AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' PRONUNCIATION DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH WORDS THROUGH TONGUE TWISTER ACTIVITIES AMONG THE ELEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS OF SMAS NASRANI 2 MEDAN

Susi Santrika Sitinjak, Carolina Pakpahan, Lastri Wahyuni Manurung
Universitas HKBP Nomensen Medan
Email :susi.santrikasitinjak@student.uhn.ac.id , carolina.pakpahan@uhn.ac.id
lastri.manurung@uhn.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze students' pronunciation difficulties in English words through tongue twister activities among the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Nasrani 2 Medan. The objectives of this research are to identify the types of pronunciation difficulties experienced by students, determine the English phonemes that are most difficult for them to pronounce, and analyze the patterns of pronunciation difficulties that appear in their pronunciation performance. This research applied a descriptive qualitative research design. The participants of this study were 20 eleventh-grade students of SMAS Nasrani 2 Medan in the academic year 2024/2025. The data were collected through tongue-twister reading tasks, classroom observations, audio recordings, and interviews. The students' pronunciation performances were transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and analyzed through data reduction, data display, identification and classification of pronunciation difficulties, and interpretation of the findings. The results of the study show that students experience various pronunciation difficulties in both consonant and vowel sounds. The most frequent consonant difficulties were found in the pronunciation of /ʃ/, /θ/, /v/, /r/ in final position, and /z/. Meanwhile, vowel difficulties occurred in the pronunciation of /ʌ/, /æ/, the diphthong /aɪ/, /u/, and /oʊ/. The analysis also revealed three dominant types of pronunciation difficulties, namely substitution, omission, and reduction or simplification. Among these, substitution was the most frequently occurring error, indicating that students often replaced unfamiliar English sounds with similar sounds from their first language. The findings also indicate that first language interference significantly influenced students' pronunciation performance. In conclusion, the study reveals that tongue twister activities effectively expose students' pronunciation difficulties and highlight the English phonemes that are most problematic for learners. These findings provide useful insights for English teachers in designing more effective pronunciation teaching strategies and providing focused pronunciation practice for EFL learners..

Keywords: pronunciation difficulties, tongue twisters, English phonemes, EFL learners.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kesulitan pengucapan (pronunciation) siswa dalam mengucapkan kata-kata bahasa Inggris melalui kegiatan tongue twister pada siswa kelas XI SMAS Nasrani 2 Medan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis kesulitan pengucapan yang dialami siswa, mengetahui fonem bahasa Inggris yang paling sulit diucapkan oleh siswa, serta menganalisis pola kesulitan pengucapan yang muncul dalam performa pengucapan siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah 20 siswa kelas XI SMAS Nasrani 2 Medan pada tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Data dikumpulkan melalui tugas membaca tongue twister, observasi kelas, rekaman audio, serta wawancara. Hasil pengucapan siswa kemudian ditranskripsikan menggunakan International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) dan dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, identifikasi serta klasifikasi kesulitan pengucapan, dan interpretasi hasil penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami berbagai kesulitan pengucapan pada bunyi konsonan dan vokal. Kesulitan konsonan yang paling sering ditemukan adalah pada pengucapan /ʃ/, /θ/, /v/, /r/ pada posisi akhir, dan /z/. Sementara itu, kesulitan pada bunyi vokal ditemukan pada pengucapan /ʌ/, /æ/, diftong /aɪ/, /u/, dan /oʊ/. Analisis juga menunjukkan adanya tiga jenis utama kesulitan pengucapan yaitu substitusi, penghilangan (omission), serta reduksi atau penyederhanaan bunyi. Dari ketiga jenis tersebut, substitusi merupakan kesalahan yang paling dominan, yang menunjukkan bahwa siswa cenderung mengganti bunyi bahasa Inggris yang sulit dengan bunyi yang lebih familiar dari bahasa pertama mereka. Selain itu, interferensi bahasa pertama juga memberikan pengaruh yang cukup besar terhadap performa pengucapan siswa. Kesimpulannya, kegiatan tongue twister dapat secara efektif mengungkap kesulitan pengucapan siswa serta mengidentifikasi fonem bahasa Inggris yang paling bermasalah bagi pembelajar. Temuan penelitian ini diharapkan dapat membantu guru dalam merancang strategi pengajaran pengucapan yang lebih efektif serta memberikan latihan pengucapan yang lebih terarah bagi pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing.

Kata Kunci: kesulitan pengucapan, tongue twister, fonem bahasa Inggris, pembelajar EFL.

1. PENDAHULUAN

Background of the Study

English is an international language that plays an essential role in global communication, particularly in education, technology, business, and social interaction. In the Indonesian educational context, English is taught as a foreign language and is expected to equip students with the ability to communicate effectively at both national and international levels. Therefore, mastery of English skills is considered a fundamental requirement for students in secondary education.

English language learning consists of four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, speaking is often regarded as the most important because it enables learners to express ideas, convey information, and interact directly with others. Harmer (2007) states that speaking is not merely the production of words but a complex process that involves pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Without sufficient speaking ability, learners may struggle to participate in real communication despite having adequate knowledge of English structures. Speaking skills are closely related to pronunciation. Pronunciation refers to the way sounds are produced and organized to form meaningful spoken language. Clear pronunciation plays a crucial role in ensuring intelligibility, the extent to which listeners can understand a speaker. Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) explain that inaccurate pronunciation can lead to misunderstanding even when the speaker uses correct grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, pronunciation is a core component of effective oral communication and should receive serious attention in English language teaching.

However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experience difficulties with pronunciation. Pronunciation difficulties refer to learners' challenges in perceiving, producing, and distinguishing English sounds accurately. These difficulties do not necessarily indicate a lack of effort or intelligence but rather reflect the complexity of the English sound system and its differences from learners' first languages. In the Indonesian context, pronunciation difficulties often arise because English phonological features differ significantly from those of Bahasa Indonesia.

Pronunciation difficulties can be understood from both perceptual and articulatory perspectives, which are closely related to human sensory processes, particularly hearing and speech motor control. From a perceptual perspective, learners may have difficulty hearing or distinguishing certain English sounds that are absent in their native language. For example, learners may perceive the English sounds /θ/ and /t/ as similar because Bahasa Indonesia lacks interdental fricatives. As a result, learners struggle to recognize subtle sound contrasts, which affects their pronunciation accuracy. This perceptual difficulty relates to the auditory sense, in which learners rely on their hearing to process and interpret spoken input.

From an articulatory perspective, pronunciation difficulties are related to learners' ability to physically produce unfamiliar sounds. The production of speech involves the coordination of several speech organs, such as the tongue, lips, teeth, jaw, and vocal cords. Learners may have trouble positioning these organs correctly when producing English sounds that are not used in their first language. For instance, producing the sound /v/ requires the lower lip and the upper teeth, a movement unfamiliar to many Indonesian learners. These articulatory challenges are associated with the sense of movement and muscle coordination, which play a vital role in speech production.

Several theories explain why EFL learners experience difficulties with pronunciation. According to the first language interference theory, learners tend to transfer sound patterns from their mother tongue into the target language (Tiono & Yosta, 2008). When English sounds do not exist in learners' first language, they replace them with the closest sounds in

their native phonological system. In addition, Celce-Murcia et al., (2010) state that pronunciation difficulties may result from limited exposure to authentic English input and insufficient pronunciation practice in classroom instruction. Without frequent listening and speaking practice, learners struggle to develop accurate perception and production of sounds.

These pronunciation difficulties were also observed during the researcher's Field Experience Program (PPL) at SMA Nasrani 2 Medan. The students showed high enthusiasm for participating in English lessons and speaking activities. However, despite their motivation, many students struggled to pronounce English words clearly. Students, particularly those from Batak and Nias linguistic backgrounds, found it challenging to produce certain English consonants and vowels that are absent from their local languages. As a result, their speech often lacked clarity and confidence.

To address these pronunciation difficulties, appropriate learning activities are needed to help students become more aware of English sound patterns and improve their articulatory control. One activity that can be used is tongue twister practice. Tongue twisters consist of sequences of words with repetitive, challenging sounds, making them effective for highlighting pronunciation difficulties. Harmer (2007) explains that tongue twisters help learners engage in practice articulation while increasing awareness of difficult sounds.

2. KAJIAN TEORI

Definition of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a fundamental component of spoken language because it determines how clearly a speaker can convey meaning to listeners. Clear pronunciation allows spoken messages to be delivered accurately and understood without causing confusion or misunderstanding. In oral communication, pronunciation functions as the bridge between a speaker's intention and a listener's interpretation. Even when a speaker uses correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary, ineffective pronunciation can hinder communication and reduce intelligibility.

Definition and Function of Tongue Twisters

Tongue twisters are short phrases or sentences that contain sequences of similar or difficult sounds, designed to challenge a speaker's ability to pronounce them quickly and correctly. Kelly (2010) defines tongue twisters as "a sequence of words or sounds that are intended to be difficult to articulate properly, often used as an exercise for improving speech clarity and articulation". Moreover, tongue twisters simultaneously stimulate both the auditory and motor-speech systems. When students attempt to pronounce difficult sound sequences, the brain must quickly process acoustic input while coordinating precise articulatory movements. This dual processing promotes neuromuscular development, making pronunciation more automatic over time. Therefore, tongue twisters are not only recreational activities but also scientifically

3. METODOLOGI PENELITIAN

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the pronunciation difficulties eleventh-grade

students at SMA Nasrani 2 Medan experienced when pronouncing English words during tongue-twister activities. A descriptive qualitative design was appropriate because this study aimed to describe and analyze a particular linguistic phenomenon in depth, without manipulating variables or applying 1an experimental treatment.

Merriam (2009) states that qualitative research focuses on understanding and interpreting phenomena through participants' experiences and produces descriptive data in words rather than numerical measurements. In line with this view, the present study sought to explore students' natural pronunciation performance and to identify the types of pronunciation difficulties, difficulty patterns, and problematic English phonemes that occured when students read tongue twisters.

This research did not aim to measure the effectiveness of a teaching technique or to examine improvement in students' pronunciation. Instead, the study focused on identifying and describing pronunciation difficulties as they naturally occured in students' spoken production. Therefore, no experimental treatment, pre-test, or post-test is applied in this study. Tongue twister activities were used as a diagnostic instrument to elicit students' pronunciation performance and to make pronunciation difficulties observable.

A descriptive qualitative design enabled the researcher to collect rich, detailed data through audio recordings, classroom observations, interviews, and phonetic transcription. Through this design, the researcher could provide:

1. detailed descriptions of students' pronunciation difficulties,
2. examples of actual mispronounced utterances,
3. classification of difficulty types and patterns, and
4. identification of the most problematic English phonemes among the students.

Thus, descriptive qualitative Research was considered the most appropriate research design for investigating pronunciation difficulties among eleventh-grade students of SMA Nasrani 2 Medan.

To clarify the overall research procedure, Figure 3.1 presented the research methodology flow, which illustrates the sequence of participant selection, tongue-twister reading tasks for data collection, transcription, data analysis, and the final findings of the study.

Figure 3.1 illustrated the research methodology flow of this study. The process began with selecting students whose pronunciation performance is influenced by first language (L1) interference. Tongue twister activities were used as a diagnostic tool to assess students' pronunciation. The students' oral production was then recorded and transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

After transcription, the data were analyzed to identify pronunciation difficulties, classify difficulty patterns, and determine the most problematic English phonemes. The final stage presented the research findings and conclusions based on the analysis of students' pronunciation difficulties.

Participant and Place

3Participant

The participants in this study were all 11th-grade students at SMA Nasrani 2 Medan, comprising a single class, totaling 20 students in the academic year 2024/2025.

Because the population is small and manageable, the sampling technique used was total (census) sampling. This technique involved selecting the entire population as the study's sample. Mills, G. E., & Gay

(2016) explain that total sampling (census sampling) is recommended when the population is small, and all members share characteristics highly relevant to the study. Reasons for applying total sampling:

1. Representativeness: All students showed similar interest in English learning but face noticeable pronunciation difficulties.
2. Authenticity: Including every student increases the validity and authenticity of the findings.
3. Feasibility: The number of students (20) is suitable for qualitative observation and transcription.
4. Relevance: All students participated in speaking activities during English lessons, making them ideal for pronunciation analysis.

Through this sampling method, the findings reflected the overall pronunciation performance of the school's 11th-grade cohort.

Place of the Study

The study was conducted at SMA Nasrani 2, Medan, Jl. Pendidikan No. 88, Medan Perjuangan, Medan. Academic Year: 2024/2025

Reasons for choosing this location:

1. Researcher experience: The researcher previously completed a teaching practice (PPL) at this school and observed firsthand that students were motivated to learn English but consistently struggled with speaking and pronunciation.
2. Support from the school: The English teacher and school administration gave full permission for observation, audio recording, and data collection.
3. Authenticity of speaking behavior: Students often engaged in reading, conversation practice, and pronunciation drills, providing a natural environment for collecting reliable pronunciation data.
4. Practical consideration: The school setting allowed direct access to the participants, making it easier to observe and record their natural speaking performance.

The familiar environment ensured that students performed naturally during the pronunciation test, which strengthened the accuracy and authenticity of the data.

4. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Discussion

The previous section (4.2) presented a detailed analysis of students' pronunciation performance, including the identification of problematic phonemes, frequency distribution, and patterns of difficulty such as substitution, omission, and reduction. The analysis demonstrated that pronunciation difficulties were not randomly distributed but systematically concentrated in specific consonant and vowel sounds, particularly those absent from the Indonesian phonological system.

However, identifying problematic phonemes and patterns alone is not sufficient to fully understand the implications of these findings. Therefore, this section interprets the results in relation to the three research problems formulated in Chapter I. The discussion aims to explain why certain sounds were more problematic than others, how these difficulties relate to first-language influence, as discussed in Chapter II, and how the identified patterns contribute to a broader understanding of

pronunciation performance in tongue-twister activities.

By situating the findings within relevant theoretical perspectives and previous empirical studies, this section provides a deeper analytical interpretation of the data rather than merely restating the results. The discussion is organized according to each research problem to ensure clarity and coherence.

4.3.1 The Pronunciation Difficulties Experienced by the Students When Pronouncing English Words Through Tongue Twister Activities

The findings indicate that students experienced segmental pronunciation difficulties involving both consonants and vowels. These difficulties were manifested in inaccurate articulation of unfamiliar fricatives, unstable vowel quality, inconsistent realization of vowel length, and breakdowns in pronunciation accuracy during rapid repetition. One crucial aspect that distinguishes this study from many previous ones is the use of tongue twister activities as the elicitation tool. Tongue twisters demand not only phonemic knowledge but also articulatory coordination, speed control, and phonological precision under the pressure of repetition. When students were required to pronounce sequences such as “She sells seashells by the seashore” or “Thirty thin thinkers thought thoroughly,” their pronunciation accuracy decreased with repetition. This indicates that pronunciation competence among these learners is not yet automatized.

Situmeang & Lubis (2020) investigated fricative consonant difficulties among university students and found that dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ were consistently misarticulated because these sounds are absent in Indonesian. Their study focused on word-level pronunciation tasks. While their findings confirm phonemic difficulty, the present study extends this by demonstrating that difficulty intensifies in connected, repetitive speech contexts. This suggests that pronunciation mastery involves not only articulatory knowledge but also automaticity in performance.

Similarly, Leviakandella (2022) reported that Indonesian learners struggle with English sounds that do not exist in their native phonological inventory, particularly fricatives and long vowels. The current study confirms that the absence of phonemic equivalents contributes to difficulty. However, it also shows that the challenge is compounded by the tempo of speech and cognitive load during tongue-twister activities. Therefore, pronunciation difficulty is both structurally rooted and contextually amplified.

Furthermore, the observed instability suggests that learners may have partial phonological awareness but lack motor habituation. In slow, isolated pronunciation, students sometimes approximated correct sounds. However, during rapid repetition, they reverted to L1-based articulation patterns. This pattern reflects incomplete phonological internalization rather than a total lack of knowledge. Thus, students' pronunciation difficulties are characterized by structural phonemic gaps, articulatory unfamiliarity, and performance instability under speed constraints.

1.3.2 The English phonemes that students find most difficult to

pronounce during tongue twister activities.

The analysis revealed that dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ were the most difficult phonemes, followed by /ʃ/, /v/, and certain vowels such as /æ/ and /ʌ/. Among them, /θ/ appeared most consistently problematic across participants. The difficulty with /θ/ and /ð/ is theoretically predictable. Indonesian phonology does not include dental fricatives, nor does it require placing the tongue between the teeth while maintaining continuous airflow. Instead, Indonesians primarily employ alveolar stops /t/ and /d/. Consequently, students substituted /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/, indicating place-of-articulation approximation.

Situmeang & Lubis (2020) found that 100% of their participants mispronounced /θ/ and /ð/, especially in the initial position. The present study mirrors this pattern among high school students, suggesting that difficulty with dental fricatives persists across educational levels. This continuity indicates that phonological absence cannot be easily overcome through limited classroom exposure.

In addition, Leviakandella (2022) identified /v/, /θ/, and /ð/ as problematic due to differences in both place and manner of articulation. The current findings confirm that /v/ was frequently replaced by /f/, indicating voicing neutralization. Students maintained labiodental articulation but eliminated the voicing distinction. This suggests that learners prioritize articulatory familiarity over phonemic contrast.

Regarding vowels, Yulianti et al. (2024) reported that students struggled with vowel-length distinctions and with similar vowel qualities. The present study supports this finding, particularly in the pronunciation of /æ/ and /ʌ/. Indonesian vowel inventory is relatively smaller and does not strongly contrast these vowel qualities. As a result, students approximated /æ/ to /e/ and /ʌ/ to /a/ or /o/.

However, a key difference emerges that vowel instability in this study increased during fast repetition. Long vowels were shortened, and contrastive distinctions weakened. This suggests that vowel difficulty is not only perceptual but also related to articulatory endurance.

Therefore, the most difficult phonemes are those that:

a. Do not exist in Indonesian phonology.
b. Require unfamiliar articulatory positioning.
c. Demand sustained airflow control (fricatives).
d. Involve contrastive vowel length distinctions absent in L1.

4.3.3 The patterns of pronunciation difficulty that appear in students' pronunciation performance.

The findings identified three dominant patterns: substitution, omission, and reduction/simplification. These patterns were consistent across multiple tongue twister sentences. Substitution was the most frequent pattern. Students replaced unfamiliar phonemes with the closest equivalent in Indonesian. For example:

- /θ/ → /t/
- /ð/ → /d/
- /ʃ/ → /s/
- /v/ → /f/

This pattern reflects systematic phonological mapping rather than accidental inaccuracy. Learners retained

familiar articulatory dimensions (such as alveolar placement) while discarding unfamiliar features (such as dental articulation or voicing contrast).

Situmeang & Lubis (2020) also reported substitution as a dominant pattern in fricative pronunciation. However, their explanation focused primarily on L1 interference. The present study extends this by demonstrating that substitution frequency increases under rapid articulation. This suggests that L2 phonemic representations may be accessible to conscious awareness but not yet automatized.

Omission patterns occurred mainly in consonant clusters and final consonants. When articulatory complexity increased, students dropped segments to maintain fluency. Anwar et al., (2020) reported omission patterns in the pronunciation of non-existing English diphthongs among Indonesian learners. Although their focus was on diphthongs, the present findings indicate that omission also occurs in consonant clusters and rapid articulation contexts, suggesting that omission functions as a broader speech-processing strategy under articulatory pressure.

Reduction and simplification were also observed, particularly in vowel shortening and cluster simplification. This indicates that students prioritize speech continuity over phonological precision when faced with articulatory overload. Importantly, these patterns are not isolated behaviors but predictable adaptations shaped by Indonesian phonological structure. Indonesians rarely employ complex final clusters and do not contrast vowel length strongly. Therefore, English phonological complexity triggers systematic simplification. Thus, pronunciation difficulty patterns reflect structured cross-linguistic adaptation combined with performance-related processing constraints.

Based on the discussion of the three research problems, this study offers several conceptual contributions:

1. It confirms that phonemic absence predicts pronunciation difficulty.
2. It demonstrates that pronunciation stability decreases under rapid, repetitive articulation conditions.
3. It reframes L1 influence as structured phonological filtering rather than mere interference.

Unlike many previous studies that rely on isolated word reading, this research shows that pronunciation accuracy is context-dependent and performance-sensitive. Therefore, pronunciation instruction should incorporate dynamic articulation practice rather than relying solely on static phoneme drills.

5. KESIMPULAN DAN SARAN

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion, the conclusions of this study are formulated according to the three research problems as follows:

1. Pronunciation Difficulties Experienced by the Students

The findings reveal that the eleventh-grade students of SMAS Nasrani 2 Medan experienced systematic pronunciation difficulties when pronouncing English words through tongue twister activities. These difficulties were not incidental but structurally patterned, occurring primarily at the segmental level. Consonant sounds posed greater challenges than vowels,

particularly fricative consonants that do not exist in the Indonesian phonological system. Students demonstrated recurring tendencies to substitute unfamiliar phonemes, omit certain sounds in complex environments, and simplify articulatory movements under pressure to repeat.

The interview data strengthened this finding, as students explicitly reported uncertainty regarding tongue placement and admitted relying on Indonesian pronunciation habits. The teacher also confirmed that explicit phoneme-level correction is limited in classroom practice. Therefore, the students' pronunciation difficulties can be characterized as a combination of phonological transfer from the first language and limited articulatory training, rather than as a mere lack of vocabulary knowledge.

2. The Most Difficult English Phonemes

The quantitative calculation shows that the most difficult phoneme was the voiceless dental fricative /θ/, which recorded the highest frequency and percentage of occurrence. This was followed by other fricative consonants such as /v/ and /ʃ/. These phonemes share a common characteristic: they require articulatory configurations that are absent in Indonesian, such as interdental tongue placement or voiced labiodental friction. The dominance of these sounds confirms that articulatory unfamiliarity significantly contributes to pronunciation difficulty.

Although certain vowels, such as /ʌ/ and /æ/, were also inaccurately produced, their frequency was considerably lower than that of consonant sounds. This suggests that the primary obstacle in students' pronunciation performance lies in consonant articulation rather than vowel differentiation. Thus, the study demonstrates that phonemes absent from the learners' native phonological inventory tend to become the most problematic during structured repetition tasks such as tongue twisters.

3. Patterns of Pronunciation Difficulties

The study identified three dominant patterns of pronunciation difficulty: substitution, omission, and reduction or simplification. Among these, substitution emerged as the most consistent and systematic pattern. Students tended to replace unfamiliar English phonemes with the closest equivalents available in Indonesian, indicating strong first-language phonological influence. Omission occurred mainly in consonant clusters and final positions, particularly under rapid repetition conditions. Reduction and simplification were observed when students prioritized fluency over phonemic precision.

Importantly, these patterns were intensified by the nature of tongue twister activities, which require speed, repetition, and articulatory control. Rather than causing new difficulties, the tongue twisters exposed underlying instability in phoneme production. Therefore, the findings suggest that students' pronunciation difficulties are structurally influenced by cross-linguistic phonological differences and reinforced by limited phonemic awareness and corrective feedback.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed for students, teachers, and future researchers.

1. For Students

Students are encouraged to increase their awareness of differences in English phonemes, particularly sounds that do not exist in the Indonesian phonological system, such as /θ/, /ʃ/, and /v/. Since the study shows that articulatory unfamiliarity significantly contributes to pronunciation difficulties, students should practice specific tongue and lip positioning rather than relying solely on repetition.

In addition, students should not prioritize speed over accuracy when practicing tongue twisters. While fluency is important, accurate phoneme production must be developed first to avoid reinforcing incorrect pronunciation habits. Utilizing pronunciation-focused digital tools or audio models may also help students improve articulatory precision.

2. For Teachers

Teachers are recommended to provide more explicit instruction on problematic English phonemes, especially those absent from the Indonesian sound system. The findings indicate that students struggle primarily with dental and fricative consonants due to limited articulatory awareness. Therefore, pronunciation teaching should include demonstrations of tongue placement, airflow control, and voicing distinction. Moreover, corrective feedback should be given consistently and systematically. The study suggests that substitution patterns have become habitual, partly due to limited phoneme-level correction. Integrating structured pronunciation drills and diagnostic activities, such as tongue twisters, can help teachers identify unstable phonemes and address them more effectively.

Teachers are also encouraged to balance fluency-based activities with accuracy-focused training to ensure that students develop both communicative competence and phonological precision.

3. For Future Researchers

Future researchers are encouraged to explore pronunciation difficulties using a larger sample size or different educational contexts to determine whether similar patterns occur across regions. Comparative studies between schools with different instructional approaches may provide deeper insight into the role of teaching strategies in pronunciation development.

Additionally, experimental research investigating the effectiveness of specific pronunciation interventions, such as articulatory training, phonetic transcription practice, or digital pronunciation applications, would help strengthen pedagogical strategies. Further studies may also examine suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm, and intonation, which were beyond the scope of this research but play an essential role in overall intelligibility.

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