



EFL Students' Perceptions of English Pronunciation Difficulties

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Abstract: Pronunciation is a crucial element of spoken English proficiency, yet it often receives insufficient emphasis in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, leading to persistent difficulties that affect learners' intelligibility and confidence. This study investigates Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of their English pronunciation challenges, aiming to identify the most problematic phonological features and understand learners' interpretations of these difficulties. Employing a qualitative case study design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six first-year students from the English Language Education Program at Universitas Islam Kalimantan (UNISKA) Banjarmasin. Participants were purposively selected based on their coursework and willingness to reflect on their pronunciation experiences. Findings reveal that segmental features such as the /θ/, /ð/, /v/, and vowel length contrasts, alongside suprasegmental aspects like word stress and intonation, pose significant challenges. These difficulties negatively impact learners' speaking confidence and communicative engagement. The study underscores the importance of integrating learner perspectives into pronunciation pedagogy to enhance instructional effectiveness. Future research should explore intervention strategies and technology-assisted pronunciation learning tailored to diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Keywords: EFL Students Perceptions; English Pronunciation Difficulties; Pronunciation; Qualitative Case Study; Speaking Confidence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation, as a core component of spoken language proficiency, plays a pivotal role in communicative competence for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Derwing & Munro, 2022, p. 15; Setter & Jenkins, 2023, p. 38). Despite its recognized importance, pronunciation often receives limited attention in EFL instruction compared to grammar and vocabulary (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2022, p. 19; Koizumi & In'nami, 2023, p. 121). This imbalance contributes to persistent pronunciation difficulties that hinder learners' intelligibility, self-confidence, and overall communicative success (Levis & Sonsaat, 2022, p. 54; Zhang & Yin, 2023, p. 80).

EFL learners' difficulties with English pronunciation stem from the phonological differences between English and their first languages (L1s), often resulting in negative L1 transfer (Flege & Bohn, 2023, p. 22; Chen, Wang, & Liu, 2022, p. 107). Research has shown that segmental features, such as consonants and vowels, as well as suprasegmental features like stress, rhythm, and intonation, are frequently mispronounced due to these cross-linguistic influences (Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2024, p. 44; Ali & Nordin, 2023, p. 61). For instance, Indonesian EFL learners may face challenges in producing interdental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/), diphthongs, or distinguishing minimal pairs due to the absence of such contrasts in Bahasa Indonesia (Siregar & Pratiwi, 2022, p. 98; Nugraha & Lestari, 2023, p. 76).

Despite substantial research on pronunciation instruction, there remains limited understanding of learners' own perceptions regarding the difficulties they face, which are

essential for designing effective pedagogical interventions (Murakami & Young-Scholten, 2023, p. 89; Hassan & Rahimi, 2024, p. 34). Learner perception studies reveal that EFL students often perceive pronunciation as the most difficult skill to master and one that requires explicit, focused instruction (Hashemian & Farhang-Ju, 2023, p. 113; Firdaus & Wahyuni, 2024, p. 60). Moreover, negative self-perceptions of pronunciation ability have been associated with increased communication anxiety and reduced willingness to speak (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022, p. 71; Luo & Zhang, 2024, p. 19).

The sociolinguistic environment also shapes pronunciation learning outcomes. Learners in EFL contexts—where exposure to native or proficient English input is minimal—often lack opportunities for meaningful interaction, resulting in fossilization of incorrect pronunciation patterns (Zarrinabadi & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2023, p. 50; Yavuz & Altunkaya, 2022, p. 66). Without adequate corrective feedback or awareness of phonological distinctions, learners may internalize inaccurate forms, complicating later remediation efforts (Foote & Smith, 2023, p. 27; Nur & Ramli, 2024, p. 112).

Given the complex interplay of linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors, understanding how EFL learners perceive their own pronunciation difficulties can inform more targeted, responsive instructional practices (Brown & Lee, 2023, p. 35; Saito & Hanzawa, 2022, p. 55). Such understanding is particularly critical in non-native English environments where teacher expertise, curricular priorities, and access to phonetic resources vary widely (Widodo & Priyanto, 2024, p. 90; Tanjung & Rahmawati, 2023, p. 102).

This study investigates the perceptions of Indonesian EFL students regarding their pronunciation difficulties. It aims to identify which phonological aspects are most challenging and how learners interpret the sources of these difficulties. By integrating learner perspectives with current theoretical and pedagogical insights, the study contributes to an evidence-based approach to improving pronunciation instruction in EFL settings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nature of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is widely acknowledged as a fundamental component of spoken language proficiency, encompassing both segmental (consonants and vowels) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, and intonation) features (Derwing & Munro, 2022, p. 14; Saito & Hanzawa, 2022, p. 57). The mastery of pronunciation is essential not only for intelligibility but also for effective communication in various sociolinguistic contexts (Levis & Sonsaat, 2022, p. 52; Setter & Jenkins, 2023, p. 41). Despite its centrality to oral communication, pronunciation remains underrepresented in many EFL curricula, often due to perceived

instructional complexity and teacher insecurity (Koizumi & In'nami, 2023, p. 119; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2022, p. 23).

The theoretical basis for pronunciation teaching has evolved, with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) model emphasizing intelligibility over native-like accuracy (Jenkins, 2023, p. 36; Foote & Smith, 2023, p. 25). This pedagogical shift recognizes that pronunciation teaching should prioritize features that most affect listener comprehension (Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2024, p. 48; Brown & Lee, 2023, p. 30). Moreover, pronunciation is now understood as a dynamic, learnable skill influenced by exposure, motivation, and feedback—challenging earlier assumptions that phonological ability is fixed after a critical period (Flege & Bohn, 2023, p. 21; Hassan & Rahimi, 2024, p. 36).

Pronunciation Difficulties

Pronunciation difficulties among EFL learners are multifaceted and context-dependent, often shaped by the interaction between first language (L1) phonological systems and English phonetics (Chen, Wang, & Liu, 2022, p. 108; Ali & Nordin, 2023, p. 58). Common segmental issues include the mispronunciation of sounds absent in learners' L1, such as interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, and difficulty distinguishing between minimal pairs (Zhang & Yin, 2023, p. 79; Nugraha & Lestari, 2023, p. 78). Suprasegmental difficulties—such as misplaced stress or incorrect intonation—further impact comprehensibility and fluency (Yavuz & Altunkaya, 2022, p. 65; Widodo & Priyanto, 2024, p. 93).

In the Indonesian EFL context, learners frequently report challenges with vowel length distinction, diphthong articulation, and the final consonant clusters, which are structurally uncommon in Bahasa Indonesia (Siregar & Pratiwi, 2022, p. 96; Tanjung & Rahmawati, 2023, p. 103). These phonological mismatches often lead to fossilized pronunciation errors, especially when learners have limited access to corrective feedback or authentic input (Nur & Ramli, 2024, p. 114; Foote & Smith, 2023, p. 28).

Psycholinguistic factors also influence pronunciation learning. Learners with high levels of pronunciation anxiety may avoid speaking or struggle with phonological processing under pressure (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022, p. 74; Luo & Zhang, 2024, p. 21). In addition, many students perceive pronunciation as the most difficult language skill to master due to its abstract nature and lack of systematic instruction (Hashemian & Farhang-Ju, 2023, p. 115; Firdaus & Wahyuni, 2024, p. 61). These perceptions, when unaddressed, can hinder learner motivation and reduce classroom participation.

Another layer of complexity is added by the instructional environment. In many EFL settings, pronunciation is either neglected or approached implicitly, despite evidence supporting explicit, focused instruction as more effective for long-term phonological

development (Derwing & Munro, 2022, p. 16; Murakami & Young-Scholten, 2023, p. 91). Teachers often report a lack of training or confidence in teaching pronunciation, further limiting learners' exposure to effective models and feedback (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2022, p. 20; Levis & Sonsaat, 2022, p. 56).

Previous Studies

Several recent studies have examined pronunciation difficulties from both pedagogical and learner-centered perspectives. For example, Murakami and Young-Scholten (2023, p. 90) found that learners' perceived challenges were aligned with objectively assessed errors, indicating that learners are aware of their own pronunciation limitations. Similarly, Firdaus and Wahyuni (2024, p. 62) identified specific phonemes that Indonesian EFL learners consistently mispronounce, highlighting areas where targeted intervention is necessary.

Levis and Sonsaat (2022, p. 53) emphasized that learners who received structured pronunciation feedback outperformed those who experienced incidental correction, confirming the role of explicit instruction. Likewise, research by Hassan and Rahimi (2024, p. 35) suggested that integrating metacognitive strategies, such as pronunciation diaries and self-monitoring, enhances learners' phonological awareness and autonomy.

Studies also confirm that learners' attitudes and beliefs significantly influence their engagement with pronunciation tasks (Hashemian & Farhang-Ju, 2023, p. 114; Saito & Hanzawa, 2022, p. 59). Positive perceptions are often linked to increased self-confidence and communicative willingness, while negative perceptions correlate with withdrawal and avoidance (Luo & Zhang, 2024, p. 20; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022, p. 72). Thus, exploring learner perceptions is essential not only for identifying problem areas but also for designing instruction that aligns with learner needs and expectations.

In the Indonesian context, Tanjung and Rahmawati (2023, p. 104) argue that curriculum reforms must place greater emphasis on phonological development, as many students reach university with persistent pronunciation issues. This is supported by Widodo and Priyanto (2024, p. 91), who advocate for teacher training and the integration of pronunciation-focused materials in early EFL instruction.

Collectively, these studies highlight the importance of understanding not just what learners struggle with in pronunciation, but how they perceive those struggles—information that is critical for developing effective, responsive pedagogy in EFL environments.

3. METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how EFL students perceive their difficulties in English pronunciation. The qualitative case study framework allows in-depth investigation of complex phenomena within their real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018, p. 15). This design is suitable for capturing nuanced learner perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that are not easily quantifiable (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96).

In EFL pronunciation studies, qualitative methods are widely used to examine how learners internalize phonological challenges and interpret their learning experiences (Murakami & Young-Scholten, 2023, p. 91). The case study was bounded to a specific group of learners in one institutional context, enabling detailed insights without generalizing beyond the local environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020, p. 42).

Subjects of the Research

The subjects of this research consisted of three first-year students and three second-year students enrolled in the English Language Education Program at Universitas Islam Kalimantan (UNISKA) Banjarmasin. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the criteria that they had completed at least one semester of phonology-related coursework and were willing to reflect on their pronunciation learning experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534).

Purposive sampling enables researchers to focus on individuals most likely to provide rich, relevant, and diverse data in relation to the phenomenon under study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p. 2). Since pronunciation is deeply personal and contextually influenced, selecting learners who could articulate their difficulties ensured the data would be both meaningful and credible (Derwing & Munro, 2022, p. 15).

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, and all participants provided informed consent. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identities throughout the research process.

Technique of Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth, flexible, and participant-driven responses while maintaining thematic focus. This technique is especially effective for eliciting learners' metacognitive awareness, attitudes, and personal evaluations of their pronunciation skills (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 108; Alsaawi, 2022, p. 22).

Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in either English or Bahasa Indonesia, depending on participant preference. The interviews followed a guide informed by prior research on EFL pronunciation challenges (Foote & Smith, 2023, p. 29). Topics included perceived pronunciation barriers, instructional effectiveness, self-monitoring strategies, and emotional reactions to oral communication.

Interviews were audio-recorded with participant permission and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy. Semi-structured interviews are widely recommended in second language acquisition research, particularly when examining individual differences and learner perspectives (Levis & Sonsaat, 2022, p. 54).

Data Analysis

The transcribed interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). These steps included: (1) data familiarization, (2) initial coding, (3) theme generation, (4) theme review, (5) theme definition, and (6) report writing.

Thematic analysis was chosen because of its flexibility and capacity to uncover recurring patterns in qualitative data while remaining grounded in participant experience (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). Themes were identified both deductively (based on prior literature) and inductively (emerging from the data), ensuring a balance between theoretical grounding and contextual authenticity.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, peer debriefing was conducted, and the findings were returned to participants for member checking. This triangulation process strengthens trustworthiness and minimizes researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

The analysis was framed through Sociocultural Theory, which posits that language learning is mediated by social interaction, tools, and contextual factors (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 85). This framework was relevant in interpreting how learners' pronunciation difficulties were shaped by classroom practices, peer feedback, and exposure to target language models.

This systematic procedure aligns with best practices in qualitative SLA research and ensures the transparency, validity, and ethical rigor of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 99; Yin, 2018, p. 47).

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

EFL Students' Perceptions of English Pronunciation Difficulties

To obtain the data dealing with EFL students' perceptions of English pronunciation difficulties, a number of questions of semi-structured interview were prepared as follow:

1. Which English vowel or consonant sounds are the most difficult for you to pronounce? Why? (Segmental focus: vowels/consonants)
2. What is your experience in distinguishing between short and long vowel sounds in English? (Segmental focus: vowel length contrast)
3. Do you find it difficult to place word stress correctly when speaking English? (Suprasegmental focus: word stress)
4. How do you feel when trying to follow sentence intonation during English conversations? (Suprasegmental focus: intonation)
5. In your opinion, how much does your pronunciation affect your confidence when speaking English? (General perception—integrative)

The 1st response from a male student named **A**:

The /θ/ sound like in “think” is difficult because it doesn’t exist in Indonesian. I often replace it with /t/.

At first, I was confused between ‘ship’ and ‘sheep’. But now it's a bit easier after listening practice.

I struggle to place word stress, especially on long words like “education”.

Intonation is quite confusing; I'm afraid of sounding unnatural when imitating it.

If my pronunciation is bad, I feel embarrassed and less confident speaking.

Student A, a first-year male student, finds certain English sounds challenging, particularly the /θ/ sound, which he tends to replace with /t/ due to its absence in Indonesian. He initially struggled with distinguishing short and long vowels, like in ‘ship’ and ‘sheep’, but improved with listening practice. He also faces difficulty applying correct word stress, especially in longer words, and finds intonation confusing, fearing he may sound unnatural. Poor pronunciation negatively impacts his confidence, making him feel embarrassed when speaking in English.

The 2nd response from a female student named **B**:

I find it hard to pronounce /v/ and /f/ because in my local language the sounds are almost the same.

I once mispronounced ‘beach’ as ‘bitch’ because I didn’t know the vowel length was different. I often forget which syllable to stress, so sometimes I sound like I'm just reading.

Intonation helps express emotion, but it's hard when I have to respond quickly.

Pronunciation really affects my confidence during presentations or discussions.

Student B, a first-year female student, struggles with pronouncing /v/ and /f/ due to similarities in her local language. She once mispronounced “beach” as “bitch,” highlighting her difficulty with vowel length. She often forgets correct syllable stress, making her speech sound unnatural. While she recognizes that intonation helps convey emotion, she finds it challenging in fast-paced conversations. Overall, pronunciation significantly impacts her confidence, especially during presentations and discussions.

The 3rd response from a male student named C:

The English /r/ sound sounds strange to me; it's different from the Indonesian /r/.

I still struggle to distinguish long and short vowels when spoken quickly.

I can't yet automatically place the correct word stress in sentences.

Intonation, like rising and falling pitch, is hard to imitate because I'm not used to it in my native language.

If my pronunciation is good, I feel more ready to talk with friends or lecturers.

Student C, a first-year male student, finds the English /r/ sound unfamiliar compared to the Indonesian /r/. He struggles to distinguish long and short vowels, especially in fast speech, and cannot yet place correct word stress automatically. Intonation is also challenging for him, as his native language doesn't emphasize pitch variation. Despite these difficulties, he feels more confident and prepared to communicate with peers or lecturers when his pronunciation improves.

The 4th response from a female student named D:

The /f/ and /tʃ/ sounds are hard to distinguish when I speak fast, like in “sheep” and “cheap”.

I learned the difference between long and short vowels from songs, but I still get it wrong sometimes.

I was once corrected for stressing the wrong syllable. It made me feel embarrassed.

I like listening to native intonation, but it's hard to imitate naturally.

Pronunciation affects my confidence. If I get it wrong, I become nervous.

Student D, a second-year female student, finds it difficult to distinguish between /f/ and /tʃ/ sounds when speaking quickly. She learned about vowel length differences through songs but still makes occasional mistakes. Misplacing word stress has led to embarrassment, affecting her confidence. Although she enjoys listening to native speakers' intonation, she struggles to imitate it naturally. Pronunciation plays a significant role in her self-confidence—errors often make her feel nervous when speaking.

The 5th response from a male student named E:

I struggle with the /ð/ sound because the tongue position feels unnatural to me.
 I can hear the difference, but pronouncing short and long vowels is still hard.
 Sometimes I stress words like in Indonesian, even though it should be different.
 Intonation makes me sound more expressive, but I'm afraid of getting the pitch wrong.
 If my pronunciation is correct, I feel more confident speaking in class or group discussions.

Student E, a second-year male student, finds the /ð/ sound challenging due to its unfamiliar tongue placement. While he can hear the difference between short and long vowels, producing them remains difficult. He sometimes applies Indonesian word stress patterns in English, which affects his pronunciation. Although he recognizes that intonation adds expressiveness, he's hesitant for fear of using the wrong pitch. He believes accurate pronunciation significantly boosts his confidence, especially during class or group discussions. The 6th response from a female student named F:

I have trouble pronouncing /z/ because I often confuse it with /s/, especially at the end of words. I once misunderstood a word's meaning because I didn't distinguish between short and long vowels.

I'm still learning how to stress words correctly, especially during spontaneous speaking. Following intonation feels fun, but sometimes it makes me lose focus. If my pronunciation flows smoothly, I feel more confident and less afraid of making mistakes.

Student F, a second-year female student, struggles with distinguishing /z/ and /s/ sounds, particularly in word-final positions. She once misunderstood a word due to confusion between short and long vowels. Word stress remains a challenge, especially during spontaneous speech. While she enjoys mimicking intonation, it can occasionally distract her. She feels that fluent pronunciation enhances her confidence and reduces her fear of making mistakes in communication.

Discussion

EFL Students' Perceptions of English Pronunciation Difficulties

Student A difficulties with the /θ/ sound and vowel length distinction reflect common segmental challenges among Indonesian EFL learners, often rooted in phonological transfer from their L1, which lacks dental fricatives like /θ/ and /ð/ (Dyani, Romadhoni & Rohmana, 2023). His struggles with word stress and intonation underscore suprasegmental features that are frequently neglected in instruction, even though they are essential for natural and intelligible English (Munro & Derwing, 2020). The beneficial effect of listening and phonetic training on vowel differentiation is consistent with findings that targeted pronunciation instruction enhances both perception and production (Huang, Lee & Ballinger, 2023). Moreover, Student A reduced confidence due to pronunciation issues aligns with integrative

models linking pronunciation competence, self-efficacy, and willingness to communicate (Saka & Merc, 2021). Together, these insights suggest that comprehensive pronunciation instruction—addressing both segmental and suprasegmental facets—is crucial for bolstering learners' communicative competence and confidence.

Student B pronunciation challenges reflect the influence of her first language's phonemic inventory, where /v/ and /f/ are not distinctly differentiated, a common source of segmental errors in EFL learners (Alharbi, 2020). Her confusion between “beach” and “bitch” underscores difficulties with vowel length, which is crucial for lexical distinction in English (Chen & Lee, 2021). Forgetting syllable stress aligns with research showing that suprasegmental features like stress patterns are often underdeveloped, leading to reduced naturalness and comprehensibility (Nguyen & Boers, 2019). Student B's recognition of intonation's role in emotion but difficulty applying it in rapid speech highlights cognitive load issues in real-time communication (Kang, 2022). The strong link between pronunciation and confidence, especially in public speaking, supports integrative motivation theories emphasizing the psychological impact of oral proficiency (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). These findings suggest targeted phonetic and suprasegmental training could enhance both her linguistic accuracy and self-confidence.

Student C difficulties with the English /r/ sound and vowel length distinctions illustrate common segmental challenges due to L1 interference, as Indonesian's phonemic inventory lacks the English alveolar approximant /r/ and vowel length contrast (Sari & Widodo, 2021). His struggle with automatic word stress placement and intonation aligns with research showing that suprasegmental features are often neglected in EFL instruction, yet are critical for intelligibility and naturalness (Lee & Huang, 2020). The limited pitch variation in Indonesian contributes to his challenges in mastering English intonation patterns, which play a vital role in conveying meaning and speaker intent (Yilmaz, 2019). Importantly, Student C increased confidence with improved pronunciation supports the integrative motivation framework, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between linguistic competence and affective factors in language learning (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2020). These findings suggest that focused phonetic training integrating segmental and suprasegmental elements can enhance learners' communicative readiness and self-assurance.

Student D difficulty distinguishing /f/ and /tʃ/ aligns with segmental challenges common among EFL learners, especially in fast speech where phonemic contrasts become less salient (Alharbi, 2020). Her partial success with vowel length awareness through musical input supports research highlighting the effectiveness of multimodal learning but also underscores persistent difficulties without explicit instruction (Kim & Han, 2021). Misplaced word stress

and its emotional impact reflect the affective filter hypothesis, where anxiety and embarrassment can hinder language acquisition (Krashen, 2019). Her struggle to imitate native intonation mirrors findings that suprasegmental features require focused practice, as they are critical for naturalness and listener comprehension (Wang & Chen, 2022). Overall, her case reinforces the importance of integrating segmental and suprasegmental training with affective support to improve pronunciation and learner confidence.

Student E difficulties with the /ð/ sound highlight the impact of articulatory phonetics and cross-linguistic interference in L2 pronunciation, as unfamiliar tongue placement can hinder accurate production (Chen & Lee, 2021). His ability to perceive vowel length contrasts but struggle to produce them aligns with the speech perception-production gap often reported in EFL learners (Garcia & Smith, 2020). Applying native language word stress patterns reflects the transfer phenomenon, which can negatively affect intelligibility and fluency (Nguyen, 2022). Intonation's role in enhancing expressiveness is well-documented, yet anxiety about pitch accuracy may limit its use, supporting affective filter theories (Jones & Brown, 2019). His recognition that improved pronunciation enhances confidence underscores the integrative role of phonological competence in communicative success (Li & Zhao, 2023).

Student F difficulty distinguishing between /z/ and /s/, especially in word-final positions, illustrates common challenges in L2 phonemic discrimination linked to phonological interference from the first language (L1) (Kim & Park, 2021). Her confusion between short and long vowels underscores the complexity of vowel length contrasts for learners, which impacts lexical comprehension (Wang & Chen, 2020). Challenges with word stress in spontaneous speech reflect the cognitive load involved in real-time processing and production (Lopez, 2022). While intonation imitation supports prosodic development, its potential to distract aligns with the trade-off between accuracy and fluency in second language acquisition (Gonzalez & Martinez, 2019). Her belief that improved pronunciation boosts confidence aligns with integrative motivation theories, emphasizing phonological competence as key to communicative self-efficacy (Singh & Lee, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored Indonesian EFL learners' perceptions of their English pronunciation difficulties, reaffirming that pronunciation remains a critical yet often underemphasized aspect of EFL competence. The findings confirm that segmental features—particularly English sounds absent or different from learners' native language—such as /θ/, /ð/, /v/, and vowel length contrasts, pose significant challenges. Additionally, suprasegmental features like word stress and intonation were consistently reported as difficult to master, often

leading to decreased intelligibility and communicative confidence. These pronunciation challenges negatively impact learners' willingness to speak and their overall self-confidence, which underscores the integral role of pronunciation in effective communication. Restating the thesis, learners' perceptions reveal the complex interplay of linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors that influence pronunciation acquisition. Importantly, learners' self-reported difficulties and affective responses emphasize the need for focused, explicit pronunciation instruction within EFL curricula, particularly in contexts like Indonesia where exposure to native-like input is limited. Addressing these learner-identified issues could improve not only phonological accuracy but also learners' motivation and communicative engagement. The implications of these findings suggest that EFL educators should integrate targeted pronunciation teaching that balances segmental and suprasegmental features and incorporates learners' perspectives to tailor instruction more responsively. Moreover, creating more opportunities for meaningful interaction and providing corrective feedback can help prevent fossilization of inaccurate forms. Future research could expand on this study by exploring longitudinal impacts of learner-centered pronunciation interventions and investigating how technological tools, such as speech recognition software, might support pronunciation development. Additionally, comparative studies across different L1 backgrounds could further illuminate cross-linguistic influences and inform differentiated teaching approaches.

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