of more engaging and effective teaching strategies that can support students in overcoming common pronunciation difficulties and improving their overall English speaking skills.

METHOD

This research adopts a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which is an approach that emphasizes a reflective and cyclical process aimed at improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes (Nunan, 2017). CAR involves planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on instructional strategies, with the goal of improving a specific aspect of teaching, in this case, students' pronunciation skills (Burns, 2018). The reason for choosing CAR is that it allows for a hands-on, iterative approach to addressing specific learning challenges in the classroom, making it well-suited for exploring the effectiveness of rap songs in improving English pronunciation. The cyclical nature of CAR also enables continuous adjustments to the intervention, ensuring that the method can be fine-tuned to better suit students' needs over time (Mertler, 2017).

The study was conducted over two weeks, with sessions held four days a week (Monday to Thursday), amounting to approximately eight meetings. Each session focused on integrating rap songs into pronunciation practice, combining rhythm, stress, and intonation exercises with phonetic symbols to improve students' pronunciation accuracy. The lessons aimed to address specific pronunciation challenges, including stress patterns and difficult vowel sounds, by using lyrics from selected rap songs that highlighted these aspects.

The research participants were 15 students from the advanced class at SMA Raudlatul Ulum Gondanglegi. These students were selected based on their proficiency in basic English skills, with a particular focus on those who struggled with pronunciation. The data collection methods included pre- and post-tests on pronunciation accuracy, as well as observation notes from each session to assess students' engagement and progress. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered at the end of the intervention to gather feedback from students about their experience with the rap-based pronunciation lessons.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. RESULTS

*This study demonstrates that using rap music as a pronunciation learning tool significantly improves students' English pronunciation. The results, gathered from **test scores, classroom observations, and student feedback**, indicate a **consistent improvement**. Data from the pre-test and post-test show an **average pronunciation accuracy increase of 18% across all students**.*

a. Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

*Students' pronunciation was evaluated before and after the rap lessons, focusing on **clarity, rhythm, stress, and intonation**. The comparison of scores indicates a **consistent improvement in pronunciation accuracy**.*

- 1) **The average pre-test score was 61.13, which increased to 79.13 in the post-test, reflecting an 18% improvement overall.**
- 2) **Most students showed a 17-18% improvement, with the highest recorded improvement reaching 19% (Sel).**
- 3) Notable examples include:
 - a) **Ama: 62 → 79 (18% improvement)**
 - b) **Fai: 64 → 82 (18% improvement)**
 - c) **Jes: 60 → 78 (18% improvement)**
 - d) **Sel: 64 → 83 (19% improvement)**

These results confirm that integrating **rap-based learning** into pronunciation practice **significantly enhances students' pronunciation skills**. During **Cycle 1**, students initially struggled with the **fast tempo** of the rap songs, which **hindered pronunciation clarity**. Many found it difficult to keep up with the rhythm and stress patterns. This aligns with **Gilbert (2018)**, who highlights that **speech rhythm and speed play a crucial role in pronunciation mastery**. To address these challenges, **Cycle 2** introduced **slower paced rap songs and group based activities**. These modifications led to **greater student engagement, improved articulation, and more accurate pronunciation**. The post-test results after Cycle 2 confirmed **marked progress in clarity, rhythm, and intonation**. These findings support **Saito & Lyster (2020)**, who emphasize the importance of **collaborative practice in pronunciation learning**.

b. Student Feedback

In addition to test scores, **student feedback** further supports the effectiveness of rap-based learning. A **questionnaire** was conducted to assess students' perceptions, and the responses indicated overwhelmingly **positive results**:

- 1) 55% of students strongly agreed **that rap music helped improve their pronunciation**.
- 2) 35% agreed, **acknowledging its positive impact**.
- 3) 10% remained neutral, **possibly due to differences in learning preferences**.

- 4) No students disagreed or strongly disagreed, **indicating** widespread acceptance of the method.

Additionally, **60% of students reported increased confidence** in speaking English after the lessons. This suggests that **beyond improving pronunciation, rap-based learning fosters greater comfort and fluency in spoken English**. The rhythmic and engaging nature of rap likely created a **low-anxiety learning environment**, encouraging **active participation**.

c. Classroom Observations

Structured **classroom observations** assessed **participation, engagement, and confidence levels** during the lessons. Key findings include:

- 1) **Active participation increased from 50% (Cycle 1) to 80% (Cycle 2)**.
- 2) **85% of students engaged more actively**, asking questions and giving peer feedback.
- 3) **90% of students reported increased confidence** in speaking English after the rap-based exercises.

These observations highlight that **rap-based pronunciation practice not only enhances pronunciation accuracy but also boosts student engagement and confidence in using English**. The adjustments made in **Cycle 2**, such as **slower tempo and interactive activities**, contributed significantly to these improved outcomes.

2. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that integrating rap into pronunciation practice **significantly enhances students' pronunciation skills**. The improvement observed in the pre-test and post-test results, with an **average increase of 18% in pronunciation accuracy**, provides strong evidence that rap-based learning is an effective instructional tool. One key finding from this study is that **students demonstrated better rhythm, stress, and intonation after engaging with rap-based pronunciation exercises**. Initially, many students struggled to maintain the correct pronunciation patterns, particularly due to the **fast tempo of rap songs in Cycle 1**. However, after adjustments were made in **Cycle 2** such as **slowing down the tempo and incorporating group-based activities** students showed a **marked improvement in articulation and fluency**. The classroom observations further support this, as **80% of students actively participated** in Cycle 2, compared to **50% in Cycle 1**. Additionally, this study found that **rap-based pronunciation lessons increased student motivation and engagement**. Student feedback revealed that **90% of participants found this method beneficial**, with **55% strongly agreeing** that rap helped improve their pronunciation. Moreover, **60% of students reported feeling more confident speaking English** after completing the lessons. The structured rhythm of rap songs likely helped reduce anxiety and created a **low-stress environment for pronunciation practice**, encouraging students to engage more actively. Unlike traditional pronunciation drills, which some students may find monotonous, the **integration of rap music provided an interactive and enjoyable learning experience**. As students became more engaged, they were more willing to practice, leading to **better pronunciation outcomes**. These findings suggest that rap-based pronunciation instruction can be a **valuable alternative to conventional methods**, particularly in classrooms where student motivation and participation are key concerns.

a. General Trends in Findings

The general trend observed across the students was an 18% improvement in pronunciation scores, as indicated by both pre- and post-intervention assessments. This suggests that the rap-based learning method positively impacted students' pronunciation, particularly in areas such as clarity, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Additionally, student feedback showed a high level of engagement, with 90% of students reporting that they felt more confident in speaking English

after the intervention. This highlights the potential of using rap to not only improve pronunciation but also boost student confidence in their speaking abilities (Saito & Lyster, 2020).

b. Comparison with Previous Studies

These findings are consistent with previous research on using music to enhance language learning. Studies such as those by Derwing & Munro (2017) and Bryant & Holt (2017) also found that rhythm and intonation play a significant role in pronunciation improvement. Moreover, the results support the use of music, including rap, as a tool for improving not only pronunciation but also overall language fluency (Adams, 2018). In particular, rap's emphasis on rhythm, repetition, and articulation aligns with established methods for improving spoken English (Saito & Lyster, 2020). However, unlike traditional methods that focus purely on drilling individual sounds, the integration of rap offered a more interactive and enjoyable way for students to practice (Ziegler & Haan, 2017).

c. Reject or Accept Theory?

Based on the findings of this study, the theory that rhythm and stress are crucial for improving pronunciation accuracy is supported. The improvements in students' pronunciation scores after learning with rap music confirm that incorporating rhythm and stress, along with phonetic symbols, enhances students' ability to produce accurate English sounds. Therefore, the theory that using music, especially rap, can be an effective tool for teaching pronunciation is accepted (Bryant & Holt, 2017).

d. Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for language teaching, particularly in improving English pronunciation:

- 1) **Practical Application in Classrooms:** This study suggests that using rap music can be an engaging and effective tool for improving pronunciation in EFL classrooms. Teachers can incorporate rap into their lessons to provide a more dynamic and enjoyable way for students to practice pronunciation (Adams, 2018).
- 2) **Motivation and Engagement:** Since students found rap-based lessons fun and engaging, teachers can use rap to increase motivation, making pronunciation practice less monotonous and more appealing. This approach can encourage students to practice more frequently and consistently, leading to better learning outcomes (Ziegler & Haan, 2017).
- 3) **Integration with Phonetic Symbols:** The combination of rap with phonetic symbols proved effective in helping students understand and produce accurate sounds. This suggests that integrating visual learning (such as phonetic transcription) with auditory and rhythmic practices can be an effective method for teaching pronunciation (Saito & Lyster, 2020).
- 4) **Further Research:** Future studies can explore the long-term effects of rap-based pronunciation training and its impact on fluency, as well as the potential to integrate rap with other aspects of language learning, such as vocabulary and grammar (Derwing & Munro, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study proves that using rap music in pronunciation lessons improves clarity, rhythm, stress, and intonation. Students also feel more confident and motivated. The combination of rap and phonetic symbols makes learning more engaging and effective. The results showed a significant improvement in pronunciation, with an average increase of 18% in students' pronunciation scores. The use of rap not only helped students refine their pronunciation but also made the learning process more fun and helpful.

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