

# The Teaching of English Pronunciation: Perceptions of Indonesian School Teachers and University Students

Moedjito<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of English Language Education, STKIP Hamzanwadi Selong, Lombok Timur, Indonesia

Correspondence: Moedjito, Department of English Language Education, STKIP Hamzanwadi Selong, Lombok Timur, Indonesia. Tel: 62-0877-6304-2448. E-mail: mas.moedjito@gmail.com

Received: March 20, 2016 Accepted: April 30, 2016 Online Published: May 3, 2016

doi: 10.5539/elt.v9n6p30

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n6p30>

## Abstract

This study aimed to explore teachers' and students' perception of pronunciation teaching in Indonesian EFL classrooms, particularly on (1) the difficulty of English pronunciation, (2) the reasons for the difficulty, (3) the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms, (4) the goal of pronunciation teaching, (5) priorities in pronunciation teaching, and (6) techniques in pronunciation teaching. To achieve the purpose, a written questionnaire was distributed to 110 Indonesian school teachers and 230 Indonesian university students. The collected data were submitted to independent two-sample t test to determine the significant mean differences between the teacher and student participants. The results of the study discovered that almost all of the respondents perceived English pronunciation as one of the most difficult areas in English learning. The participants also agreed that two most significant reasons for the difficulty were related to students' first language (L1). Regarding these results, the participants strongly agreed on the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms with intelligibility as the goal of pronunciation teaching. Moreover, segmental features such as consonants and vowels as well as sentence stress became the priorities in pronunciation teaching for EFL learners. Finally, teacher explanation in students' L1, followed by demonstration of how to produce the English phonemes, is significantly rated as the better way to teach English pronunciation in EFL classrooms. The finding of the study implies that intelligibility as the goal of pronunciation teaching can be really attained with the consideration of priorities and techniques in pronunciation teaching.

**Keywords:** intelligibility, pronunciation instruction, successful oral communication

## 1. Introduction

We have seen an advance of globalization in many aspects of our daily lives in the last few decades. This has been accompanied by the upgrade of the status and roles of English as a means of communication. Today English, with around 400 million native speakers, about 400 million English as a second language (ESL) speakers, and 600 million English as a foreign language (EFL) speakers, has really become a global language (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 2006). A crucial impact of this upgrade of the status and roles of English is that there is a significant increase in oral communication not only between native speakers of English (NS) and nonnative speakers of English (NNS), but also among nonnative speakers themselves (Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2001).

A pedagogical implication of this situation for the foreign language (L2) teaching profession is that ESL/EFL researchers and practitioners have come to reappraise the importance of pronunciation for successful oral communication. For example, Tudor (2001) claims that "command of phonology of a language [the ability to understand spoken language and to produce a comprehensible version of the language] can play an important affective role in language use" (p. 53). Similarly, Setter and Jenkins (2005) also contend that pronunciation "plays a vital role in successful communication both productively and receptively" (p. 2).

On the technology perspective of language teaching, we are the witnesses of its changes in terms of approaches, methodologies, materials, and teaching-learning aids. For example, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a predominant paradigm of today's L2 teaching, has rather underrated the importance of pronunciation. CLT puts more focus on the message-oriented transactions in a target language (L2) between learners than their accurate pronunciation of L2 in language classrooms (Brown, 2007; Sri Gustiani, 2012). Accordingly, teachers are more concerned about how to promote successful classroom interaction in L2 through games and tasks than how to

enable them to pronounce L2 accurately. Learners who are involved in the message-oriented transactions tend to pay little attention to the accuracy of their pronunciation, and as a result often make pronunciation mistakes due to their first language (L1) interference. Teachers are often tolerant of these pronunciation mistakes, partly because they are more interested in the result of transactions than the manner of transactions, and partly because they believe in the philosophy of learner-centered approach, which underlies CLT. Considering the importance of pronunciation in oral communication across cultures, this is not a desirable situation since too much tolerance of L2 learners' pronunciation mistakes by sympathetic teachers may lead to the formation of a classroom dialect which may only be understandable for teachers and learners in language classroom and may hamper oral communication across cultures in real-life situations outside classrooms. It is high time, therefore, that pronunciation teaching for EFL learners was to be re-examined, keeping in mind the importance of pronunciation in oral communication across cultures.

In the process of re-examination of pronunciation teaching, instead of working on the technology perspective only, we have to consider another perspective of language teaching, namely an ecological perspective (Tudor, 2001). van Lier (1997) claims that an ecological perspective on language teaching and learning offers an alternative way of looking at the contexts in which teaching-learning activities are situated. The relationship between these ecological and technological perspectives of language classrooms should be placed in a proper way. Even though we have an extremely superior technology, there is no guarantee that the language programs will be successful if we never listen to the participants' voices: teachers and students. We cannot assume that learners are simply learners and that teachers are simply teachers (Tudor, 2001). They are really participants in classrooms and their existence in the classrooms cannot be neglected. This is because what is outlined by policy decision-makers cannot often automatically run well in the real situation. Moreover, by positioning the participants as they are and listening to what they say, we can justify and optimize the technology of language classroom so that there is much more chance to effectuate the primary goal of English learning. In short, it is necessary for us to listen to teachers' and students' voices, what they say about their thought and expectation of English language education as a whole, and specifically the teaching and learning process in English language classrooms so that the whole process of EFL learning is not misleading. The fact that we have never involved the participants in classrooms may be one of the reasons for the failure of EFL teaching-learning in some countries.

For example, in the context of EFL teaching-learning in Indonesia, although learners have spent at least for six years (three years at junior high schools and three years at senior high schools) to learn English, there is no guarantee that the graduates of senior high schools can show their ability of spoken English. Even, it is still difficult for them to introduce themselves in English. This happens because the curricula have set up reading as the main scope of English teaching-learning. This prescribed goal may be different from the participants (i.e., teachers and learners). For this reason, the present study was conducted to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of English teaching-learning in Indonesia, especially related to pronunciation as one of key elements of successful oral communication. The main foci of the current study were a) the difficulty of English pronunciation, (b) the reasons for the difficulty, (c) the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms, (d) the goal of pronunciation teaching, (e) priorities in pronunciation teaching, and (f) techniques in pronunciation teaching.

The findings of numerous studies indicate that pronunciation instruction should be a part of an EFL classroom (Jenkins, 2000; Macdonald, 2002). Furthermore, Fraser (1999) asserts that the question is not whether to teach pronunciation or not but how to teach pronunciation. However, Fraser does not specify whether it refers to English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL), as they have their own language teaching and learning environments respectively. In real circumstances, there is a set of distinctive ESL situations which are different from EFL domain. Therefore, the necessity of pronunciation instruction should be considered in its proper context.

In the light of the EFL situation, the next question is on the most important components of pronunciation instruction. Although there is no distinct priority among important components of pronunciation, both segmental features (e.g., consonants and vowels) and suprasegmental features (e.g., prominence, rhythm, and intonation) should be included in pronunciation instruction (Bowen, Madsen, & Hilferty, 1985; Brown, 2002; Carruthers, 1987; Florez, 1998; Jenkins, 2000; Jones, 2002; Power, 2003; Ufomata, 1996; Wong, 1987). However, there is no agreement on which should be the first and which should be the next.

Similar to the priority of pronunciation instruction, the techniques of teaching and learning pronunciation are varied and usually depend on influencing factors such as the existence and distribution of some sounds in students' L1 (Carruthers, 1987), age, amount and type of prior pronunciation instruction, aptitude, learner attitude and motivation, native language and variables to specific context (Florez, 1998). With regards to those

influencing factors, there are at least nine common techniques used in pronunciation instruction: teacher explanation in students' mother tongue or L1, listening discrimination, minimal pairs, tongue twister, listen and repeat, modelling or teacher demonstration, controlled practice, communicative practice, and drama and role play (Carruthers, 1987; Dalton, 1997; Jones, 2002).

In the context of Indonesia, however, although pronunciation is one of key elements of successful oral communication, pronunciation teaching is almost neglected. While secondary school students really need to learn pronunciation, Indonesian school teachers do not know what to teach and how to teach (Moedjito, 2008). Therefore, investigating teachers' and students' perceptions of pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms becomes important to see the current and future practice of pronunciation instruction. The results of the study are essential to portray the current teaching of pronunciation and are pertinent to Indonesian educational quality, especially in pronunciation teaching. Better understanding toward teachers' and students' perceptions of pronunciation instruction is urgent to improve English teaching and learning in Indonesia.

This study aimed to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of English teaching-learning in Indonesia, particularly on pronunciation teaching. More particularly, the study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How are the Indonesian school teachers' and Indonesian university students' perceptions of pronunciation teaching?
- (2) Are there any significant differences in the perceptions of pronunciation teaching between Indonesian school teachers and Indonesian university students?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

This study involved 110 of 356 Indonesian school teachers and 230 of 423 Indonesian university students. The teacher participants were Indonesian EFL teachers of junior and high secondary schools in Lombok Timur, Indonesia and selected using opportunity random sampling technique. There were no special criteria for the sampling procedure of the teacher participants, except the letter of consent which they had to sign prior to questionnaire distribution and in-depth interview. Meanwhile, the student participants were the students majoring in English Language Education at STKIP Hamzanwadi Pancor (of university level). They were selected using a proportional random sampling technique. This author decided 55% of each year enrollment (2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014). In addition, the student participants had attended the course of *English Pronunciation Practice*, meaning that they had been introduced to segmental and suprasegmental features of English pronunciation and some techniques in pronunciation teaching. They also had to sign the letter of consent before data collection. In short, there were 110 teacher participants and 230 student participants for the questionnaire. Meanwhile, there were six teacher participants (three of junior high school and three of senior high school) and ten student participants who were interviewed as the follow up of the questionnaire. These 16 interviewees were selected using simple random sampling.

### 2.2 Instrument

In order to collect suitable information on perceptions of pronunciation among Indonesian EFL speakers, the data of the study were collected by means of a written questionnaire and in-depth interview. The guide of the in-depth interview was derived from the questionnaire. To assure the questionnaire, an item-total correlations test was performed to examine its validity and reliability. The result showed that the calculated  $r$  values of the 29 investigated items were higher than the table  $r$  value (i.e., .36 for 29 cases at  $\alpha = .05$ ) meaning that all of the items were valid. In terms of the reliability of the instrument, the item-correlation test revealed that the Cronbach's alpha was .83 meaning that the instrument was highly reliable.

The questionnaire was developed based on the proposed research questions and a number of considerations, such as the theories of language and language learning, numerous previous research findings, the results of observations, and the author's self-experience as an EFL teacher. The items of the questionnaires were grouped into two parts. The first part of the questionnaires was about the personal data of the respondents in which the number of the macro questions of the teacher questionnaire was different from that of the student questionnaire. For the student respondents, the questions covered gender, grades, local language ability, and self-assessment of their English proficiency; whereas for the teacher respondents, the questions included gender, educational background, years of teaching experience, local language ability, and teaching-learning activities. All the participants were expected to answer all the questions of the first part of the questionnaire by putting a tick (✓) in the boxes of the selected options.

The second part of the questionnaires dealt with the participants' perceptions of: (1) the difficulty of English pronunciation, (2) the reasons for the difficulty, (3) the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms, (4) the goal of pronunciation teaching, (5) priorities in pronunciation teaching, and (6) techniques in pronunciation teaching. The participants were asked to show their opinions by circling one of the five-point Likert-scale options. All the participants were required to complete the task items 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The item 2 was optional and answered by the participants who had chosen "Difficult" or "Very difficult" for the item 1.

Both questionnaires were designed to be anonymous and unregistered so that the privilege of the teacher and student participants could be secured. To eliminate the language problem, the questionnaires were prepared in the Indonesian language so that the respondents of the study could fully understand what the questions/items intended to investigate. Furthermore, to avoid the participants' misunderstanding of the technical terms, the questionnaires were also supplemented with a brief manual of how to respond the questionnaire properly and a short explanation and exemplification of some related technical terminologies (e.g., consonants, vowels, enunciation, sentence stress, rhythm, IPA-based phonetic transcription, and so forth).

### 2.3 Data Collection

This study was conducted in Lombok Timur, the province of Nusa Tenggara Barat, Indonesia. There were two types of data collected in this study. The first data were collected using the teacher and student questionnaires which provided the primary data. The second data were collected using in-depth interview which became the secondary data. The prepared questionnaire sets were distributed to the selected participants directly (by person, not by mail). One hundred and ten sheets of the teacher questionnaire sets and the manual sheets were prepared and put into envelopes, and then, directly (in-person, not by mail) distributed to 110 randomly-selected EFL teachers of junior and senior high schools in Lombok Timur. The selected teachers had about one week to answer the questionnaire and submitted it to the collector. In a similar way, 230 copies of the student questionnaire sets were prepared and distributed to the selected student participants. As the teacher participants, the selected student participants were also given about one week to answer the questionnaire and submitted it to the collector.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The primary data were obtained from two sets of questionnaire. The first one was the teacher questionnaire while the second one was the student questionnaire. These data were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS 22. The secondary data, collected from in-depth interview, were qualitatively analyzed. The primary data were the main source for the conclusion of the study while the secondary data supported the results of the study.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Difficulty of English Pronunciation

Figure 1 displays the distribution of the participants' perceptions of the difficulty of English pronunciation. Although there were five options in the questionnaire, the responses were classified into three groups: *Difficult* comprising "Very difficult" and "Difficult" of the options, *Undecided* for "Undecided" of the options, and *Easy* comprising "Easy" and "Very easy" of the options. There were 99 (90%) of 110 teachers and 211 (92%) of 230 students who claimed that pronunciation was difficult; and only 2 (2%) teachers and 7 (3%) students who thought that pronunciation was easy. Meanwhile, the rate of *Undecided* was relatively low: 9 (8%) of teachers and 12 (5%) of students. The collected data indicated that there was a great tendency for the agreement that English pronunciation was an area of difficulty in EFL classrooms.

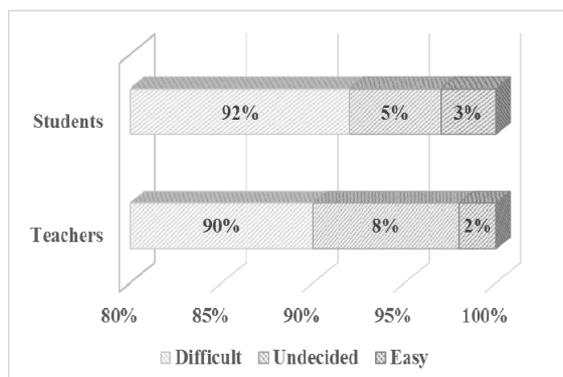


Figure 1. Perceptions of the difficulty level of English pronunciation

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the participants' perceptions of the difficulty of English pronunciation. The mean score of the student participants was slightly higher than that of the teacher participants. An independent two-sample t test indicated that the mean difference (0.06) was not statistically significant,  $t = 0.54$ ,  $p = .59$ . This implies that although the student participants valued the difficulty level of English pronunciation predominantly than the teacher participants did, both teachers and students had no significant difference in the way they perceived the difficulty level of English pronunciation. In summary, we can say that pronunciation was perceived as a difficult area of English language teaching.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the difficulty of English pronunciation

Investigated Item	Teachers <sup>a</sup>		Students <sup>b</sup>				Mean Difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		Min	Max
Difficulty	4.19	0.70	1.00	5.00	4.25	0.70	1.00	5.00	0.06

Note: <sup>a</sup>  $n = 110$ ; <sup>b</sup>  $n = 230$ .

### 3.2 Reasons for the Difficulty of English Pronunciation

As indicated in Data Analysis, only those who selected "Difficult" and "Very Difficult" were eligible to share their opinion on the item 2, the reasons for the difficulty of English pronunciation. So, there were 99 teacher participants and 211 student participants who provided their perceptions of the reasons for the difficulty.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the reasons for the difficulty of English pronunciation

Investigated Items	Teachers <sup>a</sup>		Students <sup>b</sup>				Mean Difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		Min	Max
1 There is no pronunciation instruction in EFL classrooms.	4.18	0.80	2.00	5.00	4.15	0.78	1.00	5.00	0.03
2 There is no pronunciation assessment in EFL classrooms.	4.29	0.80	1.00	5.00	4.22	0.85	2.00	5.00	0.07
3 The same spelling is not always pronounced in the same way.	4.35	0.85	1.00	5.00	4.23	0.92	2.00	5.00	0.07
4 Teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation.	4.32	0.74	2.00	5.00	4.35	0.77	1.00	5.00	0.03
5 Some English sounds do not exist in students' L1.	4.38	0.68	2.00	5.00	4.38	0.70	2.00	5.00	0.00
6 Same sounds have different distribution.	4.39	0.58	2.00	5.00	4.31	0.76	2.00	5.00	0.08
7 Pronunciation is not included in the current curriculum.	4.15	0.84	2.00	5.00	4.20	0.81	2.00	5.00	0.05
8 Students are not so motivated to learn pronunciation.	3.56	1.05	1.00	5.00	3.58	1.09	1.00	5.00	0.02

Note: <sup>a</sup>  $n = 99$ ; <sup>b</sup>  $n = 211$ .

As displayed in Table 2, there were eight possible reasons for the difficulty which were investigated in the present study. The teachers perceived *Same sounds have different distribution* (Item 6) as the highest possibility of the reasons for the pronunciation difficulty, followed by *Some English sounds do not exist in students' L1* (Item 5), *The same spelling is not always pronounced in the same way* (Item 3), *Teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation* (Item 4), *There is no pronunciation assessment in EFL classrooms* (Item 2), *There is no pronunciation instruction in EFL classrooms* (Item 1), *Pronunciation is not included in the current curriculum* (Item 7), and *Students are not so motivated to learn pronunciation* (Item 8).

As for the students, *Some English sounds do not exist in students' L1* (Item 5) as the highest possibility of the reasons for the pronunciation difficulty, followed by *Teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation* (Item 4), *Some sounds have different distribution* (Item 6), *The same spelling is not always pronounced in the same way* (Item 3), *There is no pronunciation assessment in EFL classrooms* (Item 2), *Pronunciation is not included in the current curriculum* (Item 7), *There is no pronunciation instruction in EFL classrooms* (Item 1), and *Students are not so motivated to learn pronunciation* (Item 8).

A closer examination to the order, the results disclosed that the eight reasons for the difficulty were classified into two groups. The first group comprised the items 3, 4, 5, and 6 concerning students' native language and teachers' reluctance to teach pronunciation in EFL classrooms. Meanwhile, the second group consisted of the items 1, 2, 7, and 8 dealing with pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms and students' motivation. Although there were mean differences among the items (items 3, 4, 5, and 6 for the first group and items 1, 2, 7, and 8 for the second group), the differences were not statistically significant. Thus, we come to a conclusion that both teacher and student participants have shared the same opinion on the reasons for the difficulty of English pronunciation. As all of the mean scores were higher than 3.00, all the investigated reasons may contribute to the difficulty of English pronunciation.

### 3.3 Inclusion of Pronunciation in EFL Classrooms

Figure 2 displays the distribution of the participants' perceptions of the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms. The responses to the inclusion of pronunciation teaching in English language classrooms was classified into three groups: *Agree* for "Strongly agree" and "Agree" of the options, *Undecided* for "Cannot tell" of the options, and *Disagree* for "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree" of the options. There were 86 (78%) out of 110 teachers and 190 (83%) out of 230 students who agreed on the inclusion of pronunciation on EFL classrooms; and 15 (14%) teachers and 17 (7%) students who disagreed on the inclusion of pronunciation on EFL classrooms. Meanwhile, 9 (8%) teachers and 23 (10%) students could not decide whether pronunciation should be included in EFL classrooms or not. The data revealed that there was a strong need to include pronunciation in EFL classrooms.

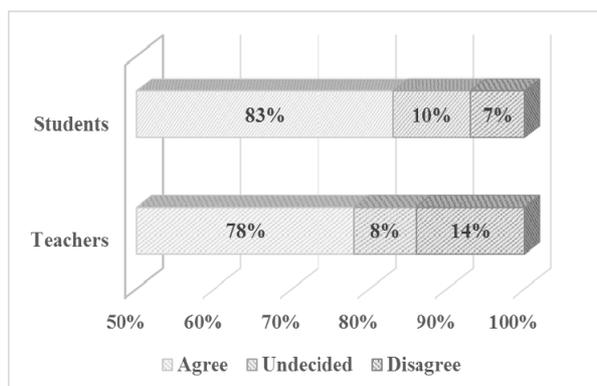


Figure 2. Perceptions of the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL Classrooms

Table 3 displays the summary of descriptive statistics of the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms. As the mean score of the student participants was exactly the same as that of the teacher participants, an independent two-sample t test of course indicated that there was statistically no difference in the mean scores between the teacher participants and the student participants,  $t = 0.03$ ,  $p = .97$ . This implies that both teachers and students have no significant difference in the way they perceive the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms. In short, pronunciation is really needed; therefore, it must be included in EFL classrooms.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms

Investigated Item	Teachers <sup>a</sup>		Students <sup>b</sup>				Mean Difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		Min	Max
Inclusion of pronunciation	4.08	0.62	3.00	5.00	4.08	0.88	2.00	5.00	0.00

Note: <sup>a</sup> *n* = 110; <sup>b</sup> *n* = 230.

### 3.4 Goal of Pronunciation Teaching

As shown in Table 4, in terms of native-like accent, the mean score of the teacher participants was slightly lower than that of the student participants. The independent two-sample *t* test indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean score between the teacher and student participants,  $t = 0.01$ ,  $p = .99$ . Also, the mean scores of both group were lower than the ideal mean ( $M = 3.00$ ), meaning that the participants did not perceive native-like accent as a legitimate goal of teaching pronunciation. In contrast, for intelligible pronunciation, although the mean score of the student participants was higher than that of the teacher participants, the independent-sample *t* test discovered that there was no significant difference in the mean score,  $t = 1.60$ ,  $p = .11$ , meaning that both group of participants shared the same idea that intelligible pronunciation should be a legitimate goal of pronunciation teaching. Comparing the mean scores of the goals of pronunciation teaching, the mean scores of intelligible pronunciation were much higher than those of native-like accent. This implies that intelligible pronunciation is more preferable to native-like accent as the goal of pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the goals of teaching pronunciation

Investigated Items	Teachers <sup>a</sup>		Students <sup>b</sup>				Mean Difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		Min	Max
Native-like accent	2.43	0.76	1.00	4.00	2.42	1.07	1.00	4.00	0.01
Intelligible pronunciation	4.15	0.79	3.00	5.00	4.29	0.68	4.00	5.00	0.14

Note: <sup>a</sup> *n* = 110; <sup>b</sup> *n* = 230.

### 3.5 Priorities in Teaching English Pronunciation

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the priorities in teaching English pronunciation

Investigated Items	Teachers <sup>a</sup>		Students <sup>b</sup>				Mean Difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		Min	Max
1 Consonants	4.23	0.65	3.00	5.00	4.36	0.60	4.00	5.00	0.13
2 Vowels	4.16	0.79	3.00	5.00	4.37	0.64	4.00	5.00	0.21*
3 Sentence Stress	3.91	0.85	2.00	5.00	3.78	0.83	2.00	5.00	0.13
4 Rhythm	3.50	1.04	2.00	5.00	3.27	1.03	2.00	5.00	0.13
5 Intonation	3.83	0.93	2.00	5.00	3.73	0.99	2.00	5.00	0.10
6 Word Stress	3.82	0.86	2.00	5.00	3.95	0.86	2.00	5.00	0.13
7 Enunciation	4.15	0.81	2.00	5.00	4.04	0.91	2.00	5.00	0.11
8 IPA-based transcription	3.58	0.90	2.00	5.00	3.93	0.82	2.00	5.00	0.35**

Note: <sup>a</sup> *n* = 110; <sup>b</sup> *n* = 230.

Table 5 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the priorities in pronunciation teaching of the teachers and the students. The students valued *vowels* (Item 2) as the first, followed by *consonants* (Item 1),

*enunciation* (Item 7), *word stress* (Item 6), *IPA-based transcription* (Item 8), *sentence stress* (Item 3), *intonation* (Item 5), and *rhythm* (Item 4). Similar to the students' perceptions, the teachers rated *consonants* (Item 1) as the first priority, followed by *vowels* (Item 2), *enunciation* (Item 7), *sentence stress* (Item 3), *intonation* (Item 5), *word stress* (Item 6), *IPA-based transcription* (Item 8), and *rhythm* (Item 4). This implies that teachers and students definitely valued more positively the segmental features (i.e., vowels and consonants) as the most important priorities in pronunciation teaching than other features, including the suprasegmental features such as sentence stress, word stress, intonation, and rhythm.

### 3.6 Techniques in Pronunciation Teaching

Table 6 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the techniques for teaching English pronunciation of the teachers and the students. The table shows that *teacher explanation in L1* (Item 1) was highly rated by the student participants, followed by *teacher demonstration* (Item 5), *minimal pairs* (Item 2), *communicative practice* (Item 8), *sound discrimination* (Item 3), *listen and repeat* (Item 4), *tongue twister* (Item 9), *controlled practice* (Item 7), and *drama and role play* (Item 6). Similar to the student participants, the teacher participants perceived *teacher demonstration* (Item 5) as the first, followed by *teacher explanation in L1* (Item 1), *minimal pairs* (Item 2), *communicative practice* (Item 8), *sound discrimination* (Item 3), *listen and repeat* (Item 4), *controlled practice* (Item 7), *tongue twister* (Item 9), and *drama and role play* (Item 6).

A closer examination to the order of the proposed techniques, the first six techniques were rated by both groups of participants almost in the same way. The only difference was on the order of the first two techniques but the independent two-sample t test discovered that their mean differences were not significant, 0.14 for *teacher explanation in L1* and 0.07 for *teacher demonstration*. This condition also happens to the last three techniques. Both *controlled practice* and *tongue twister* were at the different order but their mean differences were not significant, 0.04 and 0.13 respectively. Regardless the difference of the mean ranks, all the mean scores of the investigated techniques for the teacher participants and the student participants were larger than the mean ( $M = 3.00$  of the five-point scale). This implies that although these nine proposed techniques in pronunciation teaching were differently perceived by the group of teachers and that of students, they were accepted as a variety of techniques in pronunciation teaching.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the techniques for teaching English pronunciation

Investigated Items	Teachers <sup>a</sup>				Students <sup>b</sup>				Mean Difference
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	
1 Explanation in L1	4.32	0.73	3.00	5.00	4.46	0.57	3.00	5.00	0.14
2 Minimal Pairs	4.26	0.67	3.00	5.00	4.24	0.55	3.00	5.00	0.02
3 Sound Discrimination	3.93	0.84	2.00	5.00	3.90	0.83	2.00	5.00	0.03
4 Listen and Repeat	3.86	0.91	2.00	5.00	3.86	0.86	2.00	5.00	0.00
5 Demonstration	4.33	0.78	3.00	5.00	4.26	0.89	3.00	5.00	0.07
6 Drama and Role Play	3.53	0.95	2.00	5.00	3.51	0.99	2.00	5.00	0.02
7 Controlled Practice	3.67	0.92	2.00	5.00	3.63	1.11	2.00	5.00	0.04
8 Communicative Practice	3.99	0.70	2.00	5.00	4.16	0.69	2.00	5.00	0.17*
9 Tongue Twister	3.60	0.96	2.00	5.00	3.73	1.04	2.00	5.00	0.13

Note: <sup>a</sup>  $n = 110$ ; <sup>b</sup>  $n = 230$ .

## 4. Discussion

The results of the difficulty level of English pronunciation have shown that the teacher participants and the student participants share the same opinion. They think that English pronunciation is difficult for them. This finding is consistent with some previous studies (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Moedjito, 2008) which indicated that English pronunciation was difficult. The quantitative data were then confirmed to the selected participants (6 teachers and 10 students) through in-depth interview. All the interviewees agreed that pronunciation was one difficult area of English elements. They admitted that grammar might be learnable and teachable while some

features of pronunciation were difficult to learn/teach.

As indicated in the results of the item 2, their difficulty in English pronunciation is due to some important issues, such as that there are some English sounds which do not exist in students' L1, that teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation, that English and students' L1 have the same sounds but they have different distribution, and that the same spelling is not always pronounced in the same way. One of the interviewees claimed that some English consonants such as the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ and the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ do not exist in his acquired languages (neither in Bahasa Indonesia nor Sasak language). Another interviewee said that English has more vowels than his acquired languages. Bahasa Indonesia only has 5 vowels with some allophones but English has 12 monothongs and 8 diphthongs. Interestingly, one of the teachers admitted that she was really reluctant to teach pronunciation for at least two reasons: (1) she did not know exactly what to teach and how to teach, and (2) it is not mandatory to teach pronunciation as the current curriculum guidelines. This finding corresponds to what Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin's (1996) conclusion that native language transfer plays a role in a learner's acquisition of the sounds of second/foreign language learning and Carruthers' (1987) assertion that the absence of English sounds in L1 and the different distribution of the same sounds in English and L1 are the main two factors as the most noticeable reasons for learners' difficulty in pronunciation mastery. Ironically, although English pronunciation is perceived as a difficult but crucial element of oral language, there is no pronunciation instruction and assessment in EFL classrooms.

One critical issue on pronunciation teaching is that pronunciation is almost neglected or sidelined in EFL classrooms (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Of course, it is not a good situation regarding the difficulty faced by EFL learners. Consequently, pronunciation must be included in teaching English as a foreign language. This critical issue is in line with the result of the item 3 which indicated that pronunciation should be a part of language teaching in EFL classrooms. When this information was confirmed to the interviewees, all of them strongly agreed on the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms. At least, they would feel more aware of their pronunciation. One of the students said that he would become more confident if he could pronounce English words accurately. This finding is consonant with some previous studies (e.g., Macdonald, 2002; Levis & Grant, 2005). For example, Macdonald (2002) reports that the inclusion of pronunciation in language curricula can increase learners' pronunciation mastery; therefore, pronunciation instruction should be a part of the programs of language teaching and learning. In the study by Breitung, Derwing, and Rossiter (2001), it was reported that the majority of respondents (teachers) agreed on the importance of pronunciation teaching at all levels.

Assuming that pronunciation has been included as part of teaching materials in EFL classrooms, the next question is: What is the goal of pronunciation teaching? The result of the study has disclosed that intelligible pronunciation should be the target of pronunciation teaching in EFL classroom. Therefore, it supports the idea that intelligibility rather than native-like pronunciation has become a legitimate goal of pronunciation teaching (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Cole, 2002; Gimson, 2001; Jenkins, 2000; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Morley, 1991; Munro, 2011; Penington & Richards, 1986; Zielinski, 2006). For example, Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) state that "intelligible pronunciation is one of the necessary components of oral communication" (p. 8). It is not surprising of the goal of pronunciation teaching has shifted from how learners can attain native-like pronunciation to how learners can transact information effectively in oral communication. The goal of pronunciation teaching is not anymore to enable EFL learners to attain native-like pronunciation of English, either Received Pronunciation accent of British speakers or General American accent of American speakers, but to attain learners' intelligibility because as more and more people have come to use English as a means of wider communication across cultures.

In the case of priorities in teaching pronunciation, the finding of the study is surprisingly the opposite of the priority order proposed by some applied linguists (cf. Bowen, Madsen, & Hilferty, 1985; Brown, 2002; Carruthers, 1987; Florez, 1998; Jones, 2002; Power, 2003; Wong, 1987). Bowen et al. (1985), for example, suggest that pronunciation teaching might follow a sequence built-in priority: fluency, stress, rhythm and intonation, and vowels and consonants. Florez (1998) claims that suprasegmental features are assumed to be more prominent in pronunciation instruction. Wong (1993) claims that the most relevant components of pronunciation which play a greater role in English communication are stress, rhythm, and intonation. However, regarding the reasons for the difficulty of English pronunciation, particularly, related to students' L1, the result of the study is consonant with some studies (e.g., Breitung, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001; Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Jenkins, 2000; Saito, 2014; Ufomata, 1996) which conclude that vowels and consonants are the essential features of pronunciation along with sounds in combination, stress and intonation. For example, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) have discovered that with regards of the respondents' L1 background, the vast majority of pronunciation problems identified by students were segmental features (i.e., consonants and vowels). Likewise, Jenkins (2000) with her proposal of Lingua Franca Core (LFC) emphasizes the balance of segmental features

(i.e., consonants, consonant clusters, and vowels) and suprasegmental features (i.e., nuclear stress) along with the effective use of articulatory setting.

Finally, in terms of techniques in pronunciation teaching, the finding of the present study is consonant with the proposal of utilizing a variety of techniques for teaching pronunciation proposed by some applied linguists such as Carruthers (1987), Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), Jones (2002), Pennington (1996), and Tudor (2001). For instance, Tudor (2001) claims that clear explanation of pronunciation and intonation can call the use of (IPA-based) phonetic transcription which can increase the total learning load of students. There is one important things related to the finding of the study, that is, *teacher explanation in students' L1*. This point becomes a main difference from other applied linguists. Teacher explanation in students' own language make them easier to understand the *procedural knowledge* of language, particularly the system of English phonology.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study was designed to investigate the perceptions of pronunciation among EFL teachers and students in Indonesia, focusing on the difficulty of English pronunciation, the reasons for the difficulty, the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL classrooms, the goal of pronunciation teaching, priorities in pronunciation teaching, and techniques in pronunciation teaching. Regarding the entire procedure of the research, there are three points as the conclusion of the study. First, there is evidence to suggest that both teachers and students see pronunciation as an essential part of oral language even though they find it difficult to learn. Secondly, their predominant reasons for the difficulty of English pronunciation are the absence of English sounds in L1 and the different distribution of the same sounds in English and L1. Thirdly, the pronunciation teaching is highly needed in English language classrooms, with the considerations of the local context, especially learners' native language, the balance of fluency and accuracy, the segmental features (e.g., consonants, vowels, IPA-based phonetic transcription) and suprasegmental features (e.g., intonation, rhythm, word stress), and a variety of techniques of pronunciation teaching (e.g., teacher explanation in L1, minimal pairs, teacher demonstration).

This study would suggest that in the Indonesian context pronunciation is strongly recommended to be included in English language teaching and learning. The inclusion of pronunciation in language classrooms is not only relevant to the main target of English language teaching and learning, but it can also help teachers and students to realize the importance of pronunciation teaching in EFL learning. However, if we consider the roles of learners' native language and the importance of the intelligible pronunciation which might be more realistic than the native-like pronunciation, there are still some remaining difficulties, especially related to how to teach pronunciation in real language classrooms. Which features of English pronunciation are important to learn and which of these features will require learners' attention are the questions which need our serious attention.

In order to answer the remaining issues on how to teach pronunciation more practically and realistically, additional research seems needed on the investigation of which features of English pronunciation are important to learn and which of these features will require learners' attention. It is impossible for teachers to teach pronunciation in English language classrooms if they do not know which features of English pronunciation are important and how to teach them. Therefore, further research on the influencing factors of intelligible pronunciation among EFL learners in Indonesia is highly needed.

## References

- Bowen, J. D., Madsen, H., & Hilferty, A. (1985). *TESOL techniques and procedures*. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers.
- Breitkreutz, J. A., Derwing, T. M., & Rossiter, M. J. (2001). Pronunciation teaching practices in Canada. *Journal La Revue TESL du Canada*, 19(1), 51-61.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). White Plains, New York: Pearson Education.
- Brown, H. D. (2002). English language teaching in the "Post-Method" Era: Toward better diagnosis, treatment, and assessment. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 9-18). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667190.003>
- Carruthers, R. (1987). Teaching pronunciation. In M. H. Long, & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Methodology in TESOL* (pp. 35-44). New York: Newbury House Publishers.
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (1996). *Teaching pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Cole, S. (2002). An investigation of the role of vowel quality for intelligibility in oral interactions between NNSs of English as an international language. *Speak Out!* 29.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalton, D. F. (1997). Some techniques for teaching pronunciation. *The Internet TESL Journal* 3(1). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Dalton-Pronunciation.html>
- Dalton, C. & Seidlhofer, B. (1994). *Pronunciation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Derwing, T. M. & Rossiter, M. J. (2002). ESL learners' perception of their pronunciation needs and strategies. *System*, 30(2), 155-166. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(02\)00012-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(02)00012-X)
- Florez, M. C. (1998). Improving adult ESL learners' pronunciation skills. *Digest*. Retrieved from <http://www.cal.org/caela/digests/Pronun.htm>
- Fraser, H. (1999). ESL pronunciation teaching: Could it be more effective? *Australian Language Matters* 7(4), 7-8.
- Gilakjani, A. P., & Ahmadi, M. R. (2011). Why is Pronunciation So Difficult to Learn? *English Language Teaching*, 4(3), 74-83. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n3p74>
- Graddol, D. (2006). *English next*. London: The British Council.
- Gimson, A. C. (2001). *An introduction to the pronunciation of English* (3rd ed.). Maryland: Edward Arnold (Publisher) Ltd.
- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jones, R. H. (2002). Beyond 'Listen and Repeat': Pronunciation teaching materials and theories of second language acquisition. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya, (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 178-187). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667190.025>
- Levis, J. M., & Grant, L. (2005). Integrating pronunciation into ESL/EFL classrooms. *TESOL Journal* 12(2), 13-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.1949-3533.2003.tb00125.x>
- Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macdonald, S. (2002). Pronunciation – views and practices of reluctant teachers. *Prospect*, 17(3). Retrieved from [http://www.nclctr.mq.edu.au/prospect/17/pros17\\_3smac.asp](http://www.nclctr.mq.edu.au/prospect/17/pros17_3smac.asp)
- Moedjito. (2008). Priorities in English pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms. *k@ta Journal* 16(2), 129-142.
- Morley, J. (1991). The pronunciation component in teaching English to speakers of other languages. *TESOL Quarterly* 25(3), 481-521. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3586981>
- Munro, M. J. (2011). Intelligibility: Buzzword or buzzworthy?. In J. Levis & K. LeVelle (Eds.). *Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference*. (pp. 7-16), Ames, IA: Iowa State University.
- Pennington, M. C. (1994). Recent research in L2 phonology: Implications for practice. In J. Morley (Ed.), *Pronunciation pedagogy and theory: New views, new dimensions* (pp. 98-108). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (1986). Pronunciation revisited. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(2), 207-225. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3586541>
- Power, T. (2003). *Teaching English intonation and stress pattern*. Retrieved from <http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/esl0108.html>
- Saito, K. (2014). Experienced teachers' perspectives on priorities for improved intelligible pronunciation: The case of Japanese learners of English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 24(2), 250-277. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12026>
- Setter, J., & Jenkins, J. (2005). Pronunciation. *Language Teaching*, 38, 1-17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S026144480500251X>
- Sri Gustiani. (2012). The communicative language teaching: Review on own experience in ELT at English Department, Sriwijaya State Polytechnic, Palembang. *Epigram* 9(1), 16-22.
- Tudor, I. (2001). *The dynamics of the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ufomata, T. (1996). Setting priorities in teaching English pronunciation in ESL contexts. *Phonetics and*

- Linguistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/shl9/ufomata/titi.htm>
- van Lier, L., (1997). Observation from an ecological perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 783-787. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3587762>
- Walker, R. (2001). Pronunciation for international intelligibility. *English Teaching Professional*, 21. Retrieved from <http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/internationallyintelligibility.html>
- Wong, R. (1987). *Teaching pronunciation: focus on English rhythm and intonation*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents.
- Zielinski, B. (2006). The intelligibility cocktail: An interaction between speaker and listener ingredients [Electronic version]. *Prospect*, 21(1), 22-45

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).