An Investigation into Errors in Pronouncing Some English Final Consonant Sounds Made By Third-Graders at Tran Cao Van Primary School, Da Nang City

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Abstract: *In order to help learners improve their communication in both speaking and listening comprehension, it is not surprising that pronunciation is considered to be one of the most important parts of English learning. However, it had not been an easy task to reach a level of clarity and precision in the pronunciation. To this end, the study entitled "An investigation into errors in pronouncing some English final consonants spoken by third-grade students in Tran Cao Van Primary School, Da Nang City" was conducted with a view to studying common ending sound errors for young learners at Tran Cao Van Primary School. This study was based on combined quantitative and qualitative methods, making it a mixed-methods study. The qualitative approach helps to explore factors that affect such problems and strategies for overcoming them in questionnaires addressed to teachers working at the same school, while the quantitative approach gives information on ending consonant errors committed by students by conducting a speaking test with students. The study findings indicate that most students make mistakes with stop and fricative consonants such as /b/, /k/, /p/, /t/, /d/, /f/, /v/, and /s/. Besides, the research also finds out factors that influence students' English pronunciation, and some useful strategies are also suggested for teachers and young learners to deal with their pronunciation errors.*

Keywords*: ending sound errors, young learners, EFL students.*

I.   Introduction

The journey of mastering a new language is filled with a myriad of challenges, among which pronunciation stands as a crucial element. Accurate pronunciation is not merely about sounding like native speakers; it plays an instrumental role in ensuring effective communication, understanding, and social integration. English, with its global significance, is often introduced as a second language in many parts of the world, including in Vietnam. As students embark on this journey, the influence of their mother tongue invariably shapes their English pronunciation, sometimes leading to distinct patterns of errors.

For young learners, especially third graders at Tran Cao Van Primary School in Da Nang City, grappling with the intricacies of English pronunciation can be a daunting task. One area that often poses challenges is the pronunciation of English final consonant sounds. These sounds, which may seem trivial in isolation, have profound implications on intelligibility and clarity in communication. Mispronouncing them can lead to misunderstandings, reduced confidence in spoken interactions, and even social stigmatization.

While there exists a plethora of studies focusing on English pronunciation errors among non-native speakers, there remains a conspicuous gap in research specifically targeting the unique challenges faced by third graders in Vietnamese primary schools, particularly in the realm of final consonant sounds. How do these young learners, at their tender age and with limited exposure to English, navigate the complex phonetic terrains of final consonants? To what extent does their native Vietnamese language, with its phonetic and phonological idiosyncrasies, influence their pronunciation of these sounds in English? And crucially, are the current pedagogical approaches adequate in addressing these challenges?

This study seeks to bridge this research gap by delving deep into the pronunciation errors of third graders at Tran Cao Van Primary School. By identifying the specific challenges, understanding the underlying

factors, and recommending tailored teaching strategies, this research aspires to contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on English language teaching and acquisition in primary education settings within Vietnam.

This research aims to enhance the pronunciation skills of third-graders at Tran Cao Van Primary School in English final consonant sounds by identifying the most significant challenges, understanding contributing factors, and developing targeted teaching strategies. In order to fulfill the objectives mentioned above, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. Which specific final consonant sounds are the most prevalent and challenging for third-graders' pronunciation at Tran Cao Van Primary School?

2. What factors contribute to the specific errors made by third-graders when pronouncing English final consonant sounds at Tran Cao Van Primary School?

3. What are the most effective teaching strategies that can be used to address the identified challenges in pronouncing English final consonant sounds for third-graders at Tran Cao Van Primary School, considering the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the students?

II. Literature review

2.1. Consonant

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Encyclopedic (1992, p.192), consonants are "speech sounds made by completely or partly stopping the flow of air breathed out through the mouth".

Consonants are also defined as "A speech sound that's not a vowel; a letter of the alphabet that represents a speech sound produced by a partial or complete obstruction of the air stream by a constriction of the speech organs".

In English phonetics and phonology (Peter Roach, 2000, p.10), the term consonant can be defined as: "sounds in which there is an obstruction to the flow of air as it passes the larynx to the lips". The sounds of consonants are formed when "one articulator moves towards another or two articulators come together obstructing the air stream and the air stream can't get out freely."

Table 1: English consonants (Source: English Phonetics and Phonology- Peter Roach)

Manner of articulation	Place of articulation							
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Approximant	w					r	j	

2.2. English final consonant

The term "ending sounds" is familiar to ESL learners of English as a second language, as it refers to the final sounds in a word. More specifically, as the word can end with one or more consonant clusters, it refers to the consonant sound. The consonant sounds at the end of each word can be distinguished, for example, as endings in English pronunciation. They are also named Codas, and the final vowel or consonant cluster is called a Coda by (Barbara and Brian, 1994).

According to Rachael (2003), there can be up to four consonants in a coda:

- If there are no consonants at the end of the word, it has a zero coda.
- A single consonant is called the final consonant. Any consonant except h, r, w and j may be a final coda.

Eg: Final consonant sounds in English are listed as below:

/p/   – rips, keep, sleep
/b/   – rib, nib
/t/   – right, start, cat
/d/   – ride,
/k/   – pick, kick
/g/   – pig, big
/f/   – leaf, chief

/v/ – leave, naïve,
/θ/ – earth, wreath
/ð/ – wreathe, breathe
/s/ – this, miss,
/z/ – these, has, was
/ʃ/ – crash, splash, smash
/ʒ/ – beige,
/tʃ/ – church, teach
/dʒ/ – bridge, encourage
/m/ – lamb, room, gloom
/n/ – then, man, happen
/η/ – sing, spring, ceiling
/l/ – pool, file, smile

When there are two or more consonants standing at the end of the word, the terms "pre-final" and "post-final" consonants are used.

- Pre-final includes: /m/. /n/, /η/, /l/, /s/
- Post-final includes: /s/, /z/, /t/, /d/, /θ/

Two consonant clusters

- Pre-final m, n, η, l, s followed by a final consonant
- Consonant plus post-final s, z, t, d, θ

E.g.: 'help, bank, edge, belt, blind, books, six , etc'.

Three consonant clusters

- Pre-final plus final plus post-final (e.g. helped, banks, bonds, twelfth)
- Final plus post-final plus post-final s, z, t, d, θ (e.g. fifths, next, lapsed)

Four consonant clusters

- Most are pre-final plus final plus post-final plus post-final

E.g. twelfths, prompts

Occasionally there is one final and three post-final consonants

E.g. sixths, texts.

2.3. Common ending sound errors

In addition, Nguyen (as cited in Ngo, 2005) showed that although the Vietnamese language only has six final consonants, such as /p, t, k, m, n, η/, they are not often produced sounds. For example, /p/ (pháp/lap), /t/ (cắt/cut), /k/ (rác/luck), /m/ (làm/mom), /n/ (sơn/son), and /η/ (phông/song). While English contains a variety of more complex final consonants /p, b, f, v, s, z, tʃ, dʒ, ʒ, ʃ, θ, ð, …/ that can be spoken in English, Vietnamese learners have encountered difficulties with the use of these last fricative terms /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, and /z/. At the beginning of words in English, Vietnamese speakers will be able to use fricatives. In their mother tongues, however, fricatives are not found in a word's definitive position. Consequently, when a person speaks English, they frequently omit the fricatives at the end of words. The word beef may be pronounced like /bi:/, month as /mon/, five as /fai/, and importance as /im'pɔ:tən/ (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).

Despite using data from a large number of informants, Ha's research (2005) is unilateral and only focuses on issues affecting people from the North, most notably the confusion between /s/ and /ʃ/, /t/ and /d/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, /ʒ/ and /z/. The table by (Mann, 2007) contains all the mistakes that Vietnamese speakers from any region of the nation can make, it is applicable to all Vietnamese learners. They are also persuasive to linguists who have certain knowledge about Vietnamese dialects. Taking final consonants into consideration, for example, /t/ and /d/ at word-finally are commonly confused with /t/ and /d/ everywhere, whereas /p/ sound in /pop/ pop is often mispronounced as /bop/ bob by Southern people and /s/ sound in /puʃ/ push becomes /pus/ puss by Northerners.

2.4. The importance of understanding pronunciation challenges among young learners

According to Harmer (2001), pronunciation is something that a beginner should be very concerned about. It is a way to make it easier for them to talk. It is obvious that the importance of saying words cannot be denied. It is regarded as a key factor in English language learning. The students should therefore consider the pronunciation in order to be good at speaking. In order to communicate with others, especially in the language of English, it is necessary that you speak clearly. If you pronounce it well, people will understand what you are saying. For example, if one does not recognize key sounds and words from a speaker in the listening section, they do not know how to pronounce them. It is also happening to students, as long as they do not know how to

pronounce words, their partner will not be able to understand what they are talking about which makes it difficult for them to write those words. After puberty, students will have some difficulties differentiating and producing sounds of a native nature. There is more activity in young learners compared to adults. They are curious about something new in their lives.

In English, there are some vocabularies that have similar sounds but different meanings, thus mispronunciation can lead to serious consequences. Mispronouncing for a long time could lead to a bad habit of using English. They will therefore continue to misjudge for a long period of time unless they correct their errors as soon as possible. It is therefore of great importance for teachers that they understand the pronunciation problems faced by young learners, which will make them more attentive to students if they speak wrong and intervene timely in order to prevent pupils from having difficulty speaking correctly.

2.5. How native language impacts on English pronunciation

Clearly, the crucial role of a native tongue is an important influence factor for learners in terms of their pronunciation. There are a variety of phonetic elements common to all languages in the world. The learners are going to have a difficult time pronouncing well in the target language due to these changes. Therefore, students will be able to improve their English speaking significantly through increased knowledge and efforts to overcome such difficulties and by becoming familiar with the sound system of their native tongue. It has been shown that English learners have difficulty with their pronunciation through a contrast between Vietnamese and English consonants.

Firstly, English also has a lot of sounds that cannot be found in Vietnamese, such as /ð/, /θ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, or pronounced differently, /z/, /ʃ/. Therefore, the learners do not use their mouths in the particular way required to pronounce these English phrases correctly. Moreover, Vietnamese learners tend to substitute the Vietnamese sound for English. For example, students tend to substitute the Vietnamese sound /b/ for the English /p/ or /θ/ for /d/.

Second, the /s/ sound can create two types of problems in conversation situations. The first problem is that when students spell some words, the /s/ sound is not used. For example, the word 'bikes' is often pronounced as 'baik'. The second problem that many speakers encounter is the redundancy of the /s/ sound. In fact, the /s/ and /z/ sounds do not occur at the final position in Vietnamese words, but for English words, they do. As a result, the learners of English in Vietnam are overexposed to these sounds, and so they make pronunciation errors when speaking. Vietnamese often add the /s/ sound to both adjectives and non-count nouns. For example, instead of saying "very good", many speakers say "very good". Sometimes, Vietnamese speakers tend to omit both the /t/ and /d/ sounds in the final sounds of words. As Nguyen (2007, p.23) stated, "clusters ending with voiceless /s/ and /t/ cause quite a lot of problems for informants". Some other final consonant clusters such as /kt/ as in walked, /t/ as in washed, /d/ as in judged, and /ld/ as in filled are very difficult for Vietnamese learners to pronounce.

Thirdly, Vietnamese learners often have problems with sound confusion between /s/ and /z/. They replace /s/ for /z/, so that a word such as "advice" is pronounced as "advice". Consequently, there is a misunderstanding among students and between Vietnamese and foreigners as to their communication.

Fourth, English has a lot of vowel clusters at the beginning and at the end of words compared to Viet Nam's sound system. One or two sounds were often omitted in the clusters of consonants by students from Vietnam. For example, instead of pronouncing "world" /wɜ:rld/, Vietnamese students pronounce /wɜ:rl/ without the sound /d/ at the end.

According to Nguyen (2007, p.22), "two-consonant clusters that contain /l/ in /lz/, /lt/, /ld/, or /lf/ are observed to be really difficult for all speakers since the sound itself never appears in the first language". For instance, "myself" may be pronounced as /maisel/. Consequently, it can be very challenging for Vietnamese students to recover from such common mistakes.

2.6. Pedagogical techniques in pronunciation teaching

2.6.1. Listen and repeat

This is the most common and traditional method that can be used by learners of all ages. However, it can be more effective if combined with using CDs, interactive boards, and internet activities (Reid, 2014). For the purpose of improving pronunciation skills, students can also record themselves and hear them when they speak.

2.6.2. Drilling

Drilling is the repetition of oral practice with regard to a particular language structure. The aim is accuracy and to provide students with an accurate representation of the target language (BBC Learning English, 2017). The basic drill is a choral drill where teachers say a word and the students repeat. Replacing exercises or Question and Answer practices are other types of drills. However, this technique can be boring and repetitive. Teachers and pupils can mix sounds of various voices, e.g. the low or high voice as well as shouts and whispering during exercises. This technique is useful for beginners, especially young learners since it generates laughter between teachers and students (BBC learning English, 2017).

2.6.3. Minimal pair drills

A minimal pair is a pair of words that vary by only a single sound (phoneme) such as fan-van, men-man, or gnat-nut. In this way, students are able to identify different sounds and pronounce them clearly. It is more suitable to use this for young learners since their brains have the elasticity to recognize and imitate sounds.

2.6.4. Ear training

The technique is highly efficient because the pupils focus on hearing rather than speech and therefore learn features like word stress, rhythm, or intonation. Training the ear is an effective technique for young children, who are able to distinguish a variety of sounds, rhythm in speech, and intonation.

2.6.5. Tongue twister

According to Beare (2014), due to alliteration or a slight change in the sound of the consonants, tongue strains are short and memorable lines that can be difficult to articulate quickly. A tongue twister is a useful tool to focus on particulars, related phonemes, or sounds in pronunciation. It's a good technique for all ages, and it can be fun in the classroom.

2.6.6. Songs and rhymes

Pupils can practice pronunciation drills, rhythm, or intonation by singing or saying rhymes. Young learners who have great enthusiasm are particularly fond of songs and rhymes. Furthermore, it's a great way to make the class fun because learners are able to play and walk while singing.

2.6.7. Phonics

Phonics is a method of teaching people to read, based on learning the sounds that letters represent (defined by Cambridge Dictionary). It was first used by native speakers, but nowadays this method is increasingly popular with ESL learners. Phonics helps students find out what letters make sounds for the purpose of reading. The teaching of phonics to pupils aged below is highly recommended.

2.6.8. Sound-color

The Sound Color Chart, a coloring program that connects letters with colors, was originally designed to teach native speakers how to read and write. Sound Color charts provide the learners with a connection between sounds and colors. As a result of learning vocal gymnastics, students will be more aware of the different styles of lip and muscle movements as they create new sounds. This method can be adapted to all ages, so learning a phonetic alphabet is no longer necessary.

2.6.9. Using communicative teaching methods to correct common errors in pronouncing final clusters

In the previous debate, it was stated that there should be an influence of a mother tongue and short teaching time for pronunciation by teachers to cause difficulties in ending sounds. Careful arrangements should be made for activities and techniques to be used in the classroom so as to remove these obstacles. As soon as students are aware of the sound and have more opportunities to practice, they improve it quickly.

Communication plays an important part in the application of CLT to teaching, as does other skills. However, it is necessary to correct the mistakes made by students immediately since pronunciation requires accuracy of pupils so that they can produce sounds accurately. It is different than other skills because teachers should be allowed to control the language used by students when speaking, while there are also cases where linguistic use can be unpredictable. When deciding what activity to do in pronunciation training, there are certain principles.

- Focus on the targeted words and sounds
- Practice small samples of language
- Do not require meaningful communication
- Choice of language is controlled

Three typical types of techniques in the theory of CLT are commonly used: information gaps, roleplay, and tasks. The objective of these communication techniques is to make students interact with one another and improve their skills as a result.

2.7.10. Teachers concentrate on mispronunciation errors of students

Firstly, lectures should generate stimulating teaching methods: As classroom observation, English classes in general were rather quiet and some were tense, which makes students not focus on lessons and interests in their study. In other words, it is very important for students to be encouraged and praised to speak English during lessons. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers should organize appealing activities, and interesting things in class such as pronunciation games so that they find learning more enjoyable.

Secondly, teachers should recognize, explain, and correct the pronunciation errors frequently. In fact, learners being taught about how these sounds are produced tend to pronounce them correctly in their pronunciation lessons in the classroom and in examinations. Hence, it is necessary for English teachers to review with them once a week and check their pronunciation again. Besides direct correction from teachers, self-testing is another way that each student is asked to check themselves. By doing this, students can evaluate their ability to recognize and pronounce sounds in words, sentences, and conversational activities.

Finally, teachers should focus on helping students practice rather than teaching theories. Practice makes perfect and can be done in a variety of exercises, discussions, and debates in English classes. This may help students become more fluent and automatic in pronouncing the sounds.

2.6.11. Incorporating Technology in pronunciation practice

- Using the app Learn English Sounds Right:

This is the British Council's iPad pronunciation app that helps master the sounds of the English language. Sounds Right is an interactive Learn English pronunciation chart with sounds grouped by vowels, consonants, and diphthongs complete with examples of each in use.

- ELSA app (English Language Speech Assistant):

ELSA is a mobile app that uses artificial intelligence to help people improve their pronunciation. Learners can use this app to select different curriculum options on the basis of their interest, travel or working in a professional setting. Then they will be led through a series of verbal terms and phrases, with ELSA's algorithms picking up on their speech. Forbes says ELSA tells users not just how to pronounce the word, but also where to move their tongue and lips so that they can type the right word when it's detected as mispronunciation.

2.7. Previous studies

There are some previous studies that had been found, and they had different problems and objects with each study, such as follows:

Farrah and Halahlah (2020), in their study, aimed to find out exactly what is happening with a number of simple pronunciation errors in Palestinian major Arabic students at Hebron University, as well as the factors underlying these problems. The paper deals with issues that have been identified in terms of the phonological problems associated with particular frequencies and vowels, as well as those relating to their pronunciation. A total of 120 English students at Hebron University took part in this study. In order to collect this data, the researchers used a questionnaire and an oral pronunciation test. Interviews with eight students and two instructors were carried out in addition to the earlier instruments. The findings of the study revealed that Hebron University English major students have difficulties pronouncing English consonants that are not part of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), such as [ŋ], [p], [ɬ], [ɪ], [ʒ], and [tʃ] (though some consider [ŋ], [ɬ], [ʒ], and [tʃ] as allophonic variants and are used in the different dialects of Arabic). They also have problems pronouncing consonant clusters (epenthesis), silent letters, and vowels that have more than one pronunciation. During the discussions, respondents indicated different reasons for their mistakes and offered suggestions on how to resolve some of these pronunciation problems. The influence of Arabic, the lack of correct models, and the exposure to indigenous speakers or practitioners are among the reasons for mispronunciation. The researchers concluded that learners' errors are caused by several linguistic factors, such as the disparity between Arabic and English sound systems, the effect of spelling on pronunciation, the influence of the first language (L1) on the second language (L2), and English vowel inconsistency.

Visonil and Marlina's (2020) study aimed to examine commonly mispronounced vowel sounds. This study investigated the pronunciation error of speech performance to get more naturalistic pronunciation as its data. Six speech recordings made by students participating in speaking courses at the University of Indonesia Negeri Padang's Language Department were used to gather data for this study. The voice recordings have been analyzed in order to identify the phonetic errors caused by these speeches. The errors were measured and interpreted after the procedure was completed. The result of this study revealed that [æ], [iː], [ə], [əʊ], and [eɪ] were frequently errors. Several sounds have replaced these sounds. It follows from this that, in the case of ESL lessons for L1 Indonesian EFL students, consideration should be given to these specific errors.

Alzainadi and Latief (2019), under the title Diagnosing Saudi Students' English Consonant Pronunciation Errors, showed that the participants committed the most errors when pronouncing: ʒ/, / ŋ/, /d/, and /p/ consonant clusters. It was also discovered that lower-intermediate-level students made more errors than intermediate-level students in pronouncing the majority of consonant sounds and clusters, and that the difference between their errors is usually higher in the word initial position than in the word medium and final positions. A lack of awareness of pronunciation is also a factor that contributes to the difficulties observed. Putra (2019) revealed in this study that students continue to make errors when pronouncing words with plosive and fricative consonants. The majority of students, approximately 36%, make errors in plosive consonants and 64% in fricative consonants.

Hidayati (2017), under the title Pronunciation Errors in Speaking Performance of Grade 11 Students at SMA Negeri 20 Medan, stated that the purpose of this research is to detect the types of phonetic errors in consonants and vowels. And to find out the causes of errors in the English pronunciation of grade 11 students at SMA Negeri 20 Medan. According to the results of the study, the total number of types of pronunciation errors is 40. Misformation is the dominance error. The other results are misformation (57.5%), omission (8%), addition (20%), and misordering (2.5%).

Rahmawati (2017) announced that there are 82 words with consonants that need to be pronounced. The students had a total of 20 correct words and 62 mispronunciations. According to the researcher, the students may have made a mistake in pronouncing consonants and either did not know how to pronounce the words or had never heard them before.

According to Al-Zaqobi, Ali, and Sulan (2016), a large number of students frequently make mistakes in their pronunciation. They are the consonant sounds of /p/, /ʧ/, /g/, and /v/, which are usually replaced with /b/, /ʃ/, /dʒ/, and /f/, respectively. The most difficult pronunciations they experienced were the /p/ and /v/ sounds, and /ʧ/ and /g/ sounds. It was also found that the learners were incorrect in their descriptions of both center and end positions.

Similarly, Vietnamese students have great difficulty in learning English speaking and are also prone to common errors in pronouncing words, according to several studies carried out by Vietnamese researchers.

Nguyen (2007) showed differences between Vietnamese and English final consonants that made it hard for the Vietnamese to pronounce them in English. After recording them reading aloud a paragraph from the research paper they sent to the researcher by EMAIL, the data were collected from five people of various Vietnamese dialects. The results of the survey showed that they often left out some unusual or difficult sounds for ending clusters, and included schwa in their final clusters like "lives" turned into /lɪvəz/, "leaves" become /liːvəz/ or they've been cutting out the last consonants and moving them to their first language. Besides, due to background noise, there were only two recordings of good quality and it was very difficult to identify them on the spot.

In addition to the past works, Duong Thi Nu (2009, p.p 41-50) has studied pronunciation problems and the influence of the mother tongue. She stressed the fact that Vietnamese students often mispronounce consonants in their spoken language. So many sounds such as /s/ and /ʃ/, /z/ and / ʒ/, /dʒ/ and / ʒ/, /tʃ/ and Vietnamese /ć/ are confused e.g. (she/ sea), (measure/pleasure), (change /tʃeindʒ/ is pronounced //tʃeinʒ/). For the /tʃ/ and Vietnamese /ć/, the English /tʃ/ in *chair* is incorrectly pronounced like Vietnamese /ć/ in Vietnamese *che*.

The effects of sound systems on learning pronunciation have also been shown to be a result of Nu's study. She showed that the main problem in teaching and learning English pronunciation results from the differences in the sound system of English and the system of Vietnamese, so a Vietnamese student is not accustomed to pronouncing for instance θ -sound and ð-sound, because they do not find in his native language. This means that the organs of speech of the learner are not trained to produce such sound systems because they are unfamiliar to students. In particular, there are differences between the Vietnamese and English languages with regard to how they speak, and where they express or say words. In addition, because of the differences between these two languages English and Vietnamese, learners with different linguistic backgrounds would have to deal with various problems when they are trying to make English sounds. These differences in sound systems are deemed to impede the ability to pronounce English since new sounds remain strange for their organs of speech. However, after considerable practice and hard work, it is hoped that this problem will be resolved.

According to Dung (2014), Vietnamese speakers have a higher number of problems with speaking than the voiceless stops in words' end positions like /b/, /p/, /d/, /g/ vs. /p/, /t/, /k/ and final fricative consonants /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/. Omission of a fricative at the end of words usually occurs when speaking English as fricatives do not occur in word-final position in their mother tongue. Because of this, (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992, p.155) emphasized "Vietnamese students tend to omit one or more consonants from a difficult cluster".

Le Thanh Hoa (2014) also reported that due to the phonetic phonological difference between English and Vietnamese dialects, students at Dong Nai University had a lot of difficulty with their pronunciation. He pointed that students made some consonant pronunciation errors, usually in /d/, /t/, /z/, /b/, /d/ sounds. At the end of the syllable, the student's last consonant pronunciation error still existed, it fell into the /d/, /t/, /z/, /s/, /l/, /b/, /d/, /f/ sounds. The final consonants were frequently pronounced incorrectly by students. For example, when students pronounced the word "find", they mispronounced the ending sound /d/ (/faɪnd/ into /faɪn/). He reminded me that the pupils were also making errors when it came to pronouncing vowels. He pointed out that the students had also made grammatical errors with the vowels. Students with no ability to distinguish between long and short vowel sounds (/i/ and /iː/, /uː/ and /ʊ/) were a common English grammatical error.

Nguyen (2017) investigated whether English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University often make mistakes with –s/-es ending consonants so that the researcher find some common errors in pronouncing these sounds and give causes of these errors so that the students avoid making mistakes in pronouncing /s/, /z/ and /iz/. The participants in this study were 50 English – majored sophomores at Tay Do University, they were randomly selected to take part in the study. There are three main data collection instruments in the research including questionnaire, recording and interview. The researcher investigated the main reasons that led the students to make mistakes are no existence of the final sounds in Vietnamese lacking attention to practicing the final consonants effectively.

Consequently, many students from Vietnam have this problem because Vietnamese audio systems are not so complicated and the learner speaks in a way that is easy for him to understand, but in English he may pronounce /ʃ/ for /s/ for example /shame/, /same/. Also in English the /r/ is distinctly pronounced only before a vowel e.g. the /r/ after a vowel is not pronounced. In Vietnamese, however, the /r/-sound is similarly pronounced in all positions. That means students are having a lot of trouble with different sounds, which makes it hard to identify them

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study was conducted as a mixed methods design. This research combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, making it a mixed-method study. While the quantitative approach provides measurable data about pronunciation challenges, the qualitative approach deepens understanding by exploring factors behind these challenges and strategies for overcoming them. "You conduct a mixed methods study when you have both quantitative and qualitative data and both types of data together provide a better understanding of your research problem than either type by itself. Mixed method research is a good design to use if you seek to build on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data". (Creswell, 2012). The quantitative data collection is the voice recording of the 120 students who took place at Tran Cao Van primary school to find out errors made when students pronounce final consonant sounds. The teachers and the students have to utilize the coursebook provided by the government during the classes. The course book for third graders at the school named "Global Success 3" does not have any part relating to pronunciation skills. The qualitative data collection is collected from the interview of 5 teachers at the school as well as from the textual sources to clarify the factors that may play a role in the specific errors of the students and suggest effective teaching strategies that can be designed to address the identified challenges in pronouncing English final consonant sounds for third-graders at Tran Cao Van Primary School.

3.2. Participants

The primary participants will be 120 third-grade students, selectively sampled from a larger group of 150 students spread across five classes. Additionally, five English teachers from the school will participate to provide insights into the instructional aspect of pronunciation. For the purpose of conducting an investigation, it was decided to focus on groups with similar characteristics. These classes had the same ability for learning, in particular English. They were therefore chosen to provide information. Secondly, because of their convenient accessibility to the researcher, they were deliberately chosen by the scientist for the pronunciation test. Since it is impossible to include all of the third-grade students at Tran Cao Van primary school, convenience sampling was applied, which is fast and inexpensive, and the participants were readily available. Then, 120 students were recorded for the evaluation of their pronunciation. Besides, five teachers responded to the questionnaires on the popular sounds that students mispronounced and the reasons for their pronunciation problems.

3.5. Data collection instrument

Data is collected through using of several research instruments, they are speech recordings and transcriptions, questionnaires, and interviews. In addition, language assessment tests and observations are also conducted in this study.

The researcher prepared a speaking test including questions and single words chosen from the course book. Each of the students answers the questions and reads the whole words aloud while the researcher is recording their performances. Everything they presented was recorded with the aid of a mobile phone, which was placed on the table in the test room to get the best audio quality, and was later used for analysis to describe and categorize their errors with final clusters.

After each of the 120 students recorded their sounds, the researcher and an American native speaker together listened carefully to samples and repeated this process a lot of times while playing the tape at home. Both incorrect and correct pronunciations were written down and analyzed descriptively.

Structured forms with both open-ended and close-ended questions exploring reasons for pronunciation challenges and potential solutions to answer research questions number two and three. It was used in collaboration with some of the English teachers at the English faculty. A number of 5 copies of the questionnaire were printed and answered by 5 Faculty's teachers within two weeks. All that helped a lot to obtain very accurate results and findings to make sure of the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Afterward, the results and the findings of the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively. The results and the information from both the questionnaires and the recordings will be reviewed in further detail in the third chapter of the study.

Similar to the data collection method using questionnaires, the interview method also aims to answer research questions two and three. Face-to-face interactions were conducted with teachers to understand the ending sound pronunciation challenges their students were getting and the strategies they employed; all of them are currently teaching third-grade students in their own schools. In order to discover the reasons and remedies for the common pronunciation errors that would contribute to the data of the current research, the interviews, which were in Vietnamese, were later translated into English by the researcher. The interviewees' answers were noted down by the researcher immediately.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the results collected from questionnaires that help to give the outcome for research question one, an evaluation form was prepared for the evaluation of the speaking tests. The researcher created her own pronunciation rubric which was the most appropriate one for this study. In the design of the rubric, what the researcher evaluated was the pronunciation on a word level and just about the final consonant sound. Evaluating students' ending sound errors were based on the rating scale true or not false. After that, the answers to the recording test were analyzed with the help of a software package, the "Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Excel, the frequency of specific pronunciation errors will be calculated. This will help in identifying the most prevalent challenges. The researcher then presented them in the form of charts and tables.

When it comes to analyzing the results of research questions two and three, responses from questionnaires and interviews will be coded and categorized to identify common themes, reasons, and strategies. Comments and judgments were made by the researcher in connection with the relevant knowledge in previous research findings presented in chapter two. As this study follows the methodology of error analysis (Corder, 1967), there were five main steps in processing data: identify errors, classify errors, quantify errors, identify sources of the errors, and offer proper remedies. However, in this study, the researcher just focused on consonant ending sound errors and noted them down, so the researcher skipped the step of classifying errors.

IV.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Description of the pronunciation challenges encountered

According to the recording test, it can be seen that students often committed errors with 15 of the 24 English consonants. In the curriculum as well as the course book for the third graders, the words they learned and practiced mainly contain these ending sounds: /z/, /d/, /t/, /r/, /n/, /s/, /g/, /l/, /m/, /k/, /ʃ/, /p/, /r/, /ŋ/, /v/, /b/. As can be seen from the chart, over 50% of students failed to pronounce /b/, /k/, /ʃ/, /p/, /v/, and /t/, so the sound received the most significant number of people making errors; among that, the mispronunciation of the sound /t/ is the dominant with 79%. The confusion of the sounds /d/ and /s/ was lower, at 33% and 38%, respectively. About 20% of students were confused with the sounds /n/, /g/, /r/, and /ŋ/. Besides, under 15% of students have problems with the sounds /m/, /l/, and /z/, and the proportion of students who met difficulty with the sound /r/

was 10%. The rate of students who are incorrect when they pronounce final consonants is shown in the chart below.
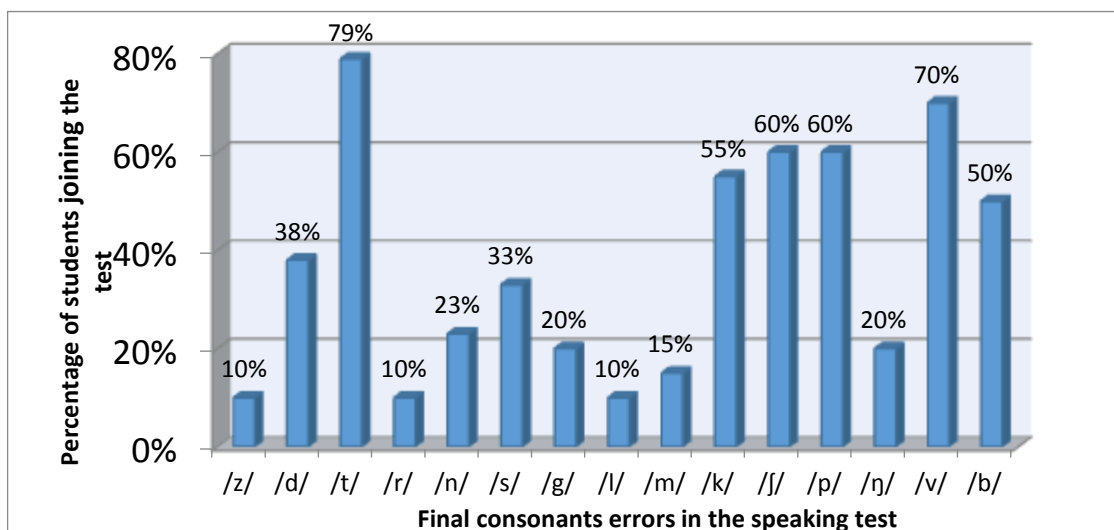
Figure 1: *Students' consonant mispronunciation*

From the questionnaire and interview, when teachers were asked to evaluate students' pronunciation of ending sounds, 3 of 5 teachers supposed that their students have good pronunciation, and the others evaluated their students are not good when they speak words containing ending sounds. It is indicated that the majority of the students have difficulty with a wider number of English consonants. Particularly, the seventh question of the questionnaire asked 5 teachers to point out which English final consonants they encounter frequently. The summary of responses of the teachers is given in the chart.
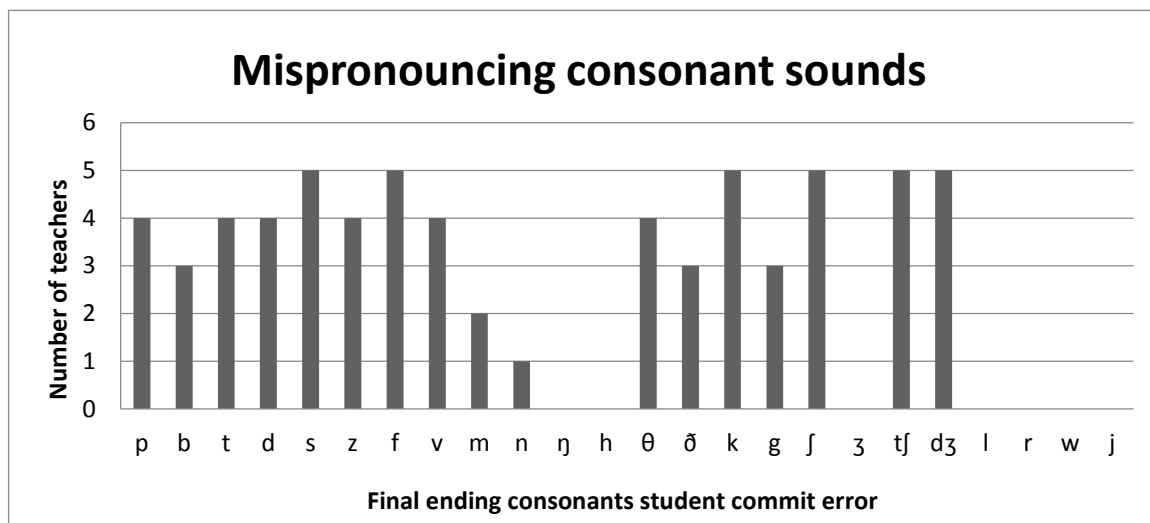
Figure 2: *Students' consonant confusion*

Figure 2 illustrates that the students often make mistakes of 17 English consonants. All 5 teachers said that their students have problems with these sounds: /s/, /f/, /k/, /ʃ/, /ʧ/, /dʒ/. Four teachers admitted that their students also often have mispronunciation with the sounds /p/, /t/, /d/, /z/, and /v/, while some sounds such as /b/, /ð/, and /g were pointed out by three teachers as being difficult for students to pronounce. Two teachers announced that students also make mistakes when they pronounce the sound /m/, and one teacher said the sound /n/ made her students commit errors.

From these errors, compared with the table of manner and place of articulation in Chapter 2, we can see that the majority of students make mistakes with stop and fricative consonants, they are /b/, /k/, /p/, /t/, /d/, /ʃ/, /v/, and /s/.

4.2 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO PRONUNCIATION ERRORS

Having interviewed five teachers, the research comes to the conclusion that students have trouble pronouncing English final consonants. Accordingly, some of the main reasons are illustrated as follows:

4.2.1. Influence of Mother Tongue and Difference between Vietnamese sound system and English ones

When the teachers were asked what they thought was the main reason for such common mispronunciations, all five teachers replied that the most dominant factor was the interference of the mother tongue. The teachers pointed out that the students try to form an analogy between Vietnamese and English and usually practice pronouncing the English words as written. Besides, five teachers agree that different sound systems of the mother tongue and the foreign language play an important factor in mispronunciation. The influence of the mother tongue and the difference between the Vietnamese sound system and English ones are also the main factors that cause failure in distinguishing the differences between some ending sounds; therefore, students usually make substitute errors when they pronounce ending sounds.

4.2.2. Lack of practices and drills

According to the responses of teachers in question 8, three of the five teachers assumed that their students lacked practice pronouncing at home. In addition to that, many learners do not have enough opportunity to practice in the classroom. From teachers' perspectives, due to time limitations and schooling requirements, there are also more than 50–60% of lessons that students can be taught and focus on improving their pronunciation.

In the first question, five teachers were asked, "Does your coursebook include any pronunciation study? If yes, please quantify (i.e., how many hours a week)?" All teachers answered that the current curriculum includes a lesson lasting 35 minutes in each unit that teaches about pronunciation; however, third graders have not learned about final consonants yet because the curriculum for 3rd graders focuses on vowels first.

In this demonstration, it is presented that the main problem is insufficient practice at home and in class. Therefore, it is essential for them to prioritize practice regularly and be active in participating in English classes.

4.2.3. Educational Influences

In the first question, five teachers were asked, "Does your coursebook include any pronunciation study? If yes, please quantify (i.e., how many hours a week)?" All teachers answered that the current curriculum includes a lesson lasting 35 minutes in each unit that teaches about pronunciation; however, third graders have not learned about final consonants yet because the curriculum for 3rd graders focuses on vowels first.

In the second question of the interview, the teachers were asked to tell whether they could sufficiently focus on pronunciation skills. Four out of five teachers answered yes, because they always correct their students' pronunciation in every lesson, not only in the pronunciation lesson, and they suppose that they can try their best to listen and adjust students' pronunciation whenever they get problems. The other teacher of the five answered no. The teacher pointed out that listening, which is an important part of pronunciation, requires technical infrastructure (audio and video tools), which is itself insufficient. Besides, they focused attention on the non-oral skills (grammar, structure, and vocabulary) more than pronunciation because it helps students get good marks on the exam.

Based on the result of question 8, two teachers said that they lacked time allocated to the pronunciation of their students because the deliberate gravitation of other skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and language areas such as grammar and vocabulary prevents sparing sufficient time for pronunciation.

In this demonstration, the curriculum and the time that the teacher allocated for pronunciation play a role in causing the students ending sound errors.

4.2.4. The insufficient technical support and the lack of interaction with native

Two of the teachers emphasized that the students have insufficient input in terms of foreign languages and the time allocated for pronunciation or pronunciation errors is not sufficient. They do not have any interaction with any English-speaking person and they do not have the means to familiarize themselves with the English language. Although they have means like TV, and the internet, face-to-face interaction with native speakers is missing. While the official textbook includes audio-lingual materials, the schools do not have sufficient technological infrastructure to apply.

The summary of the responses of the students is given in Table 6

Table 6
The response of teacher to question 8 "Among the following reasons, which one(s) do you think is behind your students' problems in English pronunciation, especially consonants?"

Codes	*f*
Influence of the mother tongue	5
Failure in distinguishing the differences	5
Inadequate practice and drills	3
The difference between English sounds and Vietnamese sounds	5
Short time allocated to pronunciation teaching by teachers	2
Lack of correction from teachers	1
The insufficient technical support	2
The lack of interaction with native	2

In conclusion, there are a lot of reasons why students meet a lot of difficulties in pronounced final consonant sounds, such as the interference of the mother tongue, insufficient input in terms of foreign language, the time allocated for pronunciation or pronunciation errors that are not sufficient, inadequate practice and drills, and the lack of interaction with natives. Among those, the influence of the mother tongue and the difference between the Vietnamese sound system and the English one was considered to play a leading role in causing the mispronunciation of the young learners.

4.3. SOLUTIONS TEACHERS EMPLOY TO TEACH PRONUNCIATION IN THEIR CLASSROOM

When the teachers were asked which solutions they thought they could use to rapidly improve students' pronunciation, all of them pointed out that students should be taught how to recognize the different places of articulation of sounds, should be given pronunciation games so that they find learning more enjoyable, and should have an opportunity to communicate with native speakers. Another common point between the two teachers is the need for increased time allocated to pronunciation learning and focusing on the most difficult and unusual sounds. Another common belief shared by teachers is that students should be given enough practice both inside and outside of the classroom. She put forward the idea that teachers should encourage students to speak more in class. The more they use the language, the fewer errors they will commit. The summary of responses is given in Table 7.

Table 7
The response of teacher to question 9 "Among the following solutions, which one(s) do you think can help your student to rapidly improve students' pronunciation?"

Codes	*f*
Student should be taught how to recognize the different places of articulation of sounds	5
Students increase time allocated to pronunciation learning	2
Students should have an opportunity to communicate with native speakers.	5
Students should be given enough practice both inside and outside of classroom.	1
Students should be given pronunciation games so that they find learning more enjoyable.	5
Students focus on the most difficult and unusual sounds.	2
Teacher should apply strategies to correct common errors in pronouncing final clusters	5

When it comes to correction strategies, five teachers agreed that finding sufficient correction strategies is very important to helping students improve their pronunciation. The teacher employs various games and tongue twisters to solidify the correct pronunciation; some others prefer to wait until they finish the speaking part.

Some of the teachers find the immediate correction of the student's pronunciation highly effective. Besides, teachers spend time writing down the mispronounced words to make them more aware of them. A summary of the correction strategies employed by the teachers is given in Table 8.

Table 8
The responses of the teacher to question 7 "What are your error correction strategies regarding ending sound pronunciation"

Codes	*f*
Games and theatrical dialogues	2
Correct repetition of the mispronounced words immediately	5
Writing the mispronounced words on the board	5
Pronunciation is more difficult to teach and even the teachers are either insufficient or not confident about it.	1
Pointing and correcting the mispronounced words at the end of the activity.	2
Games and tongue twisters for solidifying the correct pronunciation.	5

V.   CONCLUSION

According to the data analysis, the majority of students make mistakes with stop and fricative consonants; they are /b/, /k/, /p/, /t/, /d/, /ʃ/, /v/, and /s/. This result has many similarities with previous studies on students' pronunciation errors.

There are a lot of reasons why students encounter a lot of difficulties in pronounced final consonant sounds, such as the interference of the mother tongue, insufficient input in terms of foreign language, the time allocated for pronunciation or pronunciation errors that is not sufficient, inadequate practice and drills, and the lack of interaction with native Among those, the influence of the mother tongue and the difference between the Vietnamese sound system and the English ones were considered to play a leading role in causing the mispronunciation of the young learners. Moreover, teachers also suggest some solutions for the problem by encouraging students to speak out in class, watch movies and TV series in the original language, repeat incorrect words correctly, use games and songs, and role-play in class. Moreover, asking students to write dictation and read the word at the same time at home is also an effective way.

In summary, the goals of this paper were reached. Not only did the research identify what ending sound errors were made by 3rd-grade students and the factors that caused this problem, but it also provided solutions as practical references. The researcher expects the work will stimulate readers' study and research objectives

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