

Introduction to Magic E in Reading English Words *CVCe*

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ABSTRACT

English vowels consist of five letters that have different pronunciations (sounds) in English words. There are 20 vowel sounds and 24 consonant sounds in English. It is a challenge for English teachers to teach English learners the concept of reading English words. English vowels with the symbols a, i, u, e, and o have different pronunciations when they are positioned between consonants in the word *CVC* and when the word *CVC* is added by the letter e in the word *CVCe*. Therefore, this paper analyzed the influence of the letter e (which is referred to as *magic e*) in the pronunciation of English vowel sounds. This research is qualitative research with documentation study methods to analyze and explain how the vowel sounds are pronounced in *CVC* and *CVCe* words so that English reading teaching steps are obtained that are easy to understand. The results showed that English vowels were pronounced as short *vowel sounds* in *CVC* words and pronounced as *long vowel sounds* in *CVCe* words. The steps to teach *magic e* that can be applied are to repeat the short vowel sound material, introduce the concept of sounds and letters, introduce the concept of short and long vowel sounds, read two words similar in the concept of *CVC* and *CVCe*, and practice reading the word *CVCe* regularly.

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1. Introduction

Reading is one of the ways to develop children's language skills. Young children can learn to read from the age of four (Suggate, Schaughency, & Reese, 2013). The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) says the most important skill a child has when going to school is to start learning to read. It is in line to the fact that children who sit at the playgroup and kindergarten levels have already started to read. In learning English, the students have already been introduced to English phonics. Phonics is a reading method where "Teachers teach children the sound of letters and put the sounds together to form words" (Seefeldt & Wasik, 2008). It is in line with Santrock's statement (2002) which states that the "Phonics method is a technique for learning to read which emphasizes the sounds (pronunciation) produced by the letters. Reading by using phonics method is a process for students to learn about

English sounds (English phonics). It is a fundamental basis of students in reading English words. Zaitun's analysis (2023) concluded that the phonics method can improve children's ability to read English vocabulary at the beginning for Kindergarten B students at Penguin Family Islamic School Bekasi.

There are 20 vowel sounds and 24 consonant sounds in English. Siminto, (2013, p. 61) states that consonant sounds are sounds produced by blocking airflow at one place in the airways above the glottis (the gap between the two sound membranes in the larynx). Vowels are sounds produced in the sound system by experiencing little resistance to the outgoing airflow, and usually, the sound is loud (O'Grady & Archibald, 2016, p. 20). In the process of reading English words, the first vocabulary patterns learned are CVC patterns. After that, but students also have to learn advanced word patterns that have CVCe patterns (consonant vowel consonant + "e"), such as tape, bite, and cute. In the CVCe word pattern, the letter "e" is not actually pronounced, so it is often called the silent e or magic e. The letter "e" at the end of a word usually becomes the vowel "say it's named", which means to be a vowel that is pronounced the same as the vowel name in the English alphabet (English spelling). For example, the letter a is called /ei/, the letter i is called /ai/, the letter e is called /i:/, and so on. Letters that are pronounced the same as their name or spelling in this alphabet are referred to as long vowel sounds. This is in line with the theory described by Tambunsaribu, (2019, pp. 24–34), the vowels a, i, u, e, and o, which are pronounced as /æ/, /i/, /ʌ/, /e/, and /ɒ/ will sound like the spellings, namely /ei/ /ai/ /ju:/ /i:/ and /əʊ/ in the CVCe words. In this case, the use of the letter e at the end of the word causes short vowel sounds to turn into long vowel sounds.

If we compare the pronunciation of the sounds of CVC and CVCe, it will have a striking difference in the pronunciation of vowels (vowel sound). When the letter 'e' is placed at the end of a word, it becomes silent and changes the way the word is pronounced. The vowel sound "e" in English is known as the silent sound "e" or magic sound "e". Some teachers call this the "silent e" rule. Some call it the "magic e" rule. The letter 'e' gives all its power to other vowels and makes those vowels use their long sounds ("say its name"). <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/phonics-rules-for-reading-and-spelling>.

Differences in the pronunciation of English vowel sounds make it difficult to teach the reading process. Especially, when the the vowel sounds are put in the CVC pattern and CVCe pattern. Therefore, teachers will find difficulties in making the students understand how to say the vowel sounds in English words. Based on this problem, the concept of teaching English vowel sounds should be known by the teachers. It also helps the students easily understand how to read in English. The study related to the reading process has been discussed by Zuchdi and Budiasih (1996). Based on their study, it revealed that the reading ability obtained in early reading would greatly affect the ability to read further. The other study is from Phajane (2014). He states that in early childhood, reading focuses on the synthetic phonics approach, where words are separated into the smallest part of the unit, namely sounds (phonemes). Children are taught letters (graphemes) and represent them into phonemes and also learn to mix them into words. In English reading stages, students will start with the stages of reading CVC (consonant vowel consonant) words such as tap, bit, and cut. This is in line with the results of the study by Suari Dewi (2023), who explained that the stages of recognizing English phonics in the CVC reading learning process are sounding letters, spelling, and mixing sounds into meaningful words. The other study related to the reading process is from Retnomurti, Hendrawaty, and Nurhayati (2019), they stated that the phonics reading strategy is a way of teaching multisensory reading and writing of letters, then using the sound synthesis method to read words.

Based on the previous studies, it is known how important reading ability is for students. It also shows the process of reading from letters and phonemes to English words. Besides, the stages of reading CVC words have been also discussed. However, the discussion about the differences in pronunciation between vowel sounds in CVC and CVCe words were not discussed in the previous

study. Therefore, this study focuses on the functions possessed by magic e in the CVCe vocabulary to notice its effect to English vowels pronunciation. This study aims to know the function of magic e in CVCe words. In addition, this study also discusses the steps of teaching magic e in the process of reading English CVCe words. This study is expected to give solutions to the teachers in introducing English vowel sounds in the reading process by using the phonics method.

2. Materials and Methods

This study is a qualitative research method that explains social meanings and processes by using interviews, observations, and document study. The kind of qualitative in this research was the document method, by observing several words with CVC (sit, hop, hat) and CVCe (site, hope, hate) patterns to find out the function of magic e in English words. The words in CVC patterns such as: bit, hat, and cut compared to CVCe patterns such as: bite, hate, and cute to see the differences of vowel sound pronunciation. Data analysis was carried out by describing the function of magic e in the process of reading English CVCe words after comparing them to CVC words and finding out the steps of teaching magic e in the process of reading English CVCe words

3. Result and Discussion

The function of magic e in the process of reading the English word CVCe

In the early stages of English vowel sound recognition, these vowel sounds are pronounced as short sounds. Short vowel sounds are simple vowel segments contained in the core of a syllable (McCully, 2009, p. 223). Vowels sounded as short sounds can be seen as follows:

- a) The vowel a is sounded /æ/ as in the word cat /cæt/
- b) The vowel i is sounded /ɪ/ as in the word sit /sɪt/
- c) The vowel o is sounded /ɒ/ as in the word hop /hɒp/
- d) The vowel u is sounded /ʌ/ as in the word hug /hʌg/
- e) The vowel e is sounded /e/ as in the word pet /pet/

In the form of CVC words, vowel sounds tend to be pronounced as short vowel sounds. However, when we add the magic e in the CVC word, it will become CVCe words that change the pronunciation of short vowel sounds into long vowel sounds. A long vowel sound is two or three vowel sounds appearing side by side in one syllable (McCully, 2009, p. 220).

The change of short vowel sounds into long vowel sounds can be described in the CVC and CVCe words table, which is designed as a learning medium as follows:

Table 1 *The letter a from the short vowel sound /æ/ becomes the long vowel sound /eɪ/*

Words CVC	Pronunciation	Words CVCe	Pronunciation
Cat	/kæt/	Lake	/leɪk/
Hat	/hæt/	Hate	/heɪt/
Bag	/bæg/	Gate	/geɪt/

In the table above, it can be seen that the letter a, which is a short vowel sound /æ/ in the word CVC, changes pronunciation to be longer in the word CVCe, which becomes a long vowel sound /eɪ/ when added magic e at the end of the word. The short vowel sound /æ/ is a simple vowel segment found in the core syllables hat, cat, and bag. A long vowel sound is two or three vowel sounds appearing side by side in one syllable. From the table above, it can be seen that the long vowel /eɪ/ is the vowel sound /e/ and /ɪ/ that appear side by side in the syllables lake, hate, and gate.

Table 2 The letter i from the short vowel sound /ɪ/ becomes the long vowel sound /aɪ/

Words CVC	Pronunciation	Words CVCe	Pronunciation
Bit	/bɪt/	Bite	/baɪt/
Dig	/dɪg/	Kite	/kaɪt/
Sit	/sɪt/	Site	/saɪt/

In the table above, it can be seen that the letter i, which is a short vowel sound /ɪ/ in the word CVC, changes pronunciation to be longer in the word CVCe, which becomes a long vowel sound /aɪ/ when added *magic e* at the end of the word. The short vowel sound /ɪ/ is a simple vowel segment found in the core syllables *bit*, *dig*, and *sit*. A long vowel sound is two or three vowel sounds appearing side by side in one syllable. From the table above, it can be seen that the long vowel /aɪ/ is the vowel sound /a/ and /ɪ/ that appear side by side in *bite*, *kite*, and *site* syllables.

Table 3 The letter o from the short vowel sound /ɒ/ becomes the long vowel sound /əʊ/

Words CVC	Pronunciation	Words CVCe	Pronunciation
Mop	/mɒp/	Bone	/bəʊn/
Hop	/hɒt/	Hope	/həʊp/
Top	/tɒp/	Rope	/rəʊp/

In the table above, it can be seen that the letter o which is a short vowel sound /ɒ/ in the word CVC changes pronunciation to be longer in the word CVCe, which becomes a long vowel sound /əʊ/ when added *magic e* at the end of the word. The short vowel sound /ɒ/ is a simple vowel segment found in the core syllables *mop*, *hot* and *top*. A long vowel sound is two or three vowel sounds appearing side by side in one syllable. From the table above, it can be seen that the long vowel /əʊ/ is the vowel /ə/ and /ʊ/ that appear side by side in the syllables *bone*, *rose* and *rope*.

Table 4 The letter u from the short vowel sound /ʌ/ becomes the long vowel sound /ju:/

Words CVC	Pengucapan	Words CVCe	Pengucapan
Cub	/cʌb/	Cube	/kju:b/
Nut	/nʌt/	Mute	/mju:t/
Rub	/rʌb/	Cute	/kju:t/

In the table above, it can be seen that the letter u which is a short vowel sound /ʌ/ in the word CVC has changed pronunciation to be longer in the word CVCe, which is a sound like the spelling /ju:/ or called a long vowel when added *magic e* at the end of the word. The short vowel sound /ʌ/ is a simple vowel segment found in the core syllables *cub*, *nut* and *rub*. A long vowel sound is two or three vowel sounds appearing side by side in one syllable. From the table above it can be seen that the long vowel /ju:/ is a long sound because the vowel /ju:/ has a longer pronunciation duration and is like formed by the vowels /ɪ/ and /u:/ in *cube*, *mute* and *cute* syllables.

Table 5 The letter e from the short vowel sound /e/ becomes a long vowel sound /i:/

Kata CVC	Pengucapan	Kata CVCe	Pengucapan
Bed	/bed/	Here	hi:r
Red	/red/	Pete	pi:t
Jet	/jet/	Delete	dɪ'li:t

In the table above, it can be seen that the letter e, which is a short vowel sound /e/ in the word *CVC*, has changed the pronunciation to be longer in the word *CVCe*, which becomes a long vowel sound /i:/ when magic e is added to the end of the word. The short vowel sound /e/ is a simple vowel segment found in the core of *bed*, *red*, and *jet* syllables. A long vowel sound is two or three vowel sounds appearing side by side in one syllable. From the table above it can be seen that the long vowel /i:/ is a long sound because the vowel /i:/ has a longer pronunciation duration in the syllables here, *pete* and *delete*.

Steps of teaching *magic e* in the process of reading *English CVCe* words

After identifying the function of *magic e* in English words, then compiled the teaching steps in the process of reading *English CVCe* words. The steps that can be applied are as follows:

- 1) Repeating the material of short vowel sounds a, i, u, e, o
Students are invited to recall how to pronounce short English vowel sounds that have been learned before

Table 6 Table of English short vowel sounds

Letter	Sounding
a	/æ/
i	/ɪ/
u	/ʌ/
e	/e/
o	/ɒ/

- 2) Introducing the concept of sounds and letters
If we observe the comparison of the pronunciation of short and long vowel sounds from the letters a, i, u, e, o follows:

Table 7 Table of concepts of sounds and letters

Letter	Sounding	Letter	Sounding
a	/æ/	a_e	/eɪ/
i	/ɪ/	i_e	/aɪ/
u	/ʌ/	u_e	/u:/
e	/e/	e_e	/i:/
o	/ɒ/	o_e	/oʊ/

From the comparison table above, we can see that long vowel sounds are pronounced the same as the name of the vowel in English. So, the next stage is to introduce the names of vowels in English. In this stage, students should often be introduced to the concepts of "sound" and

"letter", where sounds are the pronunciations of the English letters /æ/, /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /e/ and /ɒ/ while letters are the names of the English letters /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /u:/, /i:/ and /ou/.

- 3) Introducing the concept of short and long vowel sounds
Students are shown cards of vowels a, i, u, e, and o, and students say the sounds. Students are shown a card containing vowels with *magic e*, namely: a _ e, I _ e, u _ e, e _ e, o _ e, and students say the name of the letter.
- 4) Read two words similar in the concepts of *CVC* and *CVCe*
tap – tape
kit – kite
hug – huge
pet – Pete
hop – hope
In this stage, students are given two words that are similar to one word is the word *CVC* and the other word is the word *CVCe*. By reading two words similar in the concepts of *CVC* and *CVCe*, students are expected to be able to distinguish the pronunciation of short and long vowel sounds.
- 5) Practice reading *CVCe* words regularly
Students are given more practice in reading *CVCe* words. In this stage, students are given *CVCe* words and then invited to read sentences containing *the CVCe* words.

4. Conclusion

The results showed that *magic e* changed the pronunciation of English vowel sounds from short vowel sounds to long vowel sounds. English vowels are pronounced as short *vowel sounds* in *CVC* words and pronounced as *long vowel sounds* in *CVCe* words. In the process of teaching English reading, after students get to know the concept of reading the word *CVC*, students can be introduced to the pattern of reading *the word CVCe* by applying the five steps of teaching *magic e*, namely: repeating the material of short vowel sounds, introducing the concept of sounds and letters, introducing the concept of short and long vowel sounds, reading two words that are similar in the concepts of *CVC* and *CVCe*, and practice reading the word *CVCe* regularly. It is in line with the statement from Phajane (2014). He stated that in early childhood, reading focuses on the synthetic phonics approach, where words are separated into the smallest part of the unit, namely sounds (phonemes). Children are taught letters (graphemes) and represent them into phonemes and also learn to mix them into words.

Future research is expected to focus more on research on the reading process using phonics methods with different patterns to the *CVC* and *CVCe*. Therefore, it helps English teachers to find the right concepts and learning steps for students in reading English words by using the phonics method.

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