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Nomor : 3289/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/PT/IX/2017 tertanggal 12 September 2017

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Diterbitkan di Malang pada tanggal 16 Agustus 2019



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TAUFIK BIDULLAH, SE, M. Si
NUPTK. 6960753654130082

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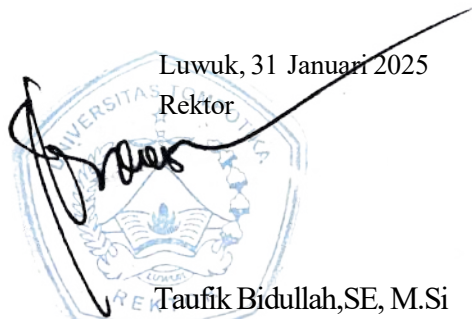
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Kajian Budaya dan Komunikasi Interkultural	1			
Linguistik Kontrastif	1			
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Sosiolinguistik dan Bahasa Tujuan Khusus			1						1	
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Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra	1						1			
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Linguistik Kontrasif	1						1			
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Luwuk, 31 Januari 2025
Rektor

Taufik Bidullah, SE, M.Si
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Podcast-based instruction with Banggai culture: Enhancing EFL students' communicative grammar

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ABSTRACT

Grammar instruction in EFL contexts has often been criticized for being overly structural and disconnected from authentic communication, leaving students with difficulties in applying grammar during speaking. To address this issue, this study aimed to enhance EFL students' communicative grammar competence through podcast-based instruction integrated with Banggai cultural narratives. The research employed an Educational Design Research (EDR) framework using a mixed-method sequential explanatory design, conducted with second-semester students of the English Language and Culture Study Program at Universitas Tompotika Luwuk. Data were collected from 41 students through test, questionnaires, interviews, and observation, then analyzed using descriptive statistics (SPSS 25) and thematic coding (NVivo 10). The findings revealed significant improvement in students' grammar performance, with mean scores rising from 54.41 in the pre-test to 80.24 in the post-test. The questionnaire results further indicated that the majority of students strongly agreed or agreed that podcasts made grammar learning clearer, increased their confidence in speaking, and fostered a greater appreciation of Banggai culture. Thematic analysis of interviews confirmed these perceptions, highlighting motivation, engagement, and cultural relevance as key factors in learning success. This study concludes that integrating local culture into podcast-based instruction offers both pedagogical and cultural benefits, making grammar learning more meaningful, communicative, and contextually grounded. The model not only improves linguistic competence but also promotes cultural awareness, offering a sustainable and innovative direction for EFL grammar instruction in culturally diverse contexts.

Keywords: Communicative grammar, podcast-based instruction, Banggai culture, EFL, educational design research

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INTRODUCTION

Grammar instruction has long been a central component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, viewed as the foundation for developing accuracy. However, many EFL learners still struggle to apply grammatical structures effectively in communicative contexts, particularly in speaking (Normawati et al., 2023; Pawabutra & Sutakote, 2024). This phenomenon is evident in Indonesia, where grammar teaching remains dominated by rule-focused and decontextualized practices (Handoyo et al., 2023; Listia & Febriyanti, 2020; Murtisari et al., 2020). While these approaches support performance on written tests, they often fail to help students use grammar spontaneously and meaningfully during interaction, resulting in a persistent gap between knowledge and use (Adam & Sailuddin, 2023; Loor & Peñaranda, 2025).

In response to this issue, communicative grammar has been introduced as an approach that integrates grammatical form with meaning and use (Setoodeh et al., 2020; Woymo et al., 2024). Rather than teaching rules in isolation, it situates grammar within meaningful and authentic tasks that require learners to construct messages, negotiate meaning, and respond in real-time (Hildebrant, 2024). Research demonstrates that communicative grammar strengthens learners' ability to transfer grammatical knowledge to both oral and written communication, thus improving overall proficiency (Berezenko et al., 2022; Kim & Baig, 2021; Normawati et al., 2023).

At the same time, the integration of technology in language education has become increasingly prevalent, offering innovative tools to support and enhance instruction (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Among these tools, podcasting stands out as a flexible and engaging medium for language learning. Podcasts allow learners to access authentic audio content at their own pace, fostering repeated exposure to language input, pronunciation models, and various speech registers (Indahsari, 2020; Ramirez, 2024). Educational podcasts have been found to improve learners' listening skills, vocabulary acquisition, and speaking confidence (Habib et al., 2024; Nasution & Saragih, 2025; Laiel & Suseno, 2023). Importantly, the characteristics of podcasts, authentic input, contextualized language use, and learner autonomy, align closely with the principles of communicative grammar, which emphasizes teaching grammar through meaningful, contextualized communication rather than isolated rules. This theoretical alignment suggests that podcasts have strong potential not only for listening-based learning but also for supporting the teaching of communicative grammar. However, most research on podcasts in EFL contexts has concentrated on listening comprehension or general language exposure (Woldemariam, 2021; Binsasi & Saraswati, 2024; Fachriza et al., 2023). Their potential for teaching grammar, especially communicative grammar, remains relatively unexplored, creating a gap in current pedagogical research and practice.

In addition to methodological innovations, cultural relevance has gained recognition as a vital element of effective language instruction. Integrating local culture into EFL curricula strengthens learner engagement, supports motivation, and promotes intercultural awareness (Kim, 2020; Hossain, 2024; Procel et al., 2023). In multilingual contexts like Indonesia, drawing on indigenous cultural knowledge provides learners with familiar reference points that help them make sense of new linguistic structures (Ratri et al., 2025; Giyatmi, 2020; Wahyuningtyas, 2021). Despite its potential, few studies have investigated how local cultural content can be systematically embedded

within grammar instruction using digital platforms such as podcasts.

The Banggai region of Central Sulawesi presents a vibrant context for such integration. Known for its vibrant traditions, ecological knowledge, and community-based wisdom, Banggai culture offers numerous themes that can serve as authentic contexts for grammar instruction. Rituals like Molabot Tumpe, traditional fishing practices, and customary law reflect values and behaviors that are both educational and culturally significant. Embedding such themes into podcast-based grammar instruction not only revitalizes local wisdom but also provides learners with linguistically rich, culturally grounded input. This approach aligns with the principles of contextualized grammar instruction and supports the broader goal of culturally responsive pedagogy (Fauzi & Dewi, 2024; Vinita & Ilankumaran, 2024).

To date, very few studies have explored the integration of communicative grammar, digital media, and local cultural content in a unified instructional model. While some research has demonstrated the effectiveness of podcasts in language learning (Chaves-Yuste & de-la Peña, 2023; Indahsari, 2020; Haneul, 2024), others have highlighted the benefits of cultural integration (Yuliantari & Huda, 2023; Yan & Jing, 2023; Khan, 2024). However, the convergence of these three elements remains underdeveloped in the empirical literature. In particular, research in Indonesian EFL settings has yet to examine how region-specific cultural narratives can be operationalized within grammar instruction through podcasting. This gap highlights an urgent need for pedagogical innovations that not only enhance linguistic competence but also preserve cultural heritage and promote digital literacy. The present study addresses this need by employing an Educational Design Research (EDR) framework to develop and test a podcast-based instructional model that integrates communicative grammar with Banggai cultural content in a structured and contextually meaningful way.

Moreover, this integration holds promise for addressing challenges specific to grammar learning in Indonesian higher education. University students often report low confidence and limited opportunities to practice grammar communicatively, especially in speaking activities (Zahid, 2023; Jaya et al., 2022; Pham et al., 2021). By designing instructional materials that incorporate cultural stories and encourage interactive language use, educators can create more engaging and effective learning environments. Podcasts can serve as both input and output tools, where students listen to culturally embedded grammar usage and then produce their oral texts reflecting similar patterns (Suseno, 2023; Suseno et al., 2024). This bidirectional process supports deeper learning and greater autonomy, as students become active participants in language construction.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to synthesize communicative grammar principles with podcast-based instruction and localized cultural content. It offers a contextualized, multimodal model of grammar learning that aligns with contemporary trends in EFL pedagogy while addressing the unique cultural and linguistic needs of Indonesian learners. Unlike traditional grammar teaching models that emphasize rote memorization and isolated exercises, this approach leverages narrative, technology, and community values to foster communicative competence. Such an innovation not only enriches the pedagogical repertoire of language instructors but also contributes to the decolonization of English education by foregrounding indigenous perspectives.

Given these considerations, this study aims to develop and implement a podcast-based instructional model that integrates Banggai cultural narratives into communicative grammar teaching for EFL students. The research focuses on second-semester university students enrolled in a grammar course at Universitas Tompotika Luwuk. By investigating the effectiveness of this model in enhancing learners' grammatical performance and speaking fluency, the study seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on context-based grammar instruction and offer practical insights for educators working in multicultural and digitally connected environments. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) To what extent does podcast-based instruction with Banggai cultural integration improve EFL students' communicative grammar skills? (2) How do students perceive the integration of local cultural content through podcast media in their grammar learning process?

METHODS

Research design

This study employed an Educational Design Research (EDR) framework using a Mixed-Method Sequential Explanatory Design. The EDR approach was chosen because it focuses not only on the development of innovative learning tools but also on testing their effectiveness through real-world application and iterative revision (Macdiarmid et al., 2021). The mixed-method design allowed the researchers to gain both quantitative measurements and qualitative insights regarding students' communicative grammar performance and perceptions. In this sequential explanatory model, quantitative data were collected and analyzed first through pre- and post-tests, as well as questionnaires. These results provided an initial picture of students' grammar performance and perceptions. The subsequent qualitative phase, comprising interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of student performance, was intentionally designed to elaborate, clarify, and contextualize the quantitative findings (Othman et al., 2020). In doing so, the qualitative data helped explain why certain improvements occurred, how students experienced the intervention, and which specific features of the podcast-based model contributed to the observed outcomes.

Research setting

The research was conducted at the Department of English Language and Culture, Universitas Tompotika Luwuk, located in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. This setting was chosen due to its geographical and cultural proximity to the Banggai region, which facilitated easy access to local wisdom and traditions relevant to the integration of culture in language learning.

Participants

The participants involved in this study consisted of two groups. The primary subjects were 41 second-semester undergraduate students enrolled in the Communicative Grammar course. These students were selected through purposive sampling to ensure their relevance to the study focus. Additionally, two fourth-semester students were involved as podcast narrators due to their relatively higher fluency and prior performance in speaking tasks. These narrators participated in the recording of

instructional podcast episodes based on Banggai culture.

Data collection

The data in this study were gathered through multiple instruments designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the research. To identify the students' difficulties and preferences in learning grammar, especially in applying grammar in speaking, a structured needs analysis questionnaire using a Likert scale was distributed to all participants. Following this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six representative students (three from each grammar class) to explore their learning experiences in greater depth and gather qualitative insights into their expectations, struggles, and perceptions regarding grammar instruction.

Observations were conducted in two grammar classes over two instructional cycles spanning four weeks throughout the implementation phase to document students' engagement and ability to apply grammatical structures in spoken interactions. Each class was observed once per week, resulting in a total of four observation sessions, all guided by structured observation sheets that focused on indicators such as participation, confidence, and the appropriateness of grammar usage in speaking tasks. To measure learning outcomes, grammar and speaking proficiency were tested through pre-tests and post-tests, with test items designed to reflect the grammatical structures taught through the podcast episodes. These assessments aimed to determine the extent to which the podcast intervention influenced student performance.

In addition to these instruments, student reflection forms were distributed after each implementation cycle to encourage metacognitive processing and to record students' personal impressions and learning takeaways from the podcast-based learning. Lastly, expert validation sheets were used to assess the accuracy, clarity, and cultural appropriateness of the podcast content. Two subject-matter experts, one in applied linguistics and one in Banggai cultural studies, reviewed the instructional materials and provided valuable feedback, which helped refine the final product before classroom use.

Materials and cultural integration

The instructional materials developed in this study were nine podcast episodes, each focusing on specific grammar points (e.g., past tense, present tense, future tense, modal verbs, and conditional sentences) integrated with unique Banggai cultural themes such as Molabot Tumpe, fisherman's life and traditional customs, preserving Banggai culture, traditional crafts in coastal Banggai, customary rules and ethics, and Banggai proverbs and traditional wisdom. The scripts were designed with communicative tasks and cultural vocabulary that reflected authentic contexts.



Figure 1. English material about Podcast Grammar Banggai

https://open.spotify.com/show/65khVIPAzK3Q7a9xFD4Mil?si=Of0amV_zQp6f9qT02muTbg

Data analysis

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests in SPSS version 25 to determine significant improvement in grammar accuracy and speaking performance (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021). Qualitative data from interviews, reflections, and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis through NVivo 10 (Dalkin et al., 2021). Emerging themes related to students' motivation, cultural awareness, and communicative competence were identified, coded, and interpreted in relation to the instructional intervention. All research procedures adhered to institutional ethical guidelines. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Tompotika Luwuk, and informed consent was secured from all participating students prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time.

RESULTS

This study investigated the effectiveness of podcast-based instruction integrating Banggai cultural elements in enhancing EFL students' communicative grammar. The research findings show significant improvements in students' grammar achievement and perceptions after the implementation of two podcast learning cycles.

Grammar performance improvement

The pre-test was conducted to measure students' initial mastery of communicative grammar before implementing the podcast-based instructional model. The classification of scores was adapted from Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), which provides a standardized framework for evaluating language proficiency. Table 1 presents the distribution of students' grammar performance across five levels: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, and Fail.

Table 1. The Results of Pre-Test Data

No	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	Excellent	85-100	4	10%
2	Good	70-84	10	24%
3	Fair	60-69	6	15%
4	Poor	50-59	6	15%
5	Fail	< 50	15	36%

The results indicate that a significant proportion of students (36%) were classified in the "Fail" category, scoring below 50. Only 10% of students achieved the "Excellent" category, while the majority fell within the "Good" (24%) and "Fair" (15%) ranges. These findings highlight that most students struggled with applying grammar communicatively, particularly in spoken tasks, which reinforces the need for an alternative instructional approach. The predominance of low to moderate scores demonstrates that conventional methods of grammar instruction were insufficient in supporting students' communicative use of grammar. This pre-test result served as the baseline for evaluating the effectiveness of the podcast—based instruction with Banggai cultural integration.

Table 2. The Results of Post-Test Data

No	Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	Excellent	85-100	20	48%
2	Good	70-84	14	34%
3	Fair	60-69	7	17%
4	Poor	50-59	0	0%
5	Fail	< 50	0	0%

The results of the post-test, as presented in Table 2, indicate a remarkable improvement in students' grammar performance compared to the pre-test. Nearly half of the participants (48%) achieved an Excellent classification, while 34% were categorized as Good. A smaller portion, 17% remained in the Fair category, whereas no students fell into the Poor or Fail classifications. This shift demonstrates a substantial enhancement in students' mastery of communicative grammar following the podcast-based instruction with Banggai cultural integration.

These findings suggest that the intervention not only raised the overall achievement level but also minimized low-performing outcomes, as evidenced by the complete absence of students in the "Poor" and "Fail" categories. The high proportion of Excellent and Good performances highlights the effectiveness of integrating cultural narratives into grammar instruction, enabling students to apply grammatical structures more confidently and contextually.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistic

Test Type	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
Pre-Test	41	20	95	54.41	23.04
Post-Test	41	60	100	80.24	13.04

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of students' grammar performance in both the pre-test and post-test based on data analysis using SPSS. The data reveal a substantial increase in the mean score, rising from 54.41 in the pre-test to 80.24 in the post-test. This indicates a clear improvement in students' grammatical competence after the implementation of podcast-based instruction with Banggai cultural integration.

In addition, the minimum score improved significantly from 20 in the pre-test to 60 in the post-test, showing that even the lowest-performing students achieved better outcomes after the intervention. Similarly, the maximum score increased from 95 to a perfect 100, further reflecting the positive effect of the instructional model on high-achieving students.

The standard deviation also decreased from 23.04 in the pre-test to 13.04 in the post-test, suggesting that the variability of students' performance became more consistent following the treatment. This reduction in score dispersion indicates that the majority of students benefited relatively equally from the instructional approach, leading to a more homogeneous level of achievement across the class.

Taken together, these statistical results provide strong evidence that podcast-based

instruction with cultural integration was effective in enhancing students' communicative grammar performance, while also reducing the performance gap between higher- and lower-achieving learners.

Student perceptions toward the podcast-based instruction

To complement the quantitative findings from the pre-test and post-test results, a questionnaire was administered to investigate students' perceptions of podcast-based instruction with Banggai cultural integration

This instrument aimed to capture students' views regarding the effectiveness, clarity, cultural relevance, and motivational aspects of the instructional model. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Student Perceptions on Podcast-Based Instruction

No.	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)
1.	The podcast effectively facilitates a clearer understanding of English grammar concepts.	36.8	55.3	7.9
2.	The use of the podcast has increased my confidence in applying grammar during spoken communication.	36.8	52.6	10.5
3.	The integration of Banggai local culture into the podcast content enhances the comprehensibility of grammar materials.	34.2	44.7	15.8
4.	The podcast fosters a greater appreciation for Banggai local culture.	28.9	55.3	13.2
5.	The podcast increases my interest in learning English grammar.	50.0	39.5	10.5
6.	The podcast serves as an effective instructional medium for developing communicative grammar competence.	39.5	50.0	5.3

The findings in Table 4 indicate that students demonstrated highly positive perceptions of the podcast-based instruction. More than 90% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the podcast facilitated a clearer understanding of grammar concepts and increased their confidence in spoken communication. Additionally, the integration of Banggai cultural content was perceived as beneficial, with 78.9% of students acknowledging its role in enhancing grammar comprehension. Importantly, 89.5% of students expressed that the podcast increased their interest in learning grammar, suggesting that the medium holds strong motivational value. Furthermore, students widely recognized the podcast as an effective medium for developing communicative grammar skills. These results emphasize the dual pedagogical and cultural contributions of podcast-based instruction in supporting grammar learning within an EFL context.

The second research question aimed to explore students' perceptions of integrating

podcast-based instruction with Banggai cultural content in learning communicative grammar. To address this objective, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six second-semester students. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, highlight students' perceived benefits, and uncover potential challenges associated with this instructional model. The analysis generated three major themes: (1) enhanced comprehension and communicative confidence, (2) flexibility and autonomy in learning, and (3) cultural relevance and identity reinforcement. The themes collectively revealed that the podcast not only facilitated grammar comprehension and speaking confidence but also strengthened students' appreciation of local culture, as illustrated in Excerpts 1-6.

The excerpts below represent students' voices, which were categorized thematically. Each excerpt is followed by an analysis highlighting how students perceived the role of the podcast in enhancing grammar learning and cultural awareness.

Excerpt 1

"The podcast made grammar rules easier to understand because the examples were related to daily conversations and local stories" (Student 1).

This excerpt highlights that contextualization through cultural narratives enhances students' comprehension of grammar. By linking grammar rules with authentic examples from Banggai culture and everyday communication, the podcast facilitated deeper understanding and reduced the abstractness of grammatical concepts.

Excerpt 2

"I feel more confident when speaking English because I can practice grammar directly after listening to the podcast" (Student 2).

The statement underscores the role of the podcast in improving learners' speaking confidence. Exposure to grammar within communicative contexts allowed students to immediately apply structures in practice, addressing one of the major challenges in EFL classrooms where grammar knowledge often remains passive.

Excerpt 3

"Learning grammar through the podcast was more interesting than the usual classroom because I could listen anytime, even outside the class" (Student 3).

This response demonstrates the flexibility and accessibility of podcast-based learning. Students valued the autonomy of being able to revisit material independently, which fostered a sense of control over their learning process and supported self-directed grammar practice.

Excerpt 4

"The inclusion of Banggai culture made me feel proud and more motivated to study grammar, because it was not only about English but also about our identity" (Student 4).

Here, students expressed that the integration of local culture elevated their motivation and emotional engagement. By embedding cultural identity within instructional content, the podcast bridged academic learning with personal relevance, reinforcing both linguistic and cultural competencies.

Excerpt 5

"Sometimes I listened to the podcast more than once, especially when I did not understand the first time. Repetition helped me to remember the grammar patterns" (Student 5).

This excerpt reflects the iterative learning process facilitated by podcasts. The ability to replay content allowed students to engage in repetitive exposure, which is crucial for grammar internalization and long-term retention.

Excerpt 6

"The podcast helped me see grammar as part of communication, not just rules. It felt more natural and useful.

This final excerpt captures the core impact of podcast-based instruction: shifting learners' perception of grammar from abstract rules to functional tools of communication. The finding illustrates the success of the intervention in promoting a communicative grammar perspective, aligning with the primary aim of the research.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide strong support for the primary hypothesis that podcast-based instruction integrated with Banggai cultural content can enhance EFL students' communicative grammar competence. The significant improvements in students' post-test scores, particularly in grammar accuracy and speaking fluency, suggest that contextualized grammar learning via digital media effectively bridges the gap between linguistic form and communicative use. These findings are further reinforced by students' favorable responses in perception questionnaires, indicating increased motivation and engagement when grammar is embedded within familiar cultural narratives.

The secondary hypothesis, that the integration of local culture would improve learners' affective response to grammar instruction, was also supported. Student reflections and classroom observations revealed heightened enthusiasm and participation during both the listening and production phases of the podcast activity. Learners reported feeling more connected to the content, which in turn facilitated deeper understanding and more meaningful grammar use. This confirms previous research suggesting that cultural relevance in language learning materials can significantly enhance learner involvement and contextual language acquisition (Mamba, 2024; Chung & Long, 2024; Masitoh et al., 2023).

Compared to previous studies that employed podcast media in EFL contexts, this study distinguishes itself by integrating indigenous cultural elements, specifically from the Banggai region. While many earlier studies (Ramirez, 2024; Indahsari, 2020; Haneul, 2024) have demonstrated the benefits of podcasting for language learning, they often utilize generic or target-culture content, limiting local relevance. In contrast, the use of local traditions such as Molabot Tumpe, coastal life, and Banggai proverbs provided learners with familiar reference points, making grammar application more intuitive and situated. This novelty offers pedagogical implications for EFL contexts in culturally rich but underrepresented regions.

From a theoretical perspective, the study aligns with principles of sociocultural theory,

which posits that language learning is most effective when it occurs in meaningful social contexts (Alkhudiry, 2022). The success of the intervention suggests that when grammar instruction is mediated through culturally significant narratives, students are better able to internalize linguistic forms and apply them in communicative contexts. Additionally, the findings support the communicative language teaching (CLT) framework by demonstrating how explicit grammar instruction can be integrated with real-world use (Zhang, 2023).

Despite these promising outcomes, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the relatively small sample size and focus on one university limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research involving multiple institutions and larger, more diverse participant pools would be valuable for testing scalability. Second, while efforts were made to validate the podcast content through expert review, there is an inherent subjectivity in determining cultural appropriateness and instructional effectiveness. Variability in student interpretation of cultural content may also have influenced learning outcomes.

Moreover, technical constraints in podcast production, such as limited access to professional recording equipment and sound editing tools, may have affected the audio quality and learner experience. While the podcast was generally well-received, several students noted minor issues with clarity and background noise. In future implementations, investment in better production resources or collaboration with media departments may enhance content delivery and learner satisfaction.

Another area worth considering is the fidelity of implementation. While the intervention was carried out as planned, the actual listening behavior of students outside class time could not be fully monitored. Some students may have engaged more deeply with the content than others, potentially influencing the overall learning effect. Providing structured listening logs or embedding podcast use within a learning management system could help track and ensure consistent exposure in future iterations.

In terms of external validity, the success of this intervention is likely influenced by the cultural proximity of the materials to the students. While this is a strength in terms of engagement and contextual learning, it raises questions about applicability in more heterogeneous or multicultural classrooms. Future research should investigate how such localized instructional models can be adapted for broader audiences or to meet intercultural learning objectives.

The findings of this study offer both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, they reinforce the value of integrating contextual and cultural dimensions into grammar instruction in EFL settings. Practically, the study provides a replicable model for educators seeking to develop communicative grammar materials that are both technologically engaging and culturally resonant. This is especially relevant for regions in Indonesia and beyond where local culture is rich but underrepresented in mainstream educational content.

In conclusion, the integration of Banggai cultural heritage through podcast-based instruction not only enhanced students' communicative grammar skills but also supported cultural preservation efforts within higher education. The intervention successfully bridged the gap between structural grammar learning and meaningful

language use, offering a promising direction for future innovations in language pedagogy. Moving forward, educators and researchers are encouraged to explore further the potential of culturally rooted digital media in enhancing EFL learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the effectiveness of podcast-based instruction with Banggai cultural integration in enhancing EFL students' communicative grammar. The findings consistently support the original hypothesis: first, that integrating communicative grammar with digital media such as podcasts would improve students' grammatical performance; and second, that embedding local culture narratives would increase students' motivation, confidence, and engagement in grammar learning. The results from pre-test and post-test scores clearly demonstrated significant improvement in students' grammar mastery, while interview excerpts and perception questionnaires revealed increased confidence in speaking, positive attitudes toward grammar learning, and heightened appreciation of local culture.

From a theoretical perspective, the study reinforces key principles of contextualized, communicative, and culturally responsive language instruction. The results align with the sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning through meaningful, context-rich interactions, and with communicative language teaching, which positions grammar as a tool for constructing meaning. By integrating local cultural narratives into podcast-based instruction, this study demonstrates how cultural proximity provides cognitive scaffolding that supports comprehension, relevance, and emotional engagement. Unlike previous studies that primarily used podcasts as supplementary listening tools, this research offers a more holistic instructional model that unites grammar, technology, and cultural identity. This synthesis highlights that culturally grounded digital resources can strengthen both linguistic competence and learners' sense of belonging.

Practically, the study presents a replicable and adaptable instructional model for educators in Indonesia and other culturally diverse regions. Teachers can implement this approach by (1) selecting or developing podcast scripts based on local stories or traditions, (2) embedding target grammatical structures within meaningful cultural episodes, (3) using podcasts as pre-class input or in-class discussion prompts, and (4) designing follow-up speaking activities that require students to use the grammar communicatively. The accessibility of podcasts enables repeated listening beyond class time, supporting autonomous learning and bridging gaps in instructional hours, particularly valuable in regions with limited resources or uneven technology access.

While the findings are promising, the study has limitations. Technical constraints in podcast production and limited access to professional audio equipment may have affected sound quality. Moreover, the cultural specificity of Banggai narratives means that the instructional model may not automatically generalize to other contexts. However, rather than serving as a limitation, this cultural proximity points to the model's adaptability: educators elsewhere may substitute their own local cultural content to create similarly meaningful learning experiences grounded in students' lived realities. Future studies should expand to larger and more diverse contexts,

explore longitudinal impacts of cultural integration in grammar instruction, and investigate comparative effectiveness between podcasts and other emerging digital platforms such as YouTube or AR-based applications.

In conclusion, integrating Banggai cultural elements into podcast-based instruction significantly enhances students' communicative grammar performance while fostering cultural appreciation and engagement. This dual contribution to linguistic competence and cultural identity underscores the model's pedagogical value and theoretical relevance. By uniting technology, communicative pedagogy, and local wisdom, this study contributes a sustainable and culturally responsive innovation for EFL instruction and opens pathways for further research on culturally integrated, technology-enhanced language education.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

Sabbu, S.W.S.: Conceptualization (lead), methodology (lead), writing – original draft (lead), review (supporting), securing funding. Epa, S.: Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), writing –original draft (supporting), review (lead), editing (lead).

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Pronunciation of English Fricatives by Indonesian EFL Learners: Patterns and Pedagogical Implications

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Abstract

Pronunciation plays a vital role in oral communication; yet, many Indonesian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) continue to face difficulties, particularly in articulating fricative consonants that are absent from their native language. This study investigates the pronunciation problems experienced by second-semester students of the English Department at Makassar Muhammadiyah University, with a specific focus on English fricative consonants. Employing a mixed-method approach, data were gathered through a pronunciation test, interviews, and audio recordings. The findings indicate that dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are the most problematic, often substituted with /t/ and /d/ due to first-language interference and limited exposure to pronunciation models. Additional contributing factors include a lack of articulatory awareness, insufficient phonetic training, and minimal practice. These results suggest the need for more explicit instruction and guided pronunciation practice to improve learners' phonological competence. The study provides practical insights for English instructors to enhance pronunciation-focused pedagogy and curriculum development.

Keywords: pronunciation, fricative consonants, dental sounds, EFL learners, phonetic training

1. Introduction

English serves as a global lingua franca and plays a crucial role in communication, education, technology, and international business. In Indonesia, the importance of English has grown significantly alongside the expansion of digital communication and access to global information, much of which is presented in English. Among the four fundamental language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking is particularly vital for real-time interaction and interpersonal communication. Within the domain of speaking, pronunciation is essential to ensure intelligibility, clarity, and effective expression of meaning (Kangatharan et al., 2023). Thus, mastering pronunciation is central to improving communicative competence among EFL learners.

One of the persistent challenges faced by Indonesian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is the accurate pronunciation of English fricative consonants. These sounds, such

as /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/, are often absent in Bahasa Indonesia, leading to frequent mispronunciations due to first language interference. As highlighted by Luthfianda et al. (2024), the inability to produce these sounds correctly stems from a lack of phonological equivalence between the learners' native language and English. Similar findings were reported by local studies, including Mada (2025), who discovered that students frequently substituted /θ/ and /ð/ with /t/ and /d/, leading to intelligibility problems in oral communication. In a study conducted by Nurhayati (2020), EFL learners in East Java also exhibited low awareness of fricative articulation, particularly for voiced dental and palato-alveolar sounds.

Despite its importance in communication, pronunciation remains underemphasized in many English classrooms in Indonesia. Learners often receive minimal instruction in articulatory phonetics and phonemic awareness, resulting in poor production of unfamiliar consonants. Passive exposure through media such as music or movies, although helpful, is rarely sufficient to develop precise pronunciation skills without explicit practice and corrective feedback. As a result, many students continue to experience difficulty producing unfamiliar consonants accurately.

Previous studies have explored this issue from various perspectives. Pakpahan (2023) found that dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ posed particular difficulties for Indonesian students, who commonly replaced them with /t/ and /d/. Similarly, Adhani et al. (2021) and Luthfianda et al. (2024) reported high error rates in the production of fricatives such as /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /v/, with consistent evidence of substitution errors influenced by the learners' first language. These mispronunciations were largely attributed to L1 interference and lack of articulatory training. However, previous research often focused narrowly on qualitative methods or specific student groups in major urban centers.

While earlier research has provided valuable insights into these pronunciation difficulties, many studies have been limited in scope, focusing either on qualitative analysis or specific regional accents. This study seeks to build on that foundation by adopting a mixed-methods approach to examine pronunciation challenges across five categories of English fricatives (labiodental, dental, alveolar, palato-alveolar, and glottal) among second-semester EFL students at Makassar Muhammadiyah University.

The present research aims to identify the most problematic fricative sounds for students and explore the underlying factors contributing to their mispronunciations. The findings are expected to offer practical implications for pronunciation instruction and phonology-based curriculum development in Indonesian higher education.

1.1 Theoretical Background on ELF Pronunciation

Speaking is a core productive skill involving the real-time construction and delivery of verbal messages. As Zeynally (2022) explains, speaking involves producing systematic utterances to convey meaning, and according to Manurung (2019), it is a skill that develops early in life, often in tandem with listening. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the ability to speak fluently is crucial for effective classroom communication and real-world interactions.

Pronunciation plays a crucial role in achieving clarity, fluency, and intelligibility in spoken communication. Pronunciation encompasses various aspects such as intonation, stress, and articulation (Saito, 2021). Among the many challenges EFL learners face, the accurate

production of fricative consonants remains one of the most persistent, especially when these sounds do not exist in the learners' first language.

English fricatives are produced by forcing air through a narrow constriction in the vocal tract, creating friction. There are nine fricative phonemes in English: /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /h/, which are grouped into voiceless (fortis) or voiced (lenis) (Lee, 2023).

These fricatives can be categorized based on their place of articulation: labiodental /f/ and /v/ (e.g., fan, van), dental /θ/ and /ð/ (e.g., think, this), alveolar /s/ and /z/ (e.g., sip, zip), palato-alveolar /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ (e.g., shoe, measure), and glottal /h/ (e.g., hat).

For Indonesian EFL learners, dental and palato-alveolar fricatives are particularly challenging due to their absence in Bahasa Indonesia's phonemic inventory. Learners often replace these unfamiliar sounds with more familiar ones from their native language.

Kelly (2022) outlines several key factors contributing to learners' pronunciation difficulties, including L1 interference, physical unfamiliarity with articulatory processes, inconsistent spelling-to-sound correspondence in English, and limited auditory exposure.

Berent et al. (2023) further emphasize that difficulty often arises when learners are unable to express their phonological knowledge due to the abstract and motoric demands of unfamiliar sound systems, especially in the case of fricatives, which require precise articulatory control. Indonesian studies by Zannah et al., (2023) and Yulia & Saukah (2021) similarly found that pronunciation training is often neglected, with limited instructional time devoted to phonetic drills or articulatory practice.

In Summary, effective pronunciation, especially of fricative consonants, requires explicit instruction, metalinguistic awareness, and repeated articulatory practice. These aspects are often overlooked in EFL classrooms in Indonesia, underscoring the need for more targeted and informed pedagogical approaches in teaching English phonology.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-method approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative techniques to investigate the pronunciation difficulties encountered by EFL students, specifically in the articulation of English fricative consonants. The quantitative component evaluates students' accuracy through pronunciation test results, while the qualitative component explores learners' perceptions and experiences through interviews. As a descriptive study, it aims to identify, classify, and explain the patterns of mispronunciation, as well as to offer pedagogical insights for more effective pronunciation instruction.

2.2 Variables and Indicators

The primary variable in this study is students' ability to pronounce English fricative consonants. These include labiodental (/f/, /v/), dental (/θ/, /ð/), alveolar (/s/, /z/), palato-alveolar (/ʃ/, /ʒ/), and glottal (/h/) sounds. The indicators used to measure this variable are:

1. The ability to articulate fricative sounds accurately in initial, medial, and final word positions.
2. The frequency and types of mispronunciation, such as substitution, omission, or distortion.

3. Students' reported challenges and the factors contributing to their difficulties.

2.3 Participants

The participants in this study were second-semester students from the English Department at Makassar Muhammadiyah University. The total population consisted of approximately 350 students across ten parallel classes (BG II A to BG II J). Using random sampling, five students were selected from each of the first seven classes (BG II A-G), resulting in a sample of 35 participants. This sampling strategy ensured both diversity and representativeness, while minimizing selection bias.

2.2 Research Instruments

Three research instruments were used to collect data:

- a. Pronunciation Test

Students were given a list of 15 English words that contained various fricative consonants. They were instructed to read the words aloud while being recorded.

- b. Audio Recording

The pronunciation sessions were recorded to facilitate repeated analysis, allowing for the accurate identification of mispronunciation patterns.

- c. Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions regarding their pronunciation difficulties and their approaches to learning fricative sounds. This format provided flexibility while maintaining consistency in core questions.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in three sequential stages:

1. Pronunciation Test

Participants read aloud a standardized list of words, each representing different categories of English fricative consonants. The selected words reflected common vocabulary items to ensure familiarity and reduce lexical bias.

2. Recording and Transcription

Each participant's pronunciation was recorded and then transcribed phonetically. The transcriptions were used to identify specific errors in the production of fricative consonants.

3. Interview

Following the pronunciation test, students were interviewed individually to provide qualitative insights into their pronunciation awareness, experiences with English phonemes, and the challenges they encountered.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods:

1. Pronunciation Test Analysis

Recordings were reviewed to evaluate the accuracy of each fricative sound. Errors were categorized by type (e.g., substitution of /θ/ with /t/), and frequency was calculated for each error type.

2. Interview Analysis

Thematic coding was applied to the interview transcripts to identify common themes related to learners' challenges, strategies, and perceptions.

3. Triangulation

Data from pronunciation tests, recordings, and interviews were triangulated to ensure the validity and reliability of findings and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study based on the pronunciation tests and interviews conducted with second-semester students of the English Department at Makassar Muhammadiyah University. The results are organized according to the two research questions:

1. What problems do students face in pronouncing English fricative consonants?
2. Which fricative consonants are most commonly mispronounced?

3.1 Students' Problems in Pronouncing English Fricative Consonants

The qualitative data obtained from interviews were thematically categorized into three domains: students' ability, students' knowledge, and difficulties related to the pronunciation of English fricative consonants.

a. Students' Ability

Most students reported relying on passive exposure, such as watching English language movies and listening to music, to improve their pronunciation. A few students also mentioned using dictionaries to check phonetic transcriptions, though this practice was inconsistent.

Sample responses included:

"I often watch English movies and listen to songs to learn how to pronounce words."

"I need to look at the dictionary to pronounce fricative correctly."

Despite these efforts, students continued to struggle with accurate articulation, particularly for fricative sounds not found in their native language. This suggests that passive exposure alone is insufficient for developing precise pronunciation skills, especially without structured practice and feedback.

b. Students' Knowledge

When asked to define or identify types of fricative consonants, only 10-15% of the students were able to respond correctly. Although many students had heard of the term "fricative," most could not explain or categorize these sounds accurately.

Typical student statements included.

"I've heard of fricative consonants, but I don't remember what they are."

"Maybe it's the way you pronounce some English words?"

These responses reflect a lack of metalinguistic awareness and limited retention of prior phonetics instruction. It also indicated that the concept of fricative sounds may not be sufficiently emphasized in the classroom.

3. Students' Difficulties

Students identified several contributing factors to their pronunciation difficulties, including:

- Limited focus on pronunciation in their previous schooling.
- Minimal opportunities to use English in daily interactions.
- Confusion caused by inconsistent English spelling-to-sound patterns.
- Difficulty in articulating unfamiliar sounds, especially dental and palato-alveolar fricatives.

One student commented:

“In high school, we never learned about pronunciation transcriptions, so I don't know how to pronounce some sounds.”

These findings reveal broader issues within EFL instruction in Indonesia, where vocabulary and grammar are often prioritized over phonological awareness and articulatory training.

3.2 Most Commonly Mispronounced Fricative Consonants

The quantitative data from the pronunciation tests of 35 students revealed consistent patterns of error, particularly with the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/. These sounds were the most frequently mispronounced, with over half of the participants substituting /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/, consistent with previous studies (e.g., Tiono & Yostanto, 2008) and supporting the theory of first language interference, as Bahasa Indonesia does not include these sounds.

Examples include:

- think /θɪŋk/ → pronounced as tink
- this /ðɪs/ → pronounced as dis

This substitution pattern supports the theory of first-language interference, as Bahasa Indonesia does not contain the /θ/ or /ð/ sounds. Learners instinctively replace these unfamiliar fricatives with more familiar plosives from their L1 phonetic system.

Additional observations include:

- Labiodental sounds (/f/, /v/) and alveolar sounds (/s/, /z/) were generally produced correctly.
- Palato-alveolar fricatives (/ʃ/, /ʒ/) showed moderate difficulty, with /ʒ/ being more problematic, likely due to its rarity and limited exposure in everyday English input.
- Glottal fricative /h/ was largely produced accurately, although in some cases it was omitted or softened, possibly influenced by regional accents.

These results suggest a correlation between pronunciation accuracy and the frequency or familiarity of the sound within the learners' native language environment.

Below is the summary of the pronunciation test results:

Table 1. Frequency of Mispronounced English Fricative Consonants (n = 35)

Fricative Sound	Example Word	Common Mispronunciation	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
/θ/	think	/tɪŋk/	25	71.4%
/ð/	this	/dɪs/	22	62.9%
/ʒ/	measure	/mesər/ or /meʃər/	15	42.9%
/ʃ/	shoe	/su:/ or /sju:/	10	28.6%
/v/	van	/fan/	6	17.1%
/h/	hat	omitted/softened	5	14.3%
/f/, /s/, /z/	fan, sip, zip	Mostly correct	0-2	<6%

Note: Some students made multiple errors across different fricative categories.

The findings of this study reinforce established research in second language phonology. As noted by Maspufah & Diana (2022), certain fricative sounds, particularly /θ/ and /ð/ are typically acquired late, even by native English-speaking children. Consequently, such sounds pose even greater challenges for EFL learners with no equivalent in their L1 (Hung & Yan, 2021).

Turner (2023) emphasized that phonetically marked or unfamiliar sounds tend to be more difficult to acquire. This is evident in the Indonesian students' inability to distinguish between the voiced and voiceless dental fricatives, resulting in substitutions that may impede intelligibility.

Moreover, Kelly (2022) underscores the importance of auditory discrimination and articulatory practice in developing accurate pronunciation. While the students in this study reported exposure to English through media, their productive skills remain underdeveloped due to the lack of structured, pronunciation-focused instruction.

The results imply a pressing need to incorporate explicit phonetic training in the EFL curriculum. Emphasis on articulatory features, supported by listening and production activities, could enhance learners' awareness and control over fricative consonant production.

4. Conclusion

This study confirms that English fricative consonants, particularly the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, are the most frequently mispronounced sounds among Indonesian EFL learners. More than 70% of students replaced these sounds with /t/ and /d/, respectively, indicating a strong influence of first-language interference due to the absence of these fricatives in Bahasa Indonesia. Other sounds such as /ʒ/, /ʃ/, and /v/ also posed challenges, though to a lesser extent. In contrast, more familiar sounds like /f/, /s/, and /z/ were generally pronounced correctly.

These findings highlight critical gaps in pronunciation instruction within the Indonesian EFL context. While students reported frequent exposure to English through media, such passive input proved insufficient for developing accurate pronunciation. The results suggest that explicit phonetic instruction, auditory discrimination training, and articulatory practice are essential for helping learners overcome pronunciation difficulties.

Therefore, pronunciation must be treated not as a peripheral skill, but as a core component of communicative competence. Teachers are encouraged to design classroom activities that include focused phonetic training, the use of phonetic transcription, and consistent corrective feedback. Integrating these elements into the curriculum will not only improve learners' pronunciation accuracy, especially of problematic fricative consonants, but also build their confidence and intelligibility in real-world communication.

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