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The Influence of Explicit Phonetics Instruction on Speaking Skills in EFL Settings

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Autores:

Emily Dayanna Martinez Cajilima

Diego Paul Pauta Chalco

Director:

Mónica Patricia Abad Célleri

ORCID:  0000-0001-8381-5982

Cuenca, Ecuador

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Resumen

El desarrollo de las habilidades orales es esencial para una comunicación eficaz en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL, por sus siglas en inglés). Esta investigación explora la relación entre la instrucción fonética explícita y el desarrollo de las habilidades orales en estudiantes de inglés. El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar el impacto de dicha instrucción en el desarrollo de las habilidades orales en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Se realizó una síntesis de investigación cualitativa mediante el análisis de 20 estudios empíricos publicados entre 2010 y 2023, los cuales fueron seleccionados por su enfoque en contextos de enseñanza del idioma inglés y la instrucción explícita. Los estudios se examinaron en función de cinco dimensiones analíticas: distribución geográfica, enfoque metodológico, instrumentos de recolección de datos, estrategias de instrucción y subhabilidades del habla influenciadas por la instrucción fonética explícita. Los hallazgos revelan que la instrucción explícita, especialmente cuando se integra en tareas comunicativas, mejora significativamente la precisión en la pronunciación y la comprensibilidad de los estudiantes. Aunque la enseñanza de los aspectos segmentales como suprasegmentales mostraron beneficios, el enfoque en los suprasegmentales tuvo un mayor impacto en la fluidez. La investigación concluye que la instrucción fonética explícita es una herramienta valiosa para mejorar el rendimiento oral y debería implementarse en la enseñanza de idiomas.

Palabras clave del autor: habilidades orales, EFL, enseñanza de la pronunciación, enseñanza del idioma



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Abstract

Developing speaking skills is essential for effective communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This research synthesis explores the relationship between explicit phonetics instruction and the development of oral skills in English learners. A qualitative research synthesis was conducted by analyzing 20 empirical studies published between 2010 and 2023, which were selected based on their focus on English language teaching settings and explicit phonetics instruction. The studies were examined across five analytical dimensions: geographical distribution, research approach, data collection instruments, instructional strategies, and impacted speaking subskills. The findings reveal that explicit instruction, particularly when integrated into communicative tasks, significantly enhances learners' pronunciation accuracy and comprehensibility. While segmental and suprasegmental training show benefits, suprasegmental focus has a stronger impact on fluency. The investigation concludes that explicit phonetics instruction is a valuable tool for improving speaking performance and should be implemented in language education.

Author Keywords: speaking skills, EFL, pronunciation teaching, language teaching



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Dedication

To my dear and best parents of the world, my brothers, and my best friends, thank you for being my unwavering support and patience. Your belief in me, your words of encouragement, and your constant presence never let me fall, even in the most difficult moments when I thought that I could not do it. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

Diego

To my sister, the brightest light in my life, sometimes annoyingly bright but always a source of happiness. To my beloved mother and father, whose constant support and guidance have helped me face every step of my journey. And finally, to those teachers who have inspired me to go beyond what is expected, who showed me what it means to be an excellent educator, and who left a lasting impact on me in a single course.

Emily

Introduction

Language serves as a global tool for human interaction, enabling individuals to exchange ideas, express emotions, and build social connections (Suhardi, 2018). In an increasingly globalized world, English has become the dominant lingua franca for communication across diverse linguistic backgrounds, reinforcing the necessity for learners to develop strong English-speaking skills (Mahmood, 2023). In spite of its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to master (Gordon et al., 2013); consequently, teaching methods have been extensively investigated, with recent research highlighting the significant value of explicit phonetics instruction in enhancing English proficiency. This approach systematically teaches phonological (segmental and suprasegmental) features of pronunciation through a variety of listening and speaking exercises, which have shown promise for enhancing learners' oral communication skills (Asrul & Husda, 2022; Pardede, 2018). However, despite these benefits, a comprehensive understanding of the specific processes, strategies, and instructional practices that contribute to its effectiveness remains lacking; therefore, this research synthesis aims to address that gap by investigating how explicit phonetics instruction influences the development of speaking skills in EFL learners. Specifically, it seeks to identify the strategies employed, examine the components of speaking most affected, and provide practical insights for effective classroom implementation.

This research synthesis is organized into the following chapters. *Chapter I* establishes the foundation by presenting the background, which emphasizes the importance of speaking skills in the context of English as a global language of communication. It also identifies a key gap in the existing research, which justifies the need for the present study, aiming to bridge the gap between the theoretical benefits and practical classroom implementation by analyzing the strategies employed in previous research. The chapter ends by establishing the research question and objectives. *Chapter II* includes a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundation and existing research related to explicit phonetics instruction and the development of speaking skills in EFL contexts. The first section presents key concepts related to explicit phonetics instruction, beginning with an analysis of speaking skills as a complex process involving various components, and followed by a discussion of related phonetics concepts. The second section presents studies on the effectiveness of explicit phonetics instruction in multiple contexts. Despite widespread support for explicit instruction, the review also acknowledges ongoing debates, and it emphasizes the need for further research to identify the conditions under which explicit phonetics instruction is most effective.

Chapter III introduces the methodology used in this study. It explains the way the articles were selected, including keywords, inclusion, and exclusion criteria. The selected studies were analyzed across five dimensions in Chapter VI to identify consistent patterns regarding the effectiveness of explicit phonetics instruction in improving EFL speaking proficiency. Based on the analysis, the results and conclusions are presented in the final chapter of the research.

Chapter I: Description Of The Study

Background

Language is a fundamental factor in daily life and represents a source of human development, as it allows us to express thoughts, opinions, or simple orders that connect us with others (Suhardi, 2018). This is particularly true in the case of the English language, which has become the primary form of communication among people who speak different languages and thus, a fundamental tool for human integration in a completely globalized world. Consequently, this evolution in the teaching of English has positioned communication at the center of learning, highlighting speaking as one of the primary skills to be developed (Mahmood, 2023).

Speaking is considered the ability to use words to construct sentences to express something. However, despite the increasing importance of speaking skills in recent decades, speaking is considered one of the most challenging skills to develop. Even though students have a grasp of the language, they still feel reluctant to speak in English, which can be attributed to several interrelated factors such as age, exposure to native speakers, and prior learning experiences (Suhardi, 2018).

Pronunciation is defined as the ability of producing or articulating certain sounds within a language, and it is essential for establishing a clear understanding when transmitting a message (Asrul & Husda, 2022). Students tend to struggle with speaking due to various pronunciation factors. First, it is challenging for them to adjust to a new sound system in a foreign language when they are accustomed to the dominant sound system of their native language (Pardede, 2018). Moreover, EFL students usually do not have contact with native speakers, so they lack sufficient opportunities to internalize the language and distinguish its various qualities to use it appropriately and conscientiously (Mahmood, 2023).

Likewise, from teachers' perspectives, it is apparent that teaching pronunciation is often overlooked in language classes due to a lack of guidance (Gordon et al., 2013). Many language teachers feel unqualified to teach pronunciation due to a lack of experience, insufficient knowledge, feeling unprepared, inadequate emphasis on pronunciation in curricula, and a shortage of suitable teaching materials for pronunciation practice and activities (Pardede, 2018). Some teachers may attempt to teach pronunciation by simply having students repeat sounds, but the differences between a student's first language and English can make it challenging to acquire correct pronunciation (Asrul & Husda, 2022).

According to Pardede (2018), "intelligible speech necessitates accurate production of many factors, e.g., phonemes, stress, linking, rhythm, and intonation" (p. 143), all of which significantly impact students' overall speaking proficiency. Therefore, students cannot

effectively develop pronunciation without being aware of the formal rules, patterns, and sound differences of the target language. In response to this challenge, researchers have begun to explore solutions, focusing particularly on pronunciation to enhance students' communication skills. Explicit phonetics instruction has emerged as a key tool in addressing this issue. Pardede (2018) defined it as:

The process of producing the sound of words well so that the ear and the listener can convert the sound and easily understand the meaning of words. The phonetics method also prioritizes training the ear and speaking skills in presenting language lessons through listening exercises, followed by exercises in speaking the words and sentences in the language being studied. (p. 31)

Therefore, the explicit phonetics approach involves not only presenting the various aspects of the language (consonant and vowel sounds, stress, intonation, connected speech, among others) but also training speech skills through listening exercises and oral practice of words and sentences in the target language (Pardede, 2018; Suhardi, 2018;). Activities such as minimal pair exercises, pronunciation and spelling activities, recording students' speech, and performing listening and reading comprehension tasks are effective in improving pronunciation and fluency (Gordon et al., 2013; Suhardi, 2018).

Furthermore, the results of studies have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of explicit phonetics instruction on the development of oral skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, helping them improve their pronunciation and fostering confidence and enthusiasm for learning progress (Asrul & Husda, 2022; Mahmoud, 2023; Pardede, 2018; Suhardi, 2018). Moreover, some studies (Asrul & Husda, 2022; Saito, 2011) suggested that these positive outcomes could be amplified with explicit and conscious phonetics training for students. In addition, some authors (Gordon et al., 2013; Pardede, 2018; Saito, 2011) agreed that teaching explicit phonetics must start with curricular planning that considers communication as the general objective of a class, which encourages the use of language in real-life situations. Consequently, students should have the opportunity not only to learn phonetics but also to practice the different phonetics features and produce them in real communicative contexts to obtain meaningful experiences and internalize knowledge. Gordon et al. (2013) have suggested that "even adding only a relatively time-limited explicit pronunciation component in a primarily communicative classroom can lead to beneficial results in production for learners" (p. 201). Thus, using what has been learned in explicit instruction is a fundamental factor in speech development. Therefore, some studies have indicated that explicit phonetics teaching models yield better results when implemented within

a communicative methodology, where explicit presentation of content is followed by guided analysis and practice, and corrective feedback is provided at different stages (Gordon et al., 2013).

Explicit phonetics teaching emphasizes both individual sounds, known as segmentals, and broader aspects of speech, such as stress and intonation, which are suprasegmentals. Considering these two components, some authors have suggested that it is important to teach the individual sounds of the language so that students can recognize and use them properly. Asrul and Husda (2022) proposed that "phonetic transcription was able to improve students' pronunciation by improving segmental features of pronunciation and helping the students to learn suprasegmental features of pronunciation such as word stress and sentence stress" (p. 4169). However, others debate that it is better to focus phonetics teaching on suprasegmental factors, which will give them better general pronunciation in speech (Gordon et al., 2013; Saito, 2011). Gordon et al. (2013) concluded that "explicit suprasegmental instruction may give learners a faster improvement in comprehensibility rather than only focusing on a few vowel sounds" (p. 201). Despite the disagreement about the focus of the teaching of explicit phonetics in terms of suprasegmentals or segmentals, both are considered important, and research on the topic is not conclusive (Mahmood, 2023).

In light of the existing body of knowledge, there remains a noticeable gap regarding the specific ways in which explicit phonetics instruction impacts the development of speaking skills. The current body of literature does not explicitly explain the precise process, activities, or instruments that had been used, nor how all these factors influence the students' learning process in a way that can be beneficial for the development of speaking skills (Mahmoud, 2023; Pardede, 2018; Saito, 2011).

Therefore, this research synthesis endeavors to explore the processes involved, as well as the strategies, instruments, and methods that facilitate EFL learners' speaking skill development through the teaching of explicit phonetics.

Problem Statement

Learning a language has different implications and motivations; however, the main objective of learning a second language is to acquire fluency not only in the use of the language but also in the management of correct pronunciation to transmit an understandable message that facilitates communication with others (Mahmoud, 2023; Pardede, 2018). Phonetics is closely related to pronunciation since many authors state how beneficial it can be to improve pronunciation. As a result, there has been a growing body of research highlighting the benefits of explicit phonetics instruction in improving speaking skills among EFL learners in recent

years. One of them is Gordon et al. (2013), who concluded that “even adding only a relatively time-limited explicit pronunciation component in a primarily communicative classroom can lead to beneficial results in production for learners” (p. 201). Therefore, by providing learners with a deeper understanding of the sounds and patterns of English, explicit phonetics instruction has the potential to enhance their ability to perceive, produce, and distinguish between phonemes accurately (Asrul & Husda, 2022; Gordon et al., 2013; Mahmoud, 2023; Pardede, 2018; Saito, 2011; Suhardi, 2018).

Moreover, research has suggested that explicit instruction in phonetics can lead to better learner confidence and proficiency, enabling learners to apply phonetics knowledge effectively to develop fluency (Mahmoud, 2023). However, despite these promising findings, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific mechanisms through which explicit phonics instruction influences speaking skill development in EFL contexts (Gordon et al., 2013). To bridge this gap, this research synthesis aims to understand the processes and strategies involved in explicit phonetics instruction that positively impact the development of speaking skills, especially focusing on pronunciation development in learning English as a foreign language.

Rationale

Studies on the influence of explicit phonetics instruction on speaking skills in EFL settings have primarily focused on its effectiveness in enhancing pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. While these investigations have consistently demonstrated positive outcomes in improving speaking proficiency, they often fall short in providing a complete understanding of the underlying processes and methodologies that lead to such improvements (Mahmoud, 2023; Pardede, 2018; Saito, 2011). Consequently, there exists a gap between theoretical efficacy and practical implementation in classroom settings.

The purpose of this research synthesis is then to bridge this gap by thoroughly examining the processes implemented in previous studies concerning explicit phonetics instruction. Rather than only focusing on the outcomes, this synthesis aims to dissect and analyze the instructional approaches and strategies utilized in various investigations to delve into their contribution to improving EFL learners' speaking skills. By synthesizing and consolidating existing investigations, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive framework that outlines the practical implementation of explicit phonetics instruction in the classroom.

What sets this study apart from previous research syntheses is its emphasis on processes for understanding the influence of explicit phonetics instruction on speaking skills. By analyzing specific procedures employed in successful interventions, this research synthesis aims to

empower language teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively integrate explicit phonetics instruction into their pedagogical practices, allowing more powerful and impactful language learning experiences for EFL learners worldwide.

Research Question

Given the beneficial results obtained in previous research on the use of explicit phonetics instruction to develop speaking skills, this research synthesis aims to clarify the processes that allow those beneficial results, guided by the following question:

- How does explicit phonetics instruction influence the development of EFL speaking skills?

Objectives

The primary objective is to investigate the impact of explicit phonetics instruction on the development of speaking skills in EFL learners.

Based on the general objective, the following specific objectives have been established:

- To determine specific strategies used to teach phonetics explicitly.
- To analyze the speaking skills that are affected by explicit phonetics instruction.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework And Literature Review

Theoretical framework

Speaking Skills

Speaking plays a crucial role in the development of foreign language proficiency. According to Hughes (2010), speaking is a communicative act that enables individuals to express ideas, emotions, intentions, and reactions. Bygate (2001) further supported this view, defining speaking as the generation of auditory signals that cause different verbal reactions from listeners. In this light, it is essential to consider speaking as a structured form of communication that generates distinct responses depending on how the message is framed and delivered.

In addition, a more comprehensive definition considers both external factors and cognitive processes involved in speaking. Richards and Renandya (2002) have described speaking as a complex cognitive and social process that involves linguistic knowledge, the ability to organize ideas coherently, and the skill to manage interactions in real time. This cognitive perspective aligns with Levelt's (1993) model, which identifies three key stages in speech production: (1) conceptualization, which involves the intention and the plan to speak; (2) formulation, which transforms that intention into linguistic forms; and (3) articulation, the physical act of producing speech. Consequently, it becomes evident that speaking is a multifaceted skill that demands mastery of various linguistic elements.

To effectively teach speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is crucial to consider not only grammar and vocabulary but also the contextualized use of language. Factors such as context, the roles and relationships of the participants, and the type of activities are essential. Effective communication includes not only spoken words but also paralinguistic features like pitch, stress, and intonation, which play a crucial role in conveying meaning (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Components of Speaking Skills

The speaking skill is a complex and interconnected ability that involves multiple components, each of which contributes to effective communication. Alrajafi et al. (2022) identified four essential elements to consider when addressing speaking skills. First, grammar is fundamental, as it ensures sentences follow structural rules, enabling speakers to convey complex ideas accurately (Harmer, 2007). While grammar is crucial for written communication, in spoken contexts, speakers and listeners may sometimes prioritize fluency over accuracy,

which can lead to overlooking grammatical details (Alrajafi et al., 2022). Second, vocabulary plays a central role in communication, providing the necessary words to express meanings. It encompasses the collection of words in a language and their use in constructing messages, particularly in spoken interactions to clearly convey thoughts (Alrajafi et al., 2022; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Another key component is fluency, which refers to the ability to produce speech smoothly and at a natural pace, without hesitation or searching for words. It reflects comfort with the language and the ability to express thoughts effortlessly. However, fluency does not guarantee accuracy, as a speaker may produce speech smoothly while still making mistakes in grammar or vocabulary usage (Alrajafi et al., 2022; Richards & Renandya, 2002). Finally, pronunciation refers to how speech sounds are produced and perceived, encompassing elements such as segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (stress, intonation, and rhythm) of a language (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). It plays a crucial role in effective communication, as accurate pronunciation directly influences intelligibility and the listener's understanding (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Micro and Macro Skills of Speaking

Speaking involves multiple components that range from smaller units of language to broader communication strategies. These components are often categorized into micro and macro skills, which describe what learners can achieve at different levels of speaking proficiency (Aida, 2014). Microskills focus on producing smaller linguistic units, such as phonemes, morphemes (word parts), individual words, and collocations. In contrast, macro skills encompass fluency, discourse organization, language functions, style, cohesion, nonverbal cues, and strategic communication. Although macro skills may appear more complex, it is important to note that both micro and macro skills are equally critical and present unique challenges depending on the learner's context and proficiency level (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

Furthermore, understanding spoken language requires a focus on three key concepts: intelligibility, accentedness, and comprehensibility. Intelligibility, as defined by Munro and Derwing (1995), refers to how well a listener can accurately decode a speaker's words. This concept plays a fundamental role in assessing the effectiveness of communication. Accentedness, described by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), measures the degree to which a speaker's pronunciation deviates from native-like norms. It is not inherently linked to understanding but can influence perceptions of the speaker's proficiency or credibility. Lastly, comprehensibility, as defined by Derwing and Munro (2015), represents the overall ease with which a listener grasps the speaker's intended message. Unlike intelligibility,

comprehensibility encompasses broader linguistic elements such as grammar, vocabulary, and discourse features, which shape the clarity of communication. Together, these concepts provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating spoken language and addressing the challenges learners face in achieving effective oral communication.

Explicit Phonetics Instruction

Phonetics, the study of speech sounds (Carley & Mees, 2019), plays a central role in developing these speaking skills. Specifically, it examines how sounds are produced, transmitted, and perceived. This field is divided into segmental features, which refer to individual sounds like consonants and vowels, and suprasegmental features, such as stress, rhythm, and intonation. These suprasegmental elements are particularly important because they add melody and emotion to speech, enhancing its natural flow. Furthermore, they play a vital role in connected speech, where phenomena like assimilation and linking occur both within and between words (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). These distinctions not only highlight the multifaceted nature of speaking but also underscore the importance of phonetics in improving intelligibility and fluency (Saito, 2011; Suhardi, 2018). Moreover, research shows that focusing on suprasegmental features optimizes pronunciation instruction for non-native speakers because these features significantly enhance both connected speech and overall communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

In language teaching, phonetics is emphasized through phonetics awareness and specific instructional approaches (Djiguimkoudre, 2021). Phonetic awareness, which refers to the ability to recognize and manipulate the sound patterns of a language, is vital for improving pronunciation (Yates & Zielinski, 2009). Instruction can be delivered through explicit or implicit methods. For instance, explicit instruction involves directly teaching sounds and pronunciation rules using tools like diagrams and drills (Saito, 2011). On the other hand, implicit instruction integrates sound learning into broader language activities, allowing learners to acquire pronunciation skills naturally over time (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

In addition, teaching strategies play an essential role in the English teaching process as they provide a structured approach for delivering content. According to Mustika and Wardah (2021), teaching strategies are thoughtful design approaches to using learning materials within a particular context. They are deeply tied to intended learning outcomes, shaping the competencies and behaviors students are expected to develop during and after a lesson. Teaching strategies play an increasingly important role in the instruction of phonetics, particularly in enhancing speaking skills. Ren et al. (2020) emphasized that their significance

lies in the issue that curricula often do not allocate enough time for thorough and effective phonetic instruction. Therefore, it is crucial to implement effective and properly executed strategies that enable learners to understand phonetics and apply it to speak English with confidence.

Literature Review

The influence of explicit phonetics instruction on pronunciation and speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting has attracted significant academic interest. Several recent studies have underscored the potential benefits of explicit phonetics instruction and the associated pedagogical challenges. This literature review synthesizes findings from studies investigating the role of explicit phonetics instruction in improving speaking skills in varied EFL contexts. These studies have emphasized the impact of phonetics training on learner comprehensibility, accuracy, and confidence, revealing insights into effective teaching practices and potential areas for improvement.

Speaking Subskills and Explicit Phonetics Instruction

Studies on explicit phonetics instruction have been analyzed considering different speaking subskills such as pronunciation, grammar, fluency, speech rate, and pronunciation accuracy. For instance, Suhardi (2018) used "the phonetics method," which emphasizes ear training and speaking practice, focusing on sound production and pronunciation. The study found improvements in students' pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. Similarly, Mahmood's (2023) study in a Kurdish university setting extended the examination of explicit phonetics instruction by investigating its impact on some aspects of speaking skills, such as speech rate, fluency, and pronunciation accuracy, through a semester-long instructional approach. Mahmood (2023) applied explicit formal instruction (EFI) and explicit pronunciation training (EPT), with learners receiving direct guidance on phonetics aspects such as stress patterns, intonation, and segmentals. The study found that learners' fluency and speech rate improved significantly, while pronunciation accuracy only improved moderately.

In addition, research consistently demonstrates that explicit phonetics instruction significantly improves pronunciation development across various assessment criteria and linguistic features (Alves & Magro, 2011; Asrul & Husda, 2022; Attamimi & Altamimi, 2018; Boto & Karavi, 2011; Brekelmans, 2017; Djiguimkoudre, 2021; Gordon et al., 2013; Gordon & Darcy, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2017; Lacabex & Gallardo del Puerto, 2018; Latorza & Ambayon, 2020; Mahmood, 2023; Palupi, 2021; Pardede, 2018; Saito, 2011, 2012; Suhardi, 2018; Trinh et al., 2022; Zhang & Yuan, 2020). Explicit phonetics instruction has been linked to improvements

in comprehensibility, intelligibility, and accent. Gordon and Darcy (2022) investigated the effect of different types of pronunciation instruction on the comprehensibility of EFL learners through explicit instruction of phonological features (both segmental and suprasegmental). The study, conducted with university students in Costa Rica, focused on training three groups of learners in segmentals, suprasegmentals, and a combination of both. According to the results, suprasegmental elements were found to be essential for improving speech comprehension quickly. In contrast, segmental instruction without consideration of prosodic elements caused a decrease in students' comprehensibility. When segmental and suprasegmental instruction were combined, a slight improvement in comprehensibility was observed. However, it has been speculated that the impact would be more significant with long-term instruction (Gordon & Darcy, 2022). In contrast to these findings, Saito (2011), who examined the effects of explicit phonetics instruction on the comprehensibility and accentedness of twenty Japanese learners of English, indicated the effectiveness of explicit segmental instruction. The research showed that explicit instruction targeting segmental features significantly enhanced comprehensibility during controlled speech tasks. Notably, in this study, no task demonstrated a significant reduction in foreign accents, which underscored the importance of prioritizing comprehensibility over achieving native-like pronunciation. These conclusions aligned with findings from Palupi's (2021) research on explicit phonetics instruction on diphthongs (segmentals), reinforcing its effectiveness in improving intelligibility and segmental accuracy. However, accent reduction remained minimal, indicating that longer exposure to native models might yield better results.

Segmental and Suprasegmental Training

Building on these findings, several studies have explored specific aspects of phonetics that significantly impact learners' overall speech production. However, the findings have not been conclusive. Some investigations have advocated for segmental training, highlighting its positive impact on learners' pronunciation and overall speech production (Algethami, 2017; Alves & Magro, 2011; Asrul & Husda, 2022; Boto & Karavi, 2011; Gordon & Darcy, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2017; Latorza & Ambayon, 2020; Pardede, 2018; Palupi, 2021; Saito, 2011, 2012). Boto and Karavi (2011) investigated the role of explicit phonetics instruction in addressing pronunciation challenges related to English consonants—specifically stops, fricatives, and affricates—in Thai EFL students. Their study demonstrated that explicit phonetics training enabled students to significantly improve in pronouncing consonant phonemes not present in Thai. The results indicated that explicit instruction helped learners overcome phonetics challenges tied to their native language phonological gaps, a key advantage over implicit methods that lacked such targeted focus. This has been particularly

valuable for learners whose L1 lacked many of the phonetics distinctions found in English, underscoring the role of explicit instruction in bridging phonetics disparities (Boto & Karavi, 2011). Similarly, Hamzah et al. (2017) investigated how explicit phonetics instruction influenced the development of speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It took place in an EFL classroom where tools such as pronunciation drills, minimal pair exercises, and focused feedback sessions were used to teach phonetics systematically. The results showed notable improvements in learners' pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and confidence, especially in distinguishing sounds that were absent in their native language. These findings indicated that targeted phonetics instruction not only improved learners' ability to produce sounds correctly but also contributed to overall speaking proficiency by enhancing communication skills and reducing misunderstandings. Palupi's (2021) study on segmental instruction of diphthongs revealed that explicit training improved intelligibility and segmental accuracy among learners. However, these findings come from studies that concentrate on the acquisition of specific segmental features within limited time frames, without comparing their impact to suprasegmental features. In contrast, other studies indicate that explicit instruction focusing on suprasegmental features (such as stress, intonation, and rhythm) can effectively improve pronunciation in adult EFL learners (Gordon et al., 2013; Gordon & Darcy, 2022; Latorza & Ambayon, 2020; Pardede, 2018). Specifically, Gordon et al. (2013) examined the impact of explicit phonetics instruction on the acquisition of L2 phonological features, focusing on how these features enhanced comprehensible speech in an EFL classroom. The study was structured around three groups of learners who received either explicit instruction on segmental or suprasegmental features or were given general pronunciation practice without specific instruction. Results from pre- and post-tests revealed that learners who received instruction on suprasegmental features, including stress, rhythm, and intonation, achieved notably higher scores in comprehensibility compared to those trained solely in segmentals or given general practice. The researchers argued that suprasegmental training enhanced comprehensibility, supporting the notion that phonetics awareness in areas like prosody significantly improved the listener's ability to understand non-native speech (Gordon et al., 2013). The authors recommended a shift toward prosodic features in EFL classrooms to support students' intelligibility. This result was also found in Gordon and Darcy (2022), who recommended prioritizing suprasegmental features over segmental ones in pronunciation instruction, particularly within communicative teaching methodologies.

Communicative Practice and Controlled Speech Tasks

Another factor influencing the effectiveness of explicit phonetics instruction in enhancing pronunciation is the structure of communicative lessons. Studies by Gordon and Darcy (2022)

and Alves and Magro (2011) argued that explicit instruction is most effective when integrated into real-world communication practice. Alves and Magro (2011) applied a five-step method that began with basic tasks like minimal-pair drills and gradually progressed to communicative activities such as role-plays and discussions. This approach ensured that learners not only understood the target sounds but also used them naturally in conversation. Similarly, Gordon and Darcy (2022) found that incorporating communicative tasks into explicit instruction improved learners' comprehension. Their study showed that suprasegmental instruction led to faster improvements in understanding, while segmental instruction alone had less impact unless combined with prosodic features. This reinforces the idea that pronunciation teaching should go beyond drills and include real-life applications. A variation of this communicative context is the use of controlled and spontaneous speech practice, which also plays a significant role in explicit instruction. Studies by Palupi (2021) and Saito (2011) focused on controlled and spontaneous speech tasks separately. Saito (2011) found that while controlled tasks improved segmental pronunciation, spontaneous speech remained more challenging. Similarly, Palupi's research (2021) on diphthongs showed improvements in controlled exercises but little progress in spontaneous speech, suggesting that focusing solely on controlled practice is not sufficient for real-world communication.

Phonological Awareness and Alternative Approaches

In general, explicit phonetics instruction has been regarded as a crucial tool for helping learners become aware of their pronunciation errors and enabling them to identify effective corrective strategies, ultimately fostering greater phonological awareness (Zhang & Yuan, 2020). Regarding phonological awareness, Djiguimkoudre (2021) examined the effectiveness of phonemic awareness (PA) activities in improving English phoneme recognition and manipulation among foreign language learners. These activities positively pushed learners to focus more intently on the sounds of the second language (L2), which statistically proved to enhance phonemic acquisition and production.

Within this area of research, alternative instructional approaches have also been explored. Notably, implicit phonetics instruction has been studied as a counterpart to explicit methods. For instance, a study found that explicit phonetics training or implicit exposure to native input would enhance students' awareness of the English schwa in unstressed syllables within content words. Lacabex and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018) concluded that both instructional methods improved pronunciation. However, explicit instruction was observed to have a more substantial impact on pronunciation enhancement than implicit instruction. Similarly, Lacabex and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018) demonstrated that explicit training, as opposed to implicit

exposure, yields higher improvements in phonological awareness, specifically with the English schwa vowel. Their findings indicate that while native input provides valuable language exposure, it may not effectively address specific pronunciation challenges such as vowel reduction for EFL learners.

To sum up, explicit phonetics instruction can significantly impact the development of EFL learners' speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. This type of instruction can equip learners with strategies to enhance intelligibility and address linguistic challenges effectively. By integrating explicit phonetics training into communicative and practical activities, learners are better prepared to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and real-world communication. Nevertheless, not all researchers agree on the extent of its benefits, with some studies questioning its effectiveness compared to alternative methods, such as implicit training. These differing perspectives highlight the importance of further research to evaluate the specific conditions under which explicit phonetics instruction is most effective.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

A research synthesis integrates the results of separate empirical studies; consequently, it helps analyze an entire body of research to determine which elements influence the strength or weakness of the relationships under investigation (Steingut et al., 2022). Regarding the influence of explicit phonetics instruction on the development of speaking skills, this approach allowed for a systematic comparison of multiple studies to identify patterns, methodological trends, and instructional outcomes that contribute to a deeper understanding of effective pronunciation teaching (Pardede, 2018). In order to find relevant research papers, academic databases and repositories such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and Redalyc were used, as well as journals focused on applied linguistics and language education, such as the Journal of English Teaching, Cambridge University Press, and Taylor and Francis. Boolean search strings like *explicit phonetics instruction*, *EFL*, *pronunciation teaching*, *speaking skills*, *phonetic training*, and *English learners* were used to identify relevant studies that can contribute to responding to the research question.

To maintain the integrity of the analysis, a clear set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was applied. The studies were required to be empirical, either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods, and had to focus on EFL learners receiving explicit phonetics instruction. Moreover, the search was limited to studies published between 2010 and 2023 to reflect current research and classroom practices. Only full-text articles written in English were considered for inclusion. Furthermore, each study needed to report outcomes connected to speaking subskills such as pronunciation, fluency, or comprehensibility. Studies were excluded if they focused solely on implicit instruction, if they were theoretical or reflective without data. After screening, a final set of 20 empirical studies was selected.

Once selected, each study was reviewed in detail and organized according to five analytical dimensions: geographical distribution, research approach, data collection instruments, instructional strategies, and impacted speaking subskills. These categories were chosen because they align with the main objectives of this research synthesis. They offer insight into places where explicit phonetics instruction is being studied, the way how it is being implemented and assessed, and the speaking subskills that are most affected. To ensure the reliability of this synthesis, recurring findings from various studies conducted in different contexts, with diverse designs and populations, were compared to confirm consistent patterns. This form of analytical analysis helped validate key findings about the impact of explicit phonetics instruction on English as a foreign language speaking skills.

Chapter IV: Data Analysis

To conduct a systematic and meaningful analysis of the influence of explicit phonetics instruction on EFL speaking skills, this study categorized the selected empirical research into five main analytical dimensions: geographical distribution, research approach, data collection instruments, instructional strategies, and impacted speaking subskills. These categories were chosen to uncover patterns not only in research design but also in pedagogical application and learner outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Analyzing the geographical distribution provides insight into where the greatest research activity is occurring and highlights regional needs or gaps in the literature. Examining the research approaches allows for an understanding of how scholars have methodologically framed the investigation of explicit phonetics instruction, revealing preferences for quantitative or mixed-method designs. Likewise, exploring the strategies and processes used in instruction helps identify the most common and effective pedagogical practices, offering valuable information for future classroom implementation. The category of speaking subskills was included to specify which aspects of oral proficiency—such as pronunciation, fluency, or grammar—benefit most from explicit instruction. Together, these categories offer a comprehensive framework to answer the research question and reach the objectives of this research synthesis.

Building on this framework, Table 1 introduces the first analytical dimension: the geographical distribution of the selected studies. This categorization helps to visualize where research on explicit phonetics instruction in EFL contexts has been most actively conducted.

Table 1

Empirical Studies According to Research Location

Continents	# of Articles	Country	Author and Date
North America	2	USA	Gordon et al. (2013)
		Costa Rica	Gordon & Darcy (2022)
South America	1	Brazil	Alves & Magro (2011)
Europe	2	Netherlands	Brekelmans (2017)
		Spain	Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018)

Africa	1	Burkina Faso	Djiguimkoudre (2021)
Asia	10	Saudi Arabia	Algethami (2017)
		Iraqi Kurdistan	Mahmood (2023)
		Yemen	Attamimi & Altamimi (2018)
		Thailand	Boto & Karavi (2011)
		Malaysia	Hamzah et al. (2017)
		Vietnam	Trinh et al. (2022)
		China	Zhang & Yuan (2020)
		Japan	Saito (2011); Saito (2012)
		Philippines	Latorza & Ambayon (2020)
Oceania	4	Indonesia	Suhardi (2018); Pardede (2018); Palupi (2021); Asrul & Husda (2022)

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of studies were carried out in Asia (10 studies), followed by Oceania (4 studies). This distribution highlights a strong research interest in Asia, particularly in countries where phonological differences between native languages and English can pose significant pronunciation challenges. The limited number of studies from Africa and South America may indicate a need for further research on phonetics instruction in these regions.

It is worth mentioning that early contributions, such as those of Alves and Magro (2011) and Boto and Karavi (2011), laid the groundwork for subsequent research. Scholars like Gordon et al. (2013) and Gordon and Darcy (2022) have further expanded on these foundations, offering significant theoretical and practical insights that have influenced later studies. More recent research, including works by Mahmood (2023) and Asrul and Husda (2022), highlights the ongoing development and diversification of approaches in this area. Collectively, these studies emphasize the critical role of phonetics in language acquisition and offer valuable perspectives for improving educational practices.

To better understand the scope of the research, the studies were further categorized into quantitative and mixed-methods research approaches.

Table 2

Research Approach

Research Approach	# of articles	of Studies
Quantitative approach	12	Gordon & Darcy (2022), Alves & Magro (2011), Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018), Djiguimkoudre (2021), Algethami (2017), Boto & Karavi (2011), Hamzah et al. (2017), Zhang & Yuan (2020), Suhardi (2018), Pardede (2018), Palupi (2021), Latorza & Ambayon (2020)
Mixed-methods approach	8	Asrul & Husda (2022), Gordon et al. (2013), Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Brekelmans (2017), Mahmood (2023), Saito (2011), Saito (2012), Trinh et al. (2022)

Table 2 shows that the majority of studies employed a quantitative research approach, with a notable emphasis on experimental and quasi-experimental methods. These approaches are commonly chosen due to their ability to establish cause-and-effect relationships between explicit phonetics instruction and improvements in learners' pronunciation or speaking skills. In addition, some studies employed a mixed-methods approach, not only to measure outcomes but also to understand how learners interact with phonetics instruction.

Following the analysis of research approaches, the next chart focuses on the data collection instruments used across the reviewed studies. This dimension was selected to understand how researchers have captured evidence of learning outcomes in explicit phonetics instruction.

Table 3

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments	# of articles	of Studies

Pre-test and Post-test	19	Algethami (2017), Alves & Magro (2011), Asrul & Husda (2022), Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Boto & Karavi (2011), Brekelmans (2017), Djiguimkoudre (2021), Gordon & Darcy (2022), Gordon et al. (2013), Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018), Latorza & Ambayon (2020), Mahmood (2023), Palupi (2021), Pardede (2018), Saito (2011), Saito (2012), Suhardi (2018), Trinh et al. (2022), Zhang & Yuan (2020)
Speech Samples/Recordings	13	Algethami (2017), Alves & Magro (2011), Boto & Karavi (2011), Gordon & Darcy (2022), Gordon et al. (2013), Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018), Latorza & Ambayon (2020), Mahmood (2023), Palupi (2021), Pardede (2018), Saito (2011), Saito (2012), Zhang & Yuan (2020)
Likert Scale Ratings	7	Algethami (2017), Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Gordon & Darcy (2022), Gordon et al. (2013), Palupi (2021), Trinh et al. (2022), Zhang & Yuan (2020)
Questionnaires	7	Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Brekelmans (2017), Djiguimkoudre (2021), Hamzah et al. (2017), Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018), Pardede (2018), Trinh et al. (2022)
Interviews	6	Asrul & Husda (2022), Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Mahmood (2023), Saito (2011), Saito (2012), Trinh et al. (2022)

Table 3 indicates that the most frequently used instruments are pre- and post-tests, which are typically linked to the analysis of speech samples, videos, or recordings. These instruments enable researchers to compare phonological development, accentedness, comprehensibility,

and other factors after a period of explicit phonetics instruction. Closely related to this approach is the use of speech samples and recordings. The data collected through these methods are subjected to acoustic and auditory analyses, focusing on characteristics like Voice Onset Time (VOT), speech rate, fluency, intelligibility, and accuracy. These recordings are essential for tracking how explicit instruction influences learners' pronunciation and fluency after a specific period.

Another commonly used instrument is the Likert scale rating, frequently utilized to evaluate participants' pronunciation changes before and after instruction. In addition, questionnaires and interviews are widely used to gather background information and qualitative insights into participants' experiences and perceptions. Questionnaires typically address demographic details, language backgrounds, and participants' opinions about the instruction process, while interviews offer in-depth qualitative data that help contextualize quantitative findings.

A further key area of analysis centers on explicit phonetics teaching strategies, as they offer important insights into effective ways to apply explicit phonetics instruction in EFL settings.

Table 4

Explicit Phonetics Teaching Strategies

Strategy	# of articles	Authors
Cross-linguistic comparison	8	Algethami (2017), Alves & Magro (2011), Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Boto & Karavi (2011), Brekelmans (2017), Palupi (2021), Pardede (2018), Saito (2011), Saito (2012), Zhang & Yuan (2020)
Contextualized Learning	5	Algethami (2017), Alves & Magro (2011), Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Brekelmans (2017), Hamzah et al. (2017)
Articulatory Phonetics Training	7	Asrul & Husda (2022), Boto & Karavi (2011), Brekelmans (2017), Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018), Latorza & Ambayon (2020), Mahmood (2023), Saito (2011)

Targeting problematic phonetic features	7	Alves & Magro (2011), Boto & Karavi (2011), Mahmood (2023), Palupi (2021), Pardede (2018), Saito (2012), Zhang & Yuan (2020)
Scaffolded Learning	4	Asrul & Husda (2022), Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Boto & Karavi (2011), Pardede (2018)
Communicative Framework	5	Alves & Magro (2011), Gordon et al. (2013), Gordon & Darcy (2022), Trinh et al. (2022), Zhang & Yuan (2020)
Multimedia integration	7	Algethami (2017), Asrul & Husda (2022), Hamzah et al. (2017), Mahmood (2023), Palupi (2021), Pardede (2018), Zhang & Yuan (2020)
Sound-letter correspondence instruction	3	Algethami (2017), Djiguimkoudre (2021), Suhardi (2018)
Form-focused instruction	3	Palupi (2021), Saito (2011), Saito (2012)
Feedback strategies (Corrective feedback, error monitoring, self-feedback, and Peer feedback)	5	Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018), Mahmood (2023), Palupi (2021), Pardede (2018), Trinh et al. (2022)

Table 4 categorizes the explicit phonetics instruction strategies used in the studies, providing insight into their role in the development of EFL speaking skills. As can be seen, cross-linguistic comparison, which draws parallels between learners' first language (L1) and the target language (L2), is used in many studies. This strategy helps students become aware of phonetic differences and transfer errors. The emphasis on cross-linguistic awareness suggests that explicit phonetics instruction aids learners in overcoming pronunciation difficulties by increasing their awareness of how sounds function in different languages. Likewise, targeting problematic phonetic features is a strategy that helps emphasize specific phonemes that are particularly challenging for EFL learners, such as /r/ and /l/ for Japanese speakers, or /θ/ and /ð/ for Spanish speakers. This will help learners overcome these difficulties and improve their fluency in English. By focusing on these problematic sounds, instruction directly addresses common pronunciation difficulties, making speech more

accurate and intelligible. Another commonly employed strategy is articulatory phonetics training, which emphasizes teaching learners how speech sounds are physically produced using the articulatory organs. This approach helps students understand the mechanics of pronunciation, such as tongue placement, voicing, and airflow, by highlighting how sounds are formed in the mouth and throat. Through the use of guided practice, visual aids, and sometimes kinesthetic feedback, learners can enhance their pronunciation accuracy and develop greater phonological awareness.

Other less commonly discussed strategies include contextualized learning and communicative framework, which focus on integrating explicit phonetics instruction into meaningful, real-life communication tasks instead of relying on isolated repetition drills. Another approach that supports real-life communication is the scaffolded production learning, which provides instructional scaffolding—from initial sound imitation to autonomous, contextually appropriate pronunciation—thereby fostering learners’ fluency and confidence in a structured manner (Asrul & Husda, 2022). Multimedia integration, as demonstrated by Hamzah et al. (2017) and Palupi (2021), leverages technology to provide authentic models and immediate feedback, thereby enhancing autonomous learning and self-monitoring. Sound-letter correspondence instruction (Algethami, 2017; Suhardi, 2018) strengthens phonemic awareness by linking graphemes to phonemes, which improves both pronunciation and spelling accuracy. Lastly, form-focused instruction (Saito, 2011, 2012; Palupi, 2021) balances communicative fluency with targeted phonetics accuracy, while feedback strategies (Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2018; Pardede, 2018), including corrective and self-feedback, promote real-time error correction and long-term phonological development.

Building on exploring instructional strategies, the final chart shifts the focus to the speaking skills most affected by explicit phonetics instruction. This reveals whether areas like pronunciation or grammar show greater improvement.

Table 5

Speaking Skills Affected by Explicit Phonetics Instruction

Speaking Skills	# of Studies	Results
Pronunciation	18	Alves & Magro (2011), Asrul & Husda (2022), Suprasegmental instruction significantly improves pronunciation at the

		Attamimi & Altamimi (2018), Boto & Karavi (2011), Brekelmans (2017), Djiguimkoudre (2021), Gordon et al. (2013), Gordon & Darcy (2022), Hamzah et al. (2017), Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto (2018), Latorza & Ambayon (2020), Palupi (2021), Pardede (2018), Saito (2011), Saito (2012), Suhardi (2018), Trinh et al. (2022), Zhang & Yuan (2020)	spontaneous speech and communicative levels. Segmental instruction improves pronunciation at the word level and controlled speech, but has no significant influence at the spontaneous speech level. Segmentals and suprasegmentals combined instruction shows some improvement, but it is not statistically significant.
			Opposite results: Segmental instruction was highly effective (Pardede, 2018; Suhardi, 2018). No clear evidence that explicit teaching of segmentals reduces foreign accents (Algethami, 2017).
Grammar	2	Mahmood (2023), Suhardi (2018)	Indirect grammar improvement through repeated exposure and practice with accurate sentence models.
Fluency	3	Mahmood (2023), Saito (2011), Suhardi (2018)	Explicit segmental and suprasegmental instruction increases speech speed, reduces hesitations, and increases confidence.
			Opposite results: No significant change in fluency was reported (Saito, 2011).

Table 5 presents the results on the influence of explicit phonetics instruction on the development of speaking skills. As can be seen, the most frequently investigated area concerns the impact of explicit phonetics instruction on pronunciation, making it the most extensively studied micro-skill. Overall, the findings suggest that the inclusion of explicit phonetics instruction contributes positively to pronunciation improvement. Nevertheless, the

degree of progress varies depending on whether the instruction targets segmental features, suprasegmental features, or a combination of both. Suprasegmental instruction has been reported to be particularly effective, as it fosters comprehensible and intelligible pronunciation in both spontaneous and controlled speech contexts. In contrast, segmental instruction has been found to support pronunciation development at the word level and in controlled practices, though its effectiveness is more limited in spontaneous speech. This has led to some debate among scholars: while some studies report the high effectiveness of segmental instruction in specific contexts (Pardede, 2018; Suhardi, 2018), others argue that its impact is constrained unless factors such as the duration of instruction, the instruction process, or the content of the instruction are considered (Algethami, 2017; Saito, 2011, 2012). Moreover, it is important to note that most studies on segmental instruction focus primarily on the correction of specific problematic phonemes due to language pronunciation variations. Thus, further research is needed in broader contexts to fully assess its overall effectiveness. The combination of segmental and suprasegmental instruction has been shown to yield moderate effectiveness; however, its impact appears to be more significant when implemented over longer instructional periods.

Regarding other speaking subskills, research remains limited. Nonetheless, the few available studies suggest that explicit phonetics instruction, which is both segmental and suprasegmental, can effectively enhance broader speaking competencies, including fluency, grammar, accuracy, vocabulary, and speaker confidence.

Conclusion

This research synthesis aimed to analyze the impact of explicit phonetics instruction on the development of speaking skills in EFL learners. After an extensive and in-depth analysis, the findings strongly support prior research indicating that explicit phonetics instruction positively influences speaking development, especially in the area of pronunciation (Alves & Magro, 2011; Gordon et al., 2013; Mahmood, 2023; Saito, 2011; Suhardi, 2018). The analysis confirms that suprasegmental instruction significantly enhances learners' speech comprehensibility and intelligibility, particularly when integrated into communicative and contextualized practices (Gordon & Darcy, 2022; Gordon et al., 2013). In contrast, although studies such as Saito (2011) and Palupi (2021) emphasized the benefits of segmental training for improving pronunciation accuracy in controlled settings, this review found that its effectiveness is limited in spontaneous speech contexts. However, a key insight in this result is that long-term, integrative approaches, which combine segmental and suprasegmental instruction, yield the most sustainable improvements, particularly when accompanied by multimedia resources, contextualized communicative tasks, and consistent feedback.

This synthesis also identified the most recurrent and effective strategies employed within explicit phonetics instruction. These strategies contribute to a comprehensive and learner-centered approach that supports both segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation development. Among the most frequently cited strategies are *cross-linguistic comparison* and *articulatory phonetics training* (Algethami, 2017; Boto & Karavi, 2011; Saito, 2012). These strategies help raise learners' phonological awareness and directly address common challenges related to their L1 background, enabling them to produce unfamiliar or difficult sounds more accurately. Strategies such as *contextualized learning*, *communicative framework*, and *scaffolded production learning* promote fluency and spontaneous speech by embedding phonetic practice within meaningful communication and scaffolding tasks (Alves & Magro, 2011; Attamimi & Altamimi, 2018; Pardede, 2018). *Multimedia integration* enhances exposure to authentic speech models and offers interactive feedback, fostering autonomous learning and self-monitoring (Hamzah et al., 2017; Palupi, 2021). Though less frequently employed, strategies such as *sound-letter correspondence instruction* and *form-focused instruction* support phonemic awareness and help balance accuracy with fluency. Additionally, feedback strategies, such as *corrective feedback*, *self-monitoring*, and *peer feedback*, encourage ongoing phonological refinement and learner engagement.

Despite these promising results, several limitations were identified. First, the dominance of studies conducted in Asian contexts highlights a potential geographical research bias,

underscoring the need for more studies from underrepresented regions such as South America. Second, many of the reviewed studies involved short-term interventions focused on specific phonetic features, which may not fully reflect the long-term outcomes or challenges of explicit instruction. Third, the review reveals that most studies concentrate primarily on pronunciation, with relatively little attention paid to other macro and micro speaking subskills. This highlights the need for research that explores the broader impact of explicit phonetics instruction on speaking proficiency, especially by considering updated studies related to the subskills of speaking. Additionally, while controlled speech tasks have been useful in measuring instructional effectiveness, spontaneous speech, which better reflects real-life language use, remains underexplored and should be prioritized in future research.

Addressing these challenges requires prioritizing research in underrepresented regions to gain a deeper understanding of how explicit phonetic instruction may be effectively implemented across diverse contexts. Comparative studies across institutions and countries are also essential for generating robust, generalizable evidence. Such research could strengthen the knowledge base on explicit phonetic instruction and inform its integration as a core component of curricula. Furthermore, incorporating context-specific findings into teacher education programs may equip educators with the knowledge, tools, and evidence-based strategies necessary to enhance student learning outcomes across varied settings.

In the broader context of EFL pedagogy, this synthesis underscores the pedagogical value of explicit phonetics instruction, particularly when implemented through integrative and communicative strategies. It reinforces the growing idea that phonological instruction should play a central role in English teaching, with segmental and suprasegmental instruction serving as an important tool to help students develop speaking skills. Ultimately, although not a standalone solution, explicit phonetics instruction emerges as a critical element of comprehensive EFL speaking instruction. Nevertheless, further longitudinal and cross-contextual research is necessary to optimize its application across diverse learner populations and instructional environments.

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