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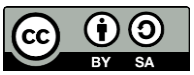

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# Analyzing Types of Mispronunciation "Deletion" 6 Grade in Elementary School

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## Abstract

This study investigates the types of phonological deletion errors found in the oral reading of sixth-grade students at SDN 11 Dauh Puri. The research is framed within David Odden's (2013) theory of phonological processes, focusing on deletion as a common feature of mispronunciation. The data were collected from students reading a short English passage aloud, and errors were categorized into five types of deletion: function word deletion, unstressed vowel deletion, consonant cluster simplification, intervocalic consonant deletion, and word-final consonant deletion. The analysis revealed that function word deletion occurred most frequently (44.4%), followed by unstressed vowel deletion (22.2%). Each of the remaining types accounted for 11.1% of the total. These errors reflect students' tendency to simplify complex phonological structures, often influenced by their first language and limited exposure to natural spoken English. The study highlights the need for explicit pronunciation instruction that addresses connected speech features and helps learners build awareness of reduced forms in English

**Keywords**: *Mispronunciation, Oral Reading, Phonological Deletion*

## Introduction

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language, yet its mastery is critical for students to engage in meaningful communication and navigate globalized contexts. Among the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, writing—speaking stands out as the key indicator of proficiency, especially for young learners. As Nunan (1991) observes, being able to hold a conversation is often the benchmark for success in acquiring a second language. However, achieving oral fluency goes beyond knowing vocabulary and grammar; it requires accurate pronunciation, which plays a vital role in ensuring clarity and intelligibility.

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Despite its importance, pronunciation remains a significant challenge for Indonesian elementary students. Even after years of instruction, their exposure to authentic spoken English is limited, often confined to the classroom. This lack of exposure leads to frequent phonological errors, such as the omission of sounds or words when speaking. In response to this, researchers such as Putri & Suryani (2020) have documented frequent deletion of final consonants among primary-level students, while Widiastuti (2021) reported that unstressed vowel deletion tends to occur in multisyllabic words due to simplification attempts. Additionally, broader analyses (Gilakjani, 2012; Derwing & Munro, 2015) highlight that deletion errors often reflect the influence of the learner's first language and limited familiarity with reduced forms in natural speech.

However, much existing research focuses on older learners or considers deletion as just one among multiple pronunciation errors, rather than examining it in depth. There is a notable gap concerning how phonological deletion specifically manifests in young learners' oral reading—a context where pronunciation has direct implications for fluency and comprehension.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing phonological deletion errors in the oral reading performances of sixth-grade students at SDN 11 Dauh Puri. Guided by David Odden's (2013) theory of phonological processes, which categorizes deletion as a common modification in speech, the research classifies errors into five types: function word deletion, unstressed vowel deletion, consonant cluster simplification, intervocalic consonant deletion, and word-final consonant deletion. Analysis of recorded reading sessions revealed that deletion of function words was the most frequent error (44.4%), followed by unstressed vowel deletion (22.2%), with each remaining type accounting for 11.1% of cases. These findings underscore a tendency to simplify complex phonological structures—patterns likely influenced by L1 interference and minimal exposure to stress-timed fluency in English.

By focusing exclusively on deletion within Odden's framework and on young learners, this study offers a novel, process-specific insight into elementary-level pronunciation challenges. The findings aim to inform targeted pedagogical strategies, raising awareness of connected speech features and teaching methods that support clearer and more confident oral communication in English classrooms.

## Method

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive method to investigate the types of mispronunciation, specifically deletion, found in the oral reading of sixth-grade students at SDN 11 Dauh Puri. The main data source is a reading text entitled "My Daily Activities", selected for its relevance to daily vocabulary, common sentence structures, and variety of phonological features. The text was purposefully chosen because it contains numerous function words, unstressed syllables, consonant clusters, and final consonants— phonological environments where deletion is likely to occur. The data were gathered during the second semester of the 2024/2025

academic year, at a time when students had already received foundational instruction in English reading.

This study uses David Odden's phonological theory (2013) as the analytical framework. Odden defines deletion as a phonological process in which one or more segments (consonants or vowels) are omitted in speech due to articulatory ease, perceptual indistinctiveness, or structural constraints. Guided by this theory, the researcher identifies and classifies deletion errors into five categories: (1) Function Word Deletion, (2) Unstressed Vowel Deletion, (3) Consonant Cluster Simplification, (4) Intervocalic Consonant Deletion, and (5) Word-final Consonant Deletion.

The data collection process involved several stages. First, each student was asked to read the same English text aloud individually. The reading was recorded using a voice recorder in a quiet classroom setting. Second, the recordings were transcribed phonetically using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to capture each student's actual pronunciation. Third, instances of deletion were identified, marked, and grouped based on the types of deletion described in Odden's theory.

For the data analysis, each mispronounced word was categorized according to the deletion types defined by David Odden (2013). The frequency of each type was calculated and presented in a percentage table to determine which deletion patterns were most prevalent among the students. The analysis also included explanations for each deletion type, considering factors such as mother tongue interference, phonological simplification, and syllable stress.

**Result**

In this section, the result from the collected data is presented. The results are displayed in a table containing a list of deletion types, their frequency of occurrence, and the percentage. A total of 9 data entries were included in the table, based on student speech that reflects phonological deletion. The table below was generated using the following formula:

*Percentage = (Number of Occurrences*

*÷ Total) × 100%*

Deletion, as described by Odden (2013), is a phonological process in which a segment is omitted from the phonetic output. This often occurs to simplify articulation and enhance fluency in connected speech. Odden classifies deletion into various types, including:

- Consonant Cluster Simplification – the removal of a consonant to simplify complex consonant sequences.
- Function Word Deletion – omission of segments, especially in weak or unstressed grammatical words.
- Unstressed Vowel Deletion – dropping vowels in unstressed syllables for ease of pronunciation.
- Word-final Consonant Deletion – deleting the last consonant of a

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word, often in rapid speech.

- Intervocalic Consonant Deletion – omission of consonants between vowels for smoother transitions.

Table 1. The Percentage of Deletion Types in Sixth-Grade Students' Oral Reading

| Types of Deletion | Occurrence | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Function Word Deletion | 4 | 44.4% |
| Unstressed Vowel Deletion | 2 | 22.2% |
| Consonant Cluster Simplification | 1 | 11.1% |
| Intervocalic Consonant Deletion | 1 | 11.1% |
| Word-Final Consonant Deletion | 1 | 11.1% |
| Total | 9 | 100% |

Based on the table above, nine data entries were analyzed directly from the sixth- grade students' oral reading performance, showing the use of various types of phonological deletion as proposed by Odden (2013). Among the nine data, function word deletion appeared most frequently, with four occurrences, accounting for (44.4%) of the total. This was followed by unstressed vowel deletion, which occurred twice (22.2%). The remaining three types of consonant cluster simplification, intervocalic consonant deletion, and word- final consonant deletion each appeared once, making up (11.1%) respectively.

The frequent use of function word deletion in students' pronunciation reflects the natural tendency to weaken or omit grammatical words in connected speech, particularly in fast or casual reading. This suggests that even at an early stage of learning, students begin to show features of native-like fluency, albeit inconsistently. Meanwhile, the less frequent occurrence of cluster and intervocalic deletion

indicates that these more advanced phonological reductions are not yet widely used by the learners, likely due to limited exposure and developing articulatory control.

**Discussion**

The analysis in this study focuses on the phonological deletion processes found in the oral utterances of sixth-grade students during reading activities. In this section, the types of deletion are discussed in detail based on David Odden's (2013) phonological theory. This theory identifies several categories of deletion such as function word deletion, unstressed vowel deletion, consonant cluster simplification, intervocalic consonant deletion, and word-final consonant deletion. These processes reflect natural simplification strategies that second language learners often employ when producing spoken English.

By analyzing the students' pronunciation errors, this study reveals how each type of deletion contributes to reducing the articulatory complexity of English speech. The findings demonstrate that function word deletion occurred most frequently, indicating a tendency among learners to omit grammatical words that are often unstressed and perceived as less important. Unstressed vowel deletion and consonant cluster simplification also appeared, showing that learners may struggle with syllable timing and complex consonantal arrangements. Intervocalic and word-final consonant deletions, although less frequent, further illustrate the learners' attempts to simplify speech for ease of articulation.

These deletion patterns emphasize the influence of first language phonological rules and suggest the importance of targeted pronunciation training to improve intelligibility. By understanding these deletion tendencies, educators can better support learners in developing clearer and more accurate English pronunciation.

The data used in this study were obtained from a reading passage performed orally by sixth-grade students during an English-speaking activity. The following is the complete text that served as the source for identifying instances of phonological deletion, analyzed according to the framework proposed by David Odden (2013).

**Student reading text:**

Every morning, I set my alarm to wake up early, but I often feel too tired to get up. I brush my teeth and take a quick shower, but sometimes I forget my towel and get wet. For breakfast, I usually eat a vegetable omelet with a cup of coffee. Then I check my schedule and head to the library to study some difficult material. I read a lot of articles, write in my journal, and talk to my colleagues. Sometimes we have a presentation, which gives me a bit of anxiety. In the afternoon, I walk through the neighborhood to buy some medicine and chocolate. At night, I watch a documentary, then brush my teeth again before I go to bed.

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### 1. Function Word Deletion

Function Word Deletion is a type of phonological deletion where a function word such as and, of, to, the, is, are, etc. Is omitted or partially deleted during speech, often in casual, fast, or non-native pronunciation.

**Data 1**

| NO | Words | Students' Pronunciation | Deletion Words/Sounds | Example Sentence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To | /tu/ → /tə/ or omitted | /t/ or full word | I set my alarm ***to*** wake up early. |
| 2. | Again | /əˈgɛn/→/ˈgɛn/ | /ə/ | Then brush my teeth ***again*** before bed. |
| 3. | And | /æn/ →/ən/ or omitted | /d/ or full word | I brush my teeth ***and*** take a quick shower. |

**Explanation:**

In the word "to" /tu/, the full vowel may be weakened to /tə/ or omitted entirely in rapid or casual speech. In some student pronunciations, the sound

/t/ or the whole word "to" may be dropped altogether, resulting in the loss of this function word. This aligns with function word deletion, a strategy often driven by the reduced stress and semantic weight of auxiliary words.

In the case of "again" /əˈgɛn/, the initial unstressed vowel /ə/ is deleted, yielding /ˈgɛn/. This represents unstressed vowel deletion, where weak syllables, particularly those carrying the schwa /ə/, are commonly omitted to simplify articulation.

Similarly, "and" /ænd/ may be reduced to /ən/ or even completely omitted. The deletion of the final consonant /d/, or the omission of the whole word, again reflects function word deletion. As a coordinating conjunction, "and" often loses prominence in connected speech, leading to such simplifications.

### 2. Unstressed Vowel Deletion

Unstressed vowel deletion is a phonological process where a vowel that occurs in a syllable with no primary stress is elided (removed), leading to a simpler syllable structure. It often results in syllable reduction.

**Data 2**

| NO | Words | Students' Pronunciation | Deletion Words/Sounds | Example Sentence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Vegetable | /ˈvɛdʒtəbl/→/ˈvɛdʒtbl/ | /ə/ | I usually eat a ***vegetable*** omelet |
| 2. | Chocolate | /ˈtʃɒklət/→ /ˈtʃɒklt/ | /ə/ | To buy some medicine and ***chocolate***. |

**Explanation:**

In the word "vegetable" /ˈvɛdʒtəbl/, the schwa /ə/ in the second syllable is deleted, resulting in the simplified pronunciation /ˈvɛdʒtbl/. This deletion reduces the number of syllables, streamlining the articulation and making the word easier and quicker to pronounce—especially in casual or rapid speech.

Similarly, in "chocolate" /ˈtʃɒklət/, the schwa /ə/ in the final syllable is dropped, leading to /ˈtʃɒklt/. This reflects a natural phonological tendency to eliminate weak, unstressed vowels that do not carry essential semantic or phonemic weight.

**3. Consonant Cluster Simplification**

Consonant Cluster Simplification is phonological theory refers to the process where one or more consonants in a consonant cluster (two or more consonants appearing together) are deleted or altered to make the word easier to pronounce.

**Data 3**

| NO | Words | Students' Pronunciation | Deletion Words/Sounds | Example Sentence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Articles | /ˈɑːtɪklz/→/ˈɑːtkəlz/ | /ɪ/ or /s/ | I read a lot of ***articles.*** |
| 2. | Documentar y | /ˌdɒkjʊˈmɛntəri/ →/ˌdɒkmɛntə ri/ | /jʊ/ or /n/ | I watch a ***documentary*** |
| | | | | **.** |

**Explanation:**

In the word "articles" /ˈɑːtɪklz/, the vowel /ɪ/ in the second syllable is unstressed and is deleted in the student's pronunciation, resulting in /ˈɑːtkəlz/. The

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omission of this unstressed vowel simplifies the syllable structure and reduces articulatory effort, especially during rapid or informal speech.

Similarly, in "documentary" /ˌdɒkjʊˈmɛntəri/, the medial vowel /jʊ/ and even the /n/ sound may be omitted, leading to a simplified pronunciation like

/ˌdɒkmɛntəri/. Here, the complex cluster formed by /kjʊ/ is reduced, which also reflects a tendency to eliminate complex or unstressed syllables for ease of articulation.

### 4. Intervocalic Consonant Deletion

Intervocalic Consonant Deletion is phonological theory refers to the omission of a consonant sound that appears between two vowels (hence inter- "between" + vocalic "vowels"). This is a type of phonological simplification commonly observed in both native and second language (L2) speakers, especially children or learners with less exposure to English phonotactics.

**Data 4**

| NO | Words | Students' Pronunciation | Deletion Words/Sounds | Example Sentence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Presentation | /ˌprɛznˈteɪʃ ən/ →/ˌprɛsˈteɪʃə n/ | /n/ | Sometimes we have a ***presentation.*** |

**Explanation:**

This error is an example of intervocalic consonant deletion, where a consonant located between two vowels is omitted to simplify articulation. According to David Odden (2013), such deletions often occur when speakers subconsciously aim to make pronunciation easier, especially with complex consonant clusters. In this case, the student deletes the /n/, possibly perceiving the cluster as difficult to articulate or unfamiliar within their native phonological patterns.

### 5. Word-Final Consonant Deletion

Word-Final Consonant Deletion phonological theory refers to the omission of a consonant sound at the end of a word. This is a phonological process where the final consonant especially if it's difficult to pronounce or uncommon in a learner's first language is deleted to simplify pronunciation.

**Data 5**

| NO | Words | Students' Pronunciation | Deletion Words/Sounds | Example Sentence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Bed | /bɛd/ →/bɛ/ | /d/ | I go to ***bed.*** |

**Explanation:**

The final voiced stop /d/ is deleted, resulting in the pronunciation /bɛ/. This is an instance of word-final consonant deletion, where the last consonant in a word is omitted. According to David Odden (2013), this process often occurs to ease articulation, particularly when the final consonant is a voiced stop that may not be strongly emphasized in the speaker's native language. The simplification reduces articulatory effort but can affect the clarity and standardless of pronunciation.

**Conclusion**

This study identified five types of mispronunciation categorized under deletion processes, based on David Odden's (2013) phonological theory. These include Function Word Deletion, Unstressed Vowel Deletion, Consonant Cluster Simplification, Intervocalic Consonant Deletion, and Word-final Consonant Deletion. Among these, Function Word Deletion was the most frequently observed, accounting for 44.4% of all mispronunciation cases among sixth-grade students at SDN 11 Dauh Puri. The high frequency of this type suggests that students tend to omit grammatical words such as "to" or "and" during oral reading.

Though often unstressed, these function words are essential for grammatical cohesion and meaning. Their omission reflects a lack of familiarity with the rhythm, intonation, and prosodic features of English, which may stem from differences in stress-timing patterns between English and the students' native language. This finding has important implications for English language instruction, emphasizing the need for phonological awareness in the classroom, especially regarding the pronunciation of function words in connected speech.

As a new pedagogical contribution, the study proposes a phonology-based learning approach to help reduce mispronunciations. Recommended strategies include drill and repetition using minimal pairs and weak forms, the shadowing technique to help students internalize rhythm and reduction patterns, phonetic transcription practice to improve sound recognition, and interactive listening-speaking exercises using natural speech input such as dialogues or audiobooks. Integrating these methods into regular instruction may enhance students' awareness of English sound patterns and improve their overall oral proficiency.

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