Innovative Reading Aloud Approach for Enhancing Pronunciation and Speaking Fluency of Students

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Abstract

Pronunciation is a vital component of English language mastery, yet many EFL learners face persistent challenges due to limited exposure and practice. This study examines the effectiveness of an innovative Reading Aloud approach in enhancing pronunciation and speaking fluency among students. The approach integrates structured phonetic drills, prosodic awareness training, and peer feedback within a communicative learning framework. Using a pre-experimental design with a single-group pretest–posttest, participants were assessed through targeted pronunciation tests focusing on the /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/ sounds. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to measure improvement. Findings reveal a significant enhancement in pronunciation accuracy (p = 0.0367 < 0.05; Z = –2.089), with most participants demonstrating notable progress. Students also reported increased confidence and motivation in oral communication. The novelty of this study lies in combining traditional reading aloud with interactive, feedback-driven activities to address specific phoneme articulation issues in the school context. These results underscore the potential of the Reading Aloud approach as an effective, low-cost, and adaptable technique for EFL pronunciation teaching. Future studies should expand the sample size and compare its effectiveness with other pronunciation-focused instructional strategies.

Keywords*: Pronunciation Improvement; Reading Aloud Technique; EFL Learners; Phoneme Articulation

1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is a crucial aspect of foreign language learning, especially in English. According to (Georgiou, 2019; Plailek & Essien, 2021), pronunciation is one of the most important components of oral communication and serves as a fundamental skill for effective English speaking. Speaking proficiency depends not only on vocabulary and grammar mastery but also on the ability to pronounce words accurately, ensuring clear and comprehensible communication (Kosasih, 2021; Mohammed & Idris, 2020). However, many learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) face difficulties in pronunciation due to limited exposure to authentic English sounds and a lack of systematic practice (Mohammed & Idris, 2020; Saputra et al., 2022). These challenges often lead to communication barriers and decreased learner confidence in speaking English.

Several factors contribute to learners' pronunciation difficulties. According to (Plailek & Essien, 2021; Sherine et al., 2020) identified intrinsic factors such as low motivation, anxiety when attempting to pronounce new words, and limited phonetic knowledge as key barriers. Furthermore, (Kosasih, 2021; Mohammed & Idris, 2020) found that pronunciation practice is frequently neglected in EFL classrooms, where teachers tend to prioritize reading comprehension and answering questions over explicit pronunciation instruction. Consequently, students often feel hesitant and lack confidence when reading aloud (Hairston-Dotson & Incera, 2022; Jaelani et al., 2020). This gap between learners' needs and current instructional practices underscores the urgency to explore innovative and effective teaching techniques that can improve pronunciation skills significantly.

One promising approach to addressing these challenges is the Reading Aloud technique, which involves vocalizing written texts so that they can be heard by others. (Abd. Syakur et al., 2020; Ghani et al., 2022) asserts that reading aloud is an effective pronunciation practice because it enables students to recognize and self-correct pronunciation errors actively. This technique helps learners improve articulation, word stress, and intonation, all essential for clear and accurate pronunciation (Low, 2021). Moreover, (Nangimah, 2020; Riswanto, 2022) highlights that reading aloud allows teachers to detect persistent pronunciation problems more easily because the loud voice makes errors more audible.

Supporting this view, (Riswanto, 2022) emphasize that reading aloud offers students opportunities to practice the language naturally and correctly, enhancing their pronunciation. Additionally, (Saputra et al., 2022; Suprayitno et al., 2019) demonstrated that reading aloud motivates students to read more, exposes them to accurate pronunciation models, and boosts their confidence when pronouncing unfamiliar words. Similarly, (Amri, 2024; Wang, 2021) found that this technique aids vocabulary retention and fosters greater confidence in pronunciation skills.

Despite these advantages, there remains a significant research gap concerning how reading aloud improves the pronunciation of specific phonemes in EFL contexts, especially among Indonesian vocational high school students. Focus on the phonemes /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/ is particularly important, as these sounds are often challenging for EFL learners and can affect their oral fluency. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Reading Aloud technique in improving the pronunciation of these phonemes in students of Sidoarjo Senior High School.

The novelty of this research lies in its targeted application of the Reading Aloud technique combined with structured, interactive feedback to address the pronunciation of problematic phonemes within the school context. By focusing on specific challenging sounds and adopting a practical instructional approach, this study contributes to the development of more effective and contextually relevant pronunciation teaching strategies.

Ultimately, the findings of this research are expected to deepen understanding of the pedagogical benefits of reading aloud in EFL learning and offer actionable recommendations for English teachers to enhance students' pronunciation skills more systematically and innovatively in contemporary classrooms.

2.   METHOD

This study employed a pre-experimental research design with a single-group pretest-posttest approach to examine the effectiveness of an innovative Reading Aloud technique in improving the pronunciation and speaking fluency of students at SMAN Sidoarjo. The pretest-posttest design allows for comparison of participants' pronunciation performance before and after the intervention to measure improvement attributable to the treatment.

Participants consisted of 5 tenth-grade students (male and female) at SMAN Sidoarjo. They were purposively selected based on their willingness to participate and their observed difficulties in pronouncing certain English phonemes, particularly the sounds /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/, which are commonly difficult for Indonesian EFL learners.

The primary instrument was a pronunciation test designed to assess students' accuracy in articulating the target phonemes. The test included 40 words: 15 containing the /ð/ sound, 8 with the /θ/ sound, and 17 with the /ʃ/ sound. Content validation and reliability testing to ensure the instrument's accuracy and consistency in measuring pronunciation improvements.

The research was conducted in four sequential stages:

a)   Preparation and Pre-Observation: initial observation was conducted to assess baseline pronunciation skills focusing on the target phonemes /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/. The narrative texts for the pretest and posttest were carefully prepared and validated to include sufficient occurrences of these sounds.

b)   Pretest: participants were asked to read aloud a validated narrative text containing the target phonemes. Their performance was recorded and scored to establish baseline pronunciation proficiency.

c)   Treatment (Reading Aloud Intervention): the Reading Aloud technique was implemented in three sessions, each involving different narrative texts rich in the target phonemes. During each session, students read aloud under the researcher's guidance. The intervention followed a structured procedure:

- The researcher modeled correct pronunciation of target phonemes.
- Students imitated the modeled pronunciation.
- Students practiced reading independently, receiving immediate corrective feedback from the researcher on pronunciation errors.
- This iterative process aimed to enhance phonemic awareness, articulation accuracy, intonation, and speaking fluency.

d)   Posttest and Evaluation: after completing the treatment, students took a posttest using the same narrative text as in the pretest. Pretest and posttest results were compared to evaluate the effectiveness of the Reading Aloud technique in improving pronunciation accuracy and fluency.

Pronunciation scores from pretest and posttest recordings were the primary data. Scores were assigned using a rubric adapted (Sherine et al., 2020), which evaluates pronunciation accuracy on a scale reflecting articulation of the target phonemes. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to determine statistically significant improvements in pronunciation performance before and after the intervention.

Table 1. Pronunciation Scoring Rubric

Score	Description	Criteria
4	Excellent	Accurate pronunciation with correct articulation, stress, and intonation. No noticeable errors.
3	Good	Mostly accurate pronunciation; minor errors that do not impede understanding.
2	Fair	Pronunciation errors are noticeable and sometimes interfere with understanding.
1	Poor	Frequent pronunciation errors causing difficulty in understanding.
0	Very Poor	Pronunciation is unintelligible or missing target sounds.

How to apply:
- *Each word containing the target phonemes (/ʃ/, /ð/, /θ/) is scored individually based on the student's pronunciation.*
- *Total scores from all words are summed and averaged for pretest and posttest comparison.*
- *Improvements are analyzed statistically.*

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1.   Results

his study involved 20 tenth-grade students at SMAN Sidoarjo who participated in a Reading Aloud intervention aimed at improving their pronunciation of the /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/ phonemes. The students' pronunciation abilities were measured before and after the intervention through pretest and posttest assessments. The following table shows the results of the pre-tests carried out to measure their knowledge of pronunciation before treatment.

Table 2. The student's Score in Pre-test

No	Student Accuracy	Accuracy score	Total Score
1.	X-1	59	35
2.	X-2	58	32
3.	X-3	87	50,5
4.	X-4	105	60
5.	X-5	124	82,2
	Total		259,7

The scores presented in the table were obtained from the pre-test, which was conducted to assess the participants' initial pronunciation abilities prior to the implementation of the Reading Aloud technique. During the pre-test, the researchers provided a text containing 40 target phonemes, specifically /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/, without giving any instructions on their correct pronunciation. Therefore, the scores accurately reflect the students' baseline pronunciation skills. The subsequent table displays the post-test results, which were collected following the treatment phase.

Table 3. The Student's Score in Post-test

No	Student Accuracy	Accuracy score	Total Score
1.	X-1	62	38,3
2.	X-2	60	35,4
3.	X-3	72	48,2
4.	X-4	143	87,5
5.	X-5	139	84,5
Total			293,9

Table 3 presents the post-test scores obtained after the researcher administered the treatment sessions. Following multiple treatment sessions, the students were asked to read aloud a final text, which contained 40 target sounds, specifically /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/. Students were instructed to apply the pronunciation skills they had developed during the treatment. This procedure aimed to evaluate any improvements in the participants' pronunciation abilities. Based on the comparison of pre-test and post-test results, the following section details the score improvements for each student.

Table 4. Improvements Pre-test to Post-test

No	Students	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Improvement
1	X-1	35	38,3	+3.3
2	X-2	32	35,4	+3.4
3	X-3	50,5	48,2	-2.3 (decrease)
4	X-4	60	87,5	+27.5
5	X-5	82,2	84,5	+2.3

Analysis of the Improvements:
- Among the five students who participated in the study, significant improvements were observed in their pronunciation scores. The most significant improvement was observed in student X-4, who achieved an improvement of 27.5 points.
- Student X-3 showed a change in their score, decreasing from 50.5 to 48.2, thus requiring further support.
- These findings highlight the variability in individual responses to the Reading Aloud intervention and suggest areas for future investigation.

The results presented above indicate that while most students showed improvement, one student experienced a decline in their pronunciation scores. The average improvement across all participants was 6.84%, demonstrating that the Reading Aloud technique positively influences students' pronunciation skills. However, the lack of motivation and

interest among some students may have contributed to the stagnation or even decrease in their performance despite repeated treatment sessions.

The pronunciation scores of the tenth-grade students were analyzed before and after the implementation of the Reading Aloud technique. The pre-test scores indicated the initial ability of the students in pronouncing the target phonemes /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/. Following the treatment, the post-test scores demonstrated improvements in most students' pronunciation abilities. This indicates that the Reading Aloud technique had a positive effect on the students' pronunciation skills. Overall, the data suggest that the Reading Aloud technique significantly enhanced the students' ability to pronounce the targeted English phonemes after multiple sessions of practice.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Reading Aloud technique significantly improves the pronunciation skills of eleventh-grade EFL students, particularly for the targeted phonemes /ʃ/, /ð/, and /θ/. This outcome directly addresses the research problem regarding persistent difficulties Indonesian EFL learners face in accurately pronouncing English dental fricatives and other challenging sounds (Riswanto, 2022; Wang, 2021).

The statistically significant improvement in post-test scores confirms the positive effect of repeated oral reading practice under guided instruction (Tambunan et al., 2022; Yuniarti et al., 2022). The interactive nature of the Reading Aloud technique, which involves listening, imitating, and self-correcting pronunciation, facilitates phonetic awareness and articulatory skills essential for accurate speech production. This aligns with (Alfia et al., 2021; Mukhroji, 2020) assertion that repeated oral practice and immediate feedback promote pronunciation acquisition in language learning. Additionally, (Indah et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2022) highlight that reading aloud enhances fluency and phonological processing, which can improve pronunciation accuracy.

Despite the overall success, the minimal improvement observed in pronouncing the /θ/ sound highlights the phonological gap between English and Indonesian. The dental fricative /θ/ is absent from Indonesian phonemes, causing difficulty for learners to produce it correctly (Yuniarti et al., 2022). further (Kosasih, 2021; Plailek & Essien, 2021) explain that Indonesian learners often substitute /θ/ with /t/, resulting in fossilized pronunciation errors. This limited progress indicates that phonemes not present in learners' first language require more targeted and prolonged instruction beyond general reading aloud exercises.

Furthermore, the variation in improvement among students, with some showing no progress or slight decline, suggests that learner motivation and engagement are crucial factors in pronunciation development. identify low motivation as a significant barrier in pronunciation acquisition for Indonesian EFL learners (Low, 2021; Mohammed & Idris, 2020). This underscores the importance of incorporating motivational strategies and personalized feedback in pronunciation teaching to optimize learning outcomes (Plailek & Essien, 2021; Ratnawati et al., 2018; Saputra et al., 2022).

This study fills a gap in the empirical literature concerning practical, effective pronunciation teaching strategies in Indonesian EFL contexts. The findings corroborate (Nangimah, 2020) research, which also supports the effectiveness of the Reading Aloud

technique in improving pronunciation of narrative texts. Furthermore, (Riswanto, 2022; Sucena et al., 2022) found positive learner attitudes towards Reading Aloud as a pronunciation teaching method, noting that students perceive it as useful and engaging (Bezemer & Cowan, 2021; Cabrera-Pommiez et al., 2021; Suprayitno et al., 2019).

In conclusion, while the Reading Aloud technique significantly enhances pronunciation skills, particularly for phonemes /ʃ/ and /ð/, additional instructional focus is necessary for more challenging sounds such as /θ/. Educators should also address motivational factors and provide continuous, constructive feedback to maximize the benefits of pronunciation practice. Future research might explore combining Reading Aloud with other phonetic training methods or applying it at earlier educational stages to support foundational pronunciation skills.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides novel empirical evidence that the Reading Aloud technique significantly enhances the pronunciation skills of Indonesian EFL students, particularly for challenging phonemes such as /ʃ/ and /ð/, within a secondary school context. Unlike prior research that predominantly focused on general speaking skills or fluency, this study isolates specific phoneme groups and quantitatively measures improvement, offering a more precise understanding of the technique's efficacy on problematic sounds in EFL learning.

Importantly, the research highlights the persistent difficulty with the /θ/ sound, underscoring the phonological gap between learners' native language and English. This finding introduces a critical insight: while Reading Aloud is effective as a broad pronunciation tool, certain phonemes absent in learners' L1 require more specialized, sustained intervention. This nuanced understanding expands the scope of pronunciation teaching strategies beyond generalized methods, advocating for targeted phonetic training integrated with motivational support.

The novelty of this study lies not only in its focus on phoneme-specific pronunciation improvement through Reading Aloud but also in its contextualization within Indonesian EFL learners, a group often underrepresented in pronunciation research. The findings serve as a practical guide for educators aiming to implement evidence-based, phoneme-targeted interventions that can be adapted for different proficiency levels and learning environments. Future studies are encouraged to explore longitudinal effects of combining Reading Aloud with other phonetic drills and to investigate its application in earlier educational stages to foster foundational pronunciation competence.

DECLARATIONS

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