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### AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EFL STUDENTS'S DIFFICULTIES IN PRONUNCIATION AT X1 GRADE OF A SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BANDUNG

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**Abstract:** Pronunciation is a fundamental part of the language-learning process. In order to speak meaningfully in real-world conversations, students require to be able to pronounce word sound properly. This research aims to explore the pronunciation difficulties faced by students of a private senior high school in Bandung and to find out what factors influenced their difficulties in pronunciation. A descriptive qualitative design method is used in this study. To collect the data, three techniques were used including observation, interview, and questionnaires. The findings highlight several difficulties faced by the students, namely substitution errors, voicing errors, difficulties with consonant voiced and unvoiced, and challenges related to stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns are identified as common challenges. These errors and difficulties are influenced by both internal and external factors such as; students' native language, learning environment, types of teachers, and methods applied. The results of this study are essential because they provide language teachers with insight into the elements that influence the pronunciation of English as a foreign language, as well as the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and teaching methods.

**Keywords:** phonetics symbol, phonological knowledge, pronunciation, speaking English

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the aspect of the English Language is improving to be more complex (Yule, 2010). There has been a lot of discussion on educational, economic, political, social, and linguistic forums about English as the most influential language around the globe (Gunantar, 2016). Moreover, research and interest in English language learning have increased significantly, especially when it comes to the challenges faced by learners from various linguistic backgrounds. As a lingua franca, English has become a prominent language to be learned outside English-spoken countries. Especially in Indonesia, English has also long become one of the compulsory subjects that are introduced pretty early to students of elementary to higher degree institutions, it slowly takes over the social life of Indonesian citizens and now serves several significant

purposes including within the educational field. Nevertheless, learning a new language is a challenging process (Gunantar, 2016). It necessitates learners to devote time and effort to communicate effectively in the target language. Owing to its significance, to become successful in the educational field any foreign language learners are required to be proficient in the overall skill of the English Language.

It has been widely observed that one of the main goals of learners and teachers while learning and teaching the English language is to acquire native-like proficiency (Donal, 2016). Consequently, from the four essences of English language skills of listening, writing, reading, and speaking, speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced as a means of effective communication. Indriani & Sakina (2022) further explain that speaking is an important skill used for transferring ideas, and it could be an indicator of someone's ability in one particular language. Thus, looking from an educational perspective, speaking skills are worthy of attention by individuals who learn English as a foreign language. As matter of fact, speaking skill occupy a prominent place in the communication process especially when the mother tongue is not being exploited for proper communication in the present world. Nevertheless, speaking skills are regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of language learning. Unfortunately, English foreign learners struggle to express themselves in spoken language. Moreover, Donal (2016) supports the case that the fact just a small percentage of Indonesians 30.8% speak English due to their pronunciation issues with English words. English pronunciation is commonly an essential aspect of foreign language acquisition (Celce et al., 2010).

Pronunciation is a fundamental part of the language-learning process. It takes a lot of attention to acquire the pronunciation of a language, which not only involves uttering the correct sounds but also involves putting those together in the right combination during the flow of speech (Situmorang et al., 2023). Yet knowing a lot of vocabulary items is meaningless unless one can pronounce them accurately. However, pronunciation leads students to understand native speakers and native-like speakers properly and improves their ability to communicate with other people, especially natives using English. Learning about pronunciation develops the students' abilities to comprehend spoken language (Baker et al., 2011). Furthermore, a good English speaker brings together of speaking skills components to succeed in a given speech act.

Additionally, to speak properly humans must to be able to articulate the sounds of language. Articulation is primarily concerned with the study of phonetics. According to Lasabuda (2017), each language sound is produced through the interplay of numerous speech organs or "articulators" such as the vocal folds, the lips, and the tongue. It is how the more 'musical' elements of speech production, such as intonation, stressing syllable and speech rhythm. Furthermore, in order to speak meaningfully in real-world conversations, students require to be able to pronounce word sound properly. Moreover, according to Situmorang (2023), unworthy pronunciation makes communication unpleasant and lead to misunderstanding situation. Therefore, in a country where English is not officially part of the first language or as '*foreign*', pronunciation is very crucial to be learned by the students. Thus, by looking at students' difficulties in pronunciation, Ahmed (2017) claims that there are essentially two factors affecting native-like pronunciations by foreign language learners, namely internal factors and external factors. Then, internal factors that influence student's perception of foreign pronunciation involve biological factors such as brain, and aptitude. Other factors involve individual differences such as individual's personality. While external factors include: first language interference, motivation, types of teachers and teaching methodologies, and classroom

environment. Therefore, (Situmorang et al., 2023) view that by understanding the factors, phonetic and phonological rules of English, learners might imitate native-like pronunciation.

Because pronunciation is important to comprehend spoken language as a means of effective communication, a lot of researchers have been contributed to figure out which vowels and consonants EFL learners find pretty challenging to pronounce. Similarly, some studies have looked into particular elements that affect pronunciation during foreign language learning. The previous study from Lasabuda's (2017) with the titled "An Identification of Students' Difficulties in Pronunciation", identifies pronunciation challenges faced by students, particularly those arising from phonetic differences between English and their native languages. The findings show students difficulties with specific English sounds, intonation, and stress patterns, often due to the interference of the first language and a lack of sufficient practice. Another similar research by Ahmed (2017) investigates the pronunciation challenges faced by EFL students that highlight difficulties with specific English sounds, stress patterns, and intonation. The research emphasizes that interference from students' native languages, limited exposure to native English, and psychological barriers like anxiety contribute to these difficulties. Unlike this study, which has a different focus of the analysis, the most recent study explores the difficulties in students' pronunciation in both segmental and suprasegmental features and provides a detailed insight into both internal and external factors. As explained above this research addresses the unexplored gap. The purpose of this research is to explore pronunciation difficulties and classify their causes. Furthermore, this study is essential because it emphasizes the necessity of learning the pronunciation of the second language. Moreover, it provides language teachers with insight into the elements that influence the pronunciation of English as a foreign language, as well as the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and teaching methods.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Speaking is one of the four primary language skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. According to Hughes (2016), speaking is a interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing receiving, and processing information. It means that speaking refers to the process of communication by producing verbal utterances where utterance deals with simply things people say to convey the meaning. Speaking is an activity of delivering a message, it occurs between the speaker and listener orally. Thus, speaking is essential in learning a second or foreign language. In the opinion of Yule (2010), speaking is the single most significant aspect of learning a second or foreign language and success is determined by the ability to converse in the language. Nunan (2015) defines speaking as a productive oral skill. It entails structured verbal utterances to convey meaning. Furthermore, speaking means expressing words orally, communicating through talking, making requests, and giving a speech (Nunan, 2003 cited in Sakina, 2024).

According to Richards (2001), speaking is the process of making and communicating meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in various contexts. Thus, speaking is not a simple undertaking, it requires a lot of practice and experience. However, speaking in a foreign language is very challenging as speaking competence takes a long time to acquire. Hence, conversational proficiency is the most crucial component of studying a foreign language. The first emphasis of English language instruction is to educate students on how to communicate effectively through English (Donal, 2016). Yet, it appears that language learners are unable to speak effectively since they lack adequate understanding of this field of study. It is hard to fulfill some of the

requirements of public speaking. These aspects of speaking performance are included: Accuracy, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

### **The Importance of Speaking Skills**

Speaking skills have been important to the success of human beings. Speaking skills play a crucial part in people's lives, it is an interactive activity that occurs in real-time (Hughes et al., 2016). Additionally, speaking is defined as the act of uttering word orally in order to communicate, make a request, or give a speech (Nunan, 2003 cited in Sakina, 2024). That is, individuals with speaking skills can compose words and phrases fluently without very much conscious thought. Furthermore, Speaking is the most important skill because it is one of the abilities that is needed to perform a real conversation. However, English speaking is a difficult undertaking since speakers must understand several significant aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. According to Richard (2001), These characteristics of speaking performance included:

#### ***Aspect of Speaking Skill***

a. *Accuracy*

According to Yule (2010), accuracy refers to the extent to which the learners' speech is grammatically acceptable, with clear, intelligible pronunciation and appropriate choice of vocabulary.

b. *Fluency*

In a simple term, fluency is the area of language ability which related to the speed and ease with a language learner's performance in one or four essential language skills speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

c. *Pronunciation*

Pronunciation is how a language or particular words or sounds are spoken. Pronunciation refers to the human sounds that are used to understand meaning. According to Zhang (2009), pronunciation refers to the student's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfill the task requirements. Pronunciation is the act or manner of the speakers to produce clearer language when they speak

d. *Grammar*

In a simple definition, grammar is the way how to organize a word into the correct sentence. It can influence successful human speech in communication (Baker, 2011).

e. *Vocabulary*

Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of a foreign language. Vocabulary is talking about how someone can choose the word that is used based on the topic of what they are talking about.

### **Pronunciation**

Phonological knowledge and pronunciation ability are closely related, and the two are inseparable. Situmorang (2023) defines phonology as a language's speech sound systems and patterns. Phonology focuses on the conceptual aspect of linguistic sounds rather than physical articulation (Jenkins, 2000). In other words, phonological knowledge contains two parts: phonetics and phonology study. Phonetics is concerned with the physical characteristics of speech, including how sounds are articulated by the speaker, the acoustic qualities of sound waves, and the effects they have on the hearer's ear. Phonology is concerned with the organization of speech sounds into a system, specifically a language's sound system. Moreover, according to Yule (2010), Phonology is essentially

the description of the systems and patterns of speech sounds in a language. Phonetics is the systematic study of the sounds of speech, which is physical and directly observable.

Nevertheless, pronunciation is concerned with the meaningful perception and sound production of the language and its impact on the listener. Gilakjani (2012), pronunciation is the process of producing sounds to convey meaning. Pronunciation is the act or way of pronouncing words. As humans, words are produced through the vibrating of the vocal cords with an airstream from the lungs passing through the process until the mouth creates the sound. As the sound is uttered, it transforms into a meaningful word or sentence (Lubis et al., 2024).

Lubis (2024), there are two elements that students must learn. These consists of the proper consonants and vowels (segments) of a language. In addition to elements of speech that go beyond segmentation, such as stress, rhythm, intonation, phrasing, and voice quality. It also includes gestures and expressions that are closely associated with language use. From some of the above statements, it can be concluded that pronunciation means how words are uttered. People with good pronunciation will be able to pronounce words correctly. Proper pronunciation is defined as the accurate replication of language sounds to express the intended message clearly. Therefore, comprehensible pronunciation is how the word is spoken correctly. If an individual modifies the pronunciation, the meaning changes. Another definition of pronunciation involves both *suprasegmental* and *segmental* elements. According to Kissling (2013), pronunciation involves features at the segmental (micro level) and the supra-segmental (macro) level. The various features that make up the production of sounds in English are classified as [1] *Segmental Features*, related to sounds at the micro level. They include specific sounds within words. [2] *Suprasegmental Features*, Suprasegmental features relate to sounds at the macro level that are divided into (a) Linking refers to the way the last sound of one word is joined to the first sound of the next word (b) Intonation means when why and how a speaker chooses to raise or lower or sustain the pitch of her or his voice at particular points while speaking (c) The word stress means "loudness." Stress is a term that we apply to words in isolation that have more than one syllable (d) The sounds that result from one chest pulse form a syllable. So, another explanation for these features is below:

#### ***Suprasegmental Feature***

Suprasegmental features are features related to sounds of tone, stress, and intonation. Zhang (2009) defines, Suprasegmental features as the name implies, are features of speech that generally apply to a group of segmental phonemes. Suprasegmental deals with indicators of how the sound can be produced appropriately or not. Here are the remarks: [1] *Stress*, Stress refers to loud or weak spoken words. All the word has an identifiable syllable, and one of the syllables in each word will sound louder than the other. [2] *Intonation*, Intonation refers to the highs and lows of spoken sounds

#### ***Segment Features***

According to Situmorang (2023), segmental phonology is the study of segmental phenomena such as vowels and consonants. The main concerns in segmental here are vowels and consonants. [1] *English consonants* are characterized by some narrowing of the laryngeal canal, especially in the oral cavity. Phonetically, consonants are sounds that come from the closure or narrowing of the vocal tract so that airflow is completely blocked or restricted, resulting in audible friction (Collins et al., 2019). There are 24 consonants: [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g], [ʔ], [tʃ], [dʒ], [m], [n], [ŋ], [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ], [r], [h], [w], and [j]. [2] *English vowels* are sounds made without the closure or release of air. Vowels

are defined as multiple-voiced sounds produced freely in the mouth that are not accompanied by friction sounds. Vowel quality depends on the position of the tongue and lips as these articulators play a crucial role in vowel production. Vowel sounds in English are classified into 2 types: simple vowels & diphthongs. Diphthongs are the result of a glide from one vowel to another within a single syllable (Kang et al., 2018). There are 12 simple vowels and 8 diphthongs in English.

#### ***Teaching and Learning of English Pronunciation***

One of the most significant difficulties faced by English language learners is pronunciation in trying to establish native-like pronunciation. In fact, pronunciation is one of the most crucial parts of a new language teaching. Following Nanda (2023), learners with good English pronunciation are more likely to be understood even if they error in other areas, whereas learners with inappropriate pronunciation will not be understood, even if they have a good grammatical structure. Zhang (2009) notes that pronunciation in English can be a challenging part of English language learning. The fact that some letters in the alphabet can be pronounced differently complicates matters. Take the letter *g*, for example, it can be pronounced as *g* in the word *girl*, and *j* in the word *gel*.

#### ***Challenges in Teaching Pronunciation in a Non-English-Speaking Country***

A major problem in learning English in a non-native-speaking country is that students may not receive appropriate exposure to the language from native speakers. As a result, students may have difficulty understanding and mastering all aspects of English properly. However, effective and comprehensible English pronunciation can be a complex task for students learning English as a foreign language (Collins, 2019)). This is because each language differs from English in several ways, especially in terms of pronunciation. Therefore, non-native English speakers find it difficult to pronounce spoken. Thus, students and teachers have to work hard to find the best way to carry an effective pronunciation learning (Kissling, 2013). EFL teachers should become more aware of the ways they can help develop EFL students' competence in pronunciation by employing more effective and successful teaching strategies.

#### ***Macro Linguistic Phonetics***

Phonetics is a type of language production associated with the area of microlinguistics. Jenkins (2000), explains phonetics is the study of how sounds function in a language and how they are related to one another. This means that the segment of utterances produced by the speaker has relations to another sound because a word appears as a collection of sounds and forms a context or meaning through pronunciation. Moreover, its meaning changes depending on which speaker represents its sound. Hence, it all is understood in the study of sound. Based on Situmorang (2023), each language has a different phonetic reality and techniques of separating the flow of continuous sounds into basic sounds. It demonstrates that every speaker creates its phonetic characteristics as a result of the various realities ways of a language speaking. So therefore, when a non-native speaker speaks a foreign language, it tends to produce its own phonetic reality by a mother tongue as a first language. In Addition to Situmorang (2023), suprasegmental features might be applied differently by every speaker in pronunciation. This is because each speaker is influenced by mother tongue. Hence, it is possible to argue that its own knowledge plays a role in his language interference. It influenced unconsciously how the speaker gives contours of tone, stressing, and also the silence of the utterances.

## **METHOD**

This study uses descriptive qualitative research since it is appropriate for this kind of study. In this research, the units analysed are student sentences with specific features. The study merely involved 6 students from 2 different levels of English skills since it was considered that they were able to cooperate with the researchers during the study. This study, thus, involved 6 students, and 1 teacher. This research was conducted at a private senior high school in Bandung. The participants involved in this research were six students from two different levels of English skills. This school was picked because it is popularly known as it has been one of the favourite schools with a good quality of students and has complete and representative supporting facilities, selected, experienced, and competent teachers in the field of English. The duration of the research will be carried out for 1 month starting in May of the 2024 academic year. The participants of this study were 6 students in grades 10-12 who had attended English pronunciation classes. All students in grades 10-11 have been divided into 2 different levels of English proficiency: basic and intermediate level. The researcher took 3 students from the basic level, and 3 students from the intermediate level in order to explore their difficulties in learning English pronunciation using several research instruments. In terms of data collection, in addition to observation, interviews, and questionnaires the researcher instructs voice recording of a given topic. This treatment will show whether the two levels find the same pronunciation difficulties or not. Students were selected randomly from a total of 65 students.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Student's Difficulties in Pronunciation**

In response to the first research question, questionnaires were adjusted from the previous related study by Wulandari (2021) which was concerned with identifying students' difficulties in pronunciation. The questionnaires were given in order to get accurate data and help the researcher gain the relevant information quickly and effectively. In this section, the researcher asked students to put a checklist as a response on a scale of ranking (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree) that consisted of 20 items of questionnaires. Since the researchers used descriptive analysis in analyzing the data of students' pronunciation, thus the results of questionnaires are transcribed by calculating the percentage of each item.

Regarding the first research questions on students' difficulties in pronunciation, Kelly (2000), defines that pronunciation involves features at the *Segmental* (micro-level) and *Supra-segmental* (micro-level). The various features that make up the production of sound in English pronunciation are classified as (1) Segmental features are related to sound at the micro levels. Segmental features contain 2 stages; the sound system of consonants and vowels. (2) Supra-segmental features are related to sound at the macro level that are divided into; intonation, stress, rhythm, and linking. These elements operate when people use that common pronunciation as an intrinsic component of their spoken language. Based on the result of the questionnaire, students find it challenging in both segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation that are reflected in various degrees for different learners. The representation of students' difficulties in pronunciation is shown in the following table

**Table 1. Representation of students' difficulties in**

**pronunciation of segmental features**

Percentage of Students' Difficulties in Pronunciation on Segmental Features					
No.	Statements	Percentage			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I am challenging with voiced and unvoiced consonants	37,14%	28,57%	25,71%	8,57%
2.	My biggest problem in speaking is segmental pronunciation	8,57%	57,14%	28,57%	5,71%
3.	My understanding of proper pronunciation is lacking	8,57%	71,42%	17,14%	2,85%

From Table 1, it can be seen that students are lacking in proper pronunciation, students stated that their biggest problem in speaking is pronunciation. Moreover, students have experienced difficulty in segmental features, that is, students find it challenging to distinguish between voiced and voiceless consonant letters. The table shows that 13 students with a percentage of 37,14% strongly agree that voiced and unvoiced words are difficult to distinguish, 10 students (28,57%) agree, 9 students (25,71%) disagree and the lowest percentage of 8,57% of the total participants on scale ranking strongly disagree of the statement. The percentage results show that students' level of understanding in distinguishing segmental features of consonant sound production is not as satisfactory as expected. Additionally, vocal cord vibration is required to create voiced consonants, while vocal cord vibration is not required for voiceless consonants. As a result, voicing errors may arise from student's inability to perceive and produce these differences (Munro et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the high percentage of students with difficulties distinguishing voiced and voiceless means that the majority of the participants have difficulty understanding the phonetic symbols or the phonetics of the alphabet. The high percentage of students on the strongly agree scale indicates that most participants find it challenging to understand phonetic symbols which results in having difficulty in distinguishing consonant voiced and unvoiced sounds. Furthermore, the English voiced consonant that the student pronounced incorrectly was: /ʒ/ like the word "measure", and the voiceless English consonant that the student pronounced incorrectly is /ʃ/ sounds like the word "she". The Air is forced through a gap in the lips to produce a friction sound, which is the /ʒ/ sound. The majority of students replaced /ʒ/ with /dʒ/, /ʃ/, and /s/. In addition, students were unsure about pronouncing voiceless sounds ending in -s that sound like /s/, /z/, or /iz/. Then, difficulties in words ending in -sh, -ch, -x, -ss, and /z/ that sound like the extra syllable /iz/, e.g. waits and catches. Additionally, students hard to pronounce the words that end on a voiceless sound of the final -ed that pronounces /t/ e.g stopped.

Obviously, this mispronunciation stems from the influence of the phonetic pattern of Bahasa Indonesia, where such a difference in sound may be unusual. Different consonant sounds can be distinguished in Indonesian, making it difficult for Indonesian learners to understand and precisely reproduce these variances in English. Whereas students do not show self-behavioral learning of phonetic symbols and pronunciation

features since that kind of material did not exist in their learning process. Addressing mispronunciations is crucial as the difference between voiced and unvoiced consonants contributes to the intelligibility of spoken English. Thus, effective methods of instructional approaches can focus on improving students' awareness of voicing contrasts through the teaching of auditory discrimination exercises, and targeted pronunciation drills. However, students' ability to appropriately differentiate and produce voiced and voiceless consonant sounds in English can be improved by giving clear models and practice opportunities (Situmorang et al., 2023).

**Table 2. Representation of students' difficulties in pronunciation of supra-segmental features**

Percentage of Students' Difficulties in Pronunciation on Supra-Segmental Features					
No.	Statements	Percentage %			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My speaking intonation and tone are problematic	17,14%	42,85%	25,71%	14,28%
2.	I find it challenging to move my muscles in rhythmic patterns	5,71%	51,42%	40%	2,85%
3.	I am unsure with the words extra stress	2,85%	57,14%	31,42%	71,42%
4.	I am having trouble understanding the intonation of the words, I can't recognize it	5,71%	37,14%	48,57%	34,28%

Table 2 indicates that the results were not as well predicted since the students had difficulties in adjusting to the stress and rhythm patterns of English consonant production. This is because English is a stress-timed language, meaning that stressed syllables receive more emphasis and time than unstressed syllables, whereas Indonesian is a syllable-timed language, meaning that each syllable is given equal duration and intensity. As a result, students may have difficulty in stressing the correct syllables in English words. A percentage of 57,14% (20) students mistakenly put stress on syllables that are supposed to be unstressed, even though they could not distinguish stressed and unstressed syllables accurately. Additionally, the table shows that there were 15 students (42,85%) who gave a rating scale of agree, and 17,14% strongly agreed with the challenge of moving muscles to produce a proper rhythmic pattern. However, this can lead to difficulties in conveying the natural rhythm and flow of English speech. In addition to stress and rhythm in pronunciation, intonation is also a significant feature that should contain to difference between high and low-spoken sounds (Lubis et al., 2023, Augustus).

Unlike, the students are having trouble understanding the word's intonation, and they can't recognize the high and low of spoken sounds with a percentage of 37,14% from 30 participants. The general lack of fluency in Indonesian learners' English speech might be impacted by their inaccurate use of stress and their inability to distinguish between stressed and unstressed syllables. The incorrect placement of stress and failure to distinguish between stressed and unstressed syllables can affect the overall intelligibility

of Indonesian learners' English speech. According to Lubis (2023), supra-segmental signs mean how sound can be created effectively. To address these issues, teachers must provide clear education on stress patterns in English, including the concept of stressed and unstressed syllables and how they affect word and sentence rhythm. Participating in pronunciation exercises, drills, and activities that emphasize stress and rhythm.

Secondly, in order to clarify and equalize with the results of the questionnaire, the researcher has conducted interviews with 3 students from 11 grade who participated in EDP (English Development Program). The questions asked were adapted from the questionnaire items to meet the researcher's needs. The findings from these interviews are described below.

Excerpt 1

**I had some difficulties in producing proper English pronunciation since I did not learn about phonetic symbols at school**, because the material was not taught in-depth, so I lacked the self-behavior to learn pronunciation and its features. In segmental features, **I had difficulty distinguishing voiced and voiceless consonants**. Especially in supra-segmental features, **I was unsure of which syllables to stress and which unstressed**. My **intonation was also inconsistent at times**, which resulted in unsatisfactory pronunciation. In spite of stressing and tone, **I also had difficulty in producing rhythmic patterns**. All of this occurred as a result of my biological factors and the teacher who was not an English native. Sometimes I didn't quite catch what the teacher was saying, since he spoke in a dialect of his own country. (Student 2)

As seen in the excerpt above, because students lack good self-behavior in learning phonetic symbols as new material, and teachers do not provide exercises and activities that emphasize stress and rhythm, learners tend to follow what the teacher has decided and are satisfied after understanding what the teacher has explained in class. This consequently caused them to experience difficulties in both segmental and supra-segmental features.

Further interviews were conducted with EDP teachers through an online Zoom meeting application with a duration of 15 minutes. The results are described below.

Excerpt 2

When I used the reading practice method to identify the students' difficulties, **I noticed that they had difficulty in the phonetic of sound which resulted in pronouncing the word as it was written, substitution errors, and voicing errors**. Some students were not proficient with voiced or unvoiced words, even though they could not effectively set **intonation and stress words**. This occurs because they are lack understanding of phonetic symbols and pronunciation basic rules. (Teacher 1)

To sum up, most students still have difficulties to produce good pronunciation due to a lack of mastering the features of pronunciation. These problems include intonation and rhythm issues, voicing errors, clustering problems with consonants, difficulty with fricative consonants, and substitution errors. In addition, students assume that the way English is written is similar to its utterances like what they have in the Indonesian language as their native language as well as their traditional language. These errors and difficulties are influenced by the Indonesian language's phonetic patterns and structures, which differ from those of English. Even, some of them at a percentage of (31.42%) understand these features and produce English pronunciation very satisfactorily. Additionally, the information gathered from the questionnaires and interviews was corroborated by conducting direct classroom observations. The researcher has conducted

observations within a duration of 30 minutes. Field note-taking conducted during the observation showed that indeed students experienced pronunciation difficulties in accordance with the information obtained from questionnaires and interviews.

### Factors that Influence Students' Difficulties in Pronunciation

In response to the second research question; the factors that affecting students' difficulties in pronunciation, the questionnaires, interviews, and observation were used to collect relevant and important data. Data collected through questionnaires suggest that there are various factors that influence children who have difficulty pronouncing words. Based on the results of the questionnaires, there are two major factors that are related: (internal factors) include biological factors such as the brain, ear, aptitude, attitude, and the student's personality, while (external factors) include first language interference/the student's native language, motivation, types of teachers, learning methodologies, and classroom environment (Situmorang et al., 2023).

The representation of students' difficulties in pronunciation is shown in the following table.

**Table 3. Representation of Internal Factors that Influence Students' Difficulties in Pronunciation**

Percentage of Factors Influence Student's Difficulties in Pronunciation (Internal Factors)					
No.	Statements	Percentage			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I always pronounce the word in the way it's written	8,57%	37,14%	34,28%	20% %
2.	I don't usually practice my pronunciation outside of the classroom	17,14%	42,85%	25,71% %	14,28%
3.	I rarely examine the dictionary for the correct pronunciation	11,42%	45,71%	40%	14,28%
4.	I request to correct my pronunciation of make mistakes, to the teacher	20% %	62,85%	14,28%	14,28%
5.	I am interested to learn more about pronunciation	20%	68,57%	11,42%	0%
6.	I don't think it's necessary for me to get better pronunciation	14,28%	31,42%	42,85%	11,42%
7.	I am motivated to have correct and accurate pronunciation	31,42%	65,71%	2,85%	0%

From Table 2, it can be seen that students' difficulties with English pronunciation are caused by a variety of factors, especially *internal factors* which include: biological factors of student aptitude, and students' differences in personality ( attitude, motivation, identity, student effort, and goal setting).

In number 8, several students with a percentage of 37.14% showed a lacked aptitude in English pronunciation. They did not appear to acquire good pronunciation by producing word pronunciations according to what was written. Therefore, the results are unsatisfactory since only 7 students (20%) possess the aptitude to learn the language and acquire better pronunciation than others. According to Carroll (1981), four traits make up language aptitude: phonetic symbol ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, and memory. Hence, difficulties will be reduced if students begin to be conscious of language aptitude indicators, especially pronunciation.

Pronunciation is also influenced by *students' personality, attitudes, motivation, identity students' effort, and setting goals*. According to Zhang (2009), the factors that largely determine the accuracy of students' pronunciation are their sense of identity, learning attitude, personality, and motivation. Each student brings different perspectives to the target language which can either help or impede the development of pronunciation skills. Unfortunately, the results in number 2 with a total of 15 students at a percentage of 42.85% show the existence of student personalities that hinder the development of pronunciation skills, students do not set goal settings which results in non-optimal efforts such as not practicing pronunciation outside of school hours, and rarely examine the dictionary for a correct pronunciation. Furthermore, students might have prejudices or negative attitudes towards pronunciation.

Based on the table, the result of number six is. 6, 31.42% of students agreed that learning a second language is not as necessary. This result is unsatisfactory since learners are required to have a positive attitude and an open mind for the target language which will encourage the development of their pronunciation easily and properly more native-like accents. Kelly (2000) identifies motivation as a significant factor influencing the success of language learning. Students with high motivation have an inner drive, emotion, or desire to do pronunciation development consciously. Thus, as learners are highly motivated to enhance pronunciation, they will be more eager to take part in activities, and pay more attention to distinguishing the sounds of the target language, and seize every opportunity to use the target language. According to the table above, 28.57% of students still lack motivation to study pronunciation, resulting in difficulties pronouncing English correctly.

Secondly, several internal factors influence student's difficulties in pronunciation, including students' aptitude, personality, attitude, motivation, efforts, and setting goals. These are found in the results of the interview below.

Excerpt 3

As I lack understanding of pronunciation features, I always **pronounce words in the way it's written. I rarely practiced** outside of class since I was in an environment where English was not spoken. Sometimes, **I rarely examine the dictionary** for proper pronunciation when I speak to the same level as me. However, when I'm going to talk to an English native speaker or a friend who has good pronunciation, I will examine the dictionary. (Student 1)

Secondly, the additional data collection was conducted through direct observation. As observed by the researcher in the classroom, the results indicates that there are internal factors that hinder students in developing good pronunciation skills. Definitely, internal factors as the main point that must be considered before external factors. Students' internal factors will show whether they are able to produce proper pronunciation or not. The aspect sheet that has been applied found that students lack in pronunciation, some of them are unmotivated and have unsupportive personalities. However, some students

have good pronunciation qualifications, and some are lacking. The number of students who grasp pronunciation is quite low.

In summary, students experience pronunciation difficulties due to several internal factors, including; student aptitude, attitude, motivation, identity, student effort, and goal setting, as include; as lack of motivation, lack of practice, the influences of the student's environment, and the low of self-bahavioral learning. Therefore, good pronunciation does not imply a perfect American or British accent, but rather a native-like and understandable pronunciation. Hence, it is critical to set up an appropriate goal of pronunciation for effective communication. Ideally, effective pronunciation contributes to intelligibility and acceptability. Many researchers appear to emphasize intelligence. Levis (2005) stated that learners should examine the intelligibility principle and interpret it as the goal of establishing a native-like goal.

**Table 4. Representation of external factors that influence students' difficulties in pronunciation**

No.	Statements	Percentage of Factors Influence Student's Difficulties in Pronunciation (External Factors)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My native language influence my pronunciation	5,71%	71,42%	11,42%	11,42%
2.	A few English vowels and consonants are absent from my native language	0%	62,85%	20%	14,28%
3.	I have a positive classroom enviroment to learn pronunciation	34,28%	54,28%	8,57%	2,85%
4.	My teacher helps me to imitate native-like pronunciation	14,28%	40%	28,57%	17,14%
5.	My teacher is a good model for teaching pronunciation	20%	45,71%	22,85%	11,42%
6.	My teacher used a variety methods of learning pronunciation	14,28%	42,85%%	31,42%	11,42%

External factors affecting English pronunciation difficulties, as described in this table, include; the learner's mother tongue, teacher type, learning methods, and classroom environment. These elements have a significant impact on whether students' pronunciations are appropriate.

It is generally accepted that the learner's mother tongue plays a significant role in the acquisition of difficult pronunciations in a new language. It is often related to interference from the mother tongue and causes errors in stress, and intonation in the target language, for example, Chinese is a pitched language, while English is a highly stressed language. Certainly, learners have difficulty understanding foreigners' speech (Rivers, 1968). The difficulty is not due to the student's lack of knowledge of vocabulary, language structure or grammar, but because the sounds produced seem strange with

intonation going up and down in unexpected places. Most students experience pronunciation difficulties due to their native language, table no 1 shows that 71.42% agreed to this factor. Additionally, the result no. 2 with a percentage of 62.85% shows that some English vowels and consonants do not exist in their native language, which results in students not understanding and having difficulty adapting to the required pronunciation. Apart from the mother tongue, the table above shows that the classroom environment is one of the external factors that occur, with a scale of 31.42% of 35 participants. Fortunately, the highest percentage with 42.85% of students had a supportive classroom environment.

In addition to the factors already described, there are several external factors that have a great influence on students' pronunciation, including: The type of teacher/teaching profession, the variety of learning methods and the role of the teacher towards EFL students. By implementing positive learning and applying varied methods, it will be easier for students to develop their ability to produce proper English pronunciation. Table 4.2 shows that 19 students (54.28%) agreed that their teachers helped them to imitate native speakers' pronunciation. Unfortunately, out of 35 students, only 10 students with a percentage of 28.57% indicated that their teachers are good models for teaching pronunciation. This result is unsatisfactory, where only a low scale shows the teacher's ability to model proper English pronunciation. This happens because the pronunciation of every human being will be influenced by their mother tongue. Fortunately, 16 students out of 35 agreed, and 7 students strongly agreed that the teacher used a variety of learning methods. Furthermore, the results above show that teachers are encouraged to provide detailed instruction on stress patterns in English, including the concept of stressed and unstressed syllables that affect word rhythm and sentence accuracy. Design activities where students engage in pronunciation drills, exercises, and activities that focus on stress and rhythm. Model correct pronunciation, provide auditory discrimination exercises, and conduct focused practice. By providing clear modeling and practice opportunities, learners are required to improve their pronunciation skills appropriately in English.

Additional information has been obtained from the interview results. The interview results show that the student's native language is the first external factor that affects the difficulty in proper English pronunciation. In addition, the type of teacher, learning method, and learning environment of students are external factors that are encountered significantly. The results are explained below.

Excerpt 4

**My native language has a significant impact** on my ability to learn English pronunciation; I struggle with some word sounds that are not similar to those in my native language. Then I have to adapt to the target language I'm studying. Aside from that, **the sort of teacher and learning approach did not assist me improve my English skills...** Moreover, the student's pronunciation depends on the teacher's pronunciation, and students see the teacher as a model. **The methods used are diverse, but they are all basic and do not include visual aids.** (Student 3)

Excerpt 5

I believe that **students' native language affects the success or failure of students' pronunciation.** It is very difficult for them to adapt to the new sounds of the target language. (Student 2)

To sum up, for external factors, native language is critical to the correct acquisition of pronunciation in a foreign language. Definitely, if a learner's native language sounds

close to the target language, they will find it easier to learn. Furthermore, teachers play a crucial role in students' learning process. Pronunciation is one of the significant aspects of foreign language teaching, and it is a very serious task. It must be borne in mind that teachers are the models for their students. So, first of all, they should have good pronunciation; otherwise, they can mislead their students. However, it is difficult to teach without practice. Therefore, it is important to combine practice pronunciation exercise with more meaningful exercises. Teachers should assist students in setting appropriate pronunciation goals and improving their learning motivation, which will play an essential part in language instruction.

Therefore, in the first discussion on pronunciation difficulties, students encounter both segmentation and supra-segmentation. In segmentation, students experienced difficulties including; voicing errors, difficulties with consonant clusters, substitution errors, and struggles with fricative consonants, difficult to distinguished between voiced and unvoiced consonant letters. In supra-segmental, students experienced difficulties including; students unsure with stressed and unstressed syllables, difficulty producing rhythmic patterns, and inconsistent use of high and low intonation. All these difficulties lead to unsatisfactory pronunciation.

In addition, certain essential elements influence native-like pronunciation; these factors can be classified as internal and external factors. In the case of internal factors, it relates to the brain development, ear perception, innate phonetic ability, students' personality, aptitude, motivation, attitude, efforts and setting goal. Many researchers argue that positive attitudes and open minds will encourage in learners pronunciation improvement, allowing them to be accurate and have a native-like accent. Another important affecting factor is the learners' attitude towards responding the opportunities in the target language. Furthermore, if the learner has highly motivation to have a better pronunciation, and set up an appropriate goal for pronunciation, they will be able to grasp the target language pronunciation much more effectively. For external factors, the native language plays a crucial role in the precise acquisition of pronunciation in a new language. The first external element influencing proper English pronunciation difficulty is the student's native language. It is referred to as a "dialect" since each country has a distinct style of pronouncing words from other countries. For example, Indonesia has numerous traditional languages. It will cause difficulty in adjusting to the English language. If the mother tongue and target language have comparable sounds, students will find it easier to master pronunciation. Furthermore, teachers have a critical role in students' pronunciation as one of the most important parts of foreign language instruction. Certainly, teachers serve as a models for their students. Absolutely, the teacher should devote some time to teaching pronunciation. However, teaching pronunciation without practice is challenging, but drilling an individual sound for more than a few minutes at a time can be tedious and discouraging for students. As a result, it is critical to combine practice speech exercises with more meaningful activities. Teachers should assist students in setting appropriate pronunciation goals and improving their learning motivation, which will play a vital role in language instruction. However, many EFL teachers argue that pronunciation is too complicated and difficult to teach, and thus overlook the necessity of teaching students' proper pronunciation. Absolutely, student's pronunciation depends on their teacher's pronunciation, which serves as a model. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to improve their pronunciation first.

The research findings align with theories of first language interference, as discussed in studies by Lasabuda (2017), and Ahmed (2017). These studies similarly highlight that

pronunciation errors often stem from the influence of students' native phonological systems on their English pronunciation. The challenges with intonation and stress patterns found in this research are consistent with Lasabuda's findings, which emphasize the complexity of these suprasegmental features. Additionally, Wulandari's work supports that traditional classroom practices are insufficient for addressing these difficulties, reinforcing the need for targeted and context-based pronunciation activities to improve students' pronunciation skills effectively.

## CONCLUSION

In the case of students' difficulties in English pronunciation, students have difficulty in both segmental and supra-segmental features. In segmental, students find it difficult to distinguish voiced and unvoiced consonants and experience the exchange between voiced to unvoiced. In supra segmental, students have difficulties in a variety of fields such as unsure of stressed and unstressed syllables, lack of ability to determine high or low intonation, and difficulty in producing proper rhythm. Those are some of the students' difficulties that have been found by researchers through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. In addition to these features, this study has found internal and external factors that influence students' pronunciation difficulties. In brief, these factors are; (1) biological influences such as differences in student intelligence, lack of motivation, attitude, efforts, and goal setting, (2) the influence of mother tongue, learning environment, teacher type, and methods applied.

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