TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING THE HINATIVE APP FOR PRONUNCIATION LEARNING

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Abstract

This study looks at how English teachers in Binjai, Indonesia, use the HiNative app to help students learn pronunciation. This research looks at how HiNative can be used in the classroom. It looks at how well it works, what the benefits are, and what the problems might be. This is important because people are focusing more on being able to communicate well, and more and more tools are being used to help with learning languages. Four English teachers were interviewed and gave answers to a questionnaire. We used something called 'thematic analysis', following a method described by Braun and Clarke in 2006, to examine the teachers' experiences and insights. The results show that HiNative had a positive effect on student engagement, motivation, and their self-awareness of pronunciation. Teachers said the app was easy to use and could provide real feedback from native speakers. But there are also some problems, such as limited internet access, people having different levels of digital skills, and not being part of the school day. The study says that HiNative can be a useful tool to help with teaching pronunciation if there is enough training, the right infrastructure, and good teaching plans. These insights are important for the wider discussion about using mobile technology in teaching English as a second language. They show how ready teachers are to use mobile technology and how schools and other organisations support them.

Keywords: *EFL, HiNative, Pronunciation, Senior high school Indonesia, Teacher perceptions*

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji bagaimana guru bahasa Inggris di Binjai, Indonesia, menggunakan aplikasi HiNative untuk membantu siswa mempelajari pelafalan. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana HiNative dapat digunakan di kelas. Penelitian ini mengkaji seberapa baik kinerjanya, apa manfaatnya, dan apa saja kemungkinan masalahnya. Hal ini penting karena orang-orang semakin berfokus pada kemampuan berkomunikasi dengan baik, dan semakin banyak alat yang digunakan untuk membantu pembelajaran bahasa. Empat guru bahasa Inggris diwawancarai dan menjawab kuesioner. Kami menggunakan sesuatu yang disebut 'analisis tematik', mengikuti metode yang dijelaskan oleh Braun dan Clarke pada tahun 2006, untuk mengkaji pengalaman dan wawasan para guru. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa HiNative memiliki efek positif pada keterlibatan, motivasi, dan kesadaran diri siswa terhadap pelafalan. Para guru mengatakan bahwa aplikasi ini mudah digunakan dan dapat memberikan umpan balik nyata dari penutur asli. Namun, terdapat juga beberapa masalah, seperti akses internet yang terbatas, tingkat keterampilan digital yang berbeda-beda, dan kurangnya keterlibatan dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar. Studi ini menyatakan bahwa HiNative dapat menjadi alat yang bermanfaat untuk membantu pengajaran pelafalan jika tersedia pelatihan yang memadai, infrastruktur yang tepat, dan rencana pengajaran yang baik. Wawasan ini penting untuk diskusi yang lebih luas tentang penggunaan teknologi seluler dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua. Wawasan ini menunjukkan seberapa siap guru dalam menggunakan teknologi seluler dan bagaimana sekolah serta organisasi lain mendukung mereka.

Kata Kunci: EFL, HiNative, Pengucapan, SMA di Indonesia, Persepsi Guru

INTRODUCTION

Language can be characterised as an open and complex adaptive and non-linear system. Non-verbal symbols and indicators are used for communication, or it can be defined as a type of articulated sound which can only be used by humans to indicate good and bad, right and wrong. Language is defined as a system of communication that incorporates words, grammar and rules for combining them to express meaning. The medium in question facilitates the articulation of individuals' opinions, thoughts, ideas and feelings to others. It is estimated that there are thousands of languages spoken around the

world. Each of these languages has its own unique set of sounds, vocabulary and syntax. It is not possible to consider language in isolation from the manner in which sounds are produced. This is termed 'pronunciation' (Nushi et al., 2023). In this author's opinion, pronunciation is as significant as the communication of words themselves. However, the intended meaning of a word is dependent upon the individual. If pronunciation is executed with precision, it will have a greater impact on the language in which it is articulated.

In recent times, scholars have directed their attention towards the manner in which telecollaboration can be utilised in the context of foreign language teacher education. This exploration has involved an examination of its distinctive advantages and potential applications (Jureynolds, 2024) observes, there is an increasing interest in the use of telecollaboration for the development of teachers, with a particular emphasis on the enhancement of their online teaching skills (p. 1). This interest is also evident in a dedicated issue of LLT, where articles specifically focus on employing telecollaboration in teacher education. A significant contributing factor to the rise of telecollaboration can be identified in its integration within foreign teacher education programmes, particularly those grounded in the principles of social constructivist views of teacher education (Половін, 2021). This pedagogical paradigm eschews conventional teacher training models, instead advocating active participation in educational activities, engagement within learning communities, and reflection and theoretical thinking based on personal learning (Valadares & Bambirra, 2021). This approach is underpinned by the belief that the collective achievements of a community surpass individual contributions and contribute to broader cultural advancements (Agustiana et al., 2021).

The present study explores the impact of English's growing global importance as a world language on English classrooms and their participants. The teaching of English has undergone considerable transformations in recent decades, which have occurred in parallel with shifts in the characteristics of the student population. In the contemporary educational landscape, where an increasing number of students are commencing their foreign language learning endeavours at primary school age, educators are compelled to demonstrate a high degree of adaptability to ensure the efficacy of the learning process. In this evolving scenario, the role of the English teacher has undergone significant change. The responsibility for imparting knowledge about the language itself no longer lies exclusively with the teacher; there is now an emphasis on practical usage, with a particular focus on fostering strong communication skills. This shift is indicative of the broader significance of English in contemporary society (Asif et al., 2021). In order to meet the evolving needs of students in today's educational environment, a dynamic and adaptable approach is required (Jubier, 2019).

Research has demonstrated that individual students exhibit varying aptitudes in their engagement with the curriculum, while others encounter challenges that may lead to demotivation and declining interest. The present paper puts forward the pivotal question of what measures English teachers should undertake to ensure successful student learning. In the contemporary educational landscape, teachers are charged with two primary responsibilities. Firstly, educators are tasked with the dissemination of knowledge, and secondly, they are expected to cultivate an environment that fosters effective learning. It is evident that English teachers have a pivotal role to play in fostering an atmosphere that supports and motivates learners, thus contributing to a more successful language acquisition experience. This is of particular importance when considering the diverse learning capacities of students, the recognition and addressing of which is paramount (Anatolievna & Denisovna, 2022).

Evidence suggests an emerging interest among students in mobile learning and in the use of mobile devices for English language learning purposes (Dashtestani, 2016). Mobile learning can be defined as an extension of e-learning that is facilitated via portable and wireless devices, thereby enabling learning at any time and in any location based on the preferences and convenience of the learner. The integration of mobile technologies, such as smartphones and tablet devices, into educational practices facilitates teaching and learning by providing users with internet access and supplementary capabilities, including touch screens, cameras, downloadable applications, and location awareness (Alexiadou, 2022). Mobile devices are frequently regarded as instruments that have democratised access to technology. This is due to the fact that learners have more mobile devices at their disposal than other types of gadgets, and these tools may be utilised for educational purposes, particularly within the context of EFL teaching and learning (Arafa et al., 2018).

Pronunciation is very important when learning a second or foreign language. Even studying English as a subject in school, most students make mistakes in listening, speaking, reading, and write.

language has three main components: phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. Phonology is an important component among them. Phonology is closely related to pronunciation. 2021, It's true that pronunciation is very important, so we have to understand the meaning of phonology and the three things Pronunciation is one of the most difficult parts of learning English. Mispronunciation can change the meaning of a sentence. Therefore, teaching common words can be used to teach new vocabulary such as names and pronunciation of pictures. Pronunciation is an important form of learning in English lessons. The Oxford Dictionary explains that pronunciation is a language, a word, and a way of speaking sounds. As mentioned earlier, "pronunciation is the waya language or a particular word or sound is spoken." The scope of pronunciation lessons includes three topics: (1) sound, (2) rhythm and intonation, and (3) intonation (To'Lqinova & Tursuntosh, 2025).

A highly efficacious method of teaching pronunciation entails the introduction of common words, names, and pictures, which facilitate the association of sounds with visual cues by learners. Nevertheless, a considerable number of senior high school students encounter difficulties with accurate pronunciation, a problem attributable to a paucity of exposure to native speakers and authentic listening practice. This lacuna has engendered opportunities for technology-assisted learning.

A highly effective method of teaching pronunciation involves the use of common words, names, and pictures to help learners associate sounds with visual cues. Nevertheless, a considerable number of senior high school students encounter difficulties with correct pronunciation, primarily due to their limited exposure to native speakers and a paucity of authentic listening experiences. The emergence of this gap has engendered a range of opportunities for the integration of technology into language learning The advent of digital tools has facilitated access to mobile applications such as HiNative, which enable learners to receive feedback from native speakers and enhance their pronunciation through interactive features. HiNative facilitates the submission of voice recordings and the provision of real-time feedback from a global community, thereby promoting a more natural form of language acquisition. Despite the global popularity of such applications, research on their use in Indonesian high school classrooms remains scarce. The majority of extant studies have focused on university-level learners or international contexts.

The present study aims to address this lacuna by exploring the perceptions of senior high school English teachers on the use of HiNative for pronunciation instruction. The present study is informed by the observation that a significant number of students encounter challenges in accurately articulating English sounds. To address this issue, a qualitative case study approach was adopted, involving four teachers. The objective of the present study is to provide practical insights by identifying both the advantages and challenges of using mobile applications such as HiNative. The ultimate objective of this initiative is to empower educators to provide more effective support to their students and to facilitate the enhancement of learners' pronunciation skills through meaningful engagement with technology.

Although the importance of pronunciation in the acquisition of English has long been recognised, it remains a skill that is particularly challenging for students to master, especially those in senior high schools in non-native English-speaking countries. A plethora of studies have been conducted on various methods for teaching pronunciation, encompassing both conventional classroom techniques and contemporary digital tools. However, the majority of extant research has focused primarily on adult learners or university students in urban or international contexts (Polovin, 2024).

Despite the increasing availability of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) tools such as HiNative, there has been limited scholarly attention paid to their implementation in Indonesian secondary school settings. Furthermore, a significant proportion of extant literature focuses on student outcomes, with an inadequate emphasis on teachers' perspectives – notably those teachers who play a pivotal role in integrating such technologies into their classrooms. Consequently, there is a paucity of research on the perceptions, utilisation and responses of English teachers in Indonesian high schools to the use of HiNative for the purpose of teaching pronunciation (Ahmadi, 2016).

The present study aims to address this lacuna by examining the lived experiences and perceptions of senior high school English teachers in Binjai, Indonesia, who have incorporated HiNative into their pronunciation instruction. By focusing on teacher perspectives, this research makes a unique contribution to the extant literature and provides practical insights into how mobile technology can be effectively implemented in local educational contexts Given the author's observation of children encountering challenges, this study explores the pronunciation of words and sentences by senior high school teachers (To'Lqinova & Tursuntosh, 2025). In this study, the researcher employed a survey

research methodology with four participants to examine teachers' perceptions of the mobile application Hinative for learning English pronunciation. The findings from this study will be of use to teachers, as they will suggest solutions based on students' perceptions. Consequently, educators will possess the knowledge necessary to address students' needs, and students will be empowered to articulate their thoughts and ideas during the learning process. This will enhance their pronunciation skills through the utilization of the Hinative mobile application (Половін, 2021).

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach to examine how English teachers perceive the use of the HiNative application for teaching pronunciation in senior high schools in Binjai, Indonesia. This approach was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and viewpoints within their authentic teaching contexts. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, enabling participants to freely express their perspectives and allowing the researcher to probe for detailed explanations (Alfaki, 2025). The six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (Druzhchenko & Semyan, 2024) was followed to systematically identify and interpret emerging themes (Purinanda & Sutrisno, 2022).

The participants were four English teachers from different senior high schools in Binjai, Indonesia. They were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience of teaching English pronunciation and their willingness to use technology in the classroom. All participants had at least five years' experience of teaching and were familiar with mobile learning applications. Their diverse backgrounds and teaching contexts provided varied insights into the potential benefits and challengesf using HiNative for pronunciation instruction (Bai & Guo, 2021).

The data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (Cesaria et al., 2023) familiarisation with the data; generation of initial codes; identification of themes; review of themes; definition and naming of themes; and production of the report. The interview transcripts and questionnaire responses were read multiple times to ensure accuracy and a deep understanding was achieved. Codes were then systematically assigned to relevant text segments and grouped into broader themes reflecting teachers' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using HiNative. This iterative process involved continuously refining the themes to ensure they accurately represented the data

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A salient theme that emerged from the data analysis pertained to the level of familiarity among teachers with technological devices, with a particular emphasis on mobile applications such as HiNative. While some participants initially expressed reservations about the use of digital tools for teaching pronunciation, their confidence levels increased significantly following a brief orientation phase and practical experience (Annamalai et al., 2023). One teacher commented, "Initially, I was uncertain about how to utilise HiNative; however, following the training, I found it to be highly beneficial." This underscores the significance of training and technological literacy in effectively integrating mobile-assisted language learning. As pedagogues become more proficient in the application's utilisation, they are better equipped to provide students with assistance and augment the learning experience (Gustanti & Ayu, 2021).

Theme	Description	Sample Extracts from Data
1. Teacher Familiarity with Technology	Teachers' understanding and comfort level with using mobile apps for language learning.	"At first, I was not sure how to use HiNative, but after the training, I found it very useful."
2. Effectiveness for Pronunciation Practice	Perceived impact of HiNative on students' pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm.	"The students became more confident after receiving feedback from native speakers."
3. Student Engagement and Motivation	How the app influenced students' interest and participation in learning.	"They were excited to use their phones for learning—especially when they heard their pronunciation was correct."
4. Comparison with	Teachers' perspectives comparing	"HiNative gives more personalized

Traditional Methods	HiNative with conventional pronunciation teaching strategies.	feedback than I can in a crowded class."
5. Technical and Access Challenges	Issues such as poor internet, limited devices, or digital skills that hinder implementation.	"Some students could not participate fully because they didn't have internet at home."

This section presents the key findings obtained through interviews and questionnaires administered to four English teachers after using the HiNative application in their classrooms. The analysis yielded several themes concerning the teachers' perceptions, experiences, and evaluations of the application's effectiveness for improving English pronunciation
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1. This study looks at how to get students more interested and motivated.

All participants reported that the utilisation of HiNative had a positive influence on student engagement in pronunciation activities. It was observed by teaching staff that the interactive and technology-based nature of the application was well-received by students, particularly given the opportunity it provided for them to receive feedback from native speakers (Umara & Lestari, 2020).

"*The students demonstrated a heightened level of enthusiasm when they had the opportunity to utilise their smartphones to engage in verbal communication with foreigners and receive authentic feedback*". They expressed curiosity regarding the comparison of their pronunciation with that of others. (Teacher A)

This motivation resulted in enhanced engagement in class and an increased propensity to practise pronunciation independently.

2. This essay will look at how people's awareness of pronunciation has developed.

It was observed by three out of four teachers that students demonstrated a heightened level of self-awareness with regard to their pronunciation errors subsequent to utilising the HiNative platform. It was reported that students began to notice differences in sound articulation and intonation, especially when comparing their own recordings with feedback or model pronunciations from native speakers.

The participants initiated a series of inquiries, posing questions such as, "*What is the rationale behind the discrepancy in my /r/ pronunciation compared to that of the speaker?" and "Does my intonation align with the standard*?" This suggests that they are beginning to engage in self-reflection with regard to their speech. (Teacher C)

3. The utilisation of HiNative as a practical learning tool.
Tabel 1.   Teachers expressed that HiNative is an easy-to-use tool that fits well with the learning needs of senior high school students. They appreciated the app's features, such as the ability to upload voice recordings, listen to native speaker examples, and interact with a global community. However, some teachers mentioned that clearer guidance and lesson planning would help integrate the app more effectively into formal curriculum settings.
Tabel 2.   *"It's useful, but teachers still need a structured way to include the app in lessons so students stay focused and don't treat it like just another social media." (Teacher B)*

4. This discussion will look at the problems that happened when we were putting it into practice.

Notwithstanding the favourable overall response, a number of challenges were identified. The most frequently cited barriers encompassed inadequate internet connectivity, students' constrained access to smartphones during lessons, and the absence of digital literacy among some students and even teachers (Dewi, 2022).

It was observed that a number of students encountered challenges when attempting to use the application. These difficulties arose from two main factors. Firstly, their limited data plans meant that

they were unable to access the full range of features available on the application. Secondly, their unfamiliarity with English-language interfaces meant that they were unable to navigate the application effectively (Guskaroska, 2019). "*Sometimes students give up before trying because they can't find the right menu in English. They need step-by-step guidance at first*" (Teacher D). (Teacher D).

These challenges underscore the necessity for support with regard to infrastructure and training for both teachers and students.

5. This essay will look at how students' confidence is affected.

It was asserted by two teachers that HiNative had a beneficial effect on students' confidence in speaking English. Receiving responses from native speakers served to validate their efforts and engender feelings of pride in their improvement (ANUGRAH, 2019).

"*In instances where a native speaker responded positively to a student's pronunciation, it was evident that the student experienced a marked increase in both excitement and confidence. The provision of such encouragement is challenging in a standard classroom environment.*" (Teacher A)

The following essay will provide a comprehensive overview of the relevant literature on the subject.

Discussion

The integration of mobile applications such as HiNative into pronunciation instruction has yielded novel insights into the manner in which technology can influence language learning in senior high schools. This study examined how four English teachers in Binjai, Indonesia, utilised HiNative to enhance their students' pronunciation skills. The analysis of teacher interviews and questionnaires yielded both encouraging results and identifiable obstacles that can inform future practice and policy.

A significant finding of the study was the considerable increase in student motivation and engagement when HiNative was incorporated into pronunciation instruction. Teachers consistently reported that students were excited to use their mobile phones for learning and were especially enthusiastic when they could interact with native speakers. This motivation resulted in increased participation and independent practice. These findings are supported by previous research indicating that authentic communication opportunities and technology integration enhance learner motivation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2022).

Another pivotal theme that emerged pertained to the development of students' phonological awareness. It was observed by the teaching staff that students became more conscious of their pronunciation errors, particularly after comparing their own voice recordings with those of native speakers. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Chan (2018), who emphasised the pivotal role of sound awareness in the mastery of pronunciation. The capacity to discern and contemplate on variations in pronunciation suggests that HiNative fosters metacognitive strategies, which are imperativ for the enhancement of linguistic proficiency.

A salient finding of the study was that HiNative was both user-friendly and accessible for both students and teachers. The capacity to upload recordings, pose inquiries, and obtain native feedback was esteemed as being highly advantageous by the participants. The combination of ease of use and the flexibility of mobile access renders HiNative a practical tool for EFL settings, particularly in regions where direct access to native speakers is limited. This finding aligns with the arguments posited by Hockly & Dudeney (Saadia, 2023).who advocate for the democratising potential of mobile tools in language education.

However, the findings also revealed barriers that hinder full implementation, including poor internet connectivity and limited access to smartphones among some students. In certain instances, students were obliged to share devices or utilise restricted data plans, which impeded their full engagement with the application. It is imperative that these logistical issues are given due consideration when planning mobile-assisted language instruction, particularly within less-resourced educational environments.

Another challenge that was identified related to digital literacy. At the inception of the study, it was observed that a proportion of the teaching faculty and students exhibited a deficiency in

technological confidence, which hindered their ability to utilise HiNative in an effective manner. Despite the provision of training, this case study underscores the necessity for ongoing support and capacity-building for teachers and learners to optimise the potential of digital learning tools. As asserted by Fulantelli et al. (Cerezo et al., 2023). the potential benefits of mobile technology may be inaccessible to a significant proportion of users due to their lack of fundamental digital competencies.

A noteworthy observation was the favourable impact of HiNative on the confidence of students in their English language proficiency. Two of the four teachers specifically noted that students displayed increased confidence when their pronunciation was affirmed by native speakers. The implementation of this form of validation can prove challenging within the context of conventional classroom environments, primarily due to constraints in time and limited teacher availability. As Derwing & Munro (Gilakjani Pourhosein Abbas, 2021) have observed, confidence plays a crucial role in oral communication and overall language success.

The study also found that HiNative was used as a complement to traditional teaching methods rather than as a replacement. Teachers expressed appreciation for the app's capacity to provide personalised feedback, a capability that they often found challenging to deliver individually in large classrooms. The integration of conventional instructional methods with mobile technologies enables educators to provide more personalised assistance, thereby addressing the varied requirements of students.

Furthermore, teachers reported that HiNative allowed students to learn at their own pace. The asynchronous nature of the application enabled learners to access feedback multiple times, practise their pronunciation, and reflect on their progress independently. This flexibility aligns with the principles of learner autonomy and supports the findings of Traxler & Crompton (Antaris & Omolu, 2019) who argue that mobile learning promotes self-directed language development.

Notwithstanding the pervasive positive feedback, a number of participants have expressed concerns that students may regard HiNative as a social media platform in the absence of adequate guidance. In order to address this issue, it was proposed by members of the teaching faculty that a more systematic integration into lesson plans was required, with clearly defined objectives, specific tasks, and focused follow-up activities. In the absence of such a framework, there is a risk that learning outcomes may become diluted or inconsistent. As Richards (2015) observes, the efficacy of technology integration in language education is contingent on effective instructional design.

A further theme that emerged from the discourse was the necessity for teacher training and curriculum support. While teachers generally adapted to the app after initial exposure, they expressed a desire for more examples, templates, and lesson plans that could help align the app with curriculum goals. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of earlier research, which highlighted the significance of institutional support in the implementation of educational technology.

Furthermore, it was observed by the teaching faculty that HiNative fosters a global perspective among students. The interaction of learners with speakers from other countries has been demonstrated to facilitate the development of a more expansive comprehension of English accents, pronunciation norms, and cultural expressions. This kind of exposure is rarely available in conventional classrooms and illustrates one of the unique affordances of mobile-assisted global platforms. As asserted by Godwin-Jones (Mellisa et al., 2019) the utilisation of telecollaborative tools such as HiNative has been demonstrated to foster intercultural competence in conjunction with linguistic accuracy.

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CONCLUSION

This study investigated the perceptions of senior high school English teachers with regard to

utilising the HiNative mobile application as a tool to enhance students' pronunciation skills. The findings indicated that HiNative had a positive impact on student motivation, engagement, and confidence, primarily attributable to its interactive features and the provision of authentic feedback from native speakers. It was acknowledged by the teaching faculty that the application had facilitated an enhancement in students' awareness of pronunciation accuracy, with a particular emphasis on sound articulation, intonation, and rhythm. Notwithstanding initial reservations and a number of challenges, including restricted internet access and varying degrees of digital literacy, teachers generally found the application to be an effective and accessible resource when utilised in conjunction with adequate support and lesson planning.

While the HiNative application offers promising opportunities for enhancing English pronunciation instruction, its success is contingent on its integration into classroom activities and the provision of adequate training and infrastructure. This research underscores the necessity for continuous professional development in the realm of digital literacy and the utilisation of mobile technologies to enhance language learning methodologies. Furthermore, it is posited that mobile learning tools such as HiNative can function as valuable supplements to traditional methods, particularly in contexts where exposure to native pronunciation is limited. It can be concluded that equipping teachers with the appropriate tools and support systems can facilitate more meaningful and effective pronunciation learning experiences for students

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