



SEGMENTAL PHONEME TEACHING FOR LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDONESIA: A NEED ANALYSIS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the instructional needs and challenges in teaching English segmental phonemes to lower primary school students in Indonesia. Although pronunciation is a foundational aspect of oral communication, it is often overlooked in early English instruction. Indonesian learners struggle with phonemes absent in their L1, such as /θ/, /ʒ/, and /æ/, leading to persistent mispronunciations. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were gathered through interviews with five elementary English teachers from Central Java and Jakarta. Thematic coding with ATLAS.ti revealed 11 key categories related to instructional methods, media use, assessment, and teacher expectations. Findings show that teachers employ simple, intuitive strategies—such as drilling, songs, flashcards, and kinesthetic activities—that align with brain-based learning principles. However, instruction is constrained by limited classroom time, lack of pronunciation-focused training, and inadequate multimedia support. Assessment remains informal and unsystematic, primarily based on observation during classroom activities. Teachers emphasized the need for a structured, engaging, and sustainable pronunciation teaching model, integrated curriculum support, and access to multisensory teaching media. The study highlights the importance of early phoneme instruction to prevent fossilization of errors and to support learners' long-term communicative competence.

Keywords: Segmental Phonemes, Pronunciation, EFL Primary Learners, Phonology, Instructional Needs

INTRODUCTION

Correct pronunciation plays a vital role in achieving effective English proficiency, particularly in spoken communication (Zega, 2025). In the Indonesian context, English language instruction is commonly introduced at the lower primary school level—typically from grade 1 or 2—during a formative period of students' cognitive and linguistic development (Djiwandono & Ginting, 2025). However, despite early exposure, the teaching of segmental phonemes, which includes the accurate articulation of English consonants and vowels, often receives minimal emphasis (Yulianti et al., 2025). As a result, many students struggle with pronouncing English words correctly even after years of instruction.

This issue is closely tied to the phonological differences between the Indonesian language (L1) and English (L2). Indonesian has a relatively simple phonetic system, and many English sounds—such as /θ/ in *think*, /ð/ in *this*, /æ/ in *cat*, and /ʒ/ in *measure*—are absent in the students' native sound inventory. Consequently, learners tend to substitute unfamiliar English sounds with their closest L1 equivalents, leading to persistent mispronunciations. These pronunciation patterns, if not addressed early, may become fossilized and difficult to correct at higher levels of education.

Moreover, pronunciation teaching at the lower primary level in Indonesia is often overshadowed by other language components such as vocabulary acquisition and sentence structure (Salsabila et al., 2025). Instructional time devoted specifically to segmental phonemes is limited, and teachers often lack sufficient resources, structured training, and phonics-based methodologies appropriate for young learners (Dugan, 2025). In many cases, teaching is restricted to a few basic sounds and does not involve systematic exposure or reinforcement of more complex segmental features (Ihsani et al., 2025).

Given these conditions, it becomes essential to conduct a needs analysis to understand the specific challenges and instructional gaps in teaching English segmental phonemes to lower primary school students. This analysis is necessary to explore the current practices in classrooms, assess both teacher and learner needs, and identify obstacles such as limited instructional materials, time constraints, and insufficient teacher preparation in pronunciation pedagogy. Furthermore, students' own awareness of the importance of pronunciation—and their motivation to improve it—must be taken into account.

By conducting this needs analysis, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the requirements for effective segmental phoneme instruction at the lower primary level in Indonesia. It seeks to generate data-driven insights that can inform the development of engaging, age-appropriate, and multisensory teaching materials. Additionally, the findings are expected to contribute practical recommendations for teachers and curriculum developers to strengthen pronunciation teaching approaches that align with the developmental characteristics of young EFL learners.

Ultimately, the study emphasizes the urgency of addressing pronunciation issues early in the language learning process to support students' long-term speaking proficiency. By enhancing segmental phoneme teaching practices, this research aims to contribute to the broader goal of improving English language education quality in Indonesian primary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Segmental phonemes, which includes the accurate articulation of vowels and consonants, plays a crucial role in effective communication in English (Lok Raj Sharma, 2021); (Umar & Aspany, 2024). In the context of primary education in Indonesia, segmental pronunciation often receives less attention in language teaching compared to other aspects, such as vocabulary and grammar (Azizah & Musthafa, 2024). This situation poses significant challenges for young learners, who, despite early exposure to English, often struggle with correct pronunciation due to the phonological differences between Indonesian and English (Ni Luh Desy Suari Dewi et al., 2024); (Permata et al., 2025); (Aluwa & Junaedi, 2025). Consequently, understanding the existing gaps in segmental phoneme teaching is vital for enhancing English language instruction at the primary school level in Indonesia.

Phonology and Segmental Phoneme

Phonology, the study of sound systems in language, provides a fundamental basis for understanding the pronunciation challenges encountered by lower primary school students in Indonesia when learning English (Salsabila et al., 2025). At this early developmental stage, students are highly susceptible to phonological influences from their first language (Amengual, 2024); (Septa Aryanika, 2024); (Werker, 2024). The significant differences between the Indonesian and English phonological systems often



lead to persistent segmental errors, especially in the articulation of vowels and consonants that are absent in Indonesian (Fadillah, 2020). For example, sounds such as /θ/ in *think* and /ʒ/ in *measure* are not part of the Indonesian sound inventory, resulting in common mispronunciations. These errors are often explained through the concept of linguistic interference, which refers to the transfer of phonological patterns from the learners' native language to the target language (Alisoy, 2024). In the case of young Indonesian EFL learners, such interference can significantly hinder accurate pronunciation if not addressed through targeted instruction. Therefore, a clear understanding of phonology and its impact on segmental phoneme acquisition is crucial for designing effective pronunciation teaching strategies at the lower primary level.

Second Language Acquisition Theories and Pronunciation

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories offer valuable insights into how pronunciation is acquired (Crowther & Loewen, 2025). Among the foundational perspectives, Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis (1982) underscores the pivotal role of *comprehensible input*, emphasizing that learners acquire language most effectively when they are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence (HARASHCHUK, 2024). In the context of pronunciation, this means that consistent exposure to natural, intelligible, and accurate speech models in meaningful contexts is essential. For young learners in particular, such input supports the establishment of accurate phonological patterns at an early stage, contributing significantly to long-term pronunciation proficiency. Early exposure also helps prevent fossilization of incorrect sounds that are often influenced by the learners' first language (L1) phonological system (Qosimova, 2025); (Al-khresheh, 2024).

In addition, The Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 2015) provides a valuable framework for analyzing learner errors in pronunciation (Barone, 2024). According to this theory, second language learners develop an evolving linguistic system, known as *interlanguage*, which is shaped by both the influence of their native language and the input they receive in the target language. For Indonesian learners of English, this interlanguage often reflects phonological interference, such as the substitution of non-existent sounds in Bahasa Indonesia with approximate ones—for example, replacing /θ/ with /t/ or /s/. Understanding interlanguage as a natural, developmental stage rather than a set of mistakes allows educators to approach pronunciation instruction with a more supportive and corrective lens (Pawlak, 2025). Moreover, SLA theories collectively stress that pronunciation should not be treated in isolation, but rather as an integrated component of communicative competence, influenced by input quality, cognitive processing, and socio-affective factors (Foncubierta & Cores-Bilbao, 2024).

Phonetic Teaching Approaches

Effective teaching methods are central to improving segmental phoneme. Studies have shown that explicit phonetic instruction, particularly the use of phonetic drills, helps students internalize correct pronunciation patterns (Awodeha & Chika, 2025). For primary school students, this approach can be adapted by incorporating engaging and age-appropriate activities, such as games and songs, to reinforce accurate articulation. In addition, integrating auditory and visual aids, such as listening exercises and mouth-positioning videos, provides multisensory input that aids students in producing sounds more accurately. Research indicates that such multimodal approaches are particularly

effective in enhancing the pronunciation skills of young learners (Panyathikul & Poopatwiboon, 2024).

The Role of Motivation in Pronunciation Learning

Motivation is a key factor in language learning, particularly in the acquisition of pronunciation. Intrinsic motivation—stemming from the learner’s internal desire to master a skill—significantly impacts learning outcomes (Karimah, 2023). In the context of segmental pronunciation, motivating students by highlighting the practical benefits of good pronunciation, such as clearer communication and increased confidence, can encourage greater engagement in pronunciation practice (Karimah et al., 2025). A study by (Saito, 2023) supports the idea that students who are motivated to improve their pronunciation are more likely to adopt effective strategies and engage in consistent practice, ultimately leading to better pronunciation outcomes.

The Need for Pronunciation Instruction in Primary Education

Despite its importance, segmental phoneme is often underemphasized in the current curriculum for primary school students in Indonesia (Yulianti et al., 2025). Studies have highlighted that language instruction at the elementary level tends to prioritize vocabulary and grammar, with less attention paid to the phonological aspects of language learning (Gui & Ismail, 2024). This gap in teaching is concerning, as early pronunciation errors tend to solidify into habits, making it difficult to correct them later. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct a thorough needs analysis to identify the specific challenges faced by teachers and students in the teaching and learning of segmental phoneme. This analysis can guide the development of more targeted and effective teaching strategies that address the unique needs of primary school students in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore and analyze the needs for teaching segmental phoneme to elementary school students in Indonesia. This approach was selected as it provides the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of teachers directly involved in English language instruction. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five English teachers at the elementary school level, comprising three teachers from Central Java and two from Jakarta. The selection of participants was conducted through purposive sampling to ensure that the teachers had relevant experience in teaching segmental pronunciation to elementary school students.

The interviews were guided by an interview protocol developed based on a framework derived from underlying theories. The protocol included 32 questions addressing various aspects of pronunciation teaching. The 32 questions were compiled based on adaptations from several established theories and sources. These items were carefully selected and modified to align with the context and objectives of the study, ensuring both theoretical relevance and practical applicability. The integration of multiple references also aims to enhance the validity and comprehensiveness of the instrument.

The collected data were subsequently analyzed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software that facilitates systematic data coding (Gupta, 2024). The coding process involved identifying key themes related to teaching needs, challenges encountered by teachers, and variations in perceptions among teachers from different regions. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using TurboScribe.ai, an automated

tool for audio-to-text transcription. The transcription process was carried out with meticulous attention to ensure the accuracy of the data used for further analysis.

The coding process resulted in several main categories that reflect the needs and challenges in teaching English pronunciation at the elementary school level. These categories serve as the basis for further analysis, providing a clearer understanding of the issues that must be addressed in segmental phoneme instruction.

FINDING

The data coding process resulted in the identification of 11 main categories, which reflect key aspects of English pronunciation teaching at the elementary school level. The total number of codes identified from the interview data encompasses various elements related to teaching needs and challenges faced by teachers in pronunciation instruction. These categories were systematically grouped into thematic clusters, addressing both technical and pedagogical issues encountered in practice. A total of five teachers participated as respondents in this study, comprising three teachers from Central Java and two from Jakarta. The identified categories provide a comprehensive insight into the issues that need to be addressed in pronunciation teaching for elementary school students, as well as differences in perceptions between teachers from different regions.

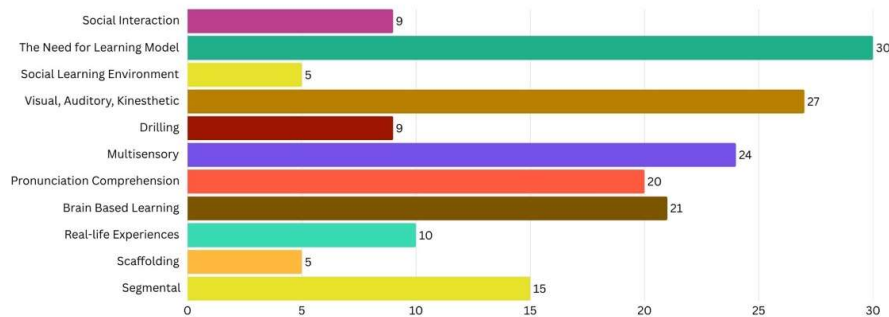


Figure 1 the frequency of coding categories

ing categories. The category “Need for a New Teaching Model” emerged with the highest frequency (30), followed closely by “Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic Media” (27), and “Multisensory” (24). This indicates that the need for a new, more effective teaching model that incorporates diverse teaching strategies was the most prominent theme in the responses. The high frequency of discussion surrounding the “Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic Media” category further highlights the importance of using multimodal resources in pronunciation teaching to cater to the varied learning styles of elementary school students. Additionally, the “Multisensory” category’s frequency underscores the growing recognition among teachers of the benefits of engaging multiple senses to enhance learning retention and student involvement.

These findings suggest that respondents widely acknowledge the limitations of traditional pronunciation teaching methods and advocate for a more integrated approach that aligns with modern educational theories. The frequent mention of multisensory techniques points to a clear preference for teaching strategies that actively engage

students through different sensory modalities, reflecting a shift towards more interactive and student-centered pedagogy in pronunciation instruction.

In this study, the researcher engaged in deep reflection to minimize the potential biases that could influence the interview process and data analysis. The researcher acknowledged that personal views and background could affect the interpretation of the respondents' answers. Therefore, objectivity was maintained by documenting every decision related to data coding, theme grouping, and interview interpretation in a personal reflection log. Additionally, the researcher remained open to feedback from peers and supervisors to ensure that the analysis conducted remained valid and transparent. As part of the measures to ensure the research's credibility, an audit trail was implemented, consisting of detailed notes of every research step, from respondent selection, data collection, to data analysis. The audit trail aimed to ensure transparency in every decision made and facilitate the verification of the research findings.

The examination of the clarity and accuracy of the transcription process was crucial in this research. Interview transcripts were carefully reviewed to ensure that the respondents' words were recorded accurately without altering the original meaning. Respondents were also involved in the member-checking process, wherein they verified the transcripts to ensure alignment with their intended message. If there were parts of the interview that were unclear, clarification was sought by re-listening to the recording or directly asking the respondents. This process ensured that the transcripts used in the data analysis were an accurate representation of the conducted interviews. With these steps, the data obtained were ensured to be authentic, valid, and accountable within the context of this study.

DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the need analysis on segmental phoneme instruction for lower primary school students in Indonesia. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving students and teachers. The findings are categorized into five key themes: (1) learning objectives, (2) preferred learning activities, (3) media and modalities, (4) assessment techniques, and (5) teacher expectations and instructional challenges.

Learning Objectives of Segmental Phonemes Instructions

The findings of this study reveal that all participating teachers unanimously perceive pronunciation instruction, particularly the teaching of segmental phonemes, as a foundational component in English language acquisition for young learners. Teachers emphasized that accurate pronunciation enables students to develop intelligible oral skills, which are essential for both comprehension and production in real-life communication contexts. This aligns with existing literature highlighting the critical role of phonological awareness in early second language learning (Gilakjani, 2011; Yavas, 2011).

Three primary learning objectives emerged from the data: (1) the ability to articulate English phonemes accurately; (2) the capacity to differentiate minimal pairs, especially those absent in the learners' first language (e.g., /θ/ vs /t/, /f/ vs /v/); and (3) the development of decoding skills, specifically the mapping of sounds to their written representations.

Teachers expressed concern that students often mispronounce familiar words due to the discrepancy between English spelling and pronunciation conventions. This was particularly evident in words like *read*, *write*, and *though*, where students defaulted to L1-influenced pronunciation patterns. As Teacher 3 commented, “*Misalnya, kata ‘knife’, mereka baca ‘knip’. Atau kata ‘phone’, dibaca ‘pehone’. Ya, itu masih sering terjadi* (They tend to pronounce ‘knife’ as ‘knip’, or ‘phone’ as ‘pehone’)” because they apply Indonesian phonetic rules. Highlighting the tendency of learners to apply Indonesian phonetic conventions, which are largely phonemic and regular in nature.

This phenomenon reflects a broader cognitive strategy where young learners intuitively apply familiar L1 decoding systems to unfamiliar L2 input. In Indonesian, spelling and pronunciation correspond in a near one-to-one fashion, making English’s deep orthography a source of confusion for early readers and speakers. As a result, students often attempt to pronounce every letter in a word, unaware of silent letters or digraphs representing a single sound (e.g., *ph* as /f/, *gh* as silent or /f/, *kn* as /n/). Without explicit instruction or modeling, learners internalize incorrect pronunciation patterns that may become fossilized over time.

The mispronunciation of these high-frequency but phonetically irregular words indicates a critical gap in early phonics and decoding instruction. Rather than learning to identify and reproduce English phonemes, students are memorizing entire word forms inaccurately or producing sounds based on what they see, not what they hear. This suggests a pressing need for phoneme-level instruction that bridges the gap between auditory discrimination and orthographic awareness.

Teachers also reported that these pronunciation errors persisted even after repeated corrections, particularly when not reinforced consistently through practice and exposure. The lack of accessible pronunciation-focused materials, as well as time constraints in English instruction, further exacerbates the problem. Therefore, pronunciation teaching should not only include articulation practice but also explicitly address how English sounds map onto written forms, especially for irregular but commonly used words in children’s vocabulary.

Meanwhile Teacher 1 stated, “*Pelafalan itu kan dasar, ya. Kalau anak nggak bisa mengucapkan dengan tepat, nanti mereka juga bingung sendiri waktu mau ngomong atau dengar orang lain bicara* (Pronunciation is fundamental, right? If students can’t pronounce words correctly, they’ll end up confused when they try to speak or listen to others.)”. This sentiment was echoed across multiple interviews. This comment encapsulates the collective concern regarding the lack of early, structured attention to pronunciation within the current curriculum. Most teachers reported that students often experience confusion and hesitation when attempting to produce English words, particularly when uncertain about their pronunciation accuracy.

Teacher 5 shared similar concerns: “*Ada beberapa anak yang istilahnya mau membaca T-R-Y, ada yang bacanya TRI – TREE* (Some of students pronounced TRY as TREE)” These responses illustrate the persistent difficulty children face in articulating

English phonemes correctly, particularly when phoneme-grapheme relationships are inconsistent with their first language.

Despite recognizing its importance, teachers consistently noted that the current primary school curriculum does not adequately prioritize pronunciation as an explicit learning goal. Instead, curriculum guidelines tend to focus on vocabulary acquisition and grammatical structures, leaving pronunciation to be addressed incidentally or informally. As a result, pronunciation instruction is often marginalized or inconsistently implemented, depending on individual teacher initiative.

Teacher 1 expressed frustration, stating “*Kadang saya juga mikir ya... kurikulumnya itu mesti disesuaikan juga. Jangan terlalu berat di grammar dulu* (Sometimes I think about it too... the curriculum really needs to be adjusted. It shouldn't focus too heavily on grammar at the beginning)”. These observations reveal a systemic gap between curriculum design and the linguistic realities faced by early English learners in Indonesia. While grammar and vocabulary remain important, the absence of phoneme-level instruction creates a weak foundation for accurate pronunciation, fluent reading, and confident speaking. Without explicit curricular support, teachers are left to improvise, which can result in instructional inconsistency and unequal student outcomes.

This further underscores the need to integrate pronunciation, particularly the teaching of segmental phonemes, as a core component of early English education. Embedding structured pronunciation objectives in the curriculum—along with practical training and ready-to-use materials—could empower teachers to address learners' phonological needs more effectively and equitably across school settings.

Preferred Learning Activities

The analysis of teacher interviews revealed that a wide range of instructional activities are employed in teaching segmental phonemes at the primary level. Although these methods vary across classrooms, they generally share characteristics of simplicity, repetition, and high student engagement. Common practices include choral drilling, songs and chants, phoneme-based games, flashcards, and mini role-playing activities. These techniques are not only easily implemented with minimal resources but also align well with the developmental stage of young learners, who benefit from movement, rhythm, and repetitive auditory input.

Teachers reported that drilling—the repeated oral practice of target phonemes through group recitation—remains the most frequently used method to help students internalize articulation patterns. This technique is particularly effective in correcting persistent mispronunciations and in reinforcing sound familiarity. Teacher 3 stated, “*Saya biasanya drilling satu bunyi dulu berulang-ulang. Kalau tidak diulang, anak-anak cepat lupa dan balik ke pelafalan awal* (I usually drill one sound repeatedly. If it's not practiced over and over, the students quickly forget and go back to their original pronunciation)”. Such comments illustrate how teachers perceive repetition as essential for reinforcing correct pronunciation.

In addition, songs and chants, particularly those that integrate gestures and movement, were widely cited as engaging and unthreatening tools for pronunciation practice. Teacher 5 observed, “*Saya putar lagu Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, mereka langsung nyanyi sambil lompat-lompat. Jadi otomatis mereka ngikutin pelafalannya juga (I play the song Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, and they instantly start singing along while jumping around. That way, they naturally pick up the pronunciation as well)*”. Similarly, another teacher 2 stated, “*Anak-anak lebih suka belajar lewat nyanyian. Kalau lewat drilling saja kadang bosan. Tapi kalau lagu, mereka hafal lebih cepat dan lebih percaya diri ngomongnya*” (Children prefer learning through songs. If it’s just drilling, they sometimes get bored. But with songs, they memorize faster and feel more confident when speaking)”. These statements support the role of rhythm and bodily engagement in incidental phonological learning, especially for young learners who thrive in multimodal environments.

Moreover, teachers highlighted the use of phoneme games such as bingo, matching sound to pictures, or tongue twisters as effective strategies for reinforcing minimal pairs and enhancing phonemic awareness. Visual aids like flashcards were also employed to support grapheme-phoneme correspondence, particularly in distinguishing problematic consonants like /v/, /f/, /θ/, and /ð/. “*Saya pakai gambar dan kartu huruf. Anak-anak diminta cocokkan bunyi dengan gambar. Itu membantu sekali untuk pelafalan ‘v’ dan ‘f’ yang masih sering tertukar (I use pictures and letter cards. The children are asked to match the sounds with the pictures. It really helps with the pronunciation of ‘v’ and ‘f’, which they still often confuse*” explained Teacher 5.

Although most teachers did not explicitly reference pedagogical theories, their activities reflect principles of brain-based learning, including multisensory stimulation, emotional engagement, and active physical involvement (Jensen, 2005; Caine & Caine, 1994).

Interestingly, many of these preferred instructional strategies emerged not from formal teacher training, but from intuitive classroom experience and peer sharing. This finding illustrates a grassroots pedagogical creativity among teachers, particularly in contexts with limited access to phonology-specific training or structured pronunciation curricula. As one teacher 1 admitted, “*Saya sih belum pernah ikut pelatihan khusus tentang pronunciation. Tapi saya coba-coba saja, lihat dari YouTube juga (I’ve never attended any formal training on pronunciation. But I just try things out and also learn from YouTube)*”. While these practices are generally effective in eliciting student participation and initial sound production, their lack of explicit progression and theoretical grounding may hinder long-term phonological development.

While the instructional methods currently used by primary school teachers demonstrate high levels of adaptability, engagement, and pedagogical intuition, there is a clear need for systematized guidance. Integrating these activities into a structured, phonologically-informed instructional framework would enable teachers to move beyond improvisation and provide more consistent, targeted, and sustainable support for students’ pronunciation development.

Media and Modalities

The findings indicate that the majority of teachers rely on simple and low-cost teaching media when delivering segmental phoneme instruction in primary classrooms. Due to limited institutional resources, most instructional tools are manually created or repurposed from freely accessible content. Teachers consistently reported using auditory media, such as children's songs, YouTube videos, and self-recorded voice notes, to expose learners to correct pronunciation models. These auditory inputs help familiarize students with phonemes in context, especially when native speaker recordings are available.

In addition to auditory tools, visual media such as flashcards, whiteboard illustrations, and printed diagrams of articulatory organs were also commonly employed. These visual aids supported the identification and differentiation of English phonemes, particularly those unfamiliar to Indonesian learners. Teacher 1 explained, "*Saya kasih gambar, atau gerakan tubuh biar mereka lebih ingat. Kadang juga saya pakai lagu sih (I use pictures or body movements to help them remember better. Sometimes I also use songs)*". This indicates that visual and auditory channels are often integrated simultaneously to enhance learner recall and engagement.

Furthermore, kinesthetic modalities were incorporated through physical movements that mimicked mouth positions or symbolized specific phonemes. Teachers encouraged students to act out sounds using gestures or whole-body movements, especially when introducing minimal pairs or phonemes with subtle distinctions. These kinesthetic strategies appeared to aid learners in encoding sounds through embodied learning, consistent with research on multisensory language instruction (Shams & Seitz, 2008; Pashler et al., 2009). As one teacher described, "*Untuk bunyi /b/ dan /p/, saya ajak mereka tepuk pelan dan keras. Mereka jadi bisa bedain mana yang pakai hembusan (For the /b/ and /p/ sounds, I have them clap softly and loudly. That way, they can tell which one uses a burst of air)*". This practical approach reflects the teachers' intuitive understanding of sensory integration in language learning.

Despite these innovative efforts, several teachers expressed concern over limited access to multimedia tools in their schools. Most classrooms lacked dedicated audio-visual equipment such as projectors, speakers, or interactive whiteboards. Consequently, teachers often resorted to using personal devices, such as their own mobile phones or laptops, to play audio or display visual content. Teacher 1 mentioned, "*Saya pakai laptop sendiri dan speaker kecil dari rumah. Kalau nggak begitu, anak-anak nggak bisa dengar pelafalan dari native speaker (I use my own laptop and a small speaker from home. Otherwise, the children wouldn't be able to hear the pronunciation from a native speaker)*". Such circumstances highlight the digital divide in school infrastructure and the need for equitable access to instructional technology.

The reliance on simple yet multisensory media underscores both the creativity and the constraints faced by teachers in low-resource educational settings. While their strategies reflect core principles of multimodal and brain-based learning, the absence of consistent technological support may limit the scalability and sustainability of such practices. Therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction, it is

essential to provide teachers with affordable, easy-to-use media packages and improve infrastructure that supports auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning modalities.

Assessment Techniques

The study revealed that pronunciation assessment at the primary level is predominantly conducted through informal and observational methods. Rather than relying on structured evaluation instruments, most teachers monitor students' phonological progress organically during classroom activities. Common techniques include listening closely as students repeat modeled pronunciation, observing articulation during songs or role-play, and administering basic oral reading tasks involving short texts. These assessments tend to be formative and continuous, allowing teachers to offer immediate corrective feedback during the learning process.

However, while such informal strategies promote a low-pressure learning environment, they are often inconsistent and subjective, depending on the teacher's attentiveness and available instructional time. Teachers acknowledged that they rarely conduct systematic pronunciation evaluations due to time constraints and competing curricular demands. As teacher 1 explained, "*Saya ulang-ulang selama dua hari... tapi tetap saja ada yang membaca TRY jadi TREE (I repeated it for two days... but some of them still read TRY as TREE)*". This comment reflects both the persistence of common mispronunciations and the limited duration typically allocated for phoneme reinforcement and assessment.

Several respondents also expressed concern over the lack of standardized assessment tools for measuring segmental phoneme accuracy among young learners. Since pronunciation is not explicitly emphasized in the curriculum, few guidelines or rubrics are provided to support teachers in evaluating progress. As a result, feedback is often anecdotal and may focus more on fluency or confidence than on phonetic precision. Some teachers reported relying on their own judgment to determine whether a student had "improved enough," often based on perceived clarity during speaking tasks.

The challenges of assessing pronunciation are further compounded by large class sizes, limited instructional time, and overlapping learning objectives within English lessons. In many cases, pronunciation is evaluated only when errors are overt or disruptive to comprehension, rather than as part of a structured diagnostic or summative process. This tendency limits opportunities to identify subtle articulatory problems or to track longitudinal progress in phoneme acquisition.

In light of these findings, there is a clear need to develop simple, classroom-friendly assessment instruments that allow teachers to monitor segmental phoneme development reliably and efficiently. Incorporating checklists, audio-based tasks, and peer-assessment protocols may enhance the consistency of evaluation without increasing teacher workload. Additionally, professional development on pronunciation assessment techniques could help teachers integrate more systematic phonological evaluation into their instructional practice, even within tight timeframes.

Teacher Expectations and Instructional Challenges

All five participating teachers identified a consistent set of challenges that hinder effective segmental phoneme instruction in lower primary classrooms. One of the most frequently mentioned constraints was limited instructional time, with English classes typically scheduled only twice per week. Teachers emphasized that within these short sessions, a broad range of language components—vocabulary, grammar, listening, and speaking—must be addressed, leaving little room for dedicated and sustained pronunciation instruction.

A second major challenge involves the lack of formal training in phonology or pronunciation pedagogy for elementary-level teachers. Most of the participants reported never receiving specific instruction in phonemic articulation or segmental features during their teacher education programs. Consequently, many rely on intuition, online resources, or trial-and-error approaches in their classrooms. This issue is compounded by variation in teacher competencies, with some educators feeling more confident and creative in delivering pronunciation activities than others.

The teachers also expressed concern regarding the heterogeneous nature of student proficiency, noting wide variation in learners' auditory discrimination, speaking confidence, and phoneme awareness. Additionally, they pointed to the lack of accessible, authentic, and easy-to-use media as a persistent barrier. Without sufficient visual and auditory tools—particularly those tailored to the cognitive and linguistic level of young learners—teachers struggle to engage students meaningfully in phoneme-based activities.

Despite these limitations, the teachers articulated clear and forward-looking expectations for improving pronunciation instruction. These included the availability of a fun, practical, and easy-to-implement instructional model that could be consistently integrated into their teaching routines. As Teacher 2 stated, "*Saya ingin model pembelajaran pronunciation itu bisa dibuat rutin. Bukan hanya satu-dua pertemuan, tapi menjadi bagian dari rutinitas* (I want pronunciation practice to become a regular part of the learning model—not just something done in one or two sessions, but integrated into the daily routine)". This highlights the desire for a structured approach that normalizes pronunciation as a core component of early language learning rather than treating it as an occasional enrichment activity.

Furthermore, teachers advocated for the provision of audio-visual media specifically designed to support segmental phoneme instruction, as well as professional development opportunities focused on basic phonological methods and multisensory teaching strategies. They also recommended a revision of the current English curriculum to ensure greater alignment with the cognitive development stage of lower primary learners, suggesting that pronunciation goals should be both developmentally appropriate and embedded throughout the language learning trajectory.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the urgent need for a systematic and developmentally appropriate approach to teaching English segmental phonemes in Indonesian lower primary schools. Despite the recognized importance of pronunciation for intelligible

communication, the findings reveal that current instructional practices are often fragmented, under-resourced, and not explicitly supported by the curriculum. Students continue to struggle with English phonemes that do not exist in their first language (e.g., /θ/, /ð/, /æ/, /v/), leading to persistent mispronunciations that are difficult to remediate without early intervention.

Teachers, while demonstrating creativity and commitment, primarily rely on informal, multisensory strategies such as songs, games, and body movements. However, these methods are implemented intuitively rather than as part of a structured phonological framework. Limited access to audiovisual media, inadequate training in pronunciation pedagogy, and restricted instructional time further constrain the effectiveness of segmental phoneme teaching. Assessment practices are likewise informal and inconsistent, with few standardized tools available to monitor learners' phonological progress.

The study underscores a critical gap between the curricular emphasis and the phonological needs of young EFL learners. Teachers consistently expressed the need for a sustainable, fun, and easy-to-integrate pronunciation teaching model—one that aligns with the cognitive characteristics of early learners and is supported by accessible audiovisual materials and professional development.

To address these gaps, this study recommends: (1) the inclusion of segmental phoneme objectives in the early English curriculum; (2) the development of structured, multisensory instructional models; (3) the provision of teacher training in basic phonology; and (4) improved access to engaging, child-friendly media. By responding to these needs, educational stakeholders can strengthen the foundation of pronunciation learning in Indonesian primary schools, leading to more confident, accurate, and effective English communication from an early age.

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