ANALYSIS OF PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN GRADE II SDS HKBP PARDAMEAN MEDAN

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Abstrak: Masalah pelafalan merupakan kendala utama dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris bagi siswa sekolah dasar, terutama kelas bawah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kemampuan pelafalan siswa kelas dua, menganalisis faktor-faktor penyebab kesalahan, mengidentifikasi strategi pembelajaran guru, dan menawarkan solusi praktis yang dapat diterapkan di kelas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi di Sekolah Dasar HKBP Pardamean. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami berbagai bentuk kesalahan fonologis seperti substitusi fonem, penyederhanaan gugus konsonan, dan kesalahan vokal. Kesalahan-kesalahan ini dipengaruhi oleh paparan audio yang terbatas, kosakata yang lemah, kecemasan berbicara, dan model pembelajaran tradisional. Artikel ini merekomendasikan penggunaan media audio, strategi pelafalan berbasis aktivitas, dan penguatan kosakata yang terintegrasi dengan latihan fonologis.

Kata Kunci: Pelafalan, Masalah Pelafalan, Sekolah Dasar, Keterampilan Berbicara.

Abstract: Pronunciation problems are one of the main obstacles in learning English for elementary school students, especially lower grades. This study aims to describe the pronunciation abilities of second-grade students, analyze the factors causing errors, identify teacher learning strategies, and offer practical solutions that can be implemented in the classroom. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with interview, observation, and documentation techniques at HKBP Pardamean Elementary School. The results showed that students experienced various forms of phonological errors such as phoneme substitutions, consonant cluster simplification, and vowel errors. These errors were influenced by limited audio exposure, weak vocabulary, speaking anxiety, and traditional learning models. This article recommends the use of audio media, activity-based pronunciation strategies, and vocabulary reinforcement integrated with phonological exercises.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Pronunciation Problems, Elementary School, Speaking Skills.

INTRODUCTION

Research on pronunciation among young learners has actually been widely conducted; however, studies that specifically examine phonological errors among lower-grade elementary school students with limited access to audio media remain relatively scarce. In fact, at the age of 7–8, children are in a stage of rapid language development, giving them strong phonetic imitation abilities. The potential to maximize this ability is often not achieved because the learning process in elementary schools does not yet fully provide sufficient phonological input. Many schools in Indonesia also continue to face limited facilities, resulting in minimal audio exposure that could serve as accurate sound models (Eniati & Numertayasa, 2024).

Field observations indicate that pronunciation skills often receive less emphasis in English instruction. Teachers tend to focus more on vocabulary or translation, while pronunciation practice is provided only minimally. This condition aligns with findings by Dalilah and Sya (2022), who reveal that elementary school students encounter various challenges in speaking skills, including the inability to produce English sounds accurately. Due to the lack of adequate sound models, students rely entirely on the teacher's voice, which is not always consistent with standard pronunciation. This leads to recurring phonological errors, such as three pronounced as tri, apple as epel, and present as presen. These errors are not merely caused by the students' lack of knowledge but also reflect insufficient exposure to accurate pronunciation models during learning (Meylina & Jufri, 2023).

Beyond input-related issues, psychological factors also significantly influence students' pronunciation ability. Many students appear enthusiastic when learning English; however, fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, and speaking anxiety often hinder them from attempting to pronounce words independently. Fitriani et al. (2022) explain that speaking anxiety poses a substantial barrier for young learners, especially when the classroom environment does not support trial and error. This situation is further exacerbated by the absence of learning media such as audio recordings or phonetic applications that could help students hear correct pronunciation models.

Another influencing factor is students' limited vocabulary mastery. When students do not recognize words or fail to understand simple instructions such as Where is your pencil?, their ability to connect meaning and sound becomes impaired. In fact, strong vocabulary representation is essential for developing accurate pronunciation. Research by Amelia and

Fatyra (2024) also highlights that audio exposure, including the use of English songs, can enhance students' phonological perception and vocabulary understanding in EFL contexts.

Based on these issues, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the pronunciation abilities of second-grade elementary school students and to identify the factors contributing to the pronunciation errors that emerge. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for developing more effective and adaptive pronunciation teaching strategies that align with children's language development. By understanding the patterns of errors and the challenges involved, teachers can design instructional approaches that provide better sound input, reduce student anxiety, and enrich their language-learning experiences.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at in-depth descriptions of *pronunciation problems* experienced by second-grade students at HKBP Pardamean Elementary School. This approach was chosen because pronunciation problems are not only related to phonological errors but also involve the social, emotional, and pedagogical contexts of the learning process. The research subjects consisted of one English teacher and 15 second-grade students, with the researcher acting as a passive observer to ensure the learning process proceeded naturally without intervention.

Data collection was conducted through interviews with teachers, observations during the learning process, and documentation in the form of audio recordings and photographs of learning activities. Data analysis followed the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing according to the Miles and Huberman model. Data validity was checked using triangulation techniques, namely the process of checking data from various sources or methods to determine the consistency of findings. In this study, triangulation was carried out by comparing interview results, observation notes, and documentary evidence obtained in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the *pronunciation problems* experienced by second-grade students at HKBP Pardamean Elementary School are a combination of limited phonological input, a lack of varied learning media, and affective dynamics that affect student

self-confidence. The classroom conditions studied show that learning facilities are still rudimentary. Although there are visual media such as vocabulary cards and alphabet posters, there are no audio media to assist in accurate sound modeling. This situation impacts the way students imitate sounds because they rely solely on the teacher's voice. In the context of foreign language acquisition at an early age, this limited input source causes students to experience difficulty in producing sounds that are not found in their first language.

Observational findings indicate a consistent pattern of pronunciation errors. The interdental sound /θ/ in the word three, which is produced by placing the tip of the tongue between the upper and lower teeth, is almost always pronounced by students as /t/ or /tri/. This error is normal because Indonesian does not have interdental sounds, so students replace the sound with a more familiar phoneme. Similar errors are also seen in the pronunciation of the vowel /æ/, as in the word apple, which is pronounced as epel, and the simplification of the consonant cluster in the words black or school, which is changed to belak or sukul. These patterns not only indicate students' limited phonological abilities but also a lack of individual pronunciation practice. The simultaneous drilling practice makes it difficult for teachers to detect and correct each student's errors specifically.

Besides technical factors, psychological aspects play a significant role in *pronunciation issues* . Interviews revealed that many students feel embarrassed or afraid of making mistakes when asked to pronounce words individually. Children tend to be more comfortable pronouncing words together rather than speaking in front of the class. This phenomenon illustrates the emergence of *speaking anxiety* in early learners. Classrooms that don't provide a safe space for experimentation make students hesitant to imitate new sounds. However, developing *pronunciation skills* requires courage and comfort in speaking. Without a supportive environment, sound acquisition is slow, even when the language material is relatively simple.

From a pedagogical perspective, the teaching strategies used by teachers are still limited to the drilling method. Students follow a "teacher says, students imitate" pattern, but this process is carried out in the form of chorus repetition, which is repeated simultaneously by all students. This technique helps introduce sounds quickly, but it does not allow teachers to identify and correct individual pronunciation errors. While this method helps introduce new sounds, it is ineffective in correcting individual errors. Teachers also focus more on introducing

new vocabulary than strengthening the connection between sound and meaning. As a result, some students know the object in question but still mispronounce the word because they don't understand the phonological pattern. Another apparent weakness is the lack of differentiation in the exercises. All students are given the same exercises without adjusting the difficulty level based on their abilities.

The results of this study confirm that teaching *pronunciation* to early childhood students requires a more varied and child-centric approach. Using audio media such as *native speaker recordings* , educational videos, or simple apps can be a solution to provide a wider variety of sound models. Game-based activities such as *chanting, minimal pairs games,* or *listen and guess* are also effective in increasing students' phonological sensitivity without causing them to feel pressured. Furthermore, teachers need to provide *positive corrective feedback* that makes students more comfortable making mistakes. This way, they can boldly try new sounds without fear.

Overall, the results and discussion indicate that *pronunciation problems* in second-grade students are the result of an interaction between linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological factors. Resolving this issue requires more varied learning strategies, richer input media, and a learning environment that supports student confidence. This approach not only improves pronunciation *but* also helps students develop more comprehensive English language skills from an early age.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that *pronunciation* in second-grade students at HKBP Pardamean Elementary School is primarily caused by limited sound input, the use of a uniform *drilling method* , and low student confidence in practicing individually. Pronunciation errors such as sound substitutions, consonant simplifications, and vowel shifts indicate that students have not yet acquired a consistent and varied pronunciation model.

Affective factors such as embarrassment and fear of making mistakes also play a significant role, making students reluctant to try pronouncing words independently. Consequently, their *pronunciation skills* develop slowly, even though they have a good grasp of vocabulary. Therefore, improving *pronunciation skills* requires the use of audio media, more enjoyable activities, and learning strategies that provide a safe space for students to experiment and learn from mistakes.

Overall, students' *pronunciation skills* will develop better if the learning process provides rich sound input, varied practice, and a classroom environment that encourages speaking confidence. This approach provides an important foundation for students to build their English language skills at the next level

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