DEVELOPING AN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR 10TH GRADE STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT JABAL RAHMAH MULIA HIGH SCHOOL

Maulidina Mutia

Institut Kesehatan Deli Husada Deli Tua
Email: maulidinamutia10@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop evaluation and assessment tools tailored for improving English pronunciation skills among 10th-grade students at Jabal Rahmah Mulia High School. Recognizing the challenges students face in mastering pronunciation, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts, the research emphasizes the importance of structured and systematic evaluation. The study adopts a research and development (R&D) methodology, involving needs analysis, tool design, implementation, and validation stages. Data were gathered through classroom observations, interviews with English teachers, and a diagnostic analysis of students' pronunciation abilities. The tools developed include pronunciation assessment rubrics, digital and offline feedback mechanisms, and task-based evaluation models focusing on segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, intonation) aspects. These tools were validated by experts and trialed in classroom settings to ensure reliability and practicality. The findings demonstrate that integrating these tools into the English learning process significantly enhances students' pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and confidence. Teachers reported improved engagement and participation among students, while learners expressed greater awareness of their pronunciation weaknesses and progress. This study underscores the critical role of well-designed pronunciation assessments in language learning and provides a framework that can be adapted for similar educational contexts. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of these tools on communicative competence and their scalability across different grade levels and school settings.

Keyword: *English pronunciation, pronunciation assessment, English language teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a crucial element in effective communication, where pronunciation holds a significant role in ensuring clarity and avoiding misunderstandings. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), mastering pronunciation is fundamental to achieving communicative competence. Accurate pronunciation enables learners to convey meaning effectively, boosts their confidence, and fosters better interaction in various communicative settings. However, pronunciation remains a challenging aspect of language learning due to

discrepancies between English spelling and its pronunciation, which often leads to confusion among learners.

In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject in senior high schools, where it is taught across all levels as part of the curriculum. The four main skills emphasized in English language learning are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking is considered one of the most essential skills, as it allows students to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions effectively. Speaking proficiency relies heavily on accurate pronunciation, which involves rhythm, intonation, and articulation, as well as segmental features like vowels and consonants. Students are also expected to grasp the cultural and social norms that influence communication in diverse contexts. These skills are pivotal in building students' confidence and fluency in English, particularly in oral communication.

Pronunciation plays an integral role in speaking, which itself is a critical link in developing students' overall language and thinking skills. Leohart (2008) defines pronunciation as the way a word or a language is generally spoken. In EFL contexts, pronunciation is perceived as challenging due to the mismatch between English spelling and sound, making it difficult for learners to apply accurate pronunciation in spoken language. Pourhosein Gilakjani (2016) emphasized that pronunciation is the process of producing sounds to convey meaning, and understandable pronunciation is a key component of language instruction. Mispronunciation can lead to misunderstandings, which impacts learners' confidence and effectiveness in communication.

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of improving pronunciation through targeted approaches. For example, Anugrah (2019) reported significant improvements in students' pronunciation after using text-to-speech tools, with an average score increase from 49.33 to 78.67. Similarly, Tamar (2021) observed a 24.65% improvement in students' pronunciation scores, with notable enhancements in syllable stress and word stress. Muamar (2022) highlighted the positive impact of the English Language Speech Assistant (ELSA) application, where students' pronunciation improved significantly through guided practice. These findings underline the potential of technology and focused strategies in addressing pronunciation challenges among EFL learners.

Despite these advancements, there remains a significant gap in research focusing on the assessment aspect of pronunciation. Pronunciation assessment is often overlooked in classroom settings, as traditional evaluation methods prioritize written skills over oral communication. In the Indonesian context, the 2013 curriculum emphasizes authentic assessment, which includes evaluating students' social and practical skills. However,

assessing pronunciation requires specialized tools and techniques to ensure validity and fairness. According to Bachman (1990), assessment significantly influences teaching and learning activities. Spratt et al. (2005) further stated that assessment involves collecting information about learners' performance to make judgments about their learning and adjust instructional strategies accordingly.

Assessment plays a pivotal role in language learning, as it not only measures students' progress but also motivates them to improve. Accurate pronunciation assessment helps educators identify specific areas where students struggle and provides targeted feedback for improvement. Biggs (2003) argued that assessment serves to motivate students, control progress, and align teaching with desired outcomes. However, assessing pronunciation is complex, as it involves evaluating various aspects, including rhythm, intonation, articulation, and stress patterns.

The challenges of pronunciation assessment are evident in Indonesian schools. Observations at Jabal Rahmah Mulia High School revealed that while students exhibit good English proficiency overall, their pronunciation skills require further improvement. As noted by one of the teachers, "In English lessons at this school, students still need to improve their English learning such as speaking and also, if possible, they should improve their pronunciation even more." This observation highlights the need for better assessment methods to enhance students' pronunciation skills effectively.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to develop and implement improved pronunciation assessment methods for 10th-grade students at Jabal Rahmah Mulia High School. By focusing on creating fair and valid tools, this research seeks to address the gap in pronunciation evaluation and provide practical solutions for educators. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to improving English language proficiency among EFL learners in Indonesia, enabling them to achieve better communicative competence and confidence in using the language.

METHOD

The research was carried out with the primary objective of designing and English Pronunciation Assessment tailored for the 10th-grade students at Jabal Rahmah Mulia. This was grounded in the principles of Research and Development (R&D), employing a systematic approach to create an assessment tool that effectively addresses the specific needs of the students. Through the R&D process, the study aimed to develop an innovative and evidence-based assessment framework that could accurately evaluate the students' pronunciation skills

while ensuring it aligned with both their learning requirements and the educational context of the institution. It is adapted R&D research method proposed by Gall Borg, and Gall.

The data for this research was gathered from students who participated in an assessment focused on their pronunciation abilities. This study was conducted at Jabal Rahmah Mulia School, is a boarding institution located on Jl. Balai Desa No. 24, Medan. The research took place during the odd semester, involving participants from the 10th grade. A total of 20 students, aged between 15 and 16 years old, were included in the study. These students were identified as having challenges with their pronunciation skills, which formed the basis of the research focus.

The techniques employed for collecting data in this research included observation, documentation sheets, interviews, and questionnaires. Observation served to identify the challenges associated with pronunciation assessments utilized in the teaching and learning process. Observation had function to find the problem of pronunciation assessment that is used as the assessment in teaching and learning process. Through documentation sheets, various educational resources such as lesson plans, syllabi, and the textbook *Bahasa Inggris*, authored by the Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, were examined. The interview technique was implemented to gather deeper insights into the students' pronunciation skills. Interview technique was used in order to find out the deeper information about how the teacher assessed the students. The researcher asked question to the teacher how assessment about students pronunciation in pre- and post-test. The questionnaire was designed based on the theoretical framework proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1986). Its primary purpose was to evaluate and provide information regarding the actual English pronunciation assessments used in the daily learning environment.

In conducting this research, the data were analysed through a need analysis questionnaire and an expert judgment questionnaire. Additionally, the teacher's interview during the teaching-learning process was transcribed to generate meaningful results. The data of this research is the result of students' pronunciation assessment in pronunciation skill, the data of need analysis questionnaire were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The highest percentages of the answers of each phoneme were considered representing the students' goal. The percentage is amount by dividing the frequency by the total of the students and then the results is shown. These findings, particularly the validation outcomes, were used by the researcher to revise and refine the assessment product. The responses from the questionnaire were analysed using a formula proposed by Suharto as cited in Risangsukmo (2015), ensuring a systematic calculation and interpretation of the results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In the process of developing an appropriate pronunciation assessment for 10th-grade students at Jabal Rahmah Mulia Medan that located on Jl. Balai Desa No. 24H, a comprehensive collection of information and data was conducted. Thus initial data gathering took place prior to the commencement of the research. Various sources of information were collected, including interviews with teachers and students, questionnaires distributed to teachers, existing pronunciation assessment, and a review of the relevant syllabus. These preliminary steps were essential in ensuring the development of a well-informed and effective pronunciation assessment tailored to the needs of the students.

The students exhibited significant improvement in their ability to pronounce challenging phonemes such as /v/ vs. /f/ and /θ/ vs. /t/. This progress can largely be attributed to the effective use of audio recordings, which allowed students to listen to and critically assess their own pronunciation. Additionally, the provision of real-time feedback played a crucial role in helping students promptly identify and correct any errors in their speech. By receiving immediate guidance and having the opportunity to make adjustments during practice, the students were able to refine their pronunciation skills more efficiently, leading to measurable advancement in their overall language proficiency.

Table 1: Students Pronunciation Accuracy Pre Test and Post Test.

Phoneme	Pre-Test Accuracy (%)	Post-Test Accuracy (%)
/v/	58%	85%
/f/	60%	87%
/θ/	52%	82%
/t/	70%	90%

The data presented in the table above illustrates a notable improvement in the accuracy of students' pronunciation of phonemes, comparing the results from the initial test to those of the final test. Specifically, the results highlight a substantial increase in the pronunciation accuracy of the phoneme /v/, with the average accuracy rising from 58% to 85% following the intervention. Similarly, a significant improvement was observed in the pronunciation of phoneme /θ/, where the average accuracy increased from 52% to 82%, reflecting an overall enhancement of 30%. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention enhancing the students' phonemic accuracy over the course of the study.

Discussion

The findings of the study on developing evaluation and assessment tools for English pronunciation for 10th-grade students at Jabal Rahmah Mulia High School provide valuable insights into both the students' pronunciation abilities and the effectiveness of the proposed assessment framework. This section discusses the results in relation to the research objectives and existing literature.

The findings are consistent with prior research emphasizing the role of structured assessment in improving pronunciation. However, this study provides a unique contribution by tailoring the framework to the local context of Jabal Rahmah Mulia High School, addressing specific student needs and resource constraints.

Several studies have explored the creation of tools for evaluating pronunciation, targeting specific linguistic skills are Rubrics and Frameworks for Pronunciation Assessment means Previous research often develops criteria for assessing aspects such as segmental features (phonemes) and supra segmental features (intonation, stress, rhythm). For example: Derwing & Munro (2015) stated Focused on the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction and assessment using both intelligibility and comprehensibility as criteria. Isaacs & Trofimovich (2012) stated Proposed frameworks for evaluating pronunciation that prioritize listener perception Automated Pronunciation Tools.

In this study, teacher effectiveness is very much needed to motivate students to try to train themselves more and be more confident in English pronunciation. In this case, schools can make the number of students per class smaller so that learning and teaching activities will be more effective. English teacher training is also very important to support understanding of how teacher knowledge evaluates assessments of student pronunciation. For the next research, specific recommendations can help in effectively gathering and analyzing data that Define specific criteria for evaluating pronunciation, such as accuracy of individual sounds (phonemes), stress patterns, intonation, and fluency. Combine various evaluation methods such as oral assessments (e.g., pronunciation tasks, interviews, reading aloud). Peer and self-assessment (with rubrics or checklists).

According to Derwing and Munro (2015), utilizing evaluation instruments that incorporate feedback plays a significant role in enhancing students' phoneme accuracy. This assertion is corroborated by the findings of this research, where students demonstrated a 30% improvement in their pronunciation accuracy after using the specially designed evaluation tool. The outcomes of this study highlight its relevance to Jabal Rahmah Mulia School, where many students face challenges in pronouncing English words accurately. This

alignment underscores the importance and applicability of the evaluation tool in addressing the specific needs of the student population at this institution.

The findings of this research can serve as a valuable benchmark for teachers in assessing students' pronunciation skills in English speaking activities. The results demonstrate that the incorporation of contextual-based tasks, such as role-playing, can significantly enhance students' intonation and rhythm. This approach is particularly effective in schools where class sizes are smaller, allowing for more individualized attention. The researcher also proposes that future studies delve deeper into the integration of AI-based technology, such as speech recognition applications, to support the evaluation of student pronunciation. By leveraging such technologies, teachers can more efficiently facilitate student assessments, leading to the development of more effective evaluation methods and a smoother teaching-learning process. AI platforms, in particular, hold great promise for transforming language learning. They can provide learners with personalized and adaptive feedback tailored to their unique learning goals, preferences, and progress. This not only enhances the accuracy and relevance of assessments but also fosters a more engaging and effective learning environment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this study, the developed English pronunciation assessment tool for 10th-grade students at Jabal Rahmah Mulia High School demonstrated effectiveness in evaluating key pronunciation features through R&D methodology. The assessment tool successfully helped teachers identify common pronunciation challenges among students, particularly in some phonemes such as /v/, /f/, /θ/, /t/ . This is shown from the comparison of the pre-test and post-test of 10th-grade students at Jabal Rahmah Mulia which shows some increase. This is evident from the average pre-test score of 52% to 82% on the post test. As a result, the assessment is effective in improving students' pronunciation. The several limitations were noted, including the relatively short intervention period and potential subjectivity in teacher assessments. For future implementation and research, it is recommended that can be used as a references for conducting other research in the same field. The next researcher can use the pre-experimental research design to find out whether the use the assessment has effect of increasing students' abilities in other skills, such as writing, reading, and listening. Then, future research can also conduct research on the use of the assessment in writing of other genres to see the effect of its use. For students, the researcher hope students should play an active role in the learning process, don't be shy and afraid to

speak English, especially in their pronunciation. Student must be confident to speak English to the teacher or friends to improve the pronunciation skills during the learning process.

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