

Pronunciation Performance in English Monologues among Islamic Education Students: A case study at Islamic University of Jambi

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the English pronunciation performance of Islamic Education students at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. Forty undergraduate students participated by submitting a 1–2 minute spoken monologue on the topic of “friendship.” Each performance was evaluated using a rubric adapted from the University of Colorado, assessing five pronunciation aspects: individual sounds, word stress and endings, intonation and rhythm, fluency and hesitation, and overall comprehensibility. The findings revealed that the overall mean score was low (1.32 out of 4), with the majority (80%) categorized as having “Ineffective” pronunciation. Word stress and endings posed the greatest challenge, while fluency had a slightly higher average. Only a few students demonstrated satisfactory pronunciation, marked by clearer articulation, better rhythm, and fewer hesitations. Qualitative observations supported these findings by identifying frequent errors in segmental and suprasegmental features. The results highlight an urgent need for explicit pronunciation instruction within the English curriculum of Islamic Education programs. The study recommends integrating phonetic training, pronunciation-focused tasks, and digital tools to improve learners’ speaking skills. Future research should explore the long-term development of pronunciation and the impact of targeted interventions.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Assessment, Performance, Islamic Education, , Islamic University

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji kemampuan pelafalan Bahasa Inggris mahasiswa Pendidikan Agama Islam di UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. Sebanyak 40 mahasiswa berpartisipasi dengan merekam monolog berdurasi 1–2 menit bertema “persahabatan.” Setiap rekaman dievaluasi menggunakan rubrik yang diadaptasi dari University of Colorado, mencakup lima aspek pelafalan: bunyi individual, tekanan kata dan akhiran, intonasi dan ritme, kelancaran dan keraguan, serta keterpahaman secara keseluruhan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa skor rata-rata keseluruhan rendah (1,32 dari 4), dengan mayoritas peserta (80%) tergolong dalam kategori “Tidak Efektif.” Aspek tekanan kata dan akhiran menjadi tantangan terbesar, sedangkan aspek kelancaran memiliki rata-rata sedikit lebih tinggi. Hanya sedikit mahasiswa yang menunjukkan pelafalan memadai, ditandai dengan artikulasi lebih jelas, ritme lebih alami, dan sedikit keraguan. Temuan kualitatif mendukung data kuantitatif dengan mengidentifikasi kesalahan umum pada fitur segmental dan suprasegmental. Hasil ini menegaskan perlunya pengajaran pelafalan secara eksplisit dalam kurikulum Bahasa Inggris bagi mahasiswa Pendidikan Agama Islam. Studi ini merekomendasikan pelatihan fonetik, tugas berbasis pelafalan, dan pemanfaatan teknologi digital untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara. Penelitian lanjutan disarankan untuk mengeksplorasi perkembangan pelafalan dalam jangka panjang dan dampak dari intervensi terarah.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Assessment, Performance, Islamic Education, , Islamic University

A. Introduction

English has long become an essential language for global communication, education, and technology. For learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts like Indonesia, developing the four key language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is fundamental. Among these, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging skill due to the need for real-time language processing, fluency, and accurate pronunciation (Robah & Anggrisia, 2023; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). English proficiency is increasingly important for university students as they are expected to access global educational resources, communicate in diverse academic settings, and prepare for future roles as educators in multilingual environments (Pranawengtias, 2022). For students majoring in Islamic Education, mastering English is similarly essential as they will become Islamic teachers who are expected not only to master religious knowledge but also to engage with contemporary issues in education and society (Fakhrurriana & Ningsih, 2023; “Learning English in Saudi Arabia,” 2018).

In a globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in English enables Islamic education students to broaden their professional horizons, participate in international forums, and access a wider range of Islamic scholarship that may be available in English. Moreover, many Islamic education graduates are anticipated to contribute to educational institutions that promote bilingual or multilingual instruction, where English is used alongside Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia (Bin Tahir, 2017; Fitriyani & Rasyid, 2018; Ma'ruf & Sari, 2020; Tahir & Maarof, 2021). Thus, developing solid speaking skills, particularly accurate pronunciation, becomes a necessary component of their academic and professional preparation. Accurate pronunciation enhances intelligibility and reduces communication barriers, especially in intercultural or interfaith dialogue, which are increasingly relevant in modern Islamic education contexts

Pronunciation plays a crucial role in oral communication as it directly affects how intelligible and comprehensible a speaker is to others (Carrel, 2023; Darcy, 2018; Tiwari, 2023). Poor pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and may hinder the effectiveness of communication even when grammar and vocabulary are accurate (Islam, 2020; Kosasih, 2021). In EFL classrooms, however, pronunciation often receives less instructional focus compared to other linguistic components (Darcy, 2018). This issue is particularly prevalent in non-English majors, such as students in Islamic Education departments, where English is treated as a supporting subject rather than a core area of specialization. As a result, pronunciation skills tend to develop unevenly, with many students displaying limited awareness of both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of spoken English.

Various factors contribute to pronunciation challenges among EFL learners in Indonesia, including interference from the first language (L1), limited exposure to native English input, and lack of speaking practice (Kosasih, 2021; Luthfianda et al., 2024). Most existing studies focus on general EFL students or English majors, leaving a need for more targeted research on learners from other academic disciplines (Indrayadi et al., 2021; Kosasih, 2021; Luthfianda et al., 2024; Nafi'a et al., 2025; Ristati et al., 2024). Despite growing awareness of the need for communicative competence, there remains a significant gap in research specifically examining how students in Islamic higher education institutions perform in speaking tasks, especially in terms of pronunciation.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the pronunciation accuracy of Islamic Education students at an Indonesian Islamic university. The data is drawn from a speaking task in which students were asked to deliver a short monologue (1–2 minutes) in English describing friendship.

What is Friendship?

Friendship is a special kind of relationship. Friends are people who

care about each other, share good times, and help one another. A good friend can make you laugh, cheer you up when you're sad, and share fun adventures with you.

Friends don't always have to be the same. You might be quiet, and your friend might be loud. You might like to play sports, and your friend might love drawing. These differences make your friendship exciting because you can learn new things from each other!

Good friends also support each other. If your friend feels upset, you can listen to them and cheer them up. If you need help, a friend will be there for you too.

Remember, being a good friend means being kind, honest, and respectful. Say "thank you," apologize when needed, and show you care.

This context provides a practical and relevant linguistic scenario, as it integrates familiar vocabulary with spontaneous spoken production, allowing researchers to observe authentic pronunciation patterns. By focusing exclusively on pronunciation, this study seeks to identify common mispronunciations, patterns of segmental and suprasegmental errors, and the overall level of pronunciation accuracy among the participants. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for language instructors, particularly in Islamic higher education institutions, in designing more effective speaking and pronunciation activities. In addition, this research contributes to the broader understanding of English language learning in non-English disciplines. It aims to emphasize the importance of incorporating pronunciation-focused instruction into general English courses, especially for students who will eventually serve as teachers or public speakers in religious and educational settings.

B. Research Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with a qualitative descriptive emphasis to examine the

pronunciation accuracy of 40 undergraduate students enrolled in an English course at the Islamic Education Department of UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. As part of their final speaking assignment, students recorded a 1–2 minute monologue in English on the topic of “friendship.” These recordings were collected and analyzed to assess pronunciation performance focusing on both segmental features (individual consonants and vowels) and suprasegmental features (word stress, intonation, rhythm, fluency, and overall comprehensibility).

Pronunciation performance was quantitatively evaluated using a speaking assessment rubric adapted from the University of Colorado International Language Centre, which rates each aspect on a five-point scale:

Table 1. Assessment Criteria

SCORE	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTIONS
(5)	Excellent Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native-like pronunciation of individual sounds, word stress, word endings, intonation, and rhythm Native-like fluency; speaks smoothly without hesitation and with ease Pronunciation does not impede communication
(4)	Good Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate pronunciation of individual sounds, word stress, word endings, intonation, and rhythm Occasional non-native pauses and/or hesitations which do not interfere with comprehensibility. Pronunciation rarely impedes communication
(3)	Satisfactory Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairly accurate pronunciation of individual sounds, word stress, word endings intonation, and rhythm Some non-native pauses and/or hesitations which sometimes interfere with comprehensibility. Pronunciation occasionally impedes communication
(2)	Partially Effective Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inaccurate pronunciation of some individual sounds, word stress, word endings intonation, and rhythm, which interfere with comprehensibility Many non-native pauses and/or hesitations which can interfere with comprehensibility. Pronunciation impedes communication
(1)	Ineffective Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major inaccuracies with pronunciation of individual sounds, word stress, word endings intonation, and rhythm, which causes significant problems in intelligibility Significant pausing, hesitations, and/or short phrases which interfere significantly with comprehensibility. Pronunciation severely impedes communication

For qualitative analysis, the video recordings were repeatedly listened to in order to identify and note common pronunciation errors and recurring patterns. These observations were systematically grouped into thematic categories reflecting frequent difficulties such as mispronounced sounds, incorrect stress placement, unnatural intonation, and frequent hesitations. Additionally, the overall intelligibility of

each monologue was assessed based on clarity and ease of listener comprehension. This combined quantitative and qualitative approach provided a comprehensive understanding of students' pronunciation strengths and challenges in a natural, task-based speaking context.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Overview of Pronunciation Performance

Table 2. Overview of Pronunciation Assessment Design

Component	Details
Number of Participants	40 Islamic Education students
Pronunciation Aspects Assessed	5 aspects: Individual Sounds, Word Stress & Endings, Intonation & Rhythm, Fluency & Hesitation, Overall Comprehensibility
Rubric Scale	1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Very Good
Score Range Interpretation	Ineffective (1.0–1.9), Partially Effective (2.0–2.9), Satisfactory (3.0–4.0)
Assessment Objective	To evaluate students' pronunciation skills based on accuracy, fluency, and clarity

This study assessed the English pronunciation skills of 40 students enrolled in the Islamic Education program using a performance-based rubric. The assessment focused on five critical aspects of pronunciation: individual sounds, word stress and endings, intonation and rhythm, fluency and hesitation, and overall comprehensibility. Each aspect was evaluated on a 4-point scale where a score of 1 indicated poor performance, 2 represented fair performance, 3 reflected good performance, and 4 denoted very good performance. These criteria were selected to capture both segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, and intonation) features of pronunciation, as well

as the ability to deliver speech in a fluid and understandable manner. To provide a comprehensive evaluation, students' scores were summed and averaged, and their overall pronunciation abilities were categorized into three levels based on their total average: "Ineffective" for average scores between 1.0–1.9, "Partially Effective" for scores between 2.0–2.9, and "Satisfactory" for scores of 3.0 and above. This categorization allowed for a clearer interpretation of students' pronunciation proficiency and helped identify areas requiring further improvement.

2. General Quantitative Results

The quantitative results of this study provide a general overview of students' performance across the five assessed aspects of pronunciation. When the total scores from all 40 students were aggregated, the highest score was found in the aspect of Fluency and Hesitation, which reached a cumulative total of 56. This suggests that, among the five components, students performed relatively better in terms of speech continuity, although this performance still fell within the lower range of the rubric. Following closely was Overall Comprehensibility, with a total of 55, indicating that while most students were not entirely fluent, some degree of intelligibility was maintained in their spoken output.

Table 3. Overall Quantitative Scores of Pronunciation Aspects

Pronunciation Aspect	Total Score	Mean Score (Total ÷ 40)
Individual Sounds	53	1.33
Word Stress & Endings	49	1.23
Intonation & Rhythm	51	1.28
Fluency & Hesitation	56	1.40
Overall Comprehensibility	55	1.38
Total Score (All Aspects)	264	1.32 (Average of all means)

In contrast, Word Stress and Endings recorded the lowest cumulative score of 49, revealing a significant challenge among students in producing accurate stress patterns and final word sounds—elements that are crucial for natural and

comprehensible speech in English. Individual Sounds and Intonation and Rhythm also showed low totals of 53 and 51, respectively, pointing to consistent difficulties in articulation and prosody across the majority of participants.

When the total scores from all students ($n = 40$) were summed, the overall score reached 264, resulting in an average total score of 6.6 per student. Given that the maximum possible total score per student was 20 (4 points for each of the 5 aspects), this average indicates a generally low level of pronunciation proficiency. When converted into a mean average score across the five aspects, the result is 1.32, which falls within the "Ineffective" category based on the established rubric. This quantitative profile highlights the urgent need for targeted instructional support to improve students' pronunciation skills in a more structured and consistent manner.

3. Categorization of Pronunciation Skills

Table 4. Students' performance based on category

Category	Number of students	%	Interpretation
Ineffective	33	82,5%	Students struggled with pronunciation across most aspects; speech often unclear.
Partially Effective	5	12,5%	Some improvement evident, but pronunciation remained inconsistent and limited.
Satisfactory	2	5%	Speech was generally comprehensible, with clearer articulation and better fluency.
Total	40	100%	

Based on the rubric criteria and students' average scores, the pronunciation performance of the 40 students was categorized into three levels: Ineffective, Partially Effective, and Satisfactory. The majority of students—33 out of 40, or 82,5%—fell into the Ineffective category, with average scores ranging between 1.0 and 1.9. This overwhelming proportion indicates that most

students faced considerable difficulties across multiple pronunciation aspects, including the production of individual sounds, stress patterns, and fluency. Their speech was likely difficult to understand and lacked the features necessary for effective oral communication in English.

A smaller group of 5 students (or 12.5%) demonstrated Partially Effective pronunciation skills, scoring between 2.0 and 2.9. These students showed some emerging strengths, such as improved fluency or clearer articulation in certain segments of their speech, but their overall intelligibility and delivery remained inconsistent and required further development.

Only 2 students (or 5%) achieved a Satisfactory level of performance, with average scores of 3.0 or above. These students were able to produce relatively accurate sounds, appropriate stress, and natural intonation, resulting in speech that was generally comprehensible and fluent.

4. Performance by Pronunciation Aspects

Table 5. Students' Performance by Pronunciation Aspects

Aspect	Total Score	Mean Score	Common Issues Identified
Individual Sounds	53	1.33	Most students scored 1; poor articulation of consonants and vowels; frequent mispronunciations.
Word Stress & Endings	49	1.23	Lowest score; dropped final sounds; incorrect syllable stress; affected speech clarity.
Intonation & Rhythm	51	1.28	Flat, flat intonation; monotonous rhythm; weak use of pitch for meaning or emotion.
Fluency & Hesitation	56	1.40	Frequent pauses, hesitations, and false starts; limited fluency and automaticity.
Overall Comprehensibility	55	1.38	Listeners had difficulty understanding; meaning often unclear in longer or complex speech.

4.1. Individual Sounds

The assessment of individual sounds—comprising both consonant and vowel articulation—revealed a total score of 53, resulting in a mean score of 1.33. This low average indicates that the majority of

students encountered difficulties in accurately producing basic phonemes of the English language. Most students scored 1, suggesting persistent mispronunciations and a lack of clarity in producing distinct sounds. Such difficulties may stem from first-language interference, insufficient phonetic awareness, or lack of practice in distinguishing minimal pairs. As accurate pronunciation of individual sounds is fundamental for intelligibility, these results reflect a foundational weakness in the students' spoken English.

4.2. Word Stress and Endings

The Word Stress and Endings aspect recorded the lowest total score (49) among the five categories, with a mean score of 1.23. This finding underscores a significant challenge in the students' ability to apply correct syllable stress and pronounce final consonant sounds. A common issue observed was the omission or softening of final sounds, which can greatly affect clarity, especially in distinguishing between singular and plural nouns or tense in verbs. Additionally, incorrect placement of primary stress on multisyllabic words led to disrupted rhythm and unnatural speech patterns. These issues suggest the need for more focused instruction on stress rules and pronunciation drills involving word endings.

4.3. Intonation and Rhythm

In the area of Intonation and Rhythm, students scored a total of 51, yielding a mean of 1.28. This result reflects difficulties in using varied pitch and natural timing during speech delivery. The students' intonation patterns tended to be flat or monotonous, often resembling robotic speech. There was also a noticeable absence of rising or falling intonation where appropriate, particularly in yes-no questions and expressions of emotion or emphasis. Furthermore, the rhythm of speech was often unnatural, lacking the expected alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables characteristic of English. These patterns not only affect listener engagement but also comprehension, especially in extended discourse.

4.4. Fluency and Hesitation

The highest score among the five aspects was in Fluency and Hesitation, with a total of 56 and a mean of 1.4. Although this aspect showed relatively better performance, the results still fall within a low proficiency range. Most students demonstrated frequent pauses, hesitation, and the use of fillers, which disrupted the flow of speech. There were also instances of self-correction and false starts, indicating a lack of automaticity in spoken English. While some students showed potential for smoother delivery, the overall fluency was hindered by limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, or insufficient speaking practice.

4.5. Overall Comprehensibility

The aspect of Overall Comprehensibility received a total score of 55, with a mean of 1.38, reflecting moderate difficulty in understanding the students' speech. Most utterances required additional effort from listeners to interpret meaning due to mispronunciations, misplaced stress, or poor fluency. Although some students managed to convey meaning in simpler sentences or familiar contexts, communication often broke down in more complex speech. This result suggests that while some intelligibility was present, the clarity and ease of understanding were significantly compromised, reaffirming the general need for enhanced pronunciation instruction.

5. Patterns and Notable Performers

The analysis of student performance revealed a few noteworthy patterns, particularly among a small group of students who exceeded the general trend. Notably, Student 2 and Student 5 stood out by achieving the highest average pronunciation scores of 3.4, placing them in the Satisfactory category. Their performance demonstrated relatively strong pronunciation skills, including clearer articulation of individual sounds, more natural rhythm and intonation, and reduced hesitation during speech. These students were able to maintain

intelligibility even in extended monologue tasks, a skill that most of their peers struggled with.

In addition, only three students consistently achieved scores in the Partially Effective range (mean scores between 2.0 and 2.9) across all five pronunciation aspects. While not fully proficient, these students displayed emerging control over basic pronunciation features, such as more accurate stress placement and moderately comprehensible speech. Their fluency, though still interrupted at times, was significantly smoother than that of the majority of their classmates.

What distinguished these stronger performers from the rest was a combination of factors. They tended to speak with greater clarity, showing a better command of English phonological rules and a more intuitive sense of rhythm and speech timing. Furthermore, they exhibited less hesitation, suggesting stronger confidence and more frequent speaking practice. These patterns indicate that while most students showed limited effectiveness in pronunciation, a small group demonstrated the potential for further development through targeted support and sustained oral language exposure.

6. Comparison with Related Studies

The findings of this study align with several previous investigations into pronunciation challenges faced by English learners, particularly in contexts where English is a foreign language. Similar studies have reported that learners commonly struggle with individual sounds, word stress, and intonation, which significantly affect overall comprehensibility (Fang, 2022; Hassan, 2014; Wei & Zhou, 2002). For instance, research by Al-Asi (2024) found that limited exposure to natural English speech and insufficient pronunciation practice were major contributors to low accuracy in sound production and rhythm patterns. Conversely, some studies present contrasting results where learners showed moderate to high proficiency in fluency and intonation, often

attributed to more immersive language environments or enhanced teaching methods (Kostromitina & Kang, 2021).

Several factors may explain the relatively low scores observed in this study. First, limited speaking practice outside the classroom reduces opportunities for students to develop automaticity in pronunciation. Second, interference from the first language (L1)—in this case, the phonological system of Indonesian—commonly leads to substitution or omission of English sounds that do not exist in the learners' native phonetic inventory. Third, the lack of immediate and constructive feedback during oral practice sessions may hinder students' ability to self-correct and internalize correct pronunciation patterns.

Finally, communication anxiety and lack of confidence during speaking tasks can cause hesitation and reduce fluency, negatively impacting performance. These factors are consistent with findings from earlier studies, reinforcing the need for more targeted pronunciation instruction that includes regular practice, corrective feedback, and confidence-building strategies.

7. Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study highlight a critical need for explicit pronunciation instruction within the Islamic Education programs, where English is taught primarily as a foreign language. Given the widespread difficulties observed in key pronunciation aspects such as individual sounds, word stress, intonation, and fluency, it is essential to integrate focused phonetic training into the curriculum. This could involve systematic instruction on the articulatory features of English sounds, stress patterns, and rhythm to help students overcome common pronunciation errors influenced by their first language.

Moreover, the use of technology-based tools, such as pronunciation apps and software that provide instant feedback, can greatly enhance learners' opportunities for practice and self-monitoring outside the classroom. Incorporating peer-assessed speaking tasks also encourages active

engagement and constructive evaluation, fostering a supportive environment where students can build confidence and improve through collaborative learning.

Finally, pronunciation-focused exercises should be embedded within regular speaking and listening activities rather than treated as isolated drills. This integration allows students to develop more natural and communicative pronunciation skills, aligning with authentic language use. Addressing these pedagogical needs will not only improve learners' oral proficiency but also enhance their overall academic performance and future communicative competence in English.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

This study reveals that the majority of Islamic Education students at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi face significant challenges in English pronunciation across multiple aspects, including individual sounds, word stress, intonation, fluency, and overall comprehensibility. Quantitative results indicate that most students fall into the "Ineffective" or "Partially Effective" categories, highlighting a pervasive difficulty in producing clear and intelligible spoken English. The low mean scores across all pronunciation features emphasize the need for targeted interventions to improve students' oral communication skills.

Qualitative analysis further illuminates the nature of these difficulties, identifying common patterns such as misarticulation of consonants and vowels, dropped or altered word endings, misplaced stress, and monotonous intonation. These recurring issues not only hinder intelligibility but also affect students' confidence and fluency. Notably, a small group of students demonstrated comparatively better performance, characterized by clearer articulation, more natural rhythm, and fewer hesitations, suggesting that focused practice and awareness can lead to improved pronunciation outcomes.

Based on these findings, it is crucial to integrate explicit pronunciation instruction into the English curriculum for

Islamic Education students. Incorporating phonetic training, pronunciation apps, and peer-assessed speaking tasks can help address specific error patterns identified in this study. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to track pronunciation development over time and investigate the effectiveness of targeted pronunciation interventions. Such efforts will contribute to enhancing students' communicative competence and academic success in English-medium contexts.

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