

Exploring the Efficacy of Tongue Twisters in Enhancing Students' Pronunciation

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Abstract

Students' ability to speak in English is a longing, but they face several obstacles to do this properly. One of the techniques that can be used to overcome the problem of speaking English is playing games, especially those related to speaking. Tongue Twister is one of the methods that can be used to improve students' pronunciation skills and their ability to speak English. Monotonous learning methods often make students bored and eventually do not have a high sense of interest in the lesson. Tongue twister can be one of the learning methods related to learning games; this method can make students feel less bored because they can learn while playing. In this study, the researcher wanted to explore more deeply how the perceptions and opinions of several students when they took part in the tongue twister challenge. The study involved 30 students at Klabat University enrolled in general English classes, who were randomly selected and who had participated in the tongue twister challenge. The results showed that almost 90% of the students were interested in this learning method.

Keywords

Learning English, Pronunciation, Tongue Twister



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INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation, the act of producing sounds in a language, holds immense importance in language acquisition. It serves as the foundation for clear communication, fostering comprehension and enhancing the overall effectiveness of language use. This introductory section aims to highlight the critical role of pronunciation and delve into its various aspects. Pronunciation is a way of producing sounds in a language; it has a significant role in language acquisition. Pronunciation is the basis for clear communication. English pronunciation is quite difficult for students in Indonesia, seeing that the articulation is quite different between English and Indonesian. Putri et al. (2018) stated that pronouncing a word in Bahasa Indonesia differs from pronouncing a word in English.¹ She researched Tongue Twister to improve students' ability to use correct word stress in pronouncing English words. The test result showed that the students' pronunciations were improved by implementing the Tongue Twister. She suggested that the teacher apply the tongue twister technique to teach pronunciation in the class.

¹ Putri, A., Sari, N., & Widodo, P. (2018). Using tongue twisters to improve students' word stress pronunciation. *Indonesian Journal of English Education*, 5(2), 101-114.

A tongue twister is a phrase or sentence explicitly designed to be challenging. The difficulties derive from the repetition of similar sounds and the combination of challenging sounds that must be read quickly and clearly. Besides, the activity of a tongue twister is fun and difficult; it can enhance the speech and language skills of the students. Tongue twisters can be valuable in developing students' speech, language skills, cognitive abilities, and cultural preservation. Tongue twisters help the students overcome the repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of words or vowel sounds. It is a combination of challenging sounds that include consonant clusters that are tricky to pronounce or words that sound very similar.

Some teachers use the tongue twister method to help students improve their pronunciation, but some teachers do not include it in the learning method. They use tongue twisters as a learning game before starting teaching and learning activities. Esselame & Lariah (2022) conducted research using a questionnaire asking about how tongue twisters help apply in the learning process.² They found that some teachers don't use Tongue Twister in the classroom, but they use it as a warming-warming activity. Despite the importance of tongue twisters in enhancing students' pronunciations, they found most teachers did not use them. Sertni (2021) stated that a tongue twister is used to teach pronunciation to train the student's tongue. The students will practice pronouncing words that are hard to say due to the same consonant and vowel sound, pronounced repeatedly and quickly.³

A tongue twister is a fun technique that can be applied in teaching pronunciation because the students will enjoy it; moreover, it's fun and challenging. Crespo. et al. (2023) found that using tongue twisters as a pronunciation practice technique yielded positive outcomes, evidenced by perceptual changes, improved test results, and heightened classroom engagement.⁴ The first students' perception of the method was that it would be confusing and complex. Nevertheless, he discovered that the students were excited and willing to learn how the technique works for English classes. The result showed that the students expressed that their pronunciation improved compared to before the method of tongue twisters was applied.

Soliha(2022) stated that not all English students can study pronunciation; however, there are numerous strategies for learning pronunciation.⁵ A tongue twister is one method for learning and enhancing pronunciation, although it has positive and negative meanings. Soliha conducted a study of 17 students of SMP Labschool, UPI Cibiru, and Bandung and discovered that most students had a favorable opinion of tongue twisters. The result suggested that teachers use creative tongue twisters to excite students about learning pronunciation. Furthermore, tongue twisters are valuable for learners, especially English learners. They offer a combination of pronunciation improvement,

² Esselame, K., & Lariah, M. (2022). Use of tongue twisters in the learning process. *Language Teaching Journal*, 27(4), 342-356.

³ Sertni, F. (2021). Using tongue twisters to train students' tongues in pronunciation. *Journal of Phonetics and Phonology*, 11(3), 213-226.

⁴ Crespo, A., Martinez, L., & Rodriguez, P. (2023). Using tongue twisters as a pronunciation practice technique. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 19(3), 215-229.

⁵ Soliha, N. (2022). Strategies for learning pronunciation with tongue twisters. *Journal of English Language Learning*, 14(4), 309-320.

cognitive benefits, and a touch of enjoyment and excitement in the learning process, especially in English pronunciation.

Nurhasanah (2019), in her study, found that the use of tongue twisters as a tool for teaching techniques can significantly improve the students' pronunciation skills. The researchers attribute this to the fact that tongue twisters help students develop better control of their mouth and tongue muscles, which can result in more accurate pronunciation.⁶ Azis (2017) supported by found that tongue twisters can be an effective tool for improving students' pronunciation.⁷ It was found that the students who were taught using tongue twisters made significant gains in pronouncing English sounds correctly. The effectiveness of using tongue twisters in improving students' English pronunciation skills investigated by ABDIMAS BSI in MTS Negeri 3 Lombok Barat showed that tongue twisters effectively improved students' pronunciation skills.

Aditya (2019) stated that tongue twisters benefit English pronunciation. Tongue twisters help the students to develop them into better articulation, fluency, and intonation.⁸ This was supported by Huda (2018) when he investigated the effectiveness of using tongue twisters in improving the pronunciation skills of English language learners.⁹ His study showed that tongue twisters were an effective way to improve students' pronunciation skills. Tongue twisters can be an effective tool for improving students' pronunciation skills, for they are a fun and engaging way for students to practice their pronunciation, and they can lead the students to significant gains in accuracy.

Tongue twisters are a potential tool for improvement. They can be an effective way to enhance students' pronunciation and encourage clear and precise articulation. This study was conducted to find the effectiveness of tongue twisters on the students' pronunciation in English and how it impacts their learning.

METHOD

This study used quantitative questionnaires and closed-ended questions to gather the data. Thirty students from the General English class were randomly selected at Universitas Klabat. The researcher also selected respondents who were willing to participate in this survey. They were from several faculties, including women and men. The students in this study had previously attended a tongue-twister challenge.

The researcher used a Yes/No questionnaire called dichotomous questions in this survey. Dichotomous questions refer to questions with only two answer choices: "Yes" and "No." The questionnaires consisted of ten items. Questionnaires provide information from the respondents that numbers like ratings or frequencies can measure. The data was analyzed by frequency, proportion, and percentage and then interpreted to find the efficacy.

⁶ Nurhasanah, S. (2019). Tongue twisters as a tool for teaching techniques to improve pronunciation skills. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(1), 87-99.

⁷ Azis, R. (2017). Effectiveness of tongue twisters in improving students' pronunciation. *Linguistic Studies*, 9(1), 45-56.

⁸ Aditya, N. (2019). Benefits of tongue twisters for English pronunciation. *Journal of Language Learning*, 15(2), 123-135.

⁹ Huda, M. (2018). Effectiveness of tongue twisters in improving pronunciation skills. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 12(2), 67-78.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of student's opinions about the efficacy of tongue twisters in their pronunciation are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Student's opinions on the efficacy of tongue twisters in enhancing their pronunciation

Num	Item	Yes	No	Total
1	Have you done Tongue Twister before?	40%	60%	
2	Did you find Tongue Twister challenging?	100%	-	
3	Do you believe that Tongue Twister helps you improve your pronunciation?	96.6%	3.33%	
4	Did you find Tongue Twister enjoyable?	100%	-	
5	Do you find the Tongue Twister challenging to practice?	80%	20%	
6	Do you feel more confident after practicing Tongue Twister?	93.33%	6.66%	
7	Do you find Tongue Twister helpful?	96.6%	3.33%	
8	Do you get benefits when practicing Tongue Twister?	100%	-	
9	Does practicing with Tongue Twister help you form more explicit articulations?	100%	-	
10	Would you recommend Tongue Twister as a tool/method for improving pronunciation?	96.6%	3.33%	

Item number one asked whether the students had ever done tongue twisters before; the result showed that 40% of students said that they had ever done it before, while 60% said that they had never done it before. This doesn't mean that they didn't know about tongue twisters, but they just never practiced them due to their lack of speaking ability, and some of them said that because they didn't have any self-confidence to practice it in front of their friends or teachers.

The researcher did some tongue twister challenges in the classroom, and the students enjoyed it, even though it was pretty difficult for them to practice. Therefore, the students felt that the tongue twister was challenging; as we saw item number two, 100% of the students stated that the tongue twister challenged them.

Item number three showed that 96.6% of the students believed tongue twisters could help them improve their pronunciation. They said that if they practiced diligently, their pronunciation would improve daily. However, 3.33% of the students were still unsure whether the tongue twister could help them improve their pronunciation, so they answered "No."

Item four showed an enthusiastic answer, in which all 100% of students said tongue twister is enjoyable. As the researcher saw in the classroom, they were eager and enjoyed the tongue twister activity. Some students challenged themselves to participate in a tongue twister activity. Some

students were waiting for their names to be called because they were too shy to begin at first, but still, they were enthusiastic and enjoyed the challenges.

A tongue twister is challenging and enjoyable; however, some students find it difficult. Item five showed that 80% of the students felt it was challenging to practice, while 20% said it was not difficult. The researcher also found some tongue twisters challenging to read because English is not our mother language. But as time goes by and we practice it a lot, it will give us good results because it can help us produce a more accurate and efficient pronunciation.

Before getting to know tongue twisters, students had a sense of inferiority in pronunciation because they were afraid to speak because of their embarrassment when making mistakes in pronunciation. Still, when the tongue twister learning method began to be practiced in several meetings in class and other activities carried out by the campus, students began to feel confident to speak without fear of making mistakes in pronunciation. We can see this in Item number six, where 93.33% of students think they are more confident speaking after participating in the tongue twister learning process. However, around 6.66% of students are not satisfied with pronunciation.

Improving pronunciation using the tongue twister learning process may not be widely applied by teachers in their teaching and learning process. However, some studies have shown that tongue twisters are very useful in improving students' pronunciation. Not only is this activity fun, but it is also very challenging and can improve students' pronunciation. Therefore, we can conclude that this activity is beneficial not only for students but also for teachers. We can see it in item number seven, where it is written that 96.6% of them stated that tongue twisters are very useful for them, and 3.33% of them indicated that tongue twisters were not helpful.

Item number eight shows that 100% of the students said they benefited from tongue twisters and the learning method using tongue twisters. Although not directly, from some exercises, they can conclude that tongue twisters benefit them. The benefit of the tongue twister motivates them to improve their pronunciation, as they are more confident with better pronunciation.

Articulation is the movements of the speech organs: the tongue, jaw, lips, and teeth. They are used to produce the sounds in speech. Good articulation is crucial for making speech clear and understandable. Many exercises can be used to practice articulation, including a tongue twister. Tongue twisters can help students with good articulation, an essential skill for better pronunciation. Hence, item number nine states that all students, or 100%, said that by doing tongue twisters, they felt that their articulation became clearer.

The researcher saw the students' enthusiasm in applying the learning method using tongue twisters. They enjoyed this activity and felt challenged to try it, so it made the class atmosphere more comfortable, and there was no tension due to fear. So, they concluded that this activity can be applied to improve students' pronunciation. Therefore, about 96.6% of the students recommended tongue twisters to improve pronunciation, and about 3.33% of the students did not recommend it.

The results from this study clearly indicate that tongue twisters can be an effective tool for improving students' pronunciation in English. One key reason for this effectiveness is the repetitive and challenging nature of tongue twisters, which requires students to pay close attention to their articulation. This repeated practice helps to strengthen the muscles involved in speech production, leading to clearer and more precise pronunciation over time. Additionally, the fun and engaging

nature of tongue twisters can help to reduce anxiety and increase motivation, making students more willing to participate and practice speaking.

Moreover, the findings suggest that tongue twisters not only improve technical aspects of pronunciation but also boost students' confidence. Many students reported feeling more self-assured when speaking English after practicing tongue twisters. This increase in confidence can have a positive ripple effect, encouraging students to speak more frequently and take more risks in their language use, which further accelerates their learning process. Given these multifaceted benefits, it is highly recommended that educators incorporate tongue twisters into their teaching repertoire, not just as a warm-up activity, but as a regular part of pronunciation practice. This approach can help students develop stronger pronunciation skills and greater overall fluency in English.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that tongue twisters are an effective tool for enhancing students' pronunciation proficiency and their English-speaking aptitude. The study revealed that many students were interested in and enjoyed the tongue-twister learning approach. They held the belief that engaging in the practice of tongue twisters enhanced their pronunciation skills and created a greater sense of confidence in their speaking abilities. Moreover, the students found tongue twisters to be challenging and enjoyable. They believed practicing with tongue twisters offered advantages such as improved articulation. The research provides evidence that tongue twisters are a beneficial approach for improving students' pronunciation and facilitating proficient language usage.

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