Employing West Life to Improve EFL Pronunciation in Blended Learning Environment

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Abstract

In EFL classrooms, pronunciation has often been the most neglected teaching-learning component. As a result, many EFL learners hold that English pronunciation is difficult to master, and they always find it difficult to speak confidently and intelligibly. This study is action research aimed at improving EFL students' pronunciation by using songs in a blended learning environment. Conducted in April to May 2017, the study involved 30 tenth graders of a private senior high school in Depok, West Java, Indonesia. The face-to-face instructions were conducted in the language laboratory of the school, while the online sessions were conducted employing Edmodo as the learning management system (LMS). Learning activities were focused on using songs to improve the consonants, vowels, diphthongs, silent sounds, consonant clusters, stress and linking that were identified to be problematic for the participants in the pre-test. Data were collected by administering tests and questionnaires. The results showed that using songs in a blended learning environment improved the participants' English pronunciation skills. The average scores of the three tests administered before, during, and after the project implementation successively increased. The data obtained from the survey revealed that pronunciation instruction using songs was interesting to the participants, helped their pronunciation improvement, and increased their self-confidence in English speaking.

Keywords: *action research, blended learning, pronunciation, songs*

Introduction

Pronunciation is the component of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching programs that is granted the least attention (Derwing, 2010; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; MacDonald, 2002; Wei & Zhou, 2002). Based on his literature review, Fouz-Gonzales (as cited in Mompean & Fouz-Gonzales, 2015) listed four common reasons for the pronunciation ignorance: the notion stating it can be acquired naturally, instruction will not make a difference, adequate materials unavailability, and teacher's insufficient

training to teach pronunciation. Considering the phenomenon, Gilbert (1994, p. 38) described pronunciation as "something of an orphan in English programs around the world", and Celce-Murcia et al (1996, p. 323) regarded it as suffering from the "Cinderella Syndrome—kept behind doors and out of sight." As a result, most EFL students perceive English pronunciation very difficult to master and many of them cannot speak intelligibly and clearly.

This phenomenon was also identified in the students of a senior high school in Depok, West Java, Indonesia. During supervising a group of English pre-service teachers doing their teaching practice at the school, the students seemed to have encountered difficulties in comprehending other's utterances and could not speak as well. Some of them used to employ the phonotactic and phonological system of Bahasa Indonesia while speaking in English. For instances, they automatically pronounce 'thanks' and 'share' /teŋs/ instead of /θæŋks/ and /ser/ instead of /ʃeə^r/. When saying multisyllabic words, they were also used to put stress on the wrong syllable, such as /ˈɪntərnasinəl/ instead of /ɪntəˈnæʃənəl/ or /ˈkɒmpütər / instead of /kəm'pjütər/. Also, they rarely used linking in their speech.

The interviews with some of the students and the English teacher revealed that pronunciation was rarely dealt with in their teaching and learning. The teacher said that she sometimes played audios and videos of English pronunciation in the classroom. However, she found it difficult to explore them further due to the unavailability of a systematic clear guideline of pronunciation teaching and her lack of strategies of teaching pronunciation. As a result, the students soon get bored with the activity. That's why English pronunciation tended to have no place in the classroom. The students told that English pronunciation was very complex to learn. To them, English inconsistent orthography and sounds made pronunciation hard to practice. The difference existed between the phonotactic and phonological rules of English and Bahasa Indonesia increased the challenge for them to master English pronunciation.

Such a condition was essentially a drawback for pronunciation is a fundamental skill of spoken language and plays a vital role in successful communication. Also, to a greater extent, it also affects one's confidence level and self-esteem. Without appropriate pronunciation skill, the students would never be able to comprehend other' utterances well and speak intelligibly. Lacking appropriate pronunciation will also cause the students to feel reluctant to speak.

To help the students overcome their pronunciation problem, a classroom action research of pronunciation improvement using songs in a blended learning environment was conducted. Songs were selected to facilitate the pronunciation improvement because various practices and research results (Lo & Li, 1998; Pardede, 2010; Rengifo, 2009; Ulate, 2008; Varasarin, 2007) have revealed that songs play a significant role in developing students' pronunciation and other language skills. Richards (1993, p. 109) accentuated that Singing activities, with rhyme "help enhance the development of auditory discrimination skills, including integration of letter sounds, syllabification, and pronunciation of words." Blended learning environment was employed because it was the best solution to compensate for the in-class time constraint to conduct the action research. Besides to improve the students' pronunciation skills, this action research was also conducted to explore the students' attitudes to the use of songs through a blended learning approach. Thus, the problems addressed in this study were stated as follows. Can the use of songs in a blended learning approach improve the students' pronunciation skills? What

is the student attitude to the use of songs through a blended learning approach in their English pronunciation practice?

Literature Review
Pronunciation in EFL Classrooms

Appropriate pronunciation is undoubtedly a key aspect for everyone to understand and make himself understood in oral communication. According to Wong (1987), although non-native speakers have good vocabulary and grammar mastery, they will not be able to communicate effectively if their pronunciation falls below a certain threshold level. Setter and Jenkins (2005) contended that pronunciation "plays a vital role in successful communication both productively and receptively" (p. 2), while Madden and Moore (1997, p. 3) accentuated that "pronunciation is the most obvious and unavoidable marker of a language learner's proficiency".

Due to its significant role in achieving intelligible oral communication, pronunciation instruction should be one of the areas that EFL teachers focus on and foster in their classrooms. If the students are not facilitated to master adequate pronunciation skills, their ability to communicate will be severely limited. The results of various studies (Jenkins, 2000; Macdonald, 2002) support this by indicating that pronunciation skills development should be a compulsory part of EFL learning. Fraser (1999) even asserted that the question is not whether to teach pronunciation or not but how to teach it.

The differences between the phonotactic and phonological rules of English and the students' first language naturally make English pronunciation quite complicated to teach and to learn. Also, according to the critical period hypothesis of the second language acquisition, language acquisition best takes place between age two and puberty (9 years old). Lenneberg (as cited in Thu, 2009) posited that anyone learning another language after puberty cannot achieve a native-like language performance, especially a native-like accent. Therefore, if someone starts to learn English after his puberty begins, he is most likely to have serious difficulties in acquiring intelligible pronunciation, and the degree of difficulty increases markedly with age (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). These two factors make intelligible pronunciation difficult to attain.

However, the goal of pronunciation instruction EFL classroom is not to attain 'perfect' or native-like pronunciation but to develop the students' functional intelligibility, communicability, increased self-confidence in oral communication (Morley, 1991). In other words, the realistic objective of EFL pronunciation instruction is to develop students' oral English that is easy to understand, serves their individual needs, and enhances their confidence by increasing a positive image of themselves as a speaker of EFL. It can be actualized by keeping in mind that the proverb "practice makes it perfect" really works in English pronunciation development. This is supported by various current studies (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Thomson & Derwing, 2014) revealing that pronunciation instruction results in improvement. Moreover, Zielinski and Yates (2014) indicated that beginner-level learners are enthusiastic to improve their pronunciation, enjoy working on their pronunciation in the language classroom, and can improve it with pronunciation instruction.

Using Songs to Develop Students' Pronunciation

As previously noted, one of the major causes of difficulties in pronunciation improvement is the differences between the phonotactic and phonological rules of students' first language and English. For Indonesian EFL students, for instance, the

existence of several sounds, e.g. /ʃ/, /ð/, /θ/,/ʤ/, /æ/, /ə/ stress, and linking (connected speech) can cause difficulties. Furthermore, the inconsistency in English between how words are spelled and how they are pronounced adds the complexity of learning English pronunciation to them. To assist the students to cope up with the difficulties, the provision of a comfortable learning environment and interesting activities is highly necessary. According to Wong (1993), the idea that pronunciation is boring is merely a myth. She accentuated that if a pronunciation teaching was boring it is because it had been conducted in a boring way, as characterized by the use of materials that were irrelevant and uninteresting to students and the employment of monotonous and unvaried activities. In other words, pronunciation teaching can be made exciting by using authentic and interesting material and employing varied activities that is fun for the students.

One of the most effective ways to present a comfortable learning environment and interesting activities to promote pronunciation is by using songs. Ulate (2008) argued that songs help reduce boredom in the classroom for it creates a pleasing and interesting atmosphere and activities. According to Al-Mamary (2007), songs can stimulate and motivate students positively towards language learning. Rajbhandaraks (2001) reported that songs provide students with a concrete example of weak forms, sound reduction, and linkage, either between words or between sentences. Songs also offer prosodic signals such as pronunciation, stress, and intonation called extra-linguistic context to students (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Additionally, Richards (1993) posited that singing activities, with rhyme "help enhance the development of auditory discrimination skills, including integration of letter sounds, syllabification, and pronunciation of words".

Blended Learning

Modern technology (computer) has been used for almost one century to enhance the teaching and learning of other language elements and skills (vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing). Soon after the invention of the Internet and then mobile technologies, ICT was introduced into the field of language education. Since ICT can enhance the teaching and learning of other language elements and skills, it is potential to augment pronunciation teaching. The fact that ICT makes materials more physically, cognitively, and psychologically accessible (Pennington, 1996), it can provide an exceptionally helpful opportunity to assist students to overcome perceptual and productive constraints in pronunciation development. Technology, for instance, enables students to repeat learning as often as they need or to take exercises in private if they feel it more comfortable before practicing in front of other people. Pennington (1996) argued that technology can help students increase confidence by practicing on their own which accordingly helps them overcome foreign language anxiety. This is possible because various technological tools facilitate students to practice comfortably, at their own pace anytime and anywhere they feel at ease.

The use of ICT in the teaching and learning processes has opened the way for new and innovative methods of teaching and learning. One of the most popular methods is called blended learning, i.e. a learning-teaching approach that combines the best of face-to-face instruction and computer-mediated instruction. Thorne (2003) asserted blended learning might be one of the main educational advances in the 21st century because it develops students' learning experience by increasing their capacity for reflection (Cooner, 2010) and allows students to get be more involved in the learning process (Wang, Shen, Novak, & Pan, 2009). Pardede's (2012) literature review listed various following benefits of blended learning implementation, i.e., it presents pedagogical richness, opens access to knowledge, facilitates social interaction and personal agency, offers cost-effectiveness, provides an opportunity for reaching a large, globally dispersed audience in a short time with consistent, semi-personal content deliver, allows teaching to continue when schools

close, engages students to become active learners, and can alleviate the negative effect of poorly designed online programs with high-quality instructor-led sessions. In language learning context, Marsh (2012, p. 4-5) listed nine strengths of blended learning: it offers a more individualized learning experience; provides more personalized learning support; supports and encourages independent and collaborative learning; increases student engagement in learning; accommodates a variety of learning styles; provides a place to practice the target language beyond the classroom; provides a less stressful practice environment for the target language; provides flexible study, anytime or anywhere, to meet the students' needs; helps them develop valuable and necessary twenty-first-century learning skills.

One of the most widely used online learning sites to combine with face-to-face instruction in blended learning is Edmodo. It is a free and secure learning platform that is designed as a social network. Edmodo looks like Facebook but is much more private and safe for a learning environment for it lets only teachers create and manage accounts, and only their students can access and join the group (Majid, 2011). Edmodo provides teachers the opportunity to connect with their students via private and public messages, send announcements, share resources, post assignments, discussions, polls, and quizzes, assign grades, outline course calendar, and form small groups for projects. In Edmodo, students can easily communicate to their teachers, send questions, submit assignments, take quizzes, upload files and links to their backpack (e-library), share, discuss, collaborate, and participate in polls.

Wichadee (2017) reported the students who learned through blended learning employing Edmodo outperformed their peers who learned in traditional learning in oral proficiency. The study of Gay and Sofyan (2017) revealed that the use of Edmodo successfully facilitates students' participation in online discussions and tasks. Edmodo also enhanced the participants' interest and motivation in improving their writing skills. Pardede's (2015) study exploring pre-service EFL teachers' perception of the use of Edmodo as an accompanying learning tool English learning showed that most participants viewed Edmodo as a beneficial tool to supplement the traditional face-to-face class. They also had a positive view of their experiences in using Edmodo. Patel's (2016) experimental study focusing on the effects of Edmodo on student's language efficiency and their comprehension ability in the English Language showed that Edmodo can be a good pedagogical devise for it can stimulate students' curiosity, increase their motivation and enrich the learning process.

Methodology
Research Design
This study employed an action research design, i.e. a principled way of observing one's teaching, reflecting upon it, and trying to analyze its weaknesses and increase its strengths. ... through which educators can help themselves and their students overcome the specific problems they encounter in the learning and teaching process" (Pardede, 2016, p.143). In the context of English teaching, Latief (2011) accentuated that action research aims at developing an innovative instructional strategy to assist to augment the students' success in learning English.

Research Setting and Participants
The action research was conducted at SMA PSKD 7 Depok, West Java, Indonesia in the even semester of the academic year 2016/2017. It involves 30 tenth graders of the XA class, consisting of 17 female and 13 male students. The actions were implemented in the face to face mode in the last 30 minutes of the class-time and were held twice a week

from April to May 2017. The online sessions were conducted employing Edmodo as the learning management system (LMS), in which students could participate any time after the class hours.

Blended learning environment was employed because it was the best solution to compensate for the in-class time constraint to conduct the action research. The researcher was supposed to finish the project in not more than 6 weeks and provided not more than 30 minutes in each in-class session. Since the English teacher needed to finish the class program, she should keep teaching in the class. The action research was then conducted in the last 30 minutes of each session. To enable the students to get involved in the project's activities outside the classroom, blended learning, which essentially "combines the best of face-to-face instruction and computer-mediated instruction" (Pardede, 2012, p. 169), was the best solution. Also, the participants had no problem to actively participate in learning through Edmodo. All of them were familiar with the online learning site's features. Each of them also had a smartphone, desktop or laptop at home to access it.

Actions Procedure

In this study, four songs of West Life were employed in a blended learning environment to improve English pronunciation elements which turned out to be erroneously uttered by the participants in the pretest administered 1 week before Cycle I started). The erroneous elements were grouped into four pronunciation aspects: sounds, stress, pausing and linking. The erroneous sounds consisted of consonants /ʃ/, /ð/, /θ/, and /dj/; vowels /æ/ and /ə/; silent sound /h/, /k/, and /ough/; and cluster [-nd], [-nds], [br-], [dr-], [fr-], [kr-], [kw-],[-ksts]. [-lj]. [-lm], [-lp], [-nch], [-pl-], [pl-], [rds], [-rk], [sp-], [shr-], [sk-], [skr-], [spl-], [spr-], [-st], [str-], [θr], [-ŋk], [ŋs], and [-tʃ],

The study was conducted in two cycles, and each cycle was divided into four stages, namely: (1) planning, (2) actions, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. Overall, the action research was conducted in 19 sessions (1 session for administering the pretest and pre-action questionnaire, 16 sessions for the actions implementation, 1 session for administering the posttest of cycle 1, and 1 sessions for administering the posttest of cycle 2 and the post-action questionnaire). West Life's songs were selected because they have clear pronunciation and the lyrics consist of common words.

Instruments

To collect the data, two types of instruments were employed, i.e. one pretest, two posttests and a questionnaire which was administered before and after the project. Both pretest and posttest was conducted by recording the students' utterance while they were reading some sentences containing the sounds, clusters, stress and linking identified as problematic to the students in the pre-test. Three examiners were assigned to rate each student's recorded utterances by counting the percentage of his/her pronunciation discrepancy with the native speaker's. Besides to assess the students' initial pronunciation performance, the pre-test also served to identify the problematic pronunciation elements to the students. The other two tests, (posttest 1 and posttest 2) were administered at the end of each corresponding cycle to assess the students' progress. The procedure and assessment system of these tests were identical with the ones used in administering the pretest.

The first questionnaire (Pre-Action Questionnaire), consisting of nine statements to respond by choosing one of the four options arranged in 4 Linkert's scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). It was administered to gauge the information concerning the

students' initial perception of pronunciation and singing. The second questionnaire (Post Action Questionnaire), consisting of eight questions. It was distributed to the students to gauge their perception of the action research implementation and its effect on their pronunciation skills.

Data Analysis Technique

The data obtained from the tests were analyzed using descriptive statistical operation in the form of tables and graphs. The data obtained through the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive analysis. It was processed to see the participants' attitudes changes before and after the action research.

Findings

Initial Condition of the Participants

Before they joint the project, the participants' English pronunciation was strongly impeded by Indonesian sound system. In addition to their inaccuracy in using certain specific sounds, such as consonants /ʃ/, /ð/, /θ/, and /dj/; vowels /æ/, /ə/ and /i:/; silent sounds /h/ as in 'what', /k/ as in 'know', /t/ as in 'listen', /n/ as in 'autumn/, /ough/ as in 'enough', and /gh/ as in 'fight/, and they also encountered difficulty to use clusters, like [-nds], ksts]. [-lp], [-nch], [-pl-], [rds, [sp-], [shr-], [sk-], [skr-], [spl-], [spr-], [str-], [θr], [-ŋk], [ŋs], and [-tʃ],. Moreover, they also did not apply stress and linking. All of these caused their utterances relatively unintelligible.

Table 1
Participants' Pretest Score

No	Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
1	≥ 75.0	Very Good	0	0	
2	70.0-74.99	Good	5	17%	
3	50.0-69.99	Fair	19	63%	54.43
4	≤ 49.99	Poor	6	20%	
	Total		30	100%	

Their poor pronunciation skills were shown by the results of the pretest conducted a week before the implementation of the actions. As shown in Table 1, none of them got very good score categories. Only 17% got a good category, more than a half (63%) got the fair category and, 20% got the poor category. The pretest mean score was 54.43.

Table 2
Pre-Action Questionnaire (n= 30)

No	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	My pronunciation is good	16	53%	14	47%	0	0	0	0
2	Pronunciation enhancement is essential	0	0	0	0	12	40%	18	60%
3	I can easily understand native speakers' utterances	13	43%	14	47%	3	10%	0	0
4	I can speak with good pronunciation	16	535	14	47%	0	0	0	0
5	I feel reluctant to speak English because of my poor pronunciation	1	3%	4	13%	12	40%	13	43%
6	English pronunciation is very difficult to master	0	0	4	14%	14	46%	12	40%
7	Pronunciation learning activities are boring	0	0	4	14%	13	43%	13	43%
8	I am committed to do my best if I find an interesting way to improve my pronunciation	0	0	0	0	15	50%	15	50%

The data obtained from the Pre Action Questionnaire support the participants' pronunciation skills inappropriateness. As shown in Table 2, none of them strongly agreed and agreed that their pronunciation was good. None of them thought they could speak with good pronunciation, and the majority (90%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that they could easily understand native speakers' utterances. These two factors made 83% of them agreed and strongly agreed they felt reluctant to speak English. However, despite their belief that English pronunciation is difficult to master (86% of them agreed and strongly agreed with this statement), because pronunciation learning activities are boring, 86% of them thought pronunciation is important to enhance, and all of them were committed to doing their best to improve their pronunciation if they could find interesting ways to do it.

Report of the Actions Implementation
Cycle I
Cycle I was conducted in eight sessions. The odd number sessions were conducted in face-to-face mode, while the even-numbered sessions were conducted online through Edmodo (see Appendix 1). The first four sessions employed West Life's *I have a Dream* to facilitate practices for improving the participants' ability to pronounce vowels /æ/and /i:/; consonants /θ/, /ð/ and /ʃ /, clusters [dr-], [-lp] [kr-], [kr-], [str-], [θr], [rk], and [st]; silent sounds /h/ as in 'while', /k/ as in 'know', and /ough/ as in 'through'; stress and linking. Sessions 5 to 8 employed West Life's *Flying without Wings* to facilitate practices for improving the participants' ability to pronounce consonants /ð/, /θ/; vowels /i:/; dipthongs /aʊ/, /ɔɪ/, and /aɪ/; silent sounds /k/, /ugh/, and /gh/; clusters [-pl-], [-st], [pl-], [br-], [-nd], [sp-], [ŋs], [fr-], [rds], [str-], [kr-], [-st], /dr/, [nds], and [tʃ], stress and linking. The videos and handouts used in the action research were also provided in the LMS (Edmodo) to facilitate students practice it in the online sessions. The details of the activity could be seen in Appendix 1. In addition, during both face-to-face and online sessions, a collaborator was assigned to observe the action research process and made notes on the provided observation sheet.

Table 3
Participants' Posttest 1 Score

No	Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
1	≥ 75.0	Very Good	5	17%	
2	70.0-74.99	Good	9	30%	
3	50.0-69.99	Fair	14	47%	65.3
4	≤ 49.99	Poor	2	6%	
	Total		30	100%	

Cycle I was ended by administering the posttest intended to assess the participants' pronunciation progress. As shown in Table 3, the posttest scores of Cycle I indicated that, although not very significant, the activities in this cycle managed to improve the students' pronunciation skills. If in the pretest none of the participants got "very good" score category and 83% got the "fair" and "poor" score category, in Posttest I 17% managed to get the "very good" category, and those who got "fair" and "poor" score category had decreased to 53%.

The most important point of the reflection stage of Cycle I was the observer's suggestion for asking the students (in groups while in the face-to-face sessions and individually while in online mode) to identify the pronunciation elements they had practiced in a text not taken from the songs but has these elements. It can be some sentences or a passage designed to contain these elements. Thus, in the second cycle, practices for identifying the pronunciation elements the students had practiced were provided during the online sessions. The participants started doing it individually. However, after finishing the exercise individually, they were asked to share and compare their findings with the other through the discussion platform in Edmodo.

Cycle II
Like Cycle I, Cycle II was conducted in eight sessions in which the odd-numbered sessions were conducted in face-to-face mode, while the even-numbered sessions were conducted online through Edmodo. The first four sessions employed West Life's *I'll be there.* It was planned to practice again the consonants, such as /ð/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/; vowels /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɜː/; diphthong /eɪ/; and silent sounds the participants found difficult and had been practiced in Cycle I. It was also employed to elaborate their skills in pronouncing consonant clusters like [kt], [nd], [st], [rt], [ms], [ts], [str], [ŋθ], [kts]; stress and linking. In the last four sessions, West Life's *If I Let you Go* was employed. In addition to the previous pronunciation components that had been practiced in the previous sessions, this second half of Cycle 2 was planned to practice the consonants /θ/, /ŋ/ /ð/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/' vowels /ə/, /ʌ/, /iː/, /ɜː/; diphthongs /eɪ/. /aɪ/, cluster /tʃ/, /dʒ/, //k/, /gh/, /ugh/; special sounds like 'gotta', stress and linking.

As suggested by the observer in Cycle 1, in the second cycle, practices for identifying the pronunciation elements the students had practiced were provided during the online sessions. In the beginning, the participants started doing it individually. Next, after finishing the exercise individually, they were asked to share and compare their findings with the other through the discussion platform in Edmodo.

This cycle was ended by administering the posttest of Cycle II intended to assess the participants' progress. After the test, the participants were also asked to fill in the Post Action Questionnaire.

Table 4
Participants' Posttest 2 Score

No	Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
1	≥ 75.0	Very Good	10	33%	
2	70.0-74.99	Good	12	40%	
3	50.0-69.99	Fair	8	27%	72.3
4	≤ 49.99	Poor	0	0%	
	Total		30	100%	

As shown in Table 4, the posttest scores of Cycle II indicated that the activities in this cycle managed to contribute much higher improvement in the participants' pronunciation skills than the improvement in Cycle I. In Posttest 1 only 4.76% of the participants got "very good" score category, while in Posttest II the participants got this category increased to 33%. In Posttest I almost more than half (53%) of the participants still got the "fair" and "poor vocabulary, while in Posttest II there remained only 27% who got this category. The mean score of this cycle increased to 72.3. To achieve the mean score

of ≥ 75, at least one more cycle was needed. However, action research was allowed only for two cycles. Thus, the project stopped, but the teacher committed to varying her teaching strategies by employing songs in the ways they were used in the action research as the main alternative.

Table 5
Post-Action Questionnaire

No	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
1	My pronunciation is good	0	0	8	27%	16	53%	6	20%
2	Using songs to improve pronunciation is interesting	0	0	2	7%	16	53%	12	40%
3	My pronunciation improved after the practices using songs	0	0	4	13%	12	40%	14	47%
4	I enthusiastically practiced the pronunciation activities in the face-to-face sessions.	0	0	2	7%	13	43%	15	50%
5	I enthusiastically practiced the pronunciation activities in the online sessions.in Edmodo	0	0	2	7%	13	43%	15	50%
6	English pronunciation is very difficult to master	15	50%	12	40%	3	10%	0	0
7	I still feel reluctant to speak English after following the pronunciation development using songs	10	33%	14	47%	4	13%	2	7%
8	I will keep on using songs to develop my pronunciation	12	40%	14	47%	4	13%	0	0

The data obtained from the post-action questionnaire indicated the positive perceptions of the participants of the action research implementation and its effect on their pronunciation skills (see table 5). Different from the data obtained from the pre-action survey showing that none of them strongly agreed and agreed that their pronunciation was good, in the post-action survey 73% of them strongly agreed and agreed that their pronunciation was good. This is supported by the finding that 87% of them thought their pronunciation improved after joining the action research. Their belief that English pronunciation is difficult to master also changed. In the pre-action survey, 86% of them agreed and strongly agreed with this statement, but in the post-action survey there was only 10% who still held the belief. The majority (93%) viewed that using songs to improve pronunciation is interesting. As a consequence, 93% of them agreed and strongly agreed that they were enthusiastic about doing the action research pronunciation activities in both face-to-face and online sessions. Finally, due to their pronunciation improvement, only 20% of them were still feel reluctant to speak in English as compared to 86% in the initial survey.

DISCUSSION
The results of this study revealed that the use of songs effectively improved the participants' pronunciation. Before participating in the action research, 83% of the participants got "fair" and "poor" score categories. This is in line with their responses through the Pre Action Questionnaire which revealed more than 83% of them agreed and strongly agreed that they feel reluctant to speak in English due to their poor pronunciation. They (86%) also initially regarded English pronunciation is very difficult to master but now t90% agreed and strongly agreed with the statement.

In their opinion, using songs to improve pronunciation skills is interesting (at the end of the project 93% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed with this statement). This belief was actualized through the enthusiastic participation of 93% of the participants in both face-to-face and online learning activities. In addition to their willingness to

improve pronunciation, through some informal discussions, many of the participants acknowledged that they liked the songs used in the project very much, and this also affected their involvement in the learning activities.

The participants' high motivation and involvement, consequently, enabled them to keep on making improvements in pronunciation, as shown by the increase of scores they got in the tests (see Chart 1). This finding clarified Dornyei's (1998) argument accentuated that motivation influences the rate and success of language learning. It is also in line with Yousofi and Naderfarjad's (2015) finding which indicated that motivation correlated significantly with EFL learners' pronunciation skill.
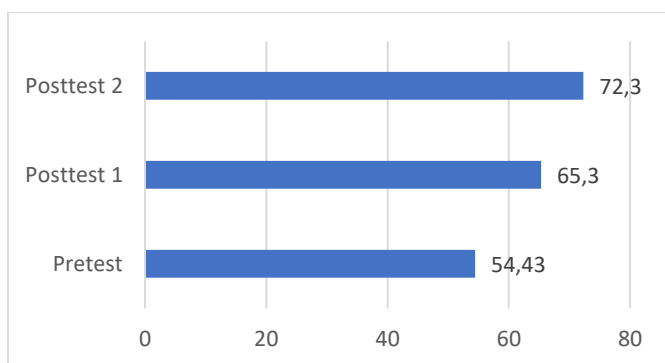
. Chart 1 Increase of Tests mean Score

In conclusion, and to answer the first research question, the mean scores obtained by the participants in the three subsequent tests revealed that the use of songs in a blended learning environment increased the students' pronunciation skills. As stated earlier, the participants' achievement was strongly supported by their motivation to improve their pronunciation and their interest in the media (songs) and learning activities conducted in the project. The majority of them were not only enthusiastic about participating in the activities during the project. Most of them (87%), even after the project finished, committed to keep on using songs to develop their pronunciation further.

To conclude this discussion and to answer the second research question as well, the results revealed that the participants perceived the use of songs in a blended learning environment to develop pronunciation in this study positively. They not only regarded the activities and media interesting but also thought they help them improve their pronunciation. The interest and belief, then, drove them to be active in both face-to-face and online learning modes.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The results of this action research provided a strong indication that pronunciation instruction using songs in a blended learning environment managed to increase the participants' pronunciation skills and change their attitude. Before the actions implementations, they generally had negative attitudes toward pronunciation. However, their high motivation, combined with the use of interesting activities and media to facilitate the explicit pronunciation instruction in the actions, managed to change the negative attitudes to positive ones.

This action research focuses only on improving a limited number of pronunciation elements, i.e. the consonants, vowels, diphthongs, silent sounds, consonant clusters, stress and linking that were identified to be problematic for the participants. To improve

students' pronunciation more comprehensively, further action researches are recommended to include rhythm and intonation.

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Appendix
Action Report Implementation

Sessions	Learning Mode	Focus Activities	Song & Focus
3 April 2017	Pretest & Pre-action survey		
Cycle 1			
1 (10 April 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Watching the live video • Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Brief discussion on the song's meaning and message. • Exploiting selected lines from the song containing the focused sounds, stress & linking (Practice using a worksheet)	*I have a dream* /æ/ /i:/
2 (10-13 April 2017)	Online	• Self-replaying the song to listen to and sing it. • Practicing to pronounce particular the sounds, stress, and linking in the selected lines.	/θ/, /ð/. /ʃ / [dr-], [-lp] [kr-], [kr-], [str-], [θr], [rk], and [st]
3 (13 April 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Group work for identifying some focused sounds, stresses, and linking • Individual practice (saying some daily sentences with appropriate pronunciation)	silent sounds: /h/, /k/, /ough/
4 (13-16 April 2017)	Online	• Self-replaying the song to listen to and sing it. • Identifying and practicing to pronounce particular the sounds, stress, and linking from a handout provided by the researcher • Taking a quiz on particular the sounds, stress, and linking learned in session 1-3	stress linking.
5 (17 April 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Watching the live video • Brief discussion on the song's meaning and message • Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Exploiting selected lines from the song containing the focused sounds, stress & linking (Practice using a worksheet)	*Flying without Wings* /i:/, /ʌ/, /eɪ/
6 17-19 April 2017	Online	• Self-replaying the song to listen to and sing it. • Practicing to pronounce particular the sounds, stress, and linking in the selected lines.	/ð/, /θ/, [tʃ] /k/, /ugh/, /gh/
7 (20 April 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Group work for identifying the focused sounds and linking • Individual practice (saying some daily sentences with appropriate pronunciation)	[-pl-], [str-], [-st], [pl-], [br-], [-nd], [sp-], [ŋs], [fr-], [rds], [kr-], [ks], [-st], /dr/, [nds]
8 (20-23 April 2017)	Online	• Self-replaying the song to listen to and sing it. • Identifying and practicing to pronounce particular the sounds, stress, and linking from a handout provided by the researcher • Taking a quiz on particular the sounds, stress, and linking learned in session 5-7	stress linking.
(24 April 2017)	Post Test of cycle 1		

Cycle 2			
9 (27 April 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Watching the live video • Brief discussion on the song's meaning and message • Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Exploiting selected lines from the song containing the focused sounds, stress & linking (Practice using a worksheet)	*I'll be there* /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɜ:/ /eɪ/ /ð/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/ [kt], [nd], [st], [rt], [ms], [ts], [str], [ŋθ], [kts] stress linking.
10 (27-30 April 2017)	Online	• Self-replaying the song, listening to and singing it. • Practicing to pronounce sounds, stress, and linking in selected lines.	
11 (1 May 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Group work for identifying some focused sounds and linking • Individual practice (saying some daily sentences with appropriate pronunciation)	
12 (1-3 May 2017	Online	• Self-replaying the song to listen to and sing it. • Identifying and practicing to pronounce particular the sounds, stress, and linking from a handout provided by the researcher, and share and discuss the findings with friends through the online discussion forum. • Taking a quiz on particular the sounds, stress, and linking learned in session 1-3	
13 (4 May 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Watching the live video • Brief discussion on the song's meaning and message • Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Exploiting selected lines from the song containing the focused sounds, stress & linking (Practice using a worksheet)	*If I Let you Go* /ə/, /ʌ/, /i:/, /ɜ:/ /θ/, /ŋ/ /eɪ/. /aɪ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/ /k/, /gh/, /ugh/, [st], [ns], [ft], /-tt-/ → /dd/ "gotta" stress linking.
14 (4-7 May 2017)	Online	• Self-replaying the song to listen to and sing it. • Practicing to pronounce particular the sounds, stress, and linking in the selected lines.	
15 (8 May 2017)	Face-to-Face	• Singing together while watching the video with lyrics • Group work for identifying the focused sounds and linking • Individual practice (saying some daily sentences with appropriate pronunciation)	
16 (8-10 may 2017	Online	• Self-replaying the song to listen to and sing it. • Identifying and practicing to pronounce particular the sounds, stress, and linking from a handout provided by the researcher, and share and discuss the findings with friends through the online discussion forum. • Taking a quiz on particular the sounds, stress, and linking learned in session 1-3	
11 may 2017	Post Test of Cycle 1 & Survey		