

Linguistics

# Challenges and Problems Faced by EFL Teachers in Teaching Allomorph through Narrative Text

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## A B S T R A C T

The fact that teaching English in Indonesia is still driven by textbooks makes not many students have the ability to communicate in English and even they often experience mispronunciation. This study was conducted to find out how to teach allomorphs as a provision to strengthen knowledge of English pronunciation. In addition, this study also seeks to reveal how the challenges faced by EFL teachers in the Allomorph learning process. There are 3 stages that the teacher can do to teach allomorphs through narrative texts; introduction to phonetic symbols, reading the text, and analyzing and practicing the types of allomorphs. From the use of the selected narrative text, it reveals 3 types of allomorphs from 4 types that have been introduced to students in the form of past tense, plural number, and regular possessive. Some of the challenges and problems faced by EFL teachers in teaching English pronunciation, especially allomorphs, is the lack of student motivation to learn. In addition, EFL teachers still hold on to the old philosophy about the lack of importance of learning pronunciation, making this teaching even more difficult. The lack of class hours and the large number of students in EFL classes are also challenges for teachers.

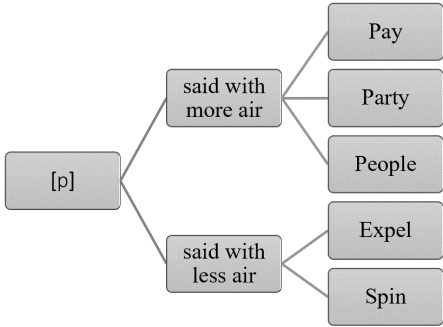
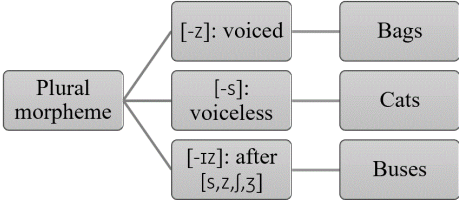
## I. INTRODUCTION

English has been considered the first foreign language in Indonesia. In this regard, Indonesia has implemented EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching at almost all school levels, from kindergarten to high school. The history of the development of EFL from the classical period (1720 - 1950) to the communicative period (1970 - 2000+) has revealed major advances in theory and methods in language learning practice (Howatt et al., 2014). Along with the entry of the post-method era in language learning in the twenty-first century, teachers can create approaches and teaching methods in the classroom based on the teacher's experience in teaching and learning about the art of teaching (Brown et al., 2015). Unfortunately, there are still many EFL teachers in Indonesia who prioritize learning tenses and grammar rather than fostering students to be able to communicate fluently in English.

By the emergence of World Englishes which has

marked that English is an international language and has many varieties, a person only needs one accent to be able to pronounce and speak English. After memorizing vocabulary, pronunciation is one of the basic knowledge to produce good English speaking. Students usually experience mispronunciation in some letters, for example they pronounce /bægs/ in the word 'bags' instead of /bægz/. Another example is the verb 'lived' which is often read /lived/ instead of the actual pronunciation /lɪvd/. Mispronunciation also occurs in the initial and middle letters of a word, such as the use of 'th' in 'this' and 'think'. Despite having the same orthographic symbol (alphabet), the 'th' in 'this' does not share the same sound as the word 'think' (Hancock, n.d.). Some explanations regarding the examples of words above can be found in the scope of micro-linguistics; phonology and morphology (Bermúdez-otero et al., 2006). Phonology is the study that deals with the sound of a letter, while morphology, is the study of how

**Table 1. Allophone and Allomorph**

Allophone	Allomorph
Phoneme is a smallest unit of language that can distinguish meaning. e.g: /pig/ and /brg/	Morpheme is a minimal unit of linguistic that has a meaning. e.g: <u>book</u> s → bound morpheme (inflectional) → free morpheme (lexical)
Allophone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different realization of single phoneme.</li> <li>• Different ways to pronounce the individual letter depending on the word.</li> </ul> e.g: 	Allomorph: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variants of morpheme which refer to the same morpheme.</li> <li>• Different ways of pronouncing morphemes depending on the word.</li> </ul> e.g: 

words are formed. From these two linguistic terms, the term allophone is formed, which means a phonetic variation of a phoneme, while allomorph means a phonetic variation of a morpheme. To get a clearer understanding of these terms, see the table 1.

After reading at the table above regarding the differences between allophone and allomorph in learning English spelling, there are lots of terms and formulas for how to produce the correct pronunciation. Research conducted by Ahmadi (2011) regarding the difficulty of learning ESL/EFL pronunciation has stated that there are many things that teachers must pay attention to in teaching ESL/EFL pronunciation; focus on student needs, language proficiency level, and students' ability. In addition, the teacher can help students underline some elements in pronunciation, such as; division of syllables, the sound of a letter, stressed and unstressed words, and intonation. Therefore, this research will focus on explaining how to teach allomorphs which includes knowledge of several letter sounds and on how to distinguish stressed and unstressed words through legends in Indonesia. Not only that, this research will also reveal the problems and challenges faced by teachers by teaching allomorphs to improve students' spelling skills. From the explanation above, there are 2 problem formulations as follows: (1) How to teach allomorphs through narrative texts to high school

students? (2) What problems or challenges do EFL teachers face in teaching allomorphs through narrative texts?

## II. METHOD

This study intends to propose the way of teaching allomorphs to high school students as a form of embodiment of learning pronunciation. One narrative text in the form of an Indonesian legend entitled 'The Legend of Toba Lake' has been chosen as an example to illustrate teaching in the EFL class. Narrative text was chosen as a learning medium because it has linguistic characteristics that use the past tense which contains many variations of allomorphs (Fahmei Lubis, 2016). In short, this study applies qualitative methods using analytical instruments from narrative texts, develops ideas by identifying previous research related to relevant discussions.

Regarding the procedure for writing research, the researcher carried out several stages to collect the data. The first step is to determine high school students as target participants to facilitate text search because teaching pronunciation must pay attention to the level of English proficiency. After determining the participants, the researcher must determine the type of narrative text and search for the selected text using English-based text. The next step is to read the entire text while underlining words that contain allomorphs. Then, the researchers

classified allomorphes based on their type in order to facilitate the writing of research results. The last step, after the data was collected, the researchers began to analyze how to teach allomorphs to high school students and reveal the challenges faced by EFL teachers in teaching allomorphs.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Teaching stages

There are 4 stages that the teacher can do to guide students in understanding the concept of allomorph in English pronunciation.

#### Introducing phonetic symbols and allomorphs

In linguistics, an allomorph is a variant phonetic form of a morpheme or a unit of meaning that varies in sound and spelling without changing the meaning. The term allomorph describes the realization of phonological variations for a specific morpheme (Bermúdez-otero et al., 2006). To provide a more detailed explanation of allomorph variations, teachers can introduce phonetic symbols based on voicing and place and manner of articulation as shown in the table below (Erlinda, n.d.).

**Table 2. Place and Manner of Articulation**

Manner	Voicing	Place						
		Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glotal
Stop	Voiceless	p			t		k	ʔ
	Voiced	b			d		g	
Fricative	Voiceless		f	θ	s	ʃ		h
	Voiced		v	ð	z	ʒ		
Affricate	Voiceless					tʃ		
	Voiced					dʒ		
Nasal	Voiced	m			n		ŋ	
Liquid	Lateral				l			
	Rhotic					r		
Glide	Voiced	w				j		

After giving a clear explanation of the division of voiced and voiceless letters in consonants, the teacher can also demonstrate how the sounds of consonants should sound. In addition, to attract students' attention, invite them to repeat what the teacher has demonstrated previously by pointing to them one by one or making groups of pairs to practice it.

If students have understood the concept of phonetic symbols, the teacher can continue to introduce students to allomorphs. In English pronunciation, there are many types of allomorphs that can be found. However, the teacher can choose to provide an explanation of 3-5 allomorphs commonly found in reading texts such as the use of (d/ed) in the regular past tense, (s/es) in the regular plural number, the suffix (s) in the third person present, and ('s) in the regular possessive (Aniuranti et al., 2020). Then the teacher can explain what is meant by an allomorph (see table 1) and provide the example of how to

pronounce a morpheme according to the formula for pronouncing consonants (see table 2).

#### Reading narrative text

Teachers can choose various types of narrative texts as teaching materials, such as; fables, legends, science-fiction, diaries, myths, etc (Fahmei Lubis, 2016). In this study, the researcher used a text in the form of a legend entitled 'The Legend of Toba Lake' as an allomorph learning medium. From the texts that have been selected, the teacher can prepare printed texts and distribute them to each student to create effective learning. Since students have been introduced to allomorph and several other terms, in addition to understanding the content of the text, students can mark words that contain allomorphs directly.

#### Analyze, categorize and produce

After the narrative text reading session is over,

Table 3. Analysis of Allomorphs

No.	Word	Types of allomorphs	The pronunciation of the allomorphs	Reason
1	Opened	Past tense	[d]= /oʊpənd/	/n/ + ed: voiced
2	Convinced	Past tense	[t]= /kən'vɪnst/	/s/ + ed: voiceless
3	Happened	Past tense	[d]= /'hæpənd/	/n/ + ed: voiced
4	Disappeared	Past tense	[d]= /,dɪsə'pɪrd/	/r/ + ed: voiced
5	Licked	Past tense	[t]= /lɪkt /	/k/ + ed: voiceless
6	Continued	Past tense	[d]= /kən'tɪnjud/	/u/ + ed: voiced
7	Shouted	Past tense	[ɪd]= /'ʃaʊtɪd/	/d/ +ed: voiced
8	Gasped	Past tense	[t]= /gæspɪt/	/p/ + ed: voiceless
9	Scales	Regular plural number	[z]= /skeɪlz/	/l/ + es: voiced
10	Hands	Regular plural number	[z]= /hændz/	/d/ + s: voiced
11	Weeks	Regular plural number	[s]= /wɪks/	/k/ + s: voiceless
12	Bones	Regular plural number	[z]= /boʊnz/	/n/ + s: voiced
13	Years	Regular plural number	[z]= /jɪrz/	/r/ + s: voiced
14	Clothes	Regular plural number	[z]= /kloʊðz/	/ð/ + es: voiced
15	Coins	Regular plural number	[z]= /kɔɪnz/	/n/ + s: voiced
16	Stories	Regular plural number	[z]= /'stɔɪrɪz/	/i/ + es: voiced
17	Cheeks	Regular plural number	[s]= /tʃiːks/	/k/ + s: voiceless
18	Dad's	Possessive	[z]= /dædz/	/d/ + 's: voiced
19	Samosir's	Possessive	[z]= /səməsɪrɪz/	/r/ + 's: voiced
20	Mother's	Possessive	[z]= /'mʌðərz/	/r/ + 's: voiced

students can analyze words containing the 4 types of allomorphs that have been described previously. So, from the text 'The Legend of Toba Lake', the teacher can encourage students to arrange them based on allomorph categories and include how to pronounce them by writing them with phonetic symbols. An example of a detailed classification will be shown in the table 3.

Table 3 above has revealed that there are 4 types of allomorphs introduced to students, there are 3 types of allomorphs that appear in the narrative text 'The Legend of Toba Lake'. The first type of allomorph that appears is the regular past tense. They are [d] in (opened, happened, disappeared, and continued), [t] in (convinced, licked, and gasped), and [ɪd] which is (shouted). The next type is a plural number consisting of [s] in (weeks and cheeks), [z] in (scales, hands, bones, years, clothes, coins, dan stories). The last type is regular possessive with allomorph [z] in (dad's, Samosir's, and mother's). It can be concluded that a rule is set for words that have consonant and vowel endings with voiced type, then the letter will affect the bound morpheme after it so that it creates a voiced allomorphs type, and vice versa (Erlinda, n.d.).

However, the use of regular plural number (-es) and past tense (-ed) is not always pronounced [ɪz] and [ɪd] (Ahmed, 2015). This refers to the previous explanation that the final letter of a word determines the type of allomorph that produces.

After analyzing and categorizing allomorphs based on their types, the teacher can ask students to pronounce words that contain several types of allomorphs. They can try to do it in pairs with their classmates so that they can make corrections to each other's pronunciation. This activity can be a closing activity to wrap all the material that has been studied in one learning session. From a series of alternative activities in allomorphs learning through narrative texts, students can improve the quality of English pronunciation which is rarely considered during learning EFL.

#### Challenges and problems in teaching allomorphs

Lack of motivation to learn is believed to be one of the main problems in learning English pronunciation, especially allomorphs. This may be due to students' perception of English. Due to the nature of the language which is hardly found in Bahasa Indonesia, many of them consider it a

difficult subject to learn. In her research, Nangimah (2020) said that the difference in the pronunciation system between L1 and L2 was one of the reasons why students were less enthusiastic about learning English. In addition, there are terms of stressed and unstressed syllables in English which are also followed by intonation and rhyme that are difficult to imitate. Most students also still have difficulty pronouncing consonants based on their sound so they often ignore and only maintain their pronunciation based on L1.

Besides the lack of student motivation to learn systematic pronunciation, there is an impact from the old beliefs of teachers who still think that learning pronunciation is not really necessary (Sharatol Ahmad Shah et al., 2017). The impact of this belief affects the teacher's current mindset regarding the necessity of teaching pronunciation which has never been glimpsed before. On the other hand, EFL students also do not experience development and are blind to the theory and practice of pronunciation. Foote et al. (2011) in his survey of the ESL program in Canada stated that the teachers there viewed teaching pronunciation as not having much benefit than studying writing, grammar, reading, etc. In line with this, EFL teachers in Indonesia also often focus on only 4 skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing which are included in the basic formula in the English exam. Moreover, the teacher also thinks that by learning speaking English, students are able to gain knowledge about pronunciation.

Furthermore, insufficient time and overcrowding class are another problem in teaching Allomorph (Gilakjani et al., 2016). The duration of learning English in class is often very short between once or twice a week, an hour or two each day for lots of material to teach. Therefore, lesson plans regarding allomorph are not developed as programmed is the next class and often a review of the last unfinished teaching and learning process. If this situation occurs continuously, the teacher will fail to achieve the goals that have been set previously and also fail to recognize the problems that exist in the student

learning process. The teachers accordingly cannot solve them because it is difficult to distinguish certain learners with certain learning problems in a very limited time. In addition, the number of learners in a typical classroom can range from 1-15 or twenty learners. However, In Indonesia, teachers may find more than thirty students in very small classes without tape recorders, televisions, or DVDs to provide more intense pronunciation learning facilities. It will certainly be difficult for teachers to carry out activities where students can improve their pronunciation skills without learning media.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Learning about pronunciation is still quite rare in English learning materials in Indonesia. Therefore, to start teaching it, teachers need careful preparation regarding materials, media, and facilities because there are no special classes or special subjects regarding English pronunciation. The teacher can choose one of the terms in the pronunciation which is quite often found in English reading texts and films so that students are more connected and interested in the material being taught. As the discussion in this study chose to specifically teach allomorphs, the author presents her ideas through activities that students can do during the lesson.

In short, lack of students' motivation, teachers' old beliefs about the lack of importance of learning pronunciation, poor scheduled time and overcrowded classes, are doubted some of the problems that teachers have to face in teaching English pronunciation. However, teachers must also use their creativity to recognize limitations and constraints, such as examples of alternative activities that students can do when studying allomorphs through narrative texts that have been discussed previously. For further research, the next researchers may be able to uncover further reasons why pronunciation is not considered in EFL teaching. In addition, the researcher hopes that the next research can try other terms in teaching English pronunciation to students along with different media.

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