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MULTI-TECHNIQUE PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE AND THE ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY OF EIGHTH GRADERS: A PRE-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY IN AN EAST LOMBOK MADRASAH

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Abstrak

Kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris peserta didik madrasah tsanawiyah sering terhambat oleh kesalahan pelafalan, interferensi bahasa ibu, dan rendahnya kepercayaan diri, sementara penelitian terdahulu cenderung menguji satu teknik secara terpisah. Penelitian ini bertujuan menguji efektivitas paket latihan pengucapan (*pronunciation practice*) multiteknik, yaitu *phonetic drilling*, *minimal pairs*, *oral drills*, *tongue twisters*, dan *reading aloud*, terhadap kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa kelas VIII. Penelitian kuantitatif pra-eksperimen dengan desain *one-group pretest-posttest* ini melibatkan 18 siswa kelas VIII MTs Darush Shibyan NW Lando, Lombok Timur, yang dipilih melalui *total sampling*. Perlakuan diberikan dalam empat pertemuan berbasis modul. Kemampuan berbicara diukur dengan tes lisan terekam yang dinilai pada lima aspek (pelafalan, kelancaran, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan keterpahaman), kemudian dianalisis dengan statistik deskriptif, uji Shapiro–Wilk, dan uji-*t* sampel berpasangan menggunakan SPSS. Instrumen terbukti reliabel (Cronbach's Alpha = 0,937) dan data berdistribusi normal (Sig. > 0,05). Rerata skor meningkat dari 56,67 (SD = 3,90) pada *pretest* menjadi 83,50 (SD = 5,46) pada *posttest*, atau naik 26,83 poin, dengan $t(17) = -19{,}79$ dan $p < 0{,}001$. Hasil ini menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan secara statistik setelah perlakuan. Karena penelitian tidak memiliki kelompok kontrol, peningkatan tersebut dimaknai sebagai peningkatan yang berasosiasi dengan perlakuan, bukan bukti kausal definitif. Latihan pengucapan multiteknik layak dipertimbangkan sebagai strategi pembelajaran berbicara di kelas VIII, dan penelitian lanjutan perlu memakai kelompok pembanding serta sampel yang lebih besar.

Kata Kunci: latihan pengucapan; kemampuan berbicara; bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing; pra-eksperimen; siswa kelas VIII

Abstract

English speaking among Indonesian junior secondary learners is often constrained by pronunciation errors, first-language interference, and low confidence, while earlier studies have tended to examine single techniques in isolation. This study examined the effectiveness of a multi-technique pronunciation practice package, consisting of phonetic drilling, minimal pairs, oral drills, tongue twisters, and reading aloud, on the English speaking ability of eighth-grade students. A quantitative pre-experimental study with a one-group pretest-posttest design was conducted with all 18 eighth graders of MTs Darush Shibyan NW Lando in East Lombok, selected through total sampling. The treatment consisted of four module-based sessions. Speaking ability was measured with a recorded oral test scored on five aspects (pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and

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comprehensibility) and analysed with descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk test, and a paired-samples t-test in SPSS. The instrument was reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.937), and the data were normally distributed (Sig. > 0.05). The mean score rose from 56.67 (SD = 3.90) in the pretest to 83.50 (SD = 5.46) in the posttest, a gain of 26.83 points, with t(17) = −19.79 and p < 0.001. The difference was statistically significant after the treatment. Because the design lacked a control group, the gain is interpreted as an improvement associated with the treatment rather than as definitive causal evidence. Multi-technique pronunciation practice is therefore a promising strategy for teaching speaking in eighth grade, and future studies should use comparison groups and larger samples.

***Keywords**: pronunciation practice; speaking ability; EFL; pre-experimental research; eighth-grade students*

INTRODUCTION

English has become the main language connecting people across countries, and mastery of it is now required in education, professional life, and international business (Nurahma, 2024). For the younger generation, the ability to communicate in English is therefore no longer optional. Secondary schools are expected to move beyond teaching grammar rules toward developing active communication skills, so that learners can express themselves accurately and confidently in real situations. The Indonesian secondary-school curriculum is designed to enable learners to communicate accurately and acceptably in varied life contexts (Wachidah et al., 2016), and speaking is regarded as the main indicator of successful communicative competence (Muhammad Idrus Hamid et al., 2023). At the eighth-grade level, learners are expected to express ideas and recount their daily activities fluently (Dia Prastika, 2022).

Pronunciation occupies a strategic position in this expectation. Speaking is not only the ability to pronounce words; it also requires constructing meaningful sentences that listeners can understand (Mufidah, 2017). Its components include pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, which are interrelated and jointly determine the quality of oral performance (Pauzan, 2021). Within this system, clear pronunciation is a fundamental foundation for conveying a message without misunderstanding (Widagdo, 2021) and an integral part of speaking that shapes the effectiveness of communication (Tugiyatun et al., 2022). Small differences in sound, such as those between *sheep* and *ship*, can change meaning and impede communication. Contemporary pronunciation scholarship accordingly emphasises intelligibility and comprehensibility, rather than native-like accent, as the practical goals of instruction (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

In practice, these goals are difficult to reach in a context where English is not a daily medium of communication (Widagdo, 2021). Many eighth graders still show weaknesses in speaking, and they often fail to pronounce consistently the vocabulary they have actually studied (Agustinawati, 2020). Two problems recur in the literature: low self-confidence and limited vocabulary (Tika Rizky & Suharmoko, 2019). Learners also feel afraid and anxious about making pronunciation mistakes in front of the class (Crutia Suli et al., 2025), a reaction consistent with the long-documented construct of foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). The mother tongue further interferes with the accuracy of English sounds (Nasta et al., 2020). On the instructional side, regional languages or Indonesian are still frequently used as the medium of teaching, so learners become passive listeners who copy materials without sufficient speaking practice, and even simple

daily expressions remain difficult (Sari & Maharini, 2023). Studies in Indonesian secondary schools report that average pronunciation and speaking scores frequently fall below minimum completeness criteria (Mardiah et al., 2024; Wulansari & Uyun, 2023), and that learners lack supporting platforms, such as English clubs, through which speaking potential can be channelled (Ismailia et al., 2023; Shafira & Anggoro Ari Santoso, 2021).

These conditions were also evident at MTs Darush Shibyan NW Lando, a private Islamic junior secondary school in East Lombok. Preliminary observations of eighth graders showed that learners struggled with words whose sounds differ from their spelling, such as *thought* and *knowledge*. Most read English texts with stiff intonation, as if reading Indonesian, and during question-and-answer sessions many remained silent because producing unfamiliar English sounds felt difficult. Pronunciation exercises in the classroom were rarely varied, so learners were unaccustomed to word stress and rhythm, and their speaking skills stagnated.

Pronunciation practice is a systematic series of activities designed to train learners to produce the sounds of the target language accurately and to build awareness of the differences between their mother tongue and English, including syllable stress and intonation. Prior studies have examined individual techniques that belong to this family of practices. Tongue twisters and systematic oral drills have been recommended for improving articulatory clarity and habituating learners to target sounds (Alfrans et al., 2025; Hasriani et al., 2025). Reading aloud fostered the speaking skills of eighth graders in a pre-experimental study, with the mean score rising from 24.43 to 44.71 (Hasriani et al., 2025), and reading aloud with texts containing minimal pairs helped learners distinguish similar sounds (Mardiah et al., 2024). Imitation through an online video platform significantly improved pronunciation competence (Tugiyatun et al., 2022), the phonetic method helped learners overcome confusion about sound symbols in a two-cycle classroom action research (Asrul & Husda, 2022), and oral drills changed the habits of initially fearful learners in a qualitative study (Komariyah, n.d.). Other approaches, such as guided conversation (Mariana et al., 2024) and the direct method (Putri Rahayu, n.d.), also reported improved speaking outcomes, the latter with a rise in the mean score from 30.6 to 71.3.

Despite this evidence, a research gap remains. Most earlier studies investigated one technique at a time or relied on non-experimental designs, and few tested a structured package that combines several pronunciation exercises in a single treatment. The present study addresses this gap by combining phonetic drilling, minimal pairs, oral drills, tongue twisters, and reading aloud into one module for eighth graders. The module trains segmental features (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental features (stress and intonation) concurrently, so that its overall effect on speaking ability can be examined experimentally. Accordingly, this study aims to measure the effectiveness of multi-technique pronunciation practice on the English speaking ability of eighth-grade students at MTs Darush Shibyan NW Lando by comparing pretest and posttest scores, and to determine whether the observed improvement is statistically significant.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research design and setting

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental, one-group pretest–posttest design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The design was chosen because a single intact group, the eighth graders of MTs Darush Shibyan NW Lando, a private Islamic junior secondary school in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, was measured before and after a treatment delivered through a pronunciation practice module. The research was conducted in the 2026/2027 academic year. The independent variable (X) was pronunciation practice, operationalised as systematic oral practice through tongue twisters, oral drills, reading aloud, and phonetic drilling. The dependent

variable (Y) was English speaking ability, operationalised as scores on a speaking test covering pronunciation accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehensibility (Soesana et al., 2023).

Participants

The population comprised all eighth-grade students of the madrasah in the 2026/2027 academic year. Because the group was small, total sampling was used, so all 18 eighth graders served as the sample. This level was selected because learners are in a transitional phase of speaking development that calls for more intensive pronunciation intervention.

Treatment and data collection

Data were collected through observation, documentation, a pretest, the treatment, and a posttest. The treatment consisted of four sessions of 45 minutes, guided by a Pronunciation and Speaking Mastery Module that combined direct instruction with collaborative learning. Session 1 (vowel mastery) trained the contrast between long and short vowels through oral drills and minimal pairs, and learners sorted word cards in groups. Session 2 (consonant clashes) targeted the fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ and the plosives /p/ and /b/, using a tongue-position demonstration, independent word practice, and a group game. Session 3 (fluency lab) used tongue twisters in a relay format to improve speech-muscle flexibility. Session 4 (integration) applied word stress and rising–falling intonation to the reading aloud of a short descriptive text, followed by peer feedback on recordings. An observation sheet recorded learners' engagement, and documentation included attendance lists and audio recordings.

Instruments, validity, and reliability

Two instruments were used: the treatment module, which ensured consistent delivery of material across sessions, and a speaking test. The test had three parts, namely word production (five words), a tongue twister, and a short paragraph reading. The pretest and posttest used the same format with different content. Performances were audio-recorded so that they could be replayed during scoring, and each recording was rated on five aspects (pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehensibility) using a 1–5 descriptive rubric adapted from Brown (2004) and Heaton (1988). Obtained scores were converted into a 0–100 scale. The instrument was consulted with supervising lecturers and senior English teachers to confirm that it matched the ability level of eighth graders. A Pearson product-moment test (N = 18, df = 16, critical $r = 0.468$ at $\alpha = 0.05$) indicated that all five indicators were valid. The internal consistency of the five indicators was excellent (Cronbach's alpha = 0.937), well above the 0.60 threshold.

Data analysis

Data were analysed in SPSS in three steps. First, descriptive statistics (mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation) summarised pretest and posttest scores. Second, because the sample was smaller than 50, the Shapiro–Wilk test was used to check normality as the prerequisite for parametric analysis. Third, a paired-samples *t*-test compared the two means of the same group:

$$t = \frac{\bar{D}}{SD_{D} / \sqrt{n}}$$

where $\bar{D}$ is the mean difference between posttest and pretest scores, SD_D is the standard deviation of the differences, and n is the number of participants. The null hypothesis (H_0) stated that pronunciation practice had no significant effect on speaking ability, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) stated that it had a significant effect. H_0 was rejected when Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Instrument quality. Before hypothesis testing, the quality of the speaking test was examined (Table 1). All five indicators exceeded the critical *r* value of 0.468, and Cronbach's alpha of 0.937 indicated excellent internal consistency. The instrument was therefore considered suitable for measuring students' speaking ability.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability of the Speaking Test

Aspect	Criterion	Result	Decision
Validity (Pearson product-moment; N = 18, df = 16)	*r* count > *r* table = 0.468	All five indicators (pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, comprehensibility) exceeded the critical value	Valid
Reliability (Cronbach's alpha; 5 items)	α > 0.60	α = 0.937	Reliable (excellent)

Descriptive statistics.

Table 2 shows that the mean score rose from 56.67 (SD = 3.896) in the pretest to 83.50 (SD = 5.458) in the posttest. The gain of 26.83 points is equivalent to a 47.3% increase over the pretest mean. The lowest posttest score (73) was higher than the highest pretest score (63), so the two score distributions did not overlap. The posttest range (22 points) was wider than the pretest range (14 points), which suggests that learners did not benefit to the same degree.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Pretest	18	49	63	56.67	3.896
Posttest	18	73	95	83.50	5.458

Normality test.

Because the sample was smaller than 50, the Shapiro–Wilk test was used as the main normality criterion (Table 3). The significance values for the pretest (0.967) and the posttest (0.953) were both greater than 0.05, and the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test with Lilliefors correction pointed in the same direction. The data in both conditions were therefore treated as normally distributed, and the paired-samples *t*-test was appropriate.

Table 3. Tests of Normality

Test	K–S statistic	df	Sig.	S–W statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	0.090	18	0.200*	0.982	18	0.967
Posttest	0.128	18	0.200*	0.980	18	0.953

Note. K–S = Kolmogorov–Smirnov (Lilliefors significance correction); S–W = Shapiro–Wilk. *This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Hypothesis test.

The paired-samples *t*-test (Table 4) produced a significance value of 0.000 (reported as $p < 0.001$), which is below 0.05. The mean difference of −26.833 indicates that posttest scores were higher than pretest scores, and the 95% confidence interval of the difference (−29.694 to −23.973) did not include zero. H_0 was therefore rejected and H_1 accepted: there was a statistically significant difference between speaking scores before and after the treatment. Using the reported values, the standardised mean difference (mean difference divided by the standard deviation of the differences) is approximately 4.67, which is very large by conventional benchmarks (Cohen, 1988).

Table 4. Paired-Samples *t*-Test

Pair	Mean difference	D	E mean	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	*t*	f	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest – Posttest	−26.833	.752	.356	−29.694	−23.973	−19.791	7	0.000

Discussion

Why the gain occurred: targeted, repeated practice on difficult sounds.

The rise from 56.67 to 83.50 shows that learners performed markedly better on the recorded speaking test after four module-based sessions. A plausible explanation lies in how the module was organised. Each session isolated a problem that the preliminary observation had identified: the contrast between long and short vowels, the fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ that have no close equivalent in Indonesian, plosive contrasts, and stress and intonation in connected text. Mother-tongue interference makes such sounds hard to articulate accurately (Nasta et al., 2020), and learners in a setting where English is not used daily have little chance to correct these habits spontaneously (Widagdo, 2021). When instruction targets precisely the sounds that first-language habits make difficult, and learners repeat them under guidance, articulatory habits can be reshaped in a way that a classroom with little pronunciation work cannot offer. This remains an interpretation, because the study did not isolate which element of the module produced the change.

The finding is consistent with earlier research on individual techniques. Reading aloud raised the mean score of eighth graders from 24.43 to 44.71, a gain of 20.28 points (Hasriani et al., 2025), and the direct method raised speaking scores from 30.6 to 71.3, a gain of 40.7 points (Putri Rahayu, n.d.). Imitation through an online video platform significantly improved pronunciation competence

(Tugiyatun et al., 2022), reading aloud with minimal-pair texts helped learners distinguish similar sounds (Mardiah et al., 2024), the phonetic method resolved confusion about sound symbols (Asrul & Husda, 2022), and oral drills turned initially fearful learners into active participants (Komariyah, n.d.). The gain of 26.83 points found here lies between the two quantitative gains above, although the tests, scales, and durations differ, so the comparison is only indicative. The present study adds that techniques usually examined separately can be delivered together in one short module that trains segmental and suprasegmental features at once. However, because no single-technique condition was compared, the results cannot show that the combination is superior to any one technique.

Pronunciation, comprehensibility, and confidence.

Pronunciation is one component of speaking alongside grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Mufidah, 2017; Pauzan, 2021). Clearer sound production can raise comprehensibility, which is the practical goal of pronunciation teaching (Derwing & Munro, 2005), and listeners are more likely to rate a speaker as fluent and understandable when individual sounds are recognisable. This also warrants caution: only total scores were analysed, and a halo effect may have carried improved pronunciation into the ratings of other aspects. The study therefore cannot show which of the five components changed, and any improvement in vocabulary or grammar should be treated as plausible but untested.

The affective dimension also deserves attention. Before the treatment, many learners stayed silent for fear of making mistakes, a pattern linked to classroom anxiety (Crutia Suli et al., 2025; Horwitz et al., 1986). The module's group sorting, sound race, twister relay, and peer feedback on recordings gave learners low-stakes opportunities to produce spoken output, which is considered an important driver of language development (Swain, 1985). The researcher's observations described more active participation during the sessions. Yet confidence and anxiety were not measured, so this affective explanation remains a hypothesis for future testing.

Interpreting the magnitude of the effect.

The standardised difference of about 4.67 is unusually large for four sessions of 45 minutes, and several features of the design call for caution. First, a one-group pretest–posttest design cannot exclude history, maturation, testing, and instrumentation effects (Campbell & Stanley, 1963), and the absence of a control group means the gain cannot be attributed to the treatment alone. Second, the pretest and posttest followed the same format but used different items, and their equivalence was not established. Some posttest words, such as *think* and *brother*, also appeared in the module's practice lists, so part of the gain may reflect familiarity with practised items rather than transfer to spontaneous speech. Third, procedures such as rater blinding and inter-rater agreement were not examined, even though audio recordings allowed repeated listening. Fourth, the sample comprised 18 learners in one madrasah, which limits generalisation, and the wider spread of posttest scores suggests that benefits were uneven across learners.

Despite these limits, the results give practical direction. Teachers can organise short modules that sequence the sounds their learners find hardest, pair drills with games and peer recording, and assess progress with recorded tasks that allow careful scoring. Future studies should include a comparison group, a delayed posttest, component-level scoring, and measures of speaking confidence and anxiety, so that the contribution of pronunciation practice can be separated from other influences.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study asked to what extent multi-technique pronunciation practice is effective for the English speaking ability of eighth graders, and whether speaking ability improved significantly after the treatment. Speaking scores were significantly higher after four module-based sessions than before them, so the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The improvement was large, and the posttest scores of the weakest learners exceeded the pretest scores of the strongest. Pronunciation practice that combines phonetic drilling, minimal pairs, oral drills, tongue twisters, and reading aloud can therefore be regarded as an effective and promising strategy for improving the speaking performance of eighth graders in this madrasah. Because the design had no control group and involved a small, single-site sample, the improvement is best read as associated with the treatment rather than as definitive causal proof.

For English teachers, the findings suggest planning short pronunciation modules that follow the sounds learners find hardest, moving from vowels and consonants to stress, rhythm, and intonation in connected text. Drills should be paired with enjoyable and interactive activities, such as games, group tasks, and peer feedback on recordings, so that learners use English actively and with less fear of mistakes. Recorded speaking tasks are also useful for careful and repeatable assessment.

For schools, the results support giving pronunciation practice a regular place in the English programme and creating supporting spaces, such as English clubs, where learners can use what they practise. For learners, regular and active practice of pronunciation outside class can help consolidate gains and build confidence. For future researchers, studies should use designs with a comparison or control group, larger and more varied samples, delayed posttests, parallel and verified test forms, component-level scoring with more than one rater, and measures of confidence and anxiety, so that the specific contribution of each technique can be identified.

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