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The Effectiveness of Online Oxford Dictionary in Improving The Students' Pronunciation of MTs Mu'Allimin NWDI Pancor

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of online Oxford dictionary in improving students' pronunciation of the seventh-grade students of MTs Mu'allimin NWDI Pancor in the academic year 2025-2026. This research used quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design with one group pretest-posttest design. A total of 25 students participated in this study. The data were obtained by giving pre-test – treatment – post-test. The data were analyzed using paired sample T-test through SPSS 22. The mean post-test score (82,40) was higher than the mean pre-test (56,00). The result pf the Paired sample T test indicated that there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test, (2-tailed) was 0,00 less than 0,05 (0,00<0,05). Base on the finding, it can be concluded that the use of Online Oxford Dictionary has a significant effect in improving students' pronunciation at the seventh grade of MTs Mu'allimin NWDI Pancor.

Keywords: *Online Oxford Dictionary, Students' Pronunciation, Learning Media*

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Introduction

Language is a fundamental tool for human communication that enables individuals to express ideas, exchange information, and build social interaction (Musheke & Phiri, 2021, p. 660). Among the many languages used worldwide, English plays a dominant role as a global language in international relations, education, science, technology, and business (Badwan & Badwan, 2021). In Indonesia, English is categorized as a foreign language (EFL) and taught as a compulsory subject from junior high school to university level (Khoiroini et al., 2020). Despite its importance, English remains one of the most challenging subjects for Indonesian learners due to linguistic differences from Bahasa Indonesia, especially in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Tambunsaribu & Simatupang, 2021).

Speaking is one of the essential language skills in English learning because it enables learners to engage in interactive communication. However, speaking skill depends heavily on pronunciation accuracy. Without proper pronunciation, spoken messages may become unclear and difficult to understand, causing communication breakdowns (Maulana, Musthafa, & Hayati, 2020). Therefore, pronunciation has an urgent role in developing communicative competence in EFL contexts.

Pronunciation in EFL Context

Pronunciation is defined as the production of meaningful sounds in communication through the articulation of segmental and suprasegmental features (Mompean & Fouz-Gonzalez, 2021). Segmental features include vowels and consonants, while suprasegmental features consist of word stress, sentence stress, intonation, and rhythm (Srakaew, 2021). Pourhosein Gilakjani et al. (2020) emphasize that learners who have poor pronunciation may struggle to communicate effectively even if they possess adequate vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Pronunciation mastery not only contributes to speech intelligibility but also enhances learners' confidence in communication (Kobilova, 2022).

However, Indonesian learners often face pronunciation difficulties due to several factors, such as interference from their mother tongue, lack of exposure to native English pronunciation, limited practice opportunities, and insufficient learning resources (Hawa et al., 2021). In traditional classrooms, pronunciation instruction is often neglected because teachers tend to focus on grammar and vocabulary rather than oral accuracy (Lenia, 2022). Therefore, innovative teaching media are needed to facilitate pronunciation learning.

Technology in Pronunciation Learning

The rapid development of educational technology provides new opportunities to enhance pronunciation learning through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). CALL promotes the use of digital tools such as audio dictionaries, pronunciation software, and mobile applications to create interactive language learning experiences (Pikilnyak et al., 2021). Technology-based media allow learners to receive immediate auditory input and feedback, which is essential for improving pronunciation accuracy (Bashori et al., 2022). Gordon (2023) argues that effective pronunciation learning should involve exposure to accurate pronunciation models rather than isolated phonetic drilling.

The integration of digital dictionaries in pronunciation learning has gained popularity due to their practicality, accessibility, and authentic language input. Electronic dictionaries not only help learners check word meaning but also provide audio pronunciation models by native speakers (Ezeh, Anyanwu, & Onunkwo, 2022). Thus, they enable students to practice independently beyond classroom time.

The Role of Online Oxford Dictionary

Among various online dictionaries, the Online Oxford Dictionary (OOD) is widely used due to its reliability, clear pronunciation features, and user-friendly interface. Previous studies have highlighted its benefits in pronunciation learning (Husni, 2017; Firdaus, Qonaatun, & Amalia, 2024). However, most of these studies were conducted in university or senior high school contexts. Unlike prior research, this study uniquely investigates the effectiveness of the OOD in a junior high Islamic boarding school (pesantren) context, where students' exposure to correct English pronunciation is particularly limited and the linguistic environment presents unique challenges. Therefore, this research aims to fill this specific gap.

Research Gap

Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of online dictionaries in pronunciation learning; however, most of these studies were conducted in university or senior high school contexts (Husni, 2017; Ambarwati & Mandasari, 2020). Research specifically investigating the effectiveness of the Online Oxford Dictionary at the junior high school level in Islamic boarding school environments is still limited.

Preliminary observations at MTs Mu'allimin NWDI Pancor revealed that students struggled with pronunciation accuracy due to lack of exposure to correct sound patterns and dependency on spelling-based pronunciation (field notes, 2025). Therefore, there is a need to conduct empirical research to determine whether the Online Oxford Dictionary can effectively improve pronunciation at this level.

Objective of the Study

Based on the identified problems and research gap, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Online Oxford Dictionary in improving students' pronunciation, specifically in the aspects of articulation of sounds (vowels and consonants), word stress, and intonation, among students at MTs Mu'allimin NWDI Pancor in the academic year 2025/2026. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for teachers, researchers, and educational practitioners in integrating practical digital media into pronunciation instruction within similar EFL environments.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a pre-experimental method with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. According to Creswell (2012), a pre-experimental design is used to determine the effect of a treatment by comparing the condition of a single group before and after the intervention. In this study, the treatment involved using the Online Oxford Dictionary to improve students' pronunciation ability.

Table 1

The Design of One-Group Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test (O1)	Treatment (X)	Post-test (O2)
O1	X	O2

Where:

O1 = Students' pronunciation score before treatment

X = Treatment using Online Oxford Dictionary

O2 = Students' pronunciation score after treatment

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all seventh-grade students at MTs Mu'allimin NWDI Pancor in the academic year 2025–2026, comprising three classes with a total of 75 students. The sample consisted of 25 students (12 males and 13 females) from one intact class, selected using a purposive sampling technique. According to Sugiyono (2018), purposive sampling is a technique in which the researcher selects a sample based on specific considerations and research purposes. The selected class was chosen based on two primary criteria: (1) the teacher's recommendation that the students demonstrated a low initial pronunciation ability, and (2) the class's representative nature of the common pronunciation challenges faced by students in the school, such as reliance on phonetic spelling and difficulty with English vowel sounds.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a pronunciation test administered in the form of a reading-aloud task. The test consisted of a short descriptive text containing 50 words, all of which were vocabulary familiar to the

students' level based on their curriculum. The same test was administered twice, as a pre-test and a post-test, to measure the students' pronunciation ability before and after the treatment.

Students' pronunciation performance was evaluated using a scoring rubric adapted from Moedjito (2013). The rubric assessed four pronunciation aspects: sound articulation, word stress, intonation, and fluency.

Table 2

Pronunciation Scoring Rubric (Adapted from Moedjito, 2013)

Score	Criteria Description
5 – Excellent	Accurate pronunciation, clear articulation, correct word stress and intonation, smooth and natural fluency.
4 – Good	Minor pronunciation errors, but do not interfere with intelligibility; stress and intonation mostly correct.
3 – Fair	Some pronunciation errors that occasionally affect intelligibility; stress and intonation inconsistent.
2 – Poor	Frequent pronunciation errors that hinder understanding; incorrect stress and weak intonation.
1 – Very Poor	Pronunciation unclear and difficult to understand; serious errors in stress, intonation, and articulation.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the rubric and test materials were validated by two experienced English lecturers. Furthermore, inter-rater reliability was established by having two trained raters assess 20% of the audio recordings. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the two raters' scores was 0.87, indicating a high level of agreement.

The final score of each student was calculated by converting the total raw score into a scale of 0–100 using the following formula:

$$\text{Final Score} = \frac{\text{Total Score Obtained}}{20} \times 100$$

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through three main stages:

1. Pre-test: The pre-test was administered to measure students' initial pronunciation ability before the treatment. Students were asked to read aloud the descriptive text, and their performance was audio-recorded for subsequent assessment using the validated rubric.
2. Treatment: The treatment was conducted over three meetings, each lasting 60 minutes, using the Online Oxford Dictionary as the primary pronunciation learning tool. The procedure for each session followed an adapted model from Husni (2017), which included:
   a) Introduction of 15-20 target vocabulary words.
   b) Guided practice in searching for and listening to the correct pronunciation
   c) and phonetic transcription of each word using the Online Oxford Dictionary.
   d) Choral and individual repetition of the words after the audio model.
   e) Pair practice where students corrected each other's pronunciation.
   f) Contextualized practice by using the target words in simple sentences.

3. Post-test: After the treatment cycle, a post-test was administered using a text that was parallel in structure and difficulty level to the pre-test. The test aimed to measure the improvement in students' pronunciation, and the recordings were assessed using the same rubric and raters.

Data Analysis Technique

The quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using SPSS version 22. The data analysis procedures included:

1. Descriptive Statistics: Calculating the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test scores to describe the sample's performance.
2. Normality Test: Using the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine whether the data were normally distributed, a prerequisite for parametric testing.
3. Homogeneity Test: Using Levene's Test to check the equality of variances between the pre-test and post-test scores.
4. Hypothesis Testing: Using a paired sample t-test to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The hypotheses of the study were:
   - H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant effect of using the Online Oxford Dictionary on students' pronunciation.
   - H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant effect of using the Online Oxford Dictionary on students' pronunciation.

   The decision rule was set at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. If the Sig. (2-tailed) value was less than 0.05, H_0 would be rejected and H_1 accepted.
5. Effect Size Calculation: To determine the practical significance and magnitude of the treatment effect, Cohen's *d* was calculated. This step is crucial for interpreting the real-world impact of the intervention, especially with a smaller sample size. The effect size was interpreted as small (*d* = 0.2), medium (*d* = 0.5), or large (*d* = 0.8).

Result and Discussion

This study employed a quantitative approach using a one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of the *Online Oxford Dictionary* (OOD) in enhancing students' pronunciation skills. The research was conducted at MTs Mu'allimin NWDI Pancor, involving a sample of 25 seventh-grade students. The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22 software, encompassing descriptive statistics, prerequisite tests (normality and homogeneity), and hypothesis testing (*paired sample t-test*).

1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the central tendency and dispersion of the students' pronunciation scores before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the implementation of the treatment using the OOD. The summary of scores is presented in

Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	25	45.00	70.00	56.0000	7.07107
Post-test	25	70.00	95.00	82.4000	6.14410

Valid N (listwise)	25				

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

As shown in Table 1, a notable improvement in student performance is evident. The mean score for the pre-test was 56.00, which falls into the *Poor* or *Sufficient* category according to the standard grading criteria. Following the intervention using the OOD, the mean score dramatically increased to 82.40 in the post-test, categorized as *Good* or *Very Good* performance. The maximum score also saw a substantial rise from 70.00 to 95.00. Quantitatively, the students achieved an average gain of 26.40 points after the treatment, indicating a substantial positive shift in their pronunciation proficiency. This improvement is visually represented in Figure 1 below.

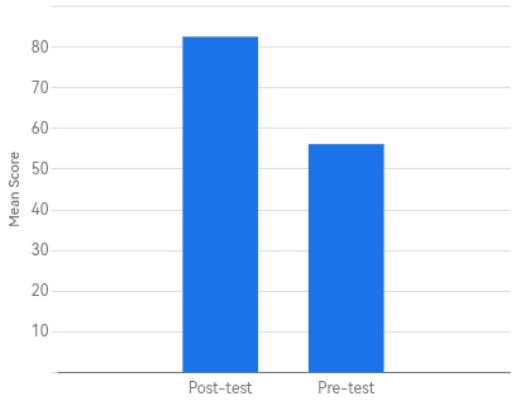

Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores

2. Required Statistical Tests

Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality and homogeneity of the data distribution were verified to ensure the validity of the parametric *paired sample t-test*.

a. Test of Normality

The Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to assess the normality of the data, as the sample size (N=25) is less than 50. Data is considered normally distributed if the significance value (Sig.) is greater than the alpha level of 0.05. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)

	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**
Pre-test	.928	25	.079
Post-test	.934	25	.107

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

The results in Table 2 show that the significance values for both the pre-test (Sig. = 0.079) and the post-test (Sig. = 0.107) are greater than 0.05 ($0.079 > 0.05$ and $0.107 > 0.05$). Thus, the data for both measurements are normally distributed, meeting the first prerequisite for the parametric test.

b. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was conducted to determine if the variances of the pre-test and post-test scores were equal (homogenous). The homogeneity assumption is met if the significance value (Sig.) is greater than 0.05.

Table 3. Test of Homogeneity of Variances (Levene Statistic)

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.675	4	19	.618

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

The significance value obtained from Levene's Test is 0.618. Since this value is considerably greater than 0.05 ($0.618 > 0.05$), it is concluded that the variances of the data are homogenous. With both the normality and homogeneity assumptions satisfied, the analysis proceeded to hypothesis testing.

3. Hypothesis Testing (Paired Samples T-Test)

The *paired samples t-test* was used to compare the means of the pre-test and post-test scores and determine whether the difference was statistically significant.

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** There is no significant effect of using the *Online Oxford Dictionary* on students' pronunciation.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_a):** There is a significant effect of using the *Online Oxford Dictionary* on students' pronunciation.

The decision rule is: Reject H_0 if the Sig. (2-tailed) value is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 4. Paired Samples T-Test Result

		Paired Differences	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean Difference	Std. Dev.				
Pair 1	Pre-test - Post-test	-26.400	7.433	-17.759	24	.000

Source: Primary Data Processed (2025)

Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value is -17.759 with 24 degrees of freedom (df). The most critical finding is the Sig. (2-tailed) value, which is 0.000. Since $0.000 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This result robustly confirms the existence of a statistically significant difference between the students' pronunciation scores before and after the treatment.

To quantify the magnitude of this improvement, Cohen's *d* was calculated. The resulting effect size was *d* = 3.55. According to Cohen's (1988) conventions, this represents an exceptionally large effect, far exceeding the threshold for a 'large' effect (*d* = 0.8). This indicates that the use of the OOD had a substantial and powerful impact on students' pronunciation skills.

The quantitative findings of this study conclusively affirm the effectiveness of the Online Oxford Dictionary (OOD) as an instructional tool for improving the pronunciation skills of the seventh-grade students. The rejection of the null hypothesis, the highly significant *p*-value (*p* < 0.001), and the exceptionally large

effect size (*d* = 3.55) collectively provide robust evidence for the efficacy of the intervention. This discussion elaborates on the factors contributing to this effectiveness and situates the findings within the existing body of literature.

1. Explaining the Significant Score Improvement

The dramatic average gain of 26.40 points is a direct testament to the OOD's impact. This improvement is primarily attributed to the dictionary's core features, which directly address common challenges in English pronunciation learning.

a) Provision of Authentic and On-Demand Auditory Input

A major hurdle in EFL contexts is the lack of exposure to native-like pronunciation models. The OOD effectively bridges this gap by providing immediate, accurate, and repeatable auditory models. This aligns with the principles of the Audio-Lingual Method, which emphasize listening and repetition as key to forming correct phonological habits. As Ladefoged (2001) noted, the ability to perceive and discriminate sounds is foundational to their accurate production. The OOD facilitated this by offering unlimited, self-paced access to correct sounds, a resource often scarce in traditional classrooms where the teacher's accent and time are limiting factors.

b) Fostering Learner Autonomy and Metacognitive Skills

Beyond mere repetition, the OOD empowered students to take control of their learning. Observation during the treatment phase indicated a shift from teacher-dependent correction to active self-inquiry. Students began to use the OOD proactively to check words they were unsure of, engaging in metacognitive strategies. This fostered learner autonomy (Benson, 2011) and created a low-anxiety environment where students could practice and self-correct privately, thereby building confidence for public speaking tasks. The dictionary was transformed from a passive reference tool into an active, personal pronunciation coach.

2. Alignment and Nuance with Existing Literature

The findings strongly support the growing body of research advocating for technology integration in pronunciation teaching. They directly corroborate the studies by Husni (2017) and Firdaus et al. (2024), who also found that audio dictionaries significantly enhanced pronunciation accuracy. However, this study adds a critical nuance: while Husni's (2017) research was conducted with university students, our findings demonstrate that the OOD is equally, if not more, effective with younger learners in a junior high Islamic school setting. This suggests the tool's applicability across diverse age groups and educational contexts.

Furthermore, the results echo the emphasis placed by Dirham & Triyuono (2023) on the pedagogical value of digital tools' convenience and clear IPA transcriptions. Yet, our study highlights a potential differential impact: the gains observed here were more substantial than those in some prior studies (e.g., Ambarwati & Mandasari, 2020). This could be attributed to the specific, structured treatment procedure used (adapted from Husni, 2017), which involved guided listening, repetition, and contextualized practice, rather than leaving dictionary use entirely to student discretion. This implies that the method of integration is as crucial as the tool itself.

3. Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Despite the clear positive results, this study's one-group pre-experimental design is its primary limitation. The lack of a control group means that while the improvement is strongly associated with the OOD intervention, other factors such as the Hawthorne Effect (where participants improve simply because they are part of an experiment), the general effect of additional instructional time, or the influence of the teacher cannot be entirely ruled out as contributing factors.

Future research should employ a quasi-experimental design with a control group (e.g., using traditional pronunciation drills) to more precisely isolate the effect of the OOD and calculate a more controlled effect size. Additionally, investigating the long-term retention of the improved pronunciation skills and exploring the tool's effectiveness through qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, journals) to gain deeper insights into student perceptions and usage patterns would be highly valuable.

4. Pedagogical Implications

The strong empirical evidence suggests that English language educators should proactively integrate audio-enabled digital dictionaries like the OOD into their curriculum. It is recommended not as a supplementary gadget, but as a core component of pronunciation instruction. Teachers can design structured activities that require students to look up, listen to, and practice new vocabulary using the OOD before engaging in speaking tasks, thereby fostering both accuracy and learner independence from an early stage.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Online Oxford Dictionary (OOD) in improving the pronunciation skills of seventh-grade students at MTs Mu'allimin NWDI Pancor. Using a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design, the data analysis from 25 students yielded compelling evidence supporting the research hypothesis. The results demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in pronunciation scores, with the mean increasing from 56.00 (pre-test) to 82.40 (post-test). The paired sample t-test confirmed this difference was significant ($t(24) = -17.759$, $*p* = .000$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0).

Therefore, it is conclusively determined that the use of the Online Oxford Dictionary was significantly effective in improving students' pronunciation. This finding underscores the OOD's role as a powerful and practical Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) tool. Its authentic audio models directly enhance students' auditory discrimination and provide a reliable standard for self-correction, which in turn builds confidence in speaking English.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on these robust findings, the study recommends that educators move beyond ad-hoc use and strategically integrate audio-enabled digital dictionaries into the curriculum. Specifically:

- Structured Pronunciation Tasks: Teachers should design specific classroom activities where students are required to use the OOD to look up, listen to, and practice the pronunciation of new vocabulary before engaging in speaking drills or presentations.

- Promotion of Learner Autonomy: Educators should explicitly teach students how to use the OOD's features (e.g., phonetic transcription, British/American variants) and encourage its use as a first resource for correcting pronunciation doubts during independent study.
- Curriculum Integration:** School administrators and curriculum designers should consider officially incorporating the use of reliable online dictionaries into English language syllabi, particularly for courses focused on speaking and listening skills.

Recommendations for Future Research

To build upon this study, future research should address its limitations by:

- Employing a quasi-experimental design with a control group to more rigorously isolate the effect of the OOD from other variables and to validate the large effect size observed.
- Investigating the long-term retention of pronunciation skills gained through OOD use to determine if improvements are sustained over time.
- Exploring the tool's effectiveness using qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, to gain deeper insights into how students use the OOD and the specific psychological factors, like reduced anxiety and increased motivation, that contribute to their improvement.

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