

THE COMPREHENSION OF INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET ROLE TOWARDS ENGLISH LEARNERS' PRONUNCIATION IN ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL ORAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: The article aims to find out the comprehension of the International Phonetic Alphabet role after the students had learned the phonology and phonetics materials in "Introduction to Linguistics" course. Qualitative approach was conducted to answer the problem of this study. To collect the data, the researcher used closed questionnaires to the 2nd semester students of English Study Program of Hasanuddin Islamic High School, Pare-Kediri in the academic year 2019/2020. The results of this study indicates that respondents have the same comprehension after being assisted by phonology and phonetics materials in improving their pronunciation errors. They were able to read phonetics transcription through phonetics dictionary application called with *toPhonetics* and increase confidence when pronouncing the words. They increasingly realized the importance of International Phonetic Alphabet in English pronunciation, so that they had the ability to read phonetics dictionary easily. It was proved from 22 respondents answering eight points related to the instrument that the average percentage in the strong agreement was 50%, mild agreement was 44%, less agreement was 7,5%, and disagreement was 0%. So, it can be concluded that the students have the same comprehension of International Phonetic Alphabet role to reduce errors in pronouncing the words to achieve successful oral communication.

Keywords: International Phonetic Alphabet, English Pronunciation, Oral Communication.

A. PRELIMINARY

As a foreign language, English gives the big change for all aspects of life, especially in Indonesia. Indonesian people need to learn English to support the progress of information and technology to face globalization challenge. The English learners or the students need to learn English both as their academic field and communicative field based on their educational affairs. In the communicative field, English can provide greater job opportunities, increase opportunities for career development, facilitate access to various information and technology, make it easier to run a business in the global era, and make it easier to understand foreign cultures as users of English, either countries that use it as a primary language, a second language, and/or a foreign language. In educational field, English is the language of instruction in the scope of multidisciplinary science. The use of English in this multidisciplinary field of science gave birth to the English for Specific Purpose (ESP) which focuses on acquiring integrated professional expertise with a variety of skills, disciplines and practices.²

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² Wardah, *Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Perguruan Tinggi Islam dalam Konteks Esp (English For Spesific Purpose)*, *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Dakwah*, Vol. 10 Number 2 (2016), 207.

English in Indonesia still plays a role as a foreign language. This is because the use of English in Indonesia is still a written language, for example at the school level; the language is prepared for them to prepare for written exams such as semester and final exams. If they want to improve their English communication skills, they should attend English language courses, and/or continue their studies to universities or higher schools with majoring in English. However, not all of these students continue their studies to major in English. Therefore, for the improvement of their English communication skills, enormous opportunities exist at the elementary and high school levels in which English is as a general subject and compulsory subject for junior and senior high school levels.

Speaking or communicating using English, in addition to mastering a lot of vocabularies, structured grammar, and also the pronunciation is appropriate. Pre-school children to elementary level school learn English starting from the pronunciation of the alphabet. For countries that still use English as a foreign language, surely they must start by memorizing 26 letters of the alphabet. For example the country of Indonesia, the alphabet is far different from its pronunciation in English. The following is an example of the pronunciation of the alphabet:

A a - [ei]	N n - [en]
B b - [bi:]	O o - [ou]
C c - [si:]	P p - [pi:]
D d - [di:]	Q q - [kju:]
E e - [I:]	R r - [a:(r)]
F f - [ef]	S s - [es]
G g - [dʒi:]	T t - [ti:]
H h - [eitʃ]	U u - [ju:]
I i - [ai]	V v - [vi:]
J j - [dʒei]	W w - (dʌblju(:))
K k - [kei]	X x - [eks]
L l - [el]	Y y - [wai]
M m - [em]	Z z - [zed]

Table 1. English Alphabet

However, only by knowing the English alphabet, sometimes there are still many mistakes that are found when it starts entering words. Even the English alphabet, the pronunciation is the same as the Indonesian alphabet, when they have entered the word. This may be true, "age" is pronounced {eɪdʒ}, the letter "a" is pronounced according to the English alphabet {ei}. How if it is compared to the word "apple", is it pronounced {eipl}? This is a pronunciation error, because the correct one is {'æpl}. That does not correspond to the pronunciation of the letter "a", which should be {ei}, must be read {'æ}.

The letters that are pronounced to the English alphabet when entering a word, the letters are actually pronounced like Indonesian. Consider the following word: "grand", the initial letter "g" is pronounced {dʒi:}, so the word is {dʒrænd}. That is a pronunciation error, because it should be {grænd}. That can be seen with the initial letter "g". In English the letter does not actually correspond to the pronunciation of the English alphabet when pronouncing the word "grand". If you pay close attention, the letter "g" from the word "grand" is pronounced the same in the pronunciation of the Indonesian alphabet. Likewise also with the many other letters such as the English alphabet not always the letter "c" is pronounced {si:}, "e" is pronounced {i}, "i" is pronounced {ai}, "u" is pronounced {ju:}, and "h" has never been pronounced {eɪtʃ}, "w"{'dʌblju (:)}, "y"{'wai}. Some examples below are some of the words that when pronouncing not always in accordance with the English alphabet.

Words	Error Spelling	Correct Spelling
apple	Eipl	'æpl
Big	baɪg	bɪg
Cat	Sæt	Kæt
duck	dju:k	dʌk
elephant	'ilɪfænt	'elɪfənt
Go	Jou	gəʊ
Hat	eɪtʃeɪt	Hæt
Inter	ain'tɜ:	ɪn'tɜ:
umbrella	jum'brələ	ʌm'brələ
window	'dʌbljuɪndəʊ	'wɪndəʊ
yellow	wailəʊ	'jeləʊ

Table 2. Error Spelling vs. Correct Spelling

Table. 2 indicates only a portion of words that are incompatible with the English alphabet. The experience as a lecturer of English, he often finds mistakes to his English learners in pronouncing English words. Moreover, the researcher is an “Introduction to Linguistics” Lecturer, one of which is about sound science or the sound of letters and words (phonetics). While teaching in class and always giving examples of words, students still had a lot of mistakes in pronouncing these words. They focused mostly on the English alphabet. However, some of them also pronounced the words correctly without knowing why they were not in accordance with the English alphabet.

IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) is an alphabetic system of phonetic notation which is mainly based on the Latin script. It was designed by the International Phonetic Association in the late 19th century as a standard representation of the sounds of spoken language. IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) prepared as a combination of the English alphabet allowed students to have a good preparation in speaking English words accurately. The students rehearsed them with classmates to correct each other's mistakes in word pronunciation. It aims to get to know and master IPA in the form of both written and verbal communication. Here are 44 phonetics of alphabet that play a role in the pronunciation and retention of proper English words:

		monophthongs				diphthongs			
VOWELS	i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ			Phonemic Chart voiced unvoiced
	sheep	ship	good	shoot	here	wait			
	e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ		
	bed	teacher	bird	door	tourist	boy	show		
	æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ		
	cat	up	far	on	hair	my	cow		
CONSONANTS	p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g	
	pea	boat	tea	dog	cheese	June	car	go	
	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	
	fly	video	think	this	see	zoo	shall	television	
	m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j	
	man	now	sing	hat	love	red	wet	yes	

The 44 phonemes of Received Pronunciation based on the popular Adrian Underhill layout

adapted by EnglishClub.com

Picture 1. International Phonetic Alphabet

A thorough discussion occurred when a discussion group with the Phonetics material presented it. That's where the discussion about IPA emerged. Even those who presented the material were also aware of errors in spelling some English words. Finally, it gave birth to an interesting interactive discussion among students. A researcher or a lecturer for the course was present as an intermediary for discussion, and asked them to download the *toPhonetics* application. The application can check the correct spelling of words according to IPA. The application turns the English text into phonetic transcription using International Phonetic Alphabet.

The role of IPA has given students to develop and improve accuracy in pronouncing English words and apply them in written form as well. A researcher helped check mistakes in pronouncing these words spontaneously. With the frequent use of IPA and *toPhonetics* application to check the words which guides in understanding the language of speaking and writing in English, a researcher gets fewer errors of students saying the words in that language. Meanwhile, writing is indeed felt to be insignificant by the lack of mistakes made by them. However, it requires a long process to better practice writing the correct spelling of English words based on IPA. The most important thing is that they are able to reduce these mistakes and are more intense in mastering and memorizing 44 symbols of IPA.

IPA as a medium for fluency development is used as a communication activities both verbally and written specifically designed for EFL students. The presence of IPA also gives EFL students new comprehension about the alphabet symbols on diphthongs and monophthongs of vowels and consonants. In addition to smooth communication, they will be able to spell English words like native speakers, and also get used to checking the correct spelling through the *toPhonetics* application that matches the spelling of IPA.

In relation with the objectives of this study, to achieve the success of English oral communication, a design used was a qualitative research method. Meanwhile, data findings in this research did not use statistical calculation, but the researcher attempted to gain comprehension and exegesis of the data obtained by describing it.

Qualitative method in the field of English education emphasizes more on observing the learning process and more examining the substance of the meaning of the learning process. The power of words and sentences really influences the analysis and acuity of research in qualitative method.

The choice of using qualitative methods in terms of research objectives is to understand how a community or individuals accept certain issues. In this case, it is very important for researchers who use qualitative methods to ensure the quality of the research process, because these researchers will interpret the data they have collected.³

There are three reasons for using qualitative methods, namely (a) the researcher's view of the world phenomenon (a researcher's view of the world), (b) the types of research questions (nature of the research question), and (c) practical reasons related to the nature of the qualitative methods (practical reasons associated with the nature of qualitative methods).⁴

Subjects of the research were the 2nd semester students of English study program – Islamic High School of Hasanuddin, Pare-Kediri, who were 22 students learning the subject of phonology and phonetics. Determination of subjects in this study was based on purposive sampling technique which according to Arikunto (2010:183) that purposive sampling is the process of selecting sample by taking subject that is not based on the level or area, but it is taken based on the specific purpose. So, this study focused to the 2nd semester students of English study program – Islamic High School of Hasanuddin, Pare-Kediri who were taking “Introduction Linguistics” course.

A questionnaire came to be the instrument of this study. It consists of a list of questions by getting any information through students’ responses. According to Sugiyono (2010:199) that questionnaire is a data collection technique by giving a set of questions or written statements to respondents to answer them. This study used a closed questionnaire which means that it is presented in such a form that the respondent only has to give a check mark (✓) in the appropriate column or place. There were eight points that would be taken into consideration and then responded by them. The following are the eight points:

Number	Statements	Criterion			
		Dis Agreement	Less Agreement	Mild Agreement	Strong Agreement
1	Linguistics supports the English learning				
2	Phonology and phonetics support pronunciation learning				
3	Phonetics facilitates pronunciation learning related to speaking learning				

³ McCusker, K., & Gunaydin, S, *Research Using Qualitative, Quantitative or Mixed Methods and Choice Based on The Research. Perfusion*. (DOI: 10.1177/0267659114559116, 2015).

⁴ Kasinath, H. M. *Understanding and Using Qualitative Methods in Performance Measurement. Journal of Educational Studies, Trend and Practices*, 3(1) (2013), 46-57.

4	It is important to have a standardized phonetic alphabet like International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)				
5	<i>toPhonetics</i> application is very helpful to increase knowledge in pronouncing words and writing words according to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)				
6	There is a significant difference between the English Alphabet and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)				
7	International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) supports pronunciation skill in English more than the English alphabet				
8	International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) really reduces the pronunciation errors of English words				

Table 3. Closed Questionnaire of International Phonetic Alphabet

Those points were selected with an observation made by the researcher during the course of Introduction to Linguistics, especially on understanding phonetics and phonology materials. The following are the explanations based on the researcher's observation:

1. **Linguistics supports the English learning.** This statement relates directly to the course of Introduction to Linguistics. The researcher wanted to know how much the percentage level of student approval of linguistics.
2. **Phonology and phonetics support pronunciation learning.** This statement is directly related to the phonology and phonetics materials in the course of Introduction to Linguistics. The researchers wanted to find out how much the percentage level of student approval of phonology and phonetics associated with their pronunciation skill.
3. **Phonetics facilitates pronunciation learning related to speaking learning.** This statement was chosen because of the importance of learning the sound system in correcting errors in pronouncing English words. The researcher wanted to find out how much the percentage level of student approval on the phonetics that facilitates their pronunciation.
4. **It is important to have a standardized phonetic alphabet like International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).** This statement was chosen because students should have standard phonetics in addition to the pronunciation of words in the English alphabet. This is due

to the importance of 44 symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet. All words that are pronounced according to the standard English alphabet are considered insufficient because not all letters are spelled according to the English alphabet when they form a word. The researcher wanted to find out how much the percentage level of student approval on the standardized phonetic alphabet like International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

5. ***toPhonetics*** application is very helpful to increase knowledge in pronouncing words and writing words according to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). This statement was chosen as a form to familiarize students with seeing a correct spelling using the ***toPhonetics*** application. The application can be viewed online or installed via a netbook or smartphone. The researcher wanted to find out how much the percentage level of student approval of the use of the application as a tool to reduce errors in pronouncing English words, both spoken and written.
6. **There is a significant difference between the English Alphabet and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)**. This statement was chosen as a form of knowing the basic to significant difference between the two alphabets. This is because it is often found that a letter is spelled in an English word that does not match the English alphabet. The International Phonetic Alphabet application with 44 symbols is here to adjust the pronunciation of these words, and can be viewed online or installed via a netbook or smartphone. The researcher wanted to know how much the percentage level of students' agreement on the significant difference between the two alphabets..
7. **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) supports pronunciation skill in English more than the English alphabet**. This statement was chosen as a form to find out whether the International Phonetic Alphabet was able to improve student error rates in pronunciation of English both spoken and written. The researcher wanted to know how much the percentage level of students' approval of the International Phonetic Alphabet's support for their pronunciation ability.
8. **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) really reduces the pronunciation errors of English words**. This last statement was chosen as a form of how successfully the students reduced their English pronunciation errors, both spoken and written. The researcher wanted to know how much the percentage level of students' approval of the International Phonetic Alphabet that could reduce their pronunciation errors.

The collection of data resulted from questionnaire was then analyzed qualitatively. It aimed

to determine students' comprehension in English pronunciation after studying and understanding International Phonetic Alphabet in the phonology and phonetics materials. The researcher collected the data by collecting the results of questionnaire, reading them in detail to be then selected based on the research objectives, after that he analyzed the data by describing them, and the last was taking conclusion on how important their comprehension of IPA role towards their English pronunciation.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comprehension refers to the ability to comprehend something. The comprehension of IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) role is the understanding and interpretation of what is read by pronouncing the English words accurately. The students were able to comprehend the material by decoding and connecting what they read using *toPhonetics* application.

After collecting data, a researcher described that all research subjects had almost the same comprehension of the importance of using IPA in their English pronunciation. They seemed helpful in improving their English pronunciation through phonology and phonetics materials in "Introduction to Linguistics Course" they got in the 2nd semester. They increasingly felt their knowledge on how to pronounce English vocabularies boosted. Accuracy and correctness in pronouncing the English words were obtained by getting used to using *toPhonetics* application.

Introduction to Linguistics course in the phonology and phonetics materials really gave them ease of pronouncing English words, moreover, with the existence of IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet). IPA is very helpful in boosting their pronunciation. This was proved by getting used to saying English words by checking them through *toPhonetics* application, e.g. the ability to pronounce "presentation" and the accuracy in their writing /prɛzən'teɪʃən/. They also were able to differ "present" /prɛznt/ which means "hadir", and /prɪznt/ means "hadiah". Another evidence was also found in the words of "clock" /klɒk/ and "chalk" /tʃɔk/. They were able to differ the letter "c" with different symbol and sound in different words. The word "clock", they pronounced "c" in /k/, and "chalk" with /tʃ/. It means that they have comprehended the sound and the symbol of IPA related to English pronunciation with the reinforcement of For and Fong (2011:19) that students can easily predict the correct sounds in English by the phonetic symbols. Thus, it helps them to improve their pronunciation and confidence in speaking English.

Research subjects as the respondents here said that the role of International Phonetic Alphabet really had reduced the pronunciation errors and they further improved their ability to pronounce English words. They are now able to pronounce vowels and consonants in IPA, in which the vowels they are able to pronounce as /ʌ/, /ɑ:/, /æ/, /e/, /ə/, /ɜ:/, /ɪ/, /i:/, /ɒ/, /ɔ:/, /ʊ/, /u:/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/,

/eɪ/, /oʊ/, /aɪ/, /eə/, /ɪə/, /ʊə/. Not only the vowels they are able to pronounce even write them accurately, but also the consonants as /b/, /d/, /f/, /g/, /h/, /j/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /p/, /r/, /s/, /ʃ/, /t/, /tʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, /v/, /w/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/. Getting used to checking the IPA symbols makes them more often overcome the pronunciation errors either in pronouncing through mentioning the English words or writing them. From this, *toPhonetics* application as the aid to help them check their errors, is really useful to comprehend the role of IPA towards their pronunciation, and certainly, to achieve successful oral communication.

A researcher also accustomed them to practicing phonemic symbols such as some of the exercises found in Mark (2012) about playing with English sounds with the following discussion results:

Question: Which word does not rhyme with the others? Underline it. The phonemic symbols will help you. Listen and check your answers.

Example:	<i>hair</i>	<u>here</u>	<i>there</i>	<i>where</i>	/heə	hɪə	ðeə	weə/
1.	car	star	far	<u>war</u>	/kɑ:	stɑ:	fɑ:	wɔ:/
2.	slow	<u>cow</u>	go	know	/sləʊ	kaʊ	gəʊ	nəʊ/
3.	nose	grows	<u>does</u>	goes	/nəʊz	grəʊz	dʌz	gəʊz/
4.	clear	near	<u>bear</u>	hear	/klɪə	nɪə	beə	hɪə/
5.	really	<u>early</u>	nearly	clearly	/'rɪəli	'ɜ:li	'nɪəli	'klɪəli/
6.	<u>close</u>	choose	lose	shoes	/kləʊz	tʃu:z	lu:z	ʃu:z/
7.	above	glove	love	<u>move</u>	/ə'bʌv	glʌv	lʌv	mu:v /

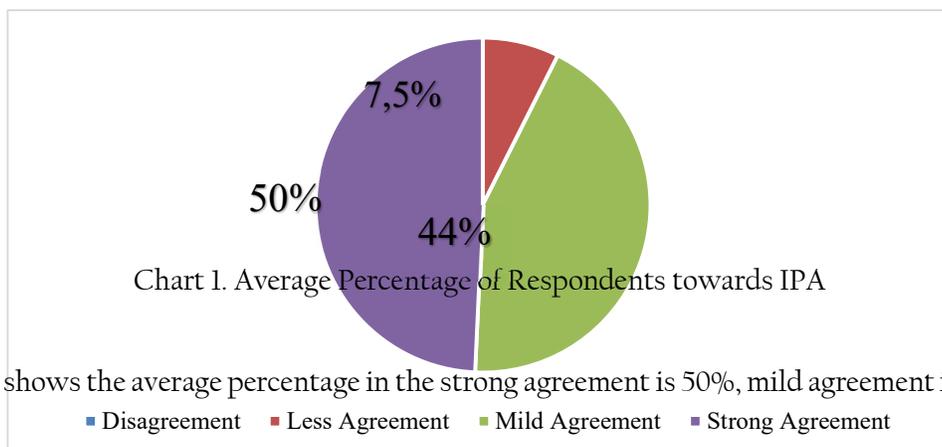
The comprehension of IPA is also obtained from the materials “phonology and phonetics” in Introduction to Linguistics course. In fact, they have more confidence in pronouncing English words accurately and this is based on Beverley and Inger (2013) who said that in fact, the study of both **phonetics** (the science of speech sound) and **phonology** (how sounds pattern and function in a given language) are going to help you to learn more about language in general and English in particular.

There are eight points related to the statements of the importance of International Phonetic Alphabet through questionnaire given to respondents. These show the overall results of the data obtained by 22 respondents or students. The data are as follows:

1. Linguistics supports the English learning: 82% chose *strong agreement*, 18% with *mild agreement*, 0% with less agreement and disagreement;

2. Phonology and phonetics support pronunciation learning: 59% chose strong agreement, 41% with mild agreement, 0% with less agreement and disagreement;
3. Phonetics facilitates pronunciation learning related to speaking learning: 14% chose strong agreement, 77% with mild agreement, 9% with less agreement, and 0% with disagreement;
4. It is important to have a standardized phonetic alphabet like International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): 9% chose strong agreement, 82% with mild agreement, 9% with less agreement, and 0% with disagreement;
5. *toPhonetics* application is very helpful to increase knowledge in pronouncing words and writing words according to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): 18% chose strong agreement, 68% with mild agreement, 14% with less agreement, and 0% with disagreement;
6. There is a significant difference between the English Alphabet and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): 86% chose strong agreement, 14% with mild agreement, 0% with less agreement and disagreement;
7. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) supports pronunciation skill in English more than the English alphabet: 73% chose strong agreement, 27% with mild agreement, 0% with less agreement and disagreement;
8. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) really reduces the pronunciation errors of English words: 59% chose strong agreement, 27% with mild agreement, 14% with less agreement, and 0% with disagreement.

These eight points were present to determine the extent to which they agree with the comprehension of the international phonetic alphabet role. From the respondents' questionnaire results, then, the researcher gave the average percentage of eight points based on the questionnaire agreement level. The overall results based on the average percentage of questionnaire data obtained by a researcher from 22 respondents with eight points above can be seen from the following chart:



The chart shows the average percentage in the strong agreement is 50%, mild agreement is 44%, less

agreement is 7,5%, and disagreement is 0%. These mean that the students have the same comprehension of International Phonetic Alphabet towards their pronunciation to achieve a successful oral communication.

C. CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, result and the discussion of this study, the writer finally proposes the conclusion:

- 1) The respondents said that the role of International Phonetic Alphabet really had reduced their pronunciation errors and they further improved their ability to pronounce English words.
- 2) *toPhonetics* application present to help them check their pronunciation errors, is really useful to comprehend the role of IPA towards their pronunciation, and certainly, to achieve successful oral communication.
- 3) From the 22 respondents of 2nd semester students of English Study Program – Islamic High School of Hasanuddin, Pare-Kediri, gave their responses through closed questionnaire as the instrument of this study with eight points included in it, were found the average percentage in the strong agreement is 50%, mild agreement is 44%, less agreement is 7,5%, and disagreement is 0%. However, their comprehension of International Phonetic Alphabet role towards their English pronunciation was measured through the level of agreement.
- 4) All of the above data indicates that the respondents or students have the same comprehension of International Phonetic Alphabet role towards their English pronunciation. It was shown by the level of strong agreement with 50% and mild agreement with 44%, compared with the level of less agreement is only 7,5%, and no students responded disagreement.
- 5) The students really felt satisfied and gained more knowledge in pronunciation skill through phonology and phonetics materials in their Introduction to Linguistics course in the 2nd semester.

D. SUGGESTION

This study is suggested for the English lecturer to be able more active in analysing students' presentation class and definitely observes his students more in learning English which aims to gain the high target in teaching English especially in achieving a successful oral communication through the pronunciation skill. It means that being able to make an engaging teaching-learning process.

The use of *toPhonetics* application or online phonetic dictionary with phonetic transcription is definitely able to facilitate students to get good pronunciation. Through the communicative activity, students need to be observed in order to have good pronunciation and the lecturer directly can give them the appropriate feedback for their successful oral communication.

The higher school institution should provide the appropriate and complete learning facilities to gain the better progress achievement of English. In addition, it is also able to support teaching-learning activities. However, the most important thing for the higher school institution is, having professional lecturers with educational philosophy, material of instruction, method, as well as a good skill and interest in giving the lecture.

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