

# Learners' Perception of and Attitude Toward Pronunciation Accuracy in English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia

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**Abstract**—If one is skeptical about others' pronunciation, then one might not be motivated to improve one's pronunciation attainment. The major purpose of this study was to examine how learners' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy correlate with their pronunciation accuracy in English. The study adopted quantitative approach. A sample of 100 eighth-grade students were randomly selected from the population of 5 junior high schools. We employed an adapted questionnaire and a pronunciation test utilizing the ELSA Speak technology to collect data. The data was analyzed using the descriptive statistics, the Pearson Product Moment, and the Multiple Linear Regression techniques with the help of SPSS software. All three alternative hypotheses put forward in this study are accepted. Firstly, students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is significantly correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy. Secondly, students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy has a significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy. Thirdly, both students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy together hold a significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy. There is sufficient evidence that students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy are correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy. As an implication of the present study, it is proposed as a reference to future research and pedagogical practices.

**Index Terms**—perception, attitude, pronunciation, accuracy, English

## I. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication occurs when the message from the communicator is conveyed well to the communicant. In oral communication, pronunciation serves as one of the major components, as it determines whether the listener catches the spoken words or not (Moedjito, 2016; Gilakjani, 2016). When non-native speakers' pronunciation falls below a certain threshold level, even when they have good vocabulary and excellent grammar, communication does not take place (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Levis, 2018). Due to its significance in oral communication, within the context of English as a foreign language, pronunciation skill is essential to be taught to enhance learners' effective communication and overall language proficiency.

In spite of its important role, pronunciation has become the Cinderella in the field of language education, with English teaching-learning being no exception (Darcy, 2018). Concerning this issue, Suwartono (2014) identifies pronunciation as the most marginalized aspect of English teaching-learning. He argues that the apparent complexity of English pronunciation and misconception about what to teach is responsible for the neglect. He adds that there is a confusion in the part of teachers about how to teach it. Nevertheless, teachers of English should be creative and innovative in order to handle this (Suwartono et al., 2022). They are challenged with it as an approach to problem-solving. Successful pronunciation teaching and learning starts from careful preparation and "content packaging" (Gilakjani, 2012).

As a foreign language in Indonesia, English is learnt and used only to a limited extent within the school walls. The situation even becomes very challenging for the learners as they are rarely in touch with English pronunciation practice in the classrooms (Kang, 2015; Suwartono et al., 2024). For this reason, as the classroom facilitator the teachers play a vital role. As per the role, they are expected to be able to cope with the condition where students are struggling with the pronunciation of English. Effective and efficient efforts they can take may involve introducing and training the learners to think and act out in active manners such as reflective learning, learner-centered teaching, student engagement, self-awareness, and learner autonomy and empowerment (Wardani & Suwartono, 2019).

Our curiosity was piqued with a type of students who behave unfavorably while hearing better performers of English just because they may consider that the speakers use an exaggerated way of pronunciation. According to our professional experience in classroom setting, some students negatively reacted to fluent speakers of English by smiling cynically or exhibiting disapproval expression (Suwartono, 2014). Apparently, this refers to perceptual and attitudinal

variables confronting pronunciation skill. We were eager to learn about the link between the perceptual and attitudinal variables and the pronunciation performance in order to provide a contribution to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in Indonesia and beyond. According to a literature search, we still lack research on this topic, particularly regarding the connection of those perceptual and attitudinal variables with pronunciation aspect (Zafary, 2021; Zulkefly & Razali, 2019). Thus, we sought to answer the following questions:

- How is the students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy?
- To what extent is the students' English pronunciation accuracy?
- Is the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy significantly correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy?
- Does the students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy hold a significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy?
- Do the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy both together correlate significantly with their English pronunciation accuracy?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Learner Perception and Attitude in Language Learning

Perception and attitudes are distinct yet interconnected psychological concepts. Perception and sensing represent a unique source of how to experience something at all (Demuth, 2013). Perception is the result of the brain process in understanding or judging a thing that happens in the environment. Meanwhile, attitude refers to the extent to which an individual holds a positive or negative assessment or judgment of a particular behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000).

Perception and attitude are highly influential in education. Positive attitudes and perceptions are thought to be beneficial to learning (Almohtadi & Aldarabah, 2021; Bakoko et al., 2023; Hromova, 2019). Likewise, in the context of English language teaching and learning, perception and attitude affect learners' behaviour. According to a rather classic theory by Zanna et al. (1981), perception shapes how people interpret it and react to it.

In Indonesia, perception and attitude have been investigated extensively in their relation to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Jaliyya and Idrus (2017) found that learners in a boarding school in West Java, Indonesia have positive attitudes and are motivated to learn the language even though the motivation does not refer to intrinsic one. They argued that the research participants and Indonesian learners of English in general still value the status of English as the most international language.

Istiqomah et al. (2021) reported their finding related with language learner attitudes that Indonesian students have positive attitude to phonetics learning although, according to them, it is a challenging course. The research team assumed that the participants view phonetics as essential knowledge and or skill to support their spoken English proficiency.

In neighboring country Malaysia, research by Rayah et al. (2018) found out that the participants' attitude toward spoken English had a strong correlation with motivation in spoken English. The finding implies the importance of different strategies to be implemented by the English language educators to enhance students' motivation in communicative English subjects.

Within all the studies aforementioned, perception and attitude appear closely interconnected. Perception – process of constructing meaning from the environment – even if not made a research topic or variable under investigation, always comes up to provide explanations, clarification, elaboration, or reason behind one's attitude. In the context of language learning, an overwhelming majority of research on perception and attitude reveals a positive tendency. The next section will discuss the track record of these two variables in a narrower focus of attention, i.e. pronunciation as an essential aspect of language, in this case the English language.

### B. Perception of and Attitude Toward Pronunciation Accuracy in English

While research on perception and attitude in the areas of learning, teaching, and education has been extensively conducted (Almohtadi & Aldarabah, 2021; Landberg & Partsch, 2023), there is a relatively small number of studies on perception and attitude which are specifically linked to English pronunciation mastery (Bakoko et al., 2023).

In the Middle East region, Almaqarn and Alshabeb (2017) found out that Saudi EFL students have a positive attitude toward the proper pronunciation of English despite low rate of improvement in their pronunciation. The participants seemed to consider the importance of proper pronunciation of English.

Japanese researchers Tsunemoto and McDonough (2020) conducted a survey of learner attitude toward English pronunciation and its relationship to perceived accentedness. Their main finding was that confidence in pronunciation was significantly correlated with accentedness scores. The stronger one's confidence in pronunciation, the farther away one's pronunciation will sound from nativelikeness.

A study by Bakoko et al. (2023) revealed that learners of English from particular religious backgrounds in Thailand, namely Buddhism and Islam, have neutral attitude toward their English pronunciation and perceived indirect influences of their religion on their English pronunciation. Further, the study also found out that learners from some religious backgrounds take an advantage in pronouncing some English sounds, letters, and words. This particularly is interesting.

Similarity in few segmental phonemes that exist in Arabic and English, for example, enables Muslim EFL learners to pronounce some sounds of English effortlessly due to positive transfer from Arabic sounds production (Suwartono, 2008).

Zafary (2021) investigated the Afghan EFL students' perceptions about English pronunciation. His study revealed that Afghan EFL students hold a positive perception about English pronunciation and feel enthusiastic toward their pronunciation related activities. This research finding, again, is compatible with previous studies of similar topics.

Students' attitude toward English pronunciation, which is often based on their perception about it, guides their actions and intentions towards it (Candan & Inal, 2020). Negative perception of British English pronunciation which is rare throughout Asia, for example, can lead learners of English in this region to negative attitude toward it which, in turn, results in unfavorable actions over this type of English pronunciation, such as avoidance, disapproval, or even other stronger negative verbal or nonverbal expressions. With this assumption, it is a simple thing to explain why such a cynical smile in this regard either inside or outside classroom context happens.

As elaborated on above, it can be inferred that research on learner perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation tends to exhibit positive relationship. It is most likely that the current study, with the main purpose being to evaluate the association between perception and attitude both together and pronunciation accuracy in English, will follow this trend. We have come across no study investigating pronunciation accuracy in our literature search, making it justifiable enough for a follow-up. Based on the literature review above, we proposed three hypotheses in regards to the third, fourth, and fifth research questions:

- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is not significantly correlated with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ho)
- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is significantly correlated with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ha)
- Students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy does not hold a significant correlation with their pronunciation in English. (Ho)
- Students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy holds a significant correlation with their pronunciation in English. (Ha)
- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy simultaneously do not correlate significantly with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ho)
- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy simultaneously both at once correlate significantly with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ha)

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

This research employed quantitative approach. More specifically, this study belongs to correlational survey (Suwartono, 2014). It aims to figure out whether the three variables under study are related without manipulating any of them and, if so, in what way. It involved perception and attitude as independent variables, while pronunciation accuracy as dependent one.

#### B. Respondents

Our research population comprised students of eight grade at all 5 junior high schools in Adipala District, Cilacap City, Central Java Province, Indonesia. We randomly recruited a sample of 100 students from the population. Table 1 describes the population and sample size in more detail.

TABLE 1  
RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

No.	School names	Population	Sample size
1	State Junior High School 1 of Adipala	256	40
2	State Junior High School 2 of Adipala	256	40
3	Local Government Junior High School of Adipala	42	6
4	Muhammadiyah Junior High School of Adipala	32	5
5	Christian Junior High School of Adipala	64	9
	Total	650	100

#### C. Data Collection

To gather data on perception of and attitudes toward English pronunciation accuracy, we used a five-point Likert scale ("Strongly Agree" through "Strongly Disagree") questionnaire. The perceptual questionnaires and attitudinal questionnaires were administered successively one after another. A brief oral explanation supporting the points stated in the informed consent was given by the surveyor right before the respondents provided their responses.

In an attempt to consider the quality of instruments, we created the blueprints during the questionnaire preparation and test content coverage. It is an approach to the logic validity (Taherdoost, 2016). The perceptual questionnaire consists of 15 items encompassing the aspects of English pronunciation in general, respondent's own English pronunciation, and motivation to improve pronunciation adapted from Srakaew (2021). Detail is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
PERCEPTUAL QUESTIONNAIRE BLUEPRINT

No	Aspects	Indicators	Distribution of items
1.	English pronunciation in general	Importance of English pronunciation	1, 2, 3, 11, 12
		Opinion of having good pronunciation	4, 5, 6, 13
2.	Respondent's own pronunciation	Self-confidence of the pronunciation mastery	7, 8, 15
3.	Motivation in improving pronunciation	Need to have better pronunciation	9, 10, 14

The attitudinal questionnaire consists of 14 items involving aspects of attitude toward English speakers, attitude toward learning English, and attitude toward English teachers adapted from Gardner (2004) in International AMTB (Attitude Motivation Test Battery) Research Project. More detail is given in Table 3.

TABLE 3  
ATTITUDINAL QUESTIONNAIRE BLUEPRINT

No	Aspects	Indicators	Distribution of items
1.	Attitude toward English speakers	Need to practice English with native speakers	1, 2
2.	Attitude toward learning English	Excitement in learning English	3, 4, 5
		Feeling of having English class	6, 7
		Feeling of speaking English	11, 12, 13, 14
3.	Attitude toward English teachers	Satisfaction on the English teachers	8, 9, 10

The English pronunciation accuracy test was conducted utilizing ELSA Speak application, which is currently considered the best (in terms of practicality, efficiency, and efficacy) pronunciation application available in the internet to practice and test pronunciation (Adawiah et al., 2024). With this tool, the users (i.e. respondents) were provided with 13 sentences to read, pronounce, and record on mobile phones. Upon completion, scores instantly appear on the screen. In spite of the fact that the application can measure both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation, we utilized it solely for assessing segmental aspects mastery, as the current study focused on pronunciation accuracy instead of pronunciation properness. See Table 4 for details.

TABLE 4  
PRONUNCIATION TEST BLUEPRINT

Aspect	Indicators	Items
Segmental features	Vowels /i/ /ɪ/ /e/ /æ/ /ə/ /ɪ/ /ʌ/ /ɑ/ /ɒ/ /ɔ:/ /o/ /u:/	Numbers 1 to 13
	Diphthongs /eɪ/ /aɪ/ /əʊ/ /aʊ/ /ɔɪ/ /ɪə/ /eə/ /ʊə/	
	Consonants /l/ /r/ /w/ /v/ /b/ /s/ /z/ /h/ /ð/ /θ/ /ʃ/	

#### D. Data Analysis

Data of this study is numeric and was analyzed using statistical techniques (Suartono, 2014), i.e. the descriptive statistics, the Pearson Product Moment technique, and Multiple Linear Regression technique. The descriptive statistics was used to analyze the students' perception of and attitude toward the English pronunciation accuracy and pronunciation performance (research questions 1 and 2). The Pearson Product Moment technique was used to assess the relationship between students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy, and between students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy (research questions 3 and 4). Last, the Multiple Linear Regression technique was used to examine the relationship of students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude towards English pronunciation accuracy both at once with their English pronunciation accuracy (research question 5). The Pearson Product Moment and the Multiple Linear Regression analyses were performed with the help of SPSS software.

## IV. RESULTS

### A. Students' Perception of and Attitude Toward Their English Pronunciation

After analyzing the perceptual data, we organized the results in the following summary table.

TABLE 5  
STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY

Number of Items	n	Total Scores	M (Avg.)
15	100	60.74	4.05

The table shows that the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy reached an average response of 4.05. When consulted to the levels of the mean scores on 5-point Likert Scale, the rate falls into category "High" (Almohtadi & Aldarabah, 2021). In regard to attitudinal data, we displayed the analysis results as follows.

TABLE 6  
STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY

Number of Items	n	Total Scores	M (Avg.)
14	100	52	3.7

As can be seen, the students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy gained an average response of 3.7. It falls within category "High".

#### B. Students' English Pronunciation Accuracy

After analyzing data on English pronunciation accuracy collected with the help of ELSA Speak software, we found out that the students' pronunciation accuracy attainment was very unsatisfying, with an average score of 44.19 on a 100-point basis. Table 7 summarizes the result.

TABLE 7  
ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY TEST RESULT

Number of Items	n	Total Scores	M (Avg.)
13	100	4419	44.19

Dataset of the three variables being investigated was further processed to test the proposed hypotheses.

#### C. Relationship Between Students' Perception of English Pronunciation Accuracy (X1) and Their English Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)

For this purpose, we applied the Pearson Product Moment analysis technique. In regard to the relationship between students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy (X2) and their pronunciation accuracy in English (Y), we processed both simultaneously. The following table summarizes the results.

TABLE 8  
SUMMARY OF PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT ANALYSIS RESULT

		Total Perception (X1)	Total Attitude (X2)	Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)
Total Perception (X1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.699**	.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	n	100	100	100
Total Attitude (X2)	Pearson Correlation	.699**	1	.494**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	n	100	100	100
Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.494**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	n	100	100	100
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

The table shows that the students' perception (X1) and English pronunciation accuracy (Y) hold a significant relationship. Sig. (2-tailed) is  $0.000 < 0.05$ , with the Pearson correlation of 0.472. Therefore, the hypothesis saying "Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is not significantly correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy." (Ho) is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, meaning that there is a positive relationship between the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy.

#### D. Relationship Between Students' Attitude Toward English Pronunciation Accuracy (X2) and Their English Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)

Table 8 also indicates that the students' attitude (X2) and English pronunciation accuracy (Y) have a significant relationship. Sig. (2-tailed) is  $0.000 < 0.05$ , with the Pearson correlation of 0.494 (49.4%). Therefore, the hypothesis saying "Students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy holds no significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy." (Ho) is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, meaning that there is a

positive association between the students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy.

#### *E. Association Between Students' Perception of and Attitude Toward English Pronunciation Accuracy and Their English Pronunciation Accuracy*

To examine the association of students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy (X1 and X2 simultaneously) with their English pronunciation accuracy, we applied the Multiple Linear Regression analysis. The result is summarized in Table 9.

TABLE 9  
SUMMARY OF MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULT

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.643	7.324		.088	.930
	Total Perception (X1)	.331	.161	.248	2.053	.043
	Total Attitude (X2)	.447	.168	.321	2.658	.009
Dependent Variable: Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)						

The result of the analysis shows that the t-value of the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is 0.043, while the t-value of their attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy is 0.009. It means there is enough evidence that the students' perception of and attitude toward the pronunciation accuracy concurrently correlate significantly with their English pronunciation accuracy. Hence, the proposed hypothesis saying: "Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy jointly have no significant correlation with their pronunciation accuracy in English." (Ho) is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, meaning that a positive correlation exists between students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy both together and their English pronunciation accuracy.

## V. DISCUSSION

In regards to the major purpose of this study, which was to examine how learners' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy correlate with their English pronunciation accuracy, three main findings are discussed here.

Based on the proposed hypotheses testing results, positive relationships exist between either independent variables individually with dependent variable or independent variables both together with dependent variable. This represents enough evidence that the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude towards English pronunciation accuracy hold a significant association with their English pronunciation accuracy. This finding aligns with previous studies by Almaqrn and Alshabeb (2017) and Bakoko et al. (2023).

Finding of the present study is good news for those struggling with English language teaching and learning. It involves pronunciation, which is paramount to oral communication, yet remains neglected in language teaching and learning. We address the findings to offer pedagogical recommendations to teachers and learners of English as the world's most international language thus far by prioritizing students' favorable perception and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy to improve their English oral communication clarity (when speaking) and comprehension (when listening).

As touched on earlier, teachers of English may notice some students exhibiting negative behaviors while hearing peers speaking "differently" due to their ignorance or erroneous belief. English teachers with good command of spoken English and excellent pronunciation will know that those learners with "different" speech manner actually speak English with pronunciation accuracy instead. Lack of exposure and limited access to model English speakers, native-like speakers of English, and native speakers of English in a foreign environment have led to this ignorance and erroneous belief. An earlier study by Mirza (2015) reported a finding that might refer to this situation. The difference in learners' pronunciation achievement in English as a foreign language (EFL) versus English as a second language (ESL) settings could be attributed to this issue. Another possible causal factor is learner confidence (Tsunemoto & McDonough, 2020). In their study, they found out that learner confidence is correlated with accented scores. When learners of a second language feel confident of their accented speech, they tend to preserve their first language pronunciation and disapprove the second language pronunciation. Professional English language educators should know and solve this problem.

Regarding perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy, we need more in-depth research in order to help provide explanations concerning why and how. In addition, we need research on pronunciation which encompasses not only segmental aspects, but also suprasegmental features as to give more comprehensive information (Wang, 2020; Abdelrahim, 2020; Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021). It is likely that less-motivated students react worse to speakers or users of English with nicest prosodic features, such as stress, intonation, and rhythm which contribute to naturalness, properness, and "melody" of the English language. To competent non-speakers of English, such pronunciation skill with suprasegmental features means nativelikeness (Suwartono, 2008).

It is undeniable that being able to speak English as a foreign language with nativelikeness is a pride in Indonesia. People may be appreciative of being able to sound more like a native speaker than like Indonesian. Such ability increases their status in the community as well gives them an elevated identity (Rini, 2014). That teaching English pronunciation is not to bring the learners to native-like accent, but rather to intelligibility (Gilakjani, 2016) is another matter.

## VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, it can be inferred from this study that the students' perception of and attitudes toward English pronunciation accuracy hold a positive correlation with their pronunciation accuracy in English. One good pedagogical implication from this research is that language educators should expose learners to good spoken English and foster positive perceptions and attitudes toward English pronunciation accuracy and pronunciation performance in general. Future research should involve prosodic aspects of English. In addition, deeper data collection techniques, such as participatory observation, need to be employed in future investigations for rich, detailed, and more comprehensive information.

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