
THE EFFECT OF TONGUE TWISTER STRATEGY ON ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AND FLUENCY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Good pronunciation and fluency competence are essential for effective communication in English, especially for second language (L2) learners, as it impacts message clarity, emotional expression, and speaker confidence. This article highlighted the importance of pronunciation and fluency competence in English language acquisition as well as the challenges faced by L2 learners and teachers. It emphasizes the need for differentiated and engaging learning methods, especially the use of tongue twister strategy, which have been shown to improve phonemic awareness, pronunciation ability, and fluency in a fun and interactive way. This article reviews several studies showing the effectiveness of tongue twister strategy in improving pronunciation and fluency competence, and increasing learners' motivation. By integrating this strategy into language teaching, teachers can create a more effective and enjoyable learning environment, ultimately promoting better proficiency in English communication for their students.

Keywords: Tongue Twister Strategy, English Pronunciation, Fluency Improvement

INTRODUCTION

Good pronunciation is essential for effective communication in English, because it influences how speakers are perceived and understood (Putra, 2010; Pennington, 2021). Pronunciation is not merely about producing sounds; it plays an important role in conveying messages accurately, expressing emotions, and enhancing speakers' confidence (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Prashant, 2018). Another English competence is fluency, which is a crucial aspect of effective communication (Tavakoli et al., 2023).

English pronunciation and fluency competence are closely related because accurate pronunciation supports smooth and effective oral communication, which is a key aspect of fluency (Ratminingsih, 2016). Thus, improving pronunciation helps students achieve better fluency in speaking English by enabling them to be understood clearly and to communicate more confidently. In detail, English pronunciation and fluency develop through interaction and grammar usage in conversation, where this interaction helps speakers internalize the rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns essential for fluent speech (Swandana et al., 2024).

Putra (2009) stated that native language (L1) influences language use and teaching of the second language or standardized form the second language (L2). Then, Pramerta et al. (2023) highlighted that both L2 students and teachers face challenges in English pronunciation and fluency competence primarily due to anxiety and difficulty in using English. Various studies suggest that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers should adopt diverse and engaging methods and strategies for teaching English pronunciation and fluency competence, such as drama, role-play, imitation and repetition, videos and group work, spelling and dictation, reading aloud, audiovisual aids, drills, Total Physical Response (TPR), and tongue twisters (Panduranga & Kalapala, 2022; Jafari et al., 2021; Purwanto, 2019; Ratminingsih, 2010). Swandana (2018) also stated that repeatedly practicing words and sentences helps solidify correct pronunciation habits.

Tongue twisters, in particular, have been shown to enhance phonemic awareness and improve English pronunciation and fluency competence in a fun and engaging manner. Recent studies indicate significant pronunciation improvement when using tongue twisters, especially among high school and university students. This article defines the concept of pronunciation and fluency, then reviews various studies to investigate the effectiveness of tongue twister strategy in improving English pronunciation and fluency competence as well as boosting learners' motivation as proposed by previous literature.

METHODOLOGY

This article used a literature review method, which refers to a comprehensive overview of previous research on a specific topic. It serves to show what is already known and what remains unknown, thereby establishing the rationale for a new investigation (Denney and Tewksbury, 2013). In a literature review research method, data collection involves systematically gathering existing information from various sources such as academic journal articles, books, governmental publications, and other credible documents relevant to the research topic. The process includes identifying, selecting, and reviewing prior studies to understand what has been established and where gaps exist (Denney and Tewksbury, 2013).

To collect the data, the purpose of the study was first identified, which is to investigate the effectiveness of tongue twister strategy in improving English pronunciation and fluency competence as well as boosting learners' motivation. In searching literature, this study used reliable sources from the internet, including Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>), Research Gate (<https://www.researchgate.net/>), and Open Knowledge Maps (<https://openknowledgemaps.org/index>). Furthermore, English articles that contain keywords such as English pronunciation, fluency, and tongue twister. Those above are the standards used by the researchers to choose a reference.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Concept of Pronunciation

Pronunciation is a crucial aspect of spoken language and essential for effective communication and understanding in English (Levis, 2018; Pennington, 2021; Sokyrska, 2023; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). It is a component of the language variety a speaker chooses to use in different communicative situations (Putra, 2010). It involves mastering sounds of the language, including segmental features such as consonant and vowel sounds and suprasegmental features like stress, rhythm, and intonation (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Challenges in pronunciation can lead to difficulties in communication, making it vital for learners to improve their pronunciation skills for academic and social success. The L2 learners often face challenges such as interference from their first language, limited exposure to English, and the trade-off between accuracy and fluency (Fadillah, 2020; Maiza, 2020).

Therefore, teaching pronunciation should be integrated into language learning as part of communicative activities, focusing on intelligibility rather than achieving native-like proficiency (Atar, 2018). According to Sokyrska (2023), practical strategies for teaching pronunciation include providing practice opportunities, using technology, incorporating communicative activities, focusing on sounds, giving feedback, making learning enjoyable, encouraging self-reflection, and integrating pronunciation into lessons. By employing these strategies, teachers can significantly enhance students' pronunciation skills and overall language proficiency, helping them become more effective communicators in English.

Pronunciation refers to how these sounds are physically produced and articulated by speakers, meanwhile speech sounds are the basic units of spoken language that are produced

by the movement and coordination of speech organs such as the tongue, lips, and vocal cords. (Adnyani and Pastika, 2016). The first division in speech sounds is between vowels and consonants (Odden, 2005). American English has seventeen vowels, while British English has twenty vowels and diphthongs as shown in the list below.

Table 1 Vowels sound in American English (Yoshida, 2014)

i:	sleep /sli:p/	u:	blue /blu:/
ɪ	bit /bɪt/	ʊ	pull /pʊl/
i	baby /'berbi/	oʊ	road /roud/
eɪ	game /gɛm/	ɔ:	walk /wɔ:k/
ɛ	egg /ɛg/	ɑ	box /bɔks/
æ	bag /bæg/	aɪ	high /haɪ/
ʌ	run /rʌn/	aʊ	cow /kaʊ/
ə	pencil /'pensəl/	ɔɪ	coin /kɔɪn/
ɜ:	earth /ɜ:rθ/		

Table 2 Vowels and Diphthongs in British English (Mortimer, 1985)

i:	see /si:/	ɜ:	fur /fɜ:(r)/
ɪ	sit /sɪt/	ə	ago /ə'gəʊ/
e	ten /ten/	eɪ	page /peɪdʒ/
æ	hat /hæt/	əʊ	home /həʊm/
ɑ:	arm /ɑ:m/	aɪ	five /faɪv/
ɒ	got /gɒt/	aʊ	now /naʊ/
ɔ:	saw /sə:/	ɔɪ	join /dʒɔɪn/
ʊ	put /pʊt/	ɪə	near /nɪə(r)/
u:	too /tu:/	eə	hair /heə(r)/
ʌ	cup /kʌp/	ʊə	pure /pjʊə/

Odden (2005) identifies three key properties for defining vowels based on tongue and lip position: height, backness, and roundness. Height refers to the tongue's vertical position during vowel production, categorized as high, mid, or low. Backness indicates the tongue's horizontal position, distinguishing vowels as front, central, or back. Then, rounding involves the shape of the lips, with rounded vowels like [u] and unrounded vowels like [i]. In addition to these properties, other phonetic characteristics define vowels, such as nasalization, where air flows through the nose, and the distinction between long and short vowels, marked by various diacritics. Stress and tone are also important; stress emphasizes certain syllables, affecting vowel sounds, while tone uses pitch variations to distinguish meaning in tonal languages. Odden (2005) then explains phonation type, which refers to vocal fold vibration patterns that affect vowel quality. Lastly, glides (or semi-vowels) like [y] and [w] function between consonants and vowels, and their classification often depends on language-specific rules. According to the vocal cords' vibration level, consonants are classified into two groups: voiced and voiceless (Birjandi & Salmani-Nodoushan, 2005).

Table 3 Type of Voicing in Consonants

Type	Phoneme
Voiced	/dʒ/, /z/, /b/, /g/, /v/, /ʒ/, /d/, /ð/, /w/, /j/, /l/, /r/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/
Voiceless	/tʃ/, /s/, /p/, /k/, /f/, /ʃ/, /t/, /θ/, /h/

Another characteristic is the place of articulation. Odden (2005) stated that it refers to where in the vocal tract the sound is produced, with primary categories including bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, alveopalatal, retroflex, palatal, velar, uvular, pharyngeal, and glottal. Each category is defined by the specific articulators involved in producing the sounds.

Furthermore, Adnyani (2021) explained that English consonant sounds consist of various types, including stops, nasals, approximants, and fricatives. Among these, fricative sounds are particularly challenging for Indonesian learners because some English fricatives do not exist in the Indonesian phonemic system. Indonesian learners experience difficulties in the pronunciation of English fricative sounds which often occur in sounds such as /v/, /f/, /ð/, /θ/, /z/, /ʒ/, and /ʃ/. These difficulties are mainly due to mother tongue interference, complex English spelling patterns, developmental articulation challenges, and limited exposure to certain sounds. Adnyani suggests targeted pronunciation training with a focus on problematic fricatives to improve learners' accuracy. Other than that, Ratminingsih & Budasi (2020) mentioned that the use of digital media also could supports learning English pronunciation by providing audio-visual materials such as videos, animations, and simulations that help concretize abstract sounds and pronunciation patterns.

Concept of Fluency

Fluency is a crucial aspect of effective communication. It defined as the ability to convey intended meaning smoothly and coherently in real time (Tavakoli et al., 2023). It involves the flow of spoken or written language, characterized by clear expression, appropriate organization of ideas, and suitable vocabulary and syntax (De Jong, 2018). Fluent speakers can communicate confidently, facilitating better interactions in personal and professional contexts. Fluency according Ratminingsih (2016) involves the ability to speak with ease, appropriate speed, and clarity, all of which depend on correct pronunciation of sounds, stress, and intonation patterns.

Fluency encompasses several elements, including speed, pauses, hesitation, and self-correction, which can significantly impact communication flow and coherence. Factors affecting fluency include cognitive aspects, such as speech generation and complexity of topics, and social elements, like conversational context (Foster, 2020).

According to Ratminingsih (2010), students' fluency competence was hindered by students' inability to express ideas smoothly, causing pauses and difficulty in understanding. Besides, Retny et al. (2017) states that students' knowledge of English is often limited to textbook content and not on how to use English contextually, which also hinders their fluency in real-life situation.

Strategies for fostering fluency include encouraging constructive errors, providing ample practice opportunities, focusing on meaning over accuracy, and discussing the importance of fluency development (Brown, 1995). Additionally, exposure to diverse English language contexts and interaction with native speakers can further improve fluency (Zhang, 2009). These approaches aim to create an environment that prioritizes communication and practical language use over strict grammatical accuracy.

Tongue Twister Strategy

The tongue twister strategy is a traditional pronunciation teaching method that involves the repeated reading of phrases designed to improve the pronunciation of specific sounds (Tergujeff & Kuronen, 2023). Tongue twisters are challenging phrases with similar sounds or complex combinations, making them enjoyable tools for practicing pronunciation and enhancing fluency (Sokyrska, 2023).

Tongue twisters are characterized by phonetic stylistic devices like alliteration and rhyme. While they can be entertaining, their primary purpose is to improve speech fluency and correct utterance (Babayev, 2022). They require careful pronunciation and control, helping learners develop focus and adaptability (Ischenko et al., 2023). Stuckey (2009) noted that tongue twisters are exciting and fun, motivating learners to practice and improve their communication skills.

The strategy involves several steps, including preparing tongue twisters, modeling pronunciation, and encouraging students to practice individually or in pairs (Ratminingsih, 2019). Benefits of this strategy include making pronunciation lessons enjoyable, improving accuracy, and enhancing vocabulary skills. However, challenges include pronunciation, which may discourage some students, the often-illogical meanings of phrases, which prioritize sound similarity over the meaning. Here are several examples of tongue twister sentences:

1. She /ʃi:/ sells /selz/ seashells /'si:felz/ by /baɪ/ the the /ðə/ seashore /'si:fɔ:(r)/
2. I /aɪ/ scream /skri:m/, you /ju:/ scream /skri:m/, we /wi:/ all /ɔ:l/ scream /skri:m/ for /fɔ:(r)/ ice cream /'aɪs kri:m/.
3. Scissors /'sɪzəz/ sizzle /'sɪzl/, thistle /'θɪsl/ sizzle /'sɪzl/.

The Effectiveness of Tongue Twister Strategy in Improving Pronunciation and Fluency Competence

The empirical review summarizes various studies that investigate the effectiveness of tongue twisters in improving English pronunciation skills. The findings from several studies include:

- 1) Nabilla et al. (2023): This study demonstrated that the tongue twister technique, combined with the Twistify application, significantly improved pronunciation skills among 34 students.
- 2) Nabila et al. (2023): Using TikTok, this study found that the tongue twister technique led to a significant improvement in pronunciation among tenth-grade students.
- 3) Husni et al. (2023): The study showed that the tongue twister technique effectively improved pronunciation and confidence in tenth-grade students.
- 4) Heart et al. (2023): This research indicated that the tongue twister technique supported by ELSA application significantly enhanced pronunciation skills.
- 5) Sugiharto et al. (2022): The study found that tongue twisters effectively improved pronunciation ability, as well as enhancing student motivation.
- 6) Sari et al. (2022): The study focused on improving the pronunciation of digraph sounds using tongue twisters, resulting in a significant increase in scores.
- 7) Juniarti et al. (2020): The study demonstrated that the tongue twister technique significantly improved pronunciation scores among first-grade students.
- 8) Thamrin et al. (2023): This study focused on addressing phonetic errors and found that tongue twisters significantly improved pronunciation skills.
- 9) Lestari (2019): The Tongue Twister Technique positively impacted students' fluency and accuracy in speaking English. It helped students improve their pronunciation, particularly

with challenging sounds like /ð/ and /θ/, and reduced long pauses in their speech, showing increased confidence and louder speech.

10) Ryandini and Fitriyasari (2023): The students find that using tongue twisters helps them become more fluent in pronouncing English words and drills their tongue to pronounce words well. The activity is considered fun and challenging, which enhances their engagement and motivation to practice pronunciation.

These studies collectively support the effectiveness of tongue twisters as a valuable strategy for improving English pronunciation and fluency competence, as well as boosting learner motivation in English language education. Adnyani (2021) explained that accurate pronunciation facilitates clearer communication, which directly impacts a learner's fluency in oral communication. Improving pronunciation helps learners be better understood, thus enhancing their overall speaking fluency and confidence in using English in real-life contexts. Moreover, Ratminingsih (2010) suggested that, improvement in these areas contributes significantly to enhancing overall oral communicative competence.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, English pronunciation and fluency competence are closely related because accurate pronunciation supports smooth and effective oral communication. They also facilitate precise message delivery and enhances speakers' confidence and social integration. The challenges faced by L2 learners, such as first language interference and limited exposure, underscore the importance of targeted pronunciation instruction. Research highlights the effectiveness tongue twister strategy significantly improve pronunciation and fluency competence. By incorporating this strategy into language instruction, teachers can foster a more enjoyable and effective learning environment, ultimately helping students achieve excellent English communication proficiency. The evidence from various studies supports the notion that tongue twister enhances pronunciation and fluency competence, as well as boost students' motivation and confidence, making them a valuable strategy in language education.

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